

WOMEN OF CHINA

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Fluttering Red Banners Everywhere

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ON the afternoon of March 5, 1960, the Music Hall of the Central People's Broadcasting Station in Peking was filled with a happy crowd, waiting for the broadcasting of a national meeting. It was jointly sponsored by the National Women's Federation of the People's Republic of China, eight other organizations and the Broadcasting Station. This meeting was to mark March 8, as International Working Women's Day, to cite and congratulate outstanding women on their achievements, and to rally all women in the country to hold high the red banner and make concerted efforts for a continuous leap forward. From the Music Hall, the meeting was broadcast to all corners throughout the vast expanse of China. Everybody was in an excited and joyous mood, prepared to hail the great achievements of Chinese women in their country's socialist construction since the great leap forward of 1958. The meeting was to witness the ceremony of honouring with citations and awards of ten thousand outstanding women and groups who were to receive the title of "March 8 Red Banner Bearer." It was also to inspire all Chinese women to learn from the fine qualities and advanced experience of the Red Banner Bearers, so that a common effort could be made for a still better and all-round leap forward in 1960.

This magnificent meeting was unprecedented. At the same hour, 150 million Chinese women of various nationalities left their lathes and looms, their fields and livestock farms, their shops and schools, their laboratories and kindergartens... and flocked to radios and loudspeakers to listen intently to the voices coming from Peking, the heart of the motherland.

"Dear Sisters!... From the capital of our great motherland, Peking, I extend my warmest congratulations to you for the great successes you have scored in building socialism. I congratulate the ten thousand women and groups on the high honours they have won as Bearers of the March 8 Red Banner... These ten thousand advanced individuals and groups reflect in a concentrated way the tremendous progress made by all our women and the remarkable changes they have undergone. They are the best representatives of

the diligent and heroic working women of China... In order to fully play our part at various posts, we should all resolve to become advanced women of the 'red, diligent, skilful and frugal' type. We should also take an active part in the labour emulation to vie with, learn from and overtake the advanced and help those lagging behind." These were the words of Tsai Chang, President of the National Women's Federation, congratulating and praising all Chinese women. Instantly, her resonant voice was transmitted to every corner of the country across high mountains, the Yangtse and other wide rivers. It set aflame the hearts of all China's 150 million working women, inspiring them to achieve a flying speed on their winged horses.

Speaking at the meeting after Tsai Chang were Liu Ning-yi, President of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions; Hu Yao-pang, First Secretary of the Chinese Communist Youth League; and Mao Yi-sheng, Vice-President of the Chinese National Association for the Dissemination of Scientific and Technical Knowledge. They greeted the Chinese women warmly and gave them kind advice, their speeches being a great inspiration to all.

After the playing of a gay tune by the band, Chang Yun, Vice-President of the National Women's Federation, announced with overflowing enthusiasm the names of the most outstanding of the 10,002 "March 8" Red Banner Bearers among individuals and groups chosen on a nation-wide basis. Then the ceremony of making the awards began. Leading members of the various people's organizations stepped forward with a smile and awarded the red banners to individuals and the representatives of groups. The ceremony was punctuated with bursts of congratulatory applause from the audience.

Among these 10,002 individuals and groups, 6,305 are "March 8" Red Banner Bearers and 3,697 Red Banner Groups. Classified by occupation those engaged in industry number 2,142; in agriculture, 3,963; in finance and trade, 510, in such fields as education, public health, science, litera-

ture, art, and physical culture, 993; in work concerned with collective welfare, 1,249; in the service trades, 252; women cadres in government offices and women employees of various kinds, 743; and 87 military personnel. Besides these there are 63 outstanding women or groups representing militia-women, dependants of martyrs and army-men as well as advanced persons and groups known for their industriousness and thrift in household work. The advanced persons and groups in various fields belong to 48 fraternal nationalities including the Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uighur, Miao, Yi, Chuang, Puyi, Korean, Manchu, Tung, Yao, Kazakh, and Olunchun. Some are also from the families of industrialists and businessmen; they have been outstanding in doing actual work and undergoing political and ideological transformation. These are a new type of people who have emerged under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Tse-tung, since the women's movement entered a new stage of development with the inception of the big leap forward. They have brought honour to the women of the whole country. When people hear their names they will think of them as well as of themselves — of how they have struggled day and night beside blast furnaces, shed tears of joy and excitement when they saw the first flow of molten iron; of how they spent whole nights working on innovations so as to turn out more cloth; of how they went deep into the mountains and forests to look for underground treasures; and of how, to obtain petroleum, they persisted in drilling wells, pouring with sweat even in weather thirty or forty degrees below zero. People will also think of the peasant women who, with an indomitable will, reconstructed desolate mountain regions and harnessed mischievous waters, bringing an abundance of rice and fish to places which suffered from poor harvests nine years out of ten. To exterminate the pests they looked everywhere for herbs to make insecticide. Eventually they succeeded and overcame the pests. People also think of the women who work in commercial establishments and how they serve their customers with diligence and zeal, frequently braving bad weather to deliver goods, delivering them during the night and giving up their holidays during the New Year and other festivals in order to send goods to the homes of their customers. People also think of the contributions made by women doing work in the fields of science, culture and education. In scientific work women now tackle the most modern branches of science and scale the heights of new scientific achievement. In public health work they

try to wipe out epidemic diseases and lower the rate of incidence of other diseases. In education they devote themselves whole-heartedly to bringing up the younger generation well. In literature and art they create typical characters of China's heroes and heroines who represent this new age of heroism. People can still remember what ordinary housewives have done since the big leap forward. Starting practically from nothing, they have established thousands and thousands of small factories in the side streets; erected "Vanguard" buildings; opened countless numbers of community



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dining-rooms, nurseries, and service centres, thus enabling mothers to go out to work with a light heart and also ensuring that the children are well brought up. . . . At this moment people think of many, many things. . . . These 10,002 women are worthy representatives chosen from millions of advanced and skilful women workers on the various fronts of socialist construction in the whole country — they provide a concentrated picture of the advance made by all heroic women since the big leap forward. They have proved by their own example that “women can do everything and can do everything well.” They make people see that, under the socialist system, the power and wisdom displayed by women is infinite and inexhaustible.

Today, some of these 10,002 Red Banner Bearers and Red Banner Groups are at their own posts while others are listening in to the radio broadcasts in places far away from Peking. There are also some who, on the platform of this central meeting place, make solemn pledges and show their determination to leap forward. Wei Feng-ying, expert technical innovator of nation-wide fame and young lathe worker of the Northeast Machine-building Factory who is marching ahead of time, said: “Together with my fellow workers and the technicians I have organized a *hung chuan* (red and expert) brigade composed of more than 150 members. We have the will and determination to march forward towards the technical and cultural revolution; to change all the things in our shop which can be changed by mechanizing and automatizing them.” In the old society Wei Feng-ying, in her twenties, was a poor girl whose work was to pick out scraps of unburnt coal and gather wild vegetables. She is now a skilled worker of the fourth grade. During the past six years or so she has made 127 technical innovations and has added profusely to the wealth of the state. According to her original plan of work she is now fulfilling the work scheduled for 1969. In our society we need many, many women like Wei Feng-ying. It is only in a socialist country that we can expect to see such outstanding women who work whole-heartedly for socialism and communism, who dare to think and act boldly and who are continually making progress.

“Everyone is to become a promoter on the political and ideological fronts, a Red Banner Bearer on the production front, a model on the cultural front, fast-moving vanguard in technical revolution” — this is the great ambition and noble aim expressed at the meeting by Tsao Kuei-fang, a woman textile worker and representative of a

Red Banner Group. Women account for more than a half of the total number of workers in the textile industry. Therefore a larger number of labour heroines, women model workers and expert innovators have appeared in this industry. The Yi Shih-chuan group in the spinning shop of the No. 2 State Cotton Mill, Shanghai, has been an “old” model group since 1953. During the big leap forward they increased the speed of their machines. At first the number of broken threads was rather many, but they knew that technical innovations and a technical revolution were decisive factors in the high-speed building of socialism. They persisted in their attempt in spite of difficulties, eventually succeeding in increasing the speed of the machines.

Among those at the meeting who expressed their determination to work for a continued leap forward were: Chen Shu-chen, head of the “March 8” People’s Commune in Suhsien, Anhwei, whom the public have seen in the film “By the Side of the March 8 River”; Cheng Hsing-chen, head of the Shihping Women’s Scientific Research Station of the Changshih People’s Commune, Kweichow, who is bold in thinking and action and who has stepped boldly into the sanctum of science; Aunt Chu Jui-hsiang, head of the “July 12 Stock-breeding Farm in the Tipu People’s Commune, Anchi County, Chekiang Province, who loves the farm as her home and treasures the pigs. The women in the countryside across the length and breadth of China have become a big force in agricultural production. Chen Shu-chen said: “Among the 17,000 and more people of the March 8 People’s Commune who have taken part in building the irrigation projects and a canal network, seventy per cent are women. Their slogans are: “Let the Dragon King step down from his pedestal, let the land and soil be emancipated.” In 1958 the network of canals was practically completed. Now, to great International Working Women’s Day, they are carrying out extensive technical innovations. The “March 8” Brigade, after seven days of hard struggle, succeeded in using wind to generate power. Pig raising depends mainly on women. Many “March 8” pig farms and women’s pig farms have appeared in all parts of the country. The women have decided to win the championship in pig raising. Aunt Chu Jui-hsiang said: “In the old society I was like a blade of grass growing by the roadside. Who knew when I was trampled on by one person or another. After liberation I was emancipated. I felt it is honourable to raise

pigs. In the new society there is a *chuang yuan** in every one of the 360 trades. I have been in Peking three times and I have seen Chairman Mao. I have joined the Chinese Communist Party which is a great honour for me. The plan of our commune for this year is to set up a pig farm in which 10,000 pigs will be raised. . . ." Her speech was thunderously applauded. Many women have been extremely successful in raising pigs. They have earned the respect of society. Fan Hsiu-tsai from Kansu, who became a child bride when she was only ten years of age and underwent all kinds of misfortunes in the old society, is an ordinary pig tender. She has, however, accumulated rich experience in pig raising, discovered scientific principles and is now engaged as a special research member by the Northwest Stock-breeding and Veterinary Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Chang Shih-chen, a clerk in a store selling non-staple foods on the Kuangfu Road, Tientsin, said: "Since the big leap forward, the conventional method of selling retail goods has been changed. Goods are delivered to shops, construction sites and the homes of workers in spite of inclement weather. Factories and local administrative offices have been helped by us to set up community dining-rooms, nurseries, and service centres, thus enabling the women who have recently taken up jobs to concentrate their energy on production and other sorts of work. In the future wherever the workers are on their jobs, supplies of goods will be taken to them." Hearing what this young girl said everyone felt grateful to comrades in the commercial departments for the concern they have for the well-being of the people. Chang Shih-chen was the first one to put forward the slogan, "Difficulties for me but convenience for others." Ever since the big leap forward the commercial departments have been continuously improving their service. Now they have done remarkably well in organizing the people's economic life in an all-round way. Together with the people living around, they have created a new life in which there are mutual aid and mutual care as well as happiness for each and all, a life in which "Everyone has work to do and every kind of work is in the charge of some one." This has further encouraged the people in their zeal for work.

Chuang Pao-ngo, vice-chairman of the Chang-chiachai local residents committee in the Chingan District, Shanghai, told the meeting of the intensive effort made by the Shanghai housewives to establish collective welfare. They have invented

639 technical devices which greatly raise the efficiency of work. Illiteracy has been wiped out in their district. At present everyone can read, many people are learning to write poetry and more than 500 have taken part in spare-time study. Moreover, over 300 people have taken up physical culture through radio-directed physical exercises, ball games etc. This shows that changes are taking place in the cities, and that the life and spirits of the women are changing too. This profound change in Chinese women has been acclaimed by all.

The hearts of women listening in to the radio in various places were also fired with enthusiasm. They sent reports and good news to the meeting expressing their determination in large number of telegrams and phone calls. The Yi Shih-chuan group of Shanghai pledged that in three months they would mechanize the winding of yarn which has hitherto been done by hand and continue to keep their work at the most advanced level. After forty days of struggle the women workers and other employees in the "March 8" construction site of the Harbin Building Company have succeeded in setting up four automated production lines to mix concrete or do other things which increased working efficiency by 24 times. The women members of the Hungmen People's Commune in Hsinhsiung, Honan, made their proposals in a poem:

*We will cultivate the rice fields with the touch
of an artist.
We will leave no stone unturned to find new
sources of water.
We will struggle to reap a bumper wheat
harvest,
As our gift to the International Working
Womens Day.*

Teng Yu-ying, pig tender of the Lihsing People's Commune in Chucheng, Shantung, reported on her success to the meeting. She took care of a sow which dropped 44 piglets a few days before March 8.

From Canton came a telegram jointly sent by more than seventy overseas Chinese who have returned from abroad. It says that they will do their best to plant tropical crops, make experiments in order to obtain high yields, raise giant pineapples and plant roses that bloom in profusion. These good news were greeted with great joy.

Space forbids us to enumerate all the outstanding achievements and the resolutions to leap forward. Telegrams reporting glad news are still pouring in from all places. The broadcast meeting finally wound up amid general rejoicing and cheers.

*In ancient China, the title of *chuang yuan* was conferred on a person who passed the royal examination with the highest honours.