

Decisions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on woman-work at present in the countryside of the liberated areas (1948)

Source: Delia Davin (1976). *Woman Work: Women And The Party In Revolutionary China*. Appendix 2

After keeping up the fight against the Japanese for eight years the Chinese people finally defeated Japanese imperialism. Now they have been fighting the People's Liberation War for two and a half years and have won unprecedentedly great victories. The reactionary Kuomintang regime can basically be defeated in about another year. These victories were gained relying on the Party's correct leadership, the fighting skill of the People's Liberation Army, and the bitter struggles of the ordinary people. Women, who form half the population, have played a big role and have become an indispensable force for defeating the enemy and building a new China. Woman-work has been especially successful since February 1943, when the Central Committee issued 'Decisions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the present orientation of woman-work in all the anti-Japanese base areas'. This gave a clear direction to woman-work in the liberated areas, and where it was put into practice there were noticeable changes in the work. Ordinary village women of the liberated areas were further mobilized and organized to work in handicrafts, supplementary enterprises, and agriculture, and to contribute to the war effort with all their strength. In land reform all the liberated areas mobilized even more women to take an active part in the sharing out of land and the struggle to eliminate feudalism. In the districts where land reform is already complete there has been a fundamental change in class relations in the villages, land has been distributed to both men and women, young and old, and quite a few women have become district or village representatives, and have even been elected village heads, deputy heads, or cadres above the village level. Women have become much more aware and enthusiastic, and consequently there has been a fundamental change in their political and economic position and in their position in the family and in society, opening the way to complete liberation. But there are certain shortcomings in woman-work in the liberated areas. In a few places the Party organization and the women's associations have not given enough recognition to the Central Committee Decisions of February 1943 or have not understood them properly. The central task in woman-work is to organize women to take an active part in production. This is also a guarantee of women's special interests and the key to freeing them from the constraints on them which still survive. Some areas have even completely disregarded these decisions and so have not carried them out conscientiously or thoroughly. Moreover, in some districts conscientious care has not been given to eliminating the survivals of feudalism which hold women back or to satisfying women's special interests and demands in the course of mobilizing women for production, land reform, and work to aid the front. It has been supposed that when women are mobilized for production and land reform, everything will naturally be solved in consequence. Woman work has also been mechanically isolated from other work. Because of this, many of the special sufferings of women cannot be ended when they should be, and their full mobilization is thus obstructed. In a few areas the old erroneous tendencies to carry out woman-work in an isolated detached way still exist, and these have built up internal antagonisms between men and women peasants and between young and old women and have even alienated the masses. Since 1943 the latter mistake has for the most part been overcome and in the few places where it has survived it is now being corrected. Up to the present the former is still rather a common phenomenon everywhere. These shortcomings are largely due to the fact that in some places some cadres of the Party and the women's organizations do not have an over-all idea of work amongst the masses, have not realized the general importance of woman-work, do not properly understand it as a part of the whole relation to revolutionary work, and cannot reconcile mobilizing women adequately

for production with protecting women's special interests. Apart from this, in some places the Party organization and the women's organizations have not given nearly sufficient attention to the glorious task of leading women to aid the war effort and consolidate the army. Either they have not been conscientious about helping and caring for the dependants of army personnel, or they have not offered suitable criticism and education to those backward army dependants who hold the soldiers back and generally undermine the consolidation of the army. They have not made ordinary women understand that without victory in the People's Liberation War there can be no true liberation for the mass of women, and so they cannot fully arouse the enthusiasm of women for the war effort. Since work was not checked when it should have been, and since experience was not summed up and mistaken tendencies were not corrected, these shortcomings could not be overcome.

The orientation of woman-work in the liberated areas should still be based on mobilizing and organizing women for an active part in production. The basic policies laid down by the Central Committee decisions of February 1943 are still completely appropriate. The whole party, all cadres engaged in woman-work, and all women activists must understand that under New Democratic Government, all the laws of the old society which constrained or mistreated women and forced them into a humiliating position of obedience have ceased to exist. The new laws guaranteeing absolute equality of the sexes in the economy, in politics, and in society have been formulated or basically formulated in the first period of New Democratic power. The question is whether these laws can truly be realized. The attitude of valuing men and despising women handed down from the old society, all kinds of constraining feudal customs, especially the economic dependence of women on men and the handicaps of not excelling at all sorts of labour and even despising it, have obstructed the rapid realization by women of the rights already granted to them in law. So if women's rights are to be properly realized, the work must be done. In the first place women must not only be given equal economic rights and position with men, and in the countryside get and keep an equal share of land and property, above all they must be made to understand fully the importance of labour and must look on it as glorious. They must participate actively in all the productive jobs which are within their physical capabilities and become the creators of wealth in both the family and society. Only by going to work with a will, so that they gradually become economically independent, can women gain the respect of their parents-in-law, their husbands and society at large, and increase the harmony and unity of the family; only thus can the economic, social and political position of women be easily consolidated and only thus can all the laws concerning sex equality acquire a strong base on which to be implemented. The experience of the last few years has proved this completely. That is to say, where women have taken an active part in productive labour and regarded it as glorious, given education on sex equality, opposed the feudal constraints and divided up the land, the position of women is clearly completely different from before. They are happy and respected and quite a few activists have been elected as representatives or have taken part in other social or political activities. And it must be recognized that women's participation in labour is not simply the key to their liberation: whether for the present war effort or New Democratic economic construction or the future victory of socialism, women's labour is absolutely indispensable. Therefore, in the villages of the liberated areas we must go on doing our very best to mobilize and organize women for agriculture, handicrafts and supplementary production. As to the orientation and needs of the restoration and development of all sorts of production, and to what sort of work the women in each place should concentrate on (agriculture, handicrafts or supplementary enterprises), concrete proposals for this suited to the locality and the time should be made in accordance with the unified local government-party production plan, the labour power ratio between men and women, and what women customarily produce. As land reform is completed, all problems connected with women should be solved in accordance with the correct policies of the local government and the directives

for dealing with problems left over from land reform, so as to confirm and increase women's enthusiasm for production. There must be government orders to guarantee women's rights to land. When the family is taken as a unit for issuing land, deeds, a note must be made on the deeds that the men and the women have equal rights to land. Every member of the family has democratic rights in the disposal of possessions. When necessary, land deeds for women can be issued separately. At the same time there should be a considerable period of publicity and education for all peasants so that both men and women fully understand the importance of protecting women's rights to land. To promote the healthy development of women's production, we must carry out the policy 'get organized* correctly, and do our best to get women to take part in all sorts of co-operatives (e.g. production co-operatives such as mutual-aid groups and weaving groups etc.). In agriculture women find that inter-household co-operation and mutual-aid groups in which both men and women can participate are convenient. In handicrafts and supplementary enterprises they find supply and marketing co-operatives convenient. As to methods, our principle must be that all is done voluntarily in the interests of both sides, to promote the democratic spirit and foster the creativity of the masses, and we must restrain ourselves from interfering too much and refrain from commandism and formalism, but at the same time, we should not just let things drift. Take production as the focal point, and in the course of production improve educational work amongst women, raise their political consciousness and cultural level and mobilize them to participate in New Democratic Government. Improve health standards among women and children (e.g. by organizing training classes for infant and maternal health-workers, Chinese and western medicine co-operatives etc.) and safeguard the special interests of women. Step by step we must purposefully eliminate the feudal thought, constraints, and customs which prevent women's participation in political, cultural, and economic activities (of which the most important is production). It should not be thought that once women take part in production all the remnants of feudalism in society which still constrain them will just naturally disappear and there will be no need to do any more work. This way of just letting things drift ignores the special interests of women and is erroneous. In the course of production, at all mass meetings and in the mass organizations, all peasants should be given constant ideological education on the equality of the sexes; feudal thought, constraints, and customs must be criticized, and it should be pointed out that all the feudal customs constraining women must be eliminated. The small number of backward elements who want to preserve old feudal customs and who constantly oppress women must be suitably struggled against where necessary. But it must be understood that this sort of struggle is an ideological struggle amongst the peasants and should be radically different from the class struggle against feudal landlords. Moreover*, the purpose of this type of struggle is to educate all the peasants more effectively and to help to mobilize women to engage in production and other constructive enterprises and to build a truly democratic and harmonious family. It should also strengthen and further consolidate the unity between the peasants. At the same time it must also be recognized that this is work to change the peasants' ideas and is a long, demanding job which cannot be hurried. We should oppose both just letting things drift and impetuosity. The government must issue orders against foot-binding, infanticide, purchase marriage, taking in child brides etc., and must also educate the masses so as to bring about the realization of these laws. In the past, in some places in the liberated areas the marriage laws contained sections opposed to the principles of the equality of men and women and freedom of marriage. These should be changed quickly. The direction of work in the villages of the newly liberated areas should be based on the directives of the Central Committee on work in the newly liberated areas. The Party's policies (including those on woman-work) should be publicized. The Party's influence should be enlarged, the false rumours and black slanderous arbitrary propaganda of the enemy denounced, and social order maintained. In areas where rent and interest reduction or land reform are being carried out, ordinary women should be mobilized to take an

active part, and should be led and organized to participate in productive construction and to contribute to the war effort. In these new areas after rent and interest reduction or land reform has been completed, productive labour remains the pivot of the women's movement. As for feudal traditions and customs which constrain women, these will be serious in the new areas and so they must be eliminated purposefully and steadily, in accordance with the level of consciousness of ordinary people, by educating people on the equality of the sexes and making them more aware. As to the problem of the form of women's organizations, the elimination of independent women's organizations or their existence in name only which occurred in some places in the past was inappropriate. Because of the actual situation of women in China at present, they need independent organizations to lead and inspire woman-work to unite and educate ordinary women and to serve them constantly. Women's congresses are the best form of organization to bring women together on a larger scale and more democratically. These organizations should exist everywhere at every level. The basic organization of this sort of congress is the village women's congress. Its delegates should be democratically chosen by ordinary women and should include women members of the people's congress, delegates from the women's organizations (such as women representatives of weaving groups, co-operatives and literacy groups) and delegates elected directly by the women (the number of women electors being settled by residential conditions). The role of this sort of congress is to represent the opinion of ordinary women, to discuss the policy and important tasks in local woman-work, to publicize the policies, orders, and resolutions of the Democratic Government and higher authorities, and to mobilize women to carry them out. There should also be a committee chosen by the congress to carry out resolutions, deal with day-to-day work, and decide when to convene a congress. What the committee should be called depends on the wishes of the masses. Where women are already very familiar with the women's association, it can be called the committee of the women's association. In order to have a fully organized mass basis the women's association committee ought always to make use of all sorts of organizational forms, such as literacy classes, co-operatives, mutual-aid groups etc., to organize all the ordinary women with their different requirements. At the same time it should maintain constant contact with, and serve the mass of women who do not belong to any organization. At county level and above, women's congresses should also be called in accordance with the above-mentioned principles and should choose women's association committees to lead woman-work. In the past in a small number of places the women's associations did not base themselves on the real circumstances of ordinary women. They were formalistic in organization, laid stress on increasing membership, and held too many group meetings but went without holding congresses for a long time. In work they went in for commandism and they performed as they said 'the tasks passed down by higher authority' formalistically but did not serve the masses. In practice this caused the divorce of the association from the masses, and it became monopolized by a small number of people. In future this bad phenomenon must be earnestly corrected. In the newly liberated countryside, where the general situation begins to become stable, women's associations can be built up, but first there must be steady, planned preparatory work. Women's organizations should be built up gradually, taking into account the needs and level of consciousness of the masses, and ordinary women should be united and educated. These women's organizations must be based on labouring women. In accordance with what is necessary to the development of the present revolutionary situation, a large group of party and non-party women cadres must be boldly educated and fully utilized and pushed forward to take up posts of every sort and reinforce the cadres in women's organizations at every level. The same work should be allocated and the same training and educational opportunities given to men and women cadres of equal ability without discrimination. Moreover, taking into account the special position of women cadres, greater attention should be given to raising their political, theoretical, and cultural levels and their ability at work. In order to assist with their special difficulties, crèches and nurseries should be set up and

mutual-aid groups of women cadres should be organized to care for children. This will not only lighten the burden of the women cadres, it will also be a start in the nursery care of children by society. The education of the new, labouring women cadres in the villages, especially those who have already held posts before, should be improved. They should be given patient training and steady encouragement with special attention to increasing the number of Party members. In the new liberated areas, pay special attention to training local women cadres. All levels of Party schools and training classes set up by the government should take in women cadres as students according to a plan. Party organizations and propaganda departments at all levels should include the teaching and training of women cadres in their work. And the women cadres themselves under the leadership and guidance of the Party ought to work with purpose and enthusiasm, plunging really deeply into their work and becoming more unified and more efficient. They should study theory, politics, and general knowledge, and knowledge and skills connected with production industriously, and should initiate criticism and self-criticism, overcome their handicaps as women, resolutely seek to progress and strengthen their ideal of serving the people. This is the basic condition for turning oneself into a cadre valuable to the Party. After the National Land Conference of 1947, Party committees at every level generally regarded leading woman-work as more important than before, and there have been various changes, but they have not yet realized regular and planned leadership of woman work. The passive phenomenon of efficient leaders having efficient subordinates but lax leaders having lax subordinates is still apparent in woman-work, and a small number of Party committees still despise woman-work and just let it slide. From now on the whole Party must recognize properly that the mobilization of ordinary women for revolutionary struggle is indispensable to revolutionary victory in the whole country. It must further reinforce the leadership of woman-work and carry out the policy of getting the whole party to do woman-work. Party committees at all levels should make woman work a part of general Party-work, and when check-ups or summaries of work are being planned, woman-work should be included. Party papers and publicity offices at all levels should increase propaganda reportage on woman-work. Party committees at county level and above ought to build up and strengthen the organization of women's committees and give them regular guidance and help. At district level and below, woman-work should be led through the branch and a particular person should be made responsible for it. The duties of women's committees are, under the leadership of the Party committee at the same level, to investigate women's problems and policies concerning women, to check woman work, to give their opinions to the Party committee, and to direct and stimulate woman-work. The Party ought further to correct the feudal ideology which values men and despises women that still survives both inside and outside the Party, and to correct the negative idea of cutting woman work off from all other work, and the mistaken tendency to do woman-work in an isolated, detached way. At all levels Party organizations should intensify their study of Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Zedong and put it into practice more in the way they do woman-work. They should cultivate a complete mass outlook and get a correct grasp of the policy on the women's movement and should overcome lawlessness and anarchy in woman-work. Those who do woman-work should seek truth from reality more often, go right down amongst the masses, plunge into tough work, serve ordinary women with all their hearts and wills and lead the women's movement forward. To satisfy the needs of national revolutionary development and to concentrate the fighting strength of women, the women's organizations of the liberated areas should actively bring together women all over the country who oppose US imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism, to struggle together to throw US imperialism out of China, strike down the reactionary ruling clique of the Kuomintang, and build a unified, democratic People's Republic. For this purpose it has been especially decided that the women's societies of the liberated areas should hold a national conference of women delegates in the spring of 1949, to set up a National

Democratic Women's Federation to bring the women's movement all over the country under a unified direction and leadership, so that it can develop even more strongly in future.

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