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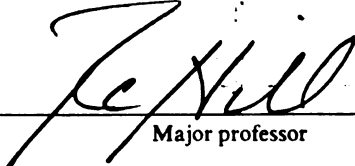
THE ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION,
CHINESE WOMEN AND THE WOMEN'S
MOVEMENT: 1949-1993

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THE ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION, CHINESE WOMEN AND
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:1949-1993

Volume I

By

Naihua Zhang

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

THE ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION, CHINESE WOMEN AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: 1949-1993

By

Naihua Zhang

My dissertation is perhaps the first systematic study of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), the national women's organization set up in 1949 for the mobilization and representation of women. This study documents the evolution of the ACWF; changes in its organizational goals, structure, activities, and perceptions of women's issues within the context of broader political, economic and social changes taking place in the country. It reveals the close yet often uneasy relationship between the gender interests of the women's movement and the class interests of the developmental state. The study of the ACWF as an intermediate structure between women and the state provides a unique lens to examine state policy on women, women's position in society and women's participation in politics. It sheds light on the complex organizational relationship between women and a party/state that claims women's liberation as part of its mandate, showing how this specific context shaped the development of the women's movement in China. My research is based on an analysis of official documents, new studies which have become available in recent years, and in-depth interviews.

To the memeory of my mother Ao Shaoqi

谨以此纪念我的母亲 鄂绍琪

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACDWF	All-China Democratic Women's Federation
ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
ACTUN	All-China Federation of Trade Unions
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CR	the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)
CCYL	Chinese Communist Youth League
FNGZ	<u>Funu gongzuo</u> (Woman-work)
FNGZTX	<u>Funu gongzuo</u> tongxun (reports on woman-work)
FNZZYHD	<u>Funu zuzhi yu huodong</u> (Women's Organizations and activities)
GLF	Great Leap Forward (1958-1960)
HQ	<u>Hongqi</u> (Red Flag)
JFJB	<u>Jie fang jun bao</u> (Liberation Army Daily)
RMRB	<u>Renmin ri bao</u> (People's Daily)
XZGFN	<u>Xin Zhongguo funu</u> (Women of New China)
ZGFN	<u>Zhongguo funu</u> (Women of China)
ZGFNB	<u>Zhongguo Funu bao</u> (China Women's News)
ZGFY	<u>Zhongguo fu yun</u> (Chinese Women's Movement)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on women and the women's movement in contemporary China by looking at the role played by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF, often called Fulian, the Chinese term for Women's Federation) through a historical documentation of its changing structure, goals and activities.

1. What is the ACWF?

The All-China Women's Federation is the national women's organization set up in 1949 for the dual mission of mobilization and representation of Chinese women.¹ Until the latter part of the 1980s, the ACWF was the only umbrella national women's organization in China. The ACWF has a semi-official and semi-popular status. Since there is no governmental department in China in charge of women's affairs, the ACWF has the authority and resources to interpret and implement state policy on women. As of 1994, it had over 98,000 full-time cadres on the state payroll. The Fulian system now publishes more than 40 women's newspapers and magazines. It has 28 women cadres' schools with research units

¹ When it was created in 1949, it was called the All-China Democratic Women's Federation. It changed its name in 1957.

within them and 24 women's occupational schools. This makes it a central source for shaping the public discourse on women and a base for women's political participation and non-formal education and training. As the sole official representative of Chinese women in contacting their counterparts in other parts of the world, the ACWF often takes part in international activities on women on behalf of the government. It has contacts with over 300 organizations of women and children throughout the world, receiving funds from international organizations for projects related to the welfare and development of women in China (Zhang, 1988:1).

In contrast to government organs, though, it has no administrative or legislative power over the making of policy. Its functions rely on hundreds of thousands of grassroots activists in a comprehensive network reaching the great majority of Chinese women. Vertically, it has a five-tier system from the national center to rural villages and urban neighborhoods. Fulian cadres at the rural township and urban residential district level and above are on the state payroll. Below that level are Fulian's grassroots (or primary) organizations called women's delegate meetings in rural villages or urban neighborhoods. They are sustained by unpaid women activists.² Horizontally, it is connected to various

² Women's Delegate Meetings (WDM) are the gathering of adult women in the local area who elect women delegates. The core of women delegates forms the WDM group. When the Fulian system was first established, all directors of WDMs and women delegates were volunteers. In rural areas, after

women's groups which join the ACWF at all levels as institutional members (see Appendix A4).

Statistics show that at the end of 1992, Fulian had over 60, 000 branches above the rural township and urban residential district levels, over 81,000 women's delegate meetings at the grassroots level, and over 5,800 institutional members (PRC, 1995). In the 1995 state report on the PRC's implementation of "Nairobi Forward Looking Strategy for the Advancement of Women," the ACWF was termed a non-official women's organization (NGO) and it calls itself the "largest NGO in the world." Such organizational strength has attracted international organizations since the 1980s to work with the ACWF in the projects they do in China.

The ACWF officially incorporates women into CCP politics and social structure, providing a space for women to voice their gender-based concerns and to push for their interests. Yet like the other mass organizations what were created under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s theory and practice of "mass line" and mass organizations to serve as an intermediate

establishment of communes, the directors of WDMs started to receive workpoints for the time they engaged in doing work related to women (going to meetings, attending training classes, etc.). In urban areas, all positions in women's delegate meetings and in the Neighborhood Committees that were mainly staffed by urban housewives and retired workers were unpaid. Around 1980, the Civil Affair Bureau started to give a meager stipend to the directors of Neighborhood Committees. Directors of WDMs who concurrently held the position of directors or deputy directors of Neighborhood Committees received the stipend. All along, the women delegates or neighborhood activists received no payment.

structure between Party/state and society, the ACWF does not exist only to make special gender-based demands. The gender interests of women are often downplayed when there is conflict between women and the state interests. Further, it is by no means an autonomous group. Crucial decisions about the organization were made by the Party; even its organizational structure and democratic centralism guidance principle were modeled after the CCP. Obviously, such a structure is better suited for transmitting messages from the top down rather than from the bottom up. This was especially true in the years when there was less attention to women's issues. During China's 10-year political upheaval, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the ACWF, like other mass organizations, was rendered powerless and disbanded.

Due to its dual mission and dual status, the ACWF embodies contradictions and complexities. People have different, often contradictory views, about its role. In its development over the past four decades, the ACWF has been greatly influenced by the traumatic course of politics in China. In turn, it has also acquired a unique position in society, helping shape the course and the direction of the Chinese women's movement, and women's image, self-perception and life experiences. Such a role has increased especially in the reform era. As the state loosens its control and retreats from the private sphere, the ACWF is taking a stronger stance on women's issues. Most recently the ACWF was entrusted by

the Chinese government to host the 1995 NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. This gave it high profile and visibility, and in a way, highlighted the necessity and timeliness of this study.

2. Why Study the ACWF?

The ACWF is an important player in the women's movement and part of the social structure that shapes women's lives. It merits systematic study. To the best of my knowledge, however, there has not yet been such a study due both to lack of access to data and lack of interest.

Many researchers were frustrated by the many restrictions on field research in China. This remained a problem even when China started to open up in the 1980s. The reportedly uncooperative and suspicious attitudes of some ACWF cadres toward scholars who were engaged in such endeavors³ were a major obstacle. The scarcity and dispersion of data on the organization were also hurdles.⁴

A more fundamental reason perhaps is that many feminist scholars regard the ACWF as an appendage or a mouthpiece of the Party, thus dismissing its relevance to feminist scholarship. After all, as Phyllis Andors (1983:30) noted,

³ See Margery Wolf's description of her research experience in China in Revolution Postponed, 1985. In my interviews, I also learned about scholars who wanted to study ACWF but could not get access.

⁴ Data and collected documents on the Chinese women's movement did not appear until the ACWF started to work on them in 1982. See Chapter IX.

"(it) was not a feminist group either in theory or in practice." As one of the three major "mass organizations"⁵ in China, it subordinates itself to the Party leadership and, in playing its dual function of mobilization and representation, it has given primacy and loyalty to the former, especially when there is a conflict.

Indifference to the ACWF is also related to many scholars' notion of the women's movement. The western type of autonomous, bottom-up women's movement certainly does not exist in China. In a place where the women's movement is subordinated to the larger social movement, could there be a women's movement at all? Could the ACWF, as a hierarchically built, top-down women's organization led by the Party, have any role to play in the women's movement if the movement did emerge?

Interest in the ACWF has increased in recent years, though, with increased recognition of different approaches to woman's issues, with western scholars's increased contact with China, the ACWF and their growing interests in Chinese women's organizations, and with the increased visibility the ACWF gained through its role in the organization of the NGO Forum of the Fourth World Women's Conference.

I decided to focus on the ACWF for several reasons. First, I chose to study it to enrich our knowledge about the

⁵ The other two are the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Chinese Communist Youth League. See Chapter II for more detailed discussion on the mass organizations.

organization itself and also about the situation of Chinese women in general. I believe that women's condition in contemporary China cannot be properly understood without a systematic study of the role the ACWF has played in constructing women's lives as well as in shaping their collective behaviors.

In particular, the ACWF provides a unique vantage point from which to analyze women in China. As the ACWF acts as a medium between women and the state, the study of the ACWF helps bring together state policy and women's lived experiences, especially women's participation in politics, thus shedding light on the organizational relationship between the CCP and women. Moreover, this approach puts women back in the center of analysis by treating them not as passive recipients of state policy, but as active agents interacting with the party/state through the ACWF and other organizations. I think there is a dialectical relationship between women and the state. To place the ACWF in the center of analysis allows us to reveal the connection and conflict between the women's movement and the larger socialist movement more fully and in more concrete terms.

Second, I hope to further study of the women's movement in contemporary China as a process and in context. We must "look at the liberation of women in any society as a process in which the goals are not predefined but are invented through the process" (quoted from Record and Record, 1976:404).

Moreover, as the ACWF is the major national organization mobilizing women to participate in activities and a central source for shaping and disseminating state ideology on women, a systematic study of the ACWF helps reveal the three major aspects a women's movement shares with other social movements -- shared ideology, organization, and organized activities.

Finally, I want to engage important issues in feminist studies about women and women's movements. The research will provide another opportunity to examine the mixed legacy of the CCP's approach to the woman question, to assess the effect of a party-led and hierarchically managed organization for the women's movement, and explore the specific route and characteristics of the women's movement in China. This will add to current scholarly debates on the women's movement in socialist states and raise new questions for further inquiry.

3. Research focus

This study is a historical analysis of the ACWF, documenting changes in its organizational goals, structure, operation, activities and perception of the woman question within the context of broader political, economic and social changes taking place in the country. The post-1949 history of the women's movement and development of the ACWF will be examined in three periods:

1. the high tide of the women's movement, establishment and consolidation of the ACWF: 1949-1956;

2. Setbacks in women's movement, bureaucratization, radicalism, disruption, and restoration of the ACWF: 1957-1978; and

3. The emergence of the women's movement from below, transformation and change of the ACWF: 1979-1993.

The analysis focuses on four major topics.

1. The changing structure and functions of the ACWF

The study will show that the ACWF was not a monolithic organization with a fixed organizational structure from its inception. It has gone through changes, from a more autonomous coalition of women's organizations in the early 1950s to mainly a political tool of the Party in the early 1960s, and then in the late 1980s and 1990s to its more independent identity as a women's group. Its dual status is both its strength and its weakness. The effort to meet the competing demands coming from its dual mission was the central source of tension manifested in different forms in different periods.

2. The women's movement in contemporary China: agenda, characteristics, and challenges

A major characteristic of the women's movement in modern China was the close connection between the women's movement and national political movements and the subsequent incorporation of the former into the latter. The CCP's influence on the women's movement at the national level started to be felt in the 1940s under the specific circumstance of women responding to the CCP's patriotic

messages during the anti-Japanese war and building their movement around the cause of national independence and liberation. The ACWF, established in 1949, was an extension of such a coalition. The women's movement in the early 1950s in the newly founded People's Republic of China (PRC) was more the climax of this previous women's movement, with its goals connected to the anti-feudal, anti-imperial democratic revolution. The year 1957 marked the setback of the women's movement because, with the state's declaration of the arrival of socialism in China, ACWF leaders were pressed to switch away from leading women's continued struggle for liberation and equality to family building and service provision. The women's coalition was also damaged. The new women's movement was able to emerge only in the 1980s under the context of economic reform and political liberalization and with reappraisal and critique of the CCP's previous theory and practice on women under socialism. The women's movement in different periods had different agendas and social bases.

The women's movement in the post-1949 period had to deal with the central issue of women's relation with the state and to adopt a strategy that combined top-down and bottom up approaches. It also had to deal with tensions coming from the complicated social relations including:

- class vs gender
- women's liberation vs sexual equality
- woman work vs women's liberation

- women's collective liberation vs individual liberation
- women's strategic gender interests vs practical gender interests, and
- western feminism vs women's liberation Chinese style

3. The legacy of the CCP on the women's movement under socialism

The experiences of the ACWF and the women's movement in post-revolutionary China are a result of their interaction with the CCP. The CCP policy on women left a mixed legacy of emancipation and continued subordination. This is due to the strengths and limitations of the CCP's theory and practice on the woman question, particularly the practice of establishing mass women's organizations and doing woman-work. These two aspects are perhaps most characteristically "Chinese."

4. ACWF's future and the development of a "civil society"

The development of the women's movement needs space and its fate will continue to be closely connected to that of the country. Democracy and China's transformation to a "civil society" are imperative for the future development of the women's movement. In a brief discussion about the present day ACWF and development of intermediate structures in China, I argue that China is moving in the direction of a "civil society" and the ACWF has a role to play in that transition.

Of course, what will happen exactly to the ACWF will depend on the way society is transformed as a whole.

The research project and arguments are laid out in the following chapters. The second chapter includes a literature review of scholarship on this topic; the third chapter covers research methodology; the fourth chapter discusses the CCP's theoretical framework on women. The following five chapters focus on history, with Chapter Five on CCP's organizational relationship with women in pre-1949 China, Chapter Six on the so-called "golden age" of 1949-1956, Chapter Seven and Eight on the frustrating years of 1957-1978, and Chapter Nine on the reform era of 1979-1993. The last chapter includes the analysis and conclusion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE, THEORY, AND RESEARCH

The scholarship that frames this project was drawn mainly from three sources. First, the literature on women and the women's movement in China since 1949 indicates the gap this study fills and the unique angle it provides. Second, research on mass organizations and mass line theory and practice in China sheds light on the organizational structure and behavior of the ACWF and the political environment in which it operates. Third, comparative studies on women's movements in the third world and actually existing socialist countries¹ stress the importance of understanding the social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which women's movements are carried out as well as the unique characteristics of those movements. This is the research principle I will follow in this study to reveal the unique pattern of the contemporary women's movement in China and the specific context in which it has developed, and the role played by the ACWF.

¹ As defined by Molyneux, 1989. Of course, some of them are now "former socialist societies."

Chinese Women and the Women's Movement

A number of western scholars have written about Chinese women in the People's Republic,² and such studies have grown especially since the 1970s. The development of this scholarship was affected by the timing of the scholars' contact with China and with the women's movement at home. It went through stages, from sympathetic writing about Chinese women in the early 1970s, looking China as a model and inspiration for women's liberation, to disappointment in the late 1970s and early 1980s, criticizing the failure of China's socialism in liberating women, and most recently to the research that comes closer to reality³.

In terms of the content of the inquiry, many of these major works can be roughly grouped by where they fall on the two ends of Chinese society -- between state (and the CCP) and women. Some depicted the social condition and life experience of Chinese women in post revolutionary China. Works by Parish and Whyte (1978), Whyte and Parish (1984), Honing and

² My literature review does not include works by Chinese scholars on Chinese women. Extensive discussion on women's issues occurred in China in the early 1950s and in the reform era starting from the 1980s, but only in the reform era was there development of women's studies and active academic debate on women's issues. See Chapter III on official gender ideology in China and Chapter IX on the development of women's studies.

³ For a more detailed discussion on the trend of development of scholarship on Chinese women, see Xialan Bao, 1991, Lieberman, 1991 and discussion by Delia Davin at the "Engendering China" conference in Boston, February 1992.

Hershatter (1988), and Wolf (1985), for example, provide an illuminating description of women's living conditions in both rural and urban areas and their personal experience in contemporary China. Some focused more on changes in state policies (or ideology, or programs) and their impact on women. Research by Stacey (1983), Croll (1983), Hemmel and Sindbjerg (1984), and Davin (1991) represents the effort to document the changes in the State's development strategy and other policies and their impact on Chinese women. Following the same line, still others are interested in examining the dynamic relation between women's experiences and the large social forces shaping them. Both Stacey (1983) and Johnson (1983), for instance, looked at women and the reconstruction of rural Chinese families and social life as the result of the Chinese Revolution, while Croll's work (1978) examines the history of the Chinese women's movement -- characterized by the interaction of two social forces, the wider revolutionary movement and the separate and organized women's movement throughout this century.

As illuminating about women in China as these works are, none of them has taken the organizational relationship between the state and women as the central analytic concern. Davin's study (1976) centered around the CCP's work among women. "Woman-work," a term she coined to describe such effort, has become popular among China scholars (Croll, 1978). But her study about women and the Party in the post-revolutionary

period focused primarily on the 1950s. Thus, more research needs to be done to fill the gap left by previous studies on Chinese women and the women's movement, especially on the role and function the ACWF plays in mediating the relationship between women and the state.

In the extant literature, many scholars have included in their work a discussion of the role of the ACWF in Chinese society. In some cases, it is a brief description about the operation of the Women's Federation at the grassroots level:

Another organization in the village is the Women's Federation. All women by virtue of their sex belong, and the organization is nebulous in form -- there are no special badges, dues, or even a fixed schedule of meetings. At the Brigade level, the women's representative dedicates much of her efforts to mass agitation. At meetings on International Women's Day and at occasional meetings through the year, she agitates for planned births and family hygiene. She also encourages women to work in the fields (Parish and Whyte, 1978:39).

In other cases, the discussion involves a more elaborate description of the nature of the organization. For example, in her book on women's changing position in China, Phyllis Andors documented the variety of activities the ACWF was involved in and pointed out:

the Women's Federation has often promoted Party policies toward women in places of work or residence as it acted as a promoter of specific women's interests within the Party itself or between the Women's Federation and the CCP. It is in this broader context that the role of the Women's Federation must be viewed (1983:30).

Croll (1983), in her discussion about women in post-revolutionary China, well described the dilemma of the ACWF with its dual tasks of acting both as a separate pressure

group in defence of women's interests and as a mechanism for soliciting support for the Party and government, especially in the social context where the interests of the Party and of women are assumed to be one and the same. She pointed out that such a difficult position and the contradiction between the rhetoric of independence for the Women's Federation on the one hand, and the adherence to the Party line on the other, was perhaps best revealed in a much publicized speech by the Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee in 1980 which stated:

All the organizations of the women's Federation should bring into full play the role of women in working independently under the leadership of the Party, and according to the Party's line, principles and policies and give full play to women's merits on the basis of their specific characteristics (1983:123).

In the few discussions about the Women's Federation, the most interesting thing is perhaps the conflicting opinions scholars held about its role and function. Some believed that the Women's Federation had no importance whatsoever to the lives of Chinese women -- it was referred to by some as "a women organization that bore little meaning even for Chinese women themselves" (Bao, 1991:8). And to some scholars, it was only an arm of the Party:

Despite its feminist-sounding title it is not an organization through which women struggle for equality, but through which they are mobilized by the Communist Party. It is in fact an extension of the Party, led by top party women, whose institutional priorities are a mirror of the current party line (Mosher 1983:200, quoted in Franklin, 1989:14).

But there are also enthusiastic defenders of the ACWF:

Certainly the Federation works within the existing structures, and certainly it accepts far more than would please an ardent Western feminist, but its goals and strategies seem to be well adapted to its actual situation. Given that it works within the system, it has a solid record of achievements to its credit (Franklin, 1989:14).

In the minds of many China watchers, the ACWF has a powerless and passive image, engaging only in trivial activities assigned by the Party. Yet, there is also an opposite image portrayed by some other scholars. Tani Barlow, in discussing the shaping of funu (women) in socialist China, states:

the importance of Fulian lay in its power to subordinate and dominate all inscriptions of womanhood in official discourse. It is not that Fulian actual represented the "Interests" of women, but rather that one could not until recently be "represented" as a woman (emphasis original) without the agency and mediation of Fulian. That fact is a measure of its success and its importance (1991)⁴.

It is evident from the scattered discussions on the ACWF cited above that the inadequacy of the research on the subject and the complexity of the organization call for a more detailed and systematic study of the ACWF, so it can help provide a rounded picture of the organization and find out its place in women's lives and in the women's movement in China. This is the gap this project aims to fill.

It should also be noted, however, that these previous studies about women in China that have laid the foundation for this project. China scholars' observation and analyses about

⁴ For a discussion that presents a similar view of Fulian's role, see Lydia Liu, 1991.

Chinese Revolution and women, for example, about state economic development strategy and its impact on women (Andors, 1983, Croll, 1983, Leader, 1973), women and the family (Stacey, 1983, Johnson, 1983, Parish and Whyte, 1978), socialization of women and sexuality (Honing and Hershatter, 1988), tension between larger revolutionary goals and feminist pursuit (Croll, 1978, Stacey, 1983, Wolf, 1985), and relationship between women and the CCP (Davin, 1976, Stranahan, 1983, Johnson, 1983), will be drawn upon when I document and analyze the ACWF's policies and its activities in these areas. Woman-work, the term Davin created to refer to work among women, will be used in this project. As pointed out by Davin, the term has a rich content of ideology and practice of CCP's contact with women. Davin explained that she used the term "woman-work" for the Chinese funu gongzuo, for it seems more preferable to the usual but misleading translation "women's work." The term covers all sorts of activities among women, including mobilizing them for revolutionary struggle, production, literacy and hygiene campaigns, social reform, and so on (Davin, 1976:17). Croll also agreed that woman-work is a popular term describing the education and organization of women for struggle within their own and the wider revolutionary movement. Women's work is reserved for reference to work or occupations to which women are traditionally confined (Croll, 1978:3). In a word, these

previous studies have made possible this research, which has a more specific angle but touches on a wide range of issues.

Mass Organizations and Chinese Society

Although the CCP stresses the importance of a national women's organization such as the ACWF in supporting the development of the women's movement in China, the ACWF is not the sole product of the CCP's policy on the "woman question." It is also the result of the CCP's idea on how society should be organized and the way social transformation should be carried out. In this sense, "the story of Communist China to this day is still one of organization" (Schurmann, 1968:11).

In the newly founded PRC, the three major political institutions were the CCP, the People's Liberation Army, and the State. They were the center of political power, connected to society by a fourth element -- "mass organizations" -- organizations with large memberships and devoted to the political mobilization of their members and the population at large.⁵ They were used as means through which the CCP attempted to extend its reach to broader segments of the populace.

⁵ This definition comes from James Townsend, who gave a more detailed description of different kinds of "mass organizations" (1969). For the purpose of this discussion, the term is used to refer to the three organizations mentioned above. For other definitions of mass organizations, see Barnett, 1951, Hinton, 1973, Tang, 1957, Dittmen, 1979, Blecherm, 1986, and Benewick and Wingrove, 1988.

As in other societies, intermediary structures such as mass organizations in China provide a vantage point for examining interactions between the political center and the masses. What is special about mass organizations in China is that they are not independent structures but a creation of the CCP. Thus, the three major mass organizations -- the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL) and the ACWF -- share much in common. For example, major decisions about mass organizations are made by the Party; the timing of the congresses of these organizations (see Table 2.1.) and the recruitment of their leaders (Wilson, 1979) are all similar.

Townsend (1969) pointed out four common characteristics of these:

First, they are all firmly controlled and supervised by the CCP. This is done through placement of Party members and non-Party activists in leading positions and the governmental regulation of registrations.

Second, they all proclaim "democratic centralism" as their guiding principle. Of the two parts in this concept, the emphasis is on the latter:

As is the case in state and Party structure, "centralism" (minority submission to majority, and lower levels obeying higher levels) is much more conspicuous than "democracy" (regular convening of congresses at all levels and free discussion before decisions are reached). All major decisions are made at the top, and higher levels can review and revoke the decisions of the lower level (Townsend, 1969:153).

Table 2.1
National Congresses of the 3 Major Mass Organizations:
1949-1993

Years	All-China Women's Federation	All-China Federation of Trade Unions	Chinese Communist Youth League
1948-1956	4, 1949, 1st	6, 1948; 6th	4, 1949; 6th
	4, 1953, 2nd	5, 1953; 7th	6, 1953; 7th
1957-1978	9, 1957; 3rd	12, 1957; 8th	5, 1957; 8th
			6, 1964; 9th
	3, 1968, ceased operation	1, 1967, ceased operation	1, 1967, ceased operation
	9, 1978, 4th	10, 1978, 9th	10, 1978; 10th
1983-1993	9, 1983; 5th	10, 1983; 10th	12, 1983; 11th
	9, 1988; 6th	10, 1988; 11th	5, 1988; 12th
	9, 1993; 7th	10, 1993; 12th	5, 1993; 13th

Third, they all share a well-developed basic level organization to encourage maximum participation and obedience to higher directives by individual members and to develop as many activists as possible.

Finally, all perform the same general function in the Chinese political system, acting as the Party's "transmission belts," the "essential ties with which the Party links itself to the masses" (Townsend, 1969:153-154). This means they were given two overarching missions: to carry out Party dictates regarding mass mobilization, and to support the interests of their mass memberships (Wilson, 1979).

In this study, I show how the ACWF exhibited these characters. In examining the dual function of the ACWF, I borrow the "welfare vs mobilization" paradigm Wilson (1979) used in her study. According to Wilson, the ACWF has two organizational goals: welfare and mobilization. She defined "welfare" as a goal the ACWF adopted to advocate benefits for women in general and/or the mass membership of the Women's Federation, while "mobilization" was used to extol women to participate in collective tasks approved by the Party (1979). I modify Wilson's paradigm, substituting representation for welfare. Representation is a higher organizational goal than welfare (even though, in the Chinese official rhetoric, it does not mean exactly the same thing as it does in Western parliamentary democracy), and it naturally includes fostering members' welfare and interests. Further, the ACWF itself

specified the representation as one of its objectives in some of its constitutions.

How well a mass organization such as the ACWF can perform its representative function as prescribed on paper is an empirical issue this research considers. In theory and practice, the Chinese style of political participation emphasizes Party leadership, the supremacy of the collective interest, and the mass line principle.⁶ Thus, the goal of mobilization takes unquestionable precedence over representation, and make political participation quite different from that under the Western democratic style, although both have in common a claim to provide representation of popular interests and a demand for extensive popular participation in political life.⁷ These differences have to be kept in mind when we examine the ACWF.

Consider the supremacy of the collective interest for example. When the CCP speaks for the collective interest, it means not only the total interests of the "people," but also the interest of the state, which is said to represent the people's interest through the dictatorship of the proletariat. No individual is allowed to compete with this highest order of interest, because, according to Party theory, "personal interests are indivisible from the public interest of the

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the principles of CCP's style of political participation, see Townsend, 1969:65.

⁷ For a discussion of the differences between the two systems, see Townsend, 1969:3-4.

country and society ... they are one and the same" (Liu Shao-ch'i, 1955, quoted in Townsend, 1969:68). Thus,

[t]he most that the CCP concedes is that "partial and temporary interests" of the masses may come into conflict with their "total, long-range interests." When this happened, the Party states flatly, the former must be subordinated to the latter (Townsend, 1969:68).

Such an approach eliminated the possibility that a mass organization such as the ACWF would claim women's interests were incompatible with that of the Party and the state and would oppose a Party policy even if it did see conflict of interest. Having said that, I will show below that, on some occasions, the ACWF did take its own stand. Moreover, in the reform era, there is also increased recognition of individual interests although collective interest continues to hold supremacy when the two are in conflict.

The mass line theory and approach has a great impact on the organizational behavior of the ACWF. The mass line is described as a fundamental political and organizational line of the CCP. It is viewed as presenting two propositions to guide Party work: a general statement of Party's dependence on the masses and the need for constant contact with them; and a more specific statement on the correct method of exercising Party leadership. It demands extensive mass participation in the political process, but unlike the western democratic style, which is defined as exerting popular influence on political decision, this participation is designed to produce popular execution of the Party policy. The mass line blurs

the distinction between governmental and nongovernmental activity by using state organs, propaganda media, mass organizations to secure popular acceptance and execution of Party objectives (Townsend, 1969). Later discussion will show how this blurring allowed the ACWF to acquire a semi-official and semi-popular status. I will argue that this actually affected the way the ACWF functioned in Chinese society.

Although the details of the structure of the Chinese political and social system and mass organizations are not the major focus of this study, these aspects provide background information about what Jancar (1978) calls the "political environment" in which the ACWF operates. It shaped the course of the ACWF's development and will continue to influence the direction of its future change.

On this note, it is helpful to look at the tradition of state-society relationship in China. Martin King Whyte (1991) compared politics in traditional China and that of the PRC and argued that despite the CCP's dramatic effort to transform the relationship between state and society after it took power in 1949, there was no fundamental change in the way such a relationship was perceived because both perspectives believe the

state should dominate society and should coopt, replace, or control grass-roots social groups to prevent autonomous forms of social life and culture from emerging and gaining influence (1991:260).

Thus, Whyte argued that the CCP adopted a combination of Soviet and traditional Chinese organizational ideas and

measures, including setting up Soviet-style "transmission belt" organizations to assist the CCP in establishing state dominance and control. In his words,

The term transmission belt, drawn from the Soviet literature, conveys the idea that the primary goals of these organizations involved transmitting the policies of the party to selected subgroups of society, rather than serving the interests of those subgroups and pressuring the party (1991:272).

In a word, in both the traditional and CCP conception of the state-society relationship:

there is no place for ideas dear to Western liberal tradition -- the individual pursuit of self-interest as a good in itself, the "market place of ideas" as a source of social dynamism, or politics as centered on the competition among autonomous interest groups (1991:256).

Whyte's discussion is interesting because it raises the question of whether a mass organization such as the ACWF is just a means for the state to exert control over the very constituency that the organization is supposed to serve. My study will explore this question. His discussion also suggests a fundamental difference between the Chinese society and western society. If the women's movement is a product of the society it emerges from (that is, in China's case, a society where there is a lack of conception of autonomous individuals, self-conscious interest groups, and competing ideas and values -- conditions crucial for the development of the feminist movement in Western societies), can there be a women's movement at all? And if there is, how did it start and what were the social forces that pushed it forward? What were its characteristics and strategies for struggle? This

area of inquiry leads us to look at the specificity of the women's movement in the Third World and actually existing socialist countries to see some of the commonalities that China, as both a developing country and a socialist state, shares with its counterparts.

Women's movements in the Third World and Socialist Countries

Studies on women and the women's movement in non-Western societies exist in the West. In recent years, criticism has been raised on the limitation of such studies. On studies of the Third World women, some scholars argue that:

Unlike the history of Western (white, middle-class) feminism, which has been explored in great detail over the last decades, histories of Third World women's engagement with feminism are in short supply (Mohanty, 1991:3).⁸

It is further pointed out that many people in the Third World are not aware that their countries have a history of active feminism, or that early movements for women's emancipation were supported both by women and men reformers existed. In the West, too, there is a Eurocentric view that the movement for women's liberation is not indigenous to Asia or Africa, but has been a purely Western European and North American phenomenon, and that where movements for women's emancipation

⁸ It is recognized that there exists a large body of work on "women in developing countries" or women in liberation movements, or on the role and status of women in individual cultures, but this scholarship, it is said, does not necessarily engage feminist questions or feminist historiography (Mohanty, 1991).

or feminist struggles have arisen in the Third World, they have been merely imitative of Western models (Jayawardena, 1986).

Studies of existing socialist societies, in contrast, are criticized for the way in which they were conducted. For example, one criticism of some studies of Chinese women argues:

By portraying women in non-western societies as identical and interchangeable, and more exploited than women in the dominant capitalist societies, liberal and socialist feminists alike encode a belief in their own cultural superiority.... For instance, studies on women in post-1949 China inevitably discuss how they are doubly exploited by the peasant family and by socialist patriarchy, reflecting the more immediate concerns of American socialist feminists than perhaps of Chinese women themselves. By using China as a "case study" of the socialist experiment with women's liberation, these works are part of a whole network of Western academic and policy-making discourses on the backwardness of the non-Western, non-modern world (Ong, 1988:85 quoted in Chow, 1991:93).

To counteract what some scholars termed "imperial feminism" -- "ways in which a particular tradition, White Eurocentric and Western, has sought to establish itself as the only legitimate feminism in current political practice" (Amos and Parmar, 1984:3)-- "Third World feminism" emerged in the United States and Third World countries. Third World feminists⁹ "recognize and analytically explore the links among the histories and struggles of the Third World women against

⁹ The term "Third World" is used here by scholars to refer to "underdeveloped/overexploited" geopolitical entities, and to refer to oppressed nationalities from these world areas who are now resident in "developed" First World countries (Johnson-Odim, 1991).

racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and monopoly capital" (Mohanty, 1991:4). They are sensitive to indigenous feminist thought and practice in developing countries and to the fact that these thoughts and practice grew under a political, social, economic and historical context that is different from that in the West.

What, then, are some of the features women's movements in the Third World have in common? And how do they compare to those in Western societies?

Studies of the women's movement in Third World countries discovered that most of Third World countries share a history of either having been directly subjected to aggression and domination by imperialist powers or indirectly manipulated into serving the interests of imperialism. It is in the context of resistance to imperialism and various forms of foreign domination on the one hand, and to feudal monarchies, exploitative local rules and traditional patriarchal and religious structures on the other, that struggles for women's emancipation were carried out and they are an essential part of national resistance movements (Jayawardena, 1986).

Third World women,¹⁰ due to their difference in sociocultural and historical locations, formulate different

¹⁰ I am fully aware that it is difficult to speak of Third World women as a singular entity. Here I am using the notion borrowed from Mohanty under the context of Third World women and the politics of feminism as "imagined community of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by the political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive but also systematic" (1991:4).

relationships to feminism. The term feminism is itself questioned by many Third World women. Yet many still refuse to give up the term feminism. Rather, they distinguish between a limited, liberal "women's rights" focus and a more productive focus on

feminism as philosophy and movement for social justice that was inclusive of their communities, in which they were equal participants, and which addressed the racism, economic exploitation and imperialism against which they continued to struggle... (because) they find that the source of their oppression cannot be limited or perhaps even primarily attributed to gender alone (Johnson-Odim, 1991:316).

Therefore, some scholars argue that there is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves (Cagatay, Grown, and Santiago, 1986, cited in Johnson-Odim, 1991:325). The priorities and strategies for struggle should be set by women according to their particular cultural and socioeconomic conditions (Johnson-Odim, 1991).

In contrast to the women's movement in western societies that is situated within a cultural context of modernity (Farganis, 1987:63), the women's movement in Third World countries takes place in modernizing societies. This means that the degree of material scarcity and the low level of productive forces seriously limit the available resources to improve the living conditions of women, and even the general populace for that matter. That is why, as Steady (1985) wrote that "in the developing world, equality of women is often viewed [by women] as linked to national and economic

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CHAPTER VI

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AT HIGH TIDE: 1949-1956

The First National Women's Congress was convened on March 24, 1949, in the ancient capital city of Beijing. The city the CCP led army just had just taken over from Guomindang troops. The civil war between the CCP and GMD had been going on for over two years and victory by the CCP was apparent. The All-China Democratic Women's Federation (ACDWF) was established at the congress. Its name reflected its central task: to "unite all women of the country" to accomplish the task of the democratic revolution -- "liberating the whole country and building a new China. " Half a year later, on October 1, Mao Zedong claimed the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The first years of the ACDWF reflected the time immediately after the revolution. China, which had been humiliated, assaulted and occupied by foreign powers since 1840, was now independent. A resumed national pride was evident in Mao's announcement on the founding of the PRC: "The Chinese people, one quarter of the human race, have now stood up!" A spirit of optimism, enthusiasm, and high hopes permeated the land.

The period was eventful. There was land reform, the Korean war, political campaigns, establishment of political

institutions, industrialization and agricultural collectivisation to develop the economy. Destruction and construction were occurring at the same time. Sweeping changes were taking place in the country and in people's lives.

For the masses of women, it was a period of progress. The attack from above to dismantle the old social order included attacks on the patriarchal family system and traditions that discriminated against women. Women, who had played a vital part in the victory of the CCP, were also crucial for the success of economic construction and social transformation of new China. Now that the people's government was in power, it would deliver on its promises to women.

Thus, in addition to the general state policies that benefitted the masses, many efforts were made directly for women, such as full legal rights, the campaign to publicize and implement the Marriage law, regulations to protect women employees, efforts to improve the health of women and children, literacy campaigns, drives to engage women in production and political activities outside home.

The ACDWF was instrumental in organizing women to participate in these programs. In the process, it also developed. By the time it held a second congress in 1953, it had already established a national network and gathered around itself a core of women cadres and activists.

Judged from women's mobilization, organization and participation in social production and public affairs and from the gains and progress they made, the period from 1949 to 1957 can be regarded as the first "high tide" of the women's movement in post-revolutionary China. This period was marked by official commitment to women's liberation. Yet, signs of contradictions between the gender interest of the women's movement and the interests of the state and the Party emerged during this honeymoon period. As the organizational structure and practices of the ACDWF formed and its place in the state and society were established, its impact on the course of the women's movement and the lives of Chinese women would become apparent only in later times. In a word, the 1949-1957 period witnessed the first drama of the women's movement in post-1949 China and set the stage for its further development. In this chapter, I will document the founding of the ACDWF, its active involvement in promoting both the causes of the state and women, and its effort to establish itself in Chinese society.

Founding of the ACDWF

The formal preparation work for the founding of the ACDWF formally began on January 12, 1949, when the Preparation Committee for the First National Congress of Women was established. The 73-member committee was made up of representatives from Women's Federations in CCP occupied

areas, various women's organizations in GMD-controlled areas and other well-known women.

The committee was initiated by the Women's Federations in the CCP occupied areas. But the decision to hold the congress and to establish the national woman's federation was made at a Politburo meeting of the CCP in September 1948 (Bangongting, 1991:1). Later, the CCP further specified the number of delegations and delegates from various regions.¹ Similar decisions were made for the convening of the first national congress of the New Democratic Youth League (Bangongting, 1991:519). These decisions reflected the CCP's belief that the key to victory lay in the organization of people. A CCP directive on woman work issued in December 20, 1948 recognized the value of a strong, separate women's organization to carry out woman-work.²

The proposal for the congress met with warm responses from women's organizations all over the country. When the congress meeting opened on March 24, 1949, 474 voting delegates and 265 non-voting delegates were present (Ren,1989). The agenda included reports on issues concerning the women's movement, and, on the last day of the meeting,

¹ Two hundred and fifty delegates to be elected from the CCP controlled areas and about 100 from GMD-occupied areas. See "Notice on the convening of the national congress of women," December 5, 1948 in ZYDAG, vol.14:435-438.

²See CCP, 1948.

the All-China Democratic Women's Federation (ACDWF) was formally founded.

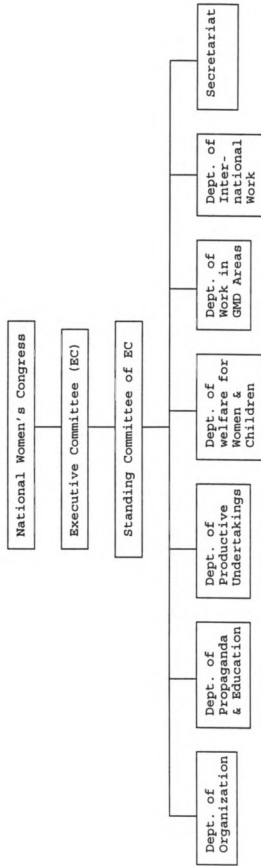
The nascent organization had a hierarchical structure, with the National Women's Congress as the lead body.³ The day-to-day business of ACDWF was handled by the Standing Committee⁴ and the seven departments under its supervision (see Figure 6.1). Of the 17 members of the Standing Committee (including the chairwoman and vice chairwomen), eight were from the CCP, the rest were from other parties⁵ and non-partisan women's organizations. He Xiangning, a veteran left-wing GMD member who led the Women's Department in the GMD during the first United Front between the two parties in 1923-1924, was elected Honorary Chairwoman. Later, Soong Chingling, widow of Dr. Sun Yet-sen, was invited by the ACDWF standing

³ It was stipulated in the organization's constitution that the National Women's Congress would decide on the principles and tasks of the federation, mend its constitution, accept new members, and hear and examine reports on the work of the Executive Committee it selected. It would convene every two years. When the National Congress was not in session, the Executive Committee would hold power. It would meet every half year, implementing the decisions of the National Congress, examining the work reports of its Standing Committee and convene the next National Congress. The Standing Committee selected by the Executive Committee was to deal with the day-to-day affairs.

⁴In the Second Constitution adopted in 1953, a secretariat was set under the leadership of the Standing Committee to be in charge of the daily routines of the Federation. That has been the case ever since.

⁵ "The other parties" refer to the so-called "democratic parties" in China. There were eight there. For a detailed discussion on these parties, see James Seymour's China's Satellite Parties. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1987.

Figure 6.1 Organizational Structure of the Central ACDWF: 1949



* At that time, neither the Women's Cadres' School nor the ACDWF journal Xin Zhongguo funu was separate unit with parallel status with the departments yet.

committee as another Honorary Chairwoman. Cai Chang, a CCP veteran, became Chairwoman. The vice chairwomen were Deng Yingchao, CCP veteran, Li Dequan (widow of General Feng Yuxiang), an educator and non-partisan women's movement leader, and Xu Guangping (widow of writer Lu Xun), a writer and newspaper editor. Although these women all had prominent husbands, they were leaders of the women's movement in their own right.

According to the constitution, the federation accepted institutional membership only. First members of the ACDWF included: the Preparatory Committee of the Women's Federation of the Liberated Areas, Women's Federations of various liberated areas, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)⁶ and Women's Friendship Associations. The last three were non-partisan women's organizations located in GMD-controlled cities.

Such a composition of leadership and membership qualified the ACDWF as a "united front organization of democratic women of all social strata and professions" as defined in its constitution (ACDWF, 1949a:24). It represented the CCP's dream of "grand unity" of the women's movement, where women joined forces for a new cause. The leadership of the ACDWF

⁶ According to my interview of a YWCA member in 1992, although Deng Yuzhi, the General Secretary of YWCA was executive member of the ACDWF at ACDWF's inception, the YWCA formally decided to join the ACDWF as an institutional member at a national enlarged YWCA Board meeting in 1951.

had worked together in the two previous united fronts. This had laid the foundation for their continued cooperation within the ACDWF.⁷

But the alliance was also new -- led and shaped by the CCP. The organization acknowledged the leadership of the CCP and announced whole-hearted support for the CCP policies. The Women's Movement Committee of the Central CCP, then headed by ACDWF Chairwoman Cai Chang, was in charge of CCP's woman work.

Within the ACDWF, as in other mass organizations, there were CCP branches at levels where there were enough Party members to form a CCP group; the highest was the Leading Party Members' Group (Party Committee in a state organization, or ministerial level, called dang zu) of the central ACDWF. The ACDWF claimed to follow the organizational principle of the CCP -- "the principle of democratic centralism" in its constitution (HUIBIAN, II:25). The CCP also exerted influence on the organizational goals, practice and ideology of the ACDWF. Thus, the ACDWF's aims were:

⁷ Take the 22-member Executive Committee of the ACDWF as an example. Both Deng Yingchao and Cai Chang worked under He Xiangning in the Women's Department of GMD during 1923-1924. During the anti-Japanese war alliance between the two parties, the transformed Women's Guiding Committee in 1938 under the leadership of Madam Chiang included non-partisan women advocates Li Dequan, and CCP member Deng Yingchao, Kang Keking, and Chao Mengjun, as well as Salvation Party member Shen Zijiu (these were all executive members of the ACDWF). The Shanghai Women's Salvation Society formed in 1935 and included Shi Liang, Shen Zijiu, Hu Ziyang, Du Huijun, and Luo Qiong. The Association of Shanghai Salvation in 1936 included Soong Chingling, He Xiangning, Shi Liang, Chao Mengjun who became executive members of the ACDWF (Qing et al, 1989,:110).

to unite the broad masses of women from all strata and nationalities, together with all people of China, to thoroughly oppose imperialism, destroy feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism and build a united, democratic people's republic, and also to make great effort to fight for the abolition of all traditional and feudal customs that are against women, to protect women's interests and children's welfare, actively organize women to participate in construction of all kinds so as to achieve equality between men and women and achieve women's liberation (ACDWF, 1949a:24).

It is obvious from this statement that the ACDWF identified a dual mission for itself -- to work for both the national interests and the interests of women. The relationship between the two causes was also clearly defined - - to strive for women's equality and liberation by way of organizing women to participate in social construction which was perceived as subsuming women's causes.

In the months following its establishment, the ACDWF continued to mobilize women to support CCP's war with the GMD troops to take state power (Ren, 1989). It also tried to expand. Women's congresses at different levels were convened to set up ACDWF branches or Preparatory Committees of the ACDWF. In July 1949, it started its official journal Xin Zhongguo Funu (XZGFN) (Women of New China).⁸ In August, it took over the former Women's Vocational School of Hebei Province and turned it into ACDWF's school for training women cadres. It was preparing for the enormous tasks it was to

⁸ It changed its name to Zhongguo funu (Women of China) in 1956.

face in the new PRC state which would be established in six months.

"Opposing Feudalism Thoroughly:" 1949-1952

The newly founded state faced the unfinished tasks of a "democratic revolution:" destroying the old feudal system, establishing new political institutions, and restoring a national economy on the brink of collapse. Feudalism was the main target. The goal of "combating feudalism thoroughly" included an attack on patriarchal relations in the family as well as traditional marriage and other customs that discriminated against women. Thus, women's liberation was on the state agenda in explicit and implicit ways and, as a result, the ACDWF actively supported the state agenda as it worked to develop itself and its initiatives.

Compatibility of State and Women's Interests

The early state policies allowed compatibility of the interests of women and the state. The founding of the PRC led to a series of laws to provide legal rights to women, including: the Common Program (1949), the basic law of development that gave women equal rights with men in all aspects of life; the Marriage Law (1950) that allowed women freedom in marriage and mate choice and equality within the family, the Land Law of 1950 which guaranteed women the right to own property; "Regulations on Labor Protection" (1951)

which stipulated that both sexes should enjoy the same benefits and that women workers would enjoy maternity leave with pay; and the "Law of Election" (1953) that guaranteed women the same rights as men to elect and to be elected as delegates to the Congress. The ACDWF participated in the drafting and implementation of these laws.

In addition to these changes directed at women, there were other events which took place during this period that were not designed for women only, but which women benefitted from nonetheless. Land reform and the efforts to involve women in social production were two such reforms. Moreover, in the process of mobilizing women to participate in these events, women were organized and gained access to public affairs.

land reform

Two significant campaigns -- marriage reform and land reform -- began at about the same time at the national level (the Land Law was publicized a month later than the marriage law in 1950). Yet the Marriage Law did not receive as much publicity as the land reform until early 1953 with the Marriage Law Publicity Campaign. Some scholars speculated that marriage reform was postponed, or downplayed or hindered by land reform activities in many areas during the early months (Wolf, 1983:18, Johnson, 1983:102, and 115) because it was not a class issue. As a matter of fact, CCP leaders and the marriage reform advocates put marriage reform behind land reform, because land reform was regarded as creating the

necessary conditions for the implementation of the marriage law.

ACDWF Vice Chairwoman Deng Yingchao wrote about the relationship between land reform and woman-work, between the women's movement and the peasants' movement as early as 1947. She cautiously pushed for attention to be paid to solve women's problems in land reform and other movements and opposed the practice of mobilizing men first and women second, of treating men as the major force and women as auxiliary in land reform, or, even worse, excluding women from the process because women were backward or difficult to mobilize. She supported the slogan "mobilizing men and women together" (Deng, 1947). Though it sounded strange as a slogan put forward by a women's organization, it became a principle promoted by the ACDWF cadres in the early years of the PRC and as a way to include women in various social and political processes.

The inclusion of women in land reform was a central task of the CCP Women's Movement Committee and the ACDWF. The ACDWF sent two thirds of its headquarters cadres to join land reform work teams. As only a small number of women cadres got onto the work teams, the ACDWF ran articles, gave talks and sent out notifications to call on all work teams to incorporate woman work on their agendas. It also coached male work team members on how to conduct work among women. The tasks specified by the ACDWF included publicizing that women

had the right to own and freely dispose of land. The slogan was renren you mingzi, gege you chanquan -- "everybody has her name (on the deed), everyone has the right to property" (Dangdai, 1989). In fact women generally did not have their own deeds for their land, instead women only had their names written on the family deed and would experience obstacles in trying to transfer their land, but just having legal land ownership had a positive psychological effect on women.⁹

Land reform provided the first opportunity for the mobilization and organization of women in new CCP-controlled areas. Mobilization occurred through zhagen chuanlian (taking roots and establishing ties) where women cadres on land reform work teams went to poor peasant households, talked to young women and encouraged them to go out and participate in activities. Sometimes, work team members had to persuade the young woman's mother-in-law first. These activists would then mobilize more women. This top-down method, tested in the CCP-controlled areas before 1949, proved effective. By 1951, one third of the four larger administrative regions' women had joined the local Peasants' Associations (Dangdai, 1989:8).

Once women were organized, separate women's organizations were created, mainly in the form of Women's Federations or Women's Delegate Meetings, depending on the administrative level. In Jiangxi, Women's Federations were established in the

⁹ See Johnson, 1983:108.

79 counties that had carried out land reform. Before land reform, Women's Delegate Meetings of Guangxi Province had contact with 440,000 women; after reform, the number increased to 1.3 million. The majority of the cadres staffing local Women's Federations were land reform activists. This laid the foundation for future woman-work. The most outstanding women activists were also elected to take leading positions at region, county, township and village levels. In Shandong province, 20% of women cadres in these positions were land reform activists. They became the first women cadres in new China (Liu, 1991).

Mobilized women proved to be an important force in land reform. It was reported that about half of the people who spoke against landlords at public mass meetings were women.¹⁰ Women were also active in land measurement and distribution and other activities. Women's participation contributed to the success of land reform. Land reform, in turn, also provided opportunity for women to actualize their property rights and to organize themselves and attend public affairs. Land reform was believed to have created more favorable conditions and paved the way for marriage reform, since in

¹⁰ For example, women comprised 52% of the 1,200 people in two districts of Kaifeng county, Henan province who "spoke bitterness" in mass meetings confronting landlords. In Guinan township of Zhongshan County, Guangdong Province, 10 meetings were held against despotic landlords and women were the initial speakers at eight of the meetings (Liu, 1989).

places where land reform was successfully carried out, implementation of the marriage law tended to go smoothly.

Engaging Women in Production outside Home

Another major task the ACDWF actively promoted was to engage urban women in production outside home. This was crucial for a state that was doing its best to rehabilitate the national economy. The ACDWF saw these as closely connected to women's interests because women comprised a large portion of the unemployed population nationwide¹¹ and because incorporating women in social production was regarded as the route to women's liberation.

The city Fulian worked together with the Urban Labor and Employment Committees and enterprises to help women find employment. Fulian branches at all levels also worked with governmental financial agencies, coops, state and privately owned factories to provide women with various kinds of work as a form of relief. Fulian opened job training classes for women and also helped women to pool funds to start whatever temporary and seasonal production that was feasible. For example, the Beijing Women's Federation enrolled over 400

¹¹ When the PRC was first founded there were 4 million unemployed. Statistics in 1952 showed that of the registered unemployed, 407,000 were male, 179,000 were female. Of the unemployed intellectuals and professionals, 45,000 were male, 36,000 were female. This did not include the people who were not employed before but were seeking employment. By the end of 1952, the number of women who registered for employment had reached 582,000, or 41.4% of the total number of people seeking employment (Dangdai, 1989).

women in training classes on cross-stitch work and established the Beijing Cross-Stitch Work Cooperative. This coop expanded into Beijing Cross-Stitch Work Mill in 1956 and became a model for local women handicraft producers (Qing et al, 1989). These and other efforts paid off. Between 1949 and 1952, 2.2 million unemployed workers and professionals found work, including women workers and housewives. The total number of women workers increased three times during this period, from 60,000 in 1949 to 1,848,000 in 1952 (Dangdai,1989).

To facilitate women working outside the home, the ACDWF worked to expand child care facilities. At the founding of the PRC, there were only 147 day-care centers in the country. In two years' time, the number jumped to 15,700 (Ren,1989), including state-run, private, and neighborhood cooperative centers. The ACDWF held its first conference on welfare work for women and children in October 1951, promoting establishment of day-care centers in factories and seasonal exchange day-care coops and other child care arrangements in the countryside. By 1952, 2,738 day-care centers were established in factories, schools and administrative units, or a 22 times increase over the 1949 number. There were also 4,346 neighborhood day-care established in large and middle sized cities. In rural areas, over 148,200 busy-season child-care centers or day-care coops were set up nation-wide, serving 850,000 children, 10 times the number of the previous year (HUIBIAN,II:174). Promoting day-care facilities

continued to be one of ACDWF's top concerns in the years to come, closely connected to its focus on mobilizing women for social production.

The recovery of the economy brought more for women than mere employment. The 1950s was the time when women entered all occupations. The first generation of women train drivers, trolley bus drivers, bricklayers, tractor drivers, managers and dispatchers, March 8th Geological Prospecting teams and women crew teams all appeared during this period. The People's liberation Army troops also had their first generation of women pilots, parachutists and tank soldiers. These women became role models and heroes for the women of the new China. Pictures of these women filled the covers of Xin Zhongguo funu and on posters. Among them were women textile workers wearing white aprons and hats. Because of the strong emphasis on heavy industry, the First Five-Year Plan did not bring as much employment to women as to men, but it did promote the textile industry and women textile workers became the most favored and honored group of women, symbolizing women's connection to the advanced production forces. Their representatives were invited to dances attended by state leaders. Hao Jianxiu, an ordinary textile worker, later became a national leader as a result of an effective working method she invented in 1951 (Si, 1989). In pictures, all the women were healthy, proud, confident, in high spirits,

representing the new image and new social role of women in China.

Working for Women's Interests and Needs

If land reform and engaging women in economic construction were state tasks that brought benefits to women, campaigns to publicize and implement the marriage law, to eliminate brothels, to improve the health of women and children, and to organize women and raise their consciousness were designed for women and affected women's situation most. The ACDWF was most active in these efforts and promoting women's interests during this period.

Marriage Reform

The contentious drafting and implementation of the PRC's first law, the Marriage law, began in 1948 when Liu Shaoqi, then Secretary of the Working Committee of the Central CCP, instructed the Women's Movement Committee to draft the law (Zhang, 1991, Liu, 1992a). Liu suggested they should use Jiangxi Central Soviet period (1931) law as a reference because it was "more thorough in opposing feudalism" than the marriage laws issued in anti-Japanese base areas and the ones being implemented in the liberated areas.¹²

¹²During the drafting of the law, the committee studied various kinds of laws and regulations, including laws and regulations on marriage previously made by the CCP, marriage laws of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and GMD National Government's Civil Code. Newly revealed information shows that the speculation of some scholars (see Meijier, 1971)

The issue that led to heated debate after the first draft was whether freedom in marriage should also include freedom to divorce. Many people, including some women cadres, strongly opposed the proposed statement that divorce should be granted when insisted upon by one party, because at the time many divorce cases were initiated by male cadres who were seeking younger and more educated women after moving to cities and being promoted to higher positions.

Deng Yingchao represented a group of women cadres who were the strongest advocates for freedom in divorce. Deng insisted that this regulation should be kept intact because women were most oppressed under the old marriage system. On her side was Shi Liang, a famous woman lawyer, then Minister of Justice. The committee sent out women cadres to rural and urban areas to investigate the issue. The result showed that young and laboring women would be the main beneficiaries of the regulation.¹³ However, by the time the draft was sent to

that CCP's regulations on marriage in base areas were not mentioned was ungrounded. The top leaders of the CCP were fully aware that their Jiangxi marriage law was more radical than the later ones.

¹³ Investigation in rural areas in three provinces and eight cities showed that of the civil cases concerning marriage, 54% in rural areas and 51-84% in cities demanded divorce or cancellation of marriage contracts. In 78% to 82% of the cases, the main reasons given for divorce was arranged, forced or purchased marriages, wife abuse, early marriage, and desertion. In 58-92% cases, divorce was initiated by women. The majority of divorce cases involved young and middle aged laboring people (Deng, 1950a:51). [The figures were calculated separately for each province and cities]

the CCP for discussion, the two sides within the drafting committee still could not reach an agreement. So both opinions were included in the first draft. Deng attached a personal note, pointing out that this regulation was made to protect women, to relieve women's suffering and to support them in their anti-feudal struggle (Liu, 1992a). Her opinion was adopted by the central CCP. The proposed regulation was included in the draft. The drafting took a year and a half to complete. It went through many revisions before it was passed by the Central People's Government on April 12, 1950 (Zhang, 1991).

The new marriage law was radical in nature ¹⁴ and since it contained regulations favorable to women and children, it was criticized by some as "one-sided" and "leaning toward women" (Zhang, 1991). Its implementation was extremely uneven, receiving strong resistance from male peasants, older women, and local cadres. By early 1951, the appalling reports of women being persecuted or even killed as they struggled for

¹⁴ The Marriage Law stated: "The feudal marriage system which is based on arbitrary and compulsory arrangements and the superiority of man over woman and ignores the children's interests shall be abolished.

The New-Democratic marriage system, which is based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy, on equal rights for both sexes and on the protection of the lawful interests of women and children, shall be put into effect.

Bigamy, concubinage, child betrothal, interference with the remarriage of widows, and the exaction of money or gifts in connection with marriage, shall be prohibited" (Meijier, 1971:300).

freedom of marriage began to appear in newspapers. According to statistics from the Mid-South region, one year after the issuance of the marriage law more than 10,000 women were killed or committed suicide. In the Eastern region, about 11,500 women died by the end of 1952 (Zuo and Ge, 1989). In Shandong Province alone, 1,245 women committed suicide in a year's time (Zhou, 1951)

In September 1951, inspection teams of personnel from agencies of the central government including the ACDWF were dispatched to inspect the implementation of the law. The month of March, 1953, was set for publicity about the law. This campaign lasted for three months and pushed the marriage reform to its climax. Under the instruction of the ACDWF, local Fulian branches usually worked on two fronts. They joined the local Marriage Law Implementation Committees to do work among women, and they used their own networks to push the campaign to reach the grassroots level in both rural and urban areas. Training and education of cadres on the spirit and regulations of the marriage law were the first focus, largely because the strong resistance to marriage reform came from local cadres, including women cadres.

The Fulian branches were very good at using all forms of media -- newspapers, magazines, pictorials, meetings, films, slides, exhibitions, etc, to publicize the law. Its Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China) carried cartoons and pictorials to support free marriage and divorce. An

exhibition run by Tianjin Fulian used pictures, charts, and real objects to explain the content of the marriage law, expose the evil of old marriage customs, and praise youngpeople's struggle against the unjust marriage arrangements, and emphasize the happiness of families offered under the new law. It was all based on real people and real incidents and thus had special appeal to its viewers. The exhibition was visited by over 150,000 people in 27 days (Zuo and Ge, 1989).

Fulian cadres and women activists also went to individual households and showed pictures and other publicity materials to household members, organized them to watch films, plays, street performance and other programs that publicized the marriage reform, and organized discussions. They also made use of village and neighborhood big-character-posters and blackboards and other means to publicize cases of free marriage in the local community. Their efforts made it possible for women who seldom left their house to learn about the new marriage law.

The formal role of the ACDWF as representative of women's interests was recognized during the marriage reform. In September 1950, the Supreme People's Court and the ACDWF jointly sent a notice to all larger administrative regions and local courts, claiming that "local Fulian should be invited to send cadres to act as a jury whenever there are hearings on marriage cases" (Bangongting, 1991:24). This ruling was made

because women had been going to local Fulian for support and mediation in their marriage disputes. Incomplete statistics from several cities showed that in a year's time, Fulian mediated 3,717 marital disputes brought to them by women (ACDWF, 1951a). The newly established jury system increased Fulian's formal role in representing women in marriage disputes ¹⁵ and proved to be beneficial for women.¹⁶

But the effectiveness of local Fulian in the jury system varied, as did the performance of local Fulian in the implementation of marriage reform in general. Some were criticized by the central Fulian as having deviated from the spirit of the marriage law in their implementation of it, overemphasizing freedom of divorce, showing indifference to the marriage law, and restricting freedom in both marriage and divorce (ACDWF, 1951a:107-111). Xin Zhangguo funu (Women of New China) reported on mishandling of marriage disputes and

¹⁵ It was reported that in the ten months since September, Beijing Fulian acted as a jury for over 40 cases, Jian city of Jiangxi for over 30 case and Qingdao for 107 cases. Shanghai Fulian joined the local court to make a circuit of the factory areas to deal with cases pertaining marriage (ACDWF, 1951a:109) .

¹⁶ For example, in the divorce case between Wang Qingshan and Duan Jinni of Yongnian County, Shandong province, the wife wanted to take the half mu of land and one-room house she received in land reform with her, the husband objected. To reconcile, the judicial officer mediated to let the husband give the wife 300 jīn of rice to compensate. The Fulian cadre felt the decision unfair, so she asked the officer to let the involved party leave and suggested he protect women's interests. As a result, the wife got the land and the house (Liu, 1989).

women's issues, even involvement in the persecution of women by Fulian cadres which resulted in the death of some women.¹⁷

Contrary to some scholars' belief that publicity for marriage reform died after the Publicity Month of March, proponents of marriage reform led by Deng Yingchao and other leaders of the ACDWF tried to keep the issues alive and on the agenda. Li Qing, deputy director of Department of Services to Women of the ACDWF, led a half-month investigation in September 1954 on women workers' marriage and families and wrote a manual on publicizing the marriage law (Bangongting, 1991). In January, 1955, the ACDWF sent out a joint notice with the Internal Ministry, Ministry of Culture and the Youth League, reminding people that the implementation of the marriage law should be treated as a daily task for a long time to come, calling on people to propagate the marriage law when organizing theatrical performances for the Spring Festival in the countryside (Bangongting, 1991).

The effort to implement the marriage law also included the elimination of prostitution. Prostitution was regarded as the

remnant of the brutish and barbarian system used by old rulers and exploiters to ruin women's spirit and bodies, insult women's moral quality, spread syphilis and gonorrhoea and thus greatly jeopardize the health of citizens (XZGFN, 1949: 39).

¹⁷ For example, see Women of New China, 1951, no.7, 1952, no.1, no.3, no.4, no.9,

Two methods were used to wipe out prostitution -- the Beijing model where the police raided all the brothels in the city simultaneously over night or the Wuhan's two-step model of first strictly limiting prostitution activities and then eliminating the trade completely. Cadres from Fulian joined people from Civil Administration organs to work with the prostitutes. They staffed the Women's Production and Education Centers set up in many cities between 1950 and 1953, organized prostitutes to participate in studies and production, and to receive medical treatment. In the end, some of the former prostitutes went to the countryside, some found employment in cities, some got married (Xiao Wen, 1957, Xiao Kan, 1950). In three years time, prostitution was eliminated (Dangdai, 1989).

For the Health of Women and Children

The ACDWF was involved in another successful effort: the promotion of women's and children's health, spearheaded by Kang Keqing (Madam Zhu De), then head of the Children's Welfare Department of the ACDWF.¹⁸

Women's and children's health was a central issue because of the high mortality rate for newborns and young children as well as the large number of women who died from difficult labor or puerperal fever, especially in the rural areas. For

¹⁸During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), she was criticized for promoting welfarism in her work during this period (Dong, 1992).

example, in 1948, in the counties of Taihang, Taiyue, Beiyue, Jizhong, Jinan, Jinsui, and Shanbei CCP-occupied areas, the average child mortality rate was ranged from 458 per thousand to 790 per thousand. Newborns made up 41% of these deaths because midwives did not understand sterilization. They did not wash their hands, and usually used broken bowls or earth ware pieces to cut umbilical cord (Kang, 1992a). Superstitions and backward midwives often cost the lives of laboring mothers, too. For example, if the placenta would not come out, the only thing the midwives could do was let the laboring woman eat burnt hair (Ren, 1989). One popular saying in the rural areas was "only seeing mothers bearing children but not hearing children calling mothers." Another saying was "Women giving birth is to have one foot inside the coffin, one foot out" (Kang, 1992a). There were no trained doctors in the countryside, only witch doctors. But even they would not show up for women's births or treat women's illnesses because these were regarded as dirty and shameful things.

Immediately after its founding, the ACDWF held the first medical training class on women's and children's health. Local Fulian also ran these classes as well as classes for midwives to learn sterilization and new methods in midwifery. By the end of 1952, over 200,000 women received such training. But that was still too few for the vast rural areas, and many women still relied on the help of mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law or themselves when giving birth. Thus, an important

object was to pass the knowledge and methods of midwifery on to women. Li Dequan, ACDWF's Vice Chairwoman and Minister of Health, was very concerned about this matter. The Ministry reached an agreement with Fulian to jointly carry out this task: the ministry would provide technical help and Fulian would be responsible for organizing women. Under this arrangement, many of the local cadres of Fulian attended the training class on the "new methods for child-delivery" and then taught it back to village women (Wang, Jie, 1991).

The Fulian cadres also disseminated knowledge and tried to change local practices harmful to women's and children's health. For example, in some places women were given only thin rice soup for three days after giving birth and were allowed only thin rice porridge for the first month because it was said that they could not digest rich food such as chicken or fish soup after giving birth. The women were so weak from starvation that they did not have the strength to walk (Kang, 1992a). There were many unscientific practices in child raising as well. For instance, in many rural places, infants would feed on mothers' breasts till they were two or three years old without taking solid food. Peasant women used various ways to wean children: they applied bitter gallbladder on mothers' breasts and wrote the character "forget" on cakes, hoping that after eating the cake, the young child would be weaned. Lack of knowledge about child raising and sanitary

habits made common diseases such as dysentery a major cause of young children's death.

The Fulian cadres used various means to advocate good practices of child raising and to disseminate knowledge about women's and children's health (Kang, 1992b).¹⁹ Xin Zhongguo funu also started a column in 1951 to help spread knowledge on women's hygiene and health.

Although a more sophisticated medical care system did not appear in the countryside until much later, these initial efforts helped address the most urgent problems women and children faced at the time. The dissemination of new midwifery techniques alone greatly reduced the infant mortality rate. According to government statistics, by 1953, about 269,000 old midwives had been retrained. Over 30,000 delivery stations, women and child health-care stations, and obstetrical hospitals had been established, and the infant death rate from tetanus had declined. In the rural areas of Heilongjiang province, for example, it dropped from 50% to 17.4%. In Luda area, such cases were virtually eliminated (Ren, 1989).

¹⁹For example, the Women's Federations organized the women in the central plain of China to carry out "three cleans" (pots and bowls, clothes and streets and courtyards), "three more" (more live babies, more grain harvest, more immunization shots) and opposing "three dirties" (latrines, corners of grain bins and underneath mats) to promote hygiene and immunization. Many local Fulian took the opportunity of Children's Day (June 1) to organize mothers' meetings and parents' meetings to discuss hygiene and new methods in child raising. In Beijing alone, in 1951, more than 1,300 mothers' meetings were held, attended by 145,000 mothers (Kang, 1951)

Raising Women's Consciousness and Increasing Political Participation

Great efforts were made to organize women and raise their consciousness. Women were organized to fanxin (turn their hearts out) and suku (speak out bitterness), that is, to talk about how they suffered and were oppressed. Activists were discovered in this process who became the core of newly established women's organizations. This consciousness raising was certainly different from consciousness raising in the West. The focus in China was to make women realize that women as a group were oppressed with other laboring people in the old society and that the new society would bring liberation. The "March Eighth Song of Women's Liberation," a song most popular among women coming out of that era, best reflects these ideas. The fact that today many women in their early 40s and older remember the song and talk about it with fond feelings indicates its popularity and impact.²⁰ It goes like this:

The old society is like a dark dried well thousand yards deep,
common people were oppressed at the bottom of the well and
women the bottom layer of all.

We could not see the sun nor the sky,
nor could we count the days, months or years.
there was no end to working like oxen and horses,
nor end to the sufferings we endured.
Who would come and save us?

Many years and many generations we had been longing for,
finally the iron tree bloomed!

²⁰ From personal interview, in Oct. 1992.

The Communist Party and Chairman Mao,
they lead our whole country to light.

Chinese people have been liberated,
the suffering masses now see the sun,
women have all become free people,
the state affairs we can also manage.

While the ACDWF put out all kinds of publicity materials, its official magazine, Xin Zhongguo funu was an important source of information and teaching materials for activists. From the very beginning, its column, "Textbook of common knowledge for women workers and peasants," informed readers about what was going on around them: current affairs at home and abroad, the functions of new political and social institutions, new laws, etc. There was also a series on the history of Chinese women's lives that described how women were oppressed since slavery. This series ended in 1951 and was followed by another series written by Luo Qiong, a CCP theorist on the woman question and Deputy Director of the Department of Propaganda and Education of the ACDWF. Luo systematically explained the orthodox Marxist-Leninist and CCP's theory on woman's oppression and the women's movement.²¹ These efforts were effective in disseminating the CCP's theory on women, which became the shared ideology for the women's movement at the time. That words such as "old feudal" (referring to whoever or whatever discriminating against women) and "women's liberation" soon became household words is

²¹ The basic arguments have been summarized in Chapter IV.

evidence of the impact of such ideology on women and on the general public.

Another major propaganda effort focused on getting women to participate in production outside home and to be independent. In addition to the emphasis discussed above, CCP and ACDWF's cadres knew from their previous experiences that organizing women around production was the most effective way to get them together for consciousness raising and to introduce them to other social activities. Thus, an important part of the ACDWF's work in rural areas was to battle against customs and ideas that prohibited women from getting out of the household to work in the field. Traditionally, women regularly worked in the field in Guangdong, Guangxi, Sichuan, Jiangxi, and Fujian provinces. In most other areas, women did auxiliary work only during busy seasons. Obstacles to women's field work were based on superstitious customs and from women themselves. Many rural women despised heavy farm work, feeling that it was a shame for women to work in the field, that only "those who have cruel fate would work in the field." Some believed in depending on husbands for support: "'marrying a man, marrying a man, getting clothes and meals.' If a woman needs to work herself, why marry?" So the Women's Federation promoted discussions on the idea that "working is glorious." Many Fujian cadres went to every household to persuade women to come out and work. They also worked in the field and taught women various kinds of farm tasks. Land reform also

helped bring women out to work. From 1950 to 1952, 60% of rural women worked in the field (Qing, et al, 1989).

The ACDWF in urban areas encouraged housewives to go out to work and to attend public activities. Mobilizing housewives and "turning the unproductive women into creators of social wealth" was one of the central tasks adopted at the First National Women's Congress (ACDWF, 1949). Associations of Housewives were established in cities, Xin Zhongguo funu also carried out discussions about "whether house management, studying, and participating in social labor can all been taken care of at the same time" (XZGFN, 1951,no.3). Some women I interviewed remember the forceful slogan of the time "changing women, holding the palm of the hand down." This meant that in the past when a woman was economically dependent on her husband, she had to hold the palm of her hand up all the time, asking for money. Now a woman should go out to work and bring money back and put it on the table -- holding the palm of her hand down. Many women were thus encouraged to take jobs outside the home and assume broader roles in society. This emphasis on productive work continued although the importance of doing housework well was also brought up from time to time, until the term Jiating funu (housewife) became a negative word coded with bad connotations. The idea that women could only be liberated through participation in productive labor also became unchallengeable in theory and practice.

Of course, these activities also represented the beginning of making women the product of the state. By 1951, there were 14 publications aimed at women readers, and 22 official newspapers with women's pages that disseminated the CCP's ideas on women (ACDWF, 1951). Xin Zhongguo funu used editorials, commentaries, discussions, and profiles of model women to influence the public discourse on women's issues.

While women's issues were the focus of ACDWF's activities, it also paid attention to the other tasks of the Party/state. Its efforts to organize women to support the "resist-America-aid-Korea" initiative (1950-1953) best demonstrated its effectiveness in mobilizing women to accomplish state goals. The scope and extent of the campaign showed what a mass organization could do. In addition to carrying out day-to-day propaganda work among women, the ACDWF helped organize large scale demonstrations. Around March 8, 1951, women in more than 300 cities, 700 counties and 600 villages held "resist-America-aid-Korea" and "protest-the-U.S.-rearming-Japan" demonstrations, attended by 10.6 million women; about one-third of adult women in these places participated in these demonstrations. In some places such as Shanghai and Nanjing, almost half of the women joined the demonstrations (ACDWF, 1951b). Rural and urban women rushed to provide war materials for the army. In 50 days, women in Jinan city alone made 350,000 army uniforms and 120,000 pairs of army shoes. The ACDWF also organized women to donate to

the war effort. With Honorary Chairwoman He Xiangning taking the lead, many women donated their jewelry. Altogether, women donated 43.3 billion Yuan (old currency) which bought 59 airplanes and 2 cannons (Dangdai, 1989:10).

The ACDWF was also involved in other activities to support the goals of the state, including encouraging women to buy state bonds and calling on women to participate in the "saving one ounce of rice" to help overcome the grain shortage of early 1950. It promoted other state policies and campaigns in its propaganda, such as "opposing counter-revolutionaries" and "three-antis" and "five antis".

Three years' effort resulted in the consolidation of power, as new laws and order were brought to the new state. On the economic front, land reform was completed. About 46 million hectares, nearly half of all the cultivated land, changed hands, involving more than 300 million peasants. The national economy recovered. The gross output of industry and agriculture was 77.5 % higher than was in 1949 (Rodzinski, 1988), surpassing the highest level reached before 1949. The PRC moved into a new stage.

The ACDWF contributed to the success of this national recovery programs. It enlisted women as key participants by linking their empowerment to the goals of the CCP in this early stage of nation building. The aims of the CCP and women's organization were generally compatible. While contradictions and questions about the degree of commitment of

the government to women's liberation were apparent in this period, glaring contradictions did not emerge until 1957.

Women and the Socialist Transformation: 1953-1956

The period followed, from 1953-1957, was the period for large scale planned economic development and reconstruction . China began its first Five-Year-Plan patterned after the Soviet model for industrialization. It also witnessed rapid socialist transformation of agriculture, industry, handicraft and commerce. The ACDWF held its Second National Women's Congress in April 1953 to review the achievements of the women's movement and to discuss the agenda of the women's movement under the new circumstances. The meeting was attended by over 916 delegates. It resolved that in this new era of reconstruction:

the central task of the women's movement is to continuously educate, mobilize and organize the broad masses of women to participate and do well in industrial and agricultural production and all aspects of construction in the country and play to the full their due function (ACDWF, 1953: 179).

Specific tasks for reaching this goal included continuously working on existing issues such as implementation and publication of the marriage law, women's and children's health and education, and promotion of women's rights and interests, and sexual equality. Shi Liang, Minister of Justice, a non-CCP member, became another vice chairwoman the

ACDWF,²² strengthening the leadership for the Publicity Month of the Marriage Law that was carried on at the time of the congress.

Issuance of the state Constitution and the Law of General Election of Delegates to the People's Congress were two major events in this period that advanced the cause of women's liberation. The constitution adopted at the first National People's Congress in September 1954 stated that

Women of the People's Republic of China shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, social and family life. The state protects marriage, family, mother and children (quoted in RMRB, editorial, 1954:199).

This passage differed slightly from the statement made in the 1949 Common Program,²³ with family life added as an aspect of equality. The emphasis also shifted from the original stress on freeing women from feudal bonds to protecting marriage and the family. In retrospect, while the CCP and ACDWF in the first four years were cautious about not alienating poor male peasants and older women, the rebellious young women standing against feudal tradition and the family

²² Together with Zhang Yun, a veteran CCP old guard in doing woman work.

²³ The Common Program stated that "The People's Republic of China shall abolish the feudal system which holds women in bondage. Women shall enjoy equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, educational and social life. Freedom of marriage for men and women shall be put into effect" (quoted in RMRB editorial, 1954:199),

were models for a time of destruction. Now the mode was reconstruction.

The two-months' nation-wide campaign to discuss the draft of the new constitution was attended by 150 million people throughout the country. The ACDWF focus at the forums was to disseminate the idea of gender equality. It also worked to get women to vote for delegates to the Congress. This became yet another occasion to get women out of the house to participate in political affairs and in consciousness raising. The mobilization was again impressive. In the 1954 national primary election, 84% of women who were eligible to vote participated. In Beijing the participation rate was as high as 98% and, in Tianjin, 95%. Over 980,000 women were elected to the People's Congress, making up 17.3% of total delegates at the primary levels. In Shanghai, women delegates took 22% of seats in the district congress and in Tianjin the proportion was 27.3%. In the second primary election of 1956, more women went out to vote, women delegates comprised 20.3% of the national delegates (Dangdai, 1989). The early period of the PRC was the time when women made big headway into leading positions. Soong Chingling was elected Vice President in the first People's Congress, and six women took leading positions at ministry level (Dangdai, 1989).

Agriculture and Handicraft Cooperatives

In addition to women's consciousness raising and political participation, the ACDWF also worked on the cooperativization of agriculture and handicrafts, as well as the transformation of industry and commerce, all the central tasks of the state.

By the end of 1952, 45.42 million, or 39.9% of total households had already joined coops (Lin, Fan and Zhang, 1989). Cooperatives became top agenda item of the CCP after Mao Zedong proposed the general line for the transitional period in mid-1953. It was adopted by the CCP Central Committee at the end of the year. The essence of the general line was to complete socialist transformation of agriculture, handicraft production and capitalist industry and commerce in the transitional period. This indicated a big shift from the development strategy adopted at the second plenary session of the Seventh Party Congress in 1947. The strategy had been to first focus on production to turn China from an agrarian society to an industrial nation and then to a socialist country. Now the goal was to transform private ownership together with the industrialization process, so as to make a direct transition to socialism (Lin, Fan and Zhang, 1989).

Opinions on appropriate strategies for the transitional period varied within the CCP and were reflected in the changes in the ACDWF's policies. In July 1954, the ACDWF issued an

instruction on woman work among rural women that reflected the state's new focus on cooperation:

In the period of state transformation, the basic tasks of woman work in rural areas are to further educate and organize the broad masses of rural women, to firmly implement the general tasks of the state in the transitional period, to gradually [emphasis mine] achieve socialist transformation of agriculture, to continuously develop agrarian productive forces, to enable the development of agriculture to suit the development of socialist industry in the country; and, on this basis, to strive for gradual (emphasis mine) realization of rural women's complete emancipation. Thus, the central task for woman work among rural women at present is to further educate and organize women to actively support and join the grand production campaign centered around cooperation (ACDWF, 1954:195)

The focus remained on developing productive forces as the conditions necessary for women's liberation. Both tasks would take a long time to achieve. After the issuing the directive, the ACDWF sent a quarter of its headquarters cadres to the countryside. Local Fulian developed their own plans to engage women in the coops. Guangxi Fulian is an example. The Fulian cadres there carried out labor contests among rural women to stress equality between men and women and the idea that "labor is glorious," to help women realize that "to attend coops and earn work points meant a step further in liberation." They also publicized the advantages of coops for women, fostered women activists and called on others to follow suit (Guangxi Fulian, 1991).

When the cooperation process suddenly speeded up in the fall of 1955 due to Mao's push, the ACDWF, like many other organizations at the time, admitted that it fell behind the

movement. It issued another directive on January 15, 1956, stressing that the cooperation movement was a "great and profound rural socialist revolutionary movement as well as a movement to achieve complete liberation for rural women" (ACDWF, 1956a:234). The focus now was to get women to join the coops and to make sure that the regulations concerning women's rights and welfare in the coops were carried out (ACDWF, 1956a:234-238). After the CCP issued "Draft 1956-1957 National Program for Agriculture," on January 23, 1956, the ACDWF issued "National Women's Draft for Realizing the 'National Program for Agriculture,'" further claiming that "realizing this program is the fundamental promise for the complete liberation of rural women and the achievement of genuine equality between men and women." Women were urged not only to join the coops, but to also move up with men to higher level Agricultural Production Cooperatives, or advanced Agricultural Production Coops (ACDWF, 1956b). In these coops, members pooled all their resources and allocated the collective income solely on the basis of labor contributions and not according to the land and tools they had contributed, thus a step further along the road to socialism. This marked a shift in ACDWF's theory and practice of women's liberation, connecting it directly to changes in ownership and regarding the process of change as much shorter and more radical.

At the advanced Agricultural Production Cooperatives established all over the country in 1957, about 60-70% rural women were engaged in farm labor, earning 25% of the total labor points earned by coop members. In many places, the seven years' goal of having each full-time woman laborer working annually for at least 120 work days in coops as recommended in the National Program for Agriculture was achieved within only one year (Gao, 1993). One of the reasons for the success in incorporating large numbers of rural women into social production was that as the level of ownership became more collectivized, a family's income became more dependent on the number of laborers participating in production, thus prompting all able-bodied family members to earn work points. Local social organization and the power of propaganda also played important roles in pressuring people to conform. The ACDWF was part of this organizational and propaganda scheme.

Some scholars have argue that the incorporation of a large numbers of women into production has improved women's status. Changes to the traditional sexual division of labor (i.e., men working outside the household and women inside) helped women gain independence and increase their value at home as they became supporters of the family. Collective labor also expanded women's social contact with the outside world and provided them with opportunities to be involved in the governance of local communities. Because of patrilocal

marriage, married women formally had little influence in the local community (Gao, 1994). This last point was especially obvious in the early years of the women's movement in the PRC. The Demonstrative Regulation on Coops required that all coops have women in leading positions which increased women's access to gain access to power.²⁴ These women received training in leadership and took a role in further organizing women and promoting change. Many years later, the ACDWF leaders still cited that period as the best time for women's political participation, demanding similar "affirmative action" policies to be made to guarantee a proportion of women delegates in the Congress.²⁵

However, as the collectivization speeded up, restrictions on free market trade and the one-sided emphasis on grain production weakened sideline production. Women's involvement in supplementary occupation declined although their

²⁴ For example, in Hebei province, statistics of 60 counties in five regions showed that of the 8,727 coops, 103 coops had women as chief directors, 7,716 had deputy women directors. This means that 89.5% of coops had women directors. There were also 10,650 women on leadership committees of coops, making up 15.2% of coop committees. Pengqing, 1956 (FNGZTX, 1956, no. 9:23-29). According to another report, in Guangxi province, 90% of the 9,997 cooperatives in the province had women directors or deputy directors. Nationwide, of the 756,000 agricultural production cooperatives, 70-80% of them had women chief or deputy directors. There were more women acting as members of coop committees or heads of production teams (Zhang, 1957).

²⁵ See discussion in Chapter IX.

participation in farming increased.²⁶ This reduced their contribution to family subsistence. The problems in implementing equal pay for equal work and labor protection measures for women working in the field, despite ACDWF's continuous work and propaganda, had not been solved. Also the burden of women's domestic labor increased now that women had to shoulder a double load. The contradictions between the state's need for women's farm labor and the ACDWF's goal of women's liberation emerged during this period as it became clear that women's new role in agricultural production occurred alongside increased domestic labor and less control over their time and activities.

Handicraft cooperatives in urban areas were carried out at the same time and went through a similar process as agriculture collectivization. A large proportion of traditional handicraft production was done by women, including garments, knitting, weaving, embroidery, cross-stitch work and applique, special crafts, dying, and printing. The ACDWF organized women into coops, fostered women activists and pushed to include women activists in coop leadership. They also helped establish woman work committees within most coops,²⁷ pushed for the introduction of piecework and the

²⁶ See Fei hio Tung, Chinese Village Close-up, for an example of decline in silk-production. I am indebted to Kay Ann Johnson for bring this material to my attention.

²⁷ Take Guangxi Province for example, woman work committees were set up in 70% of the coops.

principle of equal pay for equal work, implementation of labor protection measures and the alleviation of women workers' household burdens, especially child care.

Small producers were scattered, had backward equipment, low productivity and limited access to raw materials and markets. They experienced heavy exploitation by private merchants. Cooperation helped solve their problems in production and marketing. The Beijing Cross-stitch Mill mentioned above was one example. It became a collectively owned and state-run enterprise that provided more secure and regular employment and better benefits for small producers than when they worked individually for merchants. Unfortunately, however, some family-owned small businesses that were not incorporated into the state plan went under, women who worked in these businesses lost their autonomy. The cooperation process also moved faster than many handicraft producers wanted.²⁸ By mid-1956, 90% of all handicraft producers had joined coops (Lin, Fan and Zhang, 1989) and

²⁸ There were three forms of organized handicraft cooperatives: 1) handicraft production groups where producers organized supply and marketing; 2) supply and marketing production teams; and 3) handicraft production coops. Many producers were happy with the first two and were not quite ready to move to the third type of organization where all means of production belonged to the coops and all distribution, or a majority of it, was based on work, but were pushed to do so (Lin, Fan and Zhang, 1989).

women handicraft producers were a major part of these new coops.²⁹

Transformation of Industry and Commerce

The transformation of private industry and commerce was first mentioned in more concert terms in 1953 (Dangdai, 1988). Discussion stepped up in 1955 due to the escalation of cooperativization in agriculture. While many people in industrial and commercial circles realized that this was an irresistible trend, they were still reluctant and worried about confiscation which result in lower income and standards as well as the effect of the "capitalist" labor on the political futures of their children.

The percentage of women industrialists and merchants at the time was not known,³⁰ but the influence of women family members on industrial and commercial entrepreneurs was well documented. Some women tried to stop their husbands and children from going to meetings, some helped hide or withdraw capital from the bank. Their attitudes toward the campaign

²⁹ In Beijing, women made up 40% of the 317 handicraft coops, in Jiujiang, Jiangxi, 44%, and in Nanning of Guangxi, 56%. In Changsha of Hunan where the Xiang style embroidery was best known, the first coop appeared in 1955 with 201 members. By 1956, the 5000 Xiang embroidery producers had all joined the handicraft producers' cooperatives.

³⁰ In Guangxi province, 2,112 women industrialists and merchants, 366 women managers and 2,240 women family members were documented. The ratio of women to their male counterparts was not known (Guangxi Fulian, 1991).

proved to be vital to its outcome. There was a popular saying at the time that "a leader's speech for a day is not as effective as few words of the wife" (Dangdai, 1988). The state called on the ACDWF to mobilize these women and the ACDWF proved its ability to gain the cooperation of a specific group of women to help with state's goals.

Their general approach was to focus on the wives of industrialists and commercial entrepreneurs by organizing meetings, discussions, and conducting family visits to publicize state policies and ameliorate the women's concerns. The Housewives' Associations became very active during this period, organizing family members of industrial and commercial entrepreneurs to visit factories with joint state-private ownership. As always, a great deal of effort was made to foster activists and models, to have allied women take the lead and influence those who were not very active. Efforts were also made to draw these activists into the leadership of women's delegate meetings in the neighborhood and to Fulian at all levels.³¹

On March 29, 1956, amid the most extensive period of economic transformation when 90% of peasants and the majority of handicraft producers were collectivized and joint state-private ownership of industries was achieved cross-

³¹ For examples of local Fulian's involvement in this campaign, see Henan Fulian, 1956, Guangxi Fulian, 1991, Guo, 1991.

occupations, the ACDWF joined forces with the All-China Association of Industrial and Commercial Entrepreneurs (ACAICE) and the China Democratic National Construction Association (CDNCA) to host a national delegate meeting. This meeting was attended by well-known women capitalists, wives and family members of elite industrial and commercial entrepreneurs and tourists from Hong Kong and Macao. Deng Yingchao spoke at the meeting, encouraging the attenders to establish socialist ideas; take part in labor, political studies and social activities; do the housework well, build harmonious families, and encourage their husbands and family members to accept socialist transformation and improve production. This meeting gave a strong push to the campaign. The branch offices of the three organizations that organized the national meeting started another campaign to spread the meeting's spirit. Similar delegate meetings were held in other places following the model of the national meeting to help participants "understand the future and special role of women in industrial and commercial circles...and clarify [their] tasks and directions for making further efforts" (ACDWF, ACAICE and CDNCA, 1956:254). An ACDWF leader described this effort as mobilizing women of industrial and commercial capitalism to "bury the class to which they belonged" (liu, 1992b)

The eighth National Congress the CCP held in September 1956 pronounced that the socialist transformation had achieved fundamental victory:

in our country, the contradiction between the proletarian class and the capitalist class has basically been solved, the history of thousands years of exploiting classes has basically ended and the socialist system has been set up (Lin, Fan, and Zhang, 1989:605).

On the economic front, various targets of the first Five-year Plan were fulfilled by the end of 1956, ahead of schedule.

ACDWF: Finding a Voice and Place in Society

How did the ACDWF fare in the first seven years? This section looks specifically at the legacy of the period for the young Women's Federation. Key features of the organization were established during this period. Below I describe its membership, the dual mission, and its contacts with women outside China and with organizations within the country, especially with the CCP. These features shaped its work in this period and beyond.

Consolidation of the ACDWF

The ACDWF consolidated itself during the 1949-1956 period. The size of the organization rapidly expanded. Fulian had been set up in most provinces, cities and counties. Its network covered every part of China.

Fulian attracted many grassroots activists in rural areas and urban neighborhoods who were instrumental in bringing

CCP's policies to households and individual women. Strong connections to the grassroots laid the foundation for Fulian to become a true mass organization from which it derived its power and strength. Many Fulian activists became cadres in local government agencies and other organizations and Fulian worked hard to train its cadres.³² Thus, Fulian provided a space for women's political participation and leadership.

In order for Fulian to become a broad based organization, it shifted from the policy of recruiting individual members while retaining the women's delegate meeting. Under this system, all women had the right to vote while a small number of activists were elected as the Fulian leadership delegation. It was decided that this "most flexible and most broad form and method of women's delegate meeting should be adopted all over the country" in 1948 (Bangongting, 1991:24). As a result, the organizational base of the ACDWF was greatly expanded, since virtually all adult women were regarded as the organization's constituency. However, this practice also made the organization less cohesive than the two other mass organizations -- the Trade Union and the Youth League, which were both based on individual membership. While this

³² Fulian made arrangements to send cadres to all types of training classes. For example, 52 Fulian cadres in Guangxi province went through the 5 training classes run at the national level, 134 went to the 4 classes run by provincial CCP or Youth League cadres schools, and another 89 attended a class run by the province between 1950-1957. Altogether 275 Fulian cadres were trained. The longest class ran for a year, the shortest for 34 days (Guangxi Fulian, 1991)

structure facilitated the possibility for universal membership, it also made it hard for women to identify with the ACDWF on an individual basis. This would become an issue Fulian would confront in later years.

Formation of Dual Status

This period was also the beginning of the dual function of the ACDWF as a semi-official, semi-popular women's organization acting as an intermediary between women and the state. Since there was no formal governmental agency³³ to take charge of the crucially important element of woman work, the CCP directed resources and support to Fulian to implement such work. Early attempts on the part of the CCP to incorporate Fulian into the formal state structure reflected organizational tendencies to bureaucratize rather than strengthen connections to other women's groups. The 1950s were characterized by shifting administrative structure of the

³³ When the new state was formed in 1949, there was a Woman-work Committee within the central government (Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992), but its specific function was unclear. There was no indication that it had a higher position than the ACDWF, either, because during two major state restructuring, the ACDWF first took the names of Woman-work committees at provincial level and then made them subordinate in 1952, indicating that the ACDWF was leading Woman-work Committees at lower levels rather than being led by a similar organ within the government. Regional Women-work Committees were eliminated completely in 1954, leaving central Fulian as the actual leading body of woman-work within the country. See the following discussion about these changes.

ACDWF, especially as regards the relationship between national, regional, and local Fulian.

At the end of 1952, the ACDWF changed the names of all provincial, municipal and preparatory Fulian to Woman-work Committees, naming them the representative agencies for central Fulian in each region (ACDWF, 1952).³⁴ This change was reflected in an amendment to the ACDWF constitution passed at the Second National Women's Conference in 1953 specifying that ACDWF's organizational structure was Fulian at national, provincial and county levels and women's delegate meetings in neighborhoods. Local Fulian thus became directly subordinate to rather than a parallel organization of central Fulian. In another state administrative reshuffle in 1954, six larger administrative regions and the Woman-work Committees of the larger regions were eliminated, resulting in provincial and municipal Fulian under the direct leadership of central Fulian, strengthening Fulian's vertical network and the ACDWF's control (ACDWF, 1955).³⁵ In addition, ACDWF's

³⁴ Their tasks were to assist the central Fulian to supervise the work of local Fulian, provide timely reports, summarize work experiences, and train Fulian cadres (HUIBIAN, II:144) .

³⁵ Another directive concerning ACDWF's leadership of provincial Fulian stipulated that provincial Fulian had to submit regular work reports to central Fulian, seek guidance from central leaders on change in organizations at all levels and personnel above the bureau level. It also required each provincial Fulian to identify several "key" counties and cities which would submit annual work reports and report on ideological trends among women directly to central Fulian (ACDWF, 1955a).

chairwoman, Cai Chang, took this opportunity to have chief Fulian cadres in the larger administrative regions transferred to central Fulian, resulting in the strongest Fulian leadership yet (Su, 1990). When the state administrative structure changed again in 1956 to eliminate districts and enlarge townships, the number of paid positions of Fulian cadres increased to guarantee coverage of woman work at each level (Bangongting, 1991).

Another example of centralization of Fulian was its monopoly of the women's press and its role in the formation and dissemination of official ideology on the woman question. Beside its official organ Xin zhongguo funu (Women of New China), begun in July 20, 1949 and aimed at general women readers, the ACDWF published Funu gongzhou tongxun (FNGZTX) (Reports of woman-work) in 1951,³⁶ a reference journal for local branches and members conducting woman-work, and started another publication, Fu yun Jian kuang (Briefings of the Women's Movement) at the end of 1953, reporting significant issues and incidents concerning women and the women's movement for internal circulation among Party, state and ACDWF leaders.

³⁶ It changed its name to Funu gongzuo (Woman-Work) in 1957 and then to Zhongguo fu yun (Chinese women's movement) in 1993.

In 1956, it published Women of China ³⁷ for overseas readership.

Through these media, the ACDWF represented and passed down the "voices of the central CCP" to the general public. Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China) and Funu gongzuo tongxun (Reports on Woman-work) carried Party documents, governmental or ACDWF directives on woman-work and woman's issues. ACDWF's leaders also wrote byline articles for Party newspapers such as Renmin Ri bao (People's Daily), or wrote articles published as Party paper's editorials.³⁸ Cadres doing woman-work looked to ACDWF's journals for guidance. ACDWF's publications shaped the discourse on women's issues and indoctrinated women. On the other hand, the ACDWF was also the central source of information about Chinese women for state leaders and the media both inside and outside China since its network allowed it to collect information from the grassroots and pass it up. In December, 1953, ACDWF's Vice Chairwoman Zhang Yun who was in charge of the propaganda work of the ACDWF, wrote to leaders of the Xinhua News Agency (China's national news agency), Renmin Ri Bao (People's Daily), China's Central People's Broadcasting Station and

³⁷ Not to be confused with Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China), Women of China was run by a separate unit within the ACDWF and has different editorial policy and content.

³⁸ For example, see the RMRB editorial on March 8 of 1950 entitled "xue hao benling, zuo hao gongzuo" (master skills and do your work well) written by Deng Yingchao.

leading regional party papers, informing them that the ACDWF would send regular written briefings on the major tasks it was involved in to enhance their reportage on woman-work and women's issues. She also urged them to cooperate with local ACDWF branches so as to expand coverage on women (Bangongting, 1991).

The ACDWF's official status as a formal, authoritative women's organization was enhanced through its role in drafting and implementing laws and regulations pertaining to women; its jury function in court on marital disputes concerning women, and its work on a wide range of issues related to women and children. It offered policy suggestions to central leaders that were often passed down as instructions from the Central CCP or government to lower level Fulian or other Party and governmental organizations as guidance for work among women. It was also the sole representative of Chinese women with the outside world.

The ACDWF's official status also derived from its top leaders' interlocking positions in state and Party functions. ACDWF's Honorary Chairwoman, Soong Chingling, was Vice President of the Central People's Government, another Honorary Chairwoman, He Xiangning, was in charge of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau. ACDWF's Vice Chairwoman, Li Dequan and Shi Liang, were Minister of Public Health and Minister of Justice. ACDWF's Chairwoman, Cai Chang, was secretary of the Women's Movement Committee of the Central CCP. Vice

Chairwomen Deng Yingchao and Zhang Yun were deputy secretaries of the Women's Movement Committee. ACDWF leaders also held positions in the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The CPPCC was a broadly representative organizations of the united front acting as the provisional NPC until September 1954. After that, it played a consultative role to the NBC (See Table 6.1).

At the same time, the ACDWF also established its position as a mass organization in Chinese society, with more autonomy during this period than later. In addition to its close connection to the broad masses of women, with a large number of activists working for it at the grassroots level, it demonstrated a strong sense of self-identification as an organization representing women. For example, to encourage all Fulian cadres to actively help implement the marriage Law, Zhang Yun stressed in Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China) that Fulian was the "banner representing women's interests and a school for the broad mass of women to educate themselves and remold their minds" (Bangongting, 1991:54).

Fulian was more responsive to women's demands and problems in this period. The elimination of employment discrimination against pregnant women in 1951 was due to

Table 6.1
Interlocking Positions of Top Leaders of the ACDWF: 1949 - 1956

name	ACDWF	CCP (1949)	CPG (1949)	CPPCC (1949)	NPC (1954)
Soong Chingling	Honorary Chairwoman		Vice President		Vice Chairwoman of Standing Committee
He Xiangning	Honorary Chairwoman		Director, Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau		
Cai chang	Chairwoman	Secretary, Women's Movement Committee	Member of Government Committee		Member of Standing Committee
Deng Yingchao	Vice Chairwoman	Second Secretary, Women's Movement Committee		Member of standing committee	Member of Standing Committee
Li Dequan	Vice Chairwoman		Minister of public health	Member of Standing Committee	
Xu Guangping	Vice Chairwoman			Member of Standing Committee	Member of Standing Committee
Shi Liang*	Vice Chairwoman		Minister of Justice	Member of Standing Committee	
Zhang Yun*	Vice Chairwoman	Third Secretary, Women's Movement Committee			

* Both Shi Liang and Zhang Yun were elected as Vice Chairwomen at the Second National Congress for Women in 1953.

ACDWF's pressure.³⁹ The grievance system that allowed women to report to Fulian at all levels about their problems and to seek help was also started during this period. Xin Zhongguo funu at that time acted more like a two-way communication channel. It voiced the concerns of the masses and supervised the cadres. The "letters to the editor" column had more direct criticism and exposure of Fulian or other cadres' negligence of duty and the violation of women's interests.⁴⁰ Such criticism usually included the cadres' names, positions and the locations of their services. Such practice disappeared after 1957. Due to the lack of formal channels and a justice system in China at the time to deal with complaints against local cadres' wrongdoing, official newspapers from the political center such as Renmin Ri bao (People's Daily) could have an indirect power over the local authority.⁴¹ By exposing the wrongdoing, it put pressure on

39 From January to March 1951, of the 83 units that carried recruitment advertisements in the RMRB (People's Daily), 11 of them, i.e., 14%, stated clearly that they did not want pregnant women, causing discontent among women. Accepting the suggestion of the ACDWF, the Government Administration Council issued an instruction that prohibited such practices (HUIBIAN, II:98).

⁴⁰ An incomplete survey showed that these could be found in 1951: 4, 11 and 12, 1952, 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, and 12, 1953: 1, 3, and 4, 1955: 3 and 8, 1956, 8, 9 and 10.

⁴¹ The RMRB (People's Daily) had a sperate department handling readers complaints made in person or in writing. People who were seeking justice that they could not get at the local level would travel to Beijing to voice their grievances to the Daily which might conduct its own investigation to find out what was going on.

the local officials to solve the problems. Xin Zhongguo funu as the official organ of the ACDWF, also had this special role and power. That helped it represent women's interests which it did better during this period than the next period.

Acting as part of the state mechanism for the advocacy and representation of women's interests, the ACDWF earned women's recognition as their niangjia (the natal family) and the cadres of the ACDWF were referred to as the niangjia ren (members of the natal family). Niangjia is in opposite of pojia, the in-law's family. Under traditional patrilocal marriage customs, a newly wed young woman was a loner, a total stranger to the complicated family and kinship relations of her husband's family. In contrast, the natal family symbolized immediate bond by blood, unconditional support, and ultimate shelter. This analogy indicated the closeness and emotional connection women felt to the organization. ACDWF cadres themselves later admitted that their relations with women was closest in this period.

Contacts With Women Outside China

Between 1949-1956, the ACDWF sought to establish connections to women and women's organizations outside China. It was most successful with the International Democratic Women's Federation (IDWF). IDWF was established in 1945 with headquarters in Paris. The CCP-led Women's Federations of the Liberated Areas were accepted as an institutional member in

1945 but unable to attend any IDWF meetings until 1947 because of a GMD blockade. The ACDWF in 1949 formally applied to be a member and was accepted. Since then, it had been actively involved in the Association.⁴² ACDWF delegates emphasized independence, peace, and women's liberation at all these occasions. At a time when China was not a member of the UN, these international contacts were important to the ACDWF and to China and received a significant amount of domestic media coverage.

The ACDWF's interactions with women from other countries resembled China's contact with the rest of the world from the very beginning. Promoting relationships with Asian countries was emphasized by the new China. ACDWF leaders received official delegates from friendly neighboring countries, such as Pakistan, India, Burma, Indonesia, and Nepal. Relations with women from North Korea and Vietnam were most frequent. There were a few non-official exchanges with women from western countries, including the U.S., Great Britain and France, as well as with women from neighboring Japan.

⁴² For example, hosting two international conferences in Beijing for the IDWF (the Asian Women's delegate Conference in December 1949 and the Council Meeting of IDWF in April 1956). It also implemented IDWF's decisions, had leaders serve on the IDWF's council, and attended the large international conferences IDWF organized. For example, the International Conference on Protecting Children in Vienna in 1952, the World Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1953, the World Mothers' Conference in Lausanne in 1955 (Bangongting, 1991).

The "closest and friendliest" relations were with women from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. The Soviet Union was a particular role model for the future of China and Chinese women. Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China) was filled with reports on the Soviet Union, the lives of Soviet women, their achievements, and their leaders' discussions about women's issues. Beginning in 1952, a column entitled "Soviet Women are our models" was introduced and in November 1952, the magazine published a special edition to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the October Revolution.

A noticeable number of reviews the magazine published were about Soviet books, movies and plays, and even the column on child raising was dominated by articles written by Soviet experts.

In its contacts with the outside world, the ACDWF again revealed its dual position: representing the state and Party, its leaders received women delegates or wives of state officials from other countries and visited other countries, and as a mass organization contacting non-official organizations from other countries and making public appeals to other grassroots organizations abroad, to establish women's networks that could benefit China's women and children.

Relations With Other Mass Organizations

In China, the ACDWF worked closely with many agencies and organizations to coordinate woman-work and other state tasks.

Its closest ties were with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Chinese New Democratic Youth League.⁴³ The three organizations were strikingly similar in their organizational structure, goals and activities. Their methods of mobilization -- promoting models and cultivating activists to lead the masses in various campaigns -- were even similar. They convened their conferences at about the same times, and all strived to promote the central tasks of the Party and coordinated their efforts in doing so.⁴⁴

As a result of cross-organization coordination, division of responsibility developed in terms of each group's target population. For example, to clarify leadership relations to the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), it was decided in September 1953 that the ACDWF "contacted and directed" YWCA while the All-China Democratic Youth Federation contacted and directed YMCA.

Such a divisions of responsibility were not so simple and clear cut, especially between the ACDWF and the Trade Union in regards to women in urban areas. Questions included which

⁴³ The Peasant Association was still active during this period as a result of the land reform. It gradually disappeared with changes in Chinese politics.

⁴⁴ The activities they joined hands to organize included calling on people to save grain during the difficult time of natural disaster (1950), for support of the new marriage law (1950), to celebrate the International Women's Day on March 8 (1951), the joint statement on supporting the world peace treaty (1951) (Bangongting, 1991).

groups would organize women workers. The fact that the ACDWF's Chairwoman, Cai Chang, was heading the Women Workers' Department within the All-China Federation of Trade Unions from 1949-1956 did not help reduce the confusion. In a speech in 1949, Cai laid out the principle. She stated that as women workers were part of the working class, work among them should be taken up by the Union. But since women as a group had shared experiences and common demands and thus should be organized together, the Women Workers Committee of the Trade Unions should also join Fulian as an institutional member, the heads of the Women Workers Committees of the Unions should join the leadership of Fulian at the same level so as to bring Fulian's directives on women's issues to the Trade Union and create a partnership for woman work (Cai, 1949).

Specific articulations of the mass organizations' division of labor in reality and in paper were common between 1949-1956. For example, a 1955 work report by Vice Chairwoman Zhang Yun said that Fulian was responsible mainly for rural women, urban self-employed female handicraft producers, and other laboring women, including family members of workers scattered in common residential areas. At the same time, Fulian paid "attention to work among family members of private industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, petit vendors and other patriotic and democratic women" (Zhang, 1955:213). The Trade Union was responsible for women working in factories and families of workers living in the factory compounds. Female

students and professional women working in science, education and culture, public health, and state administration were covered by various people's organizations such as the Youth League, Students Federation, Trade Unions, Writers Federation, Scientists Federation and Party Committees within state administration (Zhang, 1955:213).

Neighborhood committees in urban areas were also competitors to Fulian. After these self-governing organizations for city residents emerged around 1955, some proposed to eliminate Women's Delegate Meetings at the neighborhood level and replace them with the neighborhood committees. This was the first time in post-1949 China that the necessity of having separate women's organizations was questioned. This was rejected by the ACDWF. ACDWF leaders stressed that separate women's organizations were needed, especially at the grassroots level. Otherwise, Fulian at the city and district levels would have no organizational network with which to contact local women (Zhang, 1955). Thus, the neighborhood-level women's Delegate Meetings existed, parallel to the neighborhood committee,⁴⁵ a structure that remains today.

⁴⁵ Women have always been the backbone of neighborhood committees. For example, in 1956, of the neighborhood groups and committees in Benxi city, women made up 90% of group leaders and over 70% of committee members respectively. Eighty percent of activists working in neighborhood organizations were housewives (FNGZTX, 1956, No.8:2).

This division of responsibility determined the social base of the ACDWF as involving laboring women with an emphasis on the grassroots and on manual laborers. Additionally, it carried out political united front work among influential non-working class women. As a result, the ACDWF laid a solid foundation among rural women and urban housewives. Its strength remained in these areas. However, its connection with women intellectuals was weak. Fulian has struggled to remedy this in the current reform period.

The establishment of organizations targeting different segments of the population allowed the CCP and the state to effectively control the population. It also resulted in what I would call "institutionalized activism." While it is important to recognize the institutionalized nature of activism that emerged from ACDWF as a reflection of its top-down organization and structure, there was true, enthusiastic activism among people, especially when the system worked. Thus, researchers need to be cautious and not treat an organization such as the ACDWF as merely tool of the state and Party that had little support from or initiative at the grassroots level. For women previously isolated and confined to their homes, these organizations provided a structure to participate in public affairs.⁴⁶ However, the consolidation

⁴⁶ Often with dual or multiple identities. For example, a young women worker could be a member of both the Union and the Youth League and also belong to Fulian.

of such a mechanism into the state apparatus also hindered the development of autonomous and alternative organizations rising from the bottom up. As a result, for many years before the reform era, these organizations were the only structures available to people. The overlapping constituencies of the Party-sponsored mass organizations also meant that the issues of "turf" were never solved completely. As later discussions will show, this tension became a constant source of conflict and competition among the organizations, especially between the ACDWF and the Trade Unions.

Relations with the CCP

The ACDWF, like all mass organizations, placed itself under the leadership of the CCP. CCP leadership was manifested in two ways, first by the direct leadership of the Women's Movement Committee of the Central CCP, and second through CCP's organizations within the ACDWF, the highest CCP branch was the Leading Party Members' Group. Several leaders, such as Cai Chang and Deng Yingchao had concurrent membership in both leading groups

On November 14, 1952, before a national meeting organized by the ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group on woman-work, Mao Zedong invited them over to talk about how to do woman-work well. He said that the role of the Women's Committee was to aid the Party. In order to do woman-work well, they must improve their method and be able to do what he

termed "yi song er cui san piping" -- first send, second push, and third criticize. That is, first send work reports to the CCP Central Committee and make suggestions. Secondly, push the Party committee to read the reports and respond. Third, if the party committee delayed responding, criticize it. He emphasized that women leaders should learn to carry out work in the name of the Party committees, i.e., sending instructions to its various local links through Party committees at various levels so as to strengthen their leadership of woman-work (Bangongting, 1991:51).

The meeting demonstrated Mao's perception of the need for the ACDWF to further the Party's cause. It also showed the kind of function and role the ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group was expected to play. In general, this meeting tells us that the ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group was encouraged to participate in the process of decision making by providing input and supervision, but was not in the position to make decisions. However, they were also given access to official channels to have their voice heard and, if they played the game right, to have their proposals accepted as policy.

Yet, this was not the first time a relationship between women's organization and the CCP was articulated. At a meeting on woman-work in liberated areas held in 1948, Deng Yingchao, then Deputy Secretary of the Women's Movement Committee (WMC) of the Central CCP, candidly talked about the relationship between her Committee and the Party leadership.

During a time when women's organizations, including Women's Movement Committees within CCP Party Committees at all levels, were growing stronger, she pointed out that the Women's Movement Committee was part of the Party committee at the same level and was not an independent organization. Its charge was to do research and make suggestions. "Many people who put a lot of hope in the Women's Movement Committee and thought that it could solve all the difficulties of women cadres did not understand how it works," she said. But she also had a positive and active approach to dealing with such relations. She said that the Women's Movement Committee should learn to direct the Party committees at lower levels to do woman-work through the Party committee at the same level as the Women's Movement Committee. It should also direct the work of lower level Women's Movement Committees through lower level Party committees while supervising and urging Party Committees at lower levels to do woman-work well. She told her audience of women cadres:

In the future, you should not fear that the Party committee (of your unit) does not tend (to woman work). Even though in their minds they do not want to, as a matter of principle, I will still write to them first and ask them to pass the letter onto you. As for whether they read it or not, I don't care. They have to pass it onto you anyway, (this is) the task that is given to them by the upper level party committee and they have to do it (Deng, 1948:463).

Instructions could be sent down in the name of the Women's Movement Committee, but Deng pointed out that it was more effective to have the higher level Party committee direct

lower level party committees. She also described effective ways to "make not technical suggestions but suggestions that have bearing on policy and points of view" ⁴⁷ and emphasized that the power of women cadres did not come from pressing others with Party decisions, but instead from self-criticism and speaking out for the masses.

These examples showed the subordinated position of woman-work within the Party, but also the efforts women made to utilize legitimate channels to elicit Party support and accomplish their goals. The ACDWF, under the leadership of the ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group, had to submit itself to the control of the CCP, but in this way it was also incorporated into the formal structure and its leaders could assert their influence, however minor, on state policy on women through deft maneuvering of the system. As a matter of fact, it was not rare that reports by the ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group were transmitted by the Central Committee of

⁴⁷ Deng cited how she promoted the importance of woman work at the national land conference. She said that at first she did not make any speeches, but collected materials and went to every delegation to encourage them to speak out. As a result, 19 out of 29 delegates spoke about woman work. She later suggested all the leading cadres provide guidance for woman work. She said by the time she spoke last, what she had to say had already been mentioned. "It was better that it was them and not me who talked about it. If I had spoken from the very beginning, they would have said 'because you specialize in woman-work you talk about it whenever you open up your mouth!' At that time, I did not mainly talk about woman-work, but about land reform, as long as land reform was carried out well, so would woman-work" (Deng, 1948).

the CCP throughout the country as guidance in policy making and woman-work.⁴⁸

One incident in this period that had crucial implications for the relationship between mass organizations such as the ACDWF and the Party was the debate within the Trade Unions on union work and its function under the new People's Democratic Dictatorship system. This was a new challenge in theory and practice for union activists in the PRC.⁴⁹ Li Lisan, then head of the Union, and Deng Zihui, Third Party Secretary of the CCP's Central and South Bureau in charge of union work in the region, argued that under the new system, there still existed internal contradictions between the interests of state-owned enterprises and workers. Thus, the Trade Unions should mediate between the two to prevent conflict and to protect workers' interests. While acknowledging Party leadership over the Union, they also argued that the Party should respect union independence and the democratic system. They criticized

⁴⁸ For example, the "Report Asking for Instruction on Fulian Organizations at the County Level and Below" in 1958 was drafted by the ACDWF Leading Party Members and was transmitted to Party committees at the county level saying that the CCP central committee agreed with report that it was not appropriate to eliminate Fulian above the county level (HUIBIAN, II:367). The ACDWF Leading Party Members' Group's reports on important meetings of the ACDWF and their decisions on key points for work in coming years were often transmitted to all provinces and central civil and military organs as guidance for making local plans on woman work (see HUIBIAN, II).

⁴⁹ For more detailed description of the incident and the Trade Union, see Wang and Xiong, 1990, Zuzhibu, 1992.

the fact that after 1949, trade unions in some state-owned factories had become an "appendage" or "tail" of the enterprises. Their opinions won support from Liu Shaoqi, then Honorary President of the Trade Union, and one of the major leaders of the CCP. Opposed to this position were Gao Gang, Party Secretary of the Northeast Bureau and ultra-leftist Party theorist Chen Boda. They insisted that there was no contradiction between state-owned enterprises and workers.

The debate ended abruptly with the reshuffling of the ACFTU Leading Party Members' Committee before it held its first enlarged meeting at the end of 1951. The meeting criticized former Union leader Li Lisan. He was allegedly committed to "narrow economism" (meaning excessive emphasis on the daily interests of workers) in his principle of union work, made a "serious mistake of unionism" (in terms of party-union relations) and was charged with "subjectivism, formalism and arbitrary rule as by a patriarch" in his working style. Twenty-nine years later at a funeral held by the central CCP for Li Lisan, it was announced that he made a great contribution to the workers' movement and his reputation should be rehabilitated. The next year, the ACFTU Leading Party Members' Committee admitted that the allegations against Li Lisan in 1951 were wrong (Wang and Xiong, 1990). But it came too late. The mistaken criticism of Li Lisan abruptly ended a budding debate on the position, nature, function and rights of the Trade Union in the new historical and social

context and indicated the first setback to the workers' movement in contemporary China. The implications were grave.

As observed by some union scholars:

After this incident, the "leftist" tendency in guiding principles of the workers' movement and union work became more and more rampant. The two labels this meeting put on Li Lisan -- "economism" and "unionism" -- for a long time became two knives hanging over the heads of the broad number of people doing union work, causing confusion in ideology and policy. It not only hurt the initiative and creativity of the people doing union work to a great extent, but also reduced the Trade Union's function of protecting workers interests and resulted in the declining of the Union's reputation among workers and caused quite a bit of damage to the Party-worker relationship (Wang and Xiong, 1990).

This must have also been a chilly lesson to the leaders of the ACDWF. I did not find any written documents that indicated their direct response to this incident. The fact that the ACDWF Chairman Cai Chang was head of the Women Workers' Committee of the central Trade Union and that her husband, Li Fuchun, was sent by the central CCP to chair the 1951 meeting criticizing Li Lisan was ample evidence that the incident could not have gone unnoticed by the ACDWF. It touched on the very sensitive issue of the relationship between women's interests and interests of the larger revolutionary cause and between the Party and the women's organizations -- issues the women's movement had been struggled with. Back in 1943 in Yanan, Cai Chang criticized Ding Ling and others as holding "one sided 'funuzhuyi' (womenism or feminism, quotation marks original) and using the woman-work system to assert independence from the Party" (Cai,

1943:21). In the years that followed, this issue would frequently be raised.

Achievements and Constraints

The 1949 to 1956 period was often perceived as one of the best periods in the history of the PRC. Great progress was also made for women and the women's movement. It was not, however, without constraints.

Golden Age for the Women's Movement

ACDWF's Autonomy and Representation

The first seven years were marked by a breadth and depth in women's mobilization throughout the country. This was accomplished through ACDWF's efforts to organize women, especially rural women and urban housewives. There were more efforts to expand the vertical connections of the ACDWF, especially after the second National Congress in 1953,⁵⁰ than to strengthen its horizontal ties with other non-CCP-initiated organizations such as Women's Friendship Association, YWCA and Women's Christian Temperance Union. However, the ACDWF was

⁵⁰ The second constitution added a provision to specify that the organizational structure of the ACDWF was the national, provincial, county Fulian and township and neighborhood women's delegate meetings to give more emphasis to Fulian along the administrative lines (see Appendix A). It also removed a provision that allowed all subordinate organizations to make their own constitutions (Bangongting, 1991), indicating the organization was restricting the independence of its subordinates.

more of a federation in this period, treating all the members on a more "equal" basis, allowing them more autonomy and acting more like a "united front" and "mass" organization than in the next period. As stipulated in both the 1949 and 1953 constitutions, Fulian branches at provincial and other levels were institutional members of the ACDWF, just as other participating women's organizations. In practice, the central Fulian, local Fulian and the other organizations acted more as independent organizations in the early years. For example, a mass meeting on collecting signatures to support world peace in Beijing in May 195 was jointly organized by the ACDWF, Beijing Democratic Women's Federation, Women's Friendship Association, Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the national YWCA (Bangongting, 1991).

The autonomy of the ACDWF was also reflected in its finances. Although it had cadres on the state payroll and received financial support from the state, its first two constitutions stated that its financing came from fund raising, establishing productive enterprises⁵¹ and collecting membership fees (Bangongting, 1991:497). The collection of membership fees more accurately described the three independent organizations that were based on individual membership than that of Fulian.

⁵¹ The regulation on "conducting productive enterprise" was removed from the second constitution in 1953 and put back in 1993.

As "united front work" was emphasized in the first seven years of the "democratic revolutionary" period, it provided a favorable social environment for the ACDWF to function. The three non-CCP organizations were also very active, especially the two Christian women's organizations. Both had close connections to American religious organizations and the "anti-America-assisting Korea" campaign was a challenge to their members. Yet the two organizations stayed with that campaign as well as other major political campaigns waged during that period.

The YWCA was led by its General Secretary Deng Yuzhi who was a member of the Standing Committee of the ACDWF and member of CPPCC. The YWCA was founded in China in 1890 and in the early years of the PRC had branches in about 20 cities. It focused its efforts on education and child care. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was founded in 1925 by Liu Wang Liming who also became member of the Standing Committee of the ACDWF after 1949. Before 1958 her organization had about 600 members in three city branches who were involved in a variety of welfare activities. The Women's Friendship Association was founded in 1945 as a united front organization by progressive women to strive for peace, democracy and freedom. Historically, it had closer relations with the CCP. After 1949, it continued to work among middle and upper class intellectual and professional women. Each of these organizations were connected to a segment of women different

from newly established Fulian branches in rural areas and urban neighborhood and played a special role that could not be replaced by these Fulian branches. Deng Yingchao once admitted that women "became the positive elements within the bourgeois class, playing a very big role in pushing capitalist industrial and commercial entrepreneurs to accept transformation" (Deng, 1956:264). Deng Yuzhi and Liu Wang Liming also represented Chinese Christian groups at international meetings, enthusiastically introducing to the outside world the achievements and progress made by women and the PRC as well as religious activities in the PRC.⁵² This indicated a positive perception of the operation and position of their organizations in the PRC. In this period there was still space for them to be active.

Ideology and Self-Perception

Between 1949 and 1956, women made gains in legal rights, political participation, employment,⁵³ and education.⁵⁴

⁵² Deng attended a meeting of the World YWCA in India in the Fall of 1950 and then, violating the wishes of the World YWCA (see Honig, 1992), participated in the World Peace Conference in Warsaw in November 1950. Liu went to the 12th Delegate meeting of World Women's Christian Temperance Union held in West Germany in 1956.

⁵³ By the end of the 1952, the number of women employees in the country had increased to 1.5 million from 1949's 600,000. By the end of 1956, it reached over 3 million (Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992)

⁵⁴ Working women benefitted from the literacy campaign, winter schools, evening schools, and other literacy class. By 1956, about 4.5 million women became literate. Women who were

Women gained more freedom in marriage, improved position within the family, and in their health and hygiene. While all women's problems were far from solved, the worst forms of inequality were eliminated.

Another achievement was the establishment of a social ideology of sexual equality. Some China Scholars have noticed that in both the May Fourth Movement and during the Mao eras, there was an emphasis on the independent and dynamic role of ideology in promoting change. Kay Ann Johnson (1983:96) discussed how this enormous faith in the importance of ideas in shaping society was reflected in Mao's more "activist" approach (compared to the more orthodox Engelsian approach) which emphasized ideology, of transforming consciousness through education, political debate, and confrontation with previously accepted value systems. This transformation of consciousness targeted not only women, but also the general public. Some women I interviewed recalled that "it changed

teaching in colleges and universities as professors, lecturers and assistant lecturers increased from 2,319 in 1950 to 11,207 in 1956 (Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992). The number of women who received formal education also increased, especially after the system of grants-in-aid was established in higher education. In the Southwest region, women students comprised 32% of students in universities and colleges for professional training in 1952, the same percentage as female students in high schools (Ren, 1989).

not only a generation of women but a generation of men as well."⁵⁵

Another indicator of the greater social attention to women's issues was the number of books published about/for women. A recent study indicated that between 1949 and 1989, there were two boom periods in women's publishing and one bust period. The first boom period occurred between 1949-1960 (1956 as the peak year in terms of the percentage of books about and for women that were published) and greatly surpassed the bust period (1961-77) in both quantity and in the range of issues that were covered (see Table 6.2(a) and (b), Zhang, Yunmei, 1992).

Women in their late '40s and older that I interviewed were quick to pick the early years of the PRC as the best for women. Some women pointed to the atmosphere in which gender equality was socially desired as an impetus for their self-confidence and esteem as women. Others mentioned that they felt a real sense of being "liberated". Veteran Fulian cadres regarded this period as a golden age for Fulian, whether judged from the effectiveness of the organization, its strong

⁵⁵ One sociologist I interviewed recalled how her father could no longer bully her mother after the founding of the PRC because her mother also worked and the family lived in the house assigned to her mother. Her mother could go to her father's work unit to report on her father who would then be "educated" by his leader. She also pointed out that more men of this generation were nominated as good husbands through a public "good husbands" appraisal held in Beijing in 1992 as evidence of the impact of ideological change (personal interview, 1993).

Table 6.2a Number of Published Books on Women: 1949-1989

year	total	women	%	year	total	on women	%
1949	---**	2	---	1970	2642	18	0.681
1950	---	14	---	1971	3747	2	0.053
1951	---	29	---	1972	4188	15	0.358
1952	11779	40	0.339	1973	5658	34	0.600
1953	15520	68	0.438	1974	6684	38	0.568
1954	15318	56	0.365	1975	7752	34	0.438
1955	18573	62	0.333	1976	7352	20	0.272
1956	25439	129	0.507	1977	7374	15	0.203
1957	23758	71	0.298	1978	8941	19	0.212
1958	38739	154	0.397	1979	11136	23	0.206
1959	34859	153	0.438	1980	15669	45	0.287
1960	23227	52	0.223	1981	18776	49	0.260
1961	6039	14	0.231	1982	23957	105	0.438
1962	9687	20	0.206	1983	26573	105	0.395
1963	10868	21	0.193	1984	29346	109	0.371
1964	10891	27	0.247	1985	34106	147	0.431
1965	12566	10	0.079	1986	39152	224	0.572
1966	6967	11	0.157	1987	45164	289	0.639
1967	1539	1	0.064	1988	---	217	---
1968	2004	0	0	1989	---	320	---
1969	1907	3	0.157	total	about 700,000	about 2800	about 0.4

* According to the authors, this chart included only books published on Mainland China in Chinese, foreign languages and braille. Pictures and textbooks were not included. Nor were literary books on women written by male writers or books that had biographies for both men and women.

** no statistics available from the State Publishing Bureau.

Source: Zhang, Ru and Dong, 1992.

Table 6.2b

Types of Books on Women in the First Boom Period: 1949-1960

	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
Marx, Lenin's work	1											
ethnics								1				
women & liberation movement				3	3	1		3	3			
women in socialist & people's democratic countries								3				
Chinese women							1					
Soviet women			3	2	1	2	1					
women and women's liberation							2	4		13	5	
employment & work				2	3	2	1		4	3		1
women, society & politics					1	3	1					
love, marriage & the family	1		1		2		8	9	9	3		
movement & organizatio n		1	2		1							7
women's issues in agri-coops					1			15	3			
marriage law of PRC		3	8	5	11	3	1			2	1	
Soviet law on marriage & family		1			2	2		2				

People's Democratic country's laws on marriage & family		1										
culture & education												
text books on politics, literary							3			1	1	
women writers' works								3		1		
physical education					4		1	1	6	6	2	
women's biography		2	8	4	15	12	7	20	9	40	90	21
health, ob-gyn child-raising		6	7	24	20	31	39	68	37	85	54	23
total	2	14	29	40	68	56	62	129	71	154	153	52

Table 6.2c Types of Books on Women in Bust Period: 1961-1977

	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77
women's issues & woman-work	1			5			2						11	10	4		
criticize women's scripture														4	11		
criticize gang of four																	5
marriage law of PRC				3													
women's physical education													1		3	1	
women's biography	13	2		3	7	2			3	16	1	3		3	3		10
health, ob-gyn, child-raising		18	16	21	3	7	1			2	1	12	22	21	13	19	
total	14	20	21	27	10	11	1	0	3	18	2	15	34	38	34	20	15

Table 6.2d
Types of Books on Women in the Second Boom Period:1978-1989

	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
criticize gang of four	3											
women ethnics psychology & aesthetics			1			1	7	3		21	27	26
organizatio n & liberation movement	3			1	5	8	8	26	8	4	4	8
theoretic studies									1	1	5	2
women's sociology											5	4
development of talent										9		1
reference books										1	3	4
women's work						1			2	2		2
guidance on life									4	6	7	8
love, marriage & the family		5	4		9	14	3	11	56	56	45	87
child education at home			2		18	9	14	11		7	15	23
culture & education												
women's literacy			2		1			1			2	
women writers' works					7	4	10	14	9	7	6	4
physical education			2		2	3	1	2	1	17	1	5

law		1	18	6	20	8	13	3	5	12	11	18
women's biography	8	14	7	24	38	36	37	65	53	65	30	39
health, ob- gyn child- raising	5	3	9	18	10	21	16	9	85	81	56	89
total	19	23	45	49	10 5	10 5	10 9	14 7	22 4	28 9	21 7	32 0

leaders, or its close relations with women (Su, 1990). Lisa Rofel (1994) reported how discussions in the 1980s with the oldest cohort of women workers in a silk factory revealed their "liberation nostalgia." She pointed out that in the midst of post-Cultural Revolution cynicism about the state and about the nation, this reconstructed memory is for a past that now seems to represent an innocent idealistic moment and a oneness with the nation-state.

This is significant because the nostalgia was felt not only by middle-and-older aged women workers and cadres, but by many other people as well. Rofel (1994) observed that this liberation nostalgia was also evident in a number of memoirs written by intellectuals in the 1980s (e.g., Dai Houying and Liu Binyan). Zhu Xuefan (1980), current President of the Revolutionary Committee of GMD, also remembered this period as one of the best periods for people from non-Communist parties. He remembered how excited they were when "Long term co-existence and mutual supervision" were proposed as the principles guiding relations between the CCP and other democratic parties. It was no coincidence that the period of 1948-1957 was regarded by union scholars as the "golden age for trade unions." Union scholars pointed out that the workers' movement flourished during this period. The Party and state leadership attended to Union work, capable union cadres and activists raised the consciousness of workers and

improved their conditions and status (Wang and Xiong, 1990:152).

The Period

This chapter has identified the social and political circumstances that led to both the improved status for women and the development of a women's movement in China. Key factors include:

1) The CCP's ideological commitment to women's liberation and its practical concern to utilizing women's labor power for social transformation and production. As a result, women's issues were on the state agenda and received genuine support from the state and its representatives;

2) The general goals of the "new democratic revolution" - overthrowing the old system, addressing urgent social problems, improving people's living standards, and build an independent, prosperous and democratic country -- resulted in favorable social, economic, and political conditions for a women's movement. The emphasis on the united front and the recognition of different interests allowed more initiative from women's cadres and more input from the bottom up; and

3) CCP's theory on the women question and the reality of women were not in conflict. Class-based theory on women's liberation did not meet any serious challenge until after China claimed it had entered the socialist phase of the revolution and when internal conflict within the CCP over ways to construct socialism sharpened in 1957.

Limitations and Constraints to the Women's Movement

Constraints of Class

In this period, the ACDWF followed CCP's theory and practice on the woman question based on class. The emphasis was on fighting against the feudal system and ideology and on engaging women in social production. The idea that the more advanced the form of ownership of social production that developed in China, the more liberation for women would result also began to form. As observed by Kay Ann Johnson, other structural relationship aside from property relationships and productive economic activities were not considered. For example, Johnson pointed out that the 1950s marriage law campaigns addressed the status of women within their husbands' family, implicitly accepting the patrilineal context (1983). The discussion on the family's role in women's oppression ceased with the emphasis on protecting the family in the 1954 Constitution.

The women's movement under the CCP's leadership revealed its class nature, too. While the ACDWF was defined from the very beginning as a united front organization and the intellectual/professional women and their feminist pursuits were recognized,⁵⁶ not all of the women who struggled to make

⁵⁶ For example, Deng Yingchao had a favorable comment on women industrial and commercial entrepreneurs in 1956: "It should be admitted that they were, on the main, devoted to the protection and construction of national industry and commerce. In that society at the time they had the aspirations to demand individual economic independence and

their own enterprises or careers before 1949 made it into the "united front" category after the founding of the PRC. Some lost the enterprises or the schools they had founded and were ill treated. "Liberation" did not mean the same thing to them as it did to working class women, despite the fact that they were active in the women's movement and women's organizations and worked alongside CCP members and women from other organizations.⁵⁷ The strengthening of the ACDWF's vertical administrative network was also a sign of a bureaucratic tendency and was responsible for the decline in the ACDWF's autonomy in the years to come.

State Policy and Development Needs

The conflict between women's interests and the needs of a developmental state became manifest in the state policy on women. One example was women's employment and housework. Even though participation in social production and in socializing housework were regarded as preconditions for women's liberation and state leaders had promised at the first National Women's Congress that in the new state everyone would have a job (Zhu, 1949), it did not take long for the CCP and Fulian leaders to realize that the unemployment problem would not be resolved quickly. The national leaders of ACDWF warned

liberation. They wanted to prove that women could also accomplish some causes" (1956:264).

⁵⁷ From personal communication with Wang Zheng. See her dissertation.

its cadres in 1950 that they had to "combine the principle of making production the center of the urban women's movement with reality," realizing that organizing women in production concerned the entire country and could not be solved by Fulian cadres alone (Deng, 1950b). In 1953, Fulian leaders pointed out that it was a mistake to look down on rural women's housework and said that the "attempt to make rural women get rid of housework all at once is obviously not feasible and therefore is also absolutely mistaken and absolutely harmful" (Deng, 1953:177).

Since the capital intensive, heavy-industry centered First Five Year plan did not create as many jobs for women as were needed, there was a shift in Fulian propaganda from social production to housework. At the first meeting on woman-work in cities held in 1955, ACDWF's Vice Chairwoman Zhang Yun told Fulian cadres that "women's demand to go out of the household to participate in production and work cannot be achieved all at once" but only gradually. Thus, she stressed that housework must be viewed in a new way, as labor serving socialist construction indirectly, because:

today's housework is a kind of social work, it is to provide service to family members who are participating in social production and country building. Housewives also bear the duty of educating children to be the new people loyal to serving socialism (Zhang, 1955:211).

She encouraged women to form "correct" view toward employment and housework:

When I am needed by the family, I will take housework as my duty. When the motherland needs me to take other

occupations, I will resolutely shoulder the work given by the country. When there is work opportunity but my ability is inadequate, I will make an effort to improve myself. When I have the ability but there is no opportunity to work, I will actively strive to get (an opportunity) and patiently wait. Even though some people have no skills at all to participate in social production, so long as she does her housework well, she has fulfilled her duty to provide service for the construction of socialist motherland all the same and should not look down on herself (Zhang, 1955:212).

In 1955, to relieve the pressure and frustrations housewives felt about being unable to go out and work, Women of New China opened a discussion on "How can housewives provide better service for the construction of socialism?" In 1956, the magazine started a column called "New Types of Housewives" that focused on how housewives dealt with all kinds of issues at home. This was the first recognition of women's dual roles -- their reproductive role as mothers and wives and production roles as workers -- and emphasis on the two alternated according to the needs of the state as shaped by the varying development strategies.

The development strategies had other effects on women. Later discussion will show that the socialist transformation begun in this period confined peasants to the country and tied urban employees to their work units. This resulted in a gap in life chances between rural women and urban women.

The need to engage women in social production while being unable to socialize housework to reduce their load at home led to a double burden for women. This was a problem early on. Xin Zhongguo funu (Women of New China) ran articles and

cartoons about how women's health was ruined because some agricultural production coops called on women to "take the moon as the sun" -- i.e., to work in the field during the day and do housework at night. They also highlighted the new and risky trend of children left home unattended while women worked in the field (1956,8:4). The collectivization of commerce took away many private street vendors, breakfast stands, neighborhood shops, and other small businesses that provided convenience and services for urban women, and thus increased their domestic burden. This collectivization of commerce had the unintended consequences of increasing women's domestic labor, despite CCP rhetoric recognizing the importance of socialization of housework.

Family planning was yet another example of subordinating women's interests to state politics. According to the recollection of Kang Keqing, then head of the ACDWF's Welfare Department, when the ACDWF promoted new methods for childbirth, some women demanded family planning. Some women who already had two or three children did not want to have any more children and wanted access to abortion. Since the state policy at the time was what Mao called "let human and property both be prosperous," and since China was following the USSR's lead and encouraging more births, abortion, birth control pills and other contraceptive devices were prohibited. This resulted in a speedy increase in population, it also brought bitterness to women (Kang, 1992b). The necessity for birth

control was formally raised by the ACDWF in 1955 (ACDWF, 1955b) and the Xin Zhongguo funu began to disseminate knowledge about it. In the years followed, birth control remained a controversial issue and discussions about it were contentious. Whatever the twist, women's interests and desires were never priorities.

Collective Interests, Individual Development and Gendered Interests

Another area of constraints was in the relationships between the individual and the collective. This is closely connected to the issues discussed above because the basis for legitimizing a specific development strategy or policy was often the claim that it represented the larger interests of the country or society and thus was good for women. Even though the combination of three interests -- those of the individual, the collective and the state -- remained the main emphasis in this period, there was already propaganda that tried to harness individual interests. The further development of this tendency de-legitimized pursuit of individual interests and choice and, for women, prevented awareness and pursuit of gendered interests.

At the beginning of the period during marriage reform, it was stressed that both men and women had freedom of love and social contact. Deng Yingchao pointed out that love and marriage

from a negative point of view, was an individual's private life and should not be interfered with. From a

positive point of view, it was part of social life, and an individual's success in love and marriage is indispensable for a happy society. So it should be protected rather than interfered with (1950:54).

At the time, young women and men were encouraged to stand against family oppression and for individual happiness, and their pursuit of individual interests was legitimized.

After the peak of marriage reform and the issuance of the new Constitution in 1954 that claimed to protect marriage, the family, mothers and children, a RMRB editorial told people that no relations, be they between husband and wife or parents and children, should be viewed as private relations because the state, society, family and individuals were all closely connected. All the acts of an individual should be based on a united new morality and new thought with no division between so-called "private life" and "public life" (quotation marks original; 1954). An ACDWF leader further emphasized that

It must be realized that in a country led by the working class, the interests of the country are identical with those of an individual. One should make his individual interests obey the collective interests of the country and gradually overcome the bourgeois thinking of pursuing only the individual self-interest (Zhang, 1955:210).

This propaganda built on Chinese traditional emphasis on collective interests became an important aspect of the political education of the masses and had complications for women in China. A case in point was the "clothes reform" campaign of 1955. Under the slogan "let's be pretty" women were urged to wear prettier clothes rather than plain ones. Xin Zhongguo funu ran articles on fashion. This was regarded

by western scholars as an "extraordinary campaign, unprecedented, and irreconcilable with the direction of the women's movement before or after 1955-6" (Davin, 1976:109). It certainly was a "herald of the 'hundred Flowers' movement which saw a reduction in many types of social conformity" as observed by Davin, but it was also more than just "part of a general presentation of conservative feminine models" (Davin, 1976:109).

While it was true that it came with the official stress on women's nurturing and decorative roles when there were inadequate opportunities for women's employment, it is important to notice that it also came at a time when there was a thaw after pushing for the socialist high tide and was symbolic of the new relaxed national mood (MacFarquhar, 1974). For women, it presented an opportunity to choose to wear whatever clothes at a time when the puritan and thrift tradition of the revolution was putting excessive pressure on people to confine to certain dress code.⁵⁸ So women welcome the change and were responding to it.⁵⁹ Another irony of the period of the "conservative feminine model" was that this was actually a more "liberal" time in some aspects. More attention was paid to women's practical gender interests. For example,

⁵⁸ A woman wrote to Xin Zhongguo funu complaining how she caught the attention and side-looks of her colleagues just because she wore a flowered qipao (a traditional Chinese dress originating with the Manchu nationality) to work (1956,4).

⁵⁹ See MacFarquhar, 1974.

as mentioned above, during this time, there was more criticism of rural women's double burden and factory's negligence of labor protection of women (XZGFN, 1956). Periods with a similar pattern would reappear later. Thus, the "clothes reform" campaign paradoxically revealed another area of conflict and complexity for women and the women's movement.

In the early years of the PRC, when women were acquiring a collective consciousness of themselves as an oppressed group that needed to strive for liberation and were learning to think collectively about their new state and new society, perhaps there were not many people who realized the importance of individual identity and consciously sought it. Some might have. Emily Honig (1992) discussed how Deng Yuzhi, the General Secretary of YWCA, changed and shifted the public expression of her Christian, feminist and communist identities. Before 1949, Deng expressed a strong commitment to social change and revolution. As she had to affiliate more closely with the CCP in the years approaching 1949, however, she became more outspoken about her Christian identity. Once the Communist Party won political power, it was her "Christian identity that defined her individual agency and the arena for struggle in which she could engage" (Honig, 1992:140). In later times, other women would be forced to deal with the collective vs individual question in different forms.

All in all, the first seven years after 1949 represented a splendid chapter, a golden age for the ACDWF and the women's

movement in the PRC. This was a period of achievement, but it also laid groundwork organizationally for problems later. The golden age would end when the next period began. The turning point was around September, 1957 when the ACDWF convened the Third National Women's Congress.

CHAPTER VII

RETREAT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: 1957-1960

The Third National Women's Congress was held in September 1957 and when it convened again in 1978, 21 years had passed. Chinese women and the ACDWF had traveled a zigzag road during this long period. I will divide this time into four periods. First, around the time the convention of the third National Women's Congress, there was heated debate within the organization and the CCP over the nature of women's problems and the goals for the women's movement. The ACDWF retreated from its previous constitutional goal of striving for sexual equality and adopted the tasks given by the state -- "building up the country through diligence and frugality and managing the home through diligence and economy" (the "two- diligence principle") -- as the main tasks for the women's movement. The organization also became bureaucratized.

During the second period, 1958-1960, the entire country was involved in the frantic radical experiment of the Great-Leap Forward. Fulian promoted mass dining halls, socialized child care, and hailed the arrival of a "new stage of women's liberation." The organization later regarded this period as a time when it "deviated" from the correct Party line on woman-work.

In the third period, 1962 - 1966, the organization went back to the "two-diligence principle," attending to women's practical gender needs while being pulled deeper and deeper into class struggle and the political indoctrination of women.

In the fourth period, the organization was paralyzed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and many of its cadres were persecuted. Its provincial branch offices were restored around 1973, but they did not function normally and the effort to revive the central organ failed. When the ACWF finally was able to convene its fourth National Congress in 1978, it found inspiration in the state's "four modernization" slogan but was still unable to get out of the shadow of the Cultural Revolution. Real changes began only after the third Plenary Session of the 11th CCP Congress in November, 1979. This meeting began the economic reforms and a reappraisal of the CCP's past politics.

This long 21-year period was marked by setbacks, conflicts, contradictions, and frustration, standing in sharp contrast to the first relatively smooth years of the ACDWF, although this period was initially also characterized by enthusiasm, aspirations, good will and hard work of many ACDWF cadres and other women. This chapter will discuss the first two periods, from 1957 to 1960, and the next chapter will cover the years of 1961-1978. To understand what led to the setback starting in this period, we need to examine the year

of 1956. It was an eventful year, on both the international and domestic fronts.

Debate, Splits, and Bureaucratization: 1957

The year 1956 was characterized by a number of achievements for China. The socialist transformation of productive relations was considered completed by the middle of the year; implementation of the First Five-Year- Plan was proceeding smoothly; a more relaxed political atmosphere continued from 1955 as a result of a massive production drive; and intellectuals were inspired by openness to ideas and the slogan "marching to science." The Eighth Congress of the CCP declared that class struggle was mainly over and the country would focus on developing productive forces. Mao also initiated the new policy of "long-term coexistence and mutual supervision" among the CCP and non-communist parties, which was very favorably received (Zhu,1990).

But the year was not without problems. The hurried advance of economic production led to a severe shortage of funds and goods. Premier Zhou Enlai proposed a campaign to increase production and reduce waste in the next year (Cong, 1989). Rapid social and economic transformation caused other problems as well. During the second half of 1956 and spring of 1957, there were workers' strikes in some cities and the countryside, student boycotts of classes and peasants quitting agricultural production coops (Cong, 1989). In the

international arena, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin at the Soviet 20th Congress in February, 1956 sent a strong shock wave throughout the socialist camp. Strikes and demonstrations broke out in Poland and in November came the Hungarian rebellion.

All these events forced the CCP to pay attention to the relationship between state and society. In an April 1956 speech, Mao Zedong spoke about "the ten great relationships," showing his twin concern for economic development and domestic harmony.¹ In February 1957, Mao gave another speech "On the correct handling of contradictions among the people," further elaborating on the "ten relationships." Mao's speeches aroused great interest among cadres. China was in a period of transition. The major contradictions between the proletariat and capitalists had been mainly resolved. Contradictions among the people were the major contradictions in socialist society. These ideas became the focus of discussions by Mao and other leaders such as Liu Shaoqi (Cong, 1989) and were pondered by cadres, intellectuals and others, including Fulian leaders.

¹ The first five relationships dealt with the issues of speeding up industrial construction. The second five concerned contradictions among the people: the relations between the Hans and minority nationalities, between Party and non-party people, between revolution and counter-revolution, between right and wrong, and between China and foreign countries (quoted in MacFarquhar, 1974).

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Debate over Women's Liberation and Sexual Equality

For ACDWF cadres and women, these changes raised new questions about theory and practice for the women's movement. The central question, as specified in a report by ACDWF leaders in charge of propaganda, was: "Today, after the class system has been eliminated, are there still women's problems (funu wenti)? If there are, what is the nature of women's problems?" They further and rightly pointed out that "this question is related to the evaluation of women's status in China and to the principles of the women's movement in our country." The report was sent to the Propaganda Department of the Central CCP for comment.²

The report writers felt that in today's China, women's problems still existed but the nature of the problems had changed. Employing Mao's ideas on contradictions and the correct handling of them, they argued that the problems women faced were embedded in two different types of contradictions - class contradictions and contradictions between men and women -- as reflected in the differences between men and women of the same class in their social and family positions. Of the two contradictions, the former was the basic contradiction, the latter derived from it. The overthrowing

² See "Guangyu dangqian wo guo funu wenti xingzhi wenti xiang Zhong Xuan Bu de qing shi," (asking for instructions from Department of Propaganda of central CCP on the nature of women's problems at present), March 9, 1957, archive of ACWF. The authors of the report included Luo Qiong, Wu Qing, Hu Naiqiu and Liu Jialin.

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of national and class oppression "has pulled out the roots of contradictions between men and women, but this did not mean that the contradictions have been completely resolved." Quoting Lenin's remarks on how women's struggle for equality would end only with the complete victory of communism, they concluded that woman's problems could not be completely solved in a socialist society. Such contradictions would exist a very long time after the elimination of classes.

Secondly, they used empirical data to argue that in today's China, while women's conditions had improved greatly and the social tendency of sexual equality was being developed day by day (the report cited the achievement Chinese women had made in all aspects of life since 1949), there were still discrepancies between men and women in terms of their positions in society and in the family:

- 1) conflict existed between women's work outside and inside the home. They pointed out that these contradictions had intensified because there were more women taking up employment and rural women were working in agricultural producers' cooperatives;

- 2) women were looked down upon as commonly shown in the ways women, children, marriage and the family were treated. The report provides examples of unequal family relations,

unequal pay, discrimination against women workers in factories and practices that ruined women's health;³ and

3) women were still behind in their ideology, literacy, knowledge, expertise and skills. ⁴

These three problems, the report contended, were specific to women although it pointed out the third problem also existed among men to various degrees. If not handled properly, these differences would develop into contradictions. The report's authors thought pointing out the differences and contradictions would help the correct handling of them. While cautiously disclaiming any resemblance of their opinion to the bourgeois point of view that treated the woman question not as part of class oppression but as a conflict between men and women, they wondered if they could summarize the woman question as "contradictions between men and women caused by

³ The report cited the results of a survey by the Beijing Fulian of 126 households in the Bai Cha Yao Xiang Agricultural Coop. In 22.2% of these households, husbands and wives cared for each other and controlled the family finance. In 56.3% of households, the men controlled the money but discussed family affairs with women, and women were mistreated sometimes. In the remaining 21.5% of households, women had no status at all and were completely controlled by men. In regard to the unequal pay, in a survey of 1,076 agricultural coops in 9 counties in Tangshan Zhuang District, Hebei province, 47.7% coops did not give equal pay to women doing the same jobs as men. In Chengde district, 79% fell into this category. The report also mentioned discrimination against women in industrial enterprises and that footbinding was still practiced in some areas.

⁴ The report also cited the increased miscarriages among rural women during the production drive a year before when women were involved in the same strenuous work as men.

historical reasons and current social conditions." They asked the theorists of CCP Propaganda Department for guidance.

In its June 1957 issue, Zhongguo funu (Women of China) ran the summary of notes from a forum⁵ on how the analysis of contradictions among the people could contribute to the understanding of women's problems. The magazine encouraged readers to join this theoretical exploration (ZGFN, 1957) which touched off debate among lower level Fulian cadres. Woman-work, the ACDWF's internal journal, organized a discussion on women's liberation.

The lively discussion revealed the diverse opinions of women cadres and activists. For example, Fulian cadres in Xuanwu District of Beijing listed three positions on women's liberation in China. Some said Chinese women had been liberated, as a result of the law that guaranteed women's rights and interests, the creation of broad opportunities in employment, and the gathering together of all women into organizations. Others said that women had not been completely liberated, or had not been liberated, because incidents of inequality still existed; the residual feudal ideology of looking down upon women was still common; and women had not gained complete economic independence, since most of them were still illiterate and were not equal to men at home. The third opinion was that women who did not work and had no independent

⁵ The forum was actually held among some ACDWF leaders although their real names were not used.

income had not been liberated while those who worked and had their own income were (FNGZ, 1957a). In terms of whether equality between men and women had been achieved in China, some said that although women were liberated, there were still incidents of inequality between men and women. The opposite opinion was that liberation and equality came together and should not be seen as contradictory, achievement of liberation meant realization of sexual equality -- "the so-called inequality between men and women today is different from that in the old society because this is only the residual of old ideas, it does not have any social basis." (FNGZ, 1957b). On the issue of when Chinese women could be considered liberated, some said from the founding of PRC in 1949, while others said from the completion of the socialist transformation.

The participants of discussion also raised many interesting questions. Some cadres wondered about the differences between "women's complete liberation and women's liberation," between "women were basically liberated" as was said before the socialist transformation and "women having been liberated" as was said in 1957 (all emphasis mine) (FNGZ, 1957b). Other cadres raised the question about whether housewives had been liberated and if housework produced value. One asked, "If a housewife did not do housework and the family hired maids, can she be considered to have gained economic independence (FNGZ, 1957b)?" These questions reflected

women's consideration of CCP rhetoric on the woman question. Such rhetoric was often unclear and kept changing.

It was also obvious from the discussion that the CCP's ideas about women's liberation were very prevalent. Many concluded that Chinese women were liberated, based on three major criteria that were proposed: 1) "Have the counter-revolutionary ruling classes been overthrown; 2) Has private ownership been eliminated; and 3) Have the laws that bound women been abolished." But it was also the consensus that "liberation does not mean that women's problems do not exist." The participants discussed the problems that women still faced and agreed that Fulian played an important role in socialist construction. Its function should include "representing women's interests and speaking on their behalf." Some suggested that Fulian should also supervise the government (FNGZ, 1957a).

As the discussion preceded, other events took place in the country that would have profound consequences for the country and the women's movement. On April 27, the CCP formally launched the rectification campaign to combat Party bureaucracy so as to improve state-society relations. On May 4th, the CCP invited non-communist persons to criticize the mistakes of the Party and government. A series of forums were organized among non-CCP party members and intellectuals for this purpose. Sharp criticism was made and some proposed that the CCP and other parties should take turns holding state

power. Mao saw this as an attack from the right to challenge the CCP regime and began the an "anti-rightist" campaign that June. The campaign escalated quickly. Many intellectuals were labeled as rightist and treated as class enemies. Mao started to emphasize that class struggle still existed in socialist societies and that struggles over whether to take a socialist or capitalist road would last a long time.

In August 1957, amid the heat of the "anti-rightist" campaign the ACDWF sent the draft work report prepared for the Third National Women's Congress to the CCP Secretariat for comments. The original draft of the report is inaccessible but some of its contents can be deduced from the comments made by members of the CCP Secretariat at the two meetings in which the report was discussed.⁶ The comments centered around the consensus view that the report should not directly addresses the issue of equality between men and women.

One argument for this position focused on the belief that "Equality between men and women was chiefly an issue of social system and ownership."⁷ Some argued that "equality between men and women is an anti-feudal slogan and capitalism is false

⁶ See "57 nian zhongyang shuji chu liang ci huiyi taolun san ci fudaihui baogao shi ge wei fuze tongzhi dui nan nu pingdeng wenti fayan," (talks of leading comrades of the Central Secretariat on the issue of equality between men and women at the two meetings in 1957 discussing the report of the Third Women's Congress), Archive of ACWF.

⁷ These comments were made by Tan Zhenlin. As this quotation and others from the same document came from my notes of the document, it may not be 100% accurate in translation.

equality" (Peng Zhen), or "Women have been liberated, men and women are basically equal. To talk about equality between men and women again is likely to cause a lot of conflict. It should not be broadly publicized, it could cause confusion" (Yang Shangkun). It was clear from these arguments that since the official gender theory had linked women's liberation and sexual equality to achievement of socialism, declaration of socialism had to mean achievement of women's liberation and equality, otherwise it would challenge the official line. The CCP leaders definitely did not want to confront the theoretical impasse the Party faced in the new social context.

Discussion about sexual equality was also considered especially politically dangerous at the time. Peng Zhen argued that when one advocated equality, one had to point out the problems one wanted to solve. He compared this to demanding political equality and asked "if you demand political equality, what issues did you want to deal with?" -- meaning that people who had already got political equality would not demand it. Demanding equality from the Party -- like what the "rightists" were allegedly doing -- meant you were not happy with what you had got and were on the opposite side of socialism.

Moreover, for Peng Zhen, women's problems were no longer special social and political issues. He said women workers' problems were mainly around reproduction and children. "There

is nothing special about female students, except menstruation."

It seemed that any mentioning of sexual inequality in China was disturbing to the Party Secretariat critics, no matter how mild.⁸ Wang Jiaxiang commented, "it seems from the report as if men and women are equal but are also not equal, as if it demands that men and women should be the same. In fact, men and women are now both guaranteed their political and economic rights. It is incorrect to demand men and women to be exactly the same even under communism, so do not talk about equality between men and women... Do not propose equality between men and women as a task, it is harmful to women if it is proposed as a task."

There was also disagreement about why inequality existed. One comment went, "The report stressed historical reasons. I think it should examine the issue from the women's angle at the present and talk about women's shortcomings (they need to overcome) and women's own effort. It is evident that politically, culturally, and socially men and women are basically equal, but women still have shortcomings" (Yang Shangkun).

⁸ The ACDWF's report to the CCP Department of Propaganda emphasized the enormous progress women had made in PRC and painstakingly described the remaining problems of inequality with defining terms such as shishi shang de "factual" inequality, xianxiang "incidents" or henji "marks" of inequality so as to distinguish the differences they saw between inequality in the past and at present. Apparently, this technique did not achieve the expected effect.

In a more reconciling tone, Deng Xiaoping said that the tendency of looking down on women should be opposed and that Fulian could focus on eliminating capitalist and feudal ideologies and address women's own weaknesses. Deng Xiaoping was also the person who suggested that Fulian take the "two diligence principle" as the central task of the women's movement and write the work report around this. This suggestion was adopted at the meeting of the Politburo of the CCP.

These comments ended the lively debate within Fulian on women's liberation and sexual equality. After the meetings of the Secretariat, the ACDWF issued a notice to its branches on the "Key Points of Propaganda on the Third National Women's Congress" (ACDWF, 1957a:298). This was the basis of the documents of the Third National Women's Congress which marked a shift in the ACDWF's goals and practices in terms of the woman question.

The Third National Women' Congress

The Third National Women's Congress was convened on September 9, 1957, 1,263 delegates attended. Representatives from 12 socialist countries, the International Democratic Women's Federation (IDWF) and wives of some diplomats stationed in Beijing also attended the meeting (Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992). ACDWF Vice Chairwoman Zhang Yun delivered the ACDWF's work report entitled "Building the Country and

Managing the Home Through Diligence and Frugality: Striving for Socialist Construction." Cao Guanqun addressed the revision of ACDWF's constitution in her speech. The 11-day meeting was held at the same time of the Third Plenary Session of the Eight Congress of the CCP and was further affected by the enhanced emphasis on class struggle at the CCP meeting.

Policy Shift

Documents of the meeting indicated a shift in the ACDWF's perception of the woman question and the goals of the women's movement. They stated that the founding of the PRC marked the victory of China's bourgeois democratic revolution and now that socialist revolution had been mainly completed

A brand new social system has been set up, the roots of women's oppression have been forever eliminated, women in our country have been liberated, equality between men and women has been achieved (Cao, 1957:330).

The organization changed its name from the All-China Democratic Women's Federation to the Women's Federation of the People's Republic of China (ACWF).⁹ The task of Fulian became:

unit[ing] and educat[ing] women of the whole country to actively participate in the socialist construction of the motherland, and also to rely on the masses and to organize social forces to serve the women masses (Cao, 1957:330).

The organizational goal remained two-fold, but striving for women's liberation and sexual equality was dropped from

⁹It changed its name to the All-China Women's Federation in 1978. Since in Chinese, it was still referred to as quan guo Fulian (the All-China Women's Federation), I used the abbreviation ACWF throughout the dissertation for simplicity.

the revised Constitution, the remaining major task was to provide services to women. The work report further declared the "two-diligence principle" "the basic principle for the women's movement in the future" (Zhang, 1957a:318).

The rest of the report elaborated on the importance of diligent and thrifty household management, referring to it as an "important aspect of country building, as the basic way in which women support the country's socialist construction and the construction of a new socialist family" (Zhang, 1957a:320). Doing housework and managing the household well were said to have "significant social meaning, especially in a socialist society" (Zhang, 1957a:320). This rhetoric reflected Fulian's shift of emphasis from participating in production to home management.

The specific problems women faced were discussed in the report under the subtitle, "Consolidating the New Common Practice (feng qi) of Protecting Marriage, the Family, Mothers and Children" (Zhang, 1957a:322). All the problems listed were the "influence of bourgeois point of view on love and marriage," the "influence of feudal and bourgeois ideology on the family," and the fact that "in a small number of families 'only the men manage (household) affairs with no women making decisions'" (Zhang, 1957a:322-324). The solution proposed was to improve family relations by spreading socialist ideology. This discussion of the problems women faced was a step away

from those contained in the "Key Points for Propaganda" document that was prepared about three weeks earlier:

we should set up the general social mood of equality between men and women, oppose discrimination against and looking down on women and protect women's lawful rights, and adhere to the socialist principle of equal pay between men and women for equal work. As for social phenomena that violate the policy of sexual equality, we must select typical cases to conduct continuous education and criticism (ACDWF, 1957:302).

These words were omitted in the documents of the Congress amid the high tide of the "anti-rightist" campaign. They were replaced by the denunciation of the "rightists" who were allegedly attacking current relations between the sexes and "blaming leadership of the Communist Party for the bitter marriages and incorrect viewpoints on marriages left over by the exploiting classes" (Zhang, 1957:323).

This discussion also backed away from the speeches on woman work given in 1956 by two top leaders of the ACWF at the Eighth Congress of the CCP. At that meeting, Cai Chang (1956) urged Party leaders to cultivate and promote more women cadres and help them solve the problems they faced trying to juggle work, studies, child raising, and housework. Deng Yingchao (1956) said that "it cannot be assumed that in our present society, the issue of women's liberation has been completely solved" and thus "the Party should all the more strengthen woman-work" (1956:262-263). She made three suggestions: a greater effort to mobilize women to participate in production and combat discrimination against women in employment; expand women's united front by increasing the number of non-CCP women

in the leadership of the ACWF; and the Party should enhance its leadership to woman-work. The documents presented at the Third National Women's Congress signalled a retreat from the first two positions Deng proposed because the intense anti-"rightists" political atmosphere made it no longer possible to discuss the problems in a socialist society or to criticize or make a suggestion to the Party about woman-work.

Anti-rightist Struggle and the Split within the Women's Movement

A striking feature of the 1957 Congress was its anti-"rightist" stance. A section entitled "We Must Take the Socialist Road" in the report provided a lengthy discussion on the importance of the anti-"rightist" struggle for women (Zhang, 1957b).¹⁰ A feature story in Zhongguo funu (Women of China) described how the "rightist" delegates¹¹ were criticized and attacked at group meetings of the Congress and treated as class enemies.¹² Most of them were non-communist

¹⁰ This section was omitted when the report was included in HUIBIAN, II. The complete version of the work report by Zhang Yun can be found in ZGFN, 1957, no.10.

¹¹ They were Liu Wang Liming, Tan Tiwu, Ding Ling, Peng Zigang, Pu Xixiu, Li Jiansheng (ZGFN, 1957, 10).

¹² For example, Tan Tiwu, a delegate of the Third National Women's Congress and one of the "rightists" criticized at the meeting, was said to "no longer represent the interests of the people and women. She represents the interests of reactionaries and is a scum among women " (Hanzi, 1957, 9).

party members.¹³ All of them were intellectuals. The article suggested that intellectual women had the tendency to adhere to the capitalist stand and individualism and were thus faced with the tough task of completely remolding themselves in a socialist society (Hanzi, 1957).

The "anti-rightist" campaign caused a split among people. Intellectuals, who were acknowledged in early 1956 to have successfully gone through the "remolding" process to become part of the laboring classes, were again regarded as elements of the national bourgeois class, a social force with the possibility of opposing working people (Cong, 1989:88). A large number of intellectuals and cadres were rounded up in the ensuing campaign.¹⁴ It is estimated that women cadres and intellectuals who were wrongly accused as "rightists" numbered no less than 50,000. Within the national ACWF organ and the departments directly under its administration, seven cadres were labeled as "rightists," accounting for 1.3% of Fulian cadres at the time (Qing et al, 1989).

The "anti-rightist" campaign resulted in a split of the women's movement. Among the six prominent women leaders

¹³ But there was also a CCP member, writer Ding Ling. The article she wrote in the 1940s "Thoughts on March 8" was criticized again and used as evidence of her "anti-Party" stance. For the incidence, see Chapter V.

¹⁴ According to statistics gathered after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Congress of the CCP in 1979, 552, 877 people were labeled as "rightists." (Cong, 1989).

criticized at the Congress,¹⁵ Liu Wang Liming, ACWF Standing Executive Member and President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, was accused of being a member of a "rightist alliance,"¹⁶ pro-American imperialist, and anti-Soviet Union. Her effort in establishing a branch office of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Chengdu in 1956 was regarded as unlawful and her motivation for her involvement in work among women before 1949 was also questioned (Hanzi, 1957). Another woman criticized at the Congress was Li Jiansheng, Vice President of the Beijing Women's Friendship Association. Both the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's Friendship Association disbanded in 1958, probably due to the anti-rightist campaign.

Officially, the ACWF retreated from its commitment to a "united front" position. It now emphasized unity among working women and then women from other social strata. A constitutional amendment stated that those known to be "counter-revolutionaries, members of reactionary classes and other bad elements that are stripped of voting rights according to law" (ACWF, 1957a:336) could not participate in the election of ACWF delegates. This sent a clear message:

¹⁵ All of them, plus the 7 from Central ACWF, were rehabilitated after 1979.

¹⁶ Zhang Bojun and Luo Longji, who were regarded as number one rightists. In 1980 in the CCP reexamination of all "rightists" cases, it admitted that such an "alliance" did not exist.

the ACWF was a mass organization, an organization of "the people," not including class enemies.

Bureaucratization of the ACWF

Major change also occurred in the ACWF's organizational structure. The constitution stipulated that "Fulian establish a national leading body and local Fulian at various levels according to state administrative divisions" (ACWF, 1957a:337). This resulted in a full fledged vertical structure, with township Fulian in rural areas and residential district Fulian in cities as the grassroots units (see Appendix A.c). This five-layer structure remained unchanged till today. It formally incorporated Fulian into the state administrative hierarchy.

Now Fulian had two types of members rather than one, i.e., Fulian's "local organizations" -- those within its vertical network --, and institutional members. The institutional members theoretically included national and local women's organizations and women's organizations within enterprises, administrative units and other organizations that applied and were accepted as members. In reality, by 1958, of the three independent national women's organizations, founding members of the ACDWF, the YWCA was the only one left. The Women Workers' Committees of the Trade Union were the major occupational based institutional members of Fulian at various levels, together with few women's committees that were established in some state administrative units or

organizations (See Appendix Ac). Apparently, the Fulian "local organizations" and its "grassroots organizations" dominated the ACWF, and the institutional members were only marginal now. The Fulian Constitution stipulated that group members could go to Fulian meetings, but they had to let Fulian know about their intention to attend in advance. They could no longer have their own constitutions since the Fulian Constitution was the unifying constitution for all member organizations at all levels (Cao, 1957).¹⁷

The revised ACWF's constitution required Fulian cadres at all levels to attend to women's demands, strengthen collective leadership, and improve their relations with women and the grassroots. The "system of delegates connecting to the masses" was added to democratic centralism as another organizational principle. This new emphasis on collective leadership and on closer connection with the masses reflected the country's concern about bureaucracy, believed by Mao and some other leaders to be the roots of the problems in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Hungary.

However, bureaucratization and centralization were what characterized the organizational change of the ACWF in 1957. The expanded new Constitution specified the responsibilities

¹⁷ According to the new Constitution only organizations for minority women could make constitutional amendment or make their own regulations according to their circumstance. All changes required the endorsement of upper level Fulian (ACWF, 1957a).

and operations of Fulian grassroots organizations, local organizations, and the central leading body in great detail. A supplemental document elaborated the division of labor within the Presidium¹⁸ and the Secretariat of the national Fulian.¹⁹ The Secretariat was given broad power and authority over decisions pertaining to important issues such as women's collective actions, state legislation and policy on women, and ACWF's work plans and its international activities. Important editorials in Zhongguo funu (Women of China) and issues the magazine wanted readers to discuss would all be discussed first by the Secretariat. The Constitution stipulated that local Fulian organizations at all levels must follow ACWF's decisions in their work, and lower level Fulian organizations must obey upper level Fulian organizations (ACWF, 1957a).

The entire organization, from structure to operation and documents, was formalized and bureaucratized, functioning more like a top-down hierarchy. As a result, the ACWF lost the little autonomy and spontaneity it had under its looser more horizontal structure, functioning more like a state agency.

¹⁸ The ACWF Standing Committee as replaced by the Presidium at this Congress to "facilitate collective leadership on important issues." It changed back at the next congress.

¹⁹ See "Quan guo Fulian zhu xi tuan, shu ji chu zhize fanwei he zuzhi jigou ji ge bumen fu ze ren mingdan" (Responsibilities and organizations of the Presidium and Secretariat of the ACWF and list of leaders of departments), HUIBIAN, II:341-344.

Impact of the Congress On the Women's Movement

The 1957 Women's Congress signalled a turning point for the ACWF. Interestingly there was little criticism of the negative consequences of these changes for the Chinese women's movement. The Congress was regarded by Fulian and many other scholars as an "important meeting" that set up the "correct principle for the women's movement" (Ren, 1989, Qing et al, 1989, Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992). The most severe documented criticism was that the meeting "overestimated the degree of Chinese women's liberation and failed to give a fuller analysis of women's problems still existing in society" (Dangdai, 1989:26). The meeting was also criticized for its misguided attack on "rightists," including a demographic view of population control (Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992), and for its discussion of the two line struggle between socialism and capitalism, which was said to have averted attention from important discussion of the "two-diligence principle" (Qing et al, 1989, Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992).

I believe that the Chinese women's movement experienced its first setback in the post-revolutionary period at the time of the Third National Women's Congress. First, the Chinese women's movement lost an opportunity for further theoretical development. The ACWF leaders and many other women had worked hard to overthrow national and class oppression, because they believed them to be the roots of women's oppression. Since their primary goal had been achieved, and China claimed itself

to be a socialist society, they had a chance to set a new agenda for future struggles. Even though their ideas were still rooted in a class-based theoretical framework, from their own experience, they recognized continued existence of sexual inequality under socialism and desired to eliminate it. Their recognition of women as having "special problems" or "special contradictions" that were different from the "common contradictions" experienced by all Chinese was the first step in examining the relationship between the women's movement and the general socialist movement in a fresh way. If they had been allowed to continue their explorations, I am sure they would have discovered the inadequacy of the CCP's theoretical framework and learned from their practice what was needed to solve the problems under the current system. Unfortunately, they were not only denied this chance, they were also pressured to deny that a proclaimed socialist system could perpetuate and reproduce sexual inequality. Their silence on the "special contradictions" women experienced left room for the practices in later time that denied both women's strategic gender interests and their practical gender needs.

Furthermore, the CCP's suppression of the discussion of inequality between men and women resulted in the separation between the goal of women's liberation and that of sexual equality. Women's liberation was interpreted as liberation from class oppression and thus re-appeared in CCP rhetoric during the Great leap Forward. Sexual equality was suspected

as a bourgeois concept and was not included as a constitutional goal for the ACWF until 1988. Meanwhile, to categorize "contradictions between men and women" as "contradictions among the people" meant that they should be resolved through persuasion and education rather than through struggle (as contradictions between the people and the enemy should be handled). As a result, the ACWF ceased discussing the need to wage separate political struggles to achieve sexual equality, thus depoliticizing the issue of gender equality. This had serious consequences for the Chinese women's movement later on.

The second consequence of what happened around the 1957 congresses was in ACWF's practice. The ACWF dropped its constitutional goal of striving for women's liberation and equality with men, and it also retreated from its earlier emphasis on mobilizing women to participate in economic production. Instead, issues within the family became the focus and were talked about in terms of interpersonal relations affected by individual members' ideas and behaviors. There was no analysis of the oppressive nature and structures of the traditional family. Since traditional families were still the norm rather than the exception in China at the time, as indicated in the ACWF's report to the CCP propaganda Department, this was a crucial misstep and betrayal of women. In pre-1949 China and during the first seven years of the PRC, women's interests were viewed as the same as those of the

working class. In 1957, the first serious conflict between the gender interest of women and the interests of class as defined by the CCP occurred. The emphasis on class struggle would erode the women's movement and became an issue the ACWF had to face in its later years.

The third consequence was the split it caused the united front of women's organizations. The "anti-rightist" campaign which persecuted some leaders of the women's movement affected the enthusiasm of intellectual women, resulting in the dissolution of the two independent women's organizations. The ACWF monopoly would not be broken until the 1980s. The incorporation of the ACWF into the state hierarchy left the organization under stricter control of the Party/state and consequently reduced its autonomy. In the reform era, the problems in the political structure were seen as caused by dang zheng bu fen (the mixing of the functions of the Party and the state), Zheng qun bu fen (mixture of the functions of political organizations and mass organizations), and were perceived as partially responsible for the expansion of Party power, the malfunctioning of the state, and the lack of democracy in China. These problems were rooted in the CCP's vanguard Party organizational strategy but were definitely exacerbated by the mass organizations such as ACWF's and ACFTU's formal incorporation into the state in 1957.

What happened around 1957 was a conflict between the gender interests of the women's movement and the interests of

the Party/state. The women's movement suffered a setback because the movement's leaders were not in a position to make decisions about its agenda. The CCP leaders had different views about women's issues. Some of the outrageous remarks by some members of the Secretariat revealed deep-rooted patriarchal views held by CCP leaders. Unfortunately, they were the ones who made critical decisions concerning women and the women's movement. Moreover, these decisions were not a result of serious debate on CCP's policy on women since they contradicted previous CCP policy and principle.²⁰ Women were shortchanged because of the Party's immediate political concerns.

The ACWF leaders gave their loyalty first to the cause of the Party and this, in turn, allowed them to keep their own positions. Thus, they accepted the official Party line. The tense anti-"rightist" political atmosphere made it harder than

²⁰ In October 1956, Mao Zedong said that he did not believe legal rights for women on paper was enough and that it would take a long time to achieve sexual equality. In his talk with women's delegates from Yugoslavia, Mao said, "the Constitution was only something on paper....In China, women who worked in the government or the National Congress, after all, were few in number. Although women's rights are stipulated in the Constitution, efforts in implementation need to be made so they can all be achieved." After mentioning the percentage of women in the Congress [12% at the national level, 17% at the grassroots level], Mao said, "in the future, women's percentage should at least be the same as that of men, each taking 50%. If the percentage of women surpasses that of men, there is nothing bad about it. This aim can only be completely achieved when there are no wars in the world, all societies have entered socialism, socialist production is highly developed and people's cultural and educational level have increased greatly" (Bangongting, 1991, 88-89).

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ever to voice opinions different than those of the Party. However, it should also be recognized that their bending to pressure was not the only reason they acquiesced. These leaders were also restricted in their own vision by their class-based theoretical framework and by a lack of understanding of issues related to socialism, an ideal social system that the state announced had been achieved. Given the strong influence of the Soviet model of socialism at the time, the optimistic atmosphere in society in general, and the fact that the ACWF leaders and the majority of Chinese women were encouraged by the progress women had made thus far, it is understandable that they accepted that building socialism would gradually solve women's problems. To reject the new official line on the woman question would have required understanding the limitations of the CCP's theoretical framework on women and a serious questioning of the socialist model as practiced as well as the legitimacy of the "anti-rightist" campaign. This was a historical limitation the women's movement could not overcome. Time and even more serious setbacks including the disastrous Cultural Revolution would result eventually in efforts in overcoming these limitations.

The Union and the Youth League around 1957

What happened to the ACWF was not unique. This section discusses the experiences of the Youth League and the Union

around 1957 to further reveal the positions of mass organizations in Chinese society and the time and political climate in which they were operating. The leaders of both organizations were persecuted for alleged disloyalty to the Party, the occupation-based Federation of Unions changed to be first and foremost region-based to be under the direct control of the Party/state hierarchy. These showed the tightened control of the Party/state after it had consolidated its power and heightened tension between the state and social groups, a context to help us understand the setbacks of the ACWF and the women's movement.

The similarities between what happened to the ACWF and the other two mass organizations were striking. The Youth League and the Trade Union also held their National Congresses in 1957, in May and December respectively. Both congresses specified socialist construction as the central goal. The title of the Trade Union's work report, "Uniting People of the Whole Country: Be Diligent and Frugal to Build Socialist New China," sounded very much like that of the ACWF. The Congress of the Youth League endorsed an earlier decision to change its name from The Chinese New Democratic (emphasis added) Youth League to the Chinese Communist Youth League to honor the arrival of a new socialist society like the ACDWF did. A major revision of the Constitution of the Trade Union paralleled that of Fulian was on the Union organizational structure. It changed from being based on occupational unions

to a combination of occupational and regional unions. The rationale provided for this change was to bring local initiatives into fuller play and to strengthen leadership of the local Party over the local unions.

Apparently, the pressure to change came from above. In March 1958, the CCP decided to formally bring the Union into the administrative hierarchy of the state. and reduced autonomy of the Union. The decision, entitled "guanyu gonghui zuzhi de yijian" (opinion of the Union organizations), said that there was too much emphasis on vertical leadership within the union, and the national occupation-based unions were set up too early, in too much haste and there were too many of them. Thus, they needed to be streamlined. Some would remain, some would be combined, some would keep their names but become departments of union at all levels, still others would be eliminated. Unions at all levels would be led by same level Party organizations while receiving leadership from union organizations from above (Department of Organization, ACFTU 1992). What happened to the Union was the same as what happened to the ACWF. It reduced the horizontal connections was put under the direct control of the state/party hierarchy. The original relatively autonomous organizations were reduced to subordinates of the Union which now acted more as a state appendage.

Like the ACWF, there was a heated debate within the Union before its Congress under a more relaxed political atmosphere.

It started with a speech on Union rectification made by the Union President Lai Royu on May 10, 1957. Lai acknowledged that the biggest problem with the Union was its relations with the workers. He pointed out that in the majority of workers' strikes and demonstrations in 1956, the participants surpassed the Union to take their own actions. This indicated that the Union was no longer perceived as connected to the masses in handling contradictions among the people as it was when fighting against capitalists. He believed bureaucracy was the cause of workers' strikes (Department of Organization, ACFTU, 1992). Gongren ri bao (the Workers' Daily) published the controversial article, "How should the Union handle contradictions among the people," as well as other articles about union problems and union relations with the Party and administration of the enterprises. Dangdai Gong yun (the Contemporary Workers' Movement), the official organ of the Union, also covered the tasks and roles of the Union (Department of Organization, ACFTU 1992).

In antecedents of these articles were the two CCP notification in March and April of 1957 respectively on students' boycott of classes and workers' strikes. The CCP acknowledged the problems with bureaucracy and wanted to expand the power of workers' delegate meetings and let the mass organizations be part of the supervision mechanism. The Union discussion was in response to the Party rectification campaign started in May.

The discussion, however, was interrupted by the escalation of the anti-"rightist" struggle. The critical opinion about combating Union bureaucracy did not get into the documents of the Union Congress.²¹ The deadly blow came later, as the Third Enlarged Meeting of the Union Leading Party Members' Group opened on May 26, 1958. The meeting was originally planned for a week but lasted 71 days. The subject matter turned from discussing the CCP's opinion on union organizations into exposure of the two-line struggle within the Union and problems in Union/Party relations.

Union President Lai Royu, who died of liver cancer before the meeting, and Dong Xin, Union Secretary, were said to have led a right opportunist line in union work and had allegedly committed five crimes: 1) opposing Party leadership of the Union; 2) demanding power from the government in order to make the Union an "independent kingdom;" 3) revising the tasks and functions of the Union to make it a narrow economic organization; 4) distorting the mass line of the Party by worshipping a spontaneous workers' movements; and 5) conducting factional activities that damaged the unity of the Party. Lai was labeled a "right opportunist" and "factionist," five of the Central Union leaders were removed from their positions (one was arrested as a "counter-reactionary" and "special

²¹ But the documents (work report and the Union Constitution passed at the Congress) were still criticized later as having deviated from the spirit of the Third Plenary session of the Eighth Party Congress.

agent"). Later, thousands of local Union cadres were criticized as "little Lai Royu" and attacked. All these damaged the workers' movement more than the first setback the Union suffered from the wrongful persecution of Li Lisan in 1951 (Wang and Xiong, 1990). In 1979, the Union Leading Party Members's Committee reexamined this period and found all the allegations false and all of the victims were rehabilitated (Department of Organization, ACFTU, 1992).

While the Union meeting was in session, the Youth League held its Third Plenary Meeting of the Third CCYL Congress, beginning on June 2, 1958. The original agenda was discussion of the League's work since the Great Leap Forward and related to the Youth Pioneers. It later turned to League rectification on how to "guarantee the absolute leadership of the Party over the League". As a result, the meeting lasted 73 days, became the longest in the history of the CCYL. The speech given by Xiang Nan, Secretary of the CCYL Secretariat, in 1956 in preparation for the Third League Congress (entitled "ten suggestions") and opinions of some other cadres on reform of the League were criticized as "out-and-out right opportunist program," "attacking Party leadership," "opposing Party leadership to the League," and "revising the communist direction of the youth movement." Xiang Nan was removed from his position. He and the other cadres who were criticized at the meeting were only rehabilitated in 1979 (Guo, 1992).

On the causes of the setbacks for the workers' movement, some scholars argued that since the Chinese revolution was won through armed struggle waged in the countryside, the CCP had a weaker connection with central cities and industrial workers. Relying on the working class wholeheartedly did not take root with all CCP cadres.²² This seemed especially true when compared with the CCP's contact with women. The CCP had a lot more experience mobilizing rural women in its base areas. Its policy on women and women cadres who were implementing the policy in post-revolutionary China all emerged from that experience. Moreover, women's position was also different from that of workers. Militant, striking workers could be a direct threat to the regime, while women did not posed a similar threat. Union leaders were more independent, too. Union leaders were criticized as "conceited" because they gave the CCP headquarters only 10 days to review the Union work report to be given at the Congress.²³ As a result, their disagreement with the Party aroused a much stronger reaction from the Party and the "disobeying" union leaders were purged ruthlessly.

²² Other reasons included lack of experience in carrying out the workers' movement in a large country such as China, the negative influence of the Soviet model of union organizations, and the conflict over the theory and practice of the workers' movement within the CCP (Wang and Xiong, 1990).

²³ See "Li Zhebo baogao quanzhong zhengfeng wenti" (Li Zhebo reports on issues relating in the rectification of the national ACFTU), July 24, 1958. ACWF Archive.

Implementing the "Two-diligence Principle"

In the time period immediately after the Third National Women's Congress, the ACWF concentrated on promoting and implementing the "two-diligence principle," stressing at first more on "managing the home" than "building the country." The ACWF issued two documents on promoting diligent and thrifty home management in the countryside, saying it was a matter whether one followed the socialist road and "loved the country, loved the coop and loved the family" (ACWF, 1957b:345). It also tried to combat the peasants' mentality that thrifty was no longer necessary since no one could buy houses or land to leave to one's children.

At the end of 1957, the CCP disclosed China's determination to surpass Great Britain in steel production and other important industrial products with 15 years by launching a production drive.²⁴ This was the start of the Great Leap Forward campaign. In January 1958, the ACWF held a meeting of provincial and municipal Fulian leaders, where it stressed that it was one-sided to understand the "two diligence principle" as a strategy to only mobilize women to do housework. According to the ACWF, women should also be mobilized to participate in the production drive and to

²⁴ This slogan was disclosed at the Eighth Congress of the All-China Trade Union held in December 1957. It was first proposed by Mao in Moscow at the meeting celebrating the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. It followed the Soviet slogan to surpass the United States in industrial and agricultural products within 15 years.

contribute to the Second Five-Year Plan (ACWF, 1957c). The ACWF plan for the celebration of March 8th was balanced around both tasks of the "two-diligence principle." While a workteam led by some top leaders of Fulian was sent to Hubei Province to inspect local Fulian's efforts around production, a large publicity campaign was waged to save coal, grain, electricity and cloth. The ACWF propagated the idea of "economy of scale":

Ours is a country with over 600 million. If each person saves one liang²⁵ of grain, the whole country will save 13.5 billion Jin of grain annually, not far from the increased grain production of 15.4 billion Jin in 1956. If everyone made one more garment, using 7.5 chi of cloth, the whole country would need 45 million Pi of cotton cloth, a bit less than the total cotton cloth production of Great Britain in 1955 of 43 million Pi (ACDWF, 1957:300).

The first issue of Women of China in 1958 carried an article written by state leader, Zhu De, on diligent and economic home management and launched a reader discussion entitled "Is my view on diligent and economic home management right or wrong?" In the following issues, the magazine was full of stories and tips on economic home management. At the same time, Women's Delegate Meetings in urban neighborhood and in workers' residence compound also engaged women in providing various services to the local communities, setting up mutual-help child care centers, service coops and tutoring stations for primary and secondary school students. These

²⁵ Chinese weight measurement unit. Ten liang make one jin, one half of a kilogram. Chi in the following sentence is unit length, about one foot. Ten chi make one pi.

services were provided at no or low cost to help working women cope with the burden of domestic labor. Those who provided services also received small cash payments to help with household expenses.

The ACWF used its time-honored methods of role models, delegate and on-the-spot meetings, and entertainment activities to promote diligent and economic home management. Another widespread activity was the "five-goods family" activity.

Wives of workers in a factory in Shenyang city began the activity first in 1952, proposing to make sure that their working husbands and sons ate well, rested well, had perfect attendance at work, good interpersonal relationship with colleagues, and had improved hygiene and studies. In 1954, the ACDWF held an on-the-spot meeting in Wuhan to promote five-goods family activities. By 1957, these activities had spread to 103 cities. To implement the two-diligence principle, the five-goods family activities were further promoted with diligent and thrifty home management as a the central focus.²⁶ Local Fulian also pushed these activities in rural areas.²⁷ From then on, except during the Great Leap

²⁶ The slogan was to have every family do well in "diligent and economic home managing, unity and mutual help, children's education, sanitation and hygiene, and making efforts to study" (Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992).

²⁷ For example, the Guangxi Fulian defined the five-goods for the rural household as: 1) be industrious, love the coop, love the country, do well in unity and mutual help; 2) manage the home well with diligence and economy; 3) learn to read and

Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the "Five-goods family" have been consistently promoted, with changes in content to suit the changing central tasks of the state. This activity was first promoted to stabilize family life interrupted by the Marriage Reform and to solve age-old problems in interpersonal relations among family members. It also became a device for the state to penetrate every household with its ideology and agenda.

The ACWF in the Great Leap Forward: 1958-1960

In May, 1958, the CCP convened the Second Meeting of the Eighth Congress. This meeting announced that in a socialist society, the major contradiction remained the struggle between the two classes of proletariat and the bourgeois and between the road China was going to take -- socialism or capitalism. The meeting endorsed the "General Line for Socialist Construction" proposed by Mao. The general line called for rapid economic development by "going all out, aiming high, and achieving more, faster, better, and more economical results in building socialism." At this meeting, several top leaders of the state, including Premier Zhou Enlai, acknowledged their "mistake in opposing rash advancement" in 1956 when they tried to lower unrealistic development targets and to cool the overheated economy (Cong, 1989). The Great Leap Forward (GLF)

write and acquire skills; 4) respect the mother-in-law, love the daughter-in-laws and educate the children; 5) maintain good sanitation and hygiene (Guangxi Fulian, 1991).

campaign quickly spread throughout the country after this meeting.

The Great Leap Forward is now used to refer to the three-year attempt to implement a communist utopia in China. It also signifies a specific strategy of economic development and resource allocation.²⁸ But economic transformation was not the only target. Cultural life was to be remade as well. Activities in this respect included mass poetry writing, the elimination of illiteracy, encouraging everyone to make scientific discoveries and establishing new social patterns by forcing peasants to live in dormitories and eat in mess halls. It was also a state of mind, suggesting that unprecedented levels of mass mobilization would bring these utopian goals to fruition.²⁹ All these were reflected in ACWF activities.

Policy Shift: Away from the "Two-Diligence Principle"

Fulian held a national work conference from June 30 to July 28, 1958 to discuss the principles and tasks of woman-work after the issuance of the "general line." The meeting was largely attended by Fulian cadres in charge of propaganda

²⁸ This strategy includes high levels of investment, high production and investment targets, decentralization, industry-aiding agriculture, self-reliance, and an emphasis on medium and small-scale factories.

²⁹ Other elements fit into this mind set: denigration of technical expertise, the idea that through struggle anything was possible and the belief that physical laws did not necessarily apply to properly indoctrinated people.

from provincial, municipal, and autonomous regional branches of the ACWF.

The first question raised at this meeting asked why the documents of the Third National Women's Congress stated that women had been liberated and equality achieved. Why did they not mention women's "complete liberation" nor the socialization of house work? Did this failure indicate a lack of vision?

Dong Bian (1958), Secretary of the ACWF Secretariat, gave a speech on the issue of women's liberation. She said that the "two-diligence principle" proposed at the last Congress had been appropriate because it was premature to address the socialization of housework given the productive level at the time. However, things were different in 1958. As for the issue of woman's liberation, she said that to say that women had been liberated meant that private ownership was eliminated and women participated in production outside the home in large numbers. But liberation did not mean that women had no problems. She identified two basic problems for women. First, women's literacy and technical skills remained lower than men's, which held them back in work and society. Second, women were hindered by traditional ideas, feudal and bourgeois ideology and customs that treated men as superior to women and by women's own weaknesses (e.g. conservative thinking, low self-esteem and dependence on men). These problems, she claimed, were related to the level of development in

socialist material and cultural life or ideology, but did not derive from the socialist system. The basic solution to these problems was to quickly develop productive forces and to build socialism. Women could only be "completely liberated" when communism had been achieved (Dong, 1958). Thus, the discussion on women's issues returned to the class based, production-deducible analysis.

This meeting also reflected on the ACWF's work over the past three years in the same spirit of the "anti-right opportunist tendency" of the Party meeting and concluded that Fulian's work was influenced by this tendency, too. This was said to be demonstrated by its "excessive attention" to women's interests during the cooperative campaign and its targeting large-scale agricultural production for increased death and injuries rural women and children encountered from the winter of 1955 to spring of 1956.³⁰ It was also said that the "two-diligence principle" did not "reflect the spirit of the general line" and did not provide "clear direction for women's liberation" (Gao, 1993, Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992). Thus, the ACWF shifted its vision of the women's movement and decided that the general tasks of the women's movement now would be to "mobilize all active elements of women and strive for the implementation of the Party's General Line for Socialist Construction". The ACWF thus pushed for the "Great Leap Forward" of woman-work.

³⁰ See previous discussion on this issue in chapter VI.

The first thing the ACWF did after the meeting was to increase publishing of Zhongguo funu (Women of China) from monthly to semi-monthly to better reflect the spirit and enthusiasm of the time.³¹ The ACWF sent seven workteams to 11 provinces and autonomous regions to investigate woman work in the Great Leap Forward.

Meanwhile, the Leap was developing rapidly. In August, the CCP meeting at Beidaihe decided that China would produce 10.7 million tons of steel and would set up the People's Communes in rural areas throughout the country during 1958. Thus, the development strategy characterized by "three red banners" (i.e. the general line, the Great Leap Forward, and the People's Commune) was fully developed. The commune, large in economic scale and more advanced in collective ownership, was seen as ideal for the transition to public ownership and thus to communism. It was envisioned as an administrative body with all functions -- workers, peasants, soldiers, commerce, and students -- that could fundamentally transform people's lives.

The perceived advantages of the Commune were immediately hailed by the ACWF. In September, in a report to the CCP, the ACWF stated that "the people's commune is the best organizational form for liberating women. It can turn all women into members of the proletarian class, into social

³¹ Its journal Funu gongzuo (Woman-work) also started to be published semi-monthly.

laborers" and "realize socialization of housework, transforming housework to grand socialist economy" (Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992). Under the direction of the CCP, the ACWF was to play a major role in organizing people's lives.

The ACWF in Full Gear for the Great Leap

Starting in September 1958, the ACWF geared itself up for the frenzied national experiment of the Three Red Banners. Its efforts were focused in three areas: (1) mobilizing all women to participate in all aspects of production; (2) "organizing people's lives in full scale" and "making child care and education a coordinated process"; and (3) indoctrinating women with communist ideology and exploring theories on women's liberation.

Mobilizing All Women to Participate in Production

The GLF was an economic development experiment using the mass mobilization of human power which fit with ACWF's vision of liberating women through engaging them in production outside the home. Thus, the GLF provided another opportunity for the ACWF to put this belief into full practice.

In rural areas, the major effort was to mobilize women to increase agricultural production. The slogan for rural work at the time was nan zi daban gangtie, nu zi daban nongye ("men go in for steel making in a big way, women go in for agriculture in a big way"). Fulian at all levels found many ways to mobilize women for agricultural production. Hubei

provincial Fulian conducted "a million young women campaign", aimed at identifying a million young women as models for achieving high grain yield. Fulian in the Jiaxing Special Region, Zhejiang Province, launched a campaign of Qian jin guniang wan jin sao (1000 jin girls and 10,000 jin sisters.³² (Qing, Ma, Huang, and Liu, 1989). Shaanxi provincial Fulian launched a campaign of "learning from Qiuxiang and catching up with Qiuxiang." Zhang Qiuxiang was an ordinary peasant woman who became a national heroine for her dedication to and skill in growing cotton (Ho, 1960). There were also campaigns calling on women to "eliminate scattered plots of unutilized land," or to "contribute ideas to technical invention" (Cao, 1958).

The number of women who participated in production and social labor was unprecedented. In 1958 - 1959, 90% of rural women were mobilized. As strong male peasants were drawn to make steel and involved in other projects, women took the major responsibility for farming. In Sichuan province, 70% of women were engaged in agricultural production. In Shaanxi Province, women did 75% of the tasks related to wheat production and over 90% of cotton field management.

³² Sister is a form of address for a married women about one's own age. This campaign was aimed at both married and unmarried women. The target was to strive for an average yield of 1,000 jin (equals half a ton) of grain product for one mu (=0.16 acre) of land, or better yet, 10,000 jin (5 tons) for that amount of land.

Many areas conducted drives to encourage women to learn farm skills. In Yizhang county, Hunan province, the slogan was "ren ren xue jishu, ge ge dang zhuanjia" ("everybody learns skills, all become experts"). As a result, about 80% of 40,000 young and middle aged women there learned to plow and prepare soil (Gao, 1993). Incomplete statistics show that 340,000 women in the 79 counties of Yunan Province learned to pull a cart. In Guizhou Province, 32.2% of young women managed new farming tools, some could operate 6 two-wheel-two-double-shared ploughs at the same time. Amid the drive for technical innovation, women in Henan were said to have invented and improved 1.3 million tools (Cao, 1957). Titles such as "bumper crop maidens," "women red flag holders," and "women innovators" appeared in reports in Zhongguo funu and other newspapers and magazines. Women were also heavily engaged in reforestation and irrigation projects.³³ Moreover, the fast development of the commune as a unit of production, consumption, and administration created many new non-farming tasks and positions, providing opportunities for women in areas they previously were excluded from, including drivers,

³³ According to statistics, in 1958, there were 7.3 million women involved in irrigation project construction, 6.7 million in reforestation. 80% of the people who were involved in cattle and poultry raising were women. In Sicken, 80% of manure collecting was done by women. On a deep ploughing team of 150,000 people in a county in Hebei, about 80,000 were women (Qing et al, 1989).

sales persons, purchasing, mail carriers, and creditors.³⁴

Even iron and steel making were no longer men's domain. Fulian mobilized women for steel making to achieve the goal of doubling steel production in 1958. Nationwide, there were 2,415 women's furnaces as well as ironworks, and women's steel smelting furnaces. Many named their furnaces or teams Mu Guiying or Satellite Furnace (Qing et al, 1989).³⁵ In Guangxi Province, 1.96 million women joined the "steel field army" or "expedition," making up 74% of the 4 million women laborers. This included young girls of 11 to 12 years old as well as grannies in their 60s and 70s. They went to uninhabited wild areas far from home and participated in coal mining, charcoal making, transportation, making fireproof materials and steel making.

³⁴ According to a report from RMRB, (the People's Daily) (12/22/58), there were 267,000 full and half time laborers at the Xujiazhuang Red Flag People's Commune in Hengshui county, Hebei Province. Among them, 15,141 were women. With the development of the commune, 4,200 industrial enterprises were set up and 32 husbandry farms, chicken farms, pig farms and agricultural extension farms were built on acid land. In addition, 109 newly established supply and marketing cooperatives, sales cooperatives and credit cooperatives were scattered around production teams and working stations. These new enterprises and services occupied 4,627 male laborers; 5,100 strong male laborers were pulled from the commune to join steel making and irrigation projects, leaving only 20% of male farmers engaged in farming on a regular basis. Under this circumstances, 6,500 women took over tasks in sales, postal service, cooking, hairdressing, telephone operating, mechanical service, sewing and tailoring (Gao, 1993).

³⁵ Mu Guiying is a legendary woman warrior. Her name and the name of another legendary woman warrior, Hua Mulan, were popular names taken by women's teams. Satellite was popular because the Soviet Union had sent a satellite into the orbit.

Women who stayed home also contributed to the steel drive. They cut their hair for bellows and pulled down fence walls to contribute bricks. They even brought out boards or planks for beds and coffins. For example, women in four cities contributed 552 tons of scrap iron and steel. Family members of the Liuzhou Mechanics Plant organized a 300-member volunteer corps to wash clothes for those who were involved in the steel drive (Guangxi Fulian, 1991).

In cities, under the slogan, "the whole Party and whole people involved in the development of industry in a big way," Fulian focused its efforts on mobilizing women for industrialization. In addition to working with Unions to engage women workers and employees in the production drive, Fulian encouraged women to take employment in state-owned industrial, commercial and service enterprises.

Initial recruitment of women in urban areas was related to the steel drive and the expansion of industry. Factory managers were interested in having women take over the simple, basic tasks, thus freeing men to establish other construction enterprises. The labor shortage also existed in other industries and occupations, especially in commerce and the service industry. Thus, yi nu ding nan (substitute women for men) was a strategy widely adopted in all occupations. Alternative forms of the similar slogan included nan nu huan ban (men and women switching jobs) and lao shao huan ban (old and young switching jobs) (Cao Baozhen, 1958). The Fulian

propaganda, "women can do everything, women can do everything well," encouraged women to take on heavy physical labor and jobs that were traditionally done by men (e.g., steel making and farming). At the same time, women were encouraged to take these service jobs because they were less physical, easy to learn, and were suitable for women (Cao Baozhen, 1958).

To involve women in service work, Zhongguo funu started a discussion entitled "Are service jobs inferior?" It devoted 5 issues to this issue and ended the discussion with a summary entitled "it is most glorious to serve the people" (ZGFN, 1958: no.12-17). With these efforts, women moved into these jobs quickly. In Xian city, in less than three months, women working in service jobs constituted a quarter of the work force; there were 7 hotels, dining halls, and barber shops run entirely by women (Cao, 1958). Although it is common to see women clustered in commercial and service jobs everywhere in the world, in China, the Great Leap certainly contributed to the feminization of these and other occupations.³⁶

The main focus of Fulian work in cities was to target an abundant, untapped human resource -- housewives --and establish street industries. Housewives were credited for the

³⁶ Cai Chang called on women to take a yet more active part in cultural, educational, medical and public health work, as well as in welfare and other social services. She said women should gradually replace men in all such work that was especially suitable for women so as to attain a more reasonable distribution of social labor force. These are the occupations that got feminized during the GLF (Peking Review, 1958).

urban commune movement. During the GLF, all kinds of small scale enterprises, workshops, work stations, services centers were established by housewives. Most were connected to larger industrial enterprises, agricultural production, or state export business, doing auxiliary and processing work. They were also geared toward services to the local community. By the end of July 1958, according to statistics from 21 cities, 535,000 women participated in various kinds of social labor. In Hebei Province, over 280,000 small scale enterprises were created by women in garment production, shoe-making, wheat and rice processing, and fertilizer production. In Emei County, Sichuan Province, one third of newly- established enterprises was set up by women (Cao, 1958). In Beijing, more than 160,000 housewives had taken part in production and public services by November 1959, establishing 608 street workshops, organizing more than 1,760 production units and over 1,200 service centers. Their promise was to "turn out whatever the big factories require us to produce and whatever the people's lives calls for" (Yi, 1960). Many of their chemical workshops, varnishing workshops, refractory material workshops to process metal, and electric appliances workshops made a name for themselves (Yi, 1960).

These street workshops, however, did not compare with the state-owned industries in terms of equipment, pay, or benefits. Because they were subsidiary projects, capital accumulation was much slower and thus the luxury of a welfare

fund to provide services such as sick leave, maternity pay or child care was almost totally absent. The principles guiding neighborhood or street industry could be called discriminating,³⁷ but the housewives were not driven to work only by economic necessity. The ideological motivation of participation in a national endeavor was very high. The establishment of service and street industries provided jobs for a particular category of women, including older women, who would not have been able to work otherwise. In this period, there was a change in Fulian's effort to mobilize urban women to participate in social labor. Previously, the emphasis was on promoting principle of women's participation in social labor outside home rather than on the actual number of women who participated, because of insufficient employment opportunities.

During the GLF, the ACWF pursued women's increased participation as a direct reflection of the degree of women's liberation. Based on a comparative study of female employment in various countries,³⁸ ACWF felt that China lagged behind in this respect and there was great potential for women's

³⁷ All neighborhood or street industry was guided by five basic principles. They could not apply to the government for 1) funds; 2) raw materials; 3) machines; 4) premises; and 5) would not get workers in state owned factories to work in their factories.

³⁸ The ACWF reported that the rate was 45% in Soviet Union, 41.7% in Democratic Germany, 29.3% in the United States, 34.7% in Great Britain, 29.5% in Japan, but only 14% in China (Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992).

employment. It estimated that at least six million urban women could be mobilized to take up employment. In this matter, the more the better, the larger the scale the better, and the faster it happened the better. As a result, Fulian at all levels made an effort to increase women's employment rate. In 1958, the number of female employees increased from 3.28 million to over 7.5 million, increasing 113% in a year's time.

This exceeded the total number of increase of female employees in the previous eight years (Qing et al, 1989).

Collectivizing Living: Liberating Women from Housework

During the GLF, socialization of domestic labor was a priority for the ACWF. It was viewed as a way to allow women to fully participate in production outside home.³⁹ It was also seen as a mechanism to transform people's ideas and lifestyles. About a year ago, ACWF leaders had stated that the socialization of domestic labor required a high level of industrialization and could not be achieved in a short period of time (Cai, 1957b). By 1958, however, the new development strategy made it not only a possibility, but also an indispensable part of the GLF effort. In September 1958, the CCP endorsed the ACWF report on its GLF work, stating that the establishment of mess halls, child care facilities, sewing

³⁹ According to statistics from 7 provinces, socialization of rural housework in these provinces freed more than 20 million women laborers for work on industrial and agricultural projects (Cao Baozhen, 1958).

workshops, and other collective services was an "important aspect of work in the fast developing commune movement," and demanded Fulian play a more active part in promoting it (Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992). Socialization of domestic labor later became part of a more radical slogan of the GLF (i.e., "militarization of production, collectivizing living and socialization of domestic labor"). Then the ACWF demanded its branches move from socialization of domestic labor to the "comprehensive organization of collective life" to "make collective living the main lifestyle of socialist society."

The ACWF specified this goal in four aspects called four huas ⁴⁰: 1) taking meals in mess halls; 2) mutual help for childcare; 3) collective sewing; and 4) mechanization of flour milling. These were implemented in a rushed, superficial fashion, like many other things that were done during the Great Leap. It took only a few days for many local Fulian to declare that they had achieved three of the four huas (mess hall, community childcare, and collective sewing) (Dangdai, 1989). The establishment of community dining halls was most impressive. By the end of 1958, most of the 26,000 communes had set up mess halls. Most people working in them were women (Qing et al, 1989).

⁴⁰ Chinese word used as a suffix, similar to English -ize, and -ify.

Cultural Life and Indoctrination of Communist Ideology

The GLF also aimed to change people's cultural lives. Zhongguo funu displayed an array of poems, songs, cartoons, and popular forms of entertainment pieces written by ordinary working women. The ACWF also urged its cadres to improve theoretical studies and make plans to improve writing skills. Some Fulian branches and cadres began work in these directions. For example, Heilongjiang provincial Fulian cadres submitted over 100 articles to the provincial paper and over 60 of them were published between January and June 1958. This was three times the articles published by Fulian in all of 1957 (Liu, 1958).

Promotion of communist morality was accomplished in the following ways: publicizing the prospects of communism and instilling the "collective thinking of 'one for all and all for one'" and the "communist style of dare to think, dare to speak and dare to act" among women (liu, 1958). The purpose of publicizing communist prospects was primarily educational. Zhongguo funu started a lecture series entitled "What does a communist society look at?" Topics included the great development of productive forces in communist society, the elimination of differences between mental and manual labor, between countryside and cities, and between workers and peasants. This publicity was also meant to be inspirational. Even though Fulian propaganda cadres stressed that Fulian cadres should make a clear distinction between the future

prospects and the present tasks when doing propaganda work so as to avoid causing confusion among people (Liu, 1958), their propaganda about the prospects of socialism bore strong resemblance to the communist utopian vision.⁴¹

The promotion of the communist spirit of "one for all and all for one" was defined in terms of class struggle. The ACWF declared that its task was to "plant the red flag of proletarian ideology and uproot the white flag of bourgeois ideology among women" (Liu, 1958). Harmonious relations between wives and husbands and among family members were seen as the result of socialist ideology. Zhongguo funu started a column, "How do we plant red flags in our family," soliciting essays from the reader on how to conduct criticism and self-criticism, how to overcome bourgeois selfish ideas and lingering feudal ideas, how to establish new relationships of equality and mutual care between the couple, and how they could teach and learn from one another in politics, skills, and culture (ZGFN, 1958, 11:24). In the stories the magazine later published, one couple challenged conservative ideas in farming, and another used big character posters for criticism and self-criticism to combat backward ideas and improve their relationship (ZGFN, 1958, 12). The ACWF internal journal, Funu

⁴¹ A group of pictures entitled "prospects not far away" showed a village scene that looked like a city; women driving an electrical tractor, village youth taking a daily bus to university in the county, solar furnaces, a family going to the communal dining hall to eat, and a satellite sent into the orbit by the Chinese (ZGFN, 1958, 7:6-7).

gongzuo (woman-work), launched a discussion on "how a Fulian cadre can be both red and expert."⁴² Being red meant to take the correct political stance: be loyal to the proletarian cause, serve the people wholeheartedly, have a proletarian world outlook and dedicate one's life to the realization of communism. Being an expert referred to one's professional development, and, for a Fulian cadre, it included doing woman-work well according to the line and principle of the Party (FNGZ, 1958).

The communist morality, "one for all and all for one," was also defined as a collective point of view and new social relations. It aimed to "make women more consciously subordinate their personal interests to state interests and collective interests, to do away with the remaining bourgeois individualism, selfish departmentalism, egalitarianism, liberalism, and anarchism" among women (Liu, 1958:16).

Funu gongzuo (Woman-work) reprinted Beijing Ri bao (Beijing Daily) summary of the discussion about "whether Communist Party members should have personal will" (1958, 17:2-5). The summary argued that Communist Party members should put the Party first and voluntarily be the tool of the Party and people. "'One for all and all for one,' this is to say that I will first be a tool and then be the master. This is the relation between us as individuals and the collective" (Beijing Ri bao, 1958, quoted in FNGZ, 1958b:2). This was an

⁴² For a summary of the discussion, see FNGZ, 1958.

example of the stepped up propaganda on the priority of Party and state interests and the illegitimacy of personal interests.

The communist endorsement of dare to think, dare to say and dare to act as reflected in woman work, could be summarized as a slogan of "women can do everything, women are good at doing everything, women can do everything well." This became a common slogan used during the Great Leap. Zhongguo funu started a column entitled "Dare to think, dare to speak, dare to do and dare to succeed" (1958,7). The slogan was frequently referred to by ACWF leaders. I think that Mao's famous statement made during the Cultural Revolution -- "Time has changed, men and women are the same. Whatever men can do, women can also do--" was inspired by this slogan. The slogan encouraged women to take on tasks that were not traditionally done by women, to be engaged in experiments and innovation, to master skills and learn science, to overcome difficulties, including conservative ideas that hindered the progress of women. This slogan was inspiring to women and had a liberating effect on women, as did the slogan, "whatever men can do women can also do." Women's initial enthusiastic responses to the Great Leap, to engagement in production and industrialization and the steel drive demonstrated the

willingness of women to be liberated and to participate as equal partners in nation building efforts.⁴³

However, the ACWF's propaganda was also infected by the "state of the mind" of the Great Leap: voluntarism and wishful thinking that anything was possible if there was zeal and spirit. Zhongguo funu disseminated the notion that hastened economic development would lead to communism. It did this not only in words but also in pictures -- for example, a poster demonstrating catching up with Great Britain in 15 years (ZGFN, 1958, 11:back cover). Other images displayed agricultural miracles that were said to be occurring such as a picture of three children playing hide and seek under one Chinese cabbage (ZGFN, 1968, 13), a pea weighing the same as a chubby boy, and a girl rowing a boat made from half of a winter melon.

One thing that the ACWF did with much enthusiasm, maybe more than other organizations or the state, was to discuss the implications of the Great leap for women's liberation. Zhongguo funu issued several editorials and byline articles hailing the Great Leap as a new historical stage of women's liberation.⁴⁴

⁴³ For example, a ZGFN cartoon of the period first shows a woman cooking at the stove who says, "I can only do this." A second panel shows her at a machine tool plant carrying finished products, saying "I can do everything!" ZGFN, 1958, 9.

⁴⁴ See editorials of ZGFN, 1958, 1959, Ji, 1958.

This new stage was symbolized by the three aspects I had discussed: 1) women's participation in social labor in unprecedented numbers; 2) socialization of domestic labor; and 3) the raised socialist consciousness of women (ZGFN, 1959). Like discussions before the Leap, women's participation in social labor and the socialization of domestic labor were again discussed as needed conditions for women's liberation. However, during the GLF, they were perceived as attainable goals made possible because of the establishment of the communes. The large size and collective nature of the commune ⁴⁵ meant great liberation for women because the commune was perceived as being able to provide more and diversified working opportunities for women as well as relief from the burden of domestic labor.

During the GLF, discussions of the socialization of domestic labor criticized its nature as tedious, confining women to the home, making people narrow minded and stupid (Hu, 1958a). Domestic labor was no longer regarded as a long-term goal that could only be realized after industrialization, mechanization, and electrification had been achieved in the country. The ACWF leaders holding this point of view were

⁴⁵ It was "big" in size -- it often contained 6,000 to 7,000 households. In some places, a whole district was made into one commune, or a whole county turned into one commune with over 10,000 households. It was more advanced in "collective ownership" -- in many places even the pigs and sheep and the small plot of land left for a peasant household were collectivized, and in distribution, communes were delivering free supplies of some daily necessities such as food and clothing and pocket money (Ji, 1958).

criticized as "right opportunists." It was declared that "the route of socialization of domestic labor is to achieve collectivization and socialization [of domestic labor] first, and then to strive for semi-mechanization and mechanization" (ZGFN, 1958:2) because people's lifestyles needed to match socialized production in order to bring about mechanization (ZGFN, 1958). Such ideas were promoted by the ACWF as well as by Party publications.⁴⁶

What is worth special notice is that during the Great Leap the role of the family as the pivotal site of women's oppression was raised again as it had been in the early 50s. This was in sharp contrast to the previous discussion of 1957 of the "two-diligence principle" which portrayed the family as a positive cell of society without major conflicts or contradictions. Also noticeable was that the issue was raised by Mao, one of the few times he talked about women's liberation.

In one of his tours to investigate local work in Anhui Province in September 1958, he talked about the targets to reach in order for women to gain complete liberation. Mao said:

If each [woman] does not have one thousand, two thousands jin of grain each year, if there is no public dining hall, no happy homes,⁴⁷ or nurseries, if [she] has not

⁴⁶ See HQ commentary, 1958, and also Lin Yizhou's article in HQ, 1960.

⁴⁷ Happy homes is the phrase used during the Great Leap to refer to old folks homes.

become literate, has not entered primary school, middle school and university, women cannot be liberated completely (ACWF, 1958b:368).

Mao's idea reflected the CCP's position that women's liberation was based on a highly developed economy, the socialization of domestic labor, and women's attainment of education. But Mao's enforcement of the new institutions indicated the perceived requirement for a basic change in social organization, especially in the function of the family. On the same occasion, Mao also said that:

Only by managing well the people's commune can it be the route of women's complete liberation. The people's commune adopts the wage system and supply system, the wage is handed to each member but not the patriarch, women and young people must be very happy, in this way, [it] does away with the patriarchal system, does away with the ideology of the bourgeois right (ACWF, 1958b:368).⁴⁸

Here, Mao openly acknowledged that the rural family was still a patriarchal system; women and young people as individuals did not have equal position within the family. He also noted that in many places women were receiving individual cash payment and could decide on their usage, no matter how small this amount might be.⁴⁹ This was the first time rural

⁴⁸ I treated this and the above passage made by Mao at the same trip as direct quotes because when this statement is quoted, the wording is always the same, although quotation marks are not used.

⁴⁹ During this period, the commune practiced the supply system -- a system of payment in kind or semi-supply and semi-wage system of distribution. Under the complete supply system, the commune took care of members' food, housing, clothing and all other expenses, there was no major differences among women. In the semi-supply -semi-wage system, the commune supplied part of basic needs to its members, such as food,

women participated in social distribution independently and received personal cash payments for their work in the collective farm directly. Previously, during the coop campaign and with the continuous mobilization of women's participation in collective farm labor, the issue of separate payments to individual women had never been raised.

Official theorists besides Mao also opened fire on the family patriarchal system. They regarded it as the basis of feudal rule in all its respects -- economic, political, ideological and personal. They argued that the campaign of coops transformed the family as a productive unit. The commune movement was changing its function as a unit of consumption and taking away the power of the patriarch to manage family-based production and control the family wealth (Fan, 1960). Responding to the western accusation that the commune movement destroyed the family, these theorists said what the feudal and bourgeois family was being destroyed in order to bring happiness and progressive material and cultural lives to the people (Fan, 1960, Hu, 1958a, 1958b).

clothing, medical care, education, birth, wedding and funeral expenses, etc. The wage part was pocket money, given monthly according to the rank of the laborers. According to newspaper reports, this amount varied from 1-2 yuan in low paying areas to 3-4 yuan in high paying areas. Women's wages were about 1/3 lower than those of men, but were given to the individual. So for the first time, rural women got monetary wages under their own names (Gao, 1993).

As a result of these changes, women would achieve complete liberation. State leader Peng Dehuai pointed out that the old patriarchal system was being wiped out, and

the dream of the complete emancipation of women and genuine equality between men and women is now on the way to becoming a reality...the family is no longer a place where the intelligence of women is held in check and her energies are worn out. Family life based on genuine happiness, democracy and unity can only be realized under the socialist system (quoted in Peking Review, 1958:13).

This propaganda brought this view of women's liberation back into public discourse.

Women's Organizations and the Commune

While the ACWF claimed that the establishment of the communes provided women with the path to liberation, the rapidly developing commune challenged, ironically, the very legitimacy of the ACWF.

Within a month after the CCP formally announced its decision to establish communes in rural areas, the movement to form communes reached its peak. By the end of September, 1958, the original 740,000 agricultural productive coops conglomerated into 260,000 communes involving 120 million rural households (99% of the total households in rural areas) (Cong, 1989).

The communes disrupted the original administrative structure of the ACWF. In some cases, an entire county became one commune, in others, the organizational structure of county, district and township was changed into a county

commune and a people's commune. The question of whether there should be separate women's organizations became an issue for local cadres who were experimenting with the new organizational structure of the commune.

There were two opinions among the local cadres. One argued for the continued existence of women's organizations. They argued that since women's problems had not all been solved, Fulian could represent women's concerns, provide suggestions for woman-work, and engage women in activities around the central tasks of the Party. People who were opposed to separate women's organizations contended that the downfall of the feudal system had reduced disparities between women and men. Collective living would resolve women's remaining problems. Furthermore, they argued that Fulian could not resolve these challenges alone largely because life was so intense that there was no time for Fulian to organize separate activities. Organizationally, some communes had two separate units while in practice one group of cadres was responsible for both production and women work. Other communes had two organizational units and two groups of cadres, thus maintaining separate women's organizations. A third group of communes had a single organizational unit with one group of cadres. They opposed separate women's organizations but

instead assigned women cadres to productive units at all levels.⁵⁰

The relationship between Fulian and communes became one of the issues the ACWF's 9 work teams investigated in 11 provinces and one autonomous region. Key leaders also debated the issues among themselves. Those who saw the final disappearance of women's organizations as inevitable with the arrival of communism, or believed that the existence of organizations should be based on the Party's political need, were more concerned about how to make the organizational transition smoothly. Others argued strongly against the attempt to eliminate grassroots women's organizations.⁵¹ On October 26, 1958, at a national forum on organization, provincial leaders were divided between maintaining and eliminating women's organizations.⁵² The first Secretary of the ACWF Secretariat, Luo Qiong, challenged the argument that Fulian could be eliminated because the task of women's liberation was fulfilled. She clearly stated that Fulian organizations must continue to exist. This opinion was taken

⁵⁰ "Nongcun gongzuo jianbao" (Briefings of rural work) (Oct. 23, 1958). ACWF Archive. Also see Hunan Fulian, 1959.

⁵¹ See minutes of Oct. 21, 1958 meeting of the ACWF Leading Party Member Group debating the issue of women's organization during the commune campaign (ACWF Archives).

⁵² See minutes of an ACWF Leading Party Members' Group on November 5, 1958, with Luo Qiong's report on the national forum (ACWF Archives).

by the meeting, and put into the meeting document (Bangongting, 1991:114).

The ACWF Leading Party Members' Group later submitted a report to the CCP on Fulian organizations at the county level and below. It stated that it was better to maintain women's organizations at these levels for a "certain period of time", because there were still women's problems. Moreover, the newly established commune needed Fulian to help it do woman work:

Thus, maintaining Fulian organizations at the county level and below, under the absolute leadership of the Commune Party Committee, [making it] cooperate with other related departments, serve the Party's loyally, pay more attention to women's problems, and do more work among women is beneficial for constructing socialism and for creating conditions for the transition to communism" (ACWF, 1958b:367).

One interesting argument it made was that historically, the CCP connected itself to the masses through mass organizations. If a women's department was established in the commune to replace Fulian, it would become a unit of administration rather than a mass organization and thus would be inconsistent with CCP's practice.

The CCP adopted Fulian's position in this report and distributed it to county Party Committees as a formal response to the attempt to cancel women's organizations. Discussion on this issue continued within Fulian and in Fulian journals.⁵³ But grassroots level Fulian in rural areas at the county level

⁵³ For example, see FNGZ editorial, 1959, and Hunan Fulian, 1959.

or below sustained some damage. Damage was also inflicted on Fulian at higher levels. Some provincial Fulian were combined with the labor department (Dangdai, 1989).

Another major change in the organization of the ACWF during this period was the elimination of the Women's Movement Committee from the Central CCP. In August 1958, the Secretariat of the CCP decided that it was unnecessary to have both the Women's Movement Committee and the ACWF Leading Party members' Group have parallel connections to the Central CCP. As a result, the Women's Movement Committee was eliminated, the ACWF Leading Party members' Group was expanded to 18 members, including all Party members who were ACWF Chairwoman, Vice Chairwomen, members of Presidium and Secretariat who were in Beijing. This took effect on November 18. Local party committees had discretion over how to deal with the relationship between the Women's Movement Committee and Party Committee of Fulian in their own localities.⁵⁴

The ACWF Leading Party Members' Group was supposed to "play the role of the Women's Movement Committee of Central

⁵⁴ See Bangongting, 1991:114, and Cai Chang's report on this matter in ACWF archives. As for the Women's Movement Committee at the provincial and city level, the Constitution passed at the Eighth Congress of the CCP in 1956 stipulated that Party Committees should be set up in all governmental agencies and people's organizations where there were three or more Party members in the leading bodies of these organizations. Some places replaced the Party Committee with the Women's Movement (Fujian Fulian and Fujian fuyunshi bianwei, 1989).

CCP,"⁵⁵ but it could not. The Women's Movement Committee was a unit within the Central Committee of CCP with authority over subordinate Party organizations, however limited this authority maybe.⁵⁶ This authority now was gone (See Figure 7.1). Besides, the original 31-members Women's Movement Committee also included leaders from provinces and other mass organizations as well as ministries that worked closely with woman.⁵⁷ Thus, it committed all parties involved to contribute resources and coordinate efforts to solve women's problems. We all know that many problems women face are deeply rooted in political, economic and social systems and cannot be solved by women's organizations alone. Under the new arrangement, women's problems became the sole responsibility of a mass organization, thus, women's issues were marginalized. This was also a retreat from the CCP's previous practice of establishing women's organizations (in the form of women's movement committee or woman-work committee) within the CCP and the CCP-led Soviet government in its base areas. The elimination of the Party's Women's Movement Committee reduced the complicated interactions and

⁵⁵ From Cai Chang's report (ACWF archives).

⁵⁶ Recall Deng Yingchao's discussion on relationship between the Women's Movement Committee of the CCP Central Committee and lower level Party organizations in Chapter V.

⁵⁷ For example, Ministries of Labor, Textile Industry, Education, and Public Health, International Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Procuratorate, Bureau of Handicraft Industry, etc.

Figure 7.1a
Institutional Relations of Fulian and Party Organizations:
1949-1957*

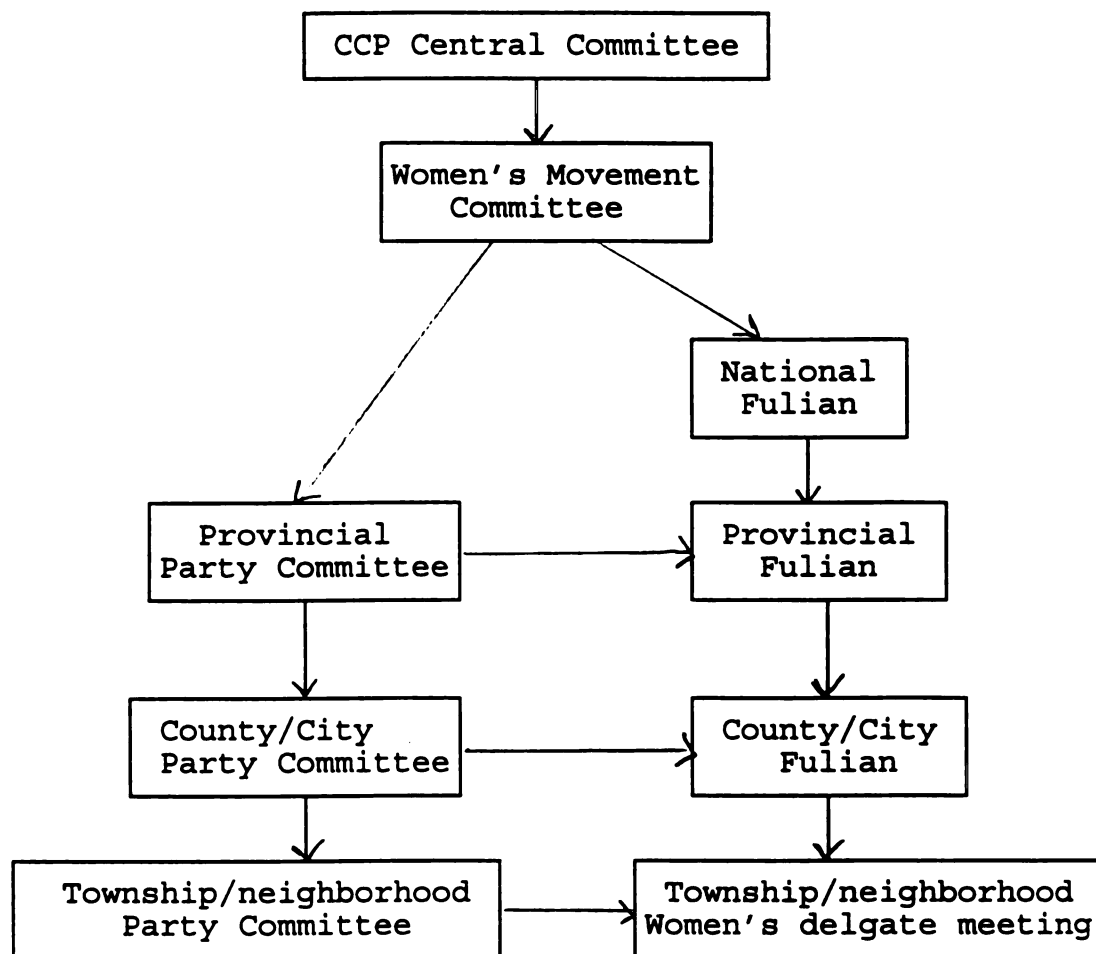
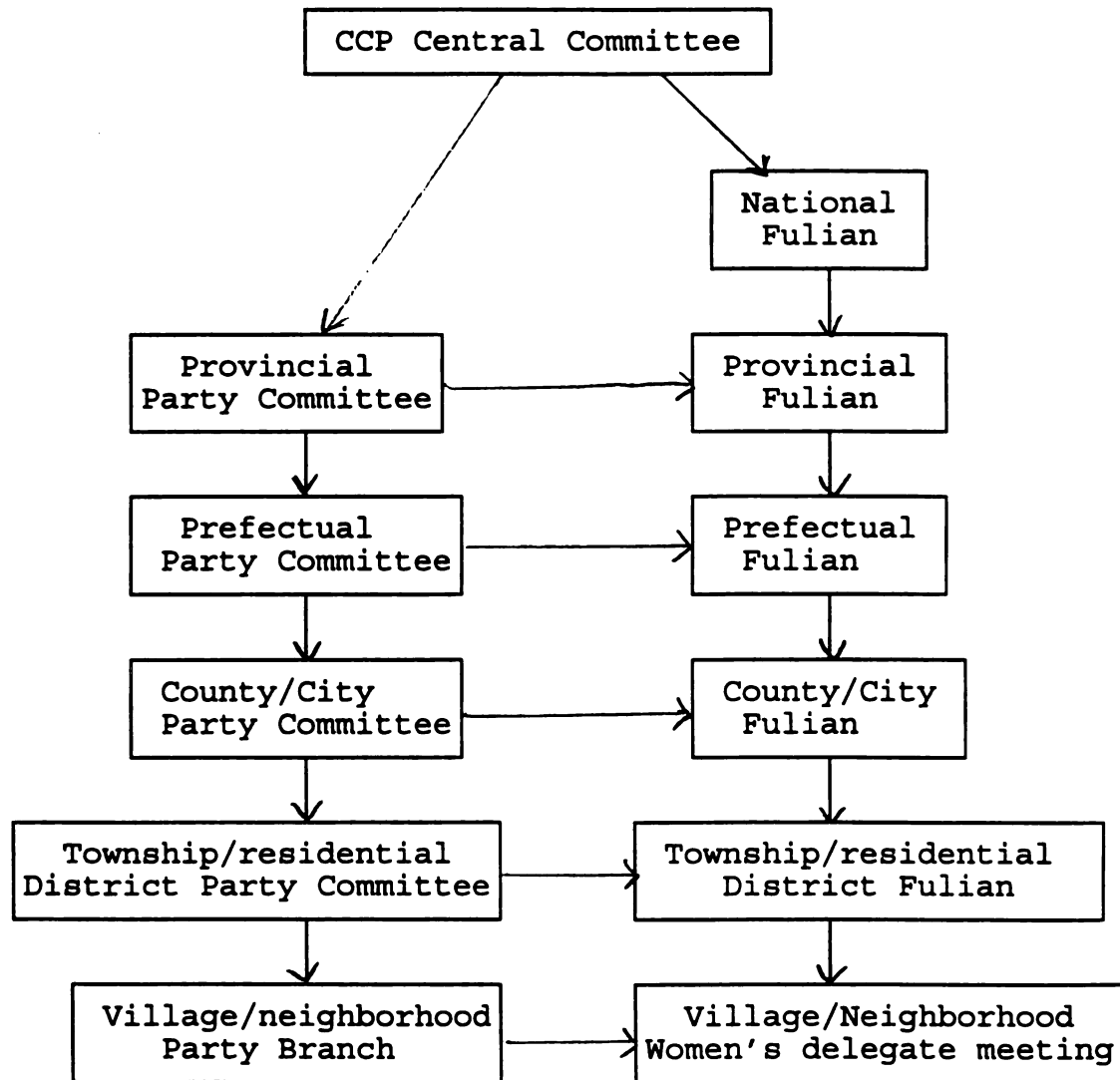


Figure 7.1b

Institutional Relations of Fulian and Party Organizations
after Elimination of the Women's Movement Committee in 1957



connections between women and the Party and reduced women's access to the central Party power. The ACWF cadres agreed that the elimination of the Women's Movement Committee was a disservice to the cause of women.⁵⁸ As will be shown in Chapter IX, in the reform era, the ACWF succeeded in pushing the women's organization back into the government.

During the Great Leap, the ACWF was not the only mass organization whose existence was threatened by the commune movement. The workers' Trade Union faced a similar challenge in the second half of 1958, the difference was that more Union leaders pushed hard for the cancellation of the Union. The issue was first raised by a CCP leader who discussed the possibility of changing the Union into a federation type of organization since now the agricultural coops were running industry. Later that year, a leader of the Organization Department of the Central CCP proposed cancellation of unions at the county level arguing that under communization, class distinctions (i.e., differences between workers and peasants) were disappearing, and the union had fulfilled its historic mission. Some contended that maintaining an organization for workers when people were increasingly engaged in both industrial and agricultural production could lead to factionalism. The top leaders of the ACFTU shared this opinion. One leader openly proposed the slogan "striving for the withering away of unions." at an internal rectification

⁵⁸ My interview with ACWF cadres.

meeting at Union headquarters. The ACFTU Leading Party Members' Group submitted a report to the CCP Central Committee on December 4, 1958, acknowledging that the union at the county level would wither away naturally with the development of the commune and proposed four ways to make the transition. This contributed to the elimination of county unions.⁵⁹ The urban unions were affected by the urban commune movement that swept the country in March 1960. Under the instruction of the CCP Central Committee, ACFTU leaders once again urged union cadres to help workers "get on the boat of communes." A national Union meeting further decided not to form unions in newly-established communes and stopped recruiting union members. This time, the effort to "incorporate unions into communes" caused serious organizational damage to urban unions and unions of large enterprises (Wang and Xiong, 1990).

"Anti-rightist Tendency" and

"Continued Leap Forward"

At the end of 1958, the ACWF held a national conference "Women Builders of Socialism." The ten day conference was attended by some 2,500 delegates from all walks of life. The

⁵⁹ According to statistics from 588 counties in 11 provinces, by the end of 1958, 230 county unions were eliminated, about 39.2% of the counties surveyed. Another 177 county unions (about 30.2%) stopped functioning even though there were no formal announcement of their cancellation. The rest remained, but the union cadres were in an anxious state of mind, waiting for "withering away." But there was resistance to the "wind of cancellation" as well. See Wang and Xiong, 1990.

oldest was 84-year-old Liu Sze-po from Hunan, a noted pig farmer. The youngest was 12-year-old, Li Ai-lan, a cotton-growing expert. The conference paid tribute to women's contributions to the Great Leap and promised more radical measures for the women's movement. This was highlighted in the slogan spelled out in golden letters on the purple velvet screen before the conference hall: "With a still higher level of political consciousness, raise the level of your skills and go forward to socialist construction!" (Peking Review, 1958:12). The Women's Exhibition in Agricultural Exhibition Hall opened at about the same time and had the same theme.

However, by the end of 1958, problems associated with the frenzied Leap and Commune experiment began to appear⁶⁰ and the CCP took some measures to redress them. One obvious problem was that heavy physical labor ruined the health of women and children. The conference called on delegates to strike a

⁶⁰ The steel drive, for example, wasted a lot of human and material resources. Of the steel and iron produced, 3 million tons were useless. Fall harvests of grain and cotton were greatly affected despite the fact that 1958 had an exceptionally good harvest, because strong farm laborers were drawn into steel making and other projects. Production in other industries, light industries and transportation in particular, dropped because of deprived resources, causing great shortages in supply due to rapidly increased demand. An 85% increase in employment in one year made the situation worse. While the grain harvest was reduced, grain consumption was up a lot because diners were supposed to be able to "eat to their heart's content" in the community dining halls. On top of that there was excessive grain purchase by the state. All these contributed to the severe shortage of food and the consequential damage to the health of laborers. Some mess halls collapsed, and peasants went begging. By February 1959, there were cases of edema and death (Cong, 1989).

proper balance between work and rest. In March 1959, Zhongguo funu carried an article by Li Dequan, ACWF Vice Chairwoman, Minister of Public Health, entitled "Pay attention to women's health, maintain vigorous revolutionary enthusiasm." In this article she emphasized the importance of protecting female laborers. Woman labor should be disposed rationally; efforts should be made to improve production tools and techniques to reduce the intensity of women's labor; and to publicize common knowledge about women's health, especially the treatment of women's gynecological illness.

In the first half of 1959, amid efforts by the CCP to correct problems caused by the rash advance to communism, the ACWF made some adjustments in its strategy. It reduced the requirement for universal childcare, stressing that child care should be based on local conditions and the needs of women. It also called for reduction of the size of mess halls as well as more freedom and autonomy to street industrial enterprises. There was also an effort to change work style.

From July 27 to August 16, the ACWF held a national conference, attended by provincial and municipal Fulian leaders. This conference began some 20 days after the CCP's Lushan Conference and was greatly affected by the political agenda of Lushan.⁶¹

⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion on the Lushan Conference, see MacFarquhar, 1974,

The ACWF meeting began by summarizing experiences and examining the "leftist" mistakes Fulian made during the Great Leap and Commune movement. Some participants argued that women's participation in production should match the development of productive forces. In addition, socialization of domestic labor was a long term goal that could not be achieved overnight, especially with low levels of economic development. They criticized ACWF's rush to promote both goals and the pressure it put on local Fulian branches. Some contended that economic development in 1958 in general was not as good as in 1957, because the scale was too large, the speed too fast, and the steel drive consumed a lot of material and labor but produced much unusable product. They also questioned the ACWF's assessment of the progress of the women's movement, arguing that "as the development of the whole country has not entered a new stage, the women's movement cannot enter a new stage by itself" (Ji, Tang, and Huang, 1992).

These comments echoed concerns and cautious reappraisal of the GLF voiced at the Lushan Conference by Marshal Peng Dehuai and some other CCP leaders. Mao was offended by their remarks and launched "anti-rightist tendency" campaign to counter-attack these criticism. Affected by the changes in Lushan, the ACWF meeting took a turn to check the "rightist tendency" in woman-work. Women cadres who had criticized "leftist" tendencies in the GLF were labeled "right

opportunists" and criticized, and, for example, Cao Guanqun, Secretary of the ACWF Secretariat, was removed from her position.⁶² The "anti-rightist tendency" effort spilled over to grassroots level Fulian in rural areas, making the cadres examine whether they had given full support to the Commune and the Leap (Nanchong Branch of Sichuan Fulian, 1960).

As a new wave of Great Leap was introduced in 1960, the ACWF decided that its objective was a "greater Leap" in woman-work to expand its previous efforts. At the February Executive Standing Committee meeting of the ACWF, the ACWF proposed further mobilization of women for the continued Great Leap and movement away from organizing domestic labor to comprehensively organizing collective living (Cai, 1960).

The ACWF mobilization campaign for women's participation in social labor emerged under the theme of "red, diligent, ingenious and frugal" (hong, qin, qiao, jian). It called for devotion to correct political ideology and a hardworking spirit while preserving women's physical strength through technical innovation and the improvement of tools in the context of an acute shortage of material resources. To further solicit women's Great Leap spirit, the ACWF joined hands with eight other organizations to hold a grand broadcasting conference on March 8th to celebrate the 50th

⁶²She was rehabilitated in July 1962 when the failure of the Great Leap Forward was formally admitted and policies were revised (Bangongting, 1991). Criticism of Cao and other cadres was summarized in a commentary in Zhongguo funu (ZGFN, 1959).

anniversary of International Women's Day, in recognition of 6,305 model women and 3,697 women's groups that had made distinctive contributions to the Great Leap (Bangongting, 1991).

One of the highlights of the 1960 GLF was urban people's communes. In March, the National Trade Union and the ACWF held a joint conference that discussed organizing collective living in cities. The ACWF also conducted an on-the-spot meeting in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on woman work in urban communes. This meeting was followed by a national telephone conference attended by provincial Fulian leaders. In May, to celebrate the approaching International Children's Day on June 1, the ACWF, with other three organizations, commended 10,002 individuals and groups for their model work in child care and education. The ACWF also conducted another on-the-spot meeting in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, promoting collective child care in cities.

Meanwhile, the ACWF began another round of propaganda and discussions about women's liberation. The study of Marxist, Leninist and Mao's works was promoted for the first time by the ACWF.⁶³ There was also extensive discussion of women's

⁶³ ACWF Secretariat secretary Wu Qing led a work team to Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces to investigate how housewives studied Marxist, Leninist and Mao Zedong's works to prepare for the national youth on-the-spot-meeting on these works. At the meeting, she made the speech "mobilize women more broadly and deeply to study Marxist, Leninist and Mao's works" (Bangongting, 1991).

liberation by ACWF leaders and in ACWF publications.⁶⁴ All these discussions reiterated arguments about women's participation in social labor, about the commune and the socialization of housework, and about relationships between women's liberation and the Great Leap, except they were more voluntaristic in tone. The ACWF said that urban communes would turn all women into workers and social laborers. It predicted that in communist societies there would be no housewives staying home taking care of household chores because laboring women would not want to be housewives, they would be workers. The ACWF used the example of urban women who did not want to be called "housewives" or "family dependents" after they went out to work. It claimed:

"family dependents," a term left over from history would be eliminated in the future. Some years later, all people will be laborers, will be commune members. The elderly will still be commune members after retirement. In the future, from each according to ability, to each according to need will be practiced, the elderly will not need the support of children in their old age, and children will not depend on their parents. All people, be they men or women, adult or children, will be rid of subordinate relationships and become social members with complete equality (FNGZ, 1960, 8:12).

⁶⁴ Some major discussions included, "ten years of victorious marching forward for the Chinese women", Zhongguo funu summary (ZGFN, 1959, 18:2-4), FNGZ special comment, "Be an active promotor of urban people's communes" (FNGZ, 1960, 8:11-15), speeches by ACWF secretaries Luo Qiong and Tian Xiujian entitled "the people's commune is the route for the complete liberation of women in our country" and "train children into successors of Communist cause," respectively (Bangongting, 1991:129). ACWF Chairwoman Cai Chang's article was entitled "proceed along the road to women's complete liberation directed by Lenin" (ZGFN, 1960, 9:1-4).

Despite their optimism, the communist utopia was slipping away quicker than it approached. The national economy continued to deteriorate. The summer harvest declined over the previous year. By the middle of 1960, acute shortages of grain, non-staple food products and articles of everyday use took its toll on people's lives and health. Mao and the CCP leadership realized the mistake of hasty transformation to communism and made adjustments in agricultural policy. However, the escalated conflict in Sino-Soviet relations⁶⁵ led Mao to insist on continuing the steel drive. The target for steel production was finally reached with great difficulty, but the national economy was severely imbalanced and in deep crisis. This ended the Great Leap Forward movement.

Legacy of the Great Leap

The three-year Great Leap Forward ended tragically at great cost. Its toll on the country inevitably affected the women's movement, since the scope of loss was so great. Heavy industry witnessed a great leap in its output value and an exaggerated proportion in national economy at the expense of agriculture and light industry. Both agriculture and light

⁶⁵ In summer of 1960, a series of events occurred between China and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union first unilaterally canceled the 1957 agreement providing samples and data on nuclear bombs. It later tore up its other economic and technological contracts with China. Khrushchev abruptly recalled the 1,400 Soviet scientists and industrial specialists working in some 250 Chinese enterprises. Sino-Soviet hostilities came into the open (Cong, 1989).

industry leaped backward, which resulted in a severe shortage of grain and light industrial products that were much needed in people's daily life. Overheated capital construction consumed resources needed for agricultural and light industrial development and efficiency declined. State finances suffered from a huge deficit, inflation, and rising prices.

All placed a heavy toll on people's lives. The shortage in commodities, especially in agricultural and non-staple food products, caused great difficulty in people's lives for at least for three years (1959-1961). The standard of living plunged, as did people's health. A large number of abnormal deaths occurred. It was estimated that the excess deaths and the massive fertility deficits during and immediately after the Leap meant about 40 million lost lives.⁶⁶ Economic losses during the three years of the Leap were estimated at 120 billion yuan. Moreover, it took another five years of economic restructuring to restore the national economy to the level of national production in 1957. The Great Leap resulted in an eight-year of loss in terms of economic development (Cong, 1989).⁶⁷

What was the legacy of the Great Leap Forward for the women's movement? The immediate reappraisal by the ACWF after

⁶⁶ See Cong, 1989. Another Chinese demographer gives a similar estimate. He estimated that births lost or postponed amounted to some 25 million during 1958-1962, and the number of excess deaths at about 14.2 million (Peng, 1987).

⁶⁷ There have been different estimates of the cost of the Leap. See Meissner, 1986, Bachman, 1991, Peng, 1987.

the GLF as well as the most recent ones have mainly been negative. At a national conference of ACWF attended by provincial Fulian leaders held at the end of 1961, the main problems of woman work during the GLF were viewed as follows:

1) a one-sided emphasis on the importance of women's participation in production outside the home, disregard for women's physiological characteristics and the low level of development of productive forces, resulted in unintended negative effect;

2) impractical demands to achieve the socialization of domestic labor in too short a time, promotion of incorrect slogans such as "establishing public welfare in a big way," "running dining halls in a big way" and "achieving collective child care overnight." These practices were divorced from the reality of economic development and encouraged rash advance; and

3) an erroneous assessment of women's liberation that claimed that the historical task of Chinese women's complete liberation was in the main completed and that women's liberation had entered a new stage. The claim by some ACWF leaders and local Fulian branches that Fulian could be eliminated was also a misstep that negatively affected women (Dangdai, 1989).

Later assessments by the ACWF of the GLF legacy for women-work ⁶⁸ acknowledged some achievements and progress by

⁶⁸ See Luo Qiong, 1980a.

women. These included the enthusiasm and creativity women demonstrated in their participation in the GLF and their achievements (e.g., some small street enterprises began by women during the Great Leap flourished). However, the ACWF's insistence on the correct direction of women's participation in production outside home and the socialization of domestic labor during the GLF period on the whole was viewed as representing an "error" (shiwu) or "deviation" (piancha) on women work, and thus a setback to the women's movement.

The GLF was regarded as a "deviation" in the sense that it deviated from the two-diligence principle mapped out at the Third National Women's Congress in 1957. It was also seen as a deviation in the sense that woman work during this period was under the influence of the erroneous "leftist" Party line. William Joseph (1984) discussed how the labels "Left" and "Right" were used to identify certain trends within the CCP elite and the ideological deviation they symbolized and how the identification and critique of these trends became an important part of China's post-liberation history. The "leftist" mistakes of the GLF were summarized as the "five winds."⁶⁹ ACWF leaders admitted that they were guilty of involving in "blowing the five winds." For example, they set

⁶⁹ The so-called five styles or five winds (wu feng) were "communist wind" (gongchan feng), commanderism (minglingzhuyi) privilege seeking, blind direction of production without due regard for local conditions (xiazhihui shengchan), and exaggeration (fukua) of targets and results and privilege seeking by cadres (ganbu teshu) (Joseph, 1984:74, 95).

high targets, promoting that the more women attended to social labor and the heavier the work they engaged in the better because it meant a greater degree of liberation. They also admitted that the ACWF's push for universal socialization of domestic labor blindly followed the needs of the GLF and the winds of communism. In addition, ACWF leaders acknowledged that they made utopian assumptions about the relationship between the Leap and the transition to communism and exaggerated their assessment of achievements toward women's liberation. One of the consequences of these practices was damage to women's health. According to typical cases studies, over 20% of rural women suffered from prolapsed uterus, 50% to 80% of women laborers in rice planting areas suffered from amenorrhoea (or loss of menstruation), and male and female laborers died resulting in increased orphans, higher child mortality rates, and the return to purchased marriages (Luo, 1980a). External evaluations of the legacy of the GLF for women was similar to those of the ACWF.⁷⁰

In my opinion, these evaluations raised two major issues. First, political struggle within the Party along with the state's development strategy had a tremendous impact on both the condition of women and the state of the women's movement. This was especially obvious during the GLF and communalization when the ACWF had to quickly adjust to rapid shifts in Party

⁷⁰See Ji, Tang and Huang, 1992, Qing, et al, 1989, Ren, 1989.

politics. However, the history of the women's movement is not the same as the Party history. There is a tendency among Fulian cadres and some scholars to confuse the two. As a result, the history of the women's movement is sometimes seen as a reflection of the Party history. Thus, if the Party was guilty of "leftist" mistakes during the GLF, so was the women's movement. This tendency prevents us from examining aspects or indicators that are specific to the women's movement. Very often, political jargon in CCP politics such as the "leftist influence" conceals rather than reveals its implications for women and the women's movement. For example, although both the GLF and the Cultural Revolution periods were regarded as times when the ultra-"leftist" tendency was rampant within the Party, the impact of each period on women was not the same. For one thing, women's issues and women's involvement were among the central focus of the Great Leap while they were very marginal to the Cultural Revolution.

Moreover, not all "deviations" from the changing Party line were bad. As discussed previously, the way the two-diligence principle came about indicated a setback in the women's movement. It was signified by the silencing of the discussion of women's liberation and the effort to shift women's attention from the public sphere to the family. The Great Leap Forward campaign revived the discussion of these issues, including the critique of the patriarchal family system. So for women it was not a bad thing to "deviate from

the two-diligence principle." Other positive impacts of the GLF period for women included:

1) the inspiration women got from the slogan "women can do everything and can do everything well" and the opportunities to be involved in various tasks and projects, including women's increased access to managerial positions within the commune. The slogan helped develop social morality on sexual equality, although the slogan contained dilemmas and contradictions;

2) women's participation in social labor on a large scale. Although many women returned home in the years after the Leap, many stayed in the labor force. The GLF created employment opportunities for urban housewives, and established the pattern of urban women's employment. For rural women, it provided the last opportunity before the reform era to migrate to cities and find employment in a large number. Many rural women received their own wages for the first time.

3) discussion and experiment in socialization of domestic labor. The GLF was the only time that this issue was dealt with in a structural way through change in the institution of the family. The GLF also challenged the sexual division of labor. Socialization was welcomed by women at first, but there were many problems associated with it.⁷¹ The problems

⁷¹Take the mess hall for example. Exaggerated harvest reports, changed consumption patterns, the rush and pressure to have all places conform to the universal standard set up for community dining halls, their ill-management and their disruption to peasant lives all contributed to their collapse.

associated with the Leap marred the experiment in the socialization of domestic labor and prevented people from examining the value of the experiment and the lessons that the women's movement could learn from it. The tendency to mix Party history up with the history of the women's movement hindered the effort to view it from a gender perspective. This tendency was in part a result of the ACWF's loss of its independent identity and a clear vision for the women's movement beginning with the Third National Congress in 1957. The potential opportunity provided by the Great Leap Forward for a discussion of such a vision was unfortunately swept away by the critique of "leftist" mistakes of the Leap, in the same way as Fulian cadres' several attempts to independently reflect on women's situation and policy on women before and during the Leap were stopped the Party's struggle against "rightist tendencies."

Another issue the Great Leap Forward raised directly and dramatically was the issue of women's special interests, or in Molyeux's words, women's practical gender interests and needs. These are needs which arise from women's attempt to fulfil traditional and/or modern obligations imposed by the sexual division of labor whereas women's strategic gender interests derive from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory, set of arrangements to those which exist (Molyneux, 1985). During

the first seven years of the PRC, the pursuit of women's strategic and practical gender interests were relatively cohesive and integrated. After that, there seemed to be a disjuncture between the conflicting goals pertaining to women's strategic and practical gender interests. While the Great Leap revived discussion of women's liberation and touched on some important issues crucial to women's strategic gender interests, such as socialization of domestic labor, women participating in production outside home and breaking stereotype on women's roles, the Leap was negated because it disturbed people's lives and hurt women's practical gender interests. This is part of the reason why the "two-diligence principle" seemed more appealing and did not draw criticism even though its inception signified a setback for the women's movement. The Great Leap also raised the issues of special female interests, especially women's reproductive health, in a particularly direct way. The conflict between women's strategic and practical gender interests would appear again in subsequent decades.

As a radical, large scale social experiment, the Great Leap Forward left a complicated, paradoxical legacy for the women's movement. The same process of institutional change produced unintended and contradictory consequences for women.⁷² The revived discussion of women's liberation and concern for women's strategic gender interests overlooked

⁷² I am indebted to Mark Selden for this observation.

women's practical gender interests, and resulted in the CCP's and ACWF's overemphasis on the Leap's damage to women's reproductive health. The Great Leap was a time when women-only groups were both popular and effective strategies to organize and empower women to allow them to play a central role in the activities in which they were involved and to fulfill state tasks. Yet it was also during the Leap that the necessity of Fulian as a separate woman's organization was challenged. Women's large scale participation in social labor constituted progress but also the feminization of service jobs. In an era when material incentives were scorned and when the emphasis was on everyone contributing his/her most to communism disregarding payment, it was impossible to talk about the principle of equal pay for equal work for women even though this was central to women's strategic gender interests. While collectivization of agriculture provided rural women with opportunities to work outside the home, it also led to stricter controls over individual lives and reduced autonomy for peasant households. One issue directly related to women was that their ability for sideline household production such as raising chickens, pigs and silkworm, and vegetable growing, was reduced, as was their access to the local free market to sell their goods. This led to women's reduced contribution to the household as well as control over family resources. This also directly affected the standard of living of peasant households. Chinese rural women, like

other Third World women, view economic survival of the household as a women's issue. Accompanying collective farming was the low level of commodification of farm produce and low level of commercialization of services and products for everyday use. This increased women's burden in domestic labor, worsening the problem of double burden.

Other contradictions included the rural/urban dichotomy which tended to exaggerate differences and divide women. The communization that began with the Great Leap and the city residence registration system established in 1963 tied peasants to the land. As a result, rural women's chances of going to cities through marriage and employment were greatly reduced, while urban women's employment was incorporated into the state plan. The experiences of rural and urban women grew further apart. The commune strengthened the declining market town system⁷³ and contributed to the continued practice of patrilocal marriage. The economic difficulties caused by the "three difficult years" during and after the Leap lowered peasants' standard of living. The revival of bride price and purchased marriages was said to be direct result of this (Luo, 1980a).

Part of the reason for these paradoxical consequences was that many Leap programs and policies directly affecting women were not developed with the primary concern of changing

⁷³ For communes and the market town system, see Skinner, 1964-65.

women's positions and conditions; policies concerning women were a spin-off of general policies. As a consequence, they embedded the contradictions between Party/state and women. Fluctuation in women's employment and the feminization of service jobs were two examples of those contradictions. Another problem was that these policies were developed under the same narrow theoretical framework on the women question; i.e., simple emphasis on the change of social relations and organizations of production. Mao's quote about women's liberation was typical of such an approach. Women's causes were subsumed by causes of the Party/state.

In sum, the Great Leap period constituted a unique page in the history of the women's movement in China, and the issues it raised need to be studied more deeply. For the ACWF, it began with a critique of the "two-diligence principle" and of the orientation to direct women's energy to home management. As will be shown in the next chapter, the failure of the Leap would bring it back to the "two-diligence principle" and a focus to serve women's practical gender needs until this was replaced by the emphasis on class struggle.

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THE ALL-CHINA WOMEN'S FEDERATION, CHINESE WOMEN AND
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:1949-1993

Volume II

By

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CHAPTER VIII

IN BETWEEN GENDER AND CLASS: 1961-1978

This chapter looks at the ACWF in between 1961 and 1978. The year 1961 began with a large scale retreat from the radicalism of the Great Leap Forward in order to deal with the grave economic crisis and other problems associated with that campaign. The CCP adopted adjustment policies to address the problems left by the Great Leap. These policies worked. By the end of 1963, the national economy recovered, aspects of work that were affected by the radicalism were back on track, and the ACWF was able to focus on serving women's practical gender needs. Yet the increasing emphasis on class struggle finally led China into another political upheaval -- the decade long Cultural Revolution (CR) breaking out in 1966. The national organization of the ACWF disbanded and did not resume its function until after the end of the 10 year's turmoil.

Economic Adjustment and Woman Work: 1961-1966

A discussion of the ACWF and its work after the Great Leap has to begin with a general review of the political, economic and social context in which it was operating. The Ninth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee was convened at

the beginning of 1961. It formally adopted the principle of "adjustment, consolidation, enrichment, and improvement" which had been proposed at the end of 1960. The new economic policy brought a series of major changes in development strategies in the following years, including: adjustment of the national economic structure; reduction of the size of the commune, lowered levels of ownership to production teams, opening up of free markets, and reduced urban population.

The economic realm was not the only domain that required adjustment in the aftermath of the Leap. Measures were also taken to alleviate tension between the party/state and society. Mistakes of the Great Leap were openly admitted by some state leaders, followed by a flurry of apologies and compensation. A large number of people who were wronged in political campaigns since 1957 had their cases reexamined and their names rehabilitated.¹ Specific efforts were made to repair damaged state relationships with some groups, including returned overseas Chinese, ethnic minority groups, and intellectuals. The property of families of overseas Chinese taken during the Leap was returned and an effort was made to stop discriminating or discrediting relatives of overseas Chinese.

The CCP also tried to resolve problems resulting from grave violations of human rights during the suppression of a

¹These included individual cadres and people who were wrongly accused as "rightists" in 1957, as "white flag holders" in 1958, and as "right opportunitists" in 1959.

rebellion in Qinghai province in 1958² as a way of acknowledging misguided policies for ethnic minority groups. Some state leaders openly acknowledged that the majority of intellectuals were part of the laboring people rather than the bourgeois class. New regulations encouraged free exchange of academic opinion, individual creativity and initiative in scientific research.³ Although these measures were inadequate and could not completely solve the problems, they did reduce tension and create a more open political atmosphere.

At the same time, the CCP also engaged its cadres in criticism of their working methods and leadership styles. The failure of the Leap was attributed to cadres' lack of understanding of people's needs, local conditions and their inability to implement Party policy properly which alienated the masses. There was a call to strengthen mass organizations to reflect the needs of their constituencies and enhance ties between the Party/state and society.

² The military effort to put down the rebellion that broke out in Qinghai Province in 1958 tragically implicated many people who were not even involved in the rebellion. Over 50,000 people (10% of the total Mongolian and Tibetan population of the province), were arrested. In Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture where no rebellion took place, 21% of the residents were arrested. Many died in crowded prisons. Reexamination of the case in 1981 showed that 44,556 people were wrongly arrested and convicted. Among them, 23,260 people died while being held and 173 others were put to death. Temples were also destroyed. Problems in crushing the Tibetan rebellion in 1959 were also addressed in a limited fashion (Cong, 1989).

³ See speeches of State leaders Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi and Nie Rongzhen on the subject in 1961 and 1962, and "14 Articles on Scientific Research" (Cong, 1989).

Many China observers have studied the political struggles within the CCP party elite in post-revolutionary China. Craig Dietrich (1986) described the conflict as between two approaches to nation building: revolutionary transformation versus institutional development. The former approach was adopted by Party Chairman Mao, who sought social transformation and more justice through mass mobilization. The latter was represented by State leaders, Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, who pushed for economic development through more regularized and bureaucratized means. This split became sharper and more acute in the late 1950s when everything else was more stable. Andrew Nathan (1990) discussed the interchanging pattern of mobilization followed by a retreat to law and order. Both perspectives make sense when used to examine the transition from the Leap to the adjustment period. In this period, Mao resigned from the post of PRC president, leaving Liu and his more pragmatic colleagues to take charge of the day-to-day management of the state affairs. The years of the adjustment, especially the initial years from 1961 to 1963, were characterized by efforts to bring economic stability and socio-political order. A slew of working regulations were mapped out.⁴ State leaders

⁴Beside the regulations on the people's commune, referred to as "60 Articles on the People's Commune" (March 1961), there were "40 Articles on Commerce" (June 1961), "35 Articles on Handicraft Industry" (June 1961), "14 Articles on Scientific Research" (July 1961), "60 Articles on Higher Education" (September 1961), "70 Articles on Industry" (September 1961), "8 Articles on Art and Literature" (August

resorted to the agreed upon institutions to achieve their goals. These institutions included the Party and State apparatus as well as mass organizations.⁵ Greater attention was paid to people's lives in order to help them survive the difficult time (referred to as "three-year difficult period").

The interests of non-class based groups were once again acknowledged. This provided a push to woman work. In the initial years of the adjustment, the ACWF focused on meeting women's practical gender needs, rebuilding grassroots branches and regaining its organizational strength. Of course, the organization became more bureaucratic as it was pulled further into the state hierarchy.

However, Mao's line and influence were not totally out of the scene. After Mao declared "never forget class struggle," and "Class struggles should be talked about daily, monthly, yearly" at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Congress in 1962, the alarm of class struggle rang louder and louder. During the Socialist Education Movement (end of 1963 through 1964), class struggle gradually took priority on the CCP agenda and led to the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. The conflict

1962) and "18 Articles on Forestry" (Cong, 1989).

⁵After a series of meetings within the Party to gain consensus among all levels on the new directions, the Summit Meeting on State Affairs, the People's Congress and People's Political Consultation Meeting were convened to openly discuss mistakes of the Leap and measures to overcome the difficulties. The three major mass organizations were all pushed to consolidate their organizations to function more effectively.

between focusing on meeting women's practical gender needs and the pressure to serve the interests of class struggle became the central issues of woman work for the ACWF from 1962 to 1966.

Retreat of Woman-Work from the Leap

The ACWF's work after the Leap focused on "adjustment." Beginning in 1961, the ACWF reduced publication of Zhongguo funu from twice monthly to monthly. In March, it dismissed the Women Cadres's School in response to the Party's call to streamline the administrative structure (Bangongting, 1991).⁶ In June, the Presidium met to propose postponing the Fourth National Women's Congress scheduled for 1961.⁷ The reason given for the delay was to simplify and to be thrifty in managing affairs at a time of economic difficulty. A deeper, unspoken reason may very well be that there was not much to talk about amid the political difficulties and uncertainties of the adjustment. Frank discussion was confined to leaders of organizations. The Trade Union and the Youth League also delayed their congresses. The ACWF presidium meeting also passed the "Ten Stipulations on Investigation" which

⁶ The ACWF was the only mass organization that did so. As a matter of fact, as the training of cadres was emphasized after the Leap, the Party Cadre school was expanded. It is not clear why the ACWF made this decision. The ACWF Cadre School reopened in 1979.

⁷ The decision was formally adopted by the Third Meeting of the ACWF Executive Committee in April 1962 (Bangongting, 1991).

stipulated that ACWF cadres from the department level and higher had to spend at least four months investigating the grassroots units (ACWF, 1961). Investigation and "seeking the truth from fact" were two themes underlying the ACWF's adjustment in work, the themes emphasized at the CCP's Ninth Plenum as ways to combat commanderism, exaggeration and other mistakes made by Party cadres during the Leap.

Intense grassroots investigations by cadres at all levels characterized the ACWF's work in 1961. These investigations were marked by genuine concern for women's needs and led to numerous policy suggestions. Once again, the ACWF provided important input into CCP policy making and implementation.

In the countryside, the impact on women and children of the newly-drafted 60 Articles on the People's Commune was the focus of investigation. After the 60 Articles were issued in March, workteams led by the first Secretary of the ACWF Secretariat, Luo Qiong, and Secretary Li Baoguang went to nine communes in five provinces. Their investigation resulted in suggestions to the drafting committee (Bangongting, 1991). These issues were further elaborated in the two reports the ACWF later sent to the central CCP: "On Labor Protection Policy for Rural Women," covering farm work assignments to women, measures protecting women during their four periods (periods of menstruation, pregnancy, delivery and breast feeding), prevention and treatment of women's gynecological illness, and regular checks by brigade and Commune leaders on

the labor protection policy implemented at the production team level. The second report, "On Child Care Organizations in Rural Areas," acknowledged the problem of pressuring mothers to send their children to full-time, universal child care run by the collective and made recommendations regarding schedules and types of care, as well as wages for care givers (ACWF, 1961). Both reports were distributed by the CCP to leaders at the county level and higher for work concerning women in rural people's communes (CCP, 1961).

The focus of investigation in cities was on women workers and wives of male workers. For example, five leaders from the ACWF Secretariat went to work in a textile factory in Shanghai for the month of July. They helped streamline workers in the factory as part of the enormous national effort to remove urban workers to the countryside so as to reduce the pressure on material provisions for the urban population. In their report to the CCP summarizing their experience, they pointed out that some workers could be persuaded to go back to the countryside as a way to reduce urban population, but the numbers were limited. Other recommended measures included encouraging family planning to control natural population growth. In September, the ACWF Party Committee invited leaders from 12 industries to discuss provisions relating to women and children in the Regulations on the Management of State-run Industrial Enterprises (i.e., 70 Articles On Industry). Based on the meeting and the investigations ACWF

leaders conducted in factories, the ACWF wrote a report to the central CCP making suggestions on some articles of the regulation. In December, after investigations in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin on urban women's fertility, the health of mothers and children and their standard of living, the ACWF wrote "Report on Continuous Implementation of Family Planning in Cities." It stated that continuous promotion of family planning in cities was needed to fulfill the needs of individuals and the state (Bangongting, 1991).

Altogether in 1961, ACWF leaders from the Beijing headquarters conducted investigations in 11 provinces, autonomous regions and cities, covering 23 rural People's Communes, 11 urban people's communes, and 7 industrial enterprises. The headquarters received more than 500 investigative reports from its branches. The reports illuminated woman-work and grassroots women's organizations throughout the country. These issues became the central topics of an ACWF forum in mid-November (Bangongting, 1991) and then a national ACWF conference in December.

At the two-week long national conference, the attenders evaluated woman-work during the Great Leap and discussed the draft on "Tasks and Working Method for Women's Delegate Meetings at the Grassroots Level." CCP General Party Secretary Deng Xiaoping spoke at the meeting about tendencies of the Leap to ignore the concrete, day-to-day work among the

people and "hanker after hustling and exciting scenes." He said:

If a person is engaged in campaigns all year round, he will lose his energy, and turn to exaggeration and formalism, this is in actuality against the will of the masses. This alienates the masses and it is a fatigue strategy (Bangongting, 1991:141).

Deng emphasized the importance of meeting people's needs and relying on grassroots organization to do the work:

Only by establishing work at the grassroots level, by engaging in day-to-day work can there be hopes for putting (policies) into effect. Otherwise, (you) can only make appeals and write out instructions, they go down like stones thrown into the sea, not a shadow will be seen (Bangongting, 1991:141).

Deng proposed once again that the ACWF take up the "two-diligence principle" as its central task. "Building up the country and managing the household with diligence and frugality, this slogan should not be changed for ten years, stick to it to the end." He also said that woman-work should "discuss the important issues and manage women's own business" (yi da shi, guan ben hang) (Bangongting, 1991:141).

Deng's speech again specified the typical dual role the ACWF was expected to play as a mass women's organization. "Important issues" here meant state affairs, "own business" meant work specific to women. Deng stressed that the "two slogans (two diligence) should be joined together. It is not enough to emphasize just one." (Bangongting, 1991:141). This was a bit different from the emphasis on home management when the principle was first adopted in 1957. Given the circumstances at the time, to emphasize both production and

the welfare and livelihood of the people so as to help overcome difficulties was essential. Deng's speech acknowledged the needs of specific social groups and legitimized work among them by separate organizations.

His suggestions --in Chinese official language, his instructions -- were adopted by the ACWF. Women of China carried an article in January 1962, entitled, "Managing the Household with Diligence and Frugality Is an Important Aspect of Country Building." An ACWF circular issued in February on the International Women's Day celebration again specified the "two-diligence principle" as its central task, thus completing the policy shift started in 1957 in the previous period.

Catering to Women's Practical Gender Needs

Before class struggle became the top issue, the ACWF tried to play its dual task, with a strong emphasis on meeting women's practical gender needs.

Working for state issues

One of the state issues at the time was to address problems associated with the Leap. At the 10th Presidium Meeting in July 1962, Cao Guanqun, the ACWF Secretary who was accused for "rightist tendency" during the Leap, was rehabilitated and regained her position. Other issues on the agenda were treatment of women's illness, enforcement of labor protection measures for women and resolution of childcare problems. These issues were of immediate concern to women,

but they also got on the state agenda because they were considered problems left over from the Leap.

Investigations continued to be an important part of ACWF's work after 1961.⁸ These investigations covered a wide range of issues. Those directly related to women included: activities of women's organizations, women's participation in production, the burden of housework (1962), family planning and education of children (1963), and the continued practice of footbinding by a large number of women in Yunnan province (1964). But more investigations reflected challenges for rural areas such as corruption of cadres, deaths of large draft animals, distribution of the grain from the summer harvest, and experiments that contracted sweet potato plots to households that reduced the number of people who consumed commercial grain.⁹ Reports on these issues provided authorities with better understanding of the severity of the difficulties confronting the countryside. They also touched on some sensitive issues under debate such as the experiment to allow peasants to contract collective land and work on their own. It is a pity that the content of actual reports is unavailable. It would be interesting to see what position ACWF cadres took on this issue.

⁸ There were six major investigations carried out by ACWF top leaders in 1962, three in 1963, and one 1964 (Bangongting, 1991).

⁹ For topics of the investigations in that year, see Bangongting, 1991.

Since agriculture was regarded as the basis of the national economy and the entire country was gathering its resources to promote grain production, the ACWF also emphasized work in the countryside. Of the six investigations conducted by workteams led by the ACWF Secretariat in 1962, five were done in the countryside. The ACWF encouraged women to contribute to collective production in the field, especially in places where there were labor shortages. It focused propaganda on the "correct handling of the relationship among the state, the collective and the individual" to encourage women to have faith in socialism and the collective economy and to promote the idea that the state and collective should have priority before the individual. Only by building a strong and prosperous state and collective could individual households and members have better lives. This idea was not new, but it gained prominence at a time when everyone needed to work together to overcome difficulties. Rural organization was undergoing changes after the Leap to address problems caused by the rapid expansion of communes. Nevertheless, the collective farming system remained and was consolidated through the adjustment. "The ideological education of women" thus became an important part in consolidating the collective economy.¹⁰

¹⁰ There was much discussion of this in ACWF journals. The ACWF Secretary, Tian Xiujian, also conducted an investigation on this issue in Shandong Province in 1962 (Bangongting, 1991).

The ACWF also encouraged women to engage in sideline or household production for the newly-opened local free market and for household consumption. Zhejiang Fulian, for example, required all its branches to help women raise pigs (Zhejiang Fulian, 1961). Traditional women's activities such as weaving, sewing, embroidery, silk worm raising, and beekeeping were promoted again by the ACWF after being discouraged in some places during the coop campaigns. The ACWF resumed its practice of naming models of thrifty and diligent household management for other women to emulate.¹¹

In cities, the ACWF promoted production and frugal household management and helped the state reduce the number of employees and urban residents. From May to October of 1962, 19,999 heavy industrial enterprises above the county level were eliminated, not including those eliminated in 1961: 44,000 enterprises were closed, with 9.66 million workers. By the end of 1960, about 44.8% of the enterprises had been closed and 45% of 21.44 million workers had been relocated (Cong, 1989:29). The Great Leap witnessed the largest migration of rural women to cities; 2.5 million women became urban employees, comprising 11% of new workers that came from the countryside. They were among those whose jobs were eliminated during the adjustment period. About 70% of them

¹¹For example, Guo Heng of Bailin Brigade, Yanyi commune of Hebei Province was model for frugal grain consumption (ZGFN, 1962, 1:7).

were returned. Those who remained were largely women textile workers (Hang, cited in Tan,1994).

Employees who came to the cities before 1957 who could return to the countryside were also pressured to do so. Between 1961 and 1963, about 25.46 million urban employees were relocated. The number of women employees also dropped. At the end of 1960, the total number of women employees in state -owned enterprises was over 10 million. By 1963, the number was 6.56 million, a reduction of about 40% (Tan, 1994). In two and half years, the country witnessed a reduction of 18.87 million employees, 26 million urban residents, and 28 million people who consumed commercial grain (Cong,1989). Many were sent to the countryside. Zhongguo funu carried a report on women who went back to the countryside. Neighborhood Fulian activists persuaded the families of workers not to hold their husbands from going back.

In cities, the ACWF resumed the five-good family activities, stressing that wives and mothers of workers should do their best to manage the household so that their husbands and sons could do a good job at work. Housewives were also encouraged to claim waste land or small plots of land around their houses for growing grain, vegetables or other products to supplement their rationed food. They were also encouraged to engage in other types of production to earn money to help with household expenses. Beginning in 1962, Zhongguo funu

(women of China) carried tips for frugal household management. These included, for example, how to save coal, how to have shoes last longer, and how to make new garments from old clothes.

The ACWF also took up birth control and family planning in urban areas and selected rural area. The focus was on gathering information on the family planning situation and publicizing the importance of the health of mothers and children. Birth control, family planning and health care know-how constituted a large part of these publicity activities. Zhongguo funu markedly increased discussion about these matters and promoted new methods of child birth.

Consolidate Women's Organizations and Improve Leadership Style

Investigations in rural areas showed that 10% of the women's delegate meetings did not function. Some Fulian cadres from the commune were embarrassed to find that they were not welcomed by local brigade leaders who considered the women's delegates meeting useless and redundant. Even ordinary women were indifferent to them. The women did not consider women's delegates meetings as their own organizations or their "natal family." Women did not want to be delegates. Women did not like the way Fulian cadres acted as "women progogandaists" or talked to people as if they were "delivering verdicts to criminals" (ZGFN reporter, 1962:1).

The rectification and consolidation of the ACWF in the countryside occurred alongside implementation of the "60

Articles of the Rural People's Commune," especially Article 58 regarding mass organizations. The ACWF issued "Rules of Rural Grassroots Women's Delegates Meetings (draft)" to specify the structure of women's organizations in rural areas. These organizations would have women's groups on the production teams, organize women's delegate meetings at the brigade level and install a full-time Fulian director in every commune as the lowest Fulian cadre on the state payroll within the administration structure. The ACWF pushed very hard to have this position filled while organizing women to elect delegates and hold delegate meetings at the brigade level. As the rural commune was consolidated, the ACWF's grassroots structure in rural areas was also enhanced.

In cities, the organizational consolidation followed the ACWF's "Rule of Urban Neighborhood Grassroots Women's Delegate Meetings (draft)." The grassroots organizations were established at the residential district committee, the lowest full-time Fulian cadres with pay were Fulian directors at district committees. In two and one-half years, the ACWF completed its organizational restructuring in both rural and urban areas. The current five-layer ACWF organizational structure was consolidated during this time.¹²

¹² Although in the reform era, the commune was replaced by the township as the lowest administrative unit and the brigade was replaced by the village committee, the grassroots of the ACWF is still at the village level in rural areas and its structure in cities remains the same.

The ACWF discovered that training people who staffed the structure and the activists on which the structure was based was a weak link. Some of the Fulian cadres did not want to do woman-work, and especially did not want to leave the comfort of home and city life to go to the countryside. This first became an issue for the ACWF in the early '50s when the CCP took over cities (Johnson, 1983). The problem seemed to be worse in 1962. Mingled with this were the real difficulties women cadres faced trying to deal with work, studying, and housework as well as the discouraging lower status of doing woman-work within the CCP political hierarchy. In addition, some cadres and activists did not know how to carry out their work.

To help solve these problems, training of Fulian cadres and activists at the grassroots level began in 1961 in step with the rectification of rural communes. Some local Fulian compiled teaching materials for this purpose. One written by Beijing Fulian was reprinted in Zhongguo funu and Funu gongzuo and widely adopted. It covered work among rural women and leadership for women cadres.

The importance of understanding women's reality through an investigation informed by Party policy was stressed. Policies concerning women were part of the materials for cadre training so women cadres would be familiar with them and

implement them in their work.¹³ The importance of immersing oneself among the masses was also emphasized. The so-called da hu long working style (relying on mass mobilization and activities) was criticized. The ACWF required its cadres to do detailed, meticulous work among women to solve their concrete problems. The saying was that woman-work should begin from yi jia yi hu, yi ren yi shi, yi dian yi di (each family and each household, each person and each matter, and each bit and each drop), meaning doing detailed work to solve concrete problems women faced.¹⁴ This work style became the motto for Fulian cadres, and was reexamined only in the late 1980s.

To raise the morale of women cadres, Zhongguo funu organized a discussion, "What do women live for?," in 1963 about relations between work, children and housework (1963,11:1). In 1964, Funu gongzuo discussed "Not Wanting to Do Woman-work -- Is It Due To Problems in Reality or Due to Erroneous Thinking?" The two discussions will be covered in greater detail later.

Addressing Women's interests and Needs

Acknowledgement of women's special needs and interests and the duty of women's organizations to address these

¹³Blaming cadres' lack of understanding of Party policies as the cause of mistakes made during the Leap put the blame on low level cadres implementing the policy rather than state leaders developing the policy.

¹⁴ There were many discussions of this, for example, see FNGZ commentary, 1963 and FNGZ short commentary, 1964.

concerns was the central feature of Fulian's work during the adjustment period. "Teaching Materials for Professional Work Among Rural Women," written by Beijing Fulian (1962) and promoted by the Central Fulian, was impressively women oriented and detailed. It contained five lectures: women's participation in collective production and their special problems; showing solicitude for the lives of women and children; organizing women to study Party policies; working methods and the working styles of women cadres.¹⁵ A majority of these tasks catered to women's reproductive functions and their responsibilities in the gender division of labor. Helping women meet these needs was regarded as the "professional" task of the ACWF, as a "big matter" (copy of Deng Xiaoping's words) and as "important political work."¹⁶

¹⁵. The first lecture was on women's participation in collective production and their special problems. It discussed mobilizing women to participate in production according to the needs of production and the potential of women, earnestly implementing the policy of equal pay for equal work, more work, more pay, organizing women to study techniques for agricultural production, women's labor protection, and that woman team leaders should lead women in production. The second lecture was on showing solicitude for the lives of women and children, and improving their health. Lecture three addressed organizing women to study Party policies, educating women, including specific policies on women. The fourth focused on working methods of women cadres, including reliance on the Party, reliance on the women's delegate meetings to do woman work, and reliance on the masses. The fifth covered the working styles of women cadres, including loving woman work, taking lead in labor, being selfless and fair, showing concern to the masses, and following the mass line.

¹⁶ See ZGFN article "Take Solving Immediate Problems of Women as Big Matter" ZGFN, 1962, 12:1-4. Also see Yang Zhihua, "Implement the Party Policy in Work among Women Workers in a Concrete Way," HUIBIAN, II:403-404.

The ACWF tackled the treatment of women's gynecological illness. It investigated women workers, women students and rural women to assess the prevalence of problems and coordinated with other organizations to prevent and treat illnesses.¹⁷

Women's labor protection was another central issue. In early 1959, the ACWF urged women to pay attention to their health, but this issue was put aside due to the "right opportunist tendency" criticism later that year. The problems were aggravated during the second half of 1960 and were clearly not confined to the countryside alone. A report jointly written by the Ministry of Labor, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the ACWF on labor protection for women workers revealed many problems such as some enterprises discriminated against and even dismissed pregnant women or women workers giving birth, some pregnant women did not want to disclose their pregnancy and continued to do heavy work that resulted in miscarriages; many nursing mothers did not have enough milk due to excessive hard work, lack of nutrition and guaranteed time to nurse the baby; and prolapse of uterus. Many women workers experienced irregular menstruation and miscarriages because of inappropriately

¹⁷For example, the ACWF issued a circular on "Prevention and Treatment of Menoxenia Among Women Students" jointly with Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Youth League in March 1961 (Bangongting, 1991). Treatment of rural women's problems was done by Ministry of Health with the cooperation of ACWF in particular.

assigned tasks. It was reported that the miscarriage rate in some enterprises reached 14.4%, the abortion rate was 8.3% in some other enterprises. In newly established street enterprises, workers did not have maternity leave, not to mention paid maternity leave as required by state regulation (Ministry of Labor, ACFTU, ACWF, 1960). These problems were attended to during the adjustment years. The measures proposed in this report and in an ACWF report on protection of rural female labor in 1961 became the basis for labor protection measures. The reports were added to the teaching materials for ACWF cadres and activists and to regulations pertaining to activities of grassroots organizations. Funu gongzuo was full of articles on how to do this work well, especially between 1961 and 1962.¹⁸

The issues of equal work, equal pay, more work, more pay for women were discussed more than labor protection in Funu gongzuo and Zhongguo funu. Concrete measures for implementation rather than the principle of pay equity was the focus of the discussion. In some reports, the objective was to strive for more pay rather than equal pay.¹⁹ Communes were

¹⁸ For example, articles mainly or exclusively about labor protection appeared in issues 2, 3, 4, 5-6, 7, 10-11 of 1961's Funu gongzuo (Woman Work), issues 1, 2, 3, and 7 of 1962's Funu gongzuo and began to phase out thereafter.

¹⁹ For example, in the Third Team of the Fifth Brigade of Minji Commune, Macheng county, Hubei Province, male members earned 10 to 12 work points performing miscellaneous tasks while women carrying manure made only 6 work points. Responding to the complaint of the women's representative, women were awarded 8 work points (Hubei Fulian workteam,

experimenting with ways to organize production and distribution and debating how to determine the basic work day and the work point system. They were trying out new things such as establishing a production quota and contracting farm tasks to households to elicit enthusiasm from peasants to increase production. These provided the context and urgency for the issue of equal work equal pay for women. Women's pay improved in places where there was a stronger push from women cadres and women's organizations for equal pay for women.²⁰

The issue of child care was constantly stressed. Child care issue was an original and consistent concern of the ACWF, similar to its commitment to women's participation in production. Although the intensity of work on childcare fluctuated with changes in the national economic and political situation, the ACWF did its best to keep the issue alive.

In retrospect, the issues emphasized by the ACWF during the early years of adjustment predominantly pertained to women's practical gender needs and to their duties based on the gender division of labor. Issues such as equal pay for

1962).

²⁰For example, at the Dongma Brigade Women's Delegate Meeting, women complained that they made only about half of the work points male commune members made lifting water to the paddy fields and that the basic work day quota was set too high for women so few could get a bonus. They also complained that women's work points had not been reviewed as men's had so there were mistakes in the records. These problems were later solved due to the push of the delegate meeting. Other measures were also introduced that catered to women's needs and interests (Changsha County Fulian, 1961). Also see Hubei Fulian workteam, 1962.

equal work, child care, and the establishment of women's organizations concerned women's strategic gender interests, affecting their position in society and in the family, as framed in the early '50s and during the Great Leap. In the adjustment period, however, the rationale was not on the emancipation of women, but on solving women's immediate and concrete problems so as to make their lives easier and raise their morale, allowing them to better perform their duties inside and outside the home. These things were considered politically important because they directly affected people's understanding and support for the larger revolutionary goals, especially at the difficult times. This was in line with the tradition of the mass line.

The ACWF noticeably increased its service role to women, as demonstrated in Zhongguo funu, where coverage of child care and education, women's health, household management, literature, art and entertaining increased. A special column on birth control and family planning began in 1963. The style of the journal changed, and had a more personal touch. It carried few editorials or documents. Opinion pieces appeared in the form of byline articles, and they were mainly about women's issues.²¹

In 1963, in response to a reader's letter to the editor claiming that a woman's luck lay in her ability to find a

²¹ For example, the Zhongguo funu Editor in Chief Dong Bian wrote several articles under her pen name.

husband with a good salary, Zhongguo funu began a discussion entitled "What Do Women Live For?" Readers responded warmly, as the magazine received about 2,000 responses. It published 39 of them and later produced a book collecting all the discussion on the issues (ZGFN, 1964). The discussion focused on the relationship between work and household duties. The main body of the discussion, including editorial comments of Zhongguo funu, stressed that women cadres should first contribute to society and the revolutionary cause. In addition, women cadres should be independent and demand an equal relationship with and mutual help from their husband in order to resolve the conflicts between work and the family with a revolutionary spirit. The discussion also acknowledged the existence of the double burden as well as hurdles and difficulties women faced in their careers and lives, male chauvinism at home and at work, and the legitimacy of demanding happiness and the improvement of people's lives (ZGFN, 1964).

In the following year, Zhongguo funu discussed "What Are the Standards for Choosing a Husband?" Funu gongzuo discussed "Not Wanting To Do Woman-work -- Is It Due To Problems in Reality or Due To Erroneous Thinking?" These discussions about women's concrete problems and concerns were carried out in a more open and truthful manner than before. They included different opinions and were different from the typical high sounding propaganda. They drew warm responses

from the readers, and the then Editor in Chief Dong Bian felt that Women of China was more like a woman's magazine and on the right track (Dong, 1991). This reflected a more relaxed political atmosphere associated with the adjustment. However, at the same time, the ACWF, together with the rest of the country, was also being pulled in another direction.

The Pressure of Class Struggle

Mao's warning, "Never forget about class struggle," was raised again in 1962 at the 10th plenary meeting of the Eighth Congress of the CCP. Mao was concerned that the Soviet Communist Party had turned revisionist, and that China should fight against Soviet revisionism on the international scene while trying to prevent it from taking root in China. In 1963, the CCP began the Four-Cleans campaign in the countryside²² and the Five-Antis campaign in cities.²³ On the ideological front, the state launched a national campaign to learn from the People's Liberation Army and its model soldier Lei Feng. The campaign stressed class education. As the national economy improved at the end of 1963, class struggle also heightened. In 1964, a socialist education movement built on

²² An investigation of how cadres determined work points, kept accounts, distributed supplies and handled warehouse and granaries.

²³ They were anti corruption, anti profiteering, anti waste, anti decentralism, and anti bureaucratism.

the "four-cleans" campaign spread throughout the countryside. These events influenced the ACWF.

The Moscow World Women's Conference

In June 1963, 47 Chinese women delegates led by ACWF Secretary, Yang Runyu, attended the World Congress of Women in Moscow. The guiding principles directing Chinese foreign policy in the '60s were anti-imperialism, anti-modern revisionism, anti-reactionaries and support for the revolutionary struggle of Asian, African, and Latin American nations. The conference was held at a time when Sino-Soviet relations were rapidly deteriorating. China opposed the political and military cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the Sino-Indian border conflict had intensified. The meeting became an arena for international politics.

The Chinese delegation criticized the leaders of the Soviet delegation and the Women's International Democratic Federation (W.I.D.F) for their control of the conference and charged that leaders of the Soviet Delegation were conducting an anti-China chorus. Their major criticism was that the congress did not oppose imperialism, especially American imperialism, but instead relied on U.S. and USSR leaders to prevent war. They argued that disarmament and peace should not be the central task of the women's movement. ACWF delegates further claimed that the congress did not support some nations' struggle for independence but talked about

women's feelings and morality in an abstract way. The Chinese delegates cast a vote against the two major documents of the conference, "Appeal to the Women of the World" and the "W.I.D.F. Program."²⁴ Seven other delegations also cast dissenting votes or abstained from voting. A women's rally was organized in Beijing to welcome the returning delegates. Yang reported on the Moscow Conference (Yang, 1963).

With changes in state relations between China and the USSR and other socialist countries, the ACWF's close relation with the Women's International Democratic Federation ended, as did the warm, non-official contact of the ACWF with women's organizations in those countries.

In October 1966, when the W.I.D.F organized a World Conference on Children in Stockholm, China did not send any delegates. The ACWF dispatched a statement criticizing the meeting as an instance of collaboration between the United States and the Soviet Union to control the world. It did not endorse the Statement of the Rights of Children by the UN and called the UN an instrument of the United States and a political bargaining place between the USSR and the US (ACWF, 1964). The ACWF's official contact with the W.I.D.F was cut off thereafter, as was its contact with outside world.

²⁴ For the Chinese delegate statement issued concerning these matters, see Peking Review, no.27, July 5, 1963. There was also an article on the congress in Peking Review, No.29, July 19, 1963.

"How to View the Women Question:" Class Interests vs Women's Interests

Back home, the growing emphasis on class struggle was manifested foremost on the ideological front -- in arts, literature, drama, film, philosophy, the social sciences, and in efforts to reform people's minds.

In 1964, the CCP's bi-monthly theoretical organ Hongqi (Red Flag) started a new column to criticize bourgeois thinking. One of its October issues ran an article by Wan mu-chun, entitled, "How to View the Woman Question." Wan Mu-chun was the pen name of Chen Boda, CCP's ultra-leftist theoretician. The article attacked the two discussions run by Zhongguo funu: "What Do Women Live For" and "What Is The Standard in Choosing a Husband." Wan asserted that there was no such a thing as a "women's world outlook" or a "men's" outlook in a class society because people were only divided by their class position. By talking about "women's problem, "women's" "duty," "women's happiness", the discussions:

look at the woman question only from the perspective of gender, ignoring the class division among women, cutting off the connection between women's liberation and the whole proletarian cause, and this is the so-called 'women's point of view' referred to by the bourgeois class (Wan, 1964:23).

The article refused to acknowledge the existence of the double burden women cadres faced in their lives because it claimed that "women with true revolutionary proletarian consciousness" would be able to "correctly arrange" all their

work and household duties "according to the revolutionary principle" (Wan, 1964:26). Wan stated that:

it is unthinkable that a revolutionary woman cadre would not know for what she is living, be confused about giving priority to what -- husband, children, family or revolutionary work -- it is unthinkable that she would be bothered by what to consider first when selecting a mate -- political conditions or economic conditions (Wan, 1964:26).

Such discussions were criticized for directing women's attention to trivial matters such as "family happiness," the "pay and rank of husband" or "what women live for." Worse, these often ACWF-initiated discussions allegedly spread bourgeois ideology by:

trying to use the theory of human nature as a talisman to purposefully cause confusion, spreading individualism and hedonism to women, and often using issues such as "family happiness" to divert their attention, sabotage the socialist consciousness of working women, harm their revolutionary determination and push them in the direction of capitalism and revisionism (Wan, 1964:27).

Chen Boda's opinion represented the ultra-leftist faction within the CCP. According to a recollection by Dong Bian, the Editor in Chief of Zhongguo funu at the time, Chen's article put enormous pressure on the journal and herself. She recalled that she and Cai Chang, the ACWF Chairwoman, were relieved when Peng Zhen, politburo member and head of the propaganda department, indicated that she did not have to make personal self-criticism about the discussions. Peng Zhen belonged to the group that was later attacked by the advocates of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), including Chen Boda. But the

pressure was there. Zhongguo funu reprinted Wan Mu chun's article in its November issue and abruptly stopped the discussion on choosing husbands. It also carried a film review by Zhong Wen that commented on the image of Tao Lan, a woman character, in the film "February of Early Spring." The review asserted that, contrary to the claim of some critics, Tao did not represent the "New Woman" in the 1920s who opposed feudal forces and pursued the right to free love and women's liberation. Instead, she was a self-centered bourgeois lady, a romantic among bourgeois professional women who pursued only individual happiness and freedom (Zhong, 1964).

As a matter of fact, the central issue around the film review was not to determine which of the two interpretations was more truthful to the original work. The issue at stake was the class nature of the main woman character in the film. Tao was criticized as a bourgeois individualist, what she pursued was "contemptible bourgeois 'free love,'" "or to be exact, freedom in sex. " What she displayed was "reactionary 'individual resistance'" or "'individual liberation.'" The article asserted that slogans such as individual resistance or liberation had some positive effect when they were first raised in the initial stage of the anti-feudal bourgeois revolution, but they turned out to be deceptive to the laboring people after the bourgeois class took power. When the proletariat rose to struggle, these slogans would hinder

the revolution and become counterrevolutionary in nature. The article said:

In the revolutionary struggle led by the Party, bourgeois individual resistance has always attempted to oppose the proletarian collectivism and the leadership of the Party. That is why to propagate individual resistance is extremely reactionary in today's socialist society. Its only purpose is to lead film viewers to oppose the system of proletariat democratic centralism, to oppose Party leadership. There is no other explanation.... To advocate individual resistance is the manifestation of anti-socialist thinking in the two line struggle (Zhong, 1964:15).

If, as Kay Ann Johnson (1983:180) commented, "the effect of Wan's article was that its assertion of issues of class and class struggle as the primary categories for understanding social problems led to a denial of gender as a significant social category," Zhong's article further showed how the

emphasis on fighting bourgeois culture and capitalist restoration led to a reactivation of the hostility which Marxist revolutionaries, in China as elsewhere, have often expressed toward feminism as a manifestation of bourgeois thinking (Johnson, 1983:180).

Zhong's article criticized the film for its "beautification of bourgeois humanism," and asserted that whether in the 1920s or in today's China, pursuit of individual liberation had no place in the revolutionary women's movement. Like Wan's article, Zhong's article indicated that under proletarian dictatorship women should have no special interests of their own but only common class interests with men. Thus, any pursuit of individual interests and happiness also lost its legitimacy and was perceived as a

potential threat to the collective interests and Party dictatorship.

As the class struggle mounted, the ACWF's focus on women's issues shifted. ACWF leaders had decided in November 1963 that as the general situation in the country improved they would hold the Fourth National Congress for Women in 1964. Preparation for the Congress remained on the agenda at an ACWF conference on woman-work in June 1964. However, after the CCP decided in September, 1964 to carry out the socialist educational movement on a large scale,²⁵ the ACWF had to send more of its cadres to join the movement. In October, nine ACWF secretaries left Beijing to lead work teams to rural areas in different provinces. Other ACWF cadres from the headquarters attended the movement in rural areas around Beijing. In December, at an ACWF executive meeting, Cai Chang reported that half of the ACWF directors at the provincial level and below were in the countryside. Deng Yingchao suggested postponing the Fourth National Congress on Women, because the socialist education movement required that leading members of Fulian at all levels continue with their work in the countryside, to remold themselves, and also to "find out women's present problems in practice and gain direct and comprehensive experiences in carrying out woman-work under the new circumstances." This would "make the most concrete, most

²⁵ This was indicated by passage of the second "ten points" concerning the socialist educational movement.

effective ideological and political preparation for the Congress" (Bangongting, 1991:168). Her suggestion was formally adopted by the meeting and this decision proved to be a fatal one. It delayed the Congress for another 15 years.

Politics in Command

Amid mounting emphasis on class struggle, the ACWF tried to continue its work on women's issues. For example, in 1965 it conducted an investigation of children's family, school, and after school education and the problems of child care in 19 factories in Shenyang city, Liaoning Province (Bangongting, 1991). It also continued to advocate for the promotion of women cadres.²⁶ The balance of its work, though, definitely tipped toward mobilization.

ACWF leaders were tied up with the socialist education movement. The first batch of national Fulian cadres, led by the nine secretaries, was dispatched to the countryside in October of 1964 and remained there until July of 1965. In September 1965, another batch of cadres led by Vice Chairwoman Kang Keqing and eight secretaries went to different rural villages and stayed until Spring 1966. Chairwoman Cai Chang

²⁶In October of 1965, Cai Chang spoke at the CCP meeting about the small proportion of leading women cadres at various levels, suggesting the Party cultivate and promote women cadres and help solve the difficulties they met in work and life. In November, the CCP passed an ACWF report on woman work during the socialist education movement to its lower Party branches that pointed out that the number of full time Fulian cadres at the county and commune level should not be further reduced, and suggested that Party organizations should pay attention to cultivation of women cadres (Bangongting, 1991).

conducted an investigation in Gaoyao county on a separate trip.

In carrying out the socialist education movement, the ACWF was not immune from the common mistakes made at the time. It emphasized that woman-work should also take "class struggle as the key link" and adopt a class analysis. As a result, in some places, cases of courtship or marriage between poor and lower-middle class peasants' decedents and the decedents of the landlords or rich peasants were treated as a new trend in the class struggle, as an attempt by landlords or rich peasants to corrupt the poor and lower-middle class peasants, or as the degeneration of the latter. Some production teams with surplus labor put a limit on the number of days women could work in the collective's fields to earn work points. This was regarded as impeding the emancipation of women, and led to the attack of production teams leaders (Qing, et al, 1989). Some local Fulian branches did self-criticism for naming women from middle class peasant families rather than from poor peasant families as models of diligent and thrifty household management (FNGZ, 1963a).

At that time, all issues were discussed in terms of class struggle -- marriage and wedding ceremonies and customs,²⁷

²⁷ see "Get Rid of Superstition, Give a Blow to the Remaining Feudal Force" (FNGZ, 1964.,8:21). "We Must have a Class View When Making Arrangement for Weddings" (FNGZ, 1965, 1-2: 10-12), "Shuli District Carries Out Propaganda destroy Old Customs and Establishing New Practices" (FNGZ, 1964, 12:16). Seven provincial newspapers carried discussion of old customs around marriage and wedding (FNGZ, 1965, 1-2:13).

education of children,²⁸ and even ways of doing woman-work.²⁹

Politics took command. A central focus was to achieve the so-called funu si xiang ge minghua (revolutionizing the minds of all women). The ACWF promoted study of Mao's works, organized newspaper reading groups (FNGZ, 1964, 5:20), told revolutionary stories (FNGZ, 1964, 10:20), trained Fulian cadres (FNGZ, 1965, 12:24), and organized emulation of role models. The promoted role models in this period were not set up specifically to inspire women as they usually did before. They were often role models for the general public. What the ACWF did was to find the right angle to connect the matters to women and to reinforce the propaganda and the mobilization effect.

Besides the People's Liberation Army, there were two other national models, one in industry and one in agriculture -- the successful Manchurian Daqing Oil Field and Dazhai Brigade of Xiyang county, Shanxi province. These two models reflected Maoist economic development strategy -- self reliance, mobilization, moral over material incentives, and politics in command. In May 1965, the ACWF and the ACFTU

²⁸ For example, "Carrying out Class Education According to children's Characteristics" (ZGFN editorial, 1963, 6:1-2), "Class Education Should Also be Carried Out Among Young Children" (Wang, Di and Zhao Defu, ZGFN, 1963, 3:26-27. "That is How I Conduct Class Education to Children" (Ye Gentu, 1964, 11:23).

²⁹ See FNGZ, 1963a. FNGZ, 1963b.

together called on all workers' families to emulate the family members of Daqing, who studied Mao's works, grew vegetables and other agricultural produce for consumption in the oil field, and supported males in their hard work. In February 1966, the ACWF set up the Dazhai Women's Delegate Meeting as the model for work among woman in rural areas.³⁰ Reports on Dazhai Women's Delegate Meeting focused on the Delegate Meetings' effort in carrying out class struggle, study of Mao's works, ideological work among women, and leading women to participate in production. One section of the report addressed educating women in women's liberation, but the emphasis was on how to change women's ideas and encourage them to participate in production more actively and conscientiously instead of on striving for equality between men and women. The report mentioned that the Brigade recognized women's important role in production and the fact that women still had to do all of the work at home. As said by the Secretary of the brigade: "women have played the function men play. The function men haven't played, women have also played." Thus women were praised because "she does whatever the collective wants her to do and does not fall short of men" (ACWF, Shanxi Provincial Fulian and Xiyan County Fulian joint work team, 1966:8). But the discussion stopped there.

³⁰ For full report on the two models, see Funu gongzuo, January and February of 1966, special issues devoted to work among families in Daqing, and woman work in Dazhai.

This was a typical mobilization model tainted by the political situation at the time. If it had been written a couple of years earlier, it might have discussed reducing women's housework burden and improving family life. But in 1966, pursuit of a better life and individual happiness could no longer be discussed. The Dazhai Women's Delegate Meeting was praised for their efforts to help "greatly expand production and appropriately (both emphases are mine) improve [people's] lives," and to transform "various individualistic ideas and ideology left from the old society" (ACWF, Shanxi Provincial Fulian and Xiyan County Fulian joint work team, 1966:1). Very clearly emphasized was how a women's organization fulfilled its mobilization function.

Besides these collective role models, the ACWF also sent out circulars, calling on women to emulate one after another individual role model praised by the Party/state. In the short period of a year or so, from the end of 1965 until 1966, the models cited included: Wang Jie, a PLA soldier who covered an exploding mine with his body to protect 12 militia men (circular issued December 13, 1965), Jiao Yulu, the secretary of Lankao county, Henan province who devoted his whole life to the improvement of the poor county (February 12, 1966); Liu Yingjun, a PLA soldier who died in an attempt to stop a carriage drawn by skidding horses (July, 15, 1966), the 3211 oil drilling team that put out a big fire and safeguarded a new gas field (July 28, 1966); PLA soldier Cai Yongxiang who

laid down his life to protect the Qiantang bridge (November 21); and Peng Xiuhua (December, 1966).³¹²

Another clear indication of the ACWF's retreat from its representative and service role to women and its new use as a tool of mobilization could be seen from the changes in its window, Zhongguo funu, which also shifted away from its coverage of women's issues. As the emphasis on class struggle increased, Zhongguo funu's reprints of official speeches and documents increased. The magazine lost its characteristics as a women's magazine and began to look like other publications of the time: full of propaganda.

A brief examination of the index of Zhongguo funu from 1962 to 1965 reveals many interesting things. In 1962, there were only two reprints, one was the textbook of woman-work among rural women and the other was ACWF's circular about the celebration of March 8. Of the 15 opinion and commentary pieces, there were no editorials, only one article with the byline of "editor of this magazine" and two additional articles written by reporters of ZGFN. Beginning in 1963, the journal presented a sterner face. There were more editorials and reprints of official documents, some pertaining to women's issues. Of the 20 opinion pieces, 8 were ZGFN editorials or short or special comments, two were reprints, altogether comprising about 50% of the total. In 1964, editorials and

³¹ See for the date and some of the documents of circulation, Bangongting, 1991 and Zhongguo Funu.

document reprints had noticeably increased. Of the 20 pieces of writing classified as opinion in 1964, 10 were ZGFN editorials and commentaries, five were reprints, about 75% of the opinion pieces. In 1965, of the 19 pieces, seven were editorials, five were reprints, and one was ACWF's circular to its branch organizations. They made up 63% of the total. It also had a new column specifically devoted to learning from Wang Jie, which resulted in additional reprints and another ACWF circular. When the Cultural Revolution began, it would devote itself fully to the propaganda of the campaign, stopping all regular columns on women and children. This will be detailed in later sections.

The ACFTU and CCYL in the Adjustment Period

The impact of the adjustment period on the other two major mass organizations, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) and the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), help us better understand the context under which the ACWF functioned between 1961 and mid-1966. After the Great Leap, when the institutional development approach took an upper hand in the CCP political circle, both organizations went through a similar consolidation process as the ACWF, both made an effort to serve their constituencies and both were affected by the increased emphasis on class struggle.

The Unions began to strengthen its organizations at the grassroots level in 1961 after a CCP leader criticized that

the union had become a non-functioning shell in some places (Wang and Xiong, 1990). Union leaders and activists who were wrongly accused during the Leap were rehabilitated. Two important ACFTU documents "Regulations on Union Work in State-Run Enterprises" and "Regulations on Union Work for County Workers' Unions" became the basis for consolidating grassroots unions in urban and rural areas. Regulations concerning workers' congress meetings and the functions of the union were more detailed than those in "70 Regulations Concerning Industry" (Wang and Xiong, 1990).

The consolidation of the CCYL began at about the same time. Grassroots CCYL organizations were on shaky ground after the Leap, especially in the countryside.³² The CCYL leadership also mapped out a series of documents as guidance for their consolidation efforts.³³ The work of consolidating CCYL grassroots organizations in rural areas was conducted along with the Party's rectification and consolidation of communes. In addition, the CCYL carried out a series of

³²In some places, about 30 to 40% of grassroots organizations had incomplete leadership, did not carry out activities on a regular basis and paid insufficient attention to the demands of young people which alienated them (Guo, 1992).

³³ These included: "Tasks and Working Methods of Communist Youth League's Grassroots Organizations in the Countryside," "Program of Communist Youth League's Political and Ideological Work in Schools," "Tasks and Working Methods of Communist Youth League Groups in the Countryside," "Tasks and Working Methods of Communist Youth League Groups in Industrial and Mining Enterprises" (Zheng et al, 1992).

activities within League organizations,³⁴ and organized training class for League cadres. These activities improved CCYL organizations (Guo, 1992).³⁵

While working on state issues such as reduction of urban employees and residents, promoting production and combating waste, and in socialist education campaign and the "in industry, learning from Daqing" movement, the ACFTU made an effort to serve workers. It first tried to help workers overcome the hardship the country's economic difficulties had brought to their lives, then promoted the system of Workers' Congress in enterprises to establish workers' rights and responsibilities. The Union also revitalized workers's palaces, clubs, and activity centers in cities, built up workers' libraries, reading rooms, cultural or entertainment centers in factories and promoted sports and other recreational activities after work.

But like ACWF's work among women, the union's specific concern for the interests of workers was challenged by the emphasis on class struggle and the changing political and

³⁴ Such as "Six Level CCYL Committees Building Up League Groups" and establishing "'Four-Goods' Youth League Groups" activities (Guo, 1992, Zheng et al, 1992)

³⁵ This was consolidation more in quality than in quantity. When the League had its third National Congress in 1957, it had 2.336 million members nationwide. In 1963, the number dropped to 2.118 million, a decline of over a million numbers. If the 7 million members who were beyond the age limit were not counted, the actual members in the League were only 1.6 million in 1963 (Guo, 1992). After the League put more efforts into recruitment in 1963, the number rose a bit (Zheng et al, 1992).

economic interests of the nation. In 1962, Gongren Ribao (Workers' Daily), the official organ of the Union and Union leaders were first implicated and criticized for the paper's carrying a novel named after Red Army leader Liu Zhidan in installments. The novel was labeled an "anti-Party" novel, accused to being part of the effort to appeal to the accusation of Marshal Peng Dehuai as "rightist opportunist" during the Great Leap. In 1964, when the Socialist Education Movement spread to 1.8 billion industrial and transportation enterprises, union organizations in many of the factories became the victim of a new round of "class struggle." Many factories were declared to be "air-raid shelters" of class enemies. CCP ultra-leftist theorist, Chen Boda, accused the union organizations of being "welfare unions," "unions of the entire people" (meaning neglecting class divisions), and hotbeds for revisionism (Wang and Xiong, 1992:189). Re-registration of union members was introduced to some places as a means to purify class ranks. The heavy involvement of union leaders at all levels in the Socialist Education Movement took its toll on the regular function of the union. Some unions were placed under newly-established political departments of enterprises to become "offices of mass work" or "sections of mass organizations," amounting to what was referred to as the "withering of the unions for the third time" (Wang and Xiong, 1992:189-190).

The ACFTU Leading Party Members Group tried to combat this trend. In a report to CCP in 1964, they pointed out that unions should have their own organizational system and continue to function as independent mass organizations. The division between a political work unit of the Party and a mass organization for workers should not be blurred. But the impact of class struggle was formidable. Beginning in 1965, "taking class struggle as the key link" as the basic guiding principle of union work appeared in ACFTU's documents. The unions' basic tasks had been changed to stressing Mao's thoughts, stressing proletarian politics and class struggle and running the unions as schools for studying Mao's thoughts (Wang and Xiong, 1992). This tendency escalated with the approach of the Cultural Revolution. Unions switched from their service and other functions to loyal tool of the Party.³⁶

As for the Youth League, it made an effort to make itself attractive to young people, respond to their needs and provide entertainment and sports activities. The League's contribution to the state tasks included its active role in mobilizing young people to contribute to the production drive so as to help the country overcome economic difficulties.³⁷

³⁶ For references to union work during this period, also see Zheng and Luo, 1990, Zheng et al, 1992.

³⁷ In industry to help the large number of new workers recruited during the Leap to improve their skills to ensure increased production and the reduction of waste. In

It was especially effective in helping the state reduce urban employees and residents. From 1962 to the summer of 1966, about 1.29 million urban middle or primary schools graduates were mobilized to go to the countryside or state farms (Zheng et al, 1992). The Youth League also took a leading role in political education and indoctrination. As early as 1958, it promoted study of works by Marx, Lenin, and Mao. During the adjustment period, the League promoted the study of Mao's works throughout the country. The campaign to learn from PLA soldier Lei Feng was also begun by the League.

The CCYL was the only mass organization that did hold its national congress in 1964. The theme of the congress was to promote the revolutionization of Chinese youth, through studying Marxism, Leninism, and Mao's thought, and taking class struggle as the key to League work. The CCYL's two organs, Zhongguo Qingnian (Chinese Youth) and Zhongguo Qingnian Bao (Chinese Youth News) criticized so-called anti-Party, anti-socialist ideas and "poisonous weeds" in literature, the arts, and academic fields such as philosophy, economics, history and education. Such criticism coincided with the expansion of the socialist education movement. By April 1966, it was very clear that the CCYL had become a political tool of the Party:

agriculture, to contribute to increased production of grain and other crops.

All the work of the Communist Youth League put together was to educate and organize the youth to study Chairman Mao's works, listen to Chairman Mao's words, and follow the Communist Party. We will do whatever Chairman Mao says without fail even though this means to climb up the mountains made of knives and plunge into seas of fire. We will resolutely oppose and fight against whatever is against Mao's thought (Guo, 1992:225).

After this meeting, the Cultural Revolution broke out. The youth campaign to study Mao's works was soon pushed to its extreme and became the movement to study Mao's "red books" by the entire nation, converging into the fanatical Mao cult -- "absolute loyalty to and absolute worship of" Mao Zedong.³⁸ But by the eve of the "Cultural Revolution," there was no longer much room left for the three major mass organizations to represent the interests of their constituencies but only space to be the political tools of the Party.

In the Storm of the Cultural Revolution: 1966-1978

The Cultural Revolution began with ideological struggle within the Party. Its prelude was an article criticizing a Peking Opera, "Hai Rui's Dismissed From Office," written by Wu Han, a well-known historian and deputy mayor of Beijing. Published in Wenhui Bao in Shanghai on December 10, 1965, the article asserted the play was produced to redress the "enemy and right opportunists" criticized by the Party during the three years of economic difficulties, and was thus a

³⁸ For reference and more information on the CCYL during this period, see Guo, 1992, Zheng et al., 1992, Zheng and Luo, 1990, Townsend, 1967.

reflection of class struggle. Criticism of the play was soon expanded to criticism of the "black line in literature and arts that is against the Party and socialism." In May 1966, the enlarged meeting of the Politburo distributed the "May 16 Circular" about carrying out the Cultural Revolution and established the Cultural Revolution Small Group headed by Chen Boda and Mao's wife, Jiang Qing. Before long, the Group replaced the CCP politburo and the Secretariat, the power base of Deng Xiaoping, and became the leading body of the Cultural Revolution. In August, the CCP convened the 11th Plenary Session of the Eighth Party Congress and passed the "decisions on the Cultural Revolution". The two meetings and two documents were later recognized as the formal launching of the Cultural Revolution (Wang, 1988).

The ACWF in the Tidal Wave

At first the ACWF tried to follow the Cultural Revolution as it always did in major political movements. By May 25, 1966, some provincial Fulian issued circulars to encourage women to actively participate in the Cultural Revolution. Others organized women for newspaper reading, broadcast listening, and group study to discuss materials concerning the CR. Some branches organized women to criticize the so-called "three-person village," the first targets of the Cultural Revolution. Similar studies and criticism were also carried

out among Fulian cadres.³⁹ Yet people were soon to learn that the Cultural Revolution was unlike any previous movement in PRC history. It would affect them in ways they had never before experienced.

On May 25 the first large character poster of the Cultural Revolution appeared at Beijing University targeting university Party leadership. On June 1, it was broadcast nationwide. Renmin Ribao (People's Daily) editorials encouraged people to open fire on all anti-Party, anti-socialist "black gangs" and on all bourgeois strongholds and "cow monsters and snake demons". The entire nation was immediately swept up in the storm.

The first casualty of the Cultural Revolution within the ACWF, perhaps the first casualty of the mass organizations, was Dong Bian, the Editor-in-Chief and Director of Zhongguo funu. Dong's husband, Tian Jiaying, was Mao's secretary. At the very beginning of the Cultural Revolution, he was suspected to be a time bomb planted near Mao, accused of having "a rightist tendency all along" and was ordered to move out of Zhongnanhai, the CCP and government compound where Mao lived. Tian committed suicide on May 23. Dong Bian was implicated as the family member of a "traitor" and thus became a member of the "black gang."

Since the Cultural Revolution was first carried out in the realm of superstructure -- academia, education,

³⁹ See issue No.6 of 1966's ZGFN.

journalism, literature and arts, and publishing -- Zhongguo funu became an easy target because it had been criticized in 1964 by Chen Boda, head of the CR Small Group. Under pressure, the ACWF reshuffled the editorial board of the journal. Dong was dismissed from her post and with the July issue, Zhongguo fnun began a new column criticizing "black gang member Dong Bian." The discussions Zhongguo funu organized in 1963 and 1964 were the first targets of attack by allegations similar to those made by Chen Boda under the pen-name Wan Mu chun in Hongqi in 1964. Dong's "crime" was traced to the articles she wrote in early 1960 when she called for understanding the real situation of women. Those articles were said to have advocated a counter-revolutionary revisionist point of view on woman-work, emphasize women's welfare while neglecting class struggle and leading women to focus only on their individual families. Some critics said that an analysis of the contents of sixty issues of Zhongguo Funu from 1961 to 1965 showed that only 33 or 2.3 percent of its articles were devoted to political studies. Dong was reported to have rejected articles on class struggles that had "nothing to do with women," and have put aside articles about Mao's works or criticisms of revisionism saying that women would not understand them. She was even reported to have said

that the idea of continuous revolution was like "frying cold rice" (ZGFN staff, 1966).⁴⁰

By this time, Zhongguo funu had to redefine its political stance. It acknowledged that class struggle existed in woman-work. It admitted that the counter-revolutionary clique:

finds thousands of ways to spread bourgeois and feudal ideological poison, peddling sinister bourgeois, revisionist stuff such as "humanitarianism," "feminism", "individual devotion to career," "mother love", "happiness of the individual family" (ZGFN Editorial, 1966a:7).

It stated that the tasks of Fulian as a mass organization:

are to stress politics, holding high the red banner of Mao Zedong thought, continuously use Mao Zedong thought to educate and arm women, continuously promote the extreme proletarianization and extreme revolutionization of women's minds (ZGFN Editorial, 1966a:6)

On August 18, when ACWF Chairwoman Cai Chang met Mao on the Tiananmen Tower during Mao's first receiving of the Red Guard, Mao inquired about the state of Cultural Revolution within Fulian. Cai asked Mao to inscribe in his own calligraphy a new title page for the magazine. Mao agreed.⁴¹ Zhongguo funu with the new title in Mao's calligraphy (this is still the title in use today) came out in September. The

⁴⁰ For the criticism, see the special column, "Black Gang Member Dong Bian" in Zhongguo funu, 1966, issues 7, 8, 9 and 10.

⁴¹ According to a biography of Cai, due to the close relationship between Cai Chang's natal family and Mao's family, between Mao and Cai Hesen, Cai Chang's elder brother and young Mao Zedong's best friend, Cai Chang had been very close and loyal to Mao. Mao was very supportive of her work and never rejected requests she made concerning woman work (Su, 1990).

magazine declared this a new beginning for the journal. The staff pledged to "pursue proletarian politics and help revolutionize the ideology of women workers and commune members, People's Liberation Army women, revolutionary girl students, revolutionary women cadres, and revolutionary women intellectuals." They felt the new start would inspire them to carry out the two line struggle, pay attention to state affairs, and "carry the Great Proletarian Revolution through to the end" (ZGFN Editorial, 1966b).

The magazine did embark on something new. With its October issue it began publishing semi-monthly as it had during the Leap so as to closely follow the tide of revolution. It also began joint publication with Funu gongzuo. No reasons were given for the merger. In any case, by this time, the journal had already stopped its regular columns on the health of women and children, children's education, family planning, and marriage and the family. The new bi-monthly journal was filled with reprints of editorials of from the Renmin ri bao (People's Daily), Jie fang jun bao (Liberation Army Daily), Hongqi (Red Flag) and CCP documents, speeches of leaders of the Cultural Revolution, or reports of important events such as Mao's receiving of the Red Guards. It duplicated the Renmin ri bao and any other publications at the time. The only thing in the journal that pertained to women was the expression of women's support of the Cultural Revolution and their criticism of "black gangs". If Funu

gongzuo had remained, it would have had similar content. Most important, if Zhongguo funu was criticized for its stress on women's issues, the continued publication of two women's journals, and a journal devoted to woman-work in particular, would exacerbate the criticism.

Despite the effort to start anew politically, the fate of ACWF and Zhongguo funu was not much better. The Cultural Revolution was pushed by a new social force -- rebels of the CR, including the Red Guards. After Mao lent his support to this new mass organization by receiving Red Guards on August 18, the Red Guard rapidly spread throughout the country. Fulian as an institution connected to the Party, the state bureaucracy and the old order could find no active role to play in the Cultural Revolution. Besides a few official contacts with visiting foreign women's organizations, the major organizational actions the ACWF took in the second half of 1966 were to issue circulars calling on women to learn from heroic role models (As mentioned earlier, in half a year's time, the ACWF sent out four such circulars). Another circular announced the change of title of ACWF national leaders from Zhu xi (Chairman or President) to Zhu ren (Director). This was in response to a CCP circular that according to suggestions from the people, all leaders of people's organizations should change their leaders' title so as to leave Zhu xi only for Mao (Bangongting, 1991). This

episode exemplified the increasing Mao cult. The ACWF at this point had become a shell.

The ACWF and its leaders became the targets of attack as the Cultural Revolution began to challenge Party organizations in all existing establishments. Cai Chang, the ACWF Chairwoman (or director according to her new title) initially headed the ACWF's Cultural Revolution Standing Committee of the Presidium, established on June 16, 1966, to lead the movement within the ACWF headquarters. She was involved in criticism of other Fulian cadres but could not escape a similar fate later (Su, 1990).⁴² After Dong Bian, almost all major leaders of Fulian below Vice Chairwoman Kang Keqing were openly denounced as "power holders taking the capitalist road" (Qing, et al, 1989). Fulian cadres at various levels were labeled "renegades," "special agents," and "black gang members" and attacked. Some were imprisoned; others even persecuted to death, as in the case of Yang Zhihua, head of the Women's Department of ACFTU, Vice Chairwoman of ACWF (Ren, 1989).

The final blow came with the "January Storm" of 1967 when Cultural Revolution rebels were inspired by their Shanghai counterparts to seize power from Party committees in all

⁴² It is said that when big character posters with "down with Cai Chang!" appeared in front of the Tiananmen tower, Mao heard about it and was very upset. He allegedly said "Cai Chang is an honest person, if Cai Chang is to be overthrown, it is like 'there is no good person in Hongdong county'" (Su, 1990).

organizations and public establishments. The CR Small Group was said to be directly involved. One member, Yao Wenyuan, was said to have called ACWF headquarters to suggest public struggles against ACWF leaders in March 1967. The rebel organizations in Shanghai incited Shanghai Fulian to "kick the Party committee aside to carry out the revolution" (Dangdai, 1989:34). The Fulian headquarters and branches throughout the country were stripped of their leadership power and were paralyzed. Zhongguo funu was forced to stop publication in March 1967. Its office building was taken over by other units, its references materials ruined, and sets of bound volumes of Zhongguo funu destroyed.⁴³ In June,⁴⁴ at a general staff meeting of the ACWF headquarters, Cai Chang made an open self-criticism for "carrying out bourgeois counter-revolutionary line" as the head of the ACWF CR standing Committee of the Presidium (Cai, A-song 1992).

The ACWF finally stopped its activities in February 1968. By then, it was openly declared that there had been a black line led Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping within the Party, that had affected work in all aspects in the PRC. Renmin ri bao carried an article written by the revolutionary rebels of the ACWF that asserted that Liu and Deng have "mapped and carried

⁴³ See ZGFN, 1978, No.1.

⁴⁴ Based on the chronological table of Cai Chang's activities, see appendix of Dong, Cai and Tan, 1992. According to another source, it was in August (Cai, A-song, 1992).

out a counter-revolutionary revisionist line in the women's movement." It said:

China's Khrushchev [a term used to refer to Liu Shaoqi during an early stage of the Cultural Revolution] has never taken Chinese women as a revolutionary force. He opposes Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, wantonly peddles bourgeois "women's view point" and "welfare point of view," one-sidedly emphasizes the so-called special interests of women, opposes women to carry out revolution, tries vigorously to make women deviate from the current political struggle, from the proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship. He wants to turn the front of woman-work into a base for his activities to restore capitalism, to make women's organizations a tool for pursuing revisionism. China's Khrushchev is the sworn enemy of all revolutionary women in the country (ACWF Proletarian Revolutionaries, 1968:4).

The article further alleged that Liu and Deng opposed women's study of Mao's works, made resolving women's special problems the basic task of the women's movement, encouraged women to engage in family side-line production and focus on the family, one-sidedly stressed the difference between men and women, and denied class confrontation. The ACWF was even accused of seeking political positions for members of the bourgeoisie and, as a result, the leadership of some grassroots Fulian organizations in large cities were usurped by wives of capitalists (ACWF Proletarian Revolutionaries, 1968).⁴⁵

These allegations, like others made during the Cultural Revolution, were made out of context, and many were

⁴⁵ See also "Thoroughly Criticize the Reactionary Revisionist Line on the Women's Movement by China's Khrushchev" Renmin ri bao, March 11, 1968, page 4.

ungrounded.⁴⁶ The sole purpose was to bring Liu and Deng down. There was also the matter of perspective. When Liu was rehabilitated in 1980, an ACWF leader recalled how they benefitted from and were inspired by Liu's ideas on women work⁴⁷. What Liu was criticized for saying was included in a collection of quotations of Chinese leaders on women 20 years later after the Cultural Revolution as wisdom on the women's movement.⁴⁸ But the allegations did touch on several crucial issues that have been the focus of tension in the women's movement in China: class interests vs gender interests, the nature and goal of women's organizations, and the issue of family and gender difference. These tensions reflected the anti-feminist ideology of the Cultural Revolution which denied gender as a category, denied women's special interests and denied the necessity of separate women's organizations.

⁴⁶ There were no sources given for the accusations as they were commonly done in the CCP politics, especially during the CR. It was reported that there were words that Liu did not say but were put into his mouth. For example, according to Luo Qiong, ACWF's Secretary, a CCP veteran who was present on most of the occasions when Liu talked to members of Women's Movement Committee and the ACWF Leading Party Members' Group, Liu had never said "women are useless." This was made up.

⁴⁷ See Luo Qing, "Revisit Comrade Liu Shaoqi's Instructions on Connecting to and Relying on the Masses," Zhongguo Funu, April, 1980, Funu Gongzuo, April, 1980 and her speech at the forum of directors of ACWF propaganda and education departments in 1980. The text was carried out in Funu Gongzuo, July, 1980.

⁴⁸ For example, see ACWF, 1988, Liu's speech in 1945 on the working principle in CCP base areas as construction rather than destruction.

The implications of the article carried in the Renmin ri bao were serious, since it was regarded as the authoritative statement about woman-work. With its assertion that the black line had ruled over women-work for the past 17 years, with its accusation that the ACWF leaders were "agents," "talons and fangs (lackeys) of China's top power holders taking the capitalist road," the fall of the ACWF was inevitable. These assertions promoted the ultra-leftist ideology and practice on women's issues that grew to an extreme during the CR, including denying gender differences, denying the need to take care of the family and household side-line production.

On June 13, 1968, army representatives were sent to the headquarters of the ACWF and other mass organizations to take charge of operations. In fall 1969, the majority of ACWF staff left Beijing for the ACWF May 7 Cadre School⁴⁹ where they engaged in physical labor and the Cultural Revolution until 1973.

The Fall of the Youth League and the Union

At this point, a review of the fate of the Youth League and the Union during the CR will help us better understand

⁴⁹ Starting in October 1968, "May 7 Cadre Schools" were established all over the country. These were special farms set up and run by cadres of all ranks to be close to the masses and remold themselves. In September and December of 1969, ACWF cadres were sent to two schools, to Xihua May 7 Cadres' school in Henan Province and Hengshui May 7 Cadres' School in Hebei Province. They later all gathered in Hengshui where the ACWF May 7 Cadres' school was formally established in December 23, 1969.

the situation the mass organizations such as the ACWF faced and the impact of CR on them. The paralysis of the CCYL was a result of its direct involvement with the Cultural Revolution. When the first wave of criticizing the leadership of universities and secondary schools was touched off by the first big wall poster at Beijing University in June, 1969, Mao was not in Beijing. Liu Shaoqi decided to send out workteams to control the movement as the Party usually had in the past. The workteams dispatched to high schools in Beijing were from the central CCYL. Thus, they were directly involved in the conflict between workteams and the anti-workteam Red Guards supported by Mao Zedong. On the evening of July 29, 1966, after the decision to withdraw work teams, the headquarters of the CCYL sustained the first of a series of attacks from Beijing Red Guards. The young students' action won support from the CR Small Group. Zhang Chunqiao, one of the Group members, went to the CCYL headquarters the next day to support the "revolutionary act of young people." Jiang Qing, Chen Boda, and Kang Sheng also asserted that the CCYL center "severely isolated itself from the youth and are afraid of youth" and thus were "young bureaucrats." They said the CCYL was a "production league," an "entertainment league," "the league of the entire people" and should be "smashed" (Zheng et al, 1992:162). On August 13, a CCP decision to shuffle the CCYL Secretariat was announced. That evening, a group of Red Guards occupied the

office building of the CCYL, "dragged and struggled against" Hu Yaobang, CCYL Secretary, Hu Keshi, CCYL Vice Secretary, and other leaders. Two days later, at a general meeting for the CCYL staff, the new temporary secretariat was announced to replace the old one. The CCYL headquarters ceased its regular functions, and its official publications were suspended,⁵⁰ as was the cadre school of the CCYL. The wave of "destroying the old League" swept League organizations all over the country. Many League cadres, model workers and activists were attacked and persecuted (Guo, 1992, Li et al, 1992, Zheng et al, 1992). During the January Storm of 1967, the rebel organization within the CCYL "seized power," "smashing" the short lived and impotent secretariat.

As for the Federation of Trade Unions, despite its loyal support to the movement,⁵¹ its ill fate during the CR was inevitable because of its special connection to Liu Shaoqi. Liu had been a leader of the workers' movement in China and was the honorary President of the ACFTU. As Liu more and more clearly became the direct target of the Cultural Revolution, the ACFTU also felt the pinch.

The direct involvement of workers with the CR occurred after the students. The headquarters of the ACFTU was first

⁵⁰ The bi-weekly journal Zhongguo Qingnian (Chinese Youth) and Zhongguo Qingnian Bao (Chinese youth newspaper) were both last published in August, 1966.

⁵¹ On June 9, 1966, the ACFTU issued a circular to its branch organizations encouraging them to actively participate in the Cultural Revolution (Wang and Xiong, 1990).

challenged in December 1966 by the All China Red Workers' Rebellion Corps, an organization comprised of contract and temporary workers, who demanded immediate termination of the contract system and required status and benefits similar to those of permanent workers. Their activities were supported by Jiang Qing and other members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group, who said the contracting system was a capitalist system proposed by Liu Shaoqi. They encouraged them to revolt against the Ministry of Labor and the ACFTU. At the end of December, the All-China Red Laborers Rebellion Corps took over the office building of the ACFTU, dispersed union cadres, and forced it to stop all activities. The union organ, Gongren ri bao (Worker's Daily), was also "sealed up." During the subsequent "power seizing January Storm" of 1967 union organizations at the provincial, autonomous regional and grassroots levels became targets. Their office buildings were attacked and occupied, archive materials were looted and the union system became paralyzed. On January 11, the CCP Politburo made three decisions about the ACFTU: to seal up its treasury for safekeeping, freeze its funds, and strip the ACFTU Leading Party Members' Group of the power to issue documents, and to invalidate documents previously signed.⁵² Union leaders and activists may have sustained worse attack and persecution during the "storm." Liu Shaoqi and formal ACFTU president Li Lisan were among the ones persecuted to

⁵² See Wang and Xiong, 1992, Wang, 1988.

death. Also attacked were model workers and advanced producers. Ordinary people who had won their titles through hard work were now accused as "fake model workers," "black pacesetters," "crabs," "royalists," "social base of power holders taking the capitalist road," "vested interests".⁵³

Around the same time that the Renmin ri bao (People's Daily) carried the article on Liu and Deng's black line within the women's movement, it also ran two articles on Liu-Deng's "counter-revolutionary revisionist line" in the youth and workers movements. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were accused of opposing youth's study of Mao's works and of peddling feudal and bourgeois ideology under the name of "labor education," "knowledge education," "moral education," "ideal and career education" and "civil behavior education." They were also said to have encouraged the League to organize recreational activities for young people while ignoring class struggle, opposing youth's integration with workers and peasants, and strangling young people's rebellious spirit (CCYL Central Organ Proletarian Revolutionaries, 1968).

The so-called Liu's counter-revolutionary revisionist line in the workers' movement was summarized as san hui yi

⁵³According to statistics collected in Tianjin in 1983, 736 people were persecuted; 23% of the 3,200 model workers. According to statistics from six cities in Heilongjiang province, there were 334 national model workers and 2837 provincial model workers before the Cultural Revolution; 870 of them were criticized, 21 were under special investigation, among them, 8 were accused to be special agents or reactionaries and imprisoned, 13 were persecuted to death (Wang and Xiong, 1992).

tuan (three unions and one unionism); i.e., trying to make the ACFTU "production unions" (emphasizing production, denying class struggle), "welfare unions" (paying attention to workers' welfare and using it as sugar coated bullets to corrode the working class), and "unions of the entire people" ("dragging" capitalists and intellectuals that had not remolded themselves into the union to make it a tool for restoring capitalism); and at the same time promoting "unionism," opposing Party leadership, emphasizing that the union should have an independent organizational system so as to make the ACFTU a bourgeois "independent kingdom" (ACFTU "da lian wei", 1968). Thus, the three mass organizations were all connected to the so-called bourgeois headquarters within the CCP and, together with Liu and the Party organization, became casualties of the CR. The CR became another occasion that forced them to examine their very missions, their relations with the Party and the revolution.

Difficult Recovery: 1972-1977

The ACWF headquarters under the control of PLA representatives had no formal role during the CR. By spring 1969, when the CCP held its Ninth Congress, the Cultural Revolution had finished its first period. During those most radical and violent years, Liu Shaoqi was denounced as a "renegade, traitor and scab" and he died. The old Party and administrative organizations were replaced by "revolutionary

committees" formed by a coalition of CR rebels, "revolutionary" Party cadres and PLA officers in "three-in-one" combination. The masses were supposed to be represented by new mass organizations. The Red Guard replaced the Youth League and became the leading force for young people. "Revolutionary Staff and Workers' Congresses" were established in provinces and enterprises during the power seizure years of 1967 and 1968 ⁵⁴ after unions were smashed. They were coalitions of rebel groups among workers with the narrowly-defined mission of "struggling against the power holders taking capitalist roads" and "carrying out the CR through to the end."⁵⁵ But there were no separate women's organizations after Fulian disbanded. There was no special working committee in charge of woman-work in the "Revolutionary Committees" established in 1968. Usually one person in the "mass work department" or "political work group" of the Revolutionary Committee was responsible for work among women (Qing, et al, 1989).

Mao was in full support of the Red Guards movement and the rebel organizations at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. But by Fall 1967, he was disappointed at their

⁵⁴ According to Chou (1975), the Workers' Congress was established in all provinces and at all levels.

⁵⁵ Such statements were common to these organizations. For example, the Beijing Revolutionary Staff and Workers Representative Meeting declared in 1967: "Our working class has only one choice, one answer, one determination: that is to carry out the Cultural Revolution through to the end" (Wang and Xiong, 1990:209).

"political immaturity" (Dietrich, 1986) and worried about the CR being out of control. He had wanted to revolutionize the Party, but it was not his intention to abolish the Party and he wanted to bring national life back to order. So unity and the rectification and consolidation of the Party became a major theme of the Ninth Congress held in April 1979. When Mao talked about Party rectification at the first plenary session of the 9th Congress, he pointed out that "[in] individual league groups, the issue of rectification of the League is also raised" (Zheng, et al, 1992:163).⁵⁶

The rectification of grassroots League groups thus started in 1970 along with the rectification of local Party organizations. By August 1972 the majority of League groups at the grassroots level were consolidated and grassroots League committees were reestablished. As for the Red Guards, their activities were first curbed by the work teams comprised of workers and PLA soldiers dispatched to schools in 1968. The individual Red Guard graduates left school one after another to the new jobs assigned to them. In the early 1970s, with the campaign of "going up to mountains and down to the countryside" to "receive the reeducation of poor and lower-middle peasants," large numbers of Red Guards and other students were dispatched all over the country, dissolving the Red Guards' movement. Although its carrier, "The Red Guards'

⁵⁶ For discussion of the revival of the CCYL before 1970, see Editor, Current Scene, 1970.

Congress" remained until the end of the CR, it became only a shell (Guo, 1992).

The work to revive the unions and the women's federations began much later than that of the Youth League. The turning point was the "September 13 incident" in 1971 which marked the disgrace and death of Lin Biao, a CR radical and leader of the PLA. After Lin's death, Premier Zhou Enlai took charge of the administrative work of the Central CCP. He began to address the serious problems in the national economy and in social life. Under the theme of rectification and unity, the neglected aspects of work got new attention. The 1972 new year's day editorial by the official ideological organs of the CR, Renmin ri bao (People's Daily), Jie fang jun bao (Liberation Army Daily) and Hongqi (Red Flag) called on workers, peasants, young people, women and intellectuals to "do well the mass work in all aspects (RMRB, JFJB, HQ Editorial, 1972:2). This recognized the legitimacy of "mass work" among these groups which were not all class-based. Renmin ri bao wrote another short commentary in March under the title "Do Woman-work Well" (March 19, 1972, page 1), so the discussion of woman-work re-entered official discourse. The next New Year's editorial of the three official organs clearly stated that "the trade unions, the Communist Youth League, the Red Guards, the Junior Red Guards, poor and lower-middle peasants and women's organizations should be consolidated step by step through rectification" (RMRB, JFJB,

HQ Editorial, 1973:2), acknowledging the legitimacy of these organizations.

With official approval, 1973 witnessed a major effort to restore the three major mass organizations. Congresses of these organizations were convened to establish new leadership committees. The consolidation of the Youth League took the lead. Shanghai Youth League was the first one to hold its congress in February 1973. By July of the same year, CCYL committees were established at all 29 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in the country. The rectification of the provincial trade unions commenced in Shanghai and Beijing simultaneously in April 1973 and ended in December of the same year. The rectification of the provincial Fulian did not begin until July of 1973 when Tianjin convened the congress. It ended in Shanghai in April 1975. It took one year and 10 months for the committees of the Women's Federation to be established at provincial level throughout the country.⁵⁷

Also in 1973, China resumed its tradition of celebrating March 8 as International Woman's Day. Renmin ri bao published an editorial on the occasion to commemorate the day after seven years' silence on the subject. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CCP International Liaison Department⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See RMRB of 1973 and 1974, also see Chou, 1975.

⁵⁸ In December 1971, the CCP decided that the ACFTU's CCYL's and ACWF's research on the workers', youth's and women's movements in other countries and their contact with foreign organizations would be taken over by the CCP International Liaison Department. The department established

jointly held a tea party for women foreign experts and wives of foreign experts in Beijing to celebrate the day, the first since 1966. The party was hosted by Premier Zhou Enlai but ACWF leaders Cai Chang and Kang Keqing were invited. At the meeting, Zhou paid special tribute to Cai when he called on Chinese women to expand their contacts with foreign friends and comrades. He departed from the text of his speech to bring the audience's attention to Cai Chang, whom he referred to as an "elder sister," "an old revolutionary woman fighter," who was among the "boldest of Chinese women who dared to contact foreign friends and comrades" (Cai, A-song, 1992a).

The situation at the ACWF headquarters also improved for its cadres. In March 1973, all the ACWF cadres came back to Beijing from the May 7 Cadres' School. Later they only needed to take turns going there to participate in physical labor (Bangongting, 1991).

The rectified mass organizations at the provincial level and below were not mere restorations of the old organizations, especially in terms of leadership.⁵⁹ It was noted that the number of people attending the congresses or serving on each committee were larger than those of the previous congress. The leading groups at all levels contained

three sub-groups to take charge of work among workers, young people and women respectively (Bangongting, 1991).

⁵⁹ By July 1973, the total number of Youth League members reached 40 million, organized into 1.55 million grassroots League groups (Guo, 1992).

a very high ratio of new cadres. Women members within the Union and the League increased, as did the number of workers and peasants in each organization. It was also noted that high-ranking officials of the CCP and the revolutionary committee concurrently took charge of the mass organizations. The most noted example was Wang Hongwen, director of the Shanghai Trade Union, who was also the Vice-Chairman of the CCP Central (Chou, 1975). These were typical features of the CR -- mass organizations's leadership was dominated by workers and peasants due to emphasis on the "class nature" of these organizations, increased women's representation in politics, and the rapid ascendance of young leaders of the CR rebel organizations to Party and administrative positions.

Also reflecting the influence of the CR were the contradictions and dilemmas in defining the goals and tasks of the organizations.⁶⁰ In any case, the organizations were to "uphold class struggle as the key link," mobilize their constituency and carry out the CR through to the end, clearly defining themselves as political tools of the Party. At the restoration of the ACWF at the national level proved to be

⁶⁰ For example, a CCP document acknowledged the legitimacy of both the Union and the Workers Congress. In defining the tasks of the Union, it included promotion of production and paying attention to workers' lives and their cultural and technical education which had been criticized as practice of "production union" and "welfare union." It also emphasized that the Union "must thoroughly criticize fallacies such as the dying out of class struggle, economist and unionism that are spread by swindlers such as Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao in the workers' movement and eliminate the pernicious influence of the revisionist line" (Wang and Xiong, 1990:214-215).

more difficult and slow. Intensified power struggle within the Party resulted in a campaign to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius. It was expanded after January 1974 and took aim at Zhou Enlai and his programs. The end of 1974 and the beginning of 1975 saw the rehabilitated Deng Xiaoping rise once more to power, taking the state administrative work from bedridden Zhou Enlai to promote development programs Zhou had proposed. In early 1975, the work to prepare for the national congresses of the three mass organizations began at the national and provincial levels.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the power struggle within the CCP continued and was reflected in the preparatory work. The Preparatory Committee of the Fourth National Women's Congress was founded on February, 1975 and soon had its first meeting. The ACWF resumed functioning in September, 1975 after the military representative was withdrawn from ACWF headquarters. According to one account, over 200 cadres were at the headquarters who could have managed the preparation work. But Wu Guixian, Vice Premier in charge of woman-work and follower of the Gang of Four, had cadres transferred from other provinces and municipalities to staff the Preparatory Committee. Only a small number of cadres from the ACWF headquarters participated in the preparatory work (Qing, et al, 1989). It was said that the Gang of Four⁶² had

⁶¹ For preparatory meetings at the provincial level, see Chou, 1975.

⁶² The CR radicals included Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan.

actual control of the Preparatory Committee through the trusted followers they put in (Ren, 1989). They were also said to have checked the list of delegate candidates, aiming to put their followers on the Preparatory Committee and on the future leadership of the ACWF and to prevent old leaders such as Cai Chang and Deng Yingchao from getting top positions (Qing, et al, 1989).⁶³

When the CR entered its last year, 1976, Deng was being attacked again by the campaign to fight back against the "right deviationist wind that was reversing correct verdicts," meaning rehabilitating victims of the Cultural Revolution. His supporter Zhou was implicated, too. Zhou died on January 8, 1976. The entire nation was suddenly in deep mourning. The trial issue of Zhongguo funu happened to be sent out to resume publication at this time. The staff of the magazine and their family members stayed overnight to insert a photo of the premier and the eulogy given by Deng at Zhou's memorial ceremony to express their grief. But Yao Wenyan ordered them recalled because the insertion was said to be done "without instructions from the Central CCP" although the articles and pictures in the trial issue had all been approved and the photo and the eulogy had been published in the Renmin ri bao and other official publications. Except the one copy that was sent to Deng Yingchao, Zhou's wife, the rest were

⁶³ About Jiang Qing's opposition to Deng Yingchao, wife of Zhou Enlai, to be on the preparatory committee, please also see China Reconstructs, 1977, Johnson, 1983:195.

taken back. No other trial issues came out after that (ZGFN Commentator, 1978, 1:15, Qing, et al, 1989) and it would take another two years for the journal to resume publication.

In August 1976, amid the heated political struggle for power before Mao's death, the Renmin ri bao carried an article written by the Theory Group of the Preparer Committee of the CCYL 10th Congress to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Mao's receiving the Red Guards, criticizing Liu and Deng Xiaoping's revisionist line in the youth movement (RMRB, March 18, 1976:1 and 3). It was followed by another article written by the Theory Group of the Preparatory Committee of the 4th Women's Congress, criticizing Deng while hailing the Cultural Revolution. It asserted that the "past decade of the CR was the time when the women's liberation movement made great advancement," "to wage a tit-for-tat struggle against capitalist roaders is the road women must take for liberation" (Theory Group of the Preparatory committee of the 4th Women's Congress, 1976:1). Mao died on September 9, 1976. On October 6, the Gang of Four was arrested. This incident signified the defeat of the CR radicals and the Cultural Revolution they promoted. In December, the CCP decided to dismiss the Preparatory Committee of the 4th Women's Congress.

In March 1977, ACWF Vice Director Kang Keqing was appointed by CCP Central to take charge of ACWF work. The leading group she headed established four sub-groups to examine ACWF work over the past 17 years, to look into all

cases against Fulian cadres after 1949, to make preparations for the Fourth National Women's Congress and the rehabilitation of Fulian cadres (Bangongting, 1991).

In August 1977, the CCP held its 11th Congress. The meeting declared the end of the Cultural Revolution. It called for "Strengthening the leadership of the Party over mass organizations such as Trade Unions, the Communist Youth League and Fulian," "rectifying and building these organizations and letting them fully play their proper roles" (Guo, 1992). The newly revised CCP constitution stipulated that the mass organizations "must accept the absolute leadership of the Party." The restoration of the national mass organizations was back on the agenda.

Restoration of the ACWF

On March 4, 1978, the ACWF held a forum for Beijing women of all ranks to celebrate the March 8 International Women's Day. Among the attenders were ACWF leaders Cai Chang, Deng Yingchao, Shi Liang, Zhang Yun, and Kang Keqing. Kang chaired the meeting and announced that this was the first meeting organized under the name of ACWF after the Cultural Revolution. The ACWF was formally back in the center of political life.

In the months that followed, the ACWF was engaged in a series of activities that paved the way for the coming Fourth National Women's Congress. Besides organizing meetings to

make necessary arrangements for the Congress,⁶⁴ the ACWF Leading Group published an article in Renmin ri bao. Entitled, "Chairman Mao's Line in the Women's Movement Tolerates No Distortion." The article refuted allegations made during the CR against the women's movement and confirmed the contribution of ACWF's work in nation building during its first 17 years. A book published a month before the meeting contained quotations by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on women compiled by the ACWF. Zhongguo funu resumed publication on July 15, 1978. The publication of these materials laid the ideological and theoretical preparation for the Congress.

On September 8, the much delayed Fourth National Women's Congress opened in Beijing, attended by about 2,000 delegates. It produced a new leadership. Kang Keqing became the chairwoman, Soong Ching-ling, Cai Chang and Deng Yingchao were elected honorary chairwomen. The executive committee was much larger than the previous presidium. Its members increased from 26 to 50. Most of the previous members were reelected, except those who had died or retired in the 21 years since its last meeting. Among the reinstalled ACWF leaders was Dong Bian, former ACWF secretary and Editor in Chief of Zhongguo funu. She was again elected ACWF secretary.

⁶⁴ For example, from April to August, it had enlarged meetings of the 16th presidium meeting of the Third Congress, enlarged meetings of the Sixth Executive Meeting of the Third Congress, two meetings for provincial, autonomous regional and municipal Fulian directors and sent out a circular on election of the delegates (Bangongting, 1991).

The Congress passed two major documents at the convention: the ACWF work report and the revised constitution. The work report delivered by Kang Keqing recalled ACWF's work in the 21 years since the last congress, summarized Mao's theory and line on the women's movement, and pointed out that the tasks of the women's movement in the new era were to achieve the "four modernizations."⁶⁵ The documents tried to tackle some of the crucial issues in the women's movement in the post-1949 period, mentioning the importance of women's special needs and interests, the united front work, and striving for modernization.

But the Congress was greatly limited by the time and context in which it was held. The documents resounded the very rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. The work report and other materials included criticizing Liu Shaoqi's revisionist line on women work and discussion of class struggle and line struggle as major tasks.⁶⁶

The revised Constitution stressed the class nature of the ACWF as a mass organization "with workers, peasants and other laboring women of various nationalities and the revolutionary intellectual women as its backbone, broadly uniting women of all circles" (ACWF, 1978:508). In its general principle, the focus was Party tasks, phrases concerning women included only

⁶⁵ They are modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology.

⁶⁶ See the collection of the meeting materials, ACWF, 1978.

to "strive for the complete liberation of women" and "closely follow the central tasks of the Party, give consideration to women's characteristics, coordinate with the parties concerned to do woman-work well" (ACWF, 1978:508-509). Of the eight tasks outlined as the concrete tasks of the ACWF, six were about mobilizing and educating women about what they should do. Only two concerned women themselves. The chapter on local Fulian organizations added an article about Party leadership: "local Fulian at various levels should conduct their work under the leadership of the Communist Party Committee of the same level. At the same time they receive professional guidance from Fulian organizations at a higher level" (ACWF, 1978,:511). Another article concerning higher level Fulian's instructions about work to its subordinates stressed the primary leadership of Party Committee over upper level Fulian. This had been the principle that was understood and followed in the past, but had never before been specifically stated in the ACWF constitution. The background for this specific article about Party leadership reflected the ACWF leaders' reaction to the Cultural Revolution. They resented the CR's practice of "uncovering capitalist roaders" and persecuting old cadres, and they were critical of what they said was the Gang of Four's attempt to "make use of mass organizations to oppose the Party" and "make Fulian a tool to usurp Party leadership and power" (ACWF Leading Party Member Group, 1978:253). This, ironically, led to their statement

that Fulian "must accept the absolute leadership of the Party" (ACWF Leading Party Member Group, 1978:253).

The 1978 Constitution of ACWF further retreated from the 1957 Constitution in its stance on issues important to the women's movement, at least in rhetoric, if not in intention. This reflected the idea of making ACWF a political tool for the mobilization of women, the legacy of the Cultural Revolution. The CCYL and ACFTU held their national congresses a month after the ACWF and had similar limitations in their documents.

Three months after the 4th National Women's Congresses, the Third Plenum of the CCP's 11th Congress was convened. This important meeting shifted the focus of Party work from class struggle to economic development and adopted the economic reform and open door policy, and the principle of using practice rather dogma as the criterion for examining truth. This opened the door for the reevaluation of the CR and CCP's rules and policies in previous years. This meeting energized the ACWF's work.

The meeting was regarded as a turning point in PRC history. It ushered in a new era, which will bring about tremendous changes to Chinese society and its people, including the ACWF.

Impact of the CR on the Women's Movement

The ten-year Cultural Revolution left a legacy that was more complicated than that of the Great Leap Forward. A full understanding of it is impossible at this stage because of limited access to information on the CR itself and on many events that had important implications for women. Also important is the recency of past events and the lack of studies of the actual experiences of women during the CR and their evaluation of the period. The unevenness with which the CR was carried out in different places and the diversity of people's experiences make the task of summarizing the meaning of this period for Chinese women more difficult, especially given different perspectives on the CR.

The responses of Chinese women scholars to the CR are negative. The 10 year period was regarded as giving "big damage to and big setback in the women's movement" (Qing, et al, 1989). This view is shared by the ACWF.⁶⁷ Many western scholars, however, gave a more positive evaluation, especially about the positive impact of the "criticize Lin Biao, criticize Confucius" campaign.⁶⁸ Of course, the more positive

⁶⁷ See Luo, 1980, and ACWF's preliminary summary of the women's movement after 1949 (draft for soliciting opinions), ACWF document, May 1982, ACWF Archive.

⁶⁸ Scholars have different ways of periodizing 1966-1976. Many western scholars refer to the CR as the first three turbulent years from 1966-1968. So the 1970s when women made some progress was considered by them as post-CR years whereas the Chinese scholars regarded the years before 1976 still as part of the Cultural Revolution. One such example was Andors' remarks that "for women, the post-Cultural Revolution years

evaluations are usually found in writings done during the CR or right after CR when information about what actually happened during the ten year period was not fully available to people outside China.

Positive aspects of the CR for women pointed out by China scholars were in four general areas:

1) women's labor force participation, 2) political participation, 3) the role of ideology, and 4) the benefits brought to women as a result of the general policy of the time.

In terms of women's labor participation, there was some resemblance to 1958. In 1970, the CCP began another economic advancement effort so as to improve the economy that was badly hurt by the political upheaval. The rash economic advance was also pushed by China's preparation for war. China's worry about an outbreak of war intensified with the Sino-Soviet border skirmish in 1969 and with escalating warfare in Cambodia and Vietnam. This had a tremendous influence on China's domestic and foreign policies. Economic advancement was carried out under the slogan of "In Agriculture, Learn

represented significant progress as the Chinese leadership displayed an increasing understanding of the dialectical relationship between the politics of women's progress and the process of socioeconomic development. In the 'criticize Lin Biao and Confucius' campaign the Chinese attacked directly not only the ideological roots of women's oppression but also confronted some specific issues such as equal pay. Moreover, national policies of the period, like the Xia-xiang movement, also raised many women's issues in a rather direct way, especially those concerning female roles in rural Chinese society" (1983:149).

from Dazhai, In Industry, Learn from Daqing." The promotion of Dazhai as a model of collective farming meant emphasis on mobilizing women to participate in collective labor, in capital construction, and other projects. Women-only groups became popular again, following the model of Dazhai's Iron Girl Team established in 1963. Women's groups named March 8 mushroomed everywhere. Women made inroads into non-traditional jobs and non-traditional roles. The two-year, rushed economic expansion resulted in a sharp increase in the number of employees at state-run enterprises due to the effort to build up the "third front" and to expand capital construction.⁶⁹

Urban housewives' labor force participation was continuously promoted. In addition to the model of the dependents of the Daqing Oil Field workers, the housewives had a new model. Urban residents from Huining County, Qinghai Province went to the countryside and⁷⁰ began the "going up to mountains and down to the countryside" movement. The Renmin ri bao issued an editorial on the incident entitled "We Also Have Two Hands. We Won't Be Idlers In Cities!" It further pushed housewives to leave their homes to participate in social production. To stay home was regarded as a shame, the

⁶⁹ It was reported that there was an increase of 9.83 million employees in state-run enterprises as against the planned 3.06 million. It is not clear if many of them were women (Wang, 1988).

⁷⁰ it was reported that from July to december, of the 688 households in the county, 191 of them (995 people) went to 13 communes (Wang, 1988).

stigma of housewives was finally formed during the CR period after all the off-and-on efforts to promote women's participation in socially productive labor. Street industry expanded in both quantity and quality during the CR due to the contribution of housewives. It was also pushed by the development strategies at the time -- the emphasis on self-reliance. In turn, it provided opportunities for employment for housewives although the old problem of street industry -- lower pay and fewer benefits than workers in state-run enterprises -- remained.⁷¹

Women's increased political participation during the CR was one phenomenon that drew a lot of comment from China watchers. Young women joined the Red Guards movement, the "going up to mountains and down to the countryside" campaign and other events of the CR the same way their male counterparts did. They also wore army uniforms, were involved in the vandalism and violence of the early Red Guards movement without hesitation, slept with their male comrades-in-arms in the same room during the da chun lian, the great political travel where the young people went all over the country free of charge to "exchange revolutionary experience."⁷² They engaged in the same heavy manual work in the countryside as

⁷¹ For the development of street industry and women, see Andors, 1983.

⁷² Some Red Guards later recalled that they had a pure relationship of "comrades-in-arms" without any physical desire for their comrades of the opposite sex. See Yan Ling. 1993.

their fellow sent-down youths of the other sex.⁷³ The absence of parental supervision allowed them a degree of freedom they had not experienced before, which also meant that they had to face challenges independently early on.

The seventies were characterized by an increase in the recruitment of women Party members, League members, and delegates to congresses of various kinds. The CR was said to be the time China had the strongest affirmative action policy. Many women, especially young women workers and peasants, entered politics. Most impressive was the increase in women taking higher leadership positions such as women in the newly-established Revolutionary Committee at the provincial level.⁷⁴ They were topped by two other women, Jiang Qing and Ye Qun (Lin Biao's wife), who gained positions in the CCP Politburo at the Ninth Party Congress of 1969. This was the first time women were named into the CCP's highest leadership body. Women made tremendous inroads into the CCP Central Committee as well.⁷⁵

⁷³ Of course, some of the young women were sexually abused and taken advantage of, a problem very rare for the young male.

⁷⁴ For example, only two women held positions on the pre-Cultural Revolution Party Committees of the provinces, autonomous regions or major municipalities at the rank of secretary. With reform in the Party apparatus, six women were elected as secretaries or deputy secretaries of Party Committees (Maloney, 1972).

⁷⁵ Thirteen women were named full members of the Central Committee and 10 were named as alternates. In 1965, only four women served on the Eighth CCP Central Committee: Chen Shaomin, Qian Ying, Deng Yingchao and Cai Chang. Another four

Another prominent feature of the CR was the important role of ideology in affecting change. "Women's liberation," "women's movement" and "sexual equality" were not the catch phrases as they were during the early 50s and the Great Leap, but two popular slogans of CR, became the dominant ideology promoting gender equality. One was Mao's quotation: "Times have changed, and today men and women are equal."⁷⁶ Whatever men comrades can accomplish, women comrades can, too" (China Reconstructs, 1977). Mao said this in June 1964 when he swam in a reservoir in Beijing. It was first published on May 27, 1965 in a report on that event carried in the Renmin ri bao ⁷⁷ but only caught on during the CR. Another popular saying was "Women hold up half of the sky." The ideology of gender equality embedded in the two slogans perhaps had the most important positive impact on women. It nurtured a generation of women who grew up believing women should be equal to men, believing in women's potential and ability to accomplish whatever men could accomplish. It further consolidated the social acceptance of gender equality, a process started in the 1950s.

were central committee alternates: Shuai Mengqi, Ou Mengjue, Li Jianzhen, and Zhang Yun (Maloney, 1972).

⁷⁶ This is the official translation from the Chinese. Mao's words were "nan nu dou yi yang," which literally means male and female are the same.

⁷⁷ See ACWF, 1988.

Moreover, it indicated changes in gender role expectations, from what women were expected to wear, to what they were expected to do and to the type of position they were to have in society. A verse of Mao's poem, "China's daughters have high-aspiring minds. They love their battle array, not silks and satins" can partially explain the interest in army uniforms among young women during the CR.⁷⁸ The change in women's role expectations could also be seen in the heroic images of women in real life -- women masons and women working on high voltage power lines as portrayed by the media -- the "iron girls." On the stage, eight "model plays" dominated during the Cultural Revolution. In these plays, women not only had a positive image that was different from traditional stereotypes, but also were portrayed as strong, capable revolutionary leaders. In two of the plays, one about dock workers in Shanghai and the other about a rural brigade in Southern China, both the chief leading characters, the Party Secretaries respectively, are women. They actually outshine everybody else in the play, including men, in their correct political stance, their sensitivity to class struggle, their toughness against class enemies, their decisiveness, determination, and their breadth of vision.

Another CR event that was given special credit for fostering the revolution in gender ideology was the "Criticize

⁷⁸ This poem about women militia was written in 1961 and published at the end of 1963. It also caught on during the CR.

Lin Biao and Confucius" campaign in 1974 and 1975. The campaign was said to have sparked a movement among women to study the origins and development of Confucian ideology and to rediscover their own history and to gain ideological emancipation by criticizing the idea that men are superior and women are inferior (Croll, 1976:36).⁷⁹

Women also were believed to have benefitted from policies that targeted the general public. One was better health care services for rural people, medical teams from cities, and the development of cooperative collective health care that benefitted everyone, including women. Under this new system, many young rural women became "bare-foot" doctors and joined the health care system. Women were also said to have benefitted from the decentralized educational system. More flexible forms of education accommodated rural girls' schedule, allowing them to remain in school while attending to their household duties. More rural women were able to go to college due to the policy of selecting students for higher education from the "workers, peasants and soldiers" rather than through entrance exams.⁸⁰

But the consequences and implications of these policies for women were far more complicated than this, as were

⁷⁹ For samples of criticism written by Chinese women, see Fu Wen, 1974, and several articles in Chinese Sociology and Anthropology, summer, 1975.

⁸⁰ For the positive effect of these, see Andors, 1983, Hayhoe, 1995.

perceptions of them. In terms of women's labor force participation, accompanying women's increased involvement in collective labor was women's increased double burden of working inside and outside the home and their overwork in the "joint battle" for grain production and for capital construction.⁸¹ Some places had the slogan of "start working at 5:30, bring a lunch and continue working after dinner." (Qing, et al, 1989:213). There were occurrences of ignoring women's labor production just as during the Great Leap. The issue of "equal work, equal pay" was raised again in the 1970s, but the criticism of pursuing self-interest or "putting work points in command" hindered implementation of the principle.⁸² The CR's emphasis on collective farming and grain production and criticism of capitalism curbed household based side-line production and the free market, reducing women's capacity to engage in these activities and to improve their lives.

As pointed out by some scholars, the limitations of increased women's political representation was that women were joining male organizations. Many women in leadership positions were tokens and the percentage of women in such positions dropped after the CR. The rise of Jiang Qing and Ye

⁸¹ The Chinese expression for "joint battle" was hui zhan. It was used to refer to all kinds of endeavors, typical of the voluntarist campaign style that was used to run everything, including production. It became a formality often without real substance.

⁸² This was also reported by Johnson, 1983.

Qun was a special event as the result of CR politics, and reflected changes in political power rather than in women's status. Moreover, the propagated rationale for promoting women was to bring women's revolutionary potential into full play rather than to promote women's emancipation. Those who were in leadership positions were not there to promote the agenda of women but that of the Party. Ideologically women workers and peasants seemed to be the beneficiaries of the CR policy by their class status, not by their sex. But without recognition and promotion of women's gender interests, this gain was limited.

In the area of ideological revolution, accompanying the most positive aspect of women's "can do" spirit was the male standard regarded as the norm. Women's successes were measured by their ability to do "whatever men comrades could do," especially physically demanding jobs, while women labor protection facilities and measures were ignored. "Male and female are the same" also indicated the denial of gender differences. This, combined with the strong puritanism of the time, pressured women not to wear more colorful clothes or clothes that showed their shape and denied their choice to use makeup or have their hair permed. The revival of femininity and the emphasis on gender difference in the post-CR era is partially the result of women's rejection of this extremist practice. Some women are also very critical of the image of women models during the CR. They were portrayed as super

women possessing unusually strong will and ability, fully devoted to work at the expense of the family, children and individual life. Women's personal feelings and individual concerns were not mentioned at all, as if these did not exist in these revolutionary women's lives. One criticism goes:

The image of those advanced models that were established through unlimited exaggeration are not convincing nor do they hold any prestige among the masses. This is the reason why after the Cultural Revolution, women labor models and women Party members are teased and even have difficulties finding spouses (Qing, et al, 1989:213).

It is interesting to observe that, contrary to their counterparts in the West, Chinese women give little or no credit to the "criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" campaign. It was not mentioned in any way as a positive event in the women's movement. I think this is because the positive effect of the message that women were not inferior and could achieve whatever men could do was regarded as part of the general ideology at the time. Thus the campaign was not given any specific credit for its promotion of this idea. It might also be due to the Chinese dislike of the criticism campaigns and the CR in general because they now understand that the real purpose of the campaign was to serve the purposes of the CR agenda. The critique of Confucian ideas about women was not as thorough as during the May Fourth Movement. Its target was "remaining feudal ideas" rather than structural and other factors in the CR that perpetuated male supremacy.

Moreover, praise of the legalists, especially two prominent former emperors, was seen as merely part of the

effort to help Jiang Qing and her followers take over the Party and gain state power. The treatment of Jiang Qing was another incident that draws different responses from China.⁸³ After the trial of the "Gang of Four" ⁸⁴ ACWF Chairwoman Kang made the following comments:

Recently, some people abroad said that Jiang Qing is a "woman theoretician," a "strong woman"; that the trial of Jiang Qing is a "suppression" of women, that "will affect the image of women," etc., etc. Obviously, this is due to their lack of understanding of the matter. No one in China regards Jiang Qing a "woman theoretician" and no one has ever seen her theoretical works. She is no more than a careerist and counter-revolutionary, cruel reckless, skilled at scheming and intriguing, playing politics and dreaming of riding roughshod over the people (Kang, 1981b:1)

There was no doubt that personally, Jiang Qing suffered from male chauvinism within the highest leading body of the CCP. It was also the fact that after Jiang Qing's fall, she was portrayed by the media as the source of trouble, the way women who were close to power are traditionally portrayed. The fact that Jiang Qing got little sympathy from Chinese women as shown in the Chinese press may be due to various reasons. She was no doubt the victim of existing chauvinist ideas and the prevailing view which considered women's issue secondary to

⁸³ For samples of criticism of Jiang Qing in Chinese press, see the translated versions that appeared in Chinese Studies in History fall, 1978, winter 1978-79, spring 1979 and summer 1979, and also the June issue of China Reconstructs, 1977.

⁸⁴ The trial took place four years after their arrest in 1976. It convicted her group as a counterrevolutionary clique and sentenced her to death with a two-year reprieve.

those of class.⁸⁵ Other reasons given included her role in the CR and her "lavish and sinister style of life and the way she lorded it over people" (China Reconstruct, 1977:7). She also did not make herself known as a fighter for the collective rights of women. American scholar Witke who interviewed both Jiang and other Chinese women leaders commented on the differences between Deng Yingchao and Jiang Qing:

Teng's⁸⁶ unequivocal and unapologetic sense of primary responsibility for the special problems of women and her habit of association with women in all political contexts set her apart from Chiang Ch'ing, whose feminism had been more privately pursued and whose high political ambition demanded that she not characterize her life fundamentally as a struggle for sexual equality (Witke, 1977:34-35).

There is no space in this dissertation to examine further issues related to the way Jiang Qing was viewed and portrayed, but the factors mentioned above affected Chinese reaction to the Criticize-Lian Biao-and Confucian-Campaign promoted by Jiang Qing.

As for the consequence of other state policies, there are varying perspectives as well. For example, contrary to the praise of women's progress in education during the CR, there was the claim that the CR caused serious damage to education

⁸⁵ It was reported that Jiang Qing had said "the situation in the Party Central Committee is unreasonable... there is serious male chauvinism... this situation should be changed, women should rule the country." The criticism for this was that Jiang Qing attempted to make women's struggle for equality a struggle between men and women, ignoring that the nature of women's issue was class, and she did this to divide the working class (China Reconstructs, 1977:7).

⁸⁶ Wede phonetic indication of Deng.

and as a direct consequence, the rate of illiterate women increased after the CR (Lou, 1980). Due to the lack of statistics during those years and the extreme unevenness of development in rural China, it is hard to back these up with reliable data.

In my opinion, the CR in general stood out for its negative impact on women and the women's movement. As many scholars recognized, women's issues were marginal and did not receive sufficient attention during the CR, especially during its first three years (Johnson, 1983, Andors, 1983). A case in point was the coverage of women's issues by the Renmin Ribao (People's Daily). The authoritativeness of the journal's editorials as policy statements of the CCP has been recognized by China scholars (Oksenberg and Henderson, 1982). Chinese political life exhibits an annual rhythm based on the occasion of national commemoration. March 8 as the officially celebrated International Women's Day is often the occasion for the RMRB to deliver Party messages to women. Except for a few occasions, RMRB seldom failed to do so. The conspicuous absence of editorials on women during the Cultural Revolution for six straight years (from 1967-1972) clearly demonstrates that women as a group were marginal during the CR and did not get the attention they had previously received.⁸⁷

As a matter of fact, the CR marked itself by its anti-feminist tendencies. The relationship between the interests

⁸⁷ For a list of RMRB editorials, see Appendix D.

of gender and class has been a central issue in the women's movement. The Cultural Revolution stood out as a period marked by the conflict between the two, clearly showing that the emphasis on class seriously hurt women's interests. This not only harmed women's alliance and unity, but united front work was denounced and replaced by a policy that divided women by economic status and manual or mental division of labor. It also meant that women's special interests, particularly women's practical gender interests and needs, were ignored and hurt by the criticism of welfarism. Women's increased double burden, the decline in child care and the deterioration of women's labor protection facilities and measures were some of the problems that resulted from this practice.⁸⁸ Moreover, another direct result of the conflict of interests between class and gender was the damage to women's organizations. Kay Ann Johnson (1983) effectively summarized what occurred:

The reason commonly given for the destruction of the Women's Federation and its local branches illustrate the anti-feminist potential of the ideology of the cultural revolution left, with their singular emphasis on the class struggle and the development of "proletarian consciousness" as the primary means to apprehend and transform the world. Not only was it claimed that the federation had been infiltrated by bourgeois ideas, leading to dwell on "narrow" family and welfare issues and to ignore the "class education" of women, but this

⁸⁸ For more detailed information, see Luo, 1980, Qing, et al, 1989. They mentioned that rural women were pushed to work in the fields and slept even less in order to finish their household duties. Many places eliminated resting rooms for pregnant woman, women workers' clinics, breast feeding rooms, etc. ignoring the four periods protection for women in rural areas. Child care facilities declined and schools specializing in training preschool teachers were closed.

ultra-left line also claimed that under the dictatorship of the proletariat, women had no special interests, only common class interests with men. Therefore women did not need a separate organization, which in any case only served to divide the proletariat.

The Cultural Revolution's destruction of the ACWF and its branches was among the strongest criticism of the CR by the ACWF leaders. Although Fulian branches at and below the provincial level were restored after 1973, they defined their goal predominantly as the mobilization of women. Despite the work done by some cadres, the role the organizations played was limited and very uneven. Without a central ACWF leadership, with no special advocacy or defense of women's interests by the women's movement, the organizations were more likely to focus only on the tasks of the local Party branches.⁸⁹ The special interests of women were neglected.

Other problems, such as increasing cases of purchased marriages and serious violations of women's rights and interests in the countryside were aggravated by the end of the CR because of a lack of social order and a lack of organizations to check on and report to (Luo, 1980).

⁸⁹ It was reported that amid the effort to criticize capitalism and revisionism, Fulian branches had to make "blocking the road to capitalism," "cutting the tail of capitalism," part of their daily work. They went after anything that was not produced for the collective. One saying went: "a fen of land, an egg could all be the soil to produce capitalism." In some places, Fulian cadres went with militia men to pull out the vegetables planted in the front or the backyards of peasant houses, limiting the number of chickens peasants could raise, etc. Some believed that it was during this period that Fulian changed in rural women's mind from people from the natal family to their foes (Qing, et al, 1989).

Commenting on the effect of women's solidarity groups, Croll made the following observations:

These groups had not always acted in defense of women's interests or even defined clearly what those interests were, but it was the direct experience of women that they were a great deal worse off without them (Croll, 1985:74).

When criticizing the CR's damage to the women's movement, the ACWF and some scholars tend to blame Lin Biao and especially the "gang of four" for their ultra-leftist ideology and line and their destruction of the ACWF which left the women's movement without a lead organization. However, if we examine the ACWF's history and the history of the women's movement closely, we would find what we saw during the Cultural Revolution was basically the continuation of the CCP's policy on the woman question rather than a major departure from the previous policies. We saw the same principle of expanding women's public roles and functions by mobilizing them to participate in production and politics, we witnessed the old issue of the relationship between gender interests and class interests where the former was subordinated to the latter as it had always been. Even the inspiring slogan of "whatever men comrades can do, women comrades can do, too" had its origins in the Great Leap slogan of "women can do everything, women can do everything well." And the necessity and legitimacy for separate women's organizations had been challenged before the CR. If the ACWF and other mass organizations had been left intact during the

CR, they would not have become the social force leading the masses against the tide of the CR, because they had already acceded to the politics of the CR when the movement started. There are structural reasons behind their helpless position during the CR. Their continued existence would probably have meant that they would have become accomplices rather than the victims of radical CR politics and the "Gang of Four."

Women's experiences during the CR were mainly shaped by the basic principles and practices of the CCP on the woman question, which once again revealed the embedded contradictions within such a theoretical framework. The major difference was that some assumptions and practices were pushed to the extreme during the CR. This resulted in some strange paradoxes in the women's movement. For example, the family is regarded by feminists as a base of women's subordination. Some scholars are very critical of the CCP's family policies, of the CCP's lack of commitment to thoroughly transform the patriarchal family for the liberation of women (Johnson, 1983, Stacey, 1983). But in China, because of the government's strong interference in people's private lives and neglect of people's needs in personal affairs, there was the tendency for women to protect the family after the Cultural Revolution. The "two-diligence principle" was first raised in 1957 to direct women to focus on the family and household as has been discussed in the previous chapter. But because CR radicals connected the "two-diligence principle" proposed by Deng

Xiaoping to the "black line" in woman-work, the principle was hailed by Fulian cadres as the correct principle for the women's movement (Wuhan Fulian Criticism group, 1978), ignoring the problem that came with proposing the principle. Chinese women's attitude toward the family will affect the way the issue will be dealt with as a women's issue in the future. Other examples of paradoxes include women's aversion to denial of gender differences and women's image and gender role expectations as created during the CR. These became part of the context in which the women's movement is being carried out in the new era of reform.

CHAPTER IX

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT EMERGES FROM BELOW: 1979-1993

The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Congress held at the end of 1978 signified the beginning of a new era in the history of PRC, an era of economic reform and political liberalization. Economic reform, which moved the nation from a planned economy to a market economy, started in the rural sector in 1979. It expanded to the urban sector in 1985 and spread far beyond the economy. It brought tremendous changes to China, a changing economic landscape and increasing socio-economic pluralism. It created the needed space for the ACWF and other mass organizations to operate with more autonomy. Most important, it allowed the emergence of interest groups. The development of an urban based women's movement was one of the most significant events. The ACWF was part of the social force pushing the urban based women's movement. Led by professional/intellectual women, the movement also imposed great pressure on the ACWF to transform itself.

All this was taking place in the context of China's opening itself to the outside world. In the reform era, especially in the 1990s, Chinese women had increased contact with feminist ideas and practices from other parts of the world. The outside influences on the women's movement were

greater than any other period of PRC history, perhaps in the entire history of China.

It is difficult to precisely periodize the ACWF's development in the reform era. I will divide my discussion of the ACWF into three periods, using the convention of each of the three National Women's Congresses as the reference point. Each congress highlighted the ground that the ACWF had covered subsequent to the previous congress.

In the first period, between the Fourth and Fifth National Congresses (1979-1983), the fully reactivated ACWF redefined its functions through reexamining its past practices, adjusting itself to the changing situation, and by responding to demands of the CCP. The CCP wanted very much to have the mass organizations play a more active representative role and gave the ACWF the support it needed to thrive. The Federation quickly walked out of the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and worked vigorously to help women deal with their problems. At the Fifth National Women's Congress in 1983, the ACWF declared that its main tasks were to represent the interests of women and children and to work on their behalf.

As China's economic reform moved to the urban sector in 1985, the conflict between reform measures and women's interests intensified. The women's movement, which had been brewing since the 1980s, developed rapidly, fueled by the more liberal atmosphere brought about by the 13th CCP Congress at the end of 1987. By the time the ACWF held the Sixth National

Women's Congress in 1988, the women's movement was at its zenith as evidenced by the rapid development of women's presses, women's groups, women's awareness of themselves as women and studies of women's issues. The Six Congress produced the most women-centered documents since the inception of the ACWF. The ACWF now defined itself more as a pressure group for women's equality and liberation. The ACWF also unveiled its most ambitious plan to carry out structural reform, looking squarely at its relation with the Party and government, its role as a women's organization in contemporary Chinese society and ways in which it could transform its organizational structure and operations.

The tighter political controls after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 curbed ACWF reform but it did not cause a full retreat. The women's movement continued to make progress, especially after China's economic reform moved forward again in 1992. From that point, China's transition to the market economy was irreversible. The Seventh National Women's Congress held in 1993 demonstrated the progress women had made as well as the constraints they faced and the changing context in which the ACWF now operated. In this period, the ACWF and Chinese women expanded their contact with the outside world and the ACWF actually gained more political power and leverage. The ACWF was entrusted with helping the government organize the Fourth World Conference on Women held

in Beijing in 1995. The conference provided the ACWF with challenges as well as new opportunities.

Full Reactivation and Redefining Roles: 1979-1983

Organizational Consolidation and Reactivation

After the restoration of the ACWF, the Federation's most urgent task was to fully reactivate its organization and functions. The ACWF issued directives on the number of personnel and finances of Fulian at all levels¹ and began to staff the Fulian offices. At the ACWF headquarters' general rehabilitation meeting in April, 1979, ACWF leaders announced there were no enemies among the 317 cadres and staff members who had been in the ACWF at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. All the cadres who had been attacked, publicly denounced or persecuted (including ACWF's two vice chairwomen: Zhang Yun and Kang Keping and seven of its secretaries) and those who had been wrongly accused as being members of the May 16 Corps² were fully rehabilitated. ³ Those who were labeled as "rightists" in 1957 and as "elements with rightist tendencies" in 1959 all regained their innocence (Bangongting, 1991).

¹ See Bangongting, 1991.

² This organization was accused of being a counterrevolutionary organization during the CR.

³ 22 who were dismissed from the CCP regained their Party membership. 22 who received unjust verdicts and punishment had their cases reversed and received apologies.

The rehabilitation of cadres at all levels allowed some old Fulian cadres to return to their posts and they were joined by some new blood, too. The National Women Cadres' School of ACWF, which was closed in 1960, re-opened. Together with other schools, it provided needed training for the ACWF cadres.⁴ The suspended ACWF journals, Funu gongzuo and Women of China, ACWF's English publication targeting foreign readership, also resumed publication in 1979 (Women of China expanded from a bi-monthly to a monthly publication). These journals provided the ACWF with the necessary tools to exert ideological influence. In December 1979, the ACWF restructured its departments at the national headquarters and chose the personnel to staff them (Bangongting, 1991), thus completing the primary work of organizational consolidation.

While working on organizational consolidation, the ACWF also took up the tasks that were traditionally done by Fulian but had been neglected during the CR. Among these tasks was the selection and praise of 10,000 individual and collective "March 8 Red Banner Carriers" from all walks of life. The last time the ACWF had carried out this activity on this scale was in 1960. The ACWF initiated other activities in 1979 including child care, proposing the revision of the marriage

⁴ In addition to the national women's cadre school, five provincial women cadres' schools were restored or established by September of 1979, and another 14 provincial Fulian conducted cadre training classes. In a year's time, over 40,000 fulian cadres above the Commune level were trained (Luo, 1979).

law, reconnecting with women's organizations at home and abroad, and beginning to document the CCP's policy on women and the history of the women's movement.⁵ These areas of work were expanded in the following years.

The catchword of the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Congress was "strategic shift," that is, "shift the emphasis of the Party's work to socialist modernization." For the ACWF, the major issue was how to make its own "shift" and where to go. Helping this exploration was what the ACWF called "make-up discussions of criterion for judging truth."⁶ The ACWF engaged its cadres to examine ACWF's work over the past 30 years, assess the current situation, explore ways to represent women's interests and debate how to balance Party leadership and the ACWF's independent and active work (Luo,

⁵ Besides Marx, Lenin, Engles and Stalin on Women, the ACWF published Collection of the Fourth National Women's Congress, Collection of Important Document on The Chinese Women's Movements (August, 1979). In December, 1979, the Committee for the Compiling of the Chinese Women's Movement was established (Bangongting, 1991).

⁶ This refers to a discussion started by Guangming Ri bao (Guangming Daily) to determine what is the proper criterion for determining truth (i.e. for determining the correct guiding ideology or the correct policy). Should the criterion be that a) a certain statement is made in the writings of Mao, Marx or Lenin or that b) experience teaches that a given course or policy is workable? The discussion finally established the idea that "practice is the sole criterion for judging truth." This challenged the absolute infallibility of classic communist writings and Mao's writing, allowing the reformers to challenge the existing principles and propose change (Ethridge, 1990).

1979). These discussions helped Fulian cadres break away from dogmatic "ultra-leftist" thinking, critically review the CCP policies on women over the past 30 years and embrace new thinking and new programs. The revisiting of Liu Shaoqi's ideas on woman work and the historical review of ACWF's experience in promoting women's participation in production by ACWF's Vice President and theorist Luo Qiong reflected such an effort (Luo, 1979).

The renewed recognition of the important role of mass organizations and the expectations placed on them from the CCP leadership was also crucial to this strategic shift. In a speech on the eve of PRC's National Day in 1979, Ye Jianying, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress, acknowledged that the ACFTU, CCYL and the ACWF were "important representatives of the broad masses". He demanded that they

actively, independently, responsively carry out their work with initiative... safeguard the interests of the state and collective. At the same time they must firmly safeguard the interests of their constituencies, actively solve the problems they meet in daily life and oppose bureaucratism that disregards the masses (Ye, 1979:488).

Ye acknowledged that these organizations "should have positions, power and responsibilities and none should be ornaments" (Ye, 1979:488).

This and later CCP leaders' speeches and Party documents indicated significant changes in the context in which the ACWF and other mass organizations were operating. The CCP again required the mass organizations to perform a dual mission. CCP

leaders now considered representation of the mass groups and safeguarding their interests also an important state task.

The serious social problems China faced after the CR - social disorder, the decline of social morality, the discontent of people due to resentment toward the CR, and the declining standard of living were the reason for this change. The so-called "crisis of three beliefs" -- people's loss of belief in Marxism, the Communist Party, and socialism -- seriously worried the CCP leadership (Wang, 1980). State/society relations were very tense and the CCP really wanted the mass organizations to help repair this relationship and find solutions to the problems.

The problems women faced were among the worst ever: increasing incidents of trafficking in women, purchased and forced marriages which led to cases of collective suicide of young women, and female infanticide and the abuse of women who gave birth to daughters that were increasing with the rigorous implementation of birth control and the one-child policy. The Cultural Revolution aggravated these problems because of the turmoil inspired by class struggle and the inattention to women's issues. Now the report of shocking incidents filled the press.⁷ There was also a sharp increase in the number of

⁷The problems were so severe, the ACWF carried articles entitled "Women should have independent personhood," (ZGFN, 1980, 10:13-14), denouncing practices that treated women as objects to be sold or bought or be abused at the will of the husband. In "women are human beings" (ZGFN, 1980, 12:16-19) it said: "women are human beings, to strive for women's rights and living as human beings, for their independence, equality

women who contacted Fulian at various levels requesting help in addressing the injustices inflicted on them. Less severe in nature but no less bothersome were problems of special concern to urban women: broken family ties or relations established during the CR for political considerations that had soured with the evolving context. Other problems in women's lives included unemployment, difficulty in finding quality child care, the heavy double burden of work and the family, crowded housing, and the lack of labor protection. There were also emerging problems with the economic reform.

CCP leaders' expectation that mass organizations would help solve the problems China was facing after the CR⁸ created favorable conditions for the mass organizations. In this regard, there was some compatibility between the goals of the women's movement and those of the state in the reform era, as there had been in the 1950s, although the switch to a market economy also brought new conflicts.

To respond to the problems and fully reactivate its work, the ACWF organized four national meetings in 1980: 1) a meeting on work among women who contacted Fulian requesting

and happiness, to struggle against the dregs of feudalism that do not treat women as human beings and devastated women physically and mentally remains a significant issue for the women's movement in the new era" (Yuan Ming, 1980:16).

⁸After the ACWF's restoration, a CCP leader asked the ACWF leaders: "If a women's organization could not help women solve the problems they faced, what kind of women's organization was that?" (from my interview in 1992)

help for their problems (April), 2) propaganda and education (May), 3) work among rural women (July), and 4) work among urban women (October). These meetings geared up activities on all fronts.

Focusing Production in Woman-Work

The ACWF decided production should still be the center of its work since the goal for the women's movement confirmed by the Fourth National Women's Congress was around the national task of striving for the four modernizations. But now the definition was much broader than mobilizing women to participate in social labor alone. It could be anything:

whether it is to directly organize women to participate in production, or indirectly to provide service for production, so long as it is beneficial for the development of production, and contributing to the four modernizations (Luo, 1980:560-561).

The ACWF encouraged its branch organizations to define their own work in cities and rural areas under this principle.

Work among Rural Women

In rural areas, the biggest challenge was adjusting to the changes brought by the reform. The family responsibility system dismantled the commune system and once again made the household the unit of production. Land and large draft animals were distributed to the households who sold contracted grain to the state and kept the rest. The household now had full control over production and organization decision making. In a few short years, from 1979 to 1982, 90% of the rural

production teams adopted various forms of the responsibility system. This system stimulated peasants's enthusiasm, increased production of grain, other crops, sideline household production, rural market activities and rural industry (Guo, 1982).

In the first couple of years, the ACWF publicized the CCP economic policy in the countryside, encouraging women to engage in production activities. Rural women had two fears. If they were among the people who got rich first, they feared criticism as new rich peasants. They also feared that the policy might change, so they retained a wait-and-see attitude. The Fulian cadres assured women that the aim of the current policy was to make people rich and they rehabilitated those who were wrongly criticized during the CR because of their involvement in non-grain or household production. At the same time, Fulian shifted from a singular emphasis on grain production to all kinds of productive activities, especially traditional household sideline production such as food processing, handicrafts, weaving, raising pigs or chickens. Fulian promoted successful projects as models for women to follow and provided information and services to women's productive and marketing activities. In some places, local Fulian actually organized women into cooperatives, collective farms or cooperative shops.

As the responsibility system developed further, the division of labor in rural production deepened and the rural

economy became more diversified. The development of "specialized households"⁹ was very fast. The ACWF started to spread the word of these women's experiences. It also raised issues of women's education and skills, heavy household burden, labor and health (ACWF, 1980). There was a wide range in the level of economic development in rural areas, and in the work done by Fulian in different places. The ACWF hadn't found an effective way to pull its rural work together.

The decollectivization process weakened women's organizations. The expansion of the family's role in production, distribution and education came with the decline of administrative and organization functions. With the structural reform of rural administration, and the commune replaced by the township, the size of villages and their administrative level differed from place to place. Many places, in the course of streamlining the brigade and production team structure, eliminated the Brigade Fulian Director. The number of Brigade Fulian directors who concurrently held the position of deputy Party secretary, committee member or deputy Brigade leader declined by 33-40% in various places. The position of women production team

⁹Defined as a household that devotes its ablest workers and at least 60% of its work time to a single crop, product, or service (such as vegetables, poultry, or transport); sells at least 80% of its products (60 percent for grain producers); and has an income from sales for its products or services at least double the average of local families. According to Beijing Review, specialized households reached their peak numerically in 1984 with 4.3 million (cited in Ethridge, 1990).

leaders was eliminated in many places. Some places kept women cadres only to do family planning work. Some even had male cadres concurrently holding the position of Fulian Brigade directors (Guo, 1982). Many rural grassroots Fulian became immobile. Some cadres felt now that every household was taking care of itself, women's organizations were useless. The old methods did not work any more --, women activists no longer needed to urge women to go to work in the field or help women demand more work points. (Guo, 1982). It was more difficult to call for meetings because women no long worked together in the fields of the collective. The need for the existence of Fulian's grassroots organizations in rural areas and their ability to organize women was again questioned.

The Fulian cadres debated whether or not there still should be women's delegate meetings and, if so, at what level they should be set up. The ACWF admitted that in many places, women's delegate meetings actually were not playing an active role. After the Great Leap women mainly worked in the field collectively so leaders of women teams became the persons who took the main responsibility for doing woman work. Some Fulian cadres felt there was no need to have women's delegates. A director of the women's delegate meeting at the brigade level and a woman team leader at the production team level would be enough. Others felt that exactly because of the implementation of the family responsibility system, more women delegates were needed to connect to women and their demands.

The ACWF decided to keep the women's delegate meeting at the level of Villagers' Committees¹⁰ (Guo, 1982).

The CCP's support for an active Fulian helped consolidate grassroots Fulian organizations. The ACWF held a meeting on work among rural women at primary branches in 1982, the "working regulation of rural grassroots women's delegate meeting (draft)" passed at that meeting specified the tasks of grassroots women's organizations and the requirements for consolidation. In another two years consolidation basically was completed although there was great variation among the various women's organizations.

A group of young and middle-aged women with professional training were recruited to Fulian positions, bringing more life to ACWF's work. In villages, the focus was to have more delegates to connect women in households. The delegates were not elected by residence or team membership as before. Rather, the new emphasis was on activists with a specialization in production (so they could help women with their income generating projects) or with different responsibilities (such as those provide medical services, or in charge of family planning, etc.,) for the convenience of woman work. Compensation for women activists had been a big problem since the beginning of decollectivization. Various compensation

¹⁰ Formally the brigade. The committees assumed the economic and social but not governmental functions of the old brigades. Above it was township governments which replaced communes. The structural change was made in 1982.

schemes were tried,¹¹ but fair payment to women remained a persistent problem. The number of women concurrently holding other positions increased, partially as a way of dealing with the payment problem.

Work among urban women

A national meeting on woman work in cities made clear that now "urban Fulian should serve all women in urban and suburban areas" (Luo, 1980b:613). This was a big change from Fulian's original focus on urban housewives. The ACWF further classified urban women with whom Fulian should work into three groups: 1) women workers and cadres in all walks of life; 2) young women waiting for jobs, retired women, women working in street-owned shops and housewives at the neighborhood level; and 3) a small number of women who were the object of the resumed united front work. City Fulian were encouraged to determine their own focus and approach in their work. Three groups of women became the focus of Fulian's work in the country as whole. They were young women "waiting for jobs," female workers, and women who were the target of united front work.

The women who were "waiting for jobs" demanded the ACWF's immediate attention. Toward the end of the CR, a large number of young people who had been sent to the countryside as

¹¹Some women got compensation for the time spent on woman-work, some received a deduction in the amount of grain they needed to turn over to the team, some received regular amounts of money or grain as payment for their work (Luo, 1981).

"educated youth" returned to cities. They were called the "waiting-for-jobs youth" (at that time, unemployment was still an unacceptable concept in a socialist economy). About 70% of these youth were women, some had children and many had been out of work for a long time (Labor Bureau, 1980). These women stayed home and were subject to the management of neighborhood committees. They became another group targeted by Fulian at the neighborhood committee level, in addition to the elderly women and children for whom the neighborhood committee had always worked.

Because of the difficulty of providing employment for these women, the great pressure of surplus labor China faced, and anticipated changes in labor and management policies coming with the reform, some economists proposed to let female workers go home so as to make their positions available for unemployed men. These economists questioned the "life-long employment of women," suggesting that, given women's heavy family burden and lack of quality time to take care the children, women should go home, with pay and benefits from their original work place, or the state should raise the pay of their husbands as a way to compensate for lost income. This suggestion was flatly rejected by the ACWF. The ACWF Secretariat wrote a formal letter to Party and state leaders, explaining why they thought this idea was wrong. The CCP Secretariat had a meeting to discuss the issue with ACWF Secretary Luo Qiong present. Luo explained the ACWF's

position. She argued that women's "waiting for jobs" was a serious problem and that the principle should be to try every means to expand women's employment, not vice versa.¹² This was accepted by the CCP and the National Conference on Employment.

The ACWF and the Labor Bureau agreed to a policy to change the employment structure to absorb more women workers. This meant expanding industries that "provide more work for women," such as light industry, handicraft, commerce, food and services. It also meant developing collectively-owned, self-supporting businesses and self-employment. Other measures included flexible working hours and different shifts, and combating discrimination against women in recruitment (Labor Bureau, 1980). These measures worked and became the major approach to women's unemployment. At the same time, however, they also reinforced the traditional gender division of labor, institutionalized occupational segregation and contributed to the existing earning gap between the two sexes because most collectively owned, small business offered fewer benefits and lower pay to employees than state-run businesses, especially in the early 1980s. Fulian joined the others in promoting gender stereotypes by talking about jobs that were "suitable for women to do."

¹² For the whole incident and the Labor Bureau's response, see "ACWF Secretariat's letter to Comrades Wan Li and Peng Chong on the issue of women's employment" and "Bring out the strength of women labor and pay attention to women's employment", both in HUIBIAN, II:564-569.

Since young people at that time still regarded jobs from state-owned enterprises as the "iron rice bowl" and a superior employment opportunity, effort to establish collectively-owned street factories and businesses to get young people working there became a real challenge. The ACWF resumed the practice of establishing small businesses of its own. A large number of street service businesses such as breakfast stands, small shops, sewing stations, laundry, and day care centers, were established during this time to ease residents' burdens in domestic chores. These businesses also absorbed many "waiting-for-jobs youth."¹³

Female workers were another group of women who required attention from the ACWF. They became the first victims of the state's policy to close, suspend, merge and change the line of production of ailing state-run enterprises as a way to improve productivity and profit. Decline in labor protection measures, lack of quality child-care, a heavy double burden inside and outside home, and discrimination in housing assignments and job promotions were among the problems female

¹³For example, Xianglu Jiao Residential Fulian worked very hard to establish street industry and service which provided employment to 1,198 people in its area, that meant 96.7% of the total waiting-for-jobs" population ("strive to settle the young people waiting for jobs," FNGZ, 1980,9:5). In Changzhou city, 51,600 people found jobs in the period of October 1978 to end of 1979, they made 98% of all "waiting-for-jobs youth," more than half of them were women. Of these young people, 42,190 were in collectively owned enterprises, or 82% of the employed ("investigation on the settlement of people waiting for jobs (FNGZ, 1980, 9:4, both quoted in Ren, 1989).

workers faced. A woman worker wrote a letter to Deng Yingchao, complaining that Fulian only issued documents and gave speeches but did not act as the "natal family" of women to help them solve these problems¹⁴. Women who were in charge of work among women workers also complained that the ACFTU and ACWF had not given adequate attention to their work (Luo, 1980b). The ACWF was compelled to step up its work among female workers.

Work among female workers had been the domain of the Trade Union. With the ACWF now making it part of its focus, the relationship between the Women Workers' Committee of ACFTU and the ACWF again became a central issue between the two organizations.¹⁵ The principle governing the relationship between the two organizations was reaffirmed. The Women Workers's Committee accepted leadership from the ACFTU but not from the ACWF, but as an institutional member of the ACWF, it also accepted guidance from the ACWF in work among women workers. The Women Workers's Committee should play the leading role in working with women workers, while the ACWF should play a supporting role. But debate on implementation

¹⁴ The woman's name is Shi Xingrong, for her letters to Deng and to ACWF, see ZGFN, 1980,11:2.

¹⁵ For example, when the ACWF carried out the 1979 praise of March 8 Red Banner holders, it did not specify how to carry out the activities among women workers and received criticism from the Union cadres (Luo, 1980b:516).

details remained a major issue between the two organizations.¹⁶

The ACWF defined several ways it could help the Union to serve women workers. First, it could help work in places where the influence of the Union was weak, such as research and academic institutions or public health establishments. In many of those places, intellectuals were the dominant group and had no union organization because they were not regarded as part of the working class. Shanghai Fulian established a women's working committee in the Shanghai branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to carry out work among women employees there. Second, it could play Fulian's traditional role well in neighborhoods to make women employees' life easier by helping them solve the "three difficulties" in "clothes making, meal preparation, and finding child care." Services such as breakfast stands, "children's lunch table," sewing and laundry centers and day care centers were set up in many places. Starting in 1983, Fulian began to organize domestic service for city residents in various places. Third, it could propose and promote policies that benefit women

¹⁶ It became a repeated topic at meetings on women work, as in the National Conference on Work among Women Workers in 1979 and in the National Forum on Women Work in Urban Areas in 1980. In February, 1980, the ACFTU and the ACWF issued a document on cooperation between the two organizations. The reactions to this document were controversial (Luo, 1980c:614)

employees.¹⁷ The ACWF also helped individual women address the unjust treatment they had received through its grievances system (Luo, 1980d).

United front work among women was another focus of ACWF and local Fulian branches, especially Fulian in large cities. Included in this work were women industrial and commercial entrepreneurs whose expertise in management was greatly needed by the Four Modernizations¹⁸ and women in religious circles. Religious activities had increased in the country since the reform era with women's disproportionate participation.¹⁹ In addition, women who returned from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and other countries and relatives of people who lived overseas also were regarded as crucial for achieving one of the three major tasks proposed by Deng Xiaoping for the 1980s -- "returning of Taiwan to the motherland" (Luo, 1980d).

The ACWF started its work on Taiwan in March 1979 by organizing a forum on unification of China and sending an open letter to women in Taiwan, reinforcing the CCP's policy.

¹⁷ For example, the proposal for strengthening labor protection measures for women workers by Kang Keping at the Second Meeting of the Fifth National People's Congress, and a similar one by the ACWF Group at the Second Meeting of Vice Chairmen of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Luo, 1980b,:515.)

¹⁸ For example, the Women's Committee of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce was successful in creating employment opportunities for "waiting-for -jobs" women (Luo, 1980c).

¹⁹ A sample survey showed that of the people who regularly went to church on Sundays, 70% were women (Luo, 1980c).

Similar efforts were made with women's organizations in democratic parties that had close ties with Taiwan, for example, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Guomindang and China Democratic National Construction Association, as well as with provinces and cities that had many residents with ties to Taiwan such as Fujian, Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu (Luo, 1980d:587).

Fulian at all levels tried to reach these women. Beijing Fulian organized tours to promote contact with these people. Some conducted home visits to find out the problems these women faced, such as the return of their family properties taken away by the Red Guards during the CR. Fulian branches also helped the YWCA branches renew their activities. The inclusion of these women into leading position of Fulian was also raised (ACWF, 1982:701-702). The principle was to "let those who have political influence and professional expertise fully contribute to Taiwan's returning to the motherland and constructing the four modernization " (ACWF:1980:618).

Women's Rights, Marriage Law and Fulian Organizations

The ACWF also took up the protection of individual women's rights and interests, particularly publicizing the marriage law since many problems women faced centered around marriage and the family.

After the end of the CR, there was a sharp increase in the volume of letters and personal visits to Fulian at all levels by women complaining about unjust treatment. The ACWF

had a national meeting to discuss how to deal with the situation. Fulian branches at each level assigned one leading member to set aside regular times to receive such visits and sent down cadres to investigate important cases. After 1982, many places set up the three-level network (county, commune and brigade), trying to help solve problems at the lower level and at an earlier stage. In a period of eight months from January to August of 1980, the National Fulian alone handled 3,697 incoming letters or personal visits. Of those, 1,113 cases were related to marriage and the family, and in 42 of these cases, the women involved were persecuted to death (Luo, 1980d:587). Incomplete statistics from another survey of 10 provincial and municipal Fulian organizations showed they handled 18,927 such cases in 1981 (ACWF secretariat, 1982:717).

As in the early 50s reforms, the first law came out during the reform era was revised Marriage law passed in 1980. This law was drafted by the revision group led by the ACWF. Among the amendments were practicing family planning, raising the minimum age for marriage, and prohibiting marriage between lineal blood relatives. In 1980, the ACWF started promoting family planning programs among women. Due to increasing elderly abuse, protection of the elderly was added to the law. Revisions that benefitted women included loosening restrictions on ending a broken marriage; defining the property ownership and inheritance rights of daughters and

position of a husband who becomes a member of the wife's family.

Zhongguo funu carried a large number of reports pertaining to marriage and the family. It was disturbing that in the 1980s, coverage still dealt with 1950s issues: purchased marriages, exchanged marriages, parental interference in marriage (even by CCP cadres as shown in a 1980 reader discussion), and the burden of extravagant weddings. Many other problems were also taking place within the family, such as abuse of women who gave birth to girls. The articles encouraged women to use the marriage law to stand up for free marriage and for their own rights.

On the other hand, marriages and family relations also experienced problems related to the new marriage law. The revised Marriage Law made divorce easier and helped couples end the sufferings from a broken or unhappy marriage, but some women complained that easier divorces hurt their interests. There was a rise in the divorce rate after the issuance of revised marriage law so some women formed a "Qin Xianglian appealing group," appealing to Fulian to protect their marriages and prevent their husbands from seeking a divorce. Qin Xianglian is a well-known figure from a traditional Chinese play. She sought justice for her husband who wanted to desert her after passing the imperial examination to become a court official, despite all the sacrifices she made to support her husband and raise their

children while he studied for the examination. Some pointed to a "third party" as the source of problem. There were so many complaints about the "third party" that the CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang requested Fulian to ally itself with other organizations to shape "correct views on marriage and the family."

The leaders worried also about what they defined as the influence of bourgeois ideology from the outside world -- premarital sex and pregnancy, which they called "sex liberation" and "sex freedom." Thus, discussions on morality in marriage and the family, often termed "morality court," became another Fulian focus.

Fulian coordinated the establishment of the Research Association of Marriage and the Family,²⁰ an organization made up of Fulian and non-Fulian scholars. These were the first research organizations set up in the reform era. At the end of 1981, the ACWF joined the other organizations to start a publicity campaign for the revised marriage law. This reaffirmed the principle of protecting women's rights to free choice and gender equality.

With greater responsibilities in cities, the ACWF realized the inadequacy of its organizations in urban areas. It renewed its efforts to strengthen grassroots women's

²⁰ The Beijing Research Association of Marriage and the Family was first set up in 1980, followed by Research Association of Marriage and Family of China affiliated with the National Fulian in 1982 and Shanghai Marriage and Family Association in 1983 (Li, 1992).

organizations. Another issue was the relationship between women's delegate meetings and the neighborhood committees and whether women activists should work in both capacities (Luo, 1980c:615).²¹ The subtle relationship of cooperation and competition between the ACWF and ACFTU stood out as another issue as Fulian paid more attention to female workers. The ACWF's new emphasis on united front work also required it to strengthen its organizational connections to intellectual women but it had not yet found an effective way to do it. Within Fulian, it acutely felt the need to improve the quality of its cadres. It also faced the pressure from the CCP to combat the bureaucratic tendency within mass organizations so as to help the Party make closer ties to women (ACWF Secretariat, 1982:722). Some Party leaders, such as Wang Renzhong, admitted the mistakes some Party organizations had made in working with women's organizations and wanted the ACWF to work more independently. He said Party committees should change their practice of using individual Fulian cadres to

²¹ All positions in neighborhood committee and women's delegate meetings were unpaid. Many started to work in the 50s and were too old to work any more. Some proposed these old activists should receive some type of benefit so they could retire with a little pay (Luo, 1980, cities meeting summary, p.615). Starting in the 1980s, the Department of Civil Affairs started to give a little monetary compensation to leaders of neighborhood committees. Women's Delegate meeting is supposed to be a parallel organization of neighborhood committee, but since Fulian did not have money, the grassroots Fulian directors got paid only if they were also leaders of the neighborhood committees. As a result, many women's delegate meeting directors also acted as deputy director of the neighborhood committee (from my interview in 1992).

contract tasks but not using Fulian as a women's organization. He pointed out that Fulian must establish its own work system. "Only by fully understanding women's demands and representing their interests can we unite the majority of women and lead them" (Wang, 1980:605).

All these pressed the ACWF to search for ways to solve these problem.

Expansion of International Contact

The ACWF's international contacts with women in other parts of the world expanded greatly in the new era. This was due first to the progress China had made in foreign policy. China broke its isolation in the international community during the Cultural Revolution when it regained its seat in the United Nations in 1971 with the help of third world countries that it had befriended. Other breakthroughs included improvement of its official relations with the United States and formalization of relations with Japan in 1972.

Approximately four years after the fourth Women's Congress, the ACWF had established relations with 124 countries and 226 women's organizations. The majority of these women's organizations were those under the leadership of nationalist parties in the third world. There were also official and semi-official women's organizations from Japan, North America, Europe, and Oceanic (Zhang, 1983:779). ACWF resumed exchanges with women's organization in the Soviet

Union and socialist countries in Eastern Europe after 1982. (Dangdai, 1989). The majority of these exchanges were, as in the past, missions of friendship building, but the ACWF also started professional exchanges.²²

The ACWF also received women's delegations to China who paid their own expenses. These delegations were usually formed by women with high social status and career aspirations. Besides touring China, they wanted to learn more about women's and children's issues and their own professions. The ACWF started to pay attention to these people (Zhang, 1983:770). In 1985, it established the Chinese Women's Travel Agency, to serve these travelers and others. The ACWF developed international exchange activities with UN organizations and other international organizations working with women. China's connection to these organizations began with China's return to the UN. In 1974, China was elected as a member to the UN's Commission on the Status of Women. In 1975, China sent a delegation to Mexico to attend activities celebrating the UN Year of Women. At that time, China was critical of a separate women's movement and the peace movement, questioning the usefulness of laws and regulations alone in bringing about

²² For example, it sent delegations to visit North Korea, Yugoslavia and Romania to learn how they trained women cadres and did children's work. It sent farming women's delegations to Japan to learn how to grow vegetables and fruits. Child development delegations visited children's facilities overseas. Delegations were also sent to the third world countries to learn how they conduct professional training for women (Zhang, 1983:781).

women's liberation and was using the occasion more as a forum to express the foreign policy position of the Chinese government.²³

China also made adjustments in its foreign policy after 1978. In 1980, Deng Yingchao, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Honorary Chairwoman of the ACWF, in an interview with Chinese reporters, expressed the Chinese government's support for the UN Decade for Women and its themes, saying that peace was what all women of the world wanted. She disclosed that the government had entrusted ACWF to take part in preparations for the World Conference on the UN Decade for Women (Women of China, 1980,8:6-7, RMRB, May 15, 1980:1).

Kang Keqing, the ACWF Chairwoman, led the Chinese women's delegation to the UN world Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980. She signed the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" on behalf of the PRC government.²⁴ The ACWF also had contacts with other UN organizations or other international bodies dealing with women's²⁵ and children's issues.²⁶ This

²³See the speech by Li Suwen, head of Chinese Women's Delegation (Li, 1975).

²⁴ See Rei Wanru, "Women from all over the world meet" Women of China, 1980, 12:20.

²⁵ This included China's participation in the NGO Forum of the World Conference on Women. The delegates also were from the ACWF. ACWF officials were sent as official representatives to UN organizations. ACWF Vice Chairwoman Huang Ganying was representative to the UN Committee on Women's Status starting

included attending the 28 training classes, forums, workshops and conferences run by the UN International Children's Fund (UNICEF) , UNESCO and the Asian and Pacific Economic and Social Council, and hosting three regional workshops in China during 1978-1982. During this time, the ACWF's English publication, Women of China, was distributed to 110 countries and regions with a circulation of 32,000 copies per issue (Zhang, 1983:778).

Emphasis on Children and Spiritual Civilization

The ACWF also emphasized work among children and young teens. Work on child care traditionally had been a major task of the ACWF, who believed socialized child care helped mothers participate in production outside home and benefit children's social education. This work was ignored during the Cultural Revolution, resulting in extreme difficulty in finding child care, and became a big complaint of working women. So reviving work on child care was the topic of the ACWF's first national working conference. The ACWF successfully pushed for the formation of the National Child Care Leading Group within

in 1980.

²⁶ Another Chinese organization that coordinated cross-nation activities on children was the Chinese People's National Committee in Defense of Children. After Soong Ching-ling's death in 1980, Kang Keking became the Chair of the Committee. There was a lot of overlapping between the two organizations especially after the ACWF was asked to play a leading role in coordinating work on children in 1981.

the State Council in January 1980. The leading group set up its offices in ACWF headquarters and soon brought about progress.²⁷ But the ACWF realized only a quarter of the 130 million preschoolers younger than seven attended day care, with only a small number of care givers having received professional training (Chen, 1980). Early childhood education and development should also be stepped up, especially because of China's family planning program (Chen, 1980:621).

In February 1981, the CCP Secretariat stated that the ACWF should make the nurturing, care, and education of over 300 million children and young teens the focus of its work. The secretariat suggested that the ACWF should hold an enlarged meeting of its standing committee to identify the focus of its work. The 300 million included new-borns to children 14 years old. This meant that the ACWF needed to expand beyond the preschool group on which it had thus far focused and become the chief coordinator of all organizations involved in this work.²⁸ The CCP was worried about increasing social problems and losing ideological influence and control, especially among young people. Of particular concern were the rising juvenile crime rate, the lower age at which children

²⁷ By the end of the 1980, enrollment of preschoolers increased from 8 to 11 percent in 9 provinces, and they increased 2 to five in other four provinces. The number of privately-run day care centers and preschools also increased (Chen, 1980).

²⁸ In the past, the ACWF was responsible for child care, the CYL for work among teenagers and youth and the Ministry of Public Health for the young people's health care.

committed the first crime, bourgeois influence coming from the West, the challenge to CCP leadership and the demand for "liberal democracy" (Deng Liqun, 1981, Song, 1981). The urgency of the issue was enhanced by the need for smooth implementation of the family planning program.

This request differed from the ACWF's work plan for 1981. That plan included attention to children, but still focused on production, improving women's skills and managerial ability, safeguarding their rights and interests and solving their concrete problems (Luo, 1980d:589).

The CCP secretariat pushed very hard for this shift. Four days after the Secretariat meeting, Song Renqiong, CCP Secretary, and Deng Liqun, director the Secretariat's Research Department and a known conservative theorist, called a meeting of members of ACWF Leading Party Members' Group, explaining that all other work should be subordinated to work with children and youth (Bangongting, 1991). Both Party leaders reiterated this theme at the March 8 meeting celebrating International Women's Day. After that, the CCP secretariat organized two forums in March, making the 31 participants from the Party, government and mass organizations discuss how they could work together to do this work well under the coordination of the ACWF (ACWF Secretariat, 1981:642).

Of the CCP leaders, the conservative theorist Deng Liqun pushed hardest for Fulian to strengthen its role as an

organization of mothers. Explaining why the ACWF should make this the center of its work, Deng said:

Fulian is the organization of women, it can and should maintain the closest relationship with every mother. To do work among children through the mother, Fulian has the best conditions and bears a responsibility that cannot be shirked... Mothers care about children the most and understand children best... If they pay attention to their own moral accomplishment, and influence children with their moral accomplishment, they will have the most obvious effect (on the children) (1981:636).

He urged ACWF to reflect the demands of mothers and be representatives of mothers. He said:

Now the phenomenon of regarding men as superior to women still exists in society. Related to this, it is really true that many comrades in some of our Party organizations or some units do not pay too much attention to Fulian work. If (you) do the work among children and young teens well, it can greatly change the image of Fulian among people of the whole country, greatly enhance the importance of Fulian work in social life, greatly raise the position of women cadres before every parent. If (you) do this work really well, it will not reduce Fulian's authority, but greatly increase Fulian's authority (1981:636).

Deng Liqun stressed that Fulian's work should emphasize children and young teens.

There were definitely questions, disagreement and even resistance to this shift among Fulian cadres, especially in the way these priorities were stated.²⁹ The ACWF leaders

²⁹ It is interesting to observe that when Deng Yingchao, ACWF honorary Chairman, was asked to make an impromptu speech at the March 8 celebration meeting after CCP leaders gave theirs, she focused on the fact that CCP top leaders spoke at the March 8 meeting thus indicating the attention the Party was giving to woman work and the importance of woman work. She reframed Deng Liqun's speech about mother's responsibility by saying "What did Comrade Deng Liqun say at the end of his speech? He said not only the mother has to take responsibility, the father has to take responsibility, too!

discussed this matter at a national meeting attended by provincial and municipal Fulian directors and at the Fifth Enlarged Meeting of the ACWF Standing Committee. They first discussed how to balance work among children with the ACWF's tradition of making production the center of woman work, including setting up industrial and commercial enterprises. The emphasis on children seemed secondary to women in many rural areas where they were still struggling with economic survival. The meeting also discussed how Fulian could manage the coordination of this task. They finally decided that the two tasks were not conflicting but complementary. Fulian should continue with all their work because the production principle fitted the national task of the four modernization, but children's work needed to be emphasized, too. In its new

So, after you return, you have shangfang baojian (the imperial sword, symbol of authority -- note mine). Not only women, not only Fulian should take responsibility, we must win all fathers, all male comrades over to do this work" (1981:638). She said Deng's speech mentioned feudal ideas (as a matter of fact, it was only a passing comment) and argued that feudal ideas existed in those who do woman work, giving the examples that wives were implicated because of husbands during the CR but not vice versa, and, in rehabilitation, a male cadre regained his position and benefits completely, but not his wife. She added that criticism of women cadres was often more severe than that of men. She also elaborated on Deng's discussion of the need to promote women cadres, saying "we should do as comrade Deng Liqun said, 'nurture our next generation well from the hands of this generation'" (1981:639) While, in fact, Deng Liqun's whole speech was about how to pass the communist cause and ideas onto the next generation, he did not mention women cadres' promotion at all.

plan for 1981, the ACWF succumbed to pressure and made the tasks stressed by the CCP secretariat stand out.³⁰

With such a strong push from above, the work among children made big headway. In May 1981, The National Children's Work Coordinating Committee was formed. It was made up of 16 organizations with Kang Keping as the director. Two sub-committees were established under it, the National Cultural and Art Committee for Children and the National Committee for Articles for Children's Daily Use. The former promoted children's art performances, exhibitions, contexts, summer camps, children's book publishing, library, and children's activity centers. The latter committee made policies on the production of children's food, clothing and toys. Other institution building in 1981 included the establishment of the Children's Foundation of China headed by Kang Keping, and the National Children's Scientific Activity Leadership. 1982 witnessed the establishment of China Child Development Center, the first multi-disciplinary research institute in this area, funded jointly by China and UNICEF Funds, and the opening of the country's largest Children's Activity Center in Beijing. The ACWF, together with Chinese Central TV station, also compiled a textbook on family

³⁰ For more detail, see ACWF Secretariat's understanding and suggestion for implementation of the February instruction (1981, Luo Qiong's report to the Fifth Enlarged meeting of the Fourth ACWF Standing Committee) and resolution of the enlarged meeting. All in HUIBIAN, II: 642-646, 649-655. The first document was also carried in FNGZ, 1981.

education of infant and young children. After Fulian of Chenzhou city in Henan province opened China's first School for Mothers, parent schools of various kinds mushroomed throughout the country. (Dangdai, 1989)

Coupled with these activities for children and young teens, the ACWF and eight other organizations also started a "politeness" campaign among people throughout all China, especially children and youth.³¹ The stepped-up emphasis on the education of children and this politeness campaign were part of the concern for the moral well-being of the country, termed "socialist spiritual civilization." This was regarded as a parallel project that should go hand in hand with "socialist material civilization," namely, the Four Modernizations. The ACWF resumed the "five-good family" activities to strengthen family ties, promote harmonious family relations and contribute to the spiritual civilization which was based on each family cell of society. As Fulian was making a big effort to do children's work, around 1982 the violation of women's rights and even lives became more serious. Cases of female infanticide, abusing women giving birth to daughters, trafficking in women and children and the revival of prostitution in coastal cities such as Guangzhou caught the attention of the whole society. The ACWF Executive Committee convened its Fourth Enlarged Meeting, reinterpreting the CCP document on making children's work the emphasis of

³¹ It was called five-attention and four beauty campaign.

Fulian. It quoted a CCP leader as saying "to emphasize means to strengthen this aspect of work" (Guo, 1982a:758) "it doesn't mean this is the only piece of work" (Guo, 1982b:733).

This meeting resulted in another CCP document known as No.20 document issued at the end of July, 1982 ³² which said "Fulian at all levels should make protecting women's interest and strengthening the education of women another emphasis of their work" (CCP, 1982:741). It also suggested the establishment of legal consultant groups at county Fulian and above. The CCP's 12th Congress which convened in September 1982 further confirmed this position. The Congress declared "Fulian should become a mass organization that has the authority to represent women's interests, protect and educate women and protect and educate children" (Wang, 1992:535).

This helped to bring the issue of safeguarding women's rights and interests to the forefront. In 1982, the ACWF carried out an investigation of causes of women's mortality, such as the case of a young women who was buried alive as the result of the domestic discipline of her clan. For trafficking in women, they investigated Sichuan, where such cases were most severe, and in Anhui, where many of the women were sold to local peasants. The ACWF Party Committee also jointly issued a report with the Party Committee of the Bureau of Public Security to crackdown on the trafficking in women

³²The one that urged Fulian to make work on children the emphasis was known as the "No. 19 document."

and on prostitution (Bangongting, 1991). In July 1983, the Legal Advisory Committee was established in the National Fulian. It provided legal assistance, made suggestions on laws concerning women and children, and supervised legal consultation at the provincial level.³³ The ACWF Women's Cadre school conducted legal training classes. Participants studied the laws that pertained to women, listened to court hearings and did case studies. The cadres were recommended to the legal system as lawyers to help deal with women's right's violation cases, or to work as lawyers in Fulian grievances offices.

In March, 1983, in a meeting where the CCP secretariat discussed the report on ACWF work to be presented at the Fifth National Women's Congress, the CCP proposed that Fulian's working principle and tasks should be "to firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interest of women and children, nurture and educate children and young teens for their healthy development, and bring women's important role in constructing a socialist material and spiritual civilization into full play." This was later referred to as the "three-sentence principle." The principle was formally adopted by the Fifth National Women's Congress as the principle of woman work.

³³ For detail of the work of the Consultation and its working regulations, see HUIBIAN, II: 832-833.

The Fifth National Women's Congress

The Fifth National Women's Congress was held in September 1983; over 2,000 delegates attended. The composition of the delegates reflected the spirit of united front: there were representatives from all groups, including all 55 ethnic minority groups. Attention to class struggle was minimized. Compared to the last Congress, the proportion of non-CCP party members increased from 13.7% to 31.1%, delegates with a senior high school education or above increased from 28.7% to 52.7%. The average age of delegates also dropped (Lei, 1983). During the Women's Congress, the March 8 Red Banner Holders and the "five-good" family models were cited. This traditional activity of the ACWF now encouraged women to contribute to production and social stability, termed spiritual civilization.

Kang Keqing again was elected Chairwoman of the ACWF. The majority of vice chairmen from the last Congress were reelected. But the leadership also changed in some important ways following the spirit of revolutionizing, intellectualizing, professionalizing and rejuvenating the leadership.³⁴ ACWF leaders were joined by some young cadres, newly assigned to do woman work, and by specialists in areas

³⁴ Before the Congress, it was decided that the new leading body must include three types of people: professionals of woman work, specialists in areas pertaining to women and children such as family planning, health of women and children, law, etc. and model workers that were literate, closely connected to masses, and young (Luo, 1983:831).

relating to women and children.³⁵ The ACWF wanted the members of its executive and standing committees to play a more active role in connecting to women and bringing in women's expertise. The ACWF added a new section, "Cadres", to its revised constitution, reflecting its new stress on the quality of its officials.

The congress formally adopted the "three-sentence principle" for the ACWF. There were still marks of class struggle in the documents. Categories of class based on economic status and political attitude were still used as a criterion. The organization defined itself as a mass organization of "women employees, women peasants, women intellectuals and other laboring women, patriotic women who support socialism and patriotic (emphasis mine) women who support the unification of the motherland" (ACWF, 1983) Regulations on Party leadership over local Fulian at the same level remained in the constitution and equality between men and women was mentioned only as a "task" of the ACWF (rather than a goal), a task which was termed "carrying out education

³⁵For example, Wang Deyi, Professor of Law for Beijing University became a secretary of the ACWF and also director of the ACWF Legal Consultative office. Lu Leshan was a professor and specialist in pre-school education and member of Expert Committee of China Center for Children's Development. Zhang Guoying and Tang Fuyun were all new to women work.

of women's liberation and male-female equality ... among women." ³⁶

The document did, however, stress "safeguarding women's and children's lawful rights and interests and firmly combating all behavior that discriminated against, mistreats, tortures or persecutes women and children" (ACWF, 1983:960) -- and that was put in first place in the three sentence principle. The term, Women's Movement, returned to replace woman work in the new constitution. The responsibility of the National Women's congress was defined as "discussing and deciding on the principles and tasks of the national women's movement (emphasis added)." The 1978 constitution had stated that the mission of the National Women's Congress was to "decide on the tasks of woman-work."³⁷ The Fifth National Women's Congress officially admitted that women faced serious problems. Funu weiti (Women's problems) was no longer a taboo topic as had been the case in 1957. ACWF and CCP leaders acknowledged this.³⁸ The term re-entered the official

³⁶ Rather than among people of the whole society. Different tasks were defined for publicity among women and for society.

³⁷ The 1978 statement was a retreat from the constitution of 1957, which was to "decide on the principle (stress added) and tasks of woman work." In the 1978 context, important matters such as principle of woman work could not be decided by a mass organization.

³⁸ As admitted by ACWF Chairwoman: "Facts show that the regulations on equality between men and women in the Constitution and the Marriage Law do not mean equality in reality or easy implementation without resistance, taking this as the departing task, Chines women still face the hard task

discourse and made possible public discussion of women's problems.

In defining women's rights and interests, the ACWF leader acknowledged that these included two types: the rights and interests male and female citizens all have and are entitled to, and the particular rights and interests related to "special problems women and children face" (Kang, 1983:851). It is interesting to observe that the ACWF's understanding of women's special interests was actually deeper than that of the CCP theoretical journal Hongqi (the Red Flag). A HQ editorial said: "Women's special needs and special interest are determined by women's physiological conditions. To take consideration of women's special needs and special interest is beneficial for the physical and mental health of women and children, thus beneficial to the whole society" (Quoted in FNZZYHD, 1983,5:7)

The acknowledgement of "women's problems" and women's special rights and interests paved the way for the next stage of development of the women's movement in the reform era. It was around these two issues that the women's movement grew from the bottom up.

of liberating themselves" (Kang, 1983, Speech at the Seventh enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fourth Women's Congress, HUIBIAN, II:799-800), and by CCP secretary Chen Peixian: "In China today there for sure exists the issue of protecting the lawful rights for women and children" (1983).

Emergence of the Women's Movement from Below
and the Sixth National Women's Congress

Women's Rights and Women's Quality

After the Fifth National Women's Congress, work with safeguarding women's interests continued. The first national action by the new leadership was a "legal publicity month for safeguarding the interests of women and children." This activity was sponsored by 13 organizations. Materials in the Constitution, the Marriage Law, Criminal Law, and Civil Law pertaining to gender equality and rights for women and children were compiled, distributed and publicized through all kinds of media. Local Fulian branches organized cadres and activists to study these materials and some combined studying the materials with case studies to illustrate how materials should be used to encourage similar studies among other women. Some Fulian branches investigated existing problems in the local areas and tried to solve them.³⁹ Domestic violence was one of the problems that had long been ignored because family disputes should not be interfered with. The study of laws helped solve some cases that had existed for years (Yang and Zheng, 1984).

³⁹Yiyang county Fulian organized over 20 investigation teams attended by 230 women cadres and activists. Xingguo county sent out investigation outlines to women, to investigate problems in physical abuse, recruitment in employment and students, distribution of land and housing (Yang and Zheng, 1984)

The Publicity month was made a big campaign event, the type of mass mobilization the ACWF and others were very good at. On a Sunday in February, the so-called high tide day (gaochao ri) of the Publicity Month in Beijing, 74 publicity centers and 34 posts were established throughout urban districts and suburbs, attracting 1.47 million participants. Among participants were leaders from the ACWF, the CCP Central Committee of Politics and Law, the State Judiciary, and Beijing city. Some 1,160 legal workers and educators provided legal consultation to 3,500 people (Zhang et al, 1984). Some provinces conducted public trials of cases that had severely violated women's rights in order to deter potential criminals from committing similar violations. In Jiangxi province, 142 such trials were held within a month and convicted 1,346 criminals (Zhongguo fazhi bao, March 7:1).

In China, where a sound legal system and practice had not been built, campaigns like this helped some cases receive legal attention. Yingkou city Fulian of Liaoning Province took the opportunity of publicity month to address 25 long-pending cases in the legal system. Within half a month, 23 cases were dealt with (Chang, 1984). The campaign pushed for the continued establishment of legal consultative offices in Fulian above the county level and the passing of local regulations and laws by provincial People's Congress to protect women's rights and interests. By 1985, about 27 provinces and municipality had passed such laws.

Meanwhile, the ACWF encouraged its organizations to do "concrete and good things" (ban shi shi, ban hao shi) for women as another way to safeguard women's rights and interests. The "domestic service company" started by Beijing Fulian became a model for helping working families deal with household chores. The ACWF organized a meeting in Beijing in March 1984 to promote Beijing Fulian's experience and similar efforts. The "domestic service company" registered families which required services and sent those who could provide such services to those families. The company also provided training for service providers. This action gained immediate popularity because private, individual domestic service was in high demand but was not available on the market. ⁴⁰

Such companies not only provided service, but also helped solve unemployment. The Beijing March 8 Garment Company established by Beijing Fulian hired 61 self-employed tailors and "waiting for job youth." The Youth United Industrial and Commercial Company which Tianjin Fulian had organized with other organizations in 1981 for "waiting-for-jobs youth" developed rapidly and became a profitable enterprises with about 5,000 employees in 1984.⁴¹ Despite the criticism that Fulian should only do cooperative ideological work to help the

⁴⁰ For report on this, see "A newly emerged cause," RMRB, April, 1, 1984, p.4, quoted in FNZZYHD, 84, 2-26, and "for the people and the country, brave in open up new path", RMRB, July 4, 1984, p.4. quoted in FNZZYHD, 84 4-32.

⁴¹ See "Elder sister Deng wrote words of encouragement for them," ZGFN, 8:2-5.

Labor Department solve unemployment problems but not independently run enterprises, the ACWF encouraged its branch organizations to establish economic enterprises. These enterprises served women and children and also helped them make some money which could be used to expand women's causes and support the operation of Fulian (Zhang Guoying, 1984). The scope had gone beyond domestic service to all possible areas of the "third tier industry" -- the service industry (Yang, 1984), some on a very large scale. Shengzhen Fulian, taking advantage of the resources and policy benefits which were part of their location in a special economic zone, built a Children's Service Center and Children's Welfare Center. Attached to the center were a preschool, a children science recreational center, a consultation center for family education and legal consultation, a women and children's department store, a hotel and other establishments (Qi, 1984, Yu, 1984, RMRB, January 13, 1985:4). It opened a new path for Fulian and strengthened the economic base of the organization.

The Fifth National Women's Congress made the improvement of women's quality (su zhi) a major task for the women's movement. The concern for the "low quality" (su zhi cha) of women had a broad meaning, including women's lack of confidence and strength in themselves, lack of education and skills to be competitive in economic activities, and political inability. Several things made the ACWF feel that it had become an organization for the weak. For example, women's

dependence on husband and family was shown in "Qin Xianglian appealing group;" women's lack of knowledge of their rights was shown in women who were ashamed of giving birth to a baby girl as if they committed a "crime;" women who accepted abuse without resistance; and women who became helpless in layoffs because of their lack of skill or training. ACWF Secretary Luo Qiong stated that the purpose of the women's movement was to promote the strength of women but not to protect their weakness.⁴²

At the Fifth National Congress, the ACWF proposed "four-selves" as the "political and ideological" standard for women, namely self respect, self love, self dignity (be self possessed) and self improvement. Women were urged to "cherish the sacred rights bestowed by the Constitution and laws,... resist spiritual pollution, shake off the yoke of remaining feudal ideas, not surrender to decadent bourgeois ideology nor bow to evil forces, and become new women of the 1980s" (RMRB, January 18, 1984:4). In essence, ACWF's promotion of the four-selves in 1983 was to make women resist feudal and bourgeois ideas.

To improve women's quality in "science and culture", the ACWF promoted women's education and occupational/professional training, including the training of Fulian cadres. In the countryside, the ACWF conducted women's evening literacy

⁴² Luo Qiong's speech at the Enlarged Meeting of the Women's Committee of the China Democratic League, reported by Ye lin, ZGFNB, July 21, 1986:1.

classes⁴³ and promoted the study of practical skills and techniques among rural women.⁴⁴ Fulian branches organized over a hundred types of training classes on income-generating projects alone. According to incomplete statistics of 18 provinces and municipalities, in 1985, about 20 million women participated in various types of study or training (Qing, et al, 1989:232).⁴⁵ The ACWF had switched the focus of its work in rural areas to specialized households. In 1983, specialized households relying on the expertise of women composed 40% of all households.

The ACWF also stepped up training of Fulian cadres. In June 1984, the ACWF decided to broaden the scope of its training to mastery of Marxist theory, professional knowledge, formal education and managerial skills (Qing, et al, 1989). In 1984, the national Women Cadres' School changed its name to ACWF Managerial School and started to recruit Fulian cadres for a two-year program of college study. In 1986, the

⁴³ For example, Fulian of Haishan Township, Wuhuan county, Zhejiang Province established five peasants evening schools. A review of educational agencies showed that by 1987, 2,144 women from 12 to 44 years age became literate (Ji, Tang, Huang, 1992),

⁴⁴ Fulian carried out different activities, for example, Henan named 1985 "year of improving women's quality," and carried out "learning knowledge, compete in getting rich through technology and innovation," other province had similar activities. see Qing, et al, 1989.

⁴⁵ By 1987, the number of rural women who received training of various kinds reached 80,000. About half of them could master one or more applicable skills (Feng, quoted in FNZZYHD, 1987, 2:14.)

Managerial School produced its first class of 207 students who had majored in the women's movement. With the CCP's new emphasis on formal education, a college diploma helped these cadres get a promotion. In 1987, the name of the school changed again to Chinese Managerial School for Women Cadres. Pre-School Management, Law, and Modern Management were added to its majors. Local Fulian cadres' schools were doing the same thing. By August 1987, 26 provinces, municipalities or autonomous regions had established women cadres' schools, 23 of them (some jointly with a local Party school or university) opened two year college classes and trained 2,500 managerial personnel. The schools also provided vocational and professional training to 2,008 women outside Fulian through classes designed for women factory leaders and women managers. Another 11,215 cadres working with women and children received on-the-job training in short term classes.

In 1987, at the third annual meeting of women cadres' schools, the Research Association of Theory of Teaching and Research on Women was formed. There were five sub-groups under the Association: Fundamental Marxist Theory on Women's Liberation, Chinese Women's Movement, Family Sociology, Research on Women's Problems (issues) and Fulian Work Management (Ren, 1989:384-387). They produced their own textbooks and helped shape the minds of Fulian cadres.

Urban Economic Reform and Women

By the end of 1984, China's economic reform in the countryside had made major advances. The rural economy had become more diversified and commercialized, women had become an important force in the development of commercial production, a large number of specialty households based on women's expertise had appeared and many women had obtained different kinds of skills.

In October 1984, the CCP convened the Third Plenum of its 12th Congress and decided to move the main battlefield of economic reform to the cities. The focus was to improve the efficiency of enterprises. Labor redundancy became the number one issue for many enterprises and women employees became the first target. Although nobody was dismissed, to be removed from one's original post, receive 70-80% of pay, and lose job security was a threat felt by all urban households and especially by women.

With enterprises gaining more autonomy and with increased power to hire and dismiss employees, discrimination against women in recruitment increased. Some factories refused to take women college graduates assigned to work in their factories, others required higher marks for women candidates in their recruitment. The talk of women going home or "phased-employment"⁴⁶ was on the rise again. The threat to job

⁴⁶The argument that a woman could be employed in certain phase of her life, for example, going home after giving birth to a children.

security sent a shock wave among women employees. Another shock was the sharp decline in women's representation in leadership associated with the direct elections adopted in the political reform. To top it off, not a single woman was admitted to the politburo as a full member or as an alternate member at the 13th CCP Congress in 1987.

These things threatened the most important areas of progress women had made through their struggle, areas in which women took great pride and which were regarded as the most significant symbol of women's liberation. These things were shocking because, unlike the problems such as trafficking in women or purchased marriages which could be explained as the remains of the feudal past, the new problems were connected solely with the "new society," with socialism and economic reform. Women had been told to believe that whatever was good for the country was good for women. Despite their support of reform, women clearly saw the conflict between the goals of economic development and social equality. They heard the increasingly loud voice of public discourse which demanded that women make sacrifices for the country's economic take off.

Chinese urban women had benefitted more than rural women from the Chinese revolution in employment, education and higher standards of living. When the economic reform expanded to cities and challenged the benefits urban women had gained, they responded in activism.

The development of the women's movement paralleled to the development in the country's reform. Several important developments had taken place by the middle of 1985, indicating a change in the interaction between the state and women. Women were taking more initiative in their interaction with the state, with more autonomy and success. This was reflected in several phenomena.

Development of Research on Women

Theoretical research on women had stopped subsequent to the Great Leap. It was restarted in the reform era with the thought liberation movement, pushed by two groups of people: women who worked within the Fulian system and those who worked in academic institutions. Within Fulian, research began with the study of the history of the women's movement in China. The ACWF established the Research Department on the History women's movement, collecting primary data and historical materials, resuming the work it had began in the early 1960s but had to suspend during the Cultural Revolution. In 1983, the ACWF established the Research Institute under the direct leadership of the Secretariat, carrying out surveys and research on the current state of women. Twenty out of thirty provincial and municipal Fulian created similar research organizations (some combined with research on the history of women's movement) or assigned cadres to specialize in research activities (See Table 9.1). The Women's Managerial Schools

Table 9.1

Establishment of Research Units within Fulian Branches at Provincial Level

Region	Theoretical research	Historical research	Note
Beijing	Research Office		historical studies included
Tianjin	Office of Investigation and Research		historical studies included
Heibei	Theoretical Research Office		historical studies included
Shanxi	Office of Investigation and Research	Office of the History of the Women's Movement	
Inner Mogolia			research done by Women cadres' School
Liaoning	Research Office of the Women's Movement		historical research included
Jilin	Research Office	Office of the History of the Women's Movement	
Heilongjiang	Office of Investigation and Research	Office of Historical Records	
Shanghai	Office of Investigation and Research		historical studies included
Jiangsu	Research Institute on Women		historical studies included
Zhejiang			theory done by the Office, history by Propaganda Depart.

Table 9.1 (cont'd)

Anhui	Office of Investigation & Research	Office of Historical Records	
Fujian			Theory by the Office, history by Propaganda Department
Jiangxi			theory by Propaganda Department history by the Office
Shandong		Compiling Office of History of the Women's Movement	Theory by the Office
Henan		Research Office of History of the Women's Movement	Theory by the Office
Hubei			theory by the Office history by Propaganda Department
Hunan	Research Office		history by Propaganda Department
Guangdong	Research Institute on Women		history included
Hainan	/	/	
Guangxi	Office of Investigation and Research	Working Office of History of the women's Movement	
Sichuan	Research Office	Research Office of	

Table 9.1 (cont'd)

History of the Women's Movement

Guizhou		theory by Propaganda Department history by Comprehensive Department
Yunnan		Theory by Department of Urban/rural Affairs history by Propaganda Department
Tibet	/	
Shaanxi	Office of Investigation and Research	history included
Guansu		all research by Propaganda Dept.
Qinghai	Office of Investigation and Research	history included
Ningxia		history by Propaganda Department
Xinjiang		
	Office of Historical Records	

Sources: Li, Jingzhi, "Fulian xitong lilun yanjiu jigou yilan" (survey of theoretical research units within Fulian system) pp.567-579 in Xiong Yumei, Liu Xiaocong and Qu Wen (eds) Zhongguo funu lilun yanjiu shinian (Women's theoretic Studies in China from 1981-1990). Beijing: Chinese Women's Press, 1992.

within the Fulian system also have Teaching and Research Offices on the Theory on Women or similar organizations.

Outside the Fulian system, beginning in 1980, some scholars of social sciences and economic theory and some university students commenced research on women's issues, published papers and caught the attention of the ACWF (Qing, et al, 1989). In May 1984, the ACWF sent an open letter to all who were interested in studying women's issues to work together to promote these studies.⁴⁷

In September 1984, the ACWF held the First National Congress on Theoretical Research on Women. Forty-two participants attended, all from the Fulian system (Ren, 1989). The official push provided legitimacy for conducting research on women and the network of Fulian organizations stimulated research on women nationwide. When the Second National Conference of Theoretical Research on Women was held in 1986, 101 people attended. Of the 101, 41 were from academic and other institutions outside Fulian (Qing, et al, 1989). A more liberal atmosphere made this conference lively and productive. A CCP leader from the Propaganda Department spoke at the meeting stating that there should be free academic research, discussion, and critique, "no taboo areas should be set up." (Quoted in Tao, 1991:189). One professor proposed that study of women should break three taboo areas: 1) sex (dismissing

⁴⁷ See "a letter to the comrades who are interested in the study of women's issues," FNGZ, 1984,6:14.

sex in research on women), 2) class (equating women's oppression as class oppression only), 3) feminism (excluding feminist thoughts in studies of women in China) (Li, 1988, Tao, 1991). Her statement sharply pointed out the problems that existed in the CCP's theoretical studies of women's issues.

The participants had lively discussions on six issues, one of which was whether or not China should establish funuxue (women's studies).⁴⁸ Despite the objections at the meeting and objections expressed by some ACWF leaders,⁴⁹ the conference helped establish funuxue as a new academic discipline.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Funuxue was one translation of Women's Studies developed in the West. Women's studies has also been translated as funu yanjiu or nuxing yanjiu. Deng Weizhi, a male scholar from Shanghai, first proposed in Woman-work in 1982 the adoption of Funuxue as the label for Chinese research on women. He argued that the study of women was about to develop into a new academic discipline and the label would help people think of women's issues from an academic perspective. He again called for the "golden age of funuxue" in Zhongguo Funu bao (China women's News) in 1986. The editor opened a new column "Theoretical Exploration" to carry his article and expressed the desire to "promote for the early establishment of this academic discipline" (Deng, 1986:3).

⁴⁹ACWF theorist Luo Qing wrote in Economic Daily on March 8, 1986, making a point of not using the term funuxue or women's studies, instead, referring to the current research on women in China as "theoretical studies of women's issues." She said "our theory of women's liberation is different in ideological systems, objective of service and final goals from the so-called 'funuxue' that came into being in the United States and Japan since the 1960s" which she considered part of bourgeois women's movement (Luo, 1986:1)

⁵⁰ By 1990, there were 24 provinces and cities with research organizations on women's issues, 8 of them had funuxue in their names. In July 1990, Jian ming Funuxue ci dian (precise dictionary on funuxue), the first reference book on funuxue was published (edited by Tao Chunfang and Duan

Associations for the study of women's issues were established nationwide, extending to 26 provinces and municipalities. The associations were coordinated by local Fulian and included academic and professional women (Table 9.2).⁵¹ These organizations provided a forum for exchanging research results and networking.

Meanwhile, researchers outside Fulian also organized and coordinated their research. In 1985, the Association of Funuxue of the Henan Future Research Association was established in Zhengzhou, Henan province by Li Xiaojiang, a young professor of literature at Zhengzhou University. It grew into the Center for Women's Studies at Zhengzhou University in 1987. Research-oriented organizations were established in the Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing University, Tianjin Normal University, and other universities. Groups studying women's issues also found their way into non-university settings.⁵² These groups organized research projects, published papers, held national conferences and promoted public awareness of women's issues and funuxue as

Huomei, Beijing, Red Flag press). The two editors were from Fulian (Ding, 1992). Tao later became head of ACWF's Women's Studies Institute of China.

⁵¹ And male scholars. They are studying women's issues and are incorporated into these groupings. Their role in the discourse on women is a complicated issue requiring separate study.

⁵²For a more detailed discussion on organizations studying women's issues within and outside the Fulian system, see Li, 1992, Liu, 1992, Fennell and Jeffry, 1992, Wang, 1994.

Table 9.2

Women's Research Organizations at Provincial Level

Name of organization	time of establishment	number of member	Supervising unit
Beijing Theoretical research Association on Women's issues	1985	200	Beijing Fulian Beijing Social Sciences Association
Beijing Research Association on Marriage and the family	1980	250	Beijing Fulian Beijing Social Sciences Association
Tianjin Research Association on Marriage and the Family	1985	133	
Hebei Research Association on women's issues	1986	105	Hebei Fulian
Shanxi Theoretical Research Association on Women	1987	300	Shanxi Fulian
Liaoning Theoretical Research Association on women	1986	625	Liaoning Fulian Liaoning Social Sciences Association
Liaoning Research Association on Marriage Laws	1988	94	Liaoning Law Association Liaoning Fulian
Jilin Women's Studies Association	1986	92	Jilin Fulian
Jilin Research Association On Marriage and the Family	1986	74	Jilin Fulian
Heilongjiang Research Association on Women's issues	1986	200	Heilongjiang Fulian

Table 9.2 (cont'd)

Heilongjiang Research Association on Marriage and the Family	1986	95	Heilongjiang Fulian
Heilongjiang Sexology Association	1987	210	Heilongjiang Sexology Research Institute
Shanghai Women's Studies Association	1986	165	Shanghai Fulian
Shanghai Research Association on Marriage and the Family	1982	125	Shanghai Fulian
Jiangsu Research Association On Women's Studies	1986	160	Jiangsu Fulian
Zhejiang Women's Studies Association*	1987	200	Zhejiang Social Sciences Association Zhejiang Fulian
Anhui Women's Studies Association	1987	142	Anhui Fulian
Anhui Research Association on Marriage and the Family	1985	180	Anhui Fulian
Fujian Theoretical Research Association on women	1989		
Jiangxi Women's Studies Association	1985	136	Jiangxi Social Sciences Association Jiangxi Fulian
Shandong Theoretical Research Association on Women	1987	100	Shandong Social Sciences Association
Henan Theoretical Research Association on Women's Issues	1986	150	Henan Fulian
Hubei Theoretical Research Association on Women	1986	185	Hubei Socail Sciences Association
Hunan Women's Studies Association	1986	215	Hunan Fulian

Table 9.2 (cont'd)

Guangdong Women's Studies Association	1985	183	Guangdong Fulian
Guangxi Theoretical Research Association on Women	1987	225	Guangxi Fulian
Sichuan Research Association on Marriage, the Family and Theories on Women	1985	100	Sichuan Social Sciences Association Sichuan Fulian
Guizhou Women's Studies Association			
Shaanxi Research Association on Theory on Women and Marriage and the Family	1986	100	
Gansu Research Association on Women's Issues	1989	130	Gansu Fulian Gansu Social Sciences Association
Gansu Research Association on Marriage laws	1988	120	Gansu Law Association Gansu Fulian
Qinghai Research Association on Marriage and the Family			Qinghai Fulian
Ningxia Research Association on Women's Issues	1986	98	Ningxia Fulian
Xinjiang Theoretical Research Association on Women	1989	213	Xinjiang Fulian

* Translated from Chinese term funu yanjiu (women's studies). In all other names, women's studies is a translation for funu xue.

Sources: Li, Jingzhi, "Fulian xitong lilun yanjiu jigou yilan" (survey of theoretical research units within Fulian system) pp.567-579 in Xiong Yumei, Liu Xiaocong and Qu Wen (eds) Zhongguo funu lilun yanjiu shinian (Women's theoretic Studies in China from 1981-1990). Beijing: Chinese Women's Press, 1992.

legitimate areas of academic inquiry.

The combined efforts of people within and outside Fulian resulted in a proliferation of conferences,⁵³ publications of books on women⁵⁴ more articles in professional journals and lively discussions of women's issues among academic/professional people and the general public. Courses pertaining to women, such as women's history, the history of the women's movement, women and law, and feminist theories entered the curriculum of several universities. The Women Cadres' School of Fulian also began teaching courses on women, as mentioned earlier.

The development of women's studies had a big impact on the women's movement, or, was perceived by women scholars, as "a women's movement in itself" (Tong, 1994:13). Much of the research focused on how to better understand the major problems women faced and on finding solutions. Studies on employment, the status of Chinese women in contemporary China, and the social value of women's reproduction had a direct impact on government policies and women's lives. Some

⁵³ By the end of 1987, over 20 provinces conducted conferences on theoretical research on women (Dangdai, 1989). Also see Tao, 1991.

⁵⁴ China experienced a peak time period in the publication of books on women, especially by the middle of 1980s. See Table 6.2 and also Zhang Yunmei, 1992, and Zhang, An and Dong, 1992. the Women's Publishing House established by the ACWF in 1981 was the first for women, followed by Northern Women and Children's Press.

research probed topics unique to China's situation;⁵⁵ other studies reopened the theoretical debate on women's liberation and gender equality. Although the Marxist framework was still the dominant theory, the CCP's dogma on the women's question was challenged and western feminist ideas were introduced.

The field of women's studies in China is still in the process of development and it is wanting in some aspects. Nevertheless, to borrow the words of an overseas scholar from China, "this scientific, ungendered, and Marxist Chinese funuxue does give the involved people legitimacy, and even some prestige, which they need to carry out researches on women and to form organizational networks" (Wang, 1994). A large number of professional and intellectual women have gathered under the banner of Women's Studies, successfully using it as a strategy for change. It is a source of dynamics for the women's movement and is in the process of creating a new ideology.

Proliferation of Women's Newspapers and Magazines

Another development was the rapid growth of a women's press. After the ACWF resumed Women of China, its official organ, in 1979, provincial Fulian began to publish their own

⁵⁵ For example, one topic that was very specific to China but not seen much in the West was the study of how to make women successful (nuxing cheng cai). This is about factors relating to women or to the environment that help or hinder women's success and how to nurture women cadres. Such study was defined as a science (ren cai xue) and several books were written about it. This was in response to the lack of women's representation in leadership and managerial positions.

journals. In May 1980, Women's Federation of Liaoning Province started its own magazine Funu (Women). This was the second women's magazine in open circulation for general readership. This magazine also extended its distribution overseas. It was followed by the restoration of Nei menggu Funu (Inner Mongolian Women) by the Women's Federation of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Others followed suit. When the ACWF organized the national conference on women's newspapers and magazines at the end of 1983, there were only 12 publications. By 1985, the number had grown to 25 (Ren, 1989).

The Fulian system dominated the women's press. According to one study, as of 1990 there were 30 general women's magazines, 29 of them run by the ACWF or its provincial or municipal branches. Fulian also ran another 27 of 28 journals on woman work which circulated mainly within the Fulian system. In addition, the Fulian system ran magazines on other subjects: marriage and the family, children's education, and women's literature and health (Xu, 1991).

The proliferation of women's journals promoted social awareness of women's issues and provided a forum for the discussion of them. Among the most influential were the publications of the National Fulian: Women of China, Woman-work and Zhongguo funu bao (China Women's News), a new ACWF publication added in October 1984. The latter was first published in October 1984 as a weekly newspaper, two years

later, it became a bi-weekly newspaper, and, in the end, it was published five days a week. The flexibility, greater space and frequency it has as a newspaper greatly strengthened the power of the ACWF to shape public discourse.

In 1984, the ACWF journal Zhongguo funu got a new Editor in Chief, Guo Ningnan, a 30-year veteran editor of Zhongguo qingnian (Chinese Youth Journal). When she accepted the position, she requested full decision making power over articles published in the journal. This ended the ACWF Secretariat censorship over Zhongguo funu articles. In 1985, Zhongguo funu made a major editorial change in layout and content. It stopped carrying reprints of Party documents and leaders' speeches, stopped its own editorials and increased coverage of women's issues. The commercialization of the media ⁵⁶ also made these journals more responsive to readers rather than just to CCP leaders. Of course, there still is Party control, and commercialization of the publications also brought about negative effects.⁵⁷ But under the principle of "informing women about society and informing society about women," the development of a women's press was part of the emerging women's movement and stimulated the development of women' studies.

⁵⁶ Now the newspapers and magazines had to be economically independent.

⁵⁷ For more detailed discussion, see Zhang, 1995.

Journals and newspapers played an important role in documenting women's problems, advocating for women's rights,⁵⁸ raising important social issues, shaping women's consciousness, and carrying out theoretical studies on women. The two journals and newspaper carried readers' discussions on "women's ideals and the ideal woman," (ZGFN, 1986), looking at what society should demand from women and how women want themselves to be viewed (1986); "1988- What is the Way Out for Women?"⁵⁹ and "Thoughts on the Reform of the ACWF" (1988) by Zhongguo funu; "Feudalism and Ignorance or Spiritual Civilization?" (1986)⁶⁰ and "Dialogue on Women's Political Participation" (1988) by Zhongguo funu bao (China Women's News); and "The Great Debate on Fulian Reform" (1987) by Funu gongzuo (Woman-work). Starting from 1986, the discussion on

⁵⁸ For example, the ZGFN column started in 1985: "Exploration of the Condition and Status of Women in Today's Society," and reports of Zhongguo funu bao (China Women's News) on women's employment and political participation.

⁵⁹ This was in response to the threat to women's employment. In a social symphony praising the necessity of reform, it struck a disharmonious note, covering topics such as gender equality, female labor force participation, the social welfare system, and women's interests v state interests in economic reform.

⁶⁰ The discussion was based on the experience of six "model wives" or "model women" chosen by local Fulian for their personal sacrifice for their spouse or their families. In the discussion, some questioned whether in involved Fulian branches were preaching "the old feudal ethnic codes in a refurbished version," and over emphasis on stability of the family helped perpetuate the traditional view of marriage and family which is oppressive to women. A few questioned why there was no respect for 'right to sexuality' of one of the women who had nurtured her disabled husband paralyzed from waist down for eight years.

interpretation of equality between men and women and women's liberation became a focus of discussion. This helped bring back gender equality as the constitutional goal of the ACWF at the Sixth National Women's Congress.

Also to be mentioned is the journalist staff's direct, active involvement in the Chinese women's movement. Because professional/intellectual women were the backbone of the women's movement in contemporary China, it is not surprising that activists from the official mass media were using the media as a tool to promote women's causes.⁶¹

The changing content and style of reporting can be seen in a report on the ACWF leaders response to the absence of women in the Politburo at the 13th CCP Congress. At the Fifth Executive Meeting of the Fifth National Congress:

Women's participation in politics originally was not included in the topics of discussion for this executive meeting. However, when more than 200 members of the Standing Committee and Executive Committee, who take the leadership of the women's liberation movement as their own duty, got together, they felt displeased and unhappy.

"This is simply too upsetting!" Yang Yanyin, the honest, straightforward and humorous director of Shandong Fulian took the lead to fire a shell (shoot off her mouth?) on the first day of the meeting. "Women's liberation has been carried out for half a century, in the end, the new politburo has shaven a 'bald head,' (meaning it was zero - note mine) -- this is truly the 'land mark' of our women's liberation!" Her words evoked a burst of laughter, but after that, thinking with heavy heart (Xie, 1987:10).

⁶¹ for a more detailed discussion on this and on ZGFN, see Zhang, 1995.

The rest of the story reported speeches of the Fifth Executive Committee members on this topic: disappointment about the retreat from the situation in the 1950s and worry that since General Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang's explanation for the incident was that "nobody elected (women)," those who were below would follow suit and use this as an excuse not to promote women leaders. Some confirmed the necessity of quotas and other measures that Fulian could take to address the problem. One mentioned the fact that, in the past within Fulian, there were many "elder sisters" (the revolutionary old guards who were thus respectfully addressed) and wives who could directly or indirectly go to the Central Committee to make demands and argue. Now that they were retired, how could others raise the issues? This participant said this incident had to prompt Fulian to overcome dependency in political life. "On this issue we have to make our demands, if not, for what purpose do we have Fulian?" The article ended with the following words:

Members of the executive committee urgently demand to have a dialogue on behalf of "half the sky" with the leaders of the Central Committee, especially with the General Secretary. Although they were unable to fulfill their wish during the duration of their meeting, all were waiting with confidence, firmly believing that their wish will come true." (Xie, 1987:11)

Development of Women's Organizations

Before research-oriented groups were established in the reform era, another type of women's organizations emerged. They were usually called Women's Friendship Associations.

Most were occupation-based: for example, the Friendship Associations of Women's Entrepreneurs, Women Engineers, Women Journalists, Women Lawyers, Women Mayors, and Retired Women Cadres, etc.. These groups were voluntary, organized by their members to network with their peers exchange information, and promote their careers. Such groups signaled a break from the pre-reform era when vertical structures confined one's social life to his/her work unit. They experienced fast growth after 1987. Most organizations like these were institutional members of Fulian. They allowed Fulian to strengthen its ties to a rising urban intellectual community, a group which had gained importance in the reform era and which the ACWF had not significantly penetrated before.

More dynamic and more activist-based women's organizations were the university groups and cross-occupational research organizations mentioned earlier. These organizations pushed for the establishment of women's studies, encouraged women to think about gender issues, and their theoretical research brought new impetus to the women's movement. Many such groups were active in projects to protect women's interests. Many were not institutional members of Fulian.

In a strict sense, neither type of organizations were "autonomous" because each was required by law to "gua kao," literally, to hang on with, or have a formal link with, a relevant state agency that supervises its activities.

However, they were initiated by individual women and were referred to as min jian zhu zhi (non-official organization) in China. Their importance here is that they broke the monopoly of women's organizations by Fulian.

Fulian had also gone through several organizational changes since the reform era. It recruited a large number of young and middle-aged, more educated cadres from the early 1980s and they brought new ideas and a new style to Fulian.⁶² A huge top-down hierarchy like the ACWF leaves room for local autonomy. Such autonomy expanded during the reform era as a result of the decentralization process. Local Fulian demand to organize their work according to their own circumstances.⁶³ Increased local autonomy of the Fulian branches also brought new dynamics to the organization. The ACWF as a whole had become more independent and vocal in representing women's interests.

The newly established groups and Fulian became the two major forces pushing for the women's movement. Tension

⁶² A Hong Kong scholar who attended a women's studies conference held in Zhengzhou in 1991 commented that several local Fulian cadres attending the meeting "are quite different from the 'mouthpiece cadre' I had in mind, they have very independent ideas" (Xiong, 1991:293). Over 60 county Fulian cadres were receiving training at the Henan Women Cadres' School and visited the meeting for a day: "They all have high school education or above, are young and energetic, broad in thinking and intellectually curious, quite different from Fulian cadres in the 50s and 60s (Xiong, 1991:294).

⁶³ See local Fulian's demand "there should not be 'a one-knife cut' (or uniform approach) in fulian work" (FNZZYHD, 1987, 6:250).

between these two forces was never completely resolved.⁶⁴ However, collaboration between women inside and outside Fulian continued, especially at the local level and on an individual basis.⁶⁵ Each had its own strengths⁶⁶ and they worked together for the development of the women's movement. Whether from the governmental or non-governmental sector, the driving force of the current women's movement is the women themselves. Their discussions are no longer confined within parameters set by the state. They are defining new issues. There is a strong push from below.⁶⁷ This is due to the awakening of women's consciousness, their search for an independent identity and movement.

⁶⁴ For example, see the conflict between some top leaders of Fulian and Professor Li Xiaojiang. The pressure on her to conform to official ideological and organizational lines has been strong. Such tension still exists today.

⁶⁵ For example, Li Xiaojiang's closest partner was Liang Jun, Head of the Women's Cadres School of Henan Fulian. The Cadres' School was often a part of their joint project. Henan Fulian had been supportive of Li Xiaojiang's many efforts despite Li's conflict with some leaders of the national Fulian.

⁶⁶The NGO's advantages were their dynamism and insights and their challenge to the dogmatic theory and practice on the woman question by the CCP, including Fulian itself. Their existence became a source of pressure forcing the ACWF to change. Fulian's advantages were its resources and legitimate position which allows it to advocate the formation of policies and measures to advance women's interests. Its penetrating network, which is often referred to as having "legs", and its ability to organize grassroots women in the rural areas is an additional strength.

⁶⁷ Here I mean demand and initiation by women themselves, including Fulian cadres.

Women's Self-perception and Consciousness

A thriving Chinese women's literature describes women's spiritual and material frustrations. With the realization that equality on paper did not automatically mean actual equality, women still faced serious problems and thus had to understand their own interests as women and fight for them as the subject of their movement was an important part of the consciousness raising process.

Ironically, the development of women's self-consciousness has been achieved in part by emphasizing gender differentiation and stereotypes. There was a revival of femininity after the Cultural Revolution as seen in women's pursuit of fashion and make-up and the promotion of homemaking (Honig and Hershatter, 1988, Young, 1989). Some Chinese women scholars have actively promoted these tendencies.⁶⁸ These trends seem to reflect Chinese women's aversion to previous state control over individual choice and inattention to women's family lives. Women also reject the androgenous concept of equality that desexualized women during the Cultural Revolution. This is a necessary step in women's search for a new collective identity as gendered beings, and it has had a liberating effect during the initial stage of the new women's movement. At the same time, the strong

⁶⁸For example, they promoted the teaching of home economics. The training classes and women's vocational schools also focused on jobs that are traditionally done by women as their "strengths."

essentialist tendency among some scholars, the new focus on women's nurturing nature, on their domestic and reproductive roles, and the emerging commercialization and objectification of women also present new challenges for the women's movement as it seeks to construct a new identity.

Another realization among women is that women's interests are not automatically taken care of by the state as they had been promised and that they must rely on themselves for their liberation. Together with this realization was the growing concern about the "poor quality" of Chinese women, shared by women from academia and the Federation.⁶⁹ The ACWF's "four-self" slogan was developed based on the assumption that women's own weaknesses prevent them from becoming full members of society. While recognizing the importance of education for women, the emphasis on "poor quality" and on self-improvement could direct Chinese women to seek individual solutions to problems rather than organized means for structural change. However, the focus on women's self-determination also represents a break with the collective definition of goals that characterized the earlier women's movement.

The awakening of women's consciousness also is reflected in debate about women's proper role and image in society. The

⁶⁹ Some scholars argue that the CCP's top-down approach resulted in women's dependence on society for the delivery of rights and benefits (Li, 1989). It is interesting to observe that while some western scholars criticize the CCP's approach to the woman question as creating a "public patriarchy" (Stacey, 1983), Chinese criticism is on women themselves.

contradiction between work and the family remains an unsolved issue central in women's lives. So is the issue of the ideal image for women. The competing images of the modern woman -- on the one hand, the image of woman with her own career and social recognition as equal partner and, on the other hand, the image of woman with a happy home, satisfied about herself as a woman -- become equally attractive to today's women. During the Cultural Revolution, the foremost model depicted women as "iron girls." Today the super-woman who is capable of performing three roles well -- worker, wife, and mother -- is still promoted by the majority of Chinese women scholars as the ideal model for women's development. But it is also questioned whether the model women who sacrificed family to achieve success in work lack a certain nu ren wei -- "womanliness" (Xie, 1993). The issues presented in a 1986 national discussion carried out in Women of China entitled "Women's Ideal and the Ideal Women" are far from being solved and are being shaped by women from Fulian and non-Fulian systems.

"Grand Discussion on Fulian Work"

In the process of responding to new challenges and rethinking past theory and practice on the woman question, limitations of Fulian's structure and how it should change became crucial issues for exploration.

These issues came to the center of attention in 1986 during a reader discussion organized by Woman-work, entitled "Is there a future (gan tou) in doing woman work?" The discussion was started by two women university graduates who were assigned to work in Henan Fulian. They wrote a letter to Woman-work, pointing out the many problems of Fulian work, wondering what their "future" would be.⁷⁰ Their letter evoked a year-long discussion, in which many problems of Fulian work were exposed. In 1987, a discussion on reforming Fulian work in cities again expanded to cover contradictions within Fulian in general. The clarification of the status of Fulian as a mass organization and its role in social and political life had become an issue that could no longer be avoided.

The convention of the 13th Congress in October 1987 gave an ultimate push for discussion on Fulian reform. The theory that China is in the primary stage of socialism was explored authoritatively for the first time at the meeting, providing an ideological basis for a comprehensive reform.⁷¹ The meeting reaffirmed reform and opening-up policies, establishing that

⁷⁰ See January issue of ZGFN. 1986.

⁷¹ The theory declares that China is now in the primary stage of socialism and will continue to be so until about 2050. Because China's socialist revolution occurred in a backward and undeveloped country, rather than in an advanced capitalist country as Marx had theorized, China failed to pass through the capitalistic development stage critical to the final success of the revolution. Therefore, the theory states, it is permissible to make use of capitalistic institutions so long as they are needed to achieve an advance stage of socialism (quoted in Ethridge, 1990:31).

whatever is necessary for the development of production is allowed by socialism. It also gave strong support to political reform, including the separation of Party and governmental functions. The meeting admitted major defects in the system of leadership, the organizational structure and style of power, and degree of bureaucratism and feudal influence in the central leadership of the Party and government. Separating the functions of the Party from those of the government, further relegating powers to lower levels, reforming government organs, reforming the cadres personnel system, and establishing a system of consultation were the major components of the political reform. The long-range goal is to build a "socialist political system with a high degree of democracy and a complete set of laws. " The meeting also redefined the role of the mass organizations as to actively participate in social consultation and dialogue, democratic management and supervision. This provided the basis for discussions of Fulian's relationship with the Party.

A lot of thought was given to the problems and weaknesses of the Fulian system and work. As stated by the Fifth Executive Meeting of the Fifth Congress of ACWF:

At present, Fulian actually is playing part of the function of the Party committee and government agencies. As a result, there is no distinction in function between the Party and masses, between the government and the masses. The color (of Fulian) as a mass organization is pale, its social image is vague, the work and activities of Fulian are unattractive, the organizational structure, object, task and methods of work do not suit the needs of reform (quoted in Wang, 1992:527).

Some found fault with the organizational structure of Fulian. That is, contradictory to its nature as mass organization which should focus on the primary level, Fulian's organization copied the administrative model of the government. Its structure was in the shape of a reversed triangle: there are about 300 people in headquarters of national Fulian, but at the township level, there was only one cadre, and when it came down to the level of women's delegate meetings of the village and urban neighborhood, a woman director either concurrently held other posts or was not counted in the establishment. Woman work thus was often squeezed almost to nothing.

Some pointed out the deeper reasons. Fulian was satisfied with taking the central task of the Party as its own, sometimes regarded itself only as part of the social management system, neglected its role as the general representative of women and thus lost itself. "In the past, we always had to cooperate with other agencies, we never heard of any other agencies that existed just to support Fulian work. It is very important that Fulian, as the representative of women's interests, learn to use its own will to influence and participate in society" (Quoted in Wang, 1992:532).

Still others focused on the principle of work for Fulian and the many tasks Fulian had to carry out. These tasks change, often with shifts in the country's political and economic situation, so Fulian sometimes ended up doing things

the other organizations were doing, and often had too many areas to cover. Some raised the issue of "three sentence principle" of the Fifth ACWF Congress. It covered many tasks that should be done by the Party and government that could not be handled by a mass organization like Fulian alone. For example, there was heated debate on whether work among children should be included in the principle of Fulian work. Some supported continued focus on children's work, some argued that a mass organization should not take on the function of the government in dealing with issues such as social care for children. Besides, they argued, Fulian did not have the needed resources or power to do these things well.

The relationship between the Party and Fulian was at the center of the debate. Some proposed that Party leadership of mass organizations should only apply to political principles and directions of the mass organization, but not specific tasks. The Party should "return power" to mass organizations and allow them to make their own decisions on tasks and personnel. Mass organizations' relation to the government should be equal through equal consultation with no suppression of mass organizations by the administration nor confrontation of mass organizations against government. Fulian should get rid of dependent tendencies, separate itself from Party and governmental agencies and be a true mass organization. It should function as the spokesperson for the fundamental interests of women, conducting efficient consultation and

dialogue within Fulian and among mass organizations and other agencies to enable women to fully participate in political life.

There also were many concrete suggestions on how to reform Fulian structure, operations, and the management of personnel. To adjust to the new grouping of women based on productive specialty and the rising rural industrial sector, some proposed that Fulian work in rural areas focus rural industry, and let rural women's delegate meetings run economic enterprises or projects to help with payment of Fulian activists. Suggestions for Fulian work in cities was to shift emphasis from administrative division and housewives to occupationally based groupings and employed women. Some suggested individual membership for Fulian. There were more new ideas about the internal structure and division within Fulian and recruitment and allocation of cadres.⁷²

All these became part of the preparation for the Sixth National Women's Congress and the discussion continued at the Congress. The participants in the debate included people from outside Fulian, pressuring from below for change.

The Six National Women's Congress

The Sixth National Women's Congress was held in September 1988 with 1183 delegates attending. This was only half the size of the last Congress. But the scope of representation

⁷² The discussion above was cited from Wang, 1992.

was expanded, delegates from non-CCP parties, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan had increased 6.2% over the previous Congress. Delegates who had a college education and above now made up 58.5% of all delegates, an increase of 30.7% from the last time. It also included new stars of economic reform: women entrepreneurs, masters of income generating projects, and model self-employed women (Ma, 1988).

Chen Muhua, head of Chinese People's Bank, became Chairwoman of the ACWF and Kang Keqing was elected Honorary Chairman of ACWF. For the first time, the ACWF was led by an expert in economic work rather than in political work and the leadership passed down from the old guards to the new generation. There were more candidates on ballots for the election of members of Executive Committee (300 members out of 315 candidates) and Standing Committee (25 out of 28 candidates) of the ACWF. Delegates made more frank and critical remarks on issues and news reports of Zhongguo funu on the Congress included negative votes and abstentions.⁷³

The delegates decided on the major tasks for the women's movement in the next five years, including "developing self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, raise women's overall competence and actively participate in reform and construction." All these were regarded as critical

⁷³ For detail of the meeting procedures, see Wang Qi, 1988. ZGFN, October:1.

for victory of the reform and for women's further emancipation (Zhang, 1988:17).

Here the ACWF changed the content of the four-selves slogan. Previously the focus was on women resisting bad influence, now on the four-selves as a means to "awaken women's self awareness of themselves as women, motivate women to enhance their sense of historical mission and social responsibility, and to acquire the "four-haves" ⁷⁴ in order to contribute to the construction of socialist modernization" (Zhang, 1988:18). It was a positive change to shift the emphasis on women themselves from the sole concern of the role they played. But the ACWF Vice Chairwoman also cautious in pointing out that the four-self slogan was "totally different from the bourgeois slogan of individual liberation that focuses on oneself" (Zhang, 1988:18).

In the revised ACWF Constitution, for the first time, the ACWF discarded the CCP expression of gunzhong zuzhi (mass organization), and referred to itself as a shehui gunzhong tuanti (social mass group or organization) under the leadership of the Communist Party. It was for "women of all ethnic groups in all walks of life who unite to strive for the further emancipation of women" (ACWF, 1988:25) -- no longer mentioning any class division within women. The revised constitution shifted away from the expression of the dual

⁷⁴ Namely, to have ideals, morality, education, and discipline,

mission of the organization and clearly stated that "in the primary stage of socialism, the fundamental social functions of the Women's Federations are to represent and safeguard women's interests and promote equality between men and women" (ACWF, 1988:25). Thus, gender equality which had been absent since 1957 became the organizational goal again.

The ACWF reaffirmed its commitment to dual mission in its statement about guiding principles of woman work:

to unite and educate all women, to implement the basic line of the Party, to play an active role in building a prosperous, democratic and civilized country through socialist modernization, safeguard women's legitimate rights and interests; and to push forward the cause of women's emancipation" (ACWF: 1988:15).

The statement about children's work in the three-sentence principle from the previous congress was eliminated. In the report on the revision of the constitution, it was explained that to take children's work out of the guiding principle of Fulian work did not mean that Fulian would not do children's work any more, rather this was to emphasize Fulian's distinctive function for women. Fulian would continue its work among children. This topic was discussed in the section about the tasks of Fulian.

Another feature, absent since the 1957 constitution, was the section on funds. It stated that in addition to the allocated operational funds from the government, Fulian may set up industrial or commercial enterprises and also accept individual or organizational donations and financial sponsorship. This stipulation confirmed the practice of

running economic enterprises as a way to expand funding sources.

The most distinctive and important issue raised by the Sixth National Women's Congress was the structural reform of Fulian. This was discussed in a separate section of the work report. It was also elaborated in a separate document, "Plan of Structural Reform of Fulian" proposed by Fulian and "approved in principle" by the Secretariat of the CCP. In explaining the necessity for Fulian reform, the ACWF document stated:

for a long time, due to the influence of weakness in the political system, such as lack of separation between the function of the Party and State, lack of separation between Party organizations and mass organizations, in some aspects, it is hard to distinguish Fulian organizations from working units of the Party committee or functional agencies of the government. The characteristics of the mass organization (of Fulian) are not distinct. To a great degree (Fulian) has "official" color and bureaucratic tendencies, made more demands from the top down and has reflected fewer voices of the masses. There is an insufficient articulation and protection of women's interests, it has separated itself from women masses to a certain degrees. As a result, the connection between the Party/government and women has been weakened." (Zhang, 1988:20).

The document listed eight areas for Fulian's reform : 1) clarify the nature, function and tasks of Fulian, 2) specify the legal status of Fulian in political life of the country, 3) put in order Fulian's relations with other parties, 4) reform the organizational system of Fulian 5) improve the mechanism of Fulian leadership, enhance democratic decision making, 6) improve the system of personnel; 7) improve Fulian's methods in carrying out activities, and 8) enlarge

the sources of funding for Fulian's activities (ZGFNB, 1988).

There were some important points in the documents. For example, it mentioned that the ACWF was under the "political leadership of the Party." This meant leadership through mapping out correct programs, principles and policies pertaining to the women's movement only, as versus "total leadership" which also included making decisions on personnel and on the actual work of the ACWF. "Total leadership" took away the independence of mass organizations and made them tools of the Party.⁷⁵ It demanded making specific laws to protect the rights and interests of women, to protect ACWF's status in state politics and specify its obligations and rights in participation and supervision of state affairs. It demanded establishment of a government agency to take charge of women's affairs; and it encouraged development of voluntary women's organizations and experiments with other forms of grouping within Fulian. In sum, there were many fresh, encouraging or even bold ideas in the reform plans for Fulian. That also characterized the reform plan for the Unions and the Youth League. The year 1988 was China's strongest effort since

⁷⁵ See Study Manual on "Basic Plan on Union Reform". In this manual, it further explained that political leadership of the CCP should only be done through Party organizations within the Unions and the leading and model role of Party members. "This is because the Party is also part of our social-political system, it also must operate within the scope of Constitution and laws. It has no right to issue orders to union organizations, nor has it any right to force the broad masses of union members to accept its political ideas" (Compiling group, 1988:73).

1949 for political reform. The ACWF was at its peak of progress when it held its Sixth Congress.

From Tiananmen Incident to Deng Xiaoping's Speeches
in the South

The time between the Sixth National Women's Congress and the Seventh Congress (1988-1993) was another turbulent period in China. The biggest event was the Chinese students' pro-democracy movement in 1989 -- the mass media brought the moving scene of millions of people gathering on Tiananmen Square as well as the devastating and shocking scene of the massacre on June 4 to households all over the world. After that, economic reform was halted and so was the budding effort at political reform. The wheel of economic reform rolled forward again at the beginning of 1992 after Deng Xiaoping made an "inspection trip to the south." The speeches he made during his trip to the part of China where the market economy was most developed were used to promote continued economic reform. The result was astonishing. The reform bounced back immediately. With the economic reform in full gear, the pace of reform of the government administrative structure also stepped up, although the focus now was to make it more efficient rather than making fundamental changes. Meanwhile, the women's movement continued to develop, expanding its contact to the outside world.

Momentum of the Reform

After the Sixth National Women's Congress, the ACWF continued with Fulian reform, social compensation for women's reproduction, training of women's cadres. Two new tasks, the "learning and competing" campaign among rural women and "women's patriotic savings" activities were taken for 1989.

Discussion of Fulian's reform was intensified by Hainan Province's new reform plan for mass organizations. Hainan, China's newest province (less than a year old then) and largest special economic zone, also took the lead in political reform. Following the spirit of separating the functions of the Party and the government, it decided that the seven provincial mass organizations under its direct leadership should operate with a "three - self policy": elect their leaders, raise operating funds and carry out activities all by themselves. The mass organizations would no longer be treated as part of the official administrative body, nor be eligible for cadre quotas for administrators.⁷⁹ Hainan Province authorities divided the seven mass organizations into three groups and had a plan on how to reform each group of organizations (Wang, 1992).

Like a stone thrown into a pond, this action produced circles of repercussions. A reporter of Zhongguo funu bao (China Women's News) commented that the Hainan plan broke the

⁷⁹ This means the so-called bian zhi, the number of governmental employees allowed to be on the state pay role within each administrative unit.

iron rice bowl where cadres of mass organizations were also state administrators. The plan aroused strong reactions from Fulian cadres. Some worried that this would result in the actual elimination of Fulian organizations in many places, and under China's current circumstances, "the function of mass groups should only be strengthened rather than weakened" (Quoted in Wang, 1992:559). Some hailed the decision. Li Xiaojiang, a leading non-Fulian scholar, commented that since the reform of mass organizations was unavoidable, "there should be no exception for Chinese women, nor for Fulian... 'Reform' does not necessarily mean "discard", to make it non-governmental does not mean 'dismissal" (Li, quoted in Wang, 1992:660). Zhang Guoying, First Secretary of Fulian, said that raising funds all by itself was the direction for Fulian to go in the long run, but at present, different places should work this out according to their own circumstances (ZGFNB, March 17, 1989:1).

The Hainan plan made the reform of Fulian an urgent matter to be dealt with in concrete terms. Fulian made adjustments in the structure of ACWF headquarters, introduced competition into the system by recruiting cadres through invited application rather than assignment, elected Fulian leaders from a larger number of candidates, and issued a document encouraging Fulian branches to set up businesses that served women and children (ACWF, 1989, FNGZ, 1989, 2:6). One of the purposes of running these businesses was to raise funds

for Fulian's activities so it could gain more independence and autonomy.

The ACWF continued to work on the issue of social compensation or guarantees for women's reproduction after the Congress. This issue concerns how to provide maternity benefits for women workers. Many enterprises did not want to hire women because they had to pay much higher costs for pregnancy, delivery and care of their children. This became an issue when the benefits to women workers no longer came from the state but became the sole responsibility of the employers. The Women Workers Committee of the Union started a reader's discussion in Gongren Ri bao (Workers' Daily) on the social value of women's reproduction in April, 1988. In September, programs to establish social reproductive funds to solve the problem were adopted by Nantong city⁸⁰ and An Shan city.⁸¹ It was followed by Zhu Zhou city.⁸² At the end

⁸⁰ Every enterprise had to pay 20 yuan for each employee (women and men) to the fund to provide for medical care and maternity leave (56 days with pay before September 1988 and 90 days after that date). The enterprises received 1,000 yuan for each woman worker needing maternity benefits. This helped to reduce cost of the enterprises with more women workers. For this, see Gong Yongquan, "let society solve this problem" on Nantong model (Ren min ri bao, February 10, 1989:3). For more detailed discussion on the issue of security for women employees' reproduction, see Zhang Mo, 1992.

⁸¹The An Shan model was to have the work units of the husband and wife share the pay for women's maternity leave and child feeding leave (one hour with pay till the child is one and half years old, so all together, four months and a half). (An Shan City Fulian and City Unions, 1989).

of November, the ACWF held a national conference on the Theoretical Studies of Social Security for Women. The attendants included people from ACFTU, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Finance. There was heated debate.⁸³ The idea that women's reproduction had social value and should be compensated seemed to be much more acceptable to the Chinese under socialist rule than to their counterparts in some 2 western countries.⁸⁴ After the meeting, the ACWF and ACFTU continued to promote the social value of women's reproduction and the implementation of similar programs.⁸⁵ But such

the Labor Department to receive compensation. Together with this regulation, Zhu Zhou also began a flexible employment system that allowed a woman to take up to four years' leave till the child was three years old. During this four years, the woman could not be regarded as a surplus worker and she received five months of full pay from her work place, the rest from the fund amounting to 60% to 70% of her monthly pay.

⁸³ About the meeting, see Liu, 1988, Guan, 1989, and Zhang Mo, 1992.

⁸⁴ In order to nurture "collectivism" and "communist ideas" and combat "individualist ideas" in China, the official efforts had been to blur rather than distinguish the boundaries of the "public" and "private" spheres. The propaganda has been promoting the ideas that children are the common wealth of society rather than property of their parents and it was best to provide social care for them (as aggressively implemented during the Great Leap). When asked by a survey about the purpose of having children, many took the official line (at least in their public declaration) by choosing "fulfilling my obligation to society." This is an indication of how prevalent these ideas were.

⁸⁵ The social value of women's reproduction was the topic of a key research project by the ACWF listed in the Seventh Five-year-plan for social development, a central topics for theoretical studies in 1989 and an urgent practical matter that pushed hard by delegates to the Six national Women's Congress (Guan, 1988).

programs did not expand to the majority of the country despite their efforts.⁸⁶ As often happens, the consideration for economic efficiency overcame concern about social equity.

The ACWF embarked on two major new tasks at the beginning of 1989: the Chinese Women Patriotic Savings Activity and the "complete and learning" activities among rural women. The savings activities were launched by the ACWF and six national banks to curb over-spending and to encourage saving for the country's construction. In less than a year's time, total savings had exceeded 10 billion yuan (FNGZ, 1990, 1:25). The competing and learning activities ("shuang xue, shuang bi -- two leanings and two competing"), namely, to learn to read and write and to learn technical skills, to compete for results and to compete for contributions, were jointly run by the ACWF and 12 other organizations and ministries to benefit rural women.⁸⁷ They provided training, loans, technical assistance, and other resources to help rural women start income generating projects, expand production scale or improve

⁸⁶ According to the state report on women, by 1994, 152 cities or counties in the country had implemented such programs (PRC, 1994).

⁸⁷ These were: the State Commission of Science and Technology, Education, Family Planning and National Affairs; the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry, Water Conservancy, Commerce, and Radio, Film and Television, the state Council's Leading Group for Economic Development of Poor Areas, the Agriculture Bank of China, and the Chinese Association for Science and Technology. See the ACWF notice on this activity, in FNGZ, 1989, 4:11, and ACWF Secretary Huang Qicao's speech at the national conference on the "learning and competing" activities held in July 1989 and other reports on the activities and the conference in FNGZ, 1989, 7.

production. Rural women increasingly took responsibility for grain production in the countryside. This turned out to be the most successful activity the ACWF carried out in the countryside.

Students' Pro-democracy Movement and Aftermath of Tiananmen Massacre

While all this was underway, the students' movement erupted. It began in April with students mourning the death of General Party Secretary Hu Yaobang, denouncing official corruption and other social evils, demanding freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom to demonstrate and more money for education. The students drew huge support from people in all walks of life in Beijing who joined students in demonstrating. Among them were state agencies and many other organizations. They marched under the banner of their work unit and some ACWF units also participated in the demonstration.

The formal involvement of national mass organizations took place on May 15th when the students' hunger strike on Tiananmen Square entered its fifth day. Several mass organizations made public announcements. The joint statement of the Chinese Communist Youth League, All-China Youth Federation and All-China Students Federation, the statement of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, an open letter signed by 20 well-known writers, and an appeal by the

ACWF appeared together on the front page of Renmin ri bao (People's Daily). The first three had similar content: they expressed support to students, demanded that the government take action to dialogue with the students as students requested, and urged the students to stop the hunger strike. Compared to those statements, the ACWF appeal urging the students to stop the hunger strike made much milder demands on the government. It had only the words "we hope the Party and the government can take more active care of the students, and cherish their good and honest hearts."⁸⁸ The ACWF promised to use different channels to pass the voices of students and their mothers to the Party and the government while trying to convince the students that their main purpose was achieved because mothers had heard their calls. It was the most apolitical and neutral statement of the four, and could be said to be vague in the message it tried to deliver.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) took the boldest action. On May 16, the ACFTU donated 100,000 yuan (about \$27,000) for medical aid to students who were on the sixth day of their hunger strike. A spokesperson for the Unions explained: "We workers are deeply concerned about the health and lives of the students" (Quoted from Perry,

⁸⁸For all these statements, see RMRB, May 18, 1989:4.

1992:157). The ACFTU was the only governmental organization that donated money to students.⁸⁹

Things got worse after Premier Li Peng made a televised speech on May 19 demanding students end their protests and occupation of Tiananmen Square. He claimed that the hunger strikers were being used as "hostages" by a "handful of persons" who wished to overthrow the government and "totally negate the people's democratic dictatorship" (quoted in Ethridge, 1990:339). This was followed by the Marshal law on May 20,⁹⁰ a crack down on students, and finally, the massacre on June 4.

After that, the student movement was termed a "disturbance evolved into counterrevolutionary rebellion." The nation-wide "red terror" began to crackdown on movement activists and to tighten state control. All work units were forced to "examine" their stance and participation in the movement. The mass organizations all pledged support to the CCP.⁹¹ Zhu Houzhe, the Party Secretary of the ACFTU was purged

⁸⁹ The ACFTU has more money than others because besides membership fee, stipends from the government, and profit from businesses it runs, it can also take 2% of total salary of all enterprises that have unions.

⁹⁰ It was reported that the ACFTU threatened to carry out a nationwide general strike on the 20th and this led to the declaration of Marshal Law on the night of May 19 (Wang, Shaoguang, 1993). An ACFTU spokesperson later called this a rumor (Perry, 1992).

⁹¹ The Communist Youth League issued an appeal to its members on June 12, 1988, urging them to "maintain stability and ensure security of cities" Ren min ribao, June 12, 1989:4.

apparently because of the ACFTU's involvement in the movement. In a report to provincial and municipal Fulian directors in late July 1989 summarizing the "attitude and actions of the National Fulian in combating disturbance and suppressing counterrevolutionary rebellion," an ACWF leader made an obvious attempt to defend ACWF's "correct" political stance and innocence of "wrong doings" during the student movement. The report listed the actions the ACWF headquarters took during the movement, including the May 17 appeal to students on the hunger strike. It was described as done with the "spirit of appealing to student's emotions and senses without putting pressure on the Party and the government" (Huang, 1989:2) which was true, especially compared with appeals made by others as mentioned earlier.

Other things the ACWF did to underscore their correct political stance included an ACWF Standing Committees meeting on May 29 urging women to support the measures of the government and maintain social order, ACWF's expressed support of the People's Liberation Army ⁹² and a circular urging women to learn from the two women citizens in Dalian

⁹² Some ACWF leaders went to Shahe Airport on June 1 to visit and express their regards to the army troops coming to Beijing to impose martial law. Similar acts were taken between June 11 and June 18 with different troops. The ACWF also issued a circular on June 12 on "love, support and learn from the PLA."

city who had reported to authorities two people who had allegedly been spreading rumors.⁹³

There was great pressure to conform, so it was hard to tell how much each individual ACWF leader supported the decisions of the CCP. As a whole, however, the national Fulian followed the CCP closely on major political issues, as they had done during the crackdown on student protests in 1986-1987. At that time, ACWF top leaders also held a Standing Committee meeting to declare their opposition to turmoil and "bourgeois liberalism."⁹⁴

Zhongguo funu, which became more independent and bold in its reporting after 1985⁹⁵ had to bend to pressure, too. Zhongguo funu usually was sent to the printer on the 15th of the month and hit the newsstand the second day of the following month. But its July issue was delayed a month and finally came out as a combined issue with August. On the front page of its September issue, it carried quotations of

⁹³The original text of this document as well as the circular for learning from the PLA were carried in Funu gongzuo, 1989, 7:2-3.

⁹⁴ See the report on this meeting in ZGFNB, January 16, 1987:1.

⁹⁵ For example, the June 1989 issue of Zhongguo funu 1989 carried a long feature story entitled "Assigned Wife." It is the true story of a CCP woman cadre who went to Yanan to join the CCP in its effort to fight Japanese invaders at the age of 16 and was later assigned by the Party to be the wife of a CCP army leader who lost his left foot in a battle. It disclosed the shocking fact of patriarchal practice within the CCP. Many of the characters in the story were high level CCP leaders.

China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. The statements were declarations of China's adherence to Marxist ideology and proletarian dictatorship and denouncement of "bourgeois liberalism." They looked odd in the journal because Zhongguo funu had stopped reprinting such propaganda materials. Their appearance could only be understood when one considers the pressure the journal must have felt to include them. But that was the only piece that Zhongguo funu carried that could be said to be related to the incident. They issued no other pledges of support to the government as the journal did during the Cultural Revolution.*

The massacre indicated a change in the political climate in China and had direct impact on Fulian and other mass organizations. It halted political reform and tightened ideological control. Control over social groupings was tightened, and the state attention to the three major mass organizations was enhanced.

Economic reform slowed down and political reform was halted, especially discussions on curbing the total control of the Party. The CCP purged General Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang who had been sympathetic to the students. One allegation was that the student movement was a result of his de-emphasis on Party leadership and ideological work. The ACWF had to do

* In my interview with the Editor in Chief of Zhongguo funu in 1992, she commented on news reporting during and after the Tiananmen incident: "I told my reporters, you may not be able to tell the truth, but do not tell lies, that is what you can do at least. "

self-criticism for its own neglect of ideological work and promised to make it a central concern of the organization. It held a national conference to discuss ideological work and all Fulian newspapers and magazines were required to examine how they were influenced by "bourgeois liberalism." Some Fulian leaders also criticized "non-Marxist ideas" in the study and discussion of the woman question.⁹⁷

The establishment of the Workers' Autonomous Federation, during the students' movement was one of the CCP's nightmares. To curb the formation of social groups, the State Council issued "Regulations on the Management of Social Groups" at the end of October, 1989. It had a damaging effect on the formation of new social groups in China.⁹⁸

To preempt autonomous organizations like the Workers' Autonomous Federation, the CCP enhanced its support to the three mass organizations. In December 1989, the CCP issued a circular on "Strengthening and Improving Party Leadership of Work among Workers, Youth and Women," known as No.12 Document. The CCP's acknowledgement of the significance of mass organizations reached an all-time high, defining them as the

⁹⁷ Criticism included "lowering the status of Marxism to one competing school of ideas" and denying its leading position (Guan, 1989) and the downplay of achievement of the women's movement in China while praising bourgeois feminism in women's studies (Luo, 1989).

⁹⁸ According to a research on Xiaoshan city, the development of social groups peaked in 1988, then fell in 1990 because of the tightening ideological control and the implementation of the regulations (Wang, Zhe and Sun, 1993).

"bridge and ties that connect the Party to the masses and important social pillars (zhi zhu) of state power" (RMRB, February 1, 1990:1). The wording about the pillar was applied for the first time to mass organizations, previously, only the PLA was referred to as "a strong pillar of the proletarian dictatorship." The CCP now wanted the mass organizations not only play an active role in the country's economic and cultural life, but particularly in its political life, especially in the "construction of socialist democracy and law," and in the "participation and supervision in the management of state and social affairs" (RMRB, 1990:1). As conveyed by the document, "the Unions, the Youth League and Fulian should become the channels for the broad masses to participate in and comment on politics with organization, discipline and leadership" (RMRB, 1990:1). It was this desire for the mass organizations to contribute to "social stability" and to become the only, and controllable channels for social participation and supervision of "socialist democracy" that led the CCP to give them new attention in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre.

The document also stressed the importance of Party leadership of the mass organizations. Now it was no longer just "political leadership," the organizations were required to "maintain a high level of consistency with the Central Committee in politics, ideology and action." The document stated clearly that all three organizations, first and

foremost, must receive leadership from same-level Party organizations and then guidance of their own organization from above:

Party organizations must guide the Unions, Youth League and Fulian organizations to conscientiously defend the unified leadership of the Party, conscientiously defend social stability and unity... No organization would be allowed to raise any political ideas that oppose the Party, no political organization that opposes the four cardinal principals and harms state power should be allowed to exist. As soon as those (organizations) are discovered, they should be banned according to law (RMRB, February 1, 1989:1)

This reinstatement of absolute Party leadership was the biggest setback to the work of mass organizations. During the Great Debate of Fulian Reform in 1987, it was pointed out that the main responsibility rested on the Party to put the relationship between Party and mass organization in order. Now any mentioning of Party loosening its control was impossible.

The documents also listed concrete measures on how the Party organizations should include these organizations in their meetings and decision making process and support their "independent work" and how the mass organizations should work vigorously to better represent and serve their constituencies. So in a twisted way, the document also allowed the mass organizations to push for their agendas so long as they were set within the perimeters of the state.

At a meeting of the Standing Committee of the ACWF, the participants expressed that "the CCP's appraisal of the three mass organizations was higher than at any time, and it was the

first time since 1949 to give such a comprehensive and systematic discussion and concrete guidance" (Huang, 1990:1). It seemed that the document did bring more attention to woman-work and work among other mass groups.⁹⁹ Party committees of provinces, prefectures, cities and counties all made decisions one after another on how to implement the CCP 12th document to do the mass work well.¹⁰⁰

On March 7, 1990, at a meeting celebrating the 80th anniversary of the International Women's Day, the General Party secretary Jiang Zemin delivered a speech. He said that the theory the CCP uses to guide the women's movement was the "fundamental principle of Marxism and its outlook on women." He further defined the outlook as "scientific analysis and summary of basic issues such as changes in women's status, women's social function, women's social rights and benefits and the path for women's liberation derived from the world outlook and methodology of dialectic materialism and historical materialism" (1990:2). He listed five basic points of such an outlook:

⁹⁹ For example, it was reported that the first meeting organized by the Mayor's office after the spring festival was studying the document and the Shanghai Fulian Director was invited to the meeting -- first time since 1949. The Party committee of the city also had a special meeting to listen to report on Fulian work and respond to Fulian demands (Huang, 1990).

¹⁰⁰ See Research Office of Central CCYL and Zhongguo qingnian bao (Chinese Youth News) (ed) Quan Guo qing shao nian gongzuo zhengce jing xuan (essential reading of policies on work among youth and children in the country), Beijing: Reform Press, 1991.

1) oppression of women was a social phenomenon that appeared at a certain stage of human history;

2) the degree of women's liberation is a natural measurement of general liberation, oppression of women is a special form of class oppression;

3) to participate in social labor is an important precondition of women's emancipation;

4) women's liberation is a long historical process;

5) women play a significant role in creation of civilization and propelling social development (Jiang, 1990:2-3) .

Jiang's speech did not differ greatly from previous official lines on women's issues, except that in the fifth point about women's role, he further specified

women and men are both propellers of the advancement of human history, are both creators of social material civilization and spiritual civilization, and they should have equal character and dignity, equal rights and status. In humankind's reproduction, women still have special value and have made special contribution. To respect women and protect women is an important sign of social progress and legal norm and moral custom a civilized society should have (1990:3).

The new thing here was that women's reproductive value and protection of women had not been emphasized as a central element of the official theory before. On the one hand, this may very well be connected to the ACWF's effort to promote the recognition of the social value of women's reproduction so as to implement measures such as the "reproductive funds" to reduce discrimination against women due to their duties

related to child birth and child raising. On the other hand, the whole discussion of women's reproductive role was part of the shift in gender discourse in China in the reform era. It was more essentialistically based, as seen in the CCP's emphasis on women's role as mothers and in the general discourse (including the official one) that stressed gender differentiation and differences. Emphasis on the protection of women may also be used to reinforce the traditional notion of women as a weaker sex. Another new element in Jiang's speech was more elaborate discussion on gender equality based on the understanding that women's position in contemporary China was far from equal. In point four about the long process of women's emancipation, he admitted that to achieve factual equality out of legal equality was arduous. Of course, this also meant that women had to be patient for inequality was expected in the current stage of social development.

It is not clear why Jiang suddenly made this attempt to tackle the theoretical issue on women. This had not been his area of work or specialty. It is interesting to note that Qiu shi (Seeking Truth), the CCP theoretical journal, previously called Hongqi (the Red Flag) did not reprint Jiang Zemin's speech. The journal's editors did not consider Jiang's speech theoretically worth printing or gender issues were marginal to them or both. But for Jiang, whether it was for his personal political career or a gesture to show the Party's concern for woman work, it fit with the general effort of the

CCP to rally support which was slipping away from these massive groups. In June, 1991, the CCP organized a conference on work among workers, youth and women, also a first time for a meeting of this kind, and another example of CCP's emphasis on "mass work."

Woman-work and the Women's Movement in the Aftermath of Tiananmen

Despite the setback caused by the tightening control after the June 4, 1989, women's movement continued to make progress.¹⁰¹ Chinese women's expanded contact with outside world was an especially remarkable phenomenon in the 1990s.

Fulian and Woman-work

Reform of Fulian continued, around streamlining and achieving efficiency, change of functions and improving service to the grassroots (Huang, 1989). The ACWF first passed four work regulations: two on women's delegate meetings in rural and urban areas, one on women's friendship associations and one on women's committees in education, science, culture, public health and administration units.¹⁰² These four types of organizations represented Fulian's vertical and horizontal connection with women. The last two

¹⁰¹ Some Chinese scholars expressed a similar observation. See Li, 1994.

¹⁰² for the four regulations, see FNGZ, 1990,1.

types were especially important, because they connected Fulian to the intellectual women with whom Fulian had no previous organizational ties.

The regulations on women's committees in administrative or cultural units further stipulated that they were grassroots organizations of Fulian. To develop such organizations had been a central task of the ACWF after the Sixth congress, intensifying its competition with the Unions who also tried to establish Women Workers' Committees in these places. There were new working regulations concerning grassroots women's organizations in rural and urban areas as well. In rural areas, Fulian promoted Women Workers's Committees as a separate women's organization in the rapidly growing rural industrial enterprises. It pushed for such a committee to enter the managerial committee of the enterprise so as to voice women's concerns. Moreover, in both rural and urban areas, the ACWF pushed for the development of "two bases" for its grassroots organizations, an activity base and funding base. Activity bases were women's homes, women's activity centers, etc. a physical space where women could carry out activities and make use of facilities. The funding bases were various kinds of income generating projects run by Fulian organizations to generate funds for Fulian activities. All these helped strengthen the grassroots Fulian organizations and vitalize their work. On the top level, the national Fulian completed its restructuring of headquarters. By

February 1991, there were 10 departments within central Fulian¹⁰³ and 10 other units directly under the leadership of the ACWF.¹⁰⁴

As part of its commitment to improve rural women's lives, in 1989, the ACWF finished training County Fulian directors from the 331 poverty counties in the country in 1989. It hoped that the Fulian directors, after training, would be better equipped to lead local women to find ways to generate income and eliminate poverty.

In 1991, the ACWF started Jinguo jian gong (women making contribution) activities among urban working women. The goal was to organize women to receive training and improve skills, to compete and learn from each other so as to make more contributions to the Eighth-five year Plan and to the modernization. These were in essence, goals of the Trade Unions in urban areas. It was interesting to note that the ACFTU did not join with other organizations to cosponsor this activity. Some cadres from the Women Workers' Committee of the ACFTU complained that the ACWF was competing with them by organizing similar activities.¹⁰⁵ Some ACWF cadres admitted that this activity was not as successful as the "learning and

¹⁰³ See FNGZ, 1991, 5:11.

¹⁰⁴ FNGZ, 1991.8:19. Also see Figure 3.2 for Fulian headquarters structure.

¹⁰⁵ This referred to the activity the Unions were organizing, entitled "emulate the advanced (workers), compete for contribution, contribute to the Eight--five plan" (from my interview in 1992).

competing" activities.¹⁰⁶ The ACWF leaders acknowledged this problems and made an effort to improve their work.¹⁰⁷

Another ACWF focus was women's participation in politics. In July 1990, Fulian organized a forum discussion together with the CCP Personnel Department on the selection and promotion of women cadres. This was the first time for such a meeting to be held, because the Department had always guarded issues of personnel tightly and never let others comment on its work. The ACWF leaders complained that in the 1950s 70% of townships had women leaders, now only 10% did (Chen, 1990). They made specific suggestions on how to improve the situation. The ACWF's goal was to make sure that in the 1990 election of delegates to Congress at county and township level, women would make 25% of the total delegates and at least one woman cadre would enter one of the two levels of government (Zhongguo funu bao, November 20, 1989:1). Besides taking measures to help women advance their careers,¹⁰⁸ the ACWF advocated establishing quotas to guarantee a certain proportion of women in Congress. It tried to get this into the

¹⁰⁶ From 1992 interview.

¹⁰⁷ See Huang Qicao 1993. This was a speech she made in October 1992. Reprinted in FNZZYHD, 1993.

¹⁰⁸ The National and many local Fulian had a data base on women cadres and actively recommended them to take leadership positions. They also pushed hard to have more women candidates included in the election and prepared them for this.

Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests and make it a reality but both efforts failed.¹⁰⁹

The ACWF was able to accomplish several tasks it determined to do at the Sixth National Congress. They included:

1) Establishment of the Women's Development Fund in 1990. The fund's biggest project was raising money for construction of China Women's College, an expansion of ACWF's Chinese Managerial School for Women cadres. It will be the largest women's college for adult education. Construction was finished in 1995.

2) Progress in formal political representation. After establishment of the Committee for Women and Youth in the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in April, 1988, and of the Special Group of Women and Children of Internal and Judicial Affairs Committee of the People's Congress in April, 1989, the Coordinating Committee on Women and Children was set up in the State Council in February, 1990, as the result of ACWF's

¹⁰⁹ At the time the law was drafted, the percentage of women delegates in the Seventh national People's Congress was 21.3%. In the ACWF led draft, it was stipulated that the percentage of women's delegates should reach 25 percent (see Zou, 1992). In the final version of the law was passed by the Congress, the actual figure of 25% was dropped. It only stated that the percentage of women delegates at all levels of the Congress should be gradually increased. And it turned out that the percentage of women delegates for the Eighth People's Congress convened in 1993 was 21.03%, dropping a little from the last congress.

effort.¹¹⁰ Although it was short of ACWF's original plan to have a full government body in charge of women's affairs,¹¹¹ with 20 state agencies on the committee, the committee had more power and authority than the ACWF to mobilize resources to work for women's benefits and this ended the history of absence of women's organizations in government.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ The ACWF wrote to the CCP Central Committee and the State Council at the end of 1988 and beginning of 1989, demanding establishment of a government agency to take charge of work among women, citing the fact that there was such a governmental agency in 71 countries already, and China, as a member of UN Committee on Women's Status and a socialist country, should have one. In August 1989 at the national three-excellence conference on children, namely, eugenics, excellent nurturing and excellent education, ACWF chairman Chen Muhua talked to Premier Li Peng again about the need for such an agency to coordinate work among women and children and received positive response from Li. Chen directed the ACWF to write another report to the State Council to follow up. Just at this time, the CCP issued the No.12 Document which requested government at each level to have a leading member taking care of mass work. With this background, Li Peng agreed at the end of 1989 to set up a coordinating Committee on work among women in China under the State Council, with Council Member Li Tieying as director (Huang, 1991).

¹¹¹ In its Plan for Fulian Reform, it suggested establishment of "a women's and children's development committee in the State Council with a vice Premier being its director ...representing the government to manage and coordinate important issues pertaining to the cause of women and children with full powers" (ZGFNB, 1988:6). Now the committee was only a coordinating committee (rather than an agency with full power), with a member of state council (rather than vice premier) as the head, and it had to take over the work of the Coordinating Committee for Children's Work established in 1981 because that committee was dismissed after this committee was set up. The good new was that the committee survived streamlining of the State Council and changed to a working committee in 1993.

¹¹² The Coordinating Committee became the Working Committee of the State Council on Women and Children in 1994. It will also coordinate the implementation of the law protecting women's rights and interests.

3) Passing the regulation on senior women intellectuals' retirement which allowed them to retire at the same age as their male counterparts.

4) Passing the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests in April, 1992. The drafting committee coordinated by Fulian was officially formed in May 1989 and Fulian had made a big effort to lobby for the passage of the law. Although further regulations need to be made to facilitate the implementation of the law (and China observers debate the power of legislation), most agree on the law's symbolic significance. The sweeping 57-article law consolidated previously fragmented measures and gave new importance to women's issues. It helps women to recognize their rights and interests and pursue justice when their rights and interests are violated. It also commits the state to deal with these violations. There was a nation-wide publicity campaign about the new law and Chinese women activists also made plans to help women understand their rights as part of the consciousness raising process and find ways to use the law as a weapon to protect themselves.¹¹³

¹¹³ This was from my personal communication with Wu Qing, January 1993.

Women's Studies and Joint Projects: Expanded Contact with the Outside World

A big stride was made in the 1990s in women's studies. To use academic conferences as an example, a few important ones include:

1) "Chinese Women's Social Participation and Development" organized by the Center for Women's Studies at Zhengzhou University in March, 1990. This was the first national academic conference after June 4, 1989. Given the sensitivity of the times, no written materials were distributed at the conference, but lively discussions were carried out among the over 150 participants, including scholars from foreign countries and from Hong Kong and Taiwan. It was the first time Taiwan scholars had attended a women's studies conference on the mainland.¹¹⁴

2) The First Sino-American Conference on Women's Issues in June 25-28, 1990. It was jointly organized by the ACWF and an American women's organization -- Global Interactions, Inc., located in Arizona. 250 Americans from over 30 states and over 200 Chinese researchers attended the conference.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ For details of the conferences, see three attached articles in Li Xiaojiang, Tan Shen et al. (eds) Funu yanjiu zai zhongguo (Women's Studies in China), Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press.

¹¹⁵ For more details, see Chinese Women's Press (ed), Zhong Mei funu wenti yantao hui lun wen ji (collection of papers given at the Sino-American Conference on Women's Issues. Beijing, Chinese Women's Press, 1991.

3) "Engendering China" held at Harvard University in February 1992. Eight scholars based on the Chinese mainland attended the conference to share their new research on women (but with no Fulian researchers due to restrictions on Fulian at the time).¹¹⁶

4) The China part of the "Engendering China" conference was held in Beijing University in October 1992, with a large number of participants from abroad.¹¹⁷ From that year on, the center for Women's Studies of Peking University organized an international conference every year.

5) "Chinese Women and Development," a two-week workshop organized by the Women's Studies Center of Tianjin Normal University in Summer, 1993, attended by over 100 researchers from all over the country. Five Chinese scholars in the United States were paired up with five Chinese scholars based on the mainland to talk about important issues. Gender perspectives became a focus of the discussion.¹¹⁸

6) "Conflicts in roles for contemporary professional women" in October 1993 by Center for Women's Studies at

¹¹⁶ See Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatler, Lisa Rofel and Tyrene White (eds) Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1994.

¹¹⁷ See First International Conference on Women's Studies. Beijing: Women's Studies Center, Peking University, 1992.

¹¹⁸ See Women's Studies Center at Tianjin University (ed) Zhongguo funu yu fazhan: diwei, jiankang, jiuye (Chinese women and development: status, health and employment). Zhengzhou: Henan People's Press, 1994.

Zhengzhou University. It attracted many scholars from Asia.

Other progress included:

1) The National Fulian set up the Women's Studies Institute of China in 1990 (funu yanjiu suo) from two research institutes studying the history of women's movement and current women's issues. It published Funu Yanjiu Luntan (Women's studies), China's only journal devoted solely to theoretical studies of women,

2) The ACWF carried out a nation-wide Survey of the social status of women in China together with the State Bureau of Statistics. The survey started in September, 1990. It covered 23 provinces, and was the first China had conducted on women's status. It provided a rich set of data on Chinese women not available before.¹¹⁹

3) Women inside and outside Fulian jointly established projects. For example, China's first Women's Hotline was set up in Beijing in 1992. It was started by a non-governmental women's organization and gathered a large number of professional women from outside and inside Fulian to be its volunteers. Zhongguo funu bao (China Women's News) opened a special column discussing issues raised in the hotline conversations. Another example was the 20th Century Women's Oral history project started in 1993. Jointly run by Li

¹¹⁹ See Zhongguo funu shehui diwei gei guan (survey of social status of women in China), compiled by Project Group of Survey of social status of women in China, Beijing: Chinese Women's Press, 1993. Separate volumes on data from different provinces have also been published.

Xiaojiang of the Center for Women's Studies at Zhengzhou University and Henan Women Cadres' School, the project aimed to interview women of various ages and publish their life stories in nine books. It had over 100 members on its editorial board, from both academic and Fulian systems.

4) One indication of the progress women made in the 1990s was that many researches and discussions were no longer confined within parameters set by the state. One example is the new research on women's reproductive health. This research has touched on the very sensitive issue of China's family planning program, including the very skewed sex ratio which reminds us of the pressing population problem and how this too is a women's issue.

The most influential and successful projects on women's reproductive health were started in 1992. One was the Women's Reproductive health and Development (WRHD) Program in Yunnan.¹²⁰ The project laid the foundation to meet the reproductive health needs of women in the poorest and most remote areas of the province. It also established the Yunnan Reproductive Health Research Association (YRHRA), China's first registered mass research organization specialized in research in this area. It now publishes a regular newsletter

¹²⁰ The program is a joint effort between provincial and county government agencies, academic institutes, township and village leadership and local Fulian in Yunnan. Technical support has been provided through the Western Consortium for Public Health in Berkeley, California, and Beijing Medical University.

"Reproductive Health and Social Sciences."¹²¹ Fulian's own research effort included six ethnic groups and covered 17 different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities (Tao and Xiao, 1995:v).

These projects had an impact on policy making and on women's lives. As was said about the Fulian project:

This multi-regional, interdisciplinary study was the first to broadly explore the significance of the effects of social status and cultural environment on women's health. The negative factors influencing women's health were widely investigated and a series of specific and practical policy suggestions were made (Tao and Xiao, 1995: xii).

Women and women's groups were active research participants, learning about themselves and determining their own definitions and their own health.¹²² This reflected the growing emphasis on the reality of women's lives, on paying more attention to problems in the private sphere and on helping individual women. The successful "Enwei Bei (Enwei Cup) Grand Contest on Knowledge on Women's Health Care and

¹²¹ See Wang and Li (eds) Women's Voice from Rural Yunnan: Needs Assessment of Reproductive Health. Beijing: Joint Press of Beijing Medical University and China Xiehe Medical University, 1994; and Zhao, Zhang, Wen, and Yang (eds) Women-centered Reproductive Health. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1995.

¹²² For example, throughout the course of research led by the ACWF, the task groups printed over 10,000 copies of 15 kinds of books, picture albums, and pamphlets, and produced four videos on women's health. These activities directly benefited 31,000 rural and urban women (Tao and Xiao, 1995: xi). In the project in Yunnan, rural women were given cameras and films to take pictures of their own lives, this resulted in a beautiful album.

Hygiene" organized by Zhongguo funu in 1991 was another example. It attracted 30 million responses. The increased attention to the individual liberation of women indicated an expanded dimension of the women's movement.

The support coming from outside China was another important element in this line of research. The Ford Foundation played an important role in initiating and developing research on women's reproductive health in China.¹²³ The Ford Foundation provided more than money. The definition the ACWF gave for women's reproductive health came from the Ford Foundation -- an indication that there were now more sources shaping the official discourse on women.

The Chinese government was concerned about the political influence of private foundations like Ford on China, and some Chinese women did not know how to deal with these organizations during their initial contacts with them.¹²⁴ But under China's open door policy to attract foreign assistance

¹²³ Planning for the WRHD program in Aeonian was initiated by the Ford Foundation in 1991 to assess women's health needs and to devise new strategies to address those needs. Both Yunnan and ACWF's research received grants from Ford.

¹²⁴ When an Ford Program officer contacted the ACWF, the first claim the official made was "we are not feminists." (interview with Ford Officer). Some women were concerned about political implications of contacting Ford. I was asked the question of what type of organization Ford was by a woman at the Tianjin Workshop in 1993. That workshop received support from Ford.

and due to China's desire to "connect to the world,"¹²⁵ especially at the time when China was to host the Fourth World Women's Conference in 1995, the Ford Foundation was able to carry out its activities. The dedication and the sincere working style of its women's program officer also helped communication. Over the five years from 1991-1995, the Ford supported about 40 projects with six to seven million dollars.¹²⁶ More than half of the recipients were official organizations,¹²⁷ including the ACWF.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ In Chinese *yu guo ji jie gui* (jie gui means to connect the track). This is a fad term in China, meaning to keep up with the international norm.

¹²⁶ From my interview with a Ford officer in 1995.

¹²⁷ Given the fact that most organizations, such as research institutions, universities, and Fulian, are officially run.

¹²⁸ To indicate the cooperation between the ACWF and the Ford Foundation, I included two passages from people from both organizations on the women's reproductive health projects they worked on together. Ford officer Mary Ann Burries understood China's situation well, always gave tribute to the ACWF for the work it did, as shown in the following paragraph: "The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) is one of a host of organizations in China which are taking reproductive health issues to heart. As we all know, ACWF is the largest and most powerful women's organization in the People's Republic of China, so its care and attention to these issues is extremely important. Nearly every Chinese village has a women's federation worker, so this mass organization has the ability to reach millions of Chinese women in their communities with information, with support, with questions that enable women's concerns to be voiced. ACWF has a training arm, a research arm, and a policy arm which can inquire into the conditions of Chinese women and then work to make changes to law, to practice, and to policy. Indeed, there are many instances where this has happened" (Burris, 1995:i-ii) .

The head of the Women's Studies Institute of ACWF made the following comment: "Ford Foundation officer Dr. Mary Ann Burris gave her full-fledged enthusiasm from the start. She

Beside the Ford Foundation, there were other foundations providing support to women's projects and research in China, including the Global Fund for Women, United Board for Christian Higher Education, the Tailor Foundation (British), Estal, and others. Support also came from international and government organizations from abroad. The influence of these donor organizations added a new dimension to the women's movement. The exact impact it had on the Chinese women's movement should be watched.

Deng's Trip to The South and reform

Many of the events listed above occurred in 1992 and after, one of the crucial turning points in the reform era. At the beginning of 1992, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping made a trip to China's special economic zones and other places that were undergoing great changes through economic reform. Along his way, Deng promoted the idea that China had to continue with its economic reform and open up policies and make economic development the center of all work, otherwise, China would not have a future. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of adhering to the four cardinal

not only provided financial assistance for the publication of this book, but also provided experience worthy of emulation. It was her understanding, sincerity, and effort which contributed to the success of the fine cooperation between the Ford Foundation and the All-China Women's Federation" (Tao and Xiao, 1995:xiii)

principles¹²⁹ to maintain political stability. Deng's words were used by the reformer's camp within the CCP to push for continued opening up. Reform made a strong, immediate comeback. The scale of opening up also expanded rapidly. In less than a year's time, the development zones in the country increased from about 100 to 1,000 (Huang, 1993). The dreary political atmosphere also lifted. The whole country was on the move again.

Deng's ideas were adopted as the guiding ideology for the CCP's 14th Congress convened in October 1992. The meeting declared that the aim of China's economic reform was to establish a "socialist market economy." This was another big step from "planned commodity economy" -- the reform the CCP proposed at the Third Plenary Meeting of the 12th Congress in 1983. The meeting again stressed the CCP's commitment to socialism, pledged to adhere to the basic line of the Party¹³⁰ characterized by "one center, two basic points" (that is, making economic development the center of all work, adhering to reform and opening up, and adhering to the four cardinal

¹²⁹ They are adherence to Marxism, Leninism and Mao thought, socialism, Party leadership and proletarian democratic leadership.

¹³⁰ The basic line of the CCP in the primary stage of socialism is: to lead and unite people of all nationalities, make economic construction the center of all work, adhere to the four cardinal principles, adhere to reform and open door policy, be self-reliant and work hard, and to strive for building China into a strong socialist country with prosperity, democracy, civilization, and modernity.

principles) and reconfirmed the CCP's determination to "build socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The ACWF, too, gave renewed stress to economic development and the development of forces of production. As one ACWF secretary put it: to make economic construction the center of all work "concerns the fundamental interests of women's liberation":

without the takeoff of the mother land, without reform and economic construction as the center of all work, without development of social productive forces and realization of the four modernizations, women's progress, development and liberation are hollow words" (Guan, 1993:6).

The ACWF's first Secretary Huang Qicao wrote "Liberation and Development of Force of Production and the liberation of Women" (1992), making similar arguments.

The renewed emphasis on market made Fulian cadres realized they had to be concerned about the economic effects of their work in addition to its social effects. To engage in market economy, they needed to have shi li (strength). This strength was now understood to be the economic power. Without money, they could not conduct their activities. To change the image of "poor Fulian" was imperative. Many Fulian cadres had come to this realization through their experience in the reform era. This was especially true for the ACWF's Chairwoman Chen Muhua, who took the position from Kang Keqing in 1988. An expert in economics, Chen previously had worked as Minister of Foreign Economics and Trade, and Director of the central People's Bank. She knew well the importance of

economic resources. She said that now that the "old elder sisters" were no longer in position, Fulian could not live on "begged money," under the market economy, nobody could survive without economic resources.¹³¹ Chen was all for Fulian running economic enterprises, but this was not the opinion among all Fulian cadres. Most important, the state policy kept changing. Many enterprises run by Fulian were affected in 1990 by the effort to "address economic order" which included a crackdown on businesses run by Party and administrative organizations. With China's new commitment on to a market economy, many Fulian cadres realized that they had to grab this opportunity to increase Fulian's "strength," otherwise it would be too late (Han, 1993).

This seemed to be an urgent issue also because the reform of administrative structure was stepped up. Huarong county of Hunan province, in its plan to reform the government structure, again decided that the mass organizations should find ways to support themselves and be on their own. A very popular phrase was "to wean" the mass organizations. That

¹³¹ From my conversation with a Fulian cadre in 1995. "old elder sisters" meant the ACWF leaders of the older generation, among them, Cai Chang, Deng Yinchao and Kang Keqing were Chairwomen of ACWF before 1988. They believed in frugality and tried to reduce the operational cost of ACWF to save for the country. When the ACWF needed money, they could ask the state to allocate money, and with their senior position and political clout, they could get it. The situation was different now for the new leader, and was apparently not the style of Chen, either. It was said that she accepted the position of ACWF Chairwoman with the condition that she had to keep her position as Vice Director of the Economics Commission. This is a position with real power.

became a much talked about topic among Fulian cadres and aroused mixed responses.¹³²

In any case, to establish economic enterprises became a major focus of Fulian work in 1992 and after. The ACWF and 11 other organizations issued the "Circular on Fulian Developing Third-tier Industry and Establishing Economic Enterprises and Related Issues" (FNGZ, 1992:11). It reaffirmed that Fulian as a mass organization was different from Party and government organizations, the business enterprises it set up should be supported. By the end of 1992, Fulian had 9,055 economic enterprises above the county level, 6,451 of them were set up in 1992, a 3.6 times increase over the 1991 figure. It was an increase of 12.7 times over the figure of 1988. The effort to establish fund bases (income generating projects) also bore fruit. In 1992, 43,401 new fund bases were set up, 3.5 times more than that in 1991. Activity bases (women's homes, activity centers) for women and children run by Fulian also increased. By the end of 1992, there were 4,471 such bases, 1,120 of them were established in 1992 (lie, 1993).

¹³² I was in Beijing doing field research. Some saw this as inevitable and feasible and welcomed the greater autonomy and revenue that would bring to Fulian as did some successfully run Fulian businesses. Many, especially local Fulian cadres from poor areas, worried that they could not serve if they had to support themselves all by themselves. Some saw this as evidence of diminishing state support for ACWF and women's issues. They argued that the Fulian exists for her social functions, not economic functions. Some were especially annoyed at the demeaning word "meaning," feeling that it sounded as if Fulian had just been fed by the government, but it had taken very little from the government and did a lot things.

Fulian's structural reform continued. For example, Chongching city became the first Fulian branch that adopted an engagement system for its cadres at middle and lower levels. Each term lasted two years, there was a review at the end of each year. Responsibility and requirements of positions were published, nominated or self-nominated candidates got positions through examinations and signed contract. Their payment fluctuated with performance. Shenyang city Fulian of Liaoning Province restructured its organization to increase efficiency.¹³³ Some Fulian branches adopted a three-third system -- to have one third of its cadres stay in the office and deal with everyday business, another third go to the grassroots to investigate and strengthen work there, the last third focus on running economic enterprises.

The 95 UN Conference On Women

Another important matter in this period was China's application to be the host of the UN Fourth World Women's Conference in 1995. China first expressed its willingness to host the government and NGO Forum of the conference in 1991.¹³⁴ The main reason the state leaders wanted to take on this project was political: to break the sanction China was suffering after the Tiananmen massacre, boost China's image

¹³³ See ZGFNB, June 28, 1993:3 "adjust to change in situation, keep up with steps of the times."

¹³⁴ In his letter to the UN Secretary on January 28, 1991, the Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen expressed the desire (Fu and Hu, 1993).

and expand China's influence in international affairs. As stated by Chen Muhua:

The purpose of 1995 world conference on women was to promote implementation of "Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women toward the 2000", to call on women to seek equality, development and peace... The convention of this meeting in Beijing has important implications for raising the international prestige of our country, strengthening our role in management of international affairs, expanding channels of international exchanges and stimulating economic development within the country (Chen, 1991:6)

Besides, discussion of women's issues seemed to be a safe topics for the Chinese government which felt that it had a good record on women's liberation.

China's application was formally accepted in March 1992 by the UN Women's Status Committee. In August 1992, China formed its organizing committee. In October, the State Council issued a circular to all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, requiring them to take measures to advance women's development as a way to prepare for the convention of the Conference in China. The ACWF was entrusted with the task of organizing the conference, especially the NGO Forum.

The hosting of the conference in China became another stimulation for the women's movement in the 1990s, giving a strong push for many projects. The research on women's reproductive health was picked up by the ACWF for this reason.¹³⁵ The active involvement of foreign donor

¹³⁵ Tao Chunfang said: " The Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing will undoubtedly spur on the women's health cause in China and facilitate its connection to international research. The issue of women's health, one of

organizations was also a phenomenon in this specific context.

Starting from 1993, Funu gongzuo (Woman work) changed its name to Zhongguo fuyun (Chinese Women's Movement) and opened it to the general public. It cited two reasons for the change of name and circulation: 1) with the development of women's movement and woman work in China, the journal needed to expand its coverage to all aspects of the women's movement and influence the general public. 2) to facilitate exchanges with women's organizations in other parts of the world in view of the approaching World Conference in Beijing (FNGZ, 1992. 10:1). The ACWF also started another magazine, shijie funu bolan (World Women's Vision) in 1993. It was the only journal specializing in introducing Chinese women to information about the international women's movement and the conditions of women around the world.

The Seventh National Women's Congress and Beyond

The Seventh's National Women's Congress was convened in September 1993, and attended by 1,148 delegates. Of the 1,110 regular delegates, 74.8% had a college education or

the three main subjects of the conference, is attracting heavy attention from every circle of society. Women's Federations are obligated to throw themselves into this case, to participate positively in the establishment of women's health policies and to launch a variety of activities with the purpose of promoting women's health.

In view of this background, the ACWF decided to carry out women's reproductive health research undertaken by the Women's Studies Institute of China with a grant from the Ford Foundation (Tao and Xiao, 1995:v)

above, a 16.8% increase over that of the Sixth Congress (Qu, 1993). Chen Muhua again was elected Chairwoman of the ACWF. Some new members joined the central leadership of ACWF. The trend was to increase the number of ACWF leaders: the Vice Chairwomen increased from 10 of the Sixth Congress to 13, secretaries from 6 to 8, members of Standing Committee from 25 to 28. Members of Executive Committee was an exception. There were 199 members of the Executive committee, 113 members less than at the last congress. The average age of the Executive members was 49 years, lower than last time. One hundred and seventy executive members had an education of college or above, about 85.4% of the total (RMRB, September 5, 1993:2).

The ACWF work report at the Seventh Congress recounted the achievements of the women's movement in the past 15 years and the achievement of the ACWF. The ACWF had gained more strength after 45 years' development. According to the report, Fulian at various levels

now publish 41 newspapers and magazines for women and children, (they) have 28 women cadres' schools, 24 women's occupational schools, 8 women's law firms, 4,471 activity bases for women and children, as well as a bunch of industrial and commercial enterprises in the third-tier industry that serve women and children. The theoretical research on women carried out by Fulian and concerned parties has become an important part of research in social sciences (Huang, 1993a:14).

ACWF's function as a women's organization was summarized as following: participation, education, representation,

service and friendship promotion.¹³⁶ The working conditions that facilitated the ACWF to play these functions included:

establish bases (for publicity and propaganda, training and education, and activities);¹³⁷ develop non-profit undertakings (in the areas of theoretical studies, legal consultation, information, community services, domestic services); and set up industrial and commercial enterprises (in public affairs, services, production, and management).

The aim was to "gradually form a multi-functional service network which includes propaganda, education, training, scientific research, safeguarding rights, and production."

The working style of Fulian was defined as:

to enhance guidance on the basis of investigation, attract women through activities, gather women through services, expand unity through establishing bonds of friendship, gain support through coordination, build a contingent through cadre training, and increase strength

¹³⁶ At the Sixth National Women's Congress, these functions were:

- 1) Participation -- to mobilize and organize women to participate in national reform and economic construction,
- 2) Education -- to offer women guidance in improving their technical and professional expertise so that they can become qualified personnel.
- 3) Representation -- to represent women to participate in democratic management and supervision of public affairs, and to protect the legitimate rights and interests of women and children;
- 4) Service -- to urge departments concerned to render services to women so as to create favorable conditions for women's development (ACWF, 1988:42).

The last one, strengthen the bonds of friendship was added later.

¹³⁷This means ACWF's publications, cadres' school and occupational schools and activity centers for women and children.

through setting up industrial and commercial enterprises.¹³⁸

Such a working style was a "mass based, socialized working style." It was quite different from the working style the ACWF had promoted since the 1960s, "one person, one matter, one family, one household, and one drop and bit." It also indicated that Fulian was also trying to change its old style of focusing on propaganda and mobilization campaigns and search for ways to do more solid, practical work.

The ACWF's perception of its social base also changed. As it stated:

At present, a new situation of woman work is forming: with women workers and peasants and intellectual women as the main body, and the outstanding women who are active on fronts such as politics, economics, science and technology, education, cultural, journalism, health and physical education, as the backbone" (Huang, 1993:15).

Although women workers and peasants still received due attribution as the main body of woman work, it is clear that intellectual/professional women are the backbone of the urban based women's movement at present, as well as the social force on which the ACWF now relied in its work. This was a shift

¹³⁸ This type of statement is a classic example of jargon in Chinese politics. It basically explain the way the ACWF works with different groups: do investigation well so it can make sound suggestions for policy making; make women identity with Fulian through the activities Fulian organize and the services Fulian provide for them; promote friendship to expand united front to connect women from non-CCP parties, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc.; play Fulian's coordinating role well to gain support from all concerned parties to accomplish Fulian's goals, and within the ACWF, the most important things were cadre training and establishing industrial and commercial enterprises to expand economic power.

from the emphasis on women workers and peasants in the pre-reform era.

The ACWF's documents at the Seventh Congress also reflected, as always, the political and social context within China. The ACWF's work report included discussion of the basic experiences of "socialist women's movement with Chinese characteristics" and fulian's reform. An article was added in the revised Fulian Constitution, stating that besides receiving funds from the state, the Federation at all levels can set up economic enterprises to promote the causes of women and children. For the first time, the ACWF's assets and the enterprises its runs are declared the property of the Federation (ACWF, 1993). This can be seen as a desire to make the organization a more independent entity, enhance its economic power, and prepare for changes on the way.

There were a few places showing retreat from the more liberal 1988 position, the result of CCP's tightened control over mass work after 1989. This was reflected in ACWF's relations with the Party/state, and with other women's organizations.

The first point the ACWF work report made on "experiences about the women's movement in China" was "adhering to the leadership of the CCP and adhering to socialist road with Chinese characteristics are the fundamental guarantee of the women's movement advancing in the correct direction" (Huang, 1993a:15). In ACWF's statement on the same subject in 1988,

this point was last, and it was termed: "(Fulian) must carry out woman work independently under the leadership of the Party" -- it was about both party leadership and independent work and the emphasis was on independent work. In the revised constitution of the Seventh Congress, there was also a switch in the statements on Fulian's functions. Fulian's mission for the state was put first, followed by its basic function of representing women and striving for equality.¹³⁹ Moreover, in the statement about the ACWF reform, the focus of the 1993 work report was on Fulian's self-improvement, so as to make it stronger, more efficient and affective. While in the 1988 document, the focus was on Fulian playing its function well, and Fulian's reform was more a part of the political reform in general.¹⁴⁰ Favorable social conditions that would facilitate

¹³⁹It was stated, "In the primary stage of socialism, the ACWF should unite and educate the broad masses of women, implement the basic line of the Party, and play an active role in the construction of socialist material and spiritual civilization. The basic function of Fulian is to represent and safeguard women's interests and promote sexual equality." (ACWF, 1993).

Compare this with the statement of 1988:

"In the primary stage of socialism, Fulian's basic function is: represent and safeguard women's interests and promote sexual equality. Its working principle is: unite and educate the broad masses of women, implement the basic line of the Party, play an active role in the construction of a prosperous, democratic, civilized socialist modern country, safeguard women's lawful rights and interests, promote women's liberation cause." (ACWF, 1988)

¹⁴⁰ Compare the statements on Fulian reform from the two congresses respectively. According to the statement of 1995: "The aim of Fulian's own reform and building is: improve efficiency, increase strength, to better represent and safeguard the rights and interests of women, promote sexual equality, push for the development of the causes of women and

the ACWF to play its function well, such as correct relations with the party, guarantee of law, etc, were also discussed in the 1988 plan.

The ACWF had a more open attitude toward various women's organizations in its 1988 report.¹⁴¹ In the revised 1995 Constitution, in the article pertaining to the kinds of organizations that could be institutional members of Fulian, it added the stipulation, "the national and local women's organizations that have registered themselves with the civil affair agencies (stress added) (ACWF, 1993:21) as part of the conditions. This was in line with the government regulations that stress the "legitimacy" of such groups. In the 1993 summary of experiences of the women's movement, it added another point that was not included in the 1988 statement: "To

children, to make Fulian a mass group with greater power to attract, gather and influence women, to make it a more open bridge, and stronger tie between Party/state and women" (Huang, 1993:18).

In contrast, the statement of 1988 read: "The aim of Fulian's reform is: to make Fulian a social group with clear social function, full of vitality, capable of representing and safeguarding women's rights and interests, of attracting and gathering the broad masses of women, and of leading women to play an important role in the construction of two civilizations and democratic politics" (Zhang, 1988:20)

¹⁴¹ It said: "Various kinds of national and local women's organizations are important channels through which Fulian connects to women from different circles, occupations and strata. Fulian welcome them to be institutional members. Fulian should help institutional members carry out this work and also provide necessary professional guidance. Institutional members should conscientiously fulfill their obligations and duty. All places can explore more advantageous forms of organization according to local conditions (Zhang, 1988:20).

build a unified women's organizations with representativeness and authority is an important organizational guarantee for the advancement of the women's movement" (Huang, 1993a:15). Such an organization could only be the ACWF, as was elaborated in the document following this statement. This rhetoric unfortunately remained focused on identifying Fulian as the organized women's movement without acknowledging the importance of autonomous groups, treating them on equal terms, or mentioning plans for more such organizations to develop.

The ACWF had come a long way since 1949. Yet after 45 years of development, the ACWF still faced the dilemma of walking a fine line to meet the demands of the Party and women. As has been demonstrated in its past history, this was by no means easy.

F. The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

The preparatory work for the World Women's Conference became a major focus of ACWF's work after its 1993 congress. There were many positive impact of the conference on Fulian and the Chinese women's movement.

First, it enriched women's knowledge about the UN World Conference and international women's movements, and facilitated China and Chinese women to connect to the international discourse on women's issues.

Very few women, including Fulian cadres, had knowledge about the previous three World Women's Conferences. There was

little coverage in the Chinese media, and the focus was on the national, political issues at each conference, as perceived and treated by the Chinese government. Now more people got to know the "Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" and the Conference. In an effort to prepare the state report on implementation of the Nairobi Strategy, training classes were held at various levels.¹⁴² A report in the Renmin ri bao (People's Daily) on the advancement of women in Hebei Province was entitled an achievement in implementing the "Nairobi Strategy" (RMRB (overseas edition): July 31, 1995:3). In anticipation of the World Women's Conference, the Chinese government issued two important documents on women. One was "State Report of the People's Republic of China on Implementation of 'Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for Advancement of Women'" on October 11, 1994.¹⁴³ The other was "Chinese Women's

¹⁴² According to one report in April, 1994, to publicize the World Conference on Women, the organizing Committee printed 100,000 copies of Chinese translation of "Nairobi Strategy" and the world Conference, distributed them to rural and urban localities. Training classes for the conference and Nairobi Strategy seminars trained about 300 people from ministries and provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. 28 provinces and municipalities in turn organized 379 training classes attended by over 30,000 people (RMRB, overseas edition, April 4, 1994 China actively prepares the Fourth World Conference on Women),

¹⁴³ See RMRB, overseas edition, October 11, 1994:3. The report was handed to UN in March, 1994. To facilitate writing of the report, ACWF organized Nairobi Strategy training class and seminars on implementation of the Strategy.

Development Program: 1995-2000" published on August 7, 1995,¹⁴⁴ less than a month before the convention of the NGO Forum. This was the first time that the Chinese government issued a special program on women's development. Both documents had to take the standards and expectations expressed in international documents on women's issues into consideration when discussing women's issues. The official theory and rhetoric can no longer be the only source that shape the public discourse on women.

The term NGO caught public attention with the coming of the World Women's Conference to China. "Non-governmental" sounded interesting to many.¹⁴⁵ To grasp its meaning and the actions behind the term was another learning process for the Chinese. It became a desired term in any case, the ACWF started to call itself an NGO, and that was how it was referred to in the State Report on Implementation of the "Nairobi Strategies."¹⁴⁶ The NGO Forum raised the status of

¹⁴⁴For the program, see RMRB, August 8, 1995:5.

¹⁴⁵ As one person commented, "interesting. In the past, I only heard about governmental, about anarchist (wu zheng fu) but never about Non-governmental (fei zheng fu)" in Ford, 1995:178)

¹⁴⁶Many Fulian cadres wanted to emphasize Fulian's connection with the state, because the official status gave them authority, they felt that this made Fulian superior than other social groups. When I was in Beijing in 1992, Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau was "sorting out" social groups and requiring those in Beijing to re-register. Some cadres commented that Fulian did not have to because it was approved by the state. In 1989 after the regulations on registration of social organizations were issued, all three mass organizations refused to register, feeling that they were approved by the

NGO groups ¹⁴⁷ in China. Many women who had the chance to go to regional NGO preparation meetings and observe and contact NGO women's organizations in other parts of the world were left with deep impression on how they operated and what they did.¹⁴⁸ The NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women was another chance for the 5,000 Chinese participants to experience the NGO spirit and style. It will be another source of inspiration for Chinese women.

government and existed long before the regulations were made. So the agency had to do the registration for them. It came in handy for the ACWF to organize the NGO Forum as a registered mass organization (from conversation with a Fulian cadre in 1995).

¹⁴⁷ Another story about the registration of NGOs concerns the Women's Research Institute of China Academy of Management Science. According to the regulation on the registration of social organizations, all such organizations have to connect to an official organization for supervision. The China Academy of Management Science was actually not a typical official organization, although it was supported by a leading member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The Academy became inactive after the leader retired at the time Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau required all social organizations to re-register in 1992. So the Women's Research Institute actually did not go through the official re-registration process. But as the center has already been "internationalized" for the women's hotline and other work, it could not be stopped from operating just because of its registration status at the time when China was showing official support to NGOs. Besides, its leader was to organize a workshop at the NGO Forum entitled "Women's Groups and Social Support" to discuss her group and their work as well as other groups. So nobody bothered them about the "legitimacy" of their group (from a conversation with a Fulian cadre in 1995). This is an example where an NGO beat the system.

¹⁴⁸ As shown in the book Reflections and Resonance (The Ford Foundation, 1995).

Secondly, the preparation and convention of the Conference in China helped advance the women's movement in China. There was increased attention to women's issues. The Chinese media increased its coverage on women.¹⁴⁹ For the first time, the Chinese government's discussion of the Conference focused on women's issues rather than on other issues that concerned China.¹⁵⁰ Chinese NGOs sponsored 44 workshops. They covered the themes and major subjects of the Women's Conference. Topics that had not been in the center of women's studies in China got covered, such as workshops on "women and environment," "women and the Red Cross," "tackling violence against women," "women and human rights," "Christianity, society and women" and "girl children." This helped expand the scope of women's studies in China.

More women's organizations were developed, including women's studies centers¹⁵¹, NGO groups based on interests or

¹⁴⁹ Take the People's Daily as an example. Its coverage on Chinese women and on the conference itself around the time of the conference would probably be several times more than the total coverage on women in the past few years. Many women's magazines had special columns on the UN world Conference on Women.

¹⁵⁰ Take the official speeches by the Chinese government at the three previous meetings for example. They focused on anti-imperialism and revisionism at the first conference in 1975, on supporting Cambodia at the Second Conference, and on supporting Palestine at the third conference. It focused on women's issues at the Fourth conference and for the first time, China had substantial participation in the NGO Forum.

¹⁵¹ They are Theoretical Research Association of Women of Capital Normal University (1993), Hainan University Women's Studies Center (1994), Women's Studies Center of Northeast Normal University (1993) People's University (1992), Human

to take on projects.¹⁵² Many formed around 1993. Some were inspired by the 1995 World Women's Conference to be held in Beijing. For example, East Meets West Translation Group¹⁵³ and Canada/China Young Women's Project played an active role in the 1994 Young women's Summer School jointly sponsored by the Great Britain China Center and ACWF, with assistance from the Ford Foundation and other donors.¹⁵⁴ Jinglun Family Center, an NGO under the Chinese Association for Social Workers participated in the 1994 International Population and Development Conference in Cairo and the Conference in Beijing. Some looked forward to new inspiration from the Conference, such as the Chinese Women's Health Network. The network has set up two volunteer collectives, one for men and one for women, which are drafting books based loosely on the Boston Women's health Collective Our Bodies, Ourselves. They shared

Rights Center of Wuhan University Law School(1992), Women's Studies Center of Yanbian University (1993), and Women's Research Center of Hebei University was still in the process of being formally established as of July 1995. See Interim Directory of Chinese Women's Organizations compiled by the Ford Foundation..

¹⁵² For example, China Women Judges Association was organized with a push from above to sponsor the Chinese workshop on violence against women.

¹⁵³ A group of professional women who share an interest in feminism. They meet regularly to translate English-language feminist articles into Chinese and discuss the relevance of foreign feminist perspectives to Chinese women. A series of their translations has been published in World Women's Vision.

¹⁵⁴At the workshop, international trainers working with 100 Chinese young women led participatory workshops on feminist issues and conducted a simulation of NGO lobbying at UN Conferences.

experiences with the Our Bodies, Ourselves projects in several other countries at the Beijing Conference.¹⁵⁵

In any case, these new women's organizations, while their aims and degree of activeness vary, flourished under the favorable conditions of China's hosting of the NGO Forum in Beijing. The occasion made more foreign support possible, more internationally collaborated projects take place and greater exchanges between Chinese women and their counterparts in other parts of the world. The academic exchange for example, stepped up in 1994 and 1995 as the Conference approached. In over a years' time, there were 14 conferences held inside and outside China that featured Chinese scholars' exchange with their counterparts from other countries (Du, 1995). These exchanges had the following characteristics: 1) direct exchanges with western scholars on western feminist ideas, touching on sensitive issues such as sexuality, reproduction, ethics and laws;¹⁵⁶ 2) a focus on the themes and major topics of the 1995 Conference, especially in areas of rural women development, girls' education and women's

¹⁵⁵ For information on these organizations, see the Ford Foundation, 1995a.

¹⁵⁶ The "International Symposium: Chinese Women and Feminist thought" held in Beijing from June 21-24 for example. Organized by Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Philosophy Summer School in China: China Britain Australia, this symposium was a high level exchange of opinions between well-known scholars from Great Britain and American and China. American feminist theoretician Alison M. Jaggar made the concluding observational remarks.

reproductive health; 3) increased exchanges with Asian scholars; and 4) introduction of new research areas and methods (Du, 1995).

Increased exchanges also allowed the world to know more about the work of Chinese scholars. There were more Chinese scholars participating in conferences or guest lecturing outside China. Chinese Women's Movement, a book on the history of the women's movement before 1949 by the ACWF had a Japanese translation published in Japan. Some volumes of "Women's Studies Series" edited by Li Xiaojiang also were translated into other languages (Du, 1995).

Another impact of the 1995 Beijing Conference on Chinese women was seen in those women who were involved in international preparatory activities for the Conference. They were women of all ages, from different walks of life. They participated in various ways. Many went to the regional NGO preparatory meetings where they contacted women from Africa, Asian, Latin American, Europe and America, to discuss issues and exchange experiences, and to observe how NGO organizations work in different places. Reflections and Resonance, a book compiled by the Ford Foundation, tells their stories. The inspiration they and other Chinese women received from the international women's movements will bear fruit in China.

Finally, preparations for the 1995 Beijing Conference also enhanced the power of the ACWF. This included the ACWF's increased responsibilities, resources, visibility, contacts

with international organizations, various tasks and skills gained from participation in the preparation efforts (many had the chance to go to regional NGO preparation meetings) and greater visibility both inside and outside China. One physical evidence of increased resources are the three ACWF buildings.

With a construction cost of 500 million yuan,¹⁵⁷ they are the office building for ACWF, the new campus of China Women's College and the China Women and Children's Activity Center. The ACWF's office building and the China Women's and Children's Activity Center are two high rises connected to one another along the Changan Avenue, the main road in central Beijing. Covered with white and green tiles and with curved shape and an arch in front of the office building, they are among the pretty landmarks on the avenue (especially compared to the square, monolithic buildings). The office building has been put into full use. The ACWF later will lease several floors to generate income. The Activity Center, after its completion, will also bring in revenue for the ACWF. The construction of buildings for China Women's College was complete by the time the Conference began, but the interiors work had not finished. It will house ACWF's National Managerial College for Women Cadres, which will change its name to China Women's College to become China's largest college for adult education for women. At a time when the

¹⁵⁷ The ACWF also raised money for the Women's College. The China Women's development fund began to raise money for this project in 1992.

mass organizations were preparing for "rainy days" and expanding their property and resources, these assets were important to the ACWF.

Although the general impact of the 1995 World Women's Conference on Chinese women and the ACWF was positive, there were some negative effects associated with the conferences: the change of the site for the NGO Forum and the tightened government control over the conference.

The politics around the preparation and convening of the conference are beyond the scope of this dissertation. But the decision to move the NGO site and to tighten control reflected the Chinese government's changing perception of women's issues and the NGO Forum and was a result of political struggle within the CCP. What is relevant to this study is that women's issues suddenly seemed to have gained a dissident status, and the ACWF also became the scapegoat for the "unwise" decision to host the conference in China.¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵⁸ The Chinese government had little knowledge about international women's movements and activities and about how women's NGOs worked. After several regional NGO preparatory meetings, reality began to sink in, especially at the 1994 International Population and Development Conference in Cairo, Egypt where China's population policy and other policies were challenged. To top it off, at the Social Development Summit at Copenhagen, Chinese Premier Li Peng personally witnessed protests and demonstrations against him as butcher of Tiananmen massacre, and was confronted with issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, human rights, etc.. The Chinese leaders realized the gathering of women to discuss women's issues was not as "safe" as they had thought. They did not want to be challenged by any explosive issues. The active involvement of women's NGO groups and their free expression of opinions also seemed threatening to the Chinese leaders. In addition, China so far is still quite closed, the government was always very

government's control over the Conference tightened, the leadership of the organizing committee was "upgraded" to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allow more government control. As the Conference approached, some exchange activities organized by women's groups were curbed.¹⁵⁹ At many of the conference workshops organized by China, Chinese speakers avoided discussing problems, because there was pressure to avoid leaving "bad impressions" about China. Some Chinese scholars intentionally "tuned down" the arguments they wanted to make because they were afraid that if some "accidents" did happen,¹⁶⁰ women's studies would lose the space it had enjoyed

cautious about gathering foreigners in China. They did not know how to handle a large crowd of women with diversified background, especially with the Chinese leaders' bias about the "bourgeois women's movement" and phobia of homosexuality. These issues seemed to be truly frightening to a fragile government fearful of a reoccurrence of the 1989 mass demonstrations evoked by the conference, especially at the vulnerable moment when internal political struggle was intensified as the health of Deng Xiaoping deteriorated. Thus, they started to get paranoid about what could happen at and during the conference, as if somebody wanted to "sabotage" the conference. The shock Li Peng had from the Social Summit in March 1995 was said to be the direct trigger for the Chinese government to propose in April to change the Forum site so as to isolate it from the center of Beijing. The ACWF was blamed for trying to get this hot potato and for some decisions that later the government wanted to change (From conversation with people in Beijing)

¹⁵⁹A workshop by the Women's Studies Center of Tianjin Normal University was cancelled and the exchange activities organized in Shanghai with Chinese scholars from overseas were scaled down. The reason given was that everyone had to concentrate on the Conference itself.

¹⁶⁰ A basic principle the Chinese government wanted at this conference was bu yao chu shi (do not let accidents occur), meaning no political or other incidents that caused

and needed for further development. Those prevented a freer, and more open and candid discussion of some issues at these workshops. It also prevented women from other parts of the world at the conference to have a better understanding of Chinese women and the women's movement in China.

It is a clear indication of the marginality of women's issues on the agenda of the Party and state. Although main attention was given to women's issues, especially compared with China's involvement with three previous world women's conferences, major decisions about the meeting were made first to suit the interests of the state in national and international affairs, with no regard to international norms and regulations concerning the Conference and its success.¹⁶¹ This was the same as the coverage of the Conference by mainstream western media, which gave more limelight to the issues around the organization of the conference rather than the conference itself. This coverage, though important, obscured the conference as a women's event, and the concerns and actions of the participants of the conference and the women they represent. Chinese women, their inspirations and frustrations, the progress they have made and the hurdles yet to be overcome got lost in this narrow focus. They were

serious embarrassment to the government.

¹⁶¹ As with regards to the late change of conference site and connecting hotel confirmation to visa issuing.

treated as passive victims of the state, indistinct from the state, or as if they were not there.

The role the ACWF played in this unfortunate twist and the implications are complicated. Many Fulian cadres involved in the preparations felt powerless. They had to bear the consequences and deal with the increased workload, worry about the effect the changes would have on the conference and yet had no power to turn things around. They were the people who had taken the conference to heart and were fully devoted to its success.

On the other hand, Fulian as a whole had to be part of the control mechanism of the state when the control tightened. The national and provincial Fulian branches were leaders of the delegations of 5,000 Chinese women to the conference. They passed on instructions from the top to these participants. The rehearsal of China sponsored workshops was also a form of control.¹⁶² Some ACWF cadres played the controlling role more willingly than others. In this aspect, Fulian acted on behalf of the government rather than women. Some women's voices were not heard at the Conference, among them, Li Xiaojiang, a leading scholar in women's studies. It was not clear how much the ACWF was involved in each of the

¹⁶² In some cases, as a participant of the workshop on women and environment reported, people benefited from rehearsed discussion which brought about deeper understanding of issues. In many cases, it was a form of censorship, a way to shape participants speeches and workshop organization.

decisions that destroyed the efforts Li made for women's advancement -- the close down of a woman's college she was trying to set up in Zhengzhou University, the decision not to include her books in the bookshow, not to publish the articles she wrote or her photo in the media, etc..¹⁶³

In any case, to say the least, the ACWF did not stand on her side or fight for her. At a seminar, when asked why Li Xiaojiang was not present, an ACWF leader responded that she was not feeling well. The Chinese book exhibition on women indeed did not include Li's works, the exhibition was organized by an ACWF affiliate. Whether this was because the ACWF did not or could not do what it should have done, the incident reflected again the ACWF's weakness and limitation as a woman's organization in contemporary China. The ACWF had taken the lead and spoken for women on many issues to the state, but within the women's movement, it also acted as a conservative force, lining up with the state and implementing decisions from the top, whether willingly or reluctantly, even if it was not involved in the making of these decisions itself. The complicated relationship between women and the state and the in between role the Women's Federation plays

¹⁶³ See Li Xiaojiang's speech "Why I refused to Participate in the NGO forum at the 95 Forth World Conference on Women" at the workshop "What Impact the "95 World Conference on Women has on the Chinese Women?" by the J.K. Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University, October 11, 1995. The written speech was delivered by Professor Christina Gilmartin on behalf of the author. I am indebted to Xiaolan Bao for bringing this speech to my attention.

remains one of the central issues for the women's movement in post-revolutionary China.

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CHAPTER X

THE ACWF AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: CONCLUSION

The past four chapters painted a complex history of the ACWF and the women's movement in contemporary China. The ACWF's status, role, and function and interaction with the Party/state and women are complex, and the federation has never been a static entity. It went through changes, shaped by the country's economic development and politics, by the CCP's perception of and practice on the woman question, by the interaction between women and the state, and by its contact with the outside world. In this last chapter of summary and analysis, the focus will be on the following issues: (1) the changing structure, organizational goals and functions of the ACWF; (2) the women's movement in contemporary China in terms of agenda, characteristics, and challenges; (3) the legacy of the CCP for the women's movement in socialist China; and (4) the ACWF's future and the development of a "civil society."

ACWF: Changing Structure, Goals, Activities, and Role

This study revealed the evolution and development of the ACWF and the women's movement in China. Contrary to the common impression of the ACWF as a monolithic organization set up as a tool for the CCP from its inception, this study showed

that the nature, organizational structure, operation, and role of the ACWF were not fixed from the beginning. They have undergone changes, shaped by forces within and outside the women's movement. The ACWF changed from a more autonomous women's organization in the early 1950s to primarily a political tool of the Party around the mid-1960s, and then became more independent in the reform era. The ups and downs of the ACWF reflected the history of the women's movement in contemporary China.

Three historical periods

The zigzag road the ACWF travelled over the past 45 years can be documented through three distinctive historical periods:

1. The high tide of the women's movement, establishment and consolidation of the ACWF: 1949-1956. This was later referred to as the "golden age" of the women's movement. The goals of the women's movement were compatible with those of the revolutionary cause. As the new government sought to undermine the old social order, it attacked aspects of patriarchy. The ACWF at that time was a united front organization, a coalition of different women's groups that had previously worked together for the goal of women and the larger national cause when the Nationalist Party and the CCP formed an alliance during the anti-Japanese war. It was active in promoting the interests of both women and the state, and in turn, the ACWF expanded rapidly, taking root among

millions of women, especially among rural women and urban housewives. The PRC saw the first tide of the women's movement, pushing from top down through the efforts of leaders of the women's movement in government and Party positions, with warm response from below. It was a movement that subsequently subordinated the independent interests of women to state policy, and marked the beginning of making women a product of the state.

2. Setback in women's movement, bureaucratization, radicalism, disruption, and restoration of the ACWF: 1957-1978. With the completion of the nationalization of industry and commerce and the collectivization of agriculture in 1956, China declared that the socialist transition was essentially completed. The ACWF was pressed to cut short the debate on how to view the woman question in this changed context and to declare that socialism had brought gender equality and women's liberation. The ACWF eliminated the organizational goal of striving for women's liberation and gender equality from its 1957 constitution. The ACWF was effectively bureaucratized.

The anti-rightist campaign caused a split within the women's movement. The head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and some leaders of Women's Friendship Associations fell victim to the campaign, with both organizations ceasing to function by 1958. Women intellectuals were also criticized as a bourgeois social force. Although the goal of striving for women's "complete liberation" returned to official rhetoric

during the Great Leap Forward of 1958-60, as female labor was mobilized in an unprecedented scale to contribute to the experiment on rapid economic development and social transformation, the official discussion of the need for political struggle for gender equality ended. In the years that followed, women's issues tended to be buried beneath the all-consuming emphasis on class struggle. The ACWF mainly acted as a political vehicle for the mobilization of women in the service of Party goals, its attention to women's practical gender needs being criticized as distracting women from heeding to class struggle. The Cultural Revolution slogan, "What men can do, women can also do" confirmed the ideology of sexual equality at the very time that the ACWF was abolished, leaving no national organization responsible for women's issues in the years of 1966-78. The ACWF was restored in 1978 in the wake of the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, yet it kept the rhetoric of the CR as a main tenet of its ideological approach.

3. The emergence of the women's movement from below, transformation and change of the ACWF: 1979-1993. During this period, women were prompted to action in response to women's old and new problems made visible by or associated with China's switch to a market economy. The ACWF's active role was supported by the State because the state was concerned about social problems and wanted mass organizations to help find solutions. The more relaxed political atmosphere that

resulted from the reforms allowed for the reappraisal of the CCP's theory and practice over the past 30 years. The ACWF expanded the focus of its work to cover all women, especially women intellectuals. It became more vocal and took a stronger stance on women's issues. Non-official organizations of professional/intellectual women began to form, breaking the monopoly of the ACWF. There were tensions between the two forces, yet there was also increasing cooperation between them. Together they pushed for the advance of women's rights and interests and the establishment of women's studies. These activities were marked by women's initiative from the bottom up, indicating the emergence of an urban-based women's movement seeking a more independent identity. The year of 1988 was the high point of the women's movement in the new era; the ACWF produced a considerable amount of women-centered documents and carried out structural reform. This effort was hindered by tightened political control after the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989, but women scholars and activists expanded their contact with the outside world in the 1990s. The convention of the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 also had a large impact on the Chinese women's movement.

During these three periods, the ACWF went through many changes.

Changes in ACWF's organizational structure

As shown in Appendix A1, at the time of its establishment, the ACWF was a coalition of Fulian organizations in the CCP-controlled rural areas and independent national women's organizations in Guomindang occupied cities. It was made of institutional members, with more equal, horizontal connections among them. But in the process of establishing local Fulian branches, vertical connections within the ACWF were strengthened. Women's organizations within the Trade Unions later were also regarded as institutional members of the ACWF. The 1953 ACDWF's Constitution specified that the ACWF's organizational system was the national, provincial, and county Fulian and women's delegate meetings in rural township and urban residential areas. But the organization was still based on institutional membership, with independent women's organizations having some autonomy and independence in finance and constitution making.

After the third Women's Congress in 1957, the ACWF was bureaucratized and formally incorporated into the geographically-based administrative structure. As shown in the figure of Appendix A3, the main body of the ACWF was its five-tier hierarchical structure in the middle. There were Fulian cadres at each level above township in rural areas, and in urban residential districts, on the state payroll. Village and urban neighborhood women's delegate meetings were the ACWF's grassroots organizations supported by numerous

unpaid women activists. On the left were its institutional members, more specifically, women workers' committees of the Trade Unions at all levels. Of the three founding independent national Women's organizations on the left, only the YWCA remained by 1958. If this figure had been drawn by proportion, it would be quite unbalanced, with the right column almost empty.

The new structure was characterized by hierarchy and vertical control from above, the relationship between the branches and the upper levels being one of domination and subordination. The ACWF system based on the administrative division facilitated control over Fulian at all levels by the same level Party leadership, a relationship with the Party later specified in the ACWF constitution. By 1957, all the existing women's organizations in China were brought under the umbrella of the ACWF and institutional members could no longer have constitutions separate and different from that of the ACWF. This was the beginning of the ACWF's monopoly over women's organizations.

This structure remained when the Six National Women's Congress was convened in 1988. By this time, however, there had been rapid development of independent women's organizations, such as the occupationally-based women's friendship associations and research-oriented women's groups. Many were institutional members of the ACWF, but some were not, as the ACWF could no longer cover all women's

organizations in China. Also, women's committees had been set up in Party and government agencies and units of science, education, arts, and health to incorporate professional/intellectual women into the Fulian system.

The status of these committees was ambiguous in the 1988 ACWF constitution. They were defined as independent women's organizations under the direct leadership of the Party committee. As such, they theoretically were institutional members of the ACWF, belonging in the right column. But the constitution also discussed these organizations together with women's delegate meetings, which were Fulian's grassroots organizations.¹ This ambiguity was gone in the 1993 constitution when it was clearly stipulated that the grassroots units of the ACWF were rural and urban women's delegate meetings and these women's committees. This showed the ACWF's desire to influence intellectual/professional women and make them part of its social base.

In short, the ACWF, which began as a horizontally connected coalition, was turned into a centralized hierarchy

¹ As discussed above, the women's committee within the ACFTU had never been ACWF's direct subordinates and there was tension between the ACFTU and ACWF over leadership of these organizations. I learned from my interviews that some women's organizations within the Democratic Parties question the concept of being a member of the ACWF: because the Democratic Parties are supposed to be parallel to the CCP, why should their central women's committees be members of ACWF which is a mass organization under the leadership of the CCP?

in 1957 and in the reform era its horizontal connections were broadened again (see Appendix A).

Changes of ACWF in definition of nature, goals, finance and personnel

As shown in Table 10.1, the ACWF went through other changes. These included the nature, goals, finance, and personnel of the organization as defined in the ACWF constitutions.

In terms of the ACWF's nature as an organization, the central issue was the conflicting identities of gender and class. In the first period, in both constitutions of 1949 and 1953, the ACWF was defined as a united front organization of democratic women of all social strata and nationalities. In 1957, it adopted the CCP term "mass organization" for itself and started to make reference to the class nature of the organization. In the 1957 constitution, it stated that all women above 16 years of age could participate in the election of women delegates, except counter-revolutionaries and those who were from reactionary classes and, therefore, stripped of their right to vote. In 1978, besides adding the phrase "under the leadership of the Party," the "main body" of the ACWF was specified as "women workers, peasants and revolutionary (emphasis added) women intellectuals." In 1983, the ACWF was defined as a group working for "female workers, peasants, intellectuals and other laboring women and patriotic women who support socialism and unification of the

motherland." In 1988, it finally discarded the CCP phrase "mass organization" to define itself as a "social mass group of women from all nationalities and all walks of life that are joined together under the leadership of the CCP for women's further liberation." It was thus again defined more as a pressure group for gender interests with the broadest membership, similar to the way it was defined when it was first established, with greater emphasis placed on its representative function.

The definition of the goals of the ACWF began in 1949 with the dual mission of benefiting the state and women -- for country building and women's liberation and sexual equality. In 1957, women's liberation and equality goals were dropped, its duty to women being only to provide services. In 1978, the rhetoric of striving for women's "complete liberation" came back as part of its dual mission, but the concrete discussion of tasks was overwhelmingly dominated by state tasks, and equality between men and women was only briefly mentioned as a policy. In 1983, discussion on tasks pertaining to women increased, and women's rights and interests as well as educating women on equality and liberation were mentioned. It was only in 1988, however, that the ACWF clearly declared that the basic function of Fulian was to represent and protect women's rights and interests and promote sexual equality and women's liberation. Thus, the ACWF finally defined itself as primarily for women,

and sexual equality was fully reestablished as a principal goal of the organization.

Regulations on finance is an important indicator of the autonomy of an organization. At the inception of the ACWF, the sources of its finance were donations, income from enterprises run by the organization, and membership fees. The statement on enterprises was dropped in the 1953 constitution because the government no longer encouraged mass organizations to run businesses. In 1957, the section on finance was eliminated from the constitution, because both membership fees and donations were no longer applicable;² financial support came totally from the state, and thus the ACWF constitution did not have to make any specifications on finance. Starting in 1988, regulations on finance returned to the federation's constitution, defining operation funds allocated by the state, donations, and income from enterprises run by Fulian as the main sources of finance. The 1993 constitution further specified that the assets Fulian used and the enterprises Fulian operated were the property of Fulian, indicating the ACWF's desire to expand its economic base in preparation for the changes the organization may face in the future.

² Donations from both home and abroad became unfeasible due to the collectivization and nationalization of the economy which in the main eliminated private ownership and the cutting off of connections of the two religious women's organizations with the United States. The small amount of membership fees from the YWCA was too insignificant to mention.

The regulations on personnel was a new section added to the constitution in 1983, reflecting the concern over the bureaucratization of the ACWF. It was an effort to improve the quality of Fulian cadres and to reform the organization so as to increase efficiency and strengthen its connections to women (see Table 10.1).

ACWF's Role in Chinese

Society and the Women's Movement

Status of the ACWF

Although people have different opinions about what type of organization the ACWF is, this study shows that it has both an official and unofficial status.

Its official status has come from its position in the official organizational system, its cadres, and finance. It is listed in the state plan as a mass organization under the Party organizations, and the quota for Fulian personnel at all levels, the ranks of its cadres, and the amount of funds allocated to the ACWF and all specified in the state plan.³ Fulian cadres are managed the same way as Party or government cadres. Cadres of government or Party agencies can be assigned to work in Fulian, and Fulian cadres can also be transferred to other agencies. The ACWF calls itself a base

³ Fulian cadres and staff are all on the state pay-roll, their rankings are usually lower than same level Party and government officials by half a rank, and they enjoy the same benefits as other officials of the same rank.

Table 10.1

Changes of the ACWF in Definition of Nature, Goals, Operation,
finance and Personnel

time	nature of organization	goals	finance	personnel
1949 (1st)	united front org. of democratic women of all social strata & professions	-build the country -sexual equality, liberation	-donations -enterprises -membership fee	
1953 (2nd)			-donations -membership fee	
1957 (3nd)	women's mass organization (who had the right to vote)	- socialist construction -provide services		
1978 (4th)	mass org-under CCP (workers, peasants, revolutionary intellect. as base)	-four moderations - complete liberation (1/8 tasks about women, policy of sexual equality and equal work equal pay)		

1983-	mass org- under CCP (female workers, peasants, intellect. & patriotic women)	-two civilization -complete liberation (rights, interests, education on equality, liberation)		-cadres qualities -training
1988 (6th)	social mass group under CCP for further liberation	-basic function: represent and protect interests, promote equality - working principle: (dual mission)	-State funds -enterprises -donations	-personnel reform (election) -training -connect to masses
1993 (7th)	as above	-impliment Party line and two civilization -basic function: represent and protect interests, promote equality	-state funds -enterprises -donations -asset ACWF's property	-as above (service exams)

for training women cadres although there have been complaints that the upward mobility of Fulian cadres is too limited, especially at lower levels.

The official status of Fulian also comes from its function. It is part of the Party organizational system. Like the ACFTU and CYL, the ACWF is directly responsible to the CCP,⁴ and to the Propaganda Department of the Central CCP, particularly because one of its major functions is to do ideological work among women. Many Party documents pertaining to women are drafted by the Party Committee of the ACWF, and passed down with comments from the CCP Central Committee or Secretariat to local Party branches as Party documents. As there is no government agency in the Chinese government to take charge of women's issues, the ACWF has been entrusted with tasks that a government agency would usually undertake. Much of Fulian's work, such as child care, family planning, and literacy campaigns, is of this nature. It also represents China by handling official exchanges between Chinese women and their counterparts in other countries. The top leaders of the ACWF concurrently hold other positions within the Party and/or

⁴ This is in contrast to other mass organizations. According to the registration law of social organizations, the condition for the registration of an organization is that it has to have a zhuguan danwei (directing unit). For example, the controlling unit for the Art Association is the Propaganda Department of CCP while the Association is the supervising unit for all art organizations under it. Again, the Science and Technology Association is under the supervision of the State Science Commission and at the same time, it supervises science organizations below them.

government, and this is one of the reasons why the federation can move easily between its role as an official and unofficial organization. This dual status also reflects the Chinese political system under the CCP where there is a lack of distinction between the functions of the Party and the government, and between the government and non-government agencies.

Nevertheless, the ACWF also has an unofficial or popular status. The over 90,000 full-time, paid cadres in the ACWF are from rural township and urban district levels and above. There were 68,355 such organizations in the ACWF in 1988 (Table 10.2). Compared to the directors of 859,880 women's rural and urban delegate meetings at the grassroots level, they constitute only a small group. These directors at the grassroots level are the majority of women on whom Fulian depends to carry out its activities. This does not include the millions of activists at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. This makes Fulian a real "mass" organization with strong ties to the grassroots.

In terms of its function, as a mass organization within the Party system, the federation is only regarded as the "tie and bridge" between the Party and women. The ACWF does not participate in decision making within the Party directly, but only makes suggestions and pushes the Party to carry out woman work. Within the government system, it coordinates resources from various agencies to carry out woman work, but it cannot

Table 10.2 Women's Organizations in 1988

	Fulian org.	grassroots w.delegate meetings			w.workers committee of Union	women's committee in admi. non-prot units	women's friend- ship associa- tions
total	68,355	859,880	88,498	771,437	160,810	35,125	3,264
province	30				16,801	2,447	44
pre- fecture	370				47,252	4,473	308
county	2810				69,113	20,499	1,132
township	65,145				27,644	7,704	1,780

Sources: Statistics on Chinese Women:1949-1989. (pp.576) Research Institute of All-China Women's Federation, Research Office of Shaanxi Provincial Women's Federation.Beijing: China Statistical Publishing House,1991.

issue orders, as can a functioning state agency, or directly enforce certain policies. Moreover, as a mass organization, its major function is to represent women. This requires it to be functionally different from government agencies. In the reform era, the ACWF has become more "popularized."

In short, the ACWF has a unique dual status as an organization with both official and non-official characteristics. This has resulted in the somewhat awkward position in which Fulian finds itself -- as described by a woman, the Fulian is a "half official and half popular" organization. "In the eyes of the government, it is a mass organization. In the eyes of the masses, it is an official organization." This semi-official and semi-non-official status was a source of identity conflict for its cadres. On the other hand, it was also a blessing on some occasions as is shown in the dual role the ACWF played.

Dual Role of the ACWF: How Has It Balanced Its Dual Mission, How Has It Served Women?

My study showed that, within its institutional capacity, the ACWF has done a considerable amount of work for women. It has played this role well, especially during the first period and the reform era when it could address both women's strategic and practical gender interests. In the economic adjustment period of 1961-63, it did more work to fulfil women's practical gender needs. When the goals of the women's movement were compatible with that of the state, when the

existence of women's problems was recognized, and when there was a relaxed enough political and social atmosphere to acknowledge diversified interests other than those of class, the ACWF could play a more active role in advancing women's causes.

The areas that the ACWF has been emphasizing and where it has had some impact are: disseminating the idea of equality between women and men; pushing for women's participation in labor and politics; promoting legislative changes, women's literacy, and the provision of child care; and the protection of women's interests. These areas are parts and parcel of the general concern of the state. The progress made in different areas has varied, but it did not occur naturally. As shown in this study, there were conflicts and tension, and the ACWF did make an effort whenever possible to keep these issues alive.

The strength of the ACWF lies in its connection to the political center and its mass base, a result of its dual status. Its official status provided it with the resources and legitimate position to push within the system for legislation favorable to women and to advance their interests. Its penetrating network, which is often referred to as having "legs", and its ability to organize grassroots women is an additional strength. The ACWF provided a channel for women to enter the Chinese political system. It represents women in the Chinese People's Congress. In factories, the women workers' committee of Trade Unions. as an institutional member

of Fulian, can join management in deciding matters concerning women. Without this status, the women workers' committee would only have a Union representative to pass women's demands on to management. They would not be able to send their own representatives to a management meeting to voice their concerns.

Whether to have separate women's organizations or not has been one of the focal points for debate within the CCP. Past experience proved that, under the current political system in China, it is better to have Fulian. In post-revolutionary China, the necessity of Fulian was challenged several times, but the ACWF was able to maintain its position. When it was disbanded during the CR, no one could talk about the specific interests of women, or the interests of any group, except those of class.

Furthermore, the ACWF's official status and its connection to central political power is not necessarily a drawback. To belittle the role of the ACWF just because it is not a "true" mass organization such as those in the West shows a lack of understanding of China's situation and the complexity of the matter. As shown by the organizational relationship between women's organizations and the CCP and the CCP led-government illustrated in Table 10.3, the involvement of women's organizations with central power reflected the perceived importance of women's issues on the CCP agenda and the strength of the women's movement. In the pre-1949 period,

Table 10.3**Women's Organizations in Relation to The CCP And CCP Led Government**

years	independent women's orga- nizations	women's orga- nization within CCP	mass women's orga- nizations	CCP within mass women's orga- nizations	women's organization within government
1921- 1949	x	x	x	x	x
1949- 1957	x	x	x	x	
1958- 1966			x	x	
1967- 1977*					
1978- 1989**			x	x	
1990s	x		x	x	x

*** Fulian at provincial level and below were restored in 1973 during the Cultural Revolution , but the attempt to restore the National Fulian failed.**

**** Independent organizations (non-official women's organizations) started to appear by mid-1980s.**

the CCP paid great attention to women's issues and women's organizations. It set up a women's organization within its central leadership -- the Women's Movement Committee to direct work among women. When it established People's Governments or local Soviets as its revolutionary bases, there was also a women's organization -- a woman work committee -- within the government to take charge of woman work. In addition, the CCP organized mass women's organizations in base areas to mobilize women. To enhance guidance and control, it had Party branches within mass women's organizations.

After 1949, a women's working committee existed in the government only very briefly. The ACWF soon became the organization the government relied on to do its work, which could probably do a better job than a government agency, given the government's needs at the time for mass mobilization among women. This was the beginning of the lack of distinction between the functions of the government and mass organizations. By 1958, independent women's organizations were virtually gone, with only the YWCA left under the direct control of the ACWF. The CCP also eliminated the Women's Committee within the CCP, which was perceived by Fulian cadres as a reduction of power. Only mass women's organizations remained, with Party Committees in control. Both were disbanded during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1990s, not only are there independent⁵ women's organizations, the

⁵ Here I mean non-official women's organizations.

Coordinating Committee of Work Among Women and Children was also established within the State Council, due to the effort of the ACWF. Thus, women's organization finally regained official status within the government. It is not a coincidence that both independent women's organization and better access to the center of power occurred at the same time (that is, during the first and the most recent periods, at a time when there was more attention to women's issues and greater space for women's advancement than at other times). Within the context of China, it is the task of the women's movement to push for the advancement of women's organizations both on top and at the grassroots level, although it does not have to be the same organization that represents women at both levels.

On the other hand, the dual status of the ACWF has also limited the role it could play. In giving priority to the mission of mobilization, the ACWF could not represent women's interests well especially when the goals of its dual mission were in conflict. Lacking real power at the top to make decisions or to directly affect change, the ACWF often found itself in a powerless position to take independent actions, or even to protect itself, as during the CR. The dual status also resulted in the ACWF's strong bureaucratic tendencies, especially at the national level. This bureaucratic tendency and identity with the establishment also resulted in tension between the ACWF and the newly founded non-official women's organizations. When such conflict occurred, the ACWF acted

as the conservative force within the women's movement, representing the interests of the state rather than women. The tension between women's interests and the state's interests used to be reflected as tension between the ACWF and the state, now it is sometimes reflected as tension between the ACWF and non-official women's organizations. This tension definitely added a new dimension to the women's movement.

In sum, the ACWF has played a complicated role in Chinese society and in the women's movement. Inherent contradictions were embedded in its dual mission, yet, this duality also gave the ACWF the legitimacy to work on women's issues. The ACWF provided channels for grassroots women's participation in politics and gave rise to institutionalized activism. But this duality also hindered the development of autonomous women's organizations and activism outside state channels. As part of the state apparatus, the federation produced bureaucrats who used Fulian to advance their own careers. Yet there are also women who raised their consciousness about women's issues after working in Fulian and women who chose to come to Fulian so as to make a difference for women.⁶ There are structural reasons for the behavior of the ACWF, but what we see was also the outcome of the interaction between the

⁶ I learned this from my interviews in 1992. Some of the Fulian cadres who joined Fulian in the 1980s mentioned that working here increased their consciousness about women's issues. A scholar of women's studies gave up her rank and high pay in the army to join the ACWF research institute on women because it had better conditions to do research on women and she could make more difference for women there.

ACWF and the CCP, and between the women's movement and the larger societal cause. These processes took place within the specific social, political, and economic context of the time.

The Women's Movement in Contemporary China: Agenda, Characteristics and Challenges

This study of the ACWF also provides an opportunity to examine the women's movement in contemporary China. The women's movement is defined here as the active, organized efforts of women to promote gender equality and the advancement of women's interests. It is marked by the basic characteristics of other social movements such as shared ideology, organizations, and organized activities on a scale that affect not only the individuals involved, but society as a whole. Using this definition, I argue that the women's movement existed in China in both the pre-1949 period and the post-revolutionary period, and that its high points were in the 1930s and 1940s in pre-1949 China, in the 1950s, and in the current reform era.

Different Perspectives

There are two prevalent perspectives about the Chinese women's movement I want to challenge based on my findings. One perspective uses the model of the western feminist movement to measure the women's movement in China. In this view, to be considered a women's movement, a movement must be

constituted in a "pure" form -- with autonomous women's groups organized from bottom up, separate women's struggles for gender equality, and a focus on gender issues only. According to this perspective, although there was a women's movement in China in the 1920s, it was later "coopted" by the two Parties. In post-revolutionary China, the women's movement only appeared during the reform era with the appearance of non-official women's organizations. Previous to that, there could not be a women's movement because of the top-down approach of the CCP to the woman question and because women were not the conscious subject of the movement. Therefore, the collective action of Chinese women cannot be characterized as a women's movement but rather should be seen as women being moved (fu nu bei yun dong); not women's liberation, but the attempt to liberate women in ways defined by the state. This perspective contends that Chinese women did not achieve liberation and gender equality through their own separate struggle, as did their counterparts in the West, but rather that their liberation and legal equality came with the founding of the PRC. Thus it was "bestowed from above" or "given" (en ci), and it was premature (chao qian). It is further argued that this process explains the low self-consciousness of Chinese women about themselves as women (Li, 1994, 1989, 1988).

The second perspective is rooted in the CCP's perceptions of women's liberation. It is based on the premise that there

is only one correct path for women's liberation and that is to gain liberation in concert with the working class through socialist revolution led by the Communist Party. This perspective often depicts the history of the women's movement as an aspect of Party history, marked by important events in the Party's history or history of the country. Statements such as "Founding of the CCP brought hope of dawn to the women's movement" (Ren, 1989:75), "Founding of the CCP started the new epoch of the Chinese women's movement" (Lu and Zhen, 1990), "Founding of the new China symbolized that Chinese women have forever ended the history of oppression and subordination, and entered the new stage of being the master of their own affairs" (Ren, 1989: 288), and "Without the Chinese Communist Party, there would be no liberation of Chinese women" (Kang, 1981:670) are arguments repeatedly made by people holding this perspective.

I want to challenge two problematic tendencies that both perspectives display. First, they both use a static model to "measure" the Chinese women's movement rather than grounding their analyses in the actual history of the women's movement in the Chinese context. In the case of the first perspective, Chinese women are disqualified from having their own movement because they allied with other political forces and have two goals instead of one, and because their request for liberation was supported by a revolutionary regime. This perspective makes it hard to see the sequence of events and

the process of the women's movement in China, particularly the connection between the high points of the women's movement in pre- and post- revolutionary periods.

In the case of the second perspective, its general statements obscure the diversified forms of the women's movement and the specific course the women's movement took in China. They turn historically specific phenomena into dogma, and further make such dogma the only prism through which the women's movement can be viewed. The history of the women's movement was blurred when it was equated with Party history. To emphasize 1949 as a firm demarcation line between "old" and "new" China and thus the beginning of a "new" stage of the women's movement makes it difficult to see the dynamic process of continued interaction between the "old" and "new." It also makes it difficult to critique the remaining gender inequality in post-revolutionary China.

The second problem with the two perspectives is that women are not treated as the subject of their movement. The first perspective, with its notion of the "given" liberation of Chinese women, gives all of the credit to the CCP for the advances women made, while the second perspective obscures women's choice and active interaction with the larger revolutionary causes. This type of argument encourages women to leave their liberation to the Party/state and thus has a disabling effect on the women's movement.

In my opinion, one characteristic of the Chinese women's movement has been its connection with the national movement. This does not disqualify Chinese women from having their own movement, because

whether women organize on their own or as members of a large group is not really what determines whether their activism is likely to endure. The more important issue is whether women's activism responds to their own concerns or to those of external actors, such as political parties and the state (Busu, 1995:10).

I would use Skocpol's (1981:2) phrase to argue that the Chinese women "have chosen" this path of the past, in that they decided that women's liberation could not be separated from the liberation of the country. Therefore, they decided to define two tasks, rather than one, for their movement. This decision became the strategic position taken by the majority of participants of the women's movement in contemporary China, and it was as much internal to the women's movement as external.

The impact of the CCP on the women's movement is most evident in its attention to the miserable condition of working women and its work with rural women in its base areas. But the CCP was not the only group that turned its eyes to the working poor, and the CCP's impact on the women's movement at the national level did not become significant until the 1940s during its second alliance with the Guomindang. The CCP gained legitimacy through its leading role in the anti-Japanese resistance. It further won the sympathy of those who shared its goal of building an independent country with

prosperity and equality. It was within this context that the CCP cast a strong influence on women who were responding to its patriotic messages, and they built their movement in that context. The CCP also received the support of rural women at the grassroots in its base areas. These women were organized via various women's federations under the CCP. This alliance between the CCP and women who were sympathetic to it was the base for the coalition of 1949, in the form of the ACWF.

I argue that the women's movement reached a high tide in the 1950s. Some Chinese scholars (Liu, 1993, quoted in Zhang and Xu, 1995) contend that the top-down approach to women's issues is perfectly compatible with a thriving women's movement because women assumed leadership, women's interests were represented, and women were its subject. Women's interests and will were represented through the ACWF, which had the position and power to pass women's views from the bottom to the top. The breadth and depth of women's participation (at the top and grassroots level), the progress made in a short period of time, and women's positive assessment of the period are too salient to be dismissed. What that period meant to women can only be determined by the generation of Chinese women who went through it at the time. Their general feeling of "being liberated" has to be acknowledged by the generation of women who live and situate themselves in the 1990s, no matter how wanting that movement seems to be by today's standard.

Furthermore, although many of the new policies in that period started with the founding of the new state,⁷ the women's movement in the 1950s was more the climax of the women's movement associated with what the CCP termed the "new democratic revolution" than the beginning stage of the women's movement in socialist revolution. The movement aimed to achieve the goals set during the 1940s, and it was actualized by women from that period. The 1950s was a time for the CCP, when it finally assumed state power, to show how its vision could work for women. This vision was inspirational and was actively promoted -- with a strong push from women -- by CCP-affiliated and non-CCP members alike. This was why the CCP's theoretical framework was widely accepted by women and became the ideology that sustained the women's movement at the time.

The year 1957 was an important turning point for the women's movement in post-revolutionary China, but it has not received adequate attention from scholars. As a matter of fact, after China announced its entrance to socialism, it failed to define new goals for the women's movement. The biggest setback for the women's movement was the official denial of women's problems and the need for continued political struggles for equality and liberation. Thus, the

⁷ The founding of the PRC indicated a new stage of the women's movement in terms of the context under which it was carried out: a state that officially supported women's liberation and its programs on women were based on the CCP's theory and practice on women's issues and were part of the state's general plan for economic development and social transformation.

CCP and the state retreated from earlier commitments to women's issues. The ACWF, leader of the women's movement in the pre-1957 period, dropped its banner of gender equality. The women's movement was actually coopted by the CCP in 1957.

Using Skocpol's (1981:2) phrase again, women by then had actually "stumbled into" the zigzag path that took them from that point on. They would adhere to the same goals raised before. They still had strength: acknowledging the importance of women's contribution to society and encouraging women to participate in production and public affairs, promoting the ideas of gender equality and increasing opportunities for women, and so on, but the limitation of this approach also emerged more clearly in the new context. The claimed arrival of socialism (or socialism as it was practiced), which was credited for bringing progress to women, also hindered a sober analysis of women's position in socialist China and new approaches to women's issues.

When the women's movement reemerged in the 1980s, it was based on the realization that equality on paper did not mean equality in reality. This awareness was based on a critique of CCP's socialist legacy, especially the critique of the ambiguity toward continued subordination of women under socialism, the idea that women's liberation would be taken care of by the state. Yet at the same time, the new women's movement was a continuation of the women's movement which emerged in China at the turn of the century. Women draw

strength from their anti-feudal, anti-imperialist, and socialist past. They continue to carry out unfinished tasks on political and economic fronts left from previous struggles, adding to the agenda of their movement the goals of cultural, psychological, and individual liberation that are not adequately addressed in China's socialist revolution, and facing bravely the challenges of China's transition to a market economy. At this point, the social base of the women's movement has also changed. Intellectual/professional women are the backbone of the current women's movement, but women in general continue to be the subject of their movement as they had been all along.

Contending Relations

A central issue for the women's movement in the post-1949 period is the relationship between women and the state, best illustrated in the relations between the state, the ACWF (the medium in between women and the state), and women. Chinese women have to learn to make use of the state's ideological commitment to women's liberation to rally all the support they can get from the state while pushing for more space for the development of women's activism from below. This poses the challenge of combining top-down and bottom-up approaches to the empowerment of women in China.

There are other complicated social relations that confront the women's movement: (1) class vs gender, (2)

women's liberation vs female-male equality, (3) women's movement vs woman work, (4) individual liberation vs collective liberation, (5) women's strategic gender interests vs practical gender interests, and (6) western feminist movement vs women's liberation Chinese style. These social relations are sources of tension, specific challenges for the Chinese women's movement.

First, there is the tension in the contradictions between class interests and gender interests. In what was termed the "new democratic revolution" that aimed to destroy imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, the two interests were perceived as the same or compatible, and there was not much conflict in goals and tasks. When China claimed to have entered socialism and tried to skip the stage of bourgeois revolution to leap to communism, the two came into sharp conflict. To stress specific gender interests and female-male equality was seen as presenting a bourgeois feminist point of view, and such a view became more intolerable under socialism because the bourgeois class and its ideology was seen as the enemy of socialist revolution.⁸ This study showed that increased emphasis on class struggle had a direct negative impact on gender struggle. It resulted in decreased attention to issues pertaining to women. This was also accompanied by

⁸ During the "new democratic revolution," the national bourgeois class was regarded by the CCP as the ally of the working class, and at a different point in history, the CCP allied with bourgeois feminist groups as shown in the chapter on the pre-1949 years.

growing intolerance to any group interests other than class interests and a reduction in the social space that the women's movement needed to develop. The emergence of the women's movement in the 1980s was a direct result of the shift from class struggle to economic development.

Second, there were contradictions around the issue of women's liberation vs male-female equality (nan nu ping deng). Both were defined by the ACWF as goals of the women's movement and the federation in 1949 and both were dropped from the ACWF Constitution in 1957. Although the goal of women's complete liberation was reinstated in the ACWF's rhetoric with the launching of the Great Leap Forward, equality as a constitutional goal for ACWF did not return until 1988. This was because women's liberation was perceived as women's emancipation from an oppressive political, economic, and social system. Thus, it was a class issue and could be discussed within that institutional context. Gender equality was interpreted as equality between individual women and men, as bourgeois feminists advocated, and thus was unfit for public discussion under socialism.⁹ It was in essence an issue derived from the contradiction between class and gender

⁹ Although like women's complete liberation, there was also wording distinguishing between legal equality (fa lu shang de pingdeng) and equality in actuality (shi shi shang de pingdeng) as a way to explain the obvious existence of gender inequality, under a general anti-bourgeoisie atmosphere that was hostile to "bourgeois humanism" and bourgeois view of "freedom, equality and fraternity." The word equality was tainted, so it was no longer used as a banner for social action and justice.

and thus a political issue rather than a simple choice of words. The political implications and history of this term have not received due attention in the Chinese scholarly discussion in the reform era, that is whether male-female equality should be taken as a goal of women's movement.

Third, tension came from the issue of the women's movement vs woman-work. In the CCP's political terminology, the two expressions had been interchangeable because the women's movement was regarded as a vehicle toward women's liberation which was part of CCP's revolutionary agenda, thus it became the center of CCP's work among women. When the goal of the movement was considered basically achieved under socialism, after the Leap woman work became the catch word and the term women's movement was phased out. Under these circumstances, to change "women's movement" to "woman-work" meant changing women's position from the subject of the movement into the object of the Party's work. The very essence of the women's movement, the collective political struggle for women's rights and equality with men, was also lost in the expression, "woman-work." On the other hand, woman-work provided legitimacy for continued attention to women's issues at a time when they were no longer among the top priorities of the state and when the existence of separate women's organizations was challenged. In the reform era, the term women's movement has regained ground. Women's movement and woman-work are now discussed as separate subjects, and

woman-work is regarded as part of the women's movement.¹⁰ In 1993, the journal funu gongzuo (Woman work) changed its name to Zhongguo fuyun (Chinese Women's Movement).

At the same time, there is also an effort to reframe woman-work, to broaden its scope and redefine its history and content. "Management of Woman-Work" is being taught as a course at Fulian's cadre schools for women. There have been several books published on this topic. One published in 1990¹¹ defined woman work as a branch of social work, tracing the history of non-professional, non-systematic woman work¹² in China back to the effort by the Reformists at the turn of the century to "release bounded feet" and "establish women's education." It included the American group NOW as an organization that has specialized in woman work and the "UN Decade for Women" as an example of woman work. It also tried to make the study of woman work a branch of women's studies by way of making "scientific abstraction on modern woman work by adopting modern management science and behavior science" (Ding, Qiu, Liu and Luo, 1990:4). It will be interesting to

¹⁰ See Funu gongzuo, there are separate columns, also see Funu Gongzuo's statement explaining why they want to change the name of the journal (FNGZ, 1992).

¹¹ Funu Gongzuo guanli xin bian (A New Book of Woman Work Management) by Ding, Juan, Qiu Congqin, Liu Miaoruo and Luo Zhaohong (eds). Beijing: Hongqi Press, 1990.

¹² As in contrast to woman work under the leadership of the CCP which was done by full-time cadres and a system of organizations such as Fulian.

watch how the discourse on woman work develops in the future.

Fourth, there was the issue of individual liberation vs collective liberation. The goal of women's liberation in China was collectively defined. It was institutionally rooted in the May Fourth Movement in 1919 when the women's movement was radicalized by the aggression of foreign powers and linked closely to the cause of national independence and liberation. In post-revolutionary China, during the campaign to implement the Marriage Law in the early 1950s, young women were encouraged to take a stand against the patriarchal family and the old marriage system and to pursue individual happiness. After that, the Party's propaganda focused on subordinating individual interests to the larger interests of community, class, society, and state. The indoctrination of communist ideology discouraged individualistic pursuits. The mounting emphasis on class struggle made this notion even less desirable, as shown in the incident in which Zhongguo funu was attacked in 1963 for catering to women's individual needs and problems in life.

After the Cultural Revolution, the renewed emphasis on fashion and home making was regarded by some western feminists as a "feminine mystique." In contrast, some Chinese scholars saw this focus as part of Chinese women's awakening consciousness of themselves as women for the very reason that individual pursuit and choices were denied during the CR and the slogan "men and women are the same" was confined to the

male standard. In the reform era, women's organizations promote individual actualization and services such as counseling that meet individual women's varied needs (as opposed to only those needs that fulfill women's designated social and the family roles as defined by the state). This approach expands the dimensions of women's liberation but it also poses new challenges.¹³ This is also an indication of the acknowledgement of distinctions between the "public" and "private" spheres. During the Mao era of "politics in command," the tendency was for the state to penetrate the private sphere and obscure the two domains.

Fifth, tension derives from the issue of women's strategic gender interests vs their practical gender

¹³ The "Feminine mystique" is a real issue in China. It is especially apparent in today's women's newspapers and magazines. This issue has not caught the attention of Chinese scholars, but there is criticism of ruan xing hua -- the "softening" -- of women's journals. This refers to the concern that some women's journals do not cover important political, economic and social issues pertaining to women's lives, but focus on "soft" things such as domestic trivia, personal feelings and anecdotes of celebrities. They are criticized for neglecting the social function of women's journals as organs to lead women's fight for equality and justice, to provide inspiration and direction and to promote women's progress, development and liberation (Guan, 1992). It is feared that the "excessive softness and gentleness" of women's journals in content and style could "have the possible effect of corroding the souls of Chinese women who still need to be further liberated from all restraints, causing the degeneration of the wings of women that are just spreading and ready for flight" (Zhang, Bohai, 1992). This concern about the proper role of the women's journals in today's China and where they will lead women has already been voiced by some ACWF leaders and officials from the News and Publishing Bureau (Guan, 1992, Zhang, Bohai, 1992).

interests. These two kinds of interests were connected in the first period but seemed in contradiction in the second period and were strangely separated. After China declared the achievement of women's liberation, discussion of striving for women's strategic gender interests understandably stopped. It was brought back by the Great Leap because women's participation in social production and the socialization of domestic labor were discussed in the framework of changing the organization of production and life, uprooting the remaining patriarchal family system and leaping to the ideal communist society. But after the failure of the Leap, the experiment was criticized for overworking women and ruining their reproductive health -- that is, for hurting women's practical gender interests. No one talked about the implications of the experiment of the Leap for changing the gender division of labor and for attacking family patriarchy, an effort which stopped after the 1950 marriage reform. In the immediate years after the Leap, the focus was on serving women's practical gender interests. Yet even this discussion could not go on as the storm of class struggle swept through the country. In the reform era, the women's movement is addressing both women's strategic and practical gender interests. Official discussion is conducted in terms of what accounts for women's "specific interests" (as opposed to the over-all interests of the whole people). At the theoretical and philosophical level, this discussion concerns what is

women's nature, how to understand sexual difference and their social implications. At the practical level, it concerns whether to push for "gender-blind" or gender-responsive policies.¹⁴ What are women's interests is a crucial issue the women's movement needs to tackle and the debate will go deeper.

Finally, there was the issue of western feminism vs women's liberation Chinese style. How to view western feminism has always been an issue in the CCP led women's movement. Western feminist ideas had a great impact on some founders of the CCP and their perception of women's issues. But these ideas were later disgraced not only as unfeasible and inappropriate for the women's movement in China, but also as an incorrect political stand for a person to take. People also had very little knowledge about the second wave of the women's movement in the United States, due to China's isolation from the world.

With the development of women's studies in the reform era, feminism is no longer a taboo area for scholars, but suspicion and lack of understanding and enthusiasm about feminism still characterizes the attitudes of the majority of women scholars and professionals, both in and outside Fulian. Many Chinese scholars emphasize the "national character" of

¹⁴ This discussion is enlightened by Alison M. Jaggar's presentation "Chinese women and feminist thought: concluding observations" at the "International Symposium: Chinese women and Feminist Thought" in Beijing, June, 1995.

women's studies in China and draw a line between it and western feminism.¹⁵ The ACWF leaders also focused on the "women's movement with Chinese characteristics" (Huang, 1993b). Chinese women's growing contact with the outside world, however, is changing this situation. As mentioned above, now there are organizations such as the East Meet West Group that aim to bridge feminist studies at home and abroad. Chinese scholars' direct exchanges with the outside world on feminist ideas and practice have deepened, and some Fulian scholars have started to call the CCP's theoretical framework "mainland feminism" or "Feminism within a Marxist framework."¹⁶

In addition, Chinese scholars have to come to terms with nationalism. The development of gender identity in China has been intertwined with the development of national identity as the result of the legacy of the women's movement in the past. Today, there is still strong nationalism among Chinese feminist scholars. This allegiance also contributes to their ambivalent feeling toward feminism. This ambiguity can only

¹⁵ For example, Chinese scholars use different translations for the term feminism to stress the different context and content of such ideas as they are used in China and in the West. See Li, 1991 and Tan, 1994. Also see Li, 1991 and Li and Zhang, 1994 on why few Chinese women would refer to themselves as feminists. For a discussion of this phenomenon, also see Zhang with Xu, 1995, Wang, 1994.

¹⁶ Ding, Juan. "Chinese Feminist Thought: The Twentieth Century," paper presentation at the "International Symposium: Chinese Women and Feminist Thought." June 21-24, 1995, Beijing.

be resolved with continued development of gender identity among Chinese women. How to view western feminism and the CCP's theoretical framework on women and the other five issues will continue to be focal points of attention and tension for the Chinese women's movement in the future.

The CCP's Legacy For the Women's Movement

The specific challenges the women's movement face are considerably influenced by the fact that the movement is operating in a socialist state led by the CCP.

The women's movement in contemporary China shares some commonality with women's movements in former socialist countries. The change in women's position was closely connected with the general social transformation of the country.¹⁷ Official theory connects women's oppression to private property and the rise of classes. There is official commitment to women's liberation and an effort to bring legal

¹⁷Funk (1993) has suggested that there are two models for the women's movements. One is characterized by a change in the totality through the transformation of the particular -- as has taken place in the second wave of the U.S women's movement where the movements of women, blacks, and gays transformed society. In contrast, in Eastern and Central Europe and the former USSR, it was the transformation of the totality that created the possibility for a transformation of the particular. For Chinese women, in the reform era the transformation of the particular also greatly affects the totality. The current wave of the women's movement, with women's points of view and voices much stronger than ever before in modern Chinese history, casts its own influence on people's values and behaviors and on the reorganization of China.

equality to women (even though the state retreated from its policy on women after consolidating its power). And the expansion of women's economic roles co-exists with a persisting gender division of labor in employment and conservative ideology on the family. Like their counterparts in other (former) socialist countries, Chinese women are now facing the challenges associated with the switch to a market economy, while also having to deal with the legacy of socialist rule in their lives and the "neofeminist" tasks unfinished by the socialist revolution.¹⁸ Above all, there is the common problem of the absence of genuine political democracy.

Nevertheless, the Chinese women's movement has characteristics of its own that are reflections of the CCP's approach to women. First, because of the influence of the May Fourth Feminist and nationalist discourses, women's issues were on the CCP's agenda for more reasons than just socialist ideological commitment to women's liberation, and there has been a history of complicated relations between the CCP and women's organizations. Second, the CCP distinguished its approach from those of other socialist countries with its theory and practice in woman work and the establishment of

¹⁸A Yugoslav feminist has used the term "neofeminist" to describe the struggle for feminist goals in a society in which many of the political and economic issues relevant to women have been legally addressed by state socialism but where many of the social, sexual, and psychological dimensions of women's emancipation remain essentially unexplored within formal channels (Ferguson, 1991).

"mass" women's organizations such as the ACWF. A comprehensive network and strength at the grassroots level are especial advantages of such organizations. A leader of a non-official Chinese women's organization made a comparison between the proliferation of women's organizations in China during the reform era and the shrinking of women's organizations in the former Soviet Union after it disintegrated, and argued that the difference was that in China, women's organizations have achieved scale or momentum (xing cheng le qi huo) and formed a system. She said Chinese women should not take such a system lightly.¹⁹ Besides, the ACWF was instrumental in helping women to step out of the household in the early 1950s and it is still the main organization addressing rural women's problems. Given the fact that China was a peasant society and had a deeply rooted patriarchal tradition, the ACWF's ability to reach rural women was important and accounts for positive change in their lives. As shown by this study, the CCP's woman work and mass organization tradition have left a complicated legacy for the women's movement in China.

Can a women's movement emerge under state socialism such as in China? I will say yes, as shown in the emergence of the women's movement in China in the 1980s. Many Chinese scholars agree that the current women's movement is very much conditioned by state policy on women developed in the 1950s.

¹⁹ From an interview in 1992.

While Chinese women's full emancipation cannot be achieved from above, governmental ideology created expectations for gender equality that became a source of consciousness raising for women and motivated them to pressure the government to deliver what was promised. The generation of middle-aged educated women who were born or grew up in post-1949 China are the products of the CCP. They have internalized their rights to work and equality and are idealistic, independent, and full of self-confidence about themselves as women. They are the main force of the current movement. They are successful in making use of the existing state structure and resources to advance their causes.

Given space constraints, it is hard to provide an adequate assessment of the achievements and limitations of the CCP's approach to women in the past four decades. In general, women have advanced in the following areas: legislation providing equality for women; better access to education and health care; employment opportunities coupled with benefits; increased participation in social labor and public affairs; and social acceptance of the ideology of gender equality and improvement in women's general living conditions and life chances. This progress is not the sole result of the CCP's policy on women, but part of the socialist transformation of basic institutions in China. Urban women have benefitted much more than rural women. Women in more economically-developed areas on the east coast have fared much better than women in

poorer areas in the west and remote border provinces where the majority of ethnic minority women live.

On the other hand, there have been limitations and failures. Chinese women continue to face problems encountered by their counterparts in other parts of the world: deeply rooted patriarchal relations; discrimination in employment and work; the double burden of working in and outside the home; fewer opportunities than men in higher education and professional and managerial positions; lack of power and representation in high decision-making bodies in the government and the Party; and incidents of serious violations of women's rights and interests. There is also the rural/urban disparity among women in terms of their condition and position, the powerful grip of traditional values, especially in the countryside; less progress in gender relations within the family than in the public sphere, and a general lack of institutional support for women's cultural and psychological empowerment and individual actualization. Although these problems are not uniquely Chinese, they are shaped by and are often associated with the same socialist transformation process that brought improvement for women in China.

For example: the collectivization of agriculture into communes and the restriction of residential registration in cities tied peasants to the land, restricted rural women's individual mobility to cities, and perpetuated patrilocal

marriages; the CCP's major concern for stabilizing the family restricted it from taking stronger measures to break the patrilineal heritage and patrilocal patterns of living arrangement after marriage which were prevalent in rural areas; some official practices and propaganda intended to promote good family relations perpetuated traditional views of marriage and the family that are oppressive to women;²⁰ and the dominant theoretical framework of the CCP that regards women's subordination as the result of class oppression greatly narrows the meaning of women's liberation.²¹

In sum, Chinese women have made great progress since 1949. Their condition -- the material state women find themselves in -- has improved tremendously compared to their condition in pre-1949 China. Yet they have not gained full equality in their position -- women's social and economic standing relative to men in society and in the family has not kept pace with their condition. To emphasize the improvement of women's condition by downplaying the existing gender gap as the CCP has done is to paint an incomplete picture. To focus on the failure of socialism to liberate Chinese women as if women are faring worse under communist rule than before is

²⁰ See ZGFNB, September 1, 1986 to March 20, 1987, "Socialist Spiritual Civilization or Feudal Ignorance," on the experiences of six "model" women)

²¹ For a range of assessment and criticism of the CCP legacy on the women's movement by western scholars, see Davin, 1976, Croll, 1978, Johnson, 1983, Stacey, 1983, Wolf, 1983, Andors, 1983 and Marilyn Young, 1989.

also inaccurate. Rather, the impact of the CCP's approach to women's issues is a mixed legacy. It is both positive and negative, emancipation and continued subordination of women. The complications of the CCP model in terms of theory, practice, and organization need to be fully recognized in historical context.

The Future of the ACWF and Development of
a "Civil Society"

A discussion about the future of the ACWF cannot be made without making reference to the future political prospect of China. The on-going debate on the development of "civil society" in China is especially relevant.

This debate is relevant because, first, the fate of the ACWF is not determined by the CCP's policy on women alone. As shown in this study, the ups and downs that the ACWF experienced resembled those that were experienced by the Trade Unions and the Communist Youth League. Their future is considerably influenced by societal change in general. Any fundamental change of the ACWF, in whatever direction, will take place within the changing social structure in China. Second, the women's movement needs social space. The biggest limitation the ACWF faces is a lack of autonomy under the tight control of a one-party state. The resolution of women's problems requires the socialization of political power and democratization. The discussion on "civil society," with its

attempt to define a type of relationship between state and society, a realm of autonomous social power and space, especially with its focus on political democratization along liberal lines and on intermediate associations between the state and society, ²² is very relevant to the ACWF's present situation and future.

In the debate, the concept "civil society" is used by scholars to refer to the societal changes that are taking place in China during the current reform era as the result of economic liberalization and limited political liberalization. The debate is over whether "civil society" is emerging in China, in what way,²³ and whether the concept is interpreted and used correctly in the discussion (Chamberlain, 1993). Some use the concept of "societal corporatism" as an alternative to the more problematic notion of civil society (Chan, 1993).

I use the concept "civil society" in the same way as Gorden White (1993a:217-218):

Redistribution of control over economic resources, together with an intermittently more liberal social and political climate has created the basis of, and context for, new forms of socio-political participation and organization, to varying degrees independent of and/or in the opposition to the Party/state. To the extent that these actions and institutions are self-organized on a voluntary basis and enjoy a degree of independence from

²² For a summary of the way "civil society" is used in analysis of China as well as in the broader comparative literature, See White, 1993b.

²³ For a summary of the debate, see Chan, 1993, and Chamberlain, 1993.

the Party/state, they merit the term "civil society." In any long-term or institutionalized sense, "civil society" of this kind could not exist in the context of the pervasive system of socio-political controls which characterized Chinese Marxist-Leninist state socialism in the pre-reform era.

White and other scholars indicate the emergence of elements of "civil society" in China, including changes of the "old" mass organizations (White, 1993a and 1993b) and the Trade Unions in particular (Chan, 1993). My study of the ACWF and the new women's movement supports their observation about the emergence of such elements. These are reflected in the changing role of the ACWF, the development of non-governmental women's organizations, the retreat of the state from the private sphere, and the expansion in influence of the ACWF and other women's organizations. All of these factors are the direct result of the space created by the economic reform. I will further hypothesize that so long as the economic reform continues, the current trend will continue and, moreover, that the ACWF has a role to play in China's movement to "civil society."

New Form of Socio-political Participation

As documented by this study, the new form of women's independent socio-political participation was first reflected in the changing role of the ACWF. By 1988, the ACWF clearly defined itself as a "social mass group" with the basic function of representing women and safeguarding their interests. It has expanded its service from rural women and

urban housewives to all women. It pushed for women's committees in rural industrial enterprises, in Party and governmental organizations, and in units of science and technology, and education and health, where intellectual and professional women are concentrated. It also promoted occupational- and research-based women's associations. As a result, it has greatly expanded the horizontal connections within its organizational structure and reaches a greater number of women than it did during pre-CR years. It has made a great effort to represent women, and made an attempt to redefine its relation with the Party and the government in its plan for Fulian reform. It has also sought a larger role in society in general.

The changing role of the ACWF resulted from a changing environment. There was pressure to change from above. After the CR, CCP leaders wanted the ACWF to help solve growing social problems. After 1989, the state increased its attention and support for the ACWF to pre-empt the rise of independent organizations that the state could not control. The state sponsored political and administrative reform, pushing the ACWF to be economically independent and make adjustments in personnel.

There was also pressure to change from within, as a result of the recruitment of new cadres and their growing consciousness about women's issues, increased autonomy of local Fulian branches as the result of the decentralization

process, and the ACWF's changing internal operations including multi-candidacies, increasing localized and autonomous cadre selection, and a move toward independent management of the organization.

The pressure also came from below. The establishment of non-governmental women's organizations and the emergence of a women's movement was another significant sign of emerging elements of "civil society." The newly emerging occupational- and research-based women's organizations established lateral links among different groups of women, breaking the vertical connection that characterized the association in pre-reform China. The monopoly of Fulian as the only national women's organization in the country was also broken. NGOs became new allies of the ACWF in joint projects for women, and also in a way the ACWF's competitors, pressuring the federation to respond to women's demands. In the realm of autonomous association, women actually have gone further than other social groups in China, because many of the newly established women's organizations, especially non-official research- and project- based women's organizations, can be classified as "purely popular" social organizations promoting the interests of women.²⁴

²⁴ Gordon White divided social organizations into three types: (1) official: with special relationship with the Party -- cadres are selected by the Party and financially supported by the Party; (2) semi-official, with main leaders holding concurrent posts in their sponsoring organization and its finances come either from the state or its own; (3), the "purely popular", with no overlapping of personnel with

Retreat of the State from Private Sphere

The ACWF not only strengthened its representative function in the reform era, it also expanded its influence in women's affairs with the retreat of state from the private sphere.

Many women's issues are located within the family and household. State intervention in people's personal lives has been reduced in the reform era. The CCP's official publications, for example, the Renmin ri bao and Qiushi (previously Red Flag) included few discussions on issues such as marriage and the family, life styles, women's image, and the pursuit of life goals. Official attention to women's issues in general has also been reduced. Few editorials on women appear in the Renmin ri bao,²⁵ and the Qiushi sometimes does not seem to have a good grip on women's issues. One example mentioned above was its editorial about what accounted for women's special interests, which it defined as completely physiological.²⁶ Another example, a key article memorializing Soong Chingling, honorary Chairwoman of the ACWF, widow of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Vice President of the PRC, failed to mention her contribution as a leader of the women's movement. In both cases, the editorials failed to provide the "ideological

sponsoring state organization and depending on its own finances (White, 1993b).

²⁵ See List 3, for review of RMRB editorials on women.

²⁶ See the description of the incident in Chapter IX.

guidance" they were supposed to because the ACWF's discussion of these issues showed a better understanding of the matter. The reality is that women's issues are increasingly discussed and pushed by the ACWF. On many occasions, the ACWF as a mass organization can play a role that a government agency cannot. For example, when some people were trying to bring beauty contests to China, the ACWF issued a statement declaring that no Fulian branches should be involved in this type of activity.²⁷ That virtually stopped the activity from spreading. It would be inappropriate for the state to issue orders to forbid such activities, even if it wanted to.

The ACWF's increased resources made the expansion of its role possible. With over 40 women's newspapers and magazines, a publishing house, and cadre training and vocational schools in most provinces and municipalities, the ACWF has become the main shaper of the public discourse on women. The ACWF's

²⁷ ACWF Secretary Guan Tao stated the ACWF's attitude toward beauty contests, which she terms as "four nos" -- meaning that the ACWF did not want to play any role in "approving, advocating, organizing or participating" in activities related to beauty contest. She said the ACWF had already refused a dozen such invitations because such activities are misleading to young women. They emphasize a young woman's appearance rather than internal accomplishments in self-cultivation, they make a young woman rich and famous overnight, which is detrimental not only to those who participated but also to those who are studying hard. She also criticized the commercialism and vulgarism involved in such activities which take women as objects. She said such activities contradict ACWF's principles which are to mobilize women to participate in economic construction and social development, represent and protect their rights and promote sexual equality. See "the ACWF disagrees with beauty contests." ZGFNB, July 5, 1993:1.

responsibility to coordinate resources from all government agencies is another example of ACWF's increased ability to influence the government.²⁸ Most recently, a 16-episode TV series portraying the lives of urban intellectual women started shooting in China in October 1995. One of the three leading characters is a Fulian cadre working in the city's district Fulian on safeguarding women's rights and interests.²⁹ It will be interesting to see how this character is portrayed. In the past, the typical image of Fulian cadres was rural women or urban housewives who were kept busy by all the trivial matters with which women had to deal. This TV series, to some degree, shows the changing image of Fulian cadres and the increased importance of their social role as perceived by the producers of the play.

Nevertheless, it is equally important to note that this increased influence does not mean a monopoly by the national Fulian. Take women's newspapers and magazines for example. The National Fulian cannot exert direct administrative control over the management of these journals or exercise censorship over their contents as the ACWF leaders did in Zhongguo Funu.

²⁸ The office of the Working Committee on Work among Women and Children under the State Council is located in the ACWF headquarters. The committee mainly meets to make decisions on things to be done. Its agenda and daily work is managed by the ACWF.

²⁹ The other two leading characters are a senior reporter of a newspaper and the concertmaster of a provincial singing and dancing troop. The series is entitled "love keeps out wind and rain from you." See RMRB (overseas edition), October 13, 1995:7.

All the ACWF can do is provide some professional "guidance."³⁰ These publications very much reflect the views of their editors and staff. The commercialization of journals makes the printed media respond more to their readers than to their superiors, such as the federation. Views of ACWF leaders, professionals, scholars from inside and outside Fulian, and even foreign donor organizations all shape the public discourse on women, indicating increased social participation by women.

The Future Prospect of the ACWF

"The Trade Union is the first, the Youth League is the second, followed by little Fulian with no money or power. " This is a popular saying among Fulian cadres describing the hierarchical relations among the three mass organizations, especially in the pre-reform eras. The ACFTU had economic and political power due to its steady and large revenue and officially claimed leading status of the working class in Chinese society. The Youth League's power came from its connection to the CCP because it is regarded as the reserve

³⁰ The ACWF headquarter has an office that monitors these publications. It has conducted annual meetings of the editors of these newspapers and magazines since 1986, to reflect on the progress and problems of the women's publications in the proceeding year and to give some guidance and direction. It also organized a contest of the best cover pictures and best news report on women to fight against the flood of pin-ups on covers of women's magazines and the sensationalist tendency of some journals (including the perpetuation of women as sex objects), and to encourage more serious, in-depth coverage. See Zhang Bohai, 1993, ZGFY, 1993, 2:37.

army of the CCP and the CYL leaders were nurtured as the successors of CCP leaders. The ACWF had neither leverage.

This in general holds true in the reform era but the situation is also changing. It is agreed that the CYL's influence has decreased somewhat because of its close connections with the CCP and of young people's reduced interest in politics. The CYL has difficulties gaining popularity among young people, especially urban youth,³¹ while the power and importance of the Union and the ACWF have increased because of people's enhanced awareness of their special interests and their quest for such interests to be voiced. Both the ACFTU and ACWF are also playing an increasing role in promoting the interests of workers and women.

The ACWF, however, is still weaker and has fewer resources and receives less attention from the CCP than does the ACFTU. Beside organizational differences between the two, such as in membership composition and finance, the ACWF is in a more marginal position because following reasons. First, the ACWF was based on the women's organizations the CCP set up in its rural base areas during China's peasant revolution. The ACWF followed the CCP closely and had fewer conflicts with the CCP than did the ACFTU. In a way the CCP was the least at ease with the ACFTU because of its lack of experience with workers

³¹ See White, 1993 and Wang, Zhe and Sun, 1993. Such opinion was also voiced by some of the people I interviewed.

and the stronger desire of the ACFTU for independence. This required the CCP to pay more attention to the ACFTU and workers' affairs. Second, the organizational potential and the ability to affect production and thus political stability made workers a powerful social group that could not be ignored. They were an important force in the 1976 April 5 Tiananmen incident, which brought Deng Xiaoping back to power, and the 1989 pro-democracy movement. Women did not stand out as a powerful social group in these two important political events in China. Thus, women do not seem to be a threatening social force to the current regime.³² Third, in the reform era, the national goal was to economically "take off," thereby giving priority to economic issues rather than to social issues and focusing attention on groups based on economic interests rather than on gender interests. Since successful transformation of the ill-managed, large scale state-run enterprises is crucial for the success of the economic reform and social stability, the workers working in these enterprises, the base of the ACFTU, also receive more attention from the state.

There are also two factors, however, that work in favor of the ACWF. First, because of its perceived safeness to the regime, the ACWF is left with greater autonomy and

³² It is possible that China's experience in hosting the NGO Forum of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women may have caused the CCP to realize the militancy of the women's movement.

responsibility to deal with women's issues. Second, the official ideological commitment to women's advancement is still there and, after the 1995 UN World Conference on Women, women's issues in China has become in a way "internationalized." Although international documents, including the Beijing "Platform for Action," do not have binding power, they put pressure on the Chinese government to fulfill its promise to adhere to them. This will create added leverage for the ACWF and women.

The future of the ACWF is closely connected with political developments in China. It is hard to predict exactly what will happen. But from what I have observed, as long as the momentum of economic reform does not slow, the trend toward "civil society" will continue, and the ACWF has a role to play in the process. The factors that contributed to the changing role of the ACWF in the reform era as discussed above will continue to operate.

The Party/state, for the same reasons, will need the ACWF to perform its functions well. After the ACWF was allowed to expand its power and make appeals to women's interests in the past decade, it is even more difficult for the state to take drastic actions to dissolve the organization as happened during the Cultural Revolution. Although the ACWF failed in its push for separate legislation to protect Fulian, in the 1992 Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of

Women, there is one article under the "General Provisions" which states

The All-China Women's Federation and the Women's Federation at all levels shall represent and uphold rights of women of all nationalities and all walks of life, and strive for the protection of women's rights and interests (1992:3).

This regulation gives legal protection for ACWF's continued existence. Besides, it may very well be unthinkable to eliminate the "world's largest women's NGO."

From within the ACWF, the reform minded ACWF cadres will continue to be a major force for reform. The most aggressively pursued administrative reform in 1995 was that to establish a civil servant system to select people to staff Party and government organizations (including the three mass organizations) through civil examinations open to the public. This reform will at least encourage those who want to do woman work to enter Fulian and reduce the Party assignment of Fulian cadres and the Party's direct control over personnel.

The pressure for Fulian to run industrial and commercial enterprises will greatly affect its future. It will push Fulian to be more financially independent than it currently is. It will also be interesting to observe how much Fulian will develop this newly defined function to provide service in production. Some local Fulian have experimented with ideas such as establishing individual membership for its constituency. When the time is ripe, such experiments will

expand. The effort to strengthen the power of the ACWF in all ways will also continue.

The push from below will also remain strong. Deepening economic reform will heighten people's consciousness about diversified interests and result in growing demands for new channels to express them. The new laws pertaining to women will be a powerful tool for women to promote their causes. The institutional base of the women's movement laid down in the last decade will also be a plus. Unlike Chinese workers who have not been able to recognize the work of the ACFTU and make use of it to effect changes within the existing state corporatist structure (Chan, 1993), non-official women's organizations do exist, and despite the tension between these organizations and Fulian, there has been cooperation between Fulian and non-Fulian organizations and activists and this will continue.³³

The road of ACWF's reform will not be easy. But the federation is moving toward better articulation of women's interests and greater social and political participation than in the past, and it has a role to play in China's move in the direction of "civil society." Anita Chan (1993) commented

³³ As reported by Tana Barlow, "there appears to be a consensus among women's studies scholars, moreover, that strategically it makes most sense to colonize rather than to abandon Fulian" (1994:358). In my interviews in 1992, leaders of independent organizations also expressed the opinion that they did not think the ACWF would be replaced by independent women's organizations, rather they believed the two types of organizations would work more closely together if Fulian became a bona-fide NGO.

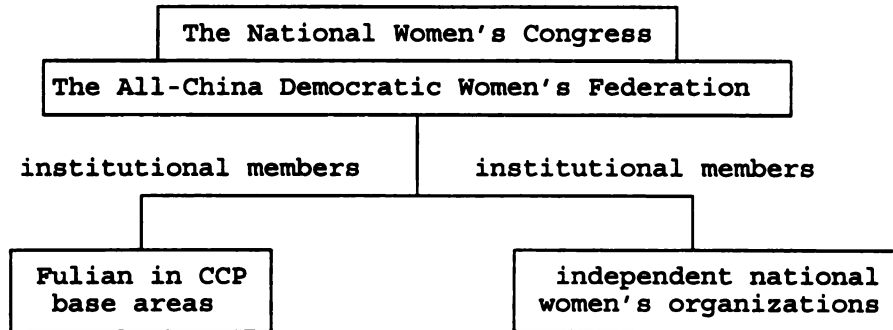
that the ACFTU should be able to see a glimmer of hope for its future, because in the wake of revolutions in post-socialist countries, the only once-communist institutions which has been able to survive the confiscation of bureaucratic properties and even obtain some kind of grassroots support are former official trade unions. In China's case, perhaps the ACWF should also be added as another institution that is likely to survive political changes, especially if such changes take the form of evolution of the state corporate structure, which many regard as a less risky and tortuous route toward the transition to democracy (Chan, 1993, White, 1993a). The changes in the position and structure of the ACWF and other women's organizations in the years to come will be interesting and important to watch.

APPENDIX A

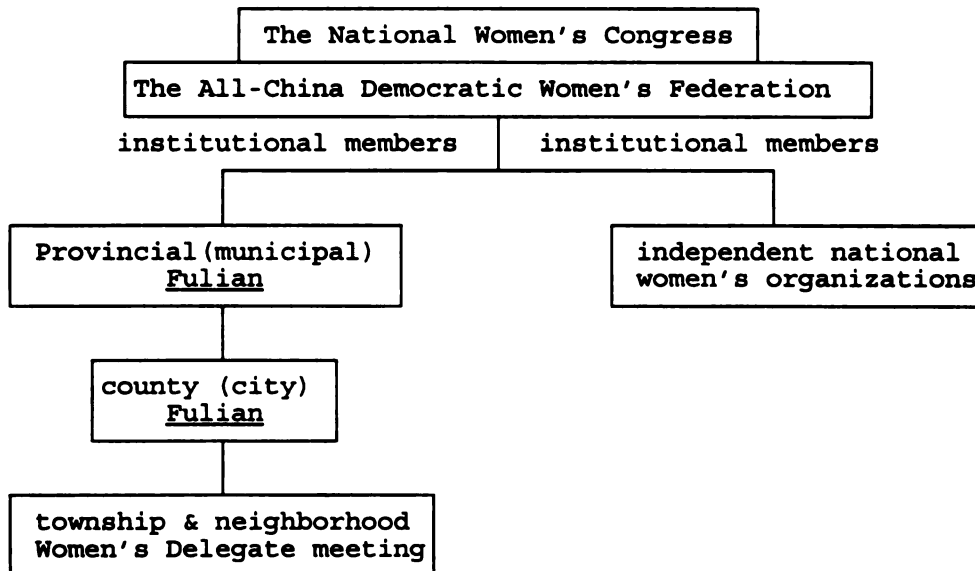
Appendix A:

ACWF's Changing Organizational Framework

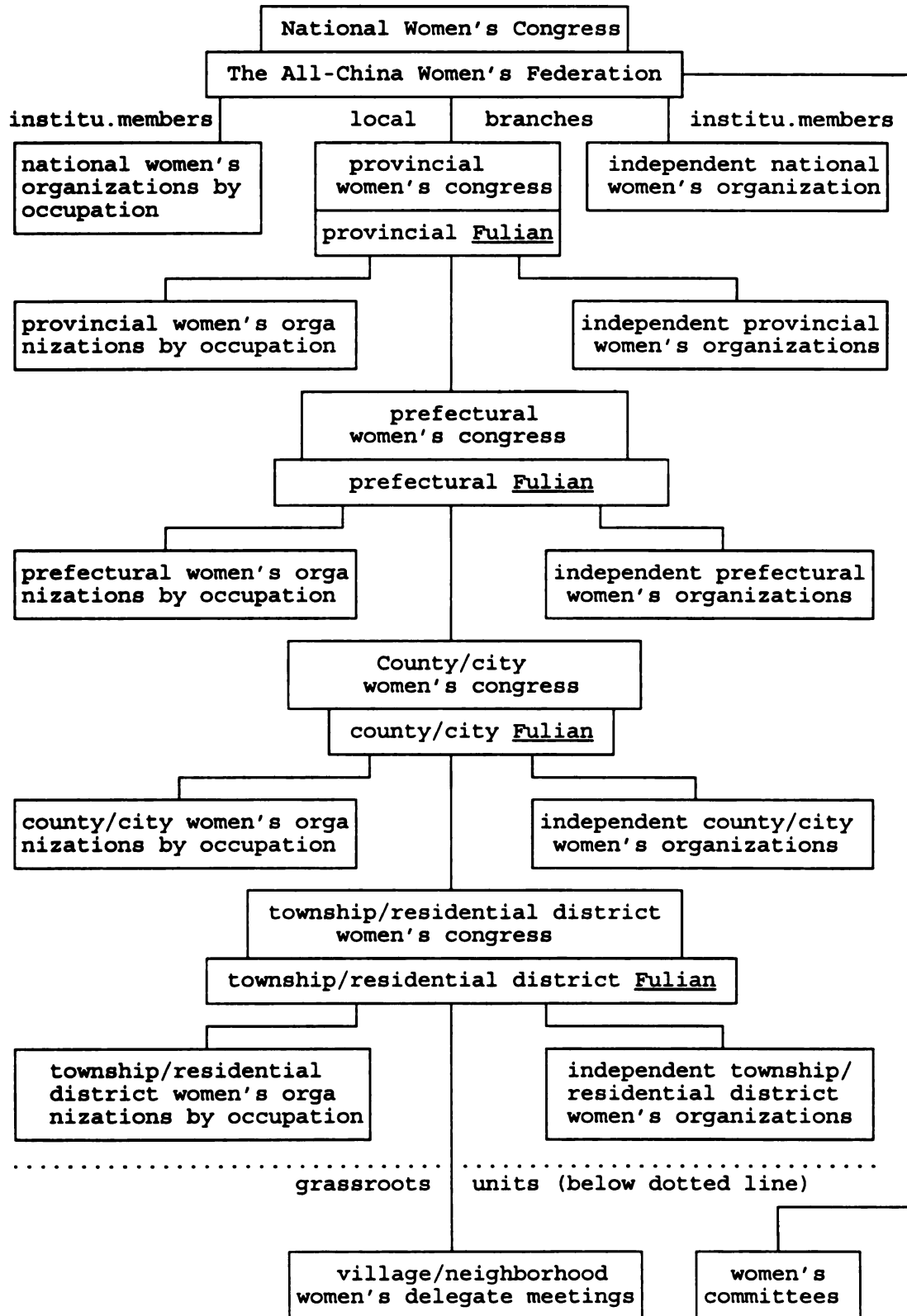
1. Pattern set up at the 1st ACDWF Congress (1949):



2. Pattern specified at the 2nd ACDWF Congress (1953):



4. Structure set up at the 7th ACWF Congress (1993):



APPENDIX B

Appendix B.

Major primary Data Sources*

1. Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xunji (selected documents of the Ccentral Committee of the CCP) (Danganguan, 1981).
2. Zhongguo Funu Yundong Wenxian Ziliao Huibian (Collection of Documents and Data on Chinese Women's Movement). Vol. I 1918-1949, Vol.II 1949-1983; cited as HUIBIAN.
3. Zhongguo funu yundong zhongyao wenxian (1941-1978) (Important Document of the Chinese Women's Movement) (ACWF, 1979).
4. Zhonghua funu lian he hui si shi nian (forty Years of the All-China Women's Federation:1949-1989) (Bangongting, 1991)
5. Fuyin baokan ziliao: funu zuzhi yu huodong (reprinted materials from the press: women's organizations and activities)(People's University, starting from 1981, cited as FNZZYHD.
6. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De lun funu jiefang (Mao Ze dong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De on Women's Liberation) (ACWF, 1988)
7. Cai Chang, Deng Yingchao, Kang Keking funu jiefang wenti wenxuan (Selected writing of Cai Chang, Deng Yingchao and Kang Keking on women's liberation) (ACWF, 1983),
8. Funu jiefang wenti jiben zhishi(Fundamental Knowledge on the Question of Women's Liberation). Luo Qiong. 1986.
9. Zhongguo funu (Women of China), official journal of ACWF,
10. Funu gongzuo (Woman-work, later changed to Zhongguo fuyun --Chinese Women's Movement)
11. Zhongguo funu bao (Chinese Women News), the official newspaper of ACWF.
12. Renmin ri bao (People's Daily), the official newspaper of the CCP.
13. Hongqi (red Flag), theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the CCP.

APPENDIX C

Appendix C

List of Interviews*

working departments of national Fulian

deputy director* 3 staff	Department of Propaganda
deputy Director 1 staff	Department of Organization
Director	Department of Urban and Rural Work
deputy director	Department of Women and Development
Deputy director	Department of Children's work
Director	Department of International Liaison,
Deputy Director	General Office of the ACWF
retired veteran ACWF cadre	once a secretary of the ACWF

Units directly under the National Fulian

deputy chief of the Administration Division 1 reporter	<u>Women of China</u> (English Monthly)
--	---

president & editor in Chief 1 reporter	<u>Zhongguo funu</u> (Women of China)
---	---------------------------------------

president & Editor in Chief 1 editor	<u>Zhongguo funu bao</u> (China Women's (News)
---	---

editor in Chief 1 stuff	<u>Funu qongzuo</u> (woman work)
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president	Chinese Women's Press
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vice president 2 staff	China College for women Administrators
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director deputy director	Women's Studies Institute of China
-----------------------------	---------------------------------------

4 researchers	Women's History Studies Division, Women's Studies Institute of China
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Fulian Branches

staff	Department of Women's Rights and Interests, Beijing Fulian
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lawyer	Office of letters and Visits, Beijing Fulian
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editor in Chief	<u>Funu vanjiu</u> (women's studies) of Beijing Fulian
director	Andingmen Residential Committee Fulian
director	Women's Delegate Meeting of Family Member Committee of Residential Compound of Rear Service Unit to the Air force
director	Women's Delegate Meeting of Bei Toutiao Neighborhood Committee
director 1 staff	Zhenlai county Fulian
director	Zhenlai Township Fulian
director	Momoge Township Fulian
director	Changan village of Zhenlai township Fulian
Party secretary head	Baxizhao village, Momoge Township
director	Lanlong Company Fulian, Men to gou District, Beijing

Institution member of ACWF
staff

	Women Workers' Department, All-China Federation of Trade Unions
staff	Beijing branch of YWCA
director	Women's Research Institute, China Academy of Management Science

Other social Organizations

	Singles' Club
staff	women's Hotline
deputy secretary-general	the Association of Self-employed Workers
staff	Coordinating Committee of Work on Women and Children, State Council
Staff	Office of Social Organizations, Beijing Civil Administrative Bureau
China representative program officer	Beijing branch, the Ford Foundation
Co-manager	ACCC/ACWF Canada/China Women in Development Project

Scholars outside Fulian

Associate Professor	Institute of Sociology and Anthropology, Peking University
Professor	Women's Studies Forum, Beijing Foreign Studies University
researcher	Institute of sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Associate editor in-Chief	Institute of sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences & Women's Research Institute, China Academy of Management Science
Associate professor	Department of Sociology, the People's University
director	Center for Women's Studies, Peking University
researcher	Institute of Sociology, chinese Academy of Social Sciences & Center for Social Work Education and Research, the Ministry of Civil Affairs
teacher	author on studies of women's ethics
researcher	Institute of sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Zhenlai county

deputy head	Zhenlai County
director	Momoge Township
manager	Zhenlai county transformer factory
manager	Jianping Township Chemical plant
manager	Zhenlai No.2 Department Store
teacher	Zhenlai Number 1 Kindergarten

* the names of accountants are omitted to protect their identity.

** An accountant is usually listed only for the position in the organization in which I had direct interest for this project.

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

RMRB editorials: 1949-1995*

- 1949
- 03-08-50. "Correctly Settle the Problem of the Marriage System."
- 1951
- 03-08-52. "Working among Family Members Should Be Given Attention in Anti-Corruption and anti-theft Campaign"
- 1953*
- 07-30-54. "Constitution that Guarantees Equality between Men and Women and Protects the Interests of Women and Children."
- 07-31-54. "Bring into Full Play the Function of Rural Women."
- 03-08-55. "Women of All China, Be Mobilized to Join the Gigantic Struggle for Socialist Construction.of the Motherland, Liberation of Taiwan, and Safeguard of Peace."
- 03-08-56. "Fully Promote the Positive Role of Women in Socialist Construction."
- 03-08-57. "More Fully Utilize Socialist Activism of Women."
- 09-09-57. "Mobilize the Whole Nation's Women to Build the Nation and Keep House through Diligence and Thrift." (Third National women's convention opens)
- 12-16-57. "Further Propagate the Principles of House Keeping by Diligence and Thrift."
- 1958**
- 03-08-59. "Women of China, Put up Skyrocketing Zeal, Make Great Contributions"
- 03-08-60. "New Stage in the Women's Emancipation Movement in our country."
- 03-08-61. "Women, Contribute More to the Effort to Win a Bumper Harvest of Crops This Year."
- 1962
- 03-08-63. "Women, Struggle and Strive for New Victories."
- 03-08-64. "Women, Promote the Revolutionary Spirit and Fight for New Victories."
- 03-08-65. "Salutes International Women's Day."
- 03-08-66. "Be Outstanding in Politics, Make Another Step to Release The Great Resources in Women."
- 1967
- 1968
- 1969
- 1970
- 1971
- 1972
- 03-08-73. "Working Women Are Great Revolutionary Force: Commemorate March 8 International Women's Day"
- 03-08-74. "Let All Women Rise up: Commemorate March 8

International Women's Day"

- 1975
- 1976
- 1977
- 04-30-78. "New Subject for the Women's Movement" (about convention of the Fourth National Women's Congress) (p.2)
- 09-18-78. "Women of All Nationalities, Mobilize and Carry the New Long March: Congratulate the Successful Conclusion of the Fourth National Women's Congress in China"
- 1979
- 1980
- 03-08-81. "Women and Children Should Have the Attention and Concern of the Whole Society."
- 1982
- 03-08-83. "Bring Women's Role in the Construction of the two Civilizations into Full Play -- Commemoration of March 8 International Women's Day"
- 04-29-83. "Safeguard the Lawful Rights and Interests of Women and Children." (p.4)
- 09-13-83. "Congratulation on the Successful Fifth National Women's Conference."
- 03-08-84. "Do Woman Work well around the Party's General Tasks Celebrate March 8 International Women's Day" (p.4)
- 03-08-85. "Improve Women's Quality in the Economic Reform: Commemorating the 75 Anniversary of the March 8 International Women's Day" (p.4).
- 1986
- 1987
- 1988
- 03-08-89. (RMRB Commentator).*** "Facing the Challenge of the Times: Commemorating March 8 International Women's Day" (p.2)
- 02-01-90. "New Development must be brought to the Work among Workers, Youth and Women" (on CCP's circular on enhance leadership on mass work)
- 03-08-90. "Promote the Cause of Women's Liberation under the Banner of Socialism"
- 03-08-91. "Women making contribution and Go All Out to Keep Forging Ahead: Celebrate the 81st anniversary of International Women's Day" (p.1)
- 09-01-93. "Men and Women Matching together, like the Sun Just Rising from the East: Warmly Congratulate the Convening of the Seventh National Women's Congress in China"
- 1994
- 09-05-95. "The Hope for the World Women: Warmly Congratulate the Opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women"
- 09-16-95. "The Importance lies in Action: Warmly Congratulate the Closing of the Fourth World Conference on Women"

*This is based on Research Guide to People's Daily Editorials, 1949-1975 by Michel Oksenberg and Gail Henderson (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 1982) and my own studies of RMRB. The list of RMRB's editorials on women may not be complete.

** Soviet leader Stalin died before the March 8, and the ACWF decided not to hold any celebration of the day. On March 7, JMRB had an editorial on Stalin.

*** This was not an editorial, but as it was written on March 8, it was also included. RMRB Commentator's remarks are regarded not as important as the editorial. The next level of editorial comments of RMRB are "brief comments." Where the editorials and comments are carried (whether in the front page or not) also indicates the political importance of the comments. A few RMRB commentator articles after 1983 are as follows:

- 04-07-83. (RMRB Commentator) "An Important Matter that Should Cause Attention" (imbalance of sex ratio)
- 03-08-89. (RMRB Commentator) "Facing the Challenge of the Times: Commemorating March 8 International Women's Day" (p.2)
- 04-10-92. (RMRB Commentator) "Important Legal Tool to Safeguard Women's Rights and Interests"
- 08-08-95. (RMRB Commentator) "Achieving New Goals, ushering in New Century: Congratulate the Issuance of 'Program of Development for Chinese Women'"

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- 1949b. "Zhonghua quanguo funu lianhehui zhangcheng" (Constitution of the ACDWF), HUIBIAN, II:24-26.
- 1951a. "Yi nian lai fulian xiezhu zhengfu guanche hun yan fa de zongjie," (Summary of Fulian's assistance to government in implementing the Marriage Law in the past year), HUIBIAN, II:107-111.
- 1951b. "Quanguo gedi jinian sanba guoji funu jie gongzuo de zonghe baogao" (Summary report on commemorating the March 8 International Women's Day throughout the country), HUIBIAN, II:99-103.
- 1953. "Guanyu jinhou quanguo funu yundong renwu de jueyi," (Decision on the future tasks of the women's movement of the whole country). HUIBIAN, II:179-180.
- 1954. "Guanyu dangqian nongcun funu gongzuo de zhishi" (instructions on current woman-work in rural areas), HUIBIAN, II:194-199.
- 1955a. "Quanguo Fulian dui ge sheng, zizhiq, zhongyang zhixiashi Fulian lingdao guanxi zhong de ji xiang guiding," (Regulations on the leadership relations between the central Fulian and various Provincial, autonomous regional and central municipal Fulian).
- 1955b. "Quanguo Fulian guanyu jiezhi shengyu wenti de tongzhi" (ACDWF's circular on birth control), HUIBIAN, II: 224-225.
- 1956a. "Wei jiaqiang nongye hezuohua yundong zhong de funu gongzuo gei geji Fulian de zhishi" (Instructions to Fulian at various levels on strengthening woman-work in the agricultural coop campaign), HUIBIAN, II: 234-238.
- 1956b. "Quanguo funu wei shixian '1956 nian dao 1967 nian quanguo nongye fazhan gangyao' de fendo gangyao" (National women's Draft for Realizing the "National Program for Agriculture"), HUIBIAN, II:244-248.
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