

# CHINESE WOMEN IN THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD



*Chinese Women*  
*in the*  
*Great Leap Forward*

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## *Editor's Foreword*

China is making a great leap forward and Chinese women are also making a great leap forward.

This book is made up of thirteen articles which from different angles portray the women of China in the great leap—their heroism at work, their sterling moral character, and the changes that have taken place in their social and family life.

Enlightened by the radiance of the Party and nourished by the fertile soil that is socialism, the Chinese women are rapidly growing into politically conscious, cultured and skilled working members of society, and are playing a tremendous role in the political, economic and cultural life of the country.

Women industrial workers are constantly setting new records in production, while women in the rural people's communes are displaying unlimited strength and gathering in one rich harvest after another.

Actresses were looked down upon in the old days. But today they find full scope for their artistic talents, and some have been elected as deputies to the National People's Congress.

Housewives are running countless factories which were started from scratch; women who had never been able to read or write turn out to be poets; slave women have become masters of their land and labour; and former prostitutes have gained a happy home life and become working members of society. . . .

Socialism has provided grand opportunities for the women of China to give rein to their capabilities. The women, on their part, are making every effort to clear away the narrow, selfish and conservative ideas and self-abasement left over from the old society. Daring in thinking and doing things, they have emerged as masters of the state and are achieving miracles in their work. They have received the praise of all for what they have accomplished and their position both at home and in society is now higher than at any time in the past.

What has been recorded here is but some fragments of the saga of the Chinese women in the great leap forward.

This book has been brought out in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the International Women's Day. We hope that through it readers abroad may gain some idea about the women of China today and see how they are working for peace and socialism.

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# *Catch Up with the Capable Hand*

**Ma Hsin-teh**

## **A STRIKING POSTER**

One day in August 1959, the weaving shop of the No. 9 State-owned Textile Mill in Shanghai suddenly turned into a scene of great activity. Especially between shifts, the weaving girls were seen fluttering to and fro like shuttles or pulling their heads together here and there, in groups of twos and threes. Evidently, they were spreading some sort of news. What was it all about? The source of it was a striking poster which someone had put up in the corridor early that morning. It was topped with a question addressed to the entire shop followed by some figures:

### **How Far Are You Behind Her?**

	<i>For Shuttle- Changing</i>	<i>For Re-starting Looms</i>
One capable hand takes	1.8 sec.	8 sec.
Ordinary hands take	4-5 sec.	13-17 sec.

The No. 9 Textile Mill, which started operation before liberation, is old in equipment; its shuttles have to be changed by hand. Even so, as the poster showed, a capable hand could change a shuttle and re-start a loom stopped for end-joining much quicker than ordinary

workers. Indeed, the amount of time involved, being only a matter of seconds, could hardly be detected. So, the workers had never taken it seriously nor thought of making efforts to reduce it.

Now, the poster was an eye-opener; it ended with a calculation like this: "Even if the time wasted in shuttle-changing were taken at lowest, say, 6 seconds, 6 times 600 — the average number of stops made by each loom in 24 hours — would amount to 1 hour a day. In other words, according to our mill's present production level, every loom would produce 5 metres less of cloth a day. If all our weavers could be as efficient as the said capable hand, then our mill would turn out 2,880 metres more every day, or a million metres more in 12 months — enough to clothe over 100,000 people for a year! This calculation stirred the girl weavers so much that it became the chief topic of conversation.

After seeing the poster, many girls came to a decision: We must overtake that capable hand! Who was she, anyway? The poster had not mentioned her name but everybody knew she must be Ni Hai-pao the Labour Model, who had been cited as an advanced worker every year ever since 1954. She had shown up very well in the big leap forward of 1958, and had been in the lead in the continuous leap forward last year. The director of her workshop had asked for her efficiency records from the tallyman and designed this striking poster, which, as a result, gave the women workers a great enlightenment.

### THE "NI HAI-PAO COLLEGE"

Soon, many textile mills in Shanghai sent invitations to Ni Hai-pao, asking her to demonstrate her technique



to their workers. One day an invitation came from the Ta Sun Textile Mill in Nantung. Ni Hai-pao accepted the invitation and went there. On her return, the mill sent along three women weavers so that by watching Ni Hai-pao working they could learn more from her. The arrival of their Nantung sisters from the other side of the Yangtse River was a fillip to the women workers in the No. 9 State-owned Textile Mill. They expressed once again their determination to learn from and catch up with Ni Hai-pao, the capable hand.

After the shifts that day, the workers decided at a meeting to organize a regular spare-time training course. Someone suggested that it be called the "Ni Hai-pao College"; all the workers approved the name and it soon spread all over the factory. But there was one person who objected to it; it was Ni Hai-pao herself. "You're all joking! The purpose of this training course is for all of us to learn from each other. 'College' is no word for it," she said to her workmates in a rather serious manner, brushing her bobbed hair aside.

Indeed, she has never liked to hear others saying to her, "Let us learn from your advanced experience," because she knows too well that if there is any skill she has acquired it is learned from her workmates. Therefore, she has always stressed that the way to improvement is to learn from each other and to raise the level of technique together. Some time ago, at a Shanghai textile workers' conference on taking a continuous leap forward in the industry, she heard someone saying: "If there is only one worker who masters the advanced technique, that's nothing! She can at most produce a few dozen metres more of cloth. But, if it becomes the knowledge of all the workers, the potentiality in production will be inexhaustible."

These words brought home to her the importance of learning from each other more strongly than ever. Since then, she has been passing on to her co-workers every bit she knows herself and withholding nothing. And she is very enthusiastic every time she is invited to demonstrate her technique to the workers, whether in the city or elsewhere.

Therefore, at the meeting of the workers, when she saw all the weavers in her mill anxious to raise their technical level, she was overjoyed and determined to see her own team as well as the whole workshop take a great leap in production. She said to herself on the spot: "I must also learn from others and make serious efforts to spread technical knowledge among them."

So, in spite of her objection to naming the training course "Ni Hai-pao College" the college was opened as decided — a college without a school building or a signboard.

#### FORGE AHEAD TO CATCH UP WITH OTHERS

The opening of the college found Ni Hai-pao more energetic than ever before. Making use of the time between shifts, she picked up a number of her workmates and trained them in groups to become "assistant teachers" so that they could in turn train other workers at the mill. In the evening she even had to give "personal coaching." Thus, interest in learning advanced operation methods from the capable hand mounted day by day.

Ni Hai-pao started her lessons with a demonstration. A good weaver, she said, needs a pair of nimble hands and a pair of intelligent eyes plus, above all, enthusiasm for

work. She gathered the girls before a fast moving loom, with the shuttle flying to and fro through the warps. The shuttle moved so fast that it was hard to follow. But suddenly Ni Hai-pao brought the loom to a stop. She had detected that the weft was about to finish and needed replacement. At that moment the flying shuttle was slowing down. While replacing it with a full one, she told the girls that a weaver should take the initiative in changing the shuttle without having to wait for the loom to stop dead. Her action was so steady and accurate yet so neat and swift that it only took a little more than one second to complete, according to the stop-watch. And in an instant the loom resumed its high speed. Ni Hai-pao then showed the girls the shuttle taken off — the weft was indeed nearly exhausted, to the astonishment of all the “assistant teachers” on the spot.

A young worker called Liu Tao-ying, admiring very much Ni Hai-pao's dexterous and co-ordinated movements, offered to have a try. But when she was about to take off the flying shuttle, she was a little scared. “Will the shuttle hit my hands?” she hesitated. At this very moment the shuttle slipped by, and she missed the timing. So, her first trial failed.

“This needs audacity and concentration,” said Ni Hai-pao. “Don't fear the shuttle. The more you shrink from it, the more likely it will hit your hand. Watch me, sister!” Ni Hai-pao demonstrated again — the shuttle seemed to be so docile, it came off at a slight motion of her hand. This time, Liu Tao-ying watched her very closely and was able to take in Ni Hai-pao's total hand movement. Soon after her shift, she and some other young workers came together for practice. They were so enthusiastic about learning Ni Hai-pao's hand move-

ment that they carried on the practice whenever their hands were free. For a time, the locker-rooms, dining-room and workers' club were all turned into the classrooms of the "Ni Hai-pao College," with many workers discussing and practising the advanced method of shuttle-changing. In a few days, Liu Tao-ying, through perseverance, succeeded in mastering the method of "taking the initiative in shuttle-changing," reducing her time for joining ends and re-starting the loom from 14 seconds to 9.5 seconds, which was fairly close to Ni Hai-pao's record of 8 seconds. Before long, many other girls succeeded in learning the advanced method. As a result, the mill's output went up quickly.

However, there were still some workers who, for one reason or another, had not participated in the movement of learning from the advanced and catching up with the advanced. There was, for instance, a forty-eight-year-old weaver whom the workers addressed as Auntie Yin San-ta to show their respect for her long record of service. One day Ni Hai-pao went to the No. 2 State-owned Textile Mill to exchange experience with the women weavers there. On her way she met Auntie San-ta.

"Hai-pao, where are you going?" Auntie San-ta greeted her warmly.

"I'm going to the No. 2 Mill to learn new methods," answered Ni Hai-pao.

"You're still learning?" Auntie San-ta was a little surprised.

"Yes, Auntie. There is a lot more to learn about shuttle-changing and end-joining. Do you wish to learn, too?" Ni Hai-pao was sounding Auntie San-ta on the matter of learning because the old worker so far had not shown any interest in acquiring new techniques.

"Am I still able to learn new things?" Auntie San-ta was a little skeptical.

"Surely you can, Auntie," Ni Hai-pao said and cited the example of a worker in the No. 3 Weaving Workshop, who was about Auntie San-ta's age, but had recently acquired new methods. Then she explained to her about the importance of increasing production in China, and how it would mean a better life for the people. She also showed Auntie San-ta how, if every weaver raised working efficiency with the help of advanced techniques, more cloth would be turned out for the good of the nation. Auntie San-ta, who had gone through a great deal of suffering before liberation, realized immediately that her work had much to do with the clothing of millions of people. She reckoned that if the output of her loom could be raised from 2.365 metres per hour as now to 2.809 metres as in the case of a capable hand, a difference of only 0.444 metre per hour per loom, it would mean a lot more cloth with all the looms in the mill or over the whole country taken together. Thinking of this, she grasped Ni Hai-pao by the hand and said with agitation:

"My young sister! Even if I were going to retire two years later, I still could produce over 2,000 more metres of cloth for the country. Think, how many new dresses will be made from them! I'll learn the new technique."

Ni Hai-pao was very happy to see that Auntie San-ta had finally come to a decision.

When Ni Hai-pao came back to the factory from the No. 2 Textile Mill, she went to see Auntie San-ta and watched her working. She discovered that the old worker was really very skilful so far as the basic operation was concerned. In fact, she was learning much

from Auntie San-ta's hand movement. The only hitch lay in the position she took when she came to change the shuttle. Besides, she was also a little scared at thrusting in her hand to snatch the shuttle. When Auntie San-ta asked for her opinion Ni Hai-pao was very frank in pointing out these two defects. Soon, the two workers began to discuss intimately together about the technique of weaving, and learned from each other. One month later, Auntie San-ta became a capable hand, too, and overfulfilled the production target by 3 per cent with her rate of defective cloth reduced by 42 per cent.

### LOOKING FORWARD TO NEW GOALS

The movement for learning from the advanced in the No. 9 Textile Mill led also a labour emulation campaign "to learn from and outstrip the capable hand." It was like a race. To win meant perseverance and determination.

In the past few months, of the 1,713 workers in the whole factory (including spinners) 865 have reached the standard of the capable hands. Among the more than 800 workers at the No. 2 Weaving Workshop over 60 have neared the production level of Ni Hai-pao. Besides, more than 100 have reached the standard set in "The Three Hundred Capable Textile Workers' Proposal for Raising Productivity" applying to all the mills in the city, and 630 have been cited as capable hands by the production groups they belong to. This drive for catching up with the advanced has pushed production ahead, making one leap forward after another. Output has gone upwards from month to month. Good news of production targets overfulfilled have come from all corners of

the mill. Some workers have outstripped the advanced level of Ni Hai-pao in a single operation, for instance, Chiang Chao-ti who has created a record of 4 seconds in re-starting the loom, cutting Ni Hai-pao's record in half. When this news reached Ni Hai-pao, she went at once to congratulate Chiang Chao-ti and to learn how she had done it. Now, in the No. 9 Textile Mill, the capable hands are setting a new starting-point to carry the emulation drive forward to reach new goals.

## *Holding Up Your End of the Line!*

— A story of the successful co-ordination of  
the Peking-Chungking Long-Distance Telephone  
Channel Group \

**Shao Chuan**

The co-ordination emulation links operators of the Peking-Chungking Long-Distance Telephone Channel Group like a long red thread winding through mountains and valleys. As a result of this co-ordination the operators are serving the people of the two cities well. They are accurately and quickly transmitting instructions of the Communist Party and the state, as well as news of construction and greetings from friends and relatives.

Operators on this channel are far apart. Peking and Chungking are separated by numerous mountains and rivers. In putting calls through they must co-ordinate their operations closely, for the slightest divergence on either side would deflect the calls and cause errors and losses.

In April 1959, Operator No. 44, an inexperienced comrade named Kuan Chen-hua, was assigned to Chungking. At first, because she spoke a different dialect she was unable to co-ordinate well with the operator in Peking. The latter complained that Operator No. 44 was too slow and that this was affecting the fulfilment of the target. She thought of asking the Chungking authorities to



transfer No. 44 to some other job. This was just the time that the co-ordination emulation campaign was getting into full swing among all channels in the country. A heated debate arose among the Peking operators: Should No. 44 be transferred to some other work or should she be retained and assisted to advance along with the others? Finally all agreed that No. 44 should be kept on the job and every effort made to help her become a competent operator.

Meanwhile, thousands of *li* away in Chungking Operator No. 44 depressed by her failure to co-ordinate smoothly with Peking was so unhappy that she wept. She thought of requesting a transfer to prevent harm to the work through her inadequacy. On the following day, however, the tone of the Peking operator changed completely. The note of dissatisfaction and reproach had disappeared. Instead, came the encouraging words: "No. 44, the standard pronunciation for this term is. . . ." A warmth spread through her body like an electric current coming through the channel. She became more confident and her operations more steady. It was not long before Operator No. 44 became a qualified worker on this line.

In May 1959, during the co-ordination emulation campaign among the country's postal and telegraphic departments, operators at both ends of the Peking-Chungking channel became deeply aware that accelerating the speed with which they put through calls meant accelerating the speed of socialist construction. Close co-ordination was the key to raising efficiency. Under the leadership of the Communist Party Committees in both cities, they formed a channel group and agreed that all direct or relayed calls from either end would be their common