

Social Welfare Crisis and The Family in Decollectivized Rural China*

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I. Introduction

The market-oriented and family-centered development strategy has confronted China with a significant trend of economic inequality and social stratification. Amid the impressive expansion of wealth in rural China, more and more families and individuals have been threatened by poverty and insecurity.¹⁾ What makes this cost of liberal developmen-

talism extremely critical is the fact that the increase in the number of families and individuals in need of social and economic protection has been accompanied by the demise of collective institutional arrangements for economic security and welfare. As Hussain and Feuchtwang (1988:70) observed, "[i]nitially it was hoped that local services including the system of support for poor households would continue as before. But things have turned out differently. In the teams

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1) See Ten Years for Economic System Reform of China (Committee for National Economic System Reform, PRC, 1988) for a comprehensive official evaluation of the economic reforms.

where collective organization and spirit were not strong to start with, local services broke down." While rural decollectivization has allowed peasant families to play an active role in improving agricultural and non-agricultural production and thus helped increase the wealth of most families, it has simultaneously put many families in a doubly disadvantaged position of missing secure income opportunities and losing collective welfare benefits.

As an increasing number of careful observers emphatically speak out, it is not existence (or absence) of material resources *per se* but social mechanisms for ensuring public entitlement to food, health services, education, and other basic needs that most crucially determine the problems of Third World poverty and famine. Sen (1981 : 7) states in this vein :

[T]he elimination of starvation in socialist economies...for example in China...seems to have taken place even without a dramatic rise in food availability per head, and indeed, typically the former had preceded the latter. The end of starvation reflects a shift in the entitlement system, both in the form of social security and...more importantly...through systems of guaranteeing employment at wages that provide exchange entitlement adequate to avoid starvation.

Conversely, it is an imminent possibility that affluent rural China would be increasingly populated by those families and individuals

worried about object poverty, social dislocation, and alienation. For this group of the rural population, decollectivization could only mean destruction of the collective "entitlement system" for work and social security.

The Chinese state seems to realize that it cannot rely on a self-healing mechanism of market socialism, if any, by which nationally expanding wealth may somehow 'trickle down' on to disadvantaged sections of the population.

Pressed by widespread discontents and worries of market-straggled families and sympathetic grassroots cadres, there have been discussions and proposals about new systems of welfare and security for peasant families. However, partly because the Chinese state has merely suggested the need for new systems without clear commitment to financial support, and partly because the old principle of local self-help has been continuously emphasized, there have been only sporadic and inconsistent experimentations mostly at township and county levels.²⁾ These experimentations have been undertaken to establish new social welfare networks in constituent villages. These efforts have been plagued by lack of stable institutional arrangement, inefficacy of ideological exhortation, and increased mobility of villagers, all of which make it difficult to induce villagers' longterm commitment to local mutual assistance.

2) By contrast, state support for urban working families' social security has been largely maintained despite the call for linking welfare benefits to the economic performance of each individual and of his/her employing enterprise as part of managerial rationalization. To the extent that there exists a zero-sum relation between the state spendings on urban workers and those on peasants...given the serious budgetary constraint, this is aptly the case...urban families' material security seems to be buttressed by rural families' material insecurity.

Despite these difficulties, the Chinese state has maintained its long-held reluctance to spend its scarce financial resources on needy peasant families' consumption. Relatedly, both central government officials and local cadres have constantly tried to limit the number and types of families entitled to assistance. Moreover, assistance alone, if provided, rarely provides even modest material life, not to mention emotional comfort. In this context, according to Chow (1988 : 74), a somewhat inevitable trend has been that :

nearly all proposals for a new social security system stressed the important roles of the family system and the local communities. For a long time, traditional networks like the family system have been neglected and at times even suppressed for playing the protective functions...But the omission of these traditional networks have not diminished their importance as the majority of the Chinese still cannot get the most basic provisions from the state...In its proposal for a new social security system in China, the Ministry [of Civil Affairs] emphasized in particular the roles played by the family system ; it is probably a lesson which the Ministry has learned from its work with the needy in the villages.⁴⁾

Thus the main burden of economically and socially protecting needy or handicapped persons has fallen on the family among both

poor and rich segments of the rural population.

While most studies on the Chinese peasant family under the rural reform have focused on the production side, the current paper addresses the distribution side of the growing importance of the family. It will be argued that the Chinese state has opted to revitalize welfare functions of the peasant family in an effort to pursue a socially viable as well as economically productive strategy of development.⁴⁾ We briefly examine the nature of the pre-reform social security systems and then analyze the implications of rural decollectivization for social welfare, with particular attention to the role division among the state, local society (the collective), and the family. Specific problems involved in grain security, health care, and elderly care are subsequently discussed. For illustration of concrete situations of welfare provision, the case of Dahe People's Commune (currently Dahe Township), Huolu County, Hebei Province is presented.⁵⁾

II. The Maoist Tradition of Collective Welfare

According to Marx, social welfare is not a central notion concerning the need to assist

3) As discussed below, the social security function of the family was not exactly neglected in the Maoist era. The major change in the reform era is that the family has become virtually the only effective, universally available welfare institution.

4) See Chang (1990c) for a general discussion of the symbiotic relationship between peasant families and the Chinese state in pursuing a socially viable as well as economically productive strategy of rural development.

5) See Chang (1990b) and Putterman (1988) for brief accounts of Dahe's social and economic situations.

needy and disadvantaged people. Since the socialist system is supposed to do away with any exploitative relations of production responsible for poverty and insecurity, a separate welfare system for destitute people is not needed—in fact, there will no destitute people in need of welfare protection in socialist or communist society (Marx 1967).

Physically handicapped people such as elderly and children should be universally protected and supported in communal living arrangements, not through categorical assistance prescribed in administrative welfare programs. If some persons suffer from poverty, it signals that the socialist system itself should be further perfected, not that a separate welfare system should be developed. The *philanthropically* disguised welfare system is needed only in bourgeois society where labor, while subjected to exploitation and alienation, needs to be maintained in proper quality to ensure smooth operation of the capitalist production system (cf. Donzelot 1979).

Despite historical shifts in its contents, China's rural welfare system in the Maoist era embodied this Marxist tradition. More correctly, there were no separate institutional arrangements for welfare other than collective work organizations. It was these collective work organizations that arranged material assistances for needy members and families and *entitlements* or *rights*—rather than as *charities*. Such entitlements, however, were very limitedly issued as “the institutio-

nal arrangements and policies are concerned less with providing assistance than minimizing the numbers needing assistance by instituting a formidable array of social and economic imperatives for self-sustenance” (Hussain and Feuchtwang 1988 : 38). The basic spirit was not to deliver comprehensive welfare benefits but to help the needy get back on their own feet.

To achieve this purpose, the Communist Party of China (CPC), on the one hand, unhesitantly embarked on a series of economic restructuring measures including land reform, cooperativization, collectivization, and communalization.⁶⁾ As Marx envisaged, the changes in relations of production were expected to help remove economic destitution from all segments of the population. On the other hand, given the ‘underdeveloped’ forces of production, Mao emphasized the principle of local self-reliance as a uniquely Chinese element added to the original Marxist strategy (Riskin 1987 ; Selden 1988). The rationale was that social and economic protection of the needy would be accomplished in as many localities as possible if they were encouraged to achieve maximum use of locally available resources instead of relying on scarce resources in the hands of the central government or other localities.

Concerning the role division among the state, rural collective organizations, and peasant families, the fact that the Chinese state was not in control of sufficient economic resources even for key economic reconstruction

6) See Chang (1990a) for a comprehensive discussion of post-revolutionary organizational changes in the rural economy.

projects had a fundamental implication. That is, the Chinese state wanted to play as minimal a role as possible in financing *self-reliant* rural welfare while fully engaging itself in the task of rapid industrialization (Parish and Whyte 1978). The Chinese state needed local institutions to “replace the state as the dispenser of rural welfare relief to those who were unable to provide for themselves and who had no family to support them” (Dixon 1981 : 190). On the other hand, as peasant families transferred ownership of land and other productive assets to collective production organizations in the process of rural collectivization, their basic economic security then had to be collectively ensured. In this context was created a rural cooperative...later collective...welfare system operating as part of the newly created production organizations.

Simultaneously, there was a somewhat contradictory policy line advanced to urge the peasant family to preserve the tradition of mutual support and filial piety. This was even codified into the 1950 Marriage Law which stipulated the duties of parents to “rear and educate their children”; of children to “support and assist their parents”; of husband and wife “to strive jointly for the welfare of the family”. This legalized exhortation for family support was sustained even when the peasant family lost its autonomous economic basis for production in the already collectivized countryside.

Although the principle of self-reliance was

introduced to urge localized financing of material relief, it was further propagated to press for each family's self-support. Facing the burden of amassing investable funds at the local level and the pressure from most constituent families for maximum possible income distribution, the emphasis on each family's self-care was an indispensable “strategy to minimize the numbers in need.”

With the state maintaining its minimal importance, the post-revolutionary history of rural welfare has since been characterized by the role division between the family and the collective. At times when communal principles of rural life were emphasized...the communalization drive and the Cultural Revolution...the relative importance of the collective for welfare increased. The expansion of collective welfare in turn has been reflected in organizational changes for welfare administration, increase of public welfare funds (vis-a-vis the total annual collective income) and expansion of the content and range of welfare coverage.

Concerning organizational changes for welfare administration, a rural cooperative welfare system based on the role of mutual aid teams and agricultural cooperatives was established in the early 1950s immediately accompanying the land reform. As such, the direct role of the central government resting with the People's Relief Administration was taken over by local self-help units.⁷⁾ However, until agricultural collectives were instituted in the mid 1950s, “welfare support

7) Before the cooperativization, the People's Relief Administration dispensed relief assistance to “some 15 to 20 million people old, handicapped, orphaned, or invalid and without means of support” (Dixon 1981 : 189)

remained very much a family responsibility" (Dixon 1981 : 190) because each peasant family could still claim its income based on individual land and labor contributions, i.e., based on family resources.

When collectivization was launched in the mid 1950s, "[t]he promise of a welfare system that would provide security for the elderly, the sick, the widowed, the orphaned, and the handicapped was an important instrument in overcoming the reluctance of peasants to join these [collectives] and give up their land, the traditional source of their security" (Dixon 1981 : 191). The rural collective welfare system was thus fully instituted and its efficacy was reinforced by the introduction of the famous *wu bao* (five guarantees) system. Financed from a collective welfare fund, such basic needs as food, clothing, fuel, and others were provided for a small number of poor families in each collective (Riskin 1987).

With rural communes introduced subsequently, the communalization of peasant life was much further intensified. Free supply of basic necessities by the commune was not limited to some destitute families but universalized to all families. This system, People's Daily (10 October 1958.) proclaimed,

is not tantamount to the communist system of "to each according to his needs," but it has completely broken the barriers of "pay according to labor." It satisfies the requirement of further development and represents a step towards "selflessness." Therefore it belongs to the sphere of communism and is a germination of communism.

In addition, communal dining halls, Homes of Respect for the Elderly, nurseries and kin-

dergardens, and specialized teams for sewing, shoemaking, laundry and others came to replace the family in most aspects of peasant life (Chang 1990a). To finance these projects, welfare fund was also accumulated at the commune level.

As the communalization drive ended as a much abortive effort, the rural welfare system had to undergo essential changes. The administrative unit of rural welfare gradually devolved into the production brigade by 1959 and ultimately into the production team by 1963. Thereby was created the production team welfare system. The universalized free supply system was virtually abandoned while the five guarantees system for a selected group of needy families was reinstated as the team's responsibility. Amid the Cultural Revolution, commune and brigade revolutionary committees were created to assume welfare responsibilities and launch new collective health programs. The Cultural Revolution period was responsible for establishment of the internationally respected collective health care system (Perkins and Yusuf 1984 ; World Bank 1984). In other areas, however, it did not substantially alter the basic organizational structure of rural welfare. Thus, until the recent rural decollectivization, production teams continued to remain the basic unit of welfare administration for poor families ; whereas brigades and communes were responsible for relatively large scale projects in education and health care using funds from commune- and brigaderun enterprises and other sources (Parish and Whyte 1978).

Accompanying these organizational changes were changes in the range and coverage

of collective welfare. The five guarantees, the kernel of rural welfare, varied over time and across regions. Most included were food, clothing, and burial expenses ; variably included were fuel and school fees or medical care and housing. During the communalization drive, according to Dixon (1981 : 196), the system was expanded to the seven guarantees (including food, clothing, housing, health care and sick leave, maternity benefits, education, and funeral and wedding ceremonies), to the ten guarantees (additionally including hair cuts, entertainment, and heating), or even to the sixteen guarantees (additionally including lighting, tailoring, upbringing of children, transportation, a small marriage grant, and old-age care). A related, fundamentally significant development was that, as pointed out above these comprehensive benefits were rather universalized to all families rather than provided to officially designated poor families. The flip side of this change was, of course, the decrease of individualized income distribution from collective production. The list of guarantees was reduced immediately accompanying the post-Great Leap Forward readjustment, so that the five guarantees system was reinstated and has remained to date.

One point to be clarified is that the range of welfare coverage does not fully indicate the strength or efficacy of collective support. No less important was the level (or amount) of support in each guarantee. While this widely varied in different areas and different periods, it was nonetheless common that collective support rarely enabled beneficiaries to enjoy comparable conditions to their ave-

rage neighbors. Furthermore, collective assistance was attached by heavy pressure of neighbors and cadres for possible self-sustenance. Likewise, the proportion of the welfare fund in the total collective income was maintained at low levels. Although this proportion widely varied across different villages, countries, and provinces, it usually accounted for 1 to 3 percent of the collective income... team income, brigade income, or commune income depending on the different unit of welfare administration in each period. One exception was the communalization drive in which rural communes were encouraged to allocate up to 5 percent of their total income to their welfare fund (Dixon 1981).

These proportions, of course, represented significant amounts of financial resources in poor rural China. But they had to be spent on a wide range of purposes such as subsidies to five-guarantee families and others ; special care for dependents of revolutionary martyrs and soldiers ; cultural activities (e.g., recreation groups and theaters) ; education (e.g., schools and nurseries) ; health (e.g., health stations and insurance) ; welfare (e.g., Elderly People's Homes) ; and even communication facilities (e.g., commune radiorelay system). Deficit in the welfare budget frequently occurred, so that some of the collective reserve fund... originally prepared for production and emergency expenditure... was used to cover these activities. The budget limitation implied, on the one hand, a modicum of assistance for each welfare beneficiary and on the other, the need to maintain as few protected families as possible, that is, the need to emphasize each family's self-subsistence.

The target groups also varied over time and across areas. In general, richer areas were more generous in qualifying needy families for support mainly because their welfare funds were relatively abundant. Until, the late 1950s, only a broad notion of "deficit households"···those whose income were notably below their average neighbors"···was applied, and a very small segment, say, less than one percent, of the rural population was eligible for collective support. For instance, only 5.2 million out of 550 million rural residents were provided with welfare support of one kind or another in the mid 1950s (Dixon 1981). It should be noted that families of counter-revolutionaries, landlords, and rich peasants were excluded from welfare protection from the beginning (Parish and Whyte 1978). As mentioned above, welfare coverage was rather universalized during the communalization drive with much of income distribution geared to the principle of "to each according to his needs".

In the post-Great Leap Forward readjustment period was formalized the system of "five protection households" covering families of ex-servicemen, revolutionary martyrs, cadres, model workers, as well as the five-guarantees families (i.e., the aged, the children, the weak, the orphaned, the widowed, and the infirm and disabled). In addition, if the local situation allowed, families with an unusually high dependency ratio or notably insufficient income were supported even when

they were not classified as "five protection households"⁸⁾ During the Cultural Revolution, familial self-reliance was strongly emphasized and, when assistances was granted, proper political attitudes and good class backgrounds were critically considered (Dixon 1981).

Yet the five protected families were continuously taken care of in this period and subsequently in the 1970s (although the qualifications as cadres and model workers gradually became insignificant in the latter period). Throughout the Maoist era, partly because of universal work entitlement in collective farming and partly because of ideological exhortation for family self-sustenance, collectively protected families accounted for a very small segment of the rural population.

III. The Family and Collective Welfare in the Decollectivized Countryside

To sum up the preceding discussion, the historical changes in the organizational basis and in the range and coverage of collective welfare had direct implications for the self-supporting role of the peasant family because the negligible contribution of the state made family self-support the only alternative source of rural welfare. When the number of guarantees, the amount of assistance in each guarantee, and the number or categories of protected families were reduced, it automa-

8) In addition to these criteria, thorough consultations among various groups including potential beneficiaries, collective leaders, mass organizations (the Poor Peasants' Association and the Women's Federation), and other lay members were undertaken to effectively limit welfare assistance to truly needy families.

tically signaled that more peasant families had to depend on themselves for more types of basic needs. In fact, as far as the collective farming system ensured all families' work entitlement and egalitarian income distribution, self-support was a permanent principle for most families while collective welfare was perceived as a means of last resort. All this was founded upon the Maoist...and Marxist...welfare strategy of rectifying relations of production first.

Seen from this standpoint, agricultural de-collectivization in the post-Mao era was a process of demolishing the core foundations of social welfare to the extent that it came to weaken the organizational and financial basis of welfare assistance and, more fundamentally, disrupt the entitlement system of work. It thus generated a doubleedged threat to peasant welfare since the inevitable weakening of collective welfare was paradoxically accompanied by an increasing need of it, that is, by a rapid increase in the number of economically threatened families in the increasingly market-oriented economy.

Thus Chow (1988 : 60) emphatically points out the exigency of state engagement in the following :

Though this practice [of collective welfare] has been continued in some communes..., most local governments have obviously found it difficult to enforce as peasants are now largely responsible for their own piecer of land. As a result, many needy members who have no families to rely Affairs, with its bureaux at the local levels, to provide the necessary help and assistance...The way in which assistance is provided in the villages is extremelv unorganized and a more rational system is urgently called for.

Yet the Chinese state was not organizationally and financially ready to supplant, or even supplement, the waning collective welfare system. As Hussain and Feuchtwang (1988 : 70) pointed out, it was only "hoped" that collectivism would survive at least in protecting destitute neighbors.

Although this hope has been borne out in varying degrees in different localities, and although the overall improvement of rural living standards has not been unimpressive, the burden of economically and socially protecting needy people has rapidly fallen onto the family.

Table 1 shows largely stagnant levels of rural welfare expenditure in the reform era. More importantly, it documents that the Chinese state has allocated only a tiny portion of its welfare resources for the welfare of peasants who constitute an overwhelming majority of the Chinese population.

Similar pictures are acquired concerning the numbers of people who benefit from public assistance. More concrete situations of collective welfare in the Production Teams of Dahe People's Commune, Hebei Province are reported in Table 2. On average, each team's collective welfare budget and actual welfare spending gradually increased in the 1970s and the early 1980s and tapered off subsequently.

Support for needy team members was larger in the 1980s than in the 1970s (except for 1979), but it is notable how small the amount of support was. Even when we assume all support was distributed to one or two families, it could not provide even anything near bare subsistence. A more serious problem is

observed concerning health care and sanitation.

Although health care programs have been administered at the brigade level in most localities, Table 2 clearly shows that rural de-collectivization has led to rapid reduction of collective health care resources.

Recently, there are numerous proposals and discussions about new systems of rural welfare, and some localities have actually launched sporadic experimentations. But these efforts have been plagued by lack of stable institutional arrangements, inefficacy of ideological exhortation, and increased mobility

of villagers, all of which tend to make it difficult to induce villagers' sustained commitment to local mutual assistance. In the mean time, the peasant family has to function as the only effective welfare institution for most of the rural population. Furthermore, as Chow (1988 : 74) observed, the new proposals themselves emphasize the enlarged role of the family in the new rural welfare system.

This position of the Chinese state was propagated as early as 1980 when it adopted a new marriage law. The 1980 Marriage Law reiterated, as legal codes, filial obligation and

Table 1. Rural Welfare Expenditure and Beneficiaries in the Reform Period^{a)}

Year	(1) State Welfare expend ^{b)}	(2) Rural Social Relief ^{c)}	(3) <i>Wu bao</i> funds	(4) Poor Family relief	(5) Leprosy funds	(6) Persons enjoying <i>wu bao</i> (1,000)	(7) Persons receiving relief (1,000)
1978	1,891	245				3,150	
1979	2,211	263				.	
1980	2,031	250	42.44	163.22	7.78	2,944	
1981	2,172	223				2,899	
1982	2,143	230				2,989	
1983	2,404	261				2,951	
1984	2,516	284				2,961	37,959
1985	3,115	265	44.31	150.06	8.23	3,008	38,004
1986	3,558		42.44	163.22	7.79	2,647	39,902
1987	3,784		44.31	150.56	7.73	2,557	37,033

a) Entry unit is million Rbm Unless otherwise noted.

b) Other areas of state welfare expenditure include expenditure on pensions of urban workers ; urban social relief ; natural disaster relief.

c) Main components of rural social relief include (3), (4), (5)

Sources : *Statistical Yearbook of China 1986, 1988* for (1), (2), (7) ; *China Rural Statistics 1988* for (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) ; *China Social Statistics 1986* for (6) ; Author's computation for (5).

other elements of family mutual support. Again, legally stipulated were the duties of parents "to rear and educate their children"; of children "to support and assist their parents"; of husband and wife "to support and assist each other." Also stipulated were the duties, when affordable, of paternal and maternal grandparents "to support and assist underaged grandchildren whose parents are deceased"; of grandchildren "to give support

to their paternal and maternal grandparents whose children are deceased"; of elder brothers and sisters "to support and assist underaged younger brothers and sisters whose parents are deceased or unable to provide".

As compared to the 1950 Marriage Law, the new marriage law extended the legal range of support relations among family and kin members as the prime institution for welfare protection.

Table 2. Size and Composition of Collective Welfare Expenditure of Production Teams of Dahe People's Commune (Township), Hebei Province, 1970-1985^{a)}

Year	Balance from prior year	Current year addition	Total welfare expense	Support for needy	Educ'n expense	Health care and sanit'n	Other
1970	254.8	258.5	169.8	14.0	3.2	55.3	19.4
1971	340.6	213.7	187.3	13.8	5.5	53.1	24.5
1972	390.2	202.4	191.7	7.1	0.9	56.1	32.3
1973	358.7	220.2	206.0	18.3	3.2	62.9	68.4
1974	347.9	243.1	195.7	20.8	2.2	76.0	53.4
1975	608.7	295.1	142.7	18.1	2.2	101.9	45.2
1976	454.6	200.0	130.0	8.5	5.0	83.9	9.9
1977	652.0	407.0	340.1	10.9	6.6	141.0	119.6
1978	750.2	734.8	435.8	11.9	6.0	132.3	72.2
1979	1,440.2	1,023.0	407.6	106.5	31.9	112.2	118.5
1980	1,389.2	1,143.4	656.9	50.6	16.3	151.6	482.0
1981	1,833.2	1,190.3	660.5	55.9	13.4	59.6	531.8
1982	2,314.6	1,064.2	786.0	40.2	39.7	46.7	636.6
1983	2,536.3	582.5	805.6	50.9	154.7	38.3	565.0
1984	2,272.3	438.7	664.6	89.6	139.9	20.5	418.4
1985	2,070.5	522.2	510.8	39.3	129.3	5.6	349.2

a) All units are current year Rmb.

Source : Chang (1990c)

Table 3. Organization of Social Security Networks in the Villages (Proposal of the Ministry of Civil Affairs)

Level of economic development	Main programs to be introduced	Funding sources
Underdeveloped and hardship regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- <i>wu bao</i> system - relief for <i>hardship</i> families 	state relief fund plus local subsidies
Developing regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - welfare protection units - welfare undertakings for the needy -- savings cooperatives 	state relief fund plus contributions from collectives and individuals
Developed and affluent regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- social insurance for peasants 	contributions from insured peasants

Source : Chow (1988)

The idea of maximum family self-reliance for welfare was also incorporated into a new social security system, Social Security Networks in the villages, planned by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and approved by the State Council (see Table 3). A particularly significant institutional change is that, when economic conditions allow, self-financed social insurance is supposed to completely replace collective assisted social relief. That is, family self-reliance, and up-to-now normative pressure, is becoming a formally institutionalized reality in more prosperous regions.

In addition, according to Chow (1988 : 81), there were four principles attached to this plan :

1. The system must be parallel to the level of economic development of the country.
2. It must be based on the self-help principle

and stay within the financial capacity of the state, collectives and individuals. The concepts of rights and responsibilities, fairness and effectiveness must be given equal emphasis.

3. The system must begin with the lowest possible standard and be developed from thence.
4. It should stress the traditional Chinese ideals of respecting the elderly and taking care of the young.

These principles may be summarized as the following : considering the low level of economic development and the limited financial capacity of the state, rural social security should be maintained at a minimum level, partially financed by benefiting families themselves, and preceded by mutual family support.

In addition to immediate practical problems

of organizing and financing social security measures, the Chinese state is confronted with a theoretical problem of profound significance. As welfare protection cannot be universally provided as part of collective work arrangements in the decollectivized countryside, a separate system for specifically delivering welfare assistances is now needed. In other words, due to the changes in rural production relations, the Maoist (and Marxist) strategy of collectively enabling people to acquire basic social and material needs cannot be upheld anymore. Even when some localities have been successful in preserving mutual assistance programs, these now have to be managed with resources separately mobilized for collective welfare and thus specific and sustained commitment of cadres and villagers to the programs are required.

On the part of the state, rural welfare is now a *social policy* that requires its own theoretical, organizational, and financial ground somewhat independent of general economic management. This gradually approximates the Chinese situation to that of the so-called welfare state found in varying degrees in relatively affluent capitalist countries.

As the Chinese state now has to develop welfare programs as a separate social policy in the absence of collective economic organizations ensuring minimum security and welfare, it seems to have two alternatives... expanding the role of the state in welfare programs directly oriented to needy groups,

or encouraging families to reinforce traditional functions of social support (with financial incentives). A comparison of American and Japanese welfare systems is illuminating because they seem to by and large parallel the two options available for China. According to Samuel Preston, the family-dependent Japanese system has been much less costly and more effective than the more separately institutionalized American system.⁹⁾ In this regard, the Chinese strategy of enlarging the welfare function of the family may be somewhat justified considering China's relative cultural proximity to Japan and pressing financial difficulty. This implies that the state-family symbiosis in China's rural reform is important not only in improving agricultural and nonagricultural production but also in establishing a viable welfare system in the countryside.

IV. Three Major Areas of Family-Dependent Welfare

In the following, we will briefly examine three major areas of rural welfare which have been subjected to profound changes associated with the above-discussed transformation of the general welfare system or with the general economic institutional changes.

Grain Security: While grain (food) has been provided as one of the five guarantees for destitute families, it has also been a basic need of universal importance to all rural fa-

9) This point was presented at a colloquium speech at Brown University in 1988. Preston was particularly interested in the area of elderly care.

Table 4. Changes in Grain Distribution Schemes of Production Teams of Dahe People's Commune, Hebei Province, 1970–1982

Year	% distributed by family size			% distributed by workpoints		
	Mean	Least	Most	Mean	Least	Most
1970	74.8	60.0	100.0	25.2	0.0	40.0
1971	73.8	60.0	100.0	26.2	0.0	40.0
1972	74.2	60.0	100.0	25.8	0.0	40.0
1973	74.8	60.0	100.0	25.2	0.0	40.0
1974	75.2	70.0	100.0	24.8	0.0	30.0
1975	76.5	70.0	100.0	23.5	0.0	30.0
1976	74.8	70.0	100.0	25.2	0.0	30.0
1977	74.1	70.0	80.0	25.9	20.0	30.0
1978	72.3	70.0	80.0	27.7	20.0	30.0
1979	71.9	70.0	80.0	28.1	20.0	30.0
1980	69.5	60.0	80.0	30.7	20.0	60.0
1981	68.3	57.0	80.0	32.1	20.0	60.0
1982 ^{a)}	68.5	0.0	100.0	33.1	20.0	60.0

a) Different numbers of teams reported % distributed by family size (99 teams) and % distributed by workpoints (93 teams)

Source : Chang (1990c)

milies. Thus, in addition to the special relief arrangement for particularly needy families, there was a “co-insurance system [for grain] anchored in the state marketing system and collective cultivation” (Hussain and Feuchtwang 1988 : 71) for all peasant families. To provide details, at the team level, a sizable proportion—usually 70 percent—of the total disposable grain was rationed out to constituent families according to the number of mouths to be fed (see Table 4 for the actual situation of Dahe People's Commune). In this way were achieved universal entitlement to grain and nutritional equality among differ-

ent families. In case grain deficit occurred, as it did chronically in mountainous and other poor provinces, the state intervened to resell grains from other areas to the troubled area through the state marketing network. It has been reported that a quarter to third of the state grain purchases were re-sold in rural areas (Hussain and Feuchtwang 1988).

Implementation of the household responsibility systems and accompanying changes in marketing and pricing systems came to destroy these grain insurance mechanisms. Since 1983, grain ration has not been a feature of the agricultural production system anymore,

Table 5. Adoption of *da baogan* by Production Teams of Dahe Township, Hebei Province^{a)}

	1983	1984	1985
Total cultivated team land	327	327	327
Grain ration land ^{b)} (% of team land)	88 (28.6)	74 (22.4)	70 (19.5)
Contract land ^{c)} (% of team land)	190 (60.9)	161 (49.1)	166 (52.1)
Private plot land (% of team land)	9 (2.6)	10 (2.7)	10 (2.6)

a) Under the system of *da baogan*, team land has been distributed out for quota production to individual families, which retain their above-quota output after paying taxes and collective obligations.

b) Distributed for family grain security according to family size.

c) Distributed based upon production quota arrangement for each family.

Source : Chang (1990c)

as each family began to claim its income from independent grain production. If any, the practice of distributing a certain proportion of team land according to the size of each family...so-called grain-ration land...has constituted a sort of pre-production arrangement of grain security (see Table 5 for the case of Dahe Township). However, in Dahe Township and probably in most other areas, the initial proportion of grain-ration land was not large and even this has gradually declined. Let alone this decrease of grain-ration land, whether it actually ensures nutritional equality or not is now a question supposedly determined by the expertise and diligence of each family in agricultural production. That is, each family now assumes a full responsibility for its members' nutritional status.

The state engagement in grain-deficit areas

is also very problematic. Since agricultural producer prices for state purchase have been substantially upward-adjusted...even to surpass rural market prices, though for a short time...the state resale of grain to destitute areas, usually at prices cheaper than market prices and often lower than original purchase prices, bears an increasing financial burden. As a result, the efficacy of the state marketing network for inter-regional grain redistribution is constantly being weakened. This in turn implies that additionally needed grain for more and more families in grain-deficit areas has to be purchased directly from rural markets. Increasingly, grain entitlement, an essence of economic collectivism in the Maoist era, is becoming each family's individual responsibility.

Health Care : Like grain, health care has

been both a guarantee for particularly designated needy families and a universal concern for all peasant families. If one most distinguished achievement of China's socialism...and of the Cultural Revolution...is to be indicated, it will be the dramatic improvement in Chinese people's health status made possible by collective health care. The World Bank (1984) called it "the Chinese health care revolution" and, in fact, the international community grounded its 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration on "health care for all by the year 2,000" on the Chinese model of primary health care. Given the already established organizational frameworks (i.e., collective agricultural organizations) and the strong commitment of the state to public health, mobilization of financial resources and manpower for collective health projects was much easier than in other countries.

Rural health care for each individual has been anchored, financially, on the brigade-level cooperative health insurance system and collective welfare funds and, organizationally, on the compactly structured medical referral system ranging between barefoot doctors and post-secondarily educated doctors in Western and Chinese medicine at different levels of medical service. These systems functioned effectively, so that every rural resident acquired easy access to medical service without much financial burden (World Bank 1984 ; Perkins and Yusuf 1984.)

Individual family farming under the household production responsibility came to unravel these foundations of the "health care revolution". First of all, the cooperative health insurance system has been dismantled in

many production brigades(villages) since the rural reform began. For instance, according to the data provided by the Chinese government for the World Bank (1984), its coverage rose from 76.6% of all brigades in 1970 to a peak of 84.6% in 1975, but since then constantly declined to 68.8% in 1980 and to 58.2% in 1981. The decline is believed to have continued to date. Similarly declining were the numbers of barefoot doctors, rural mid-wives, brigade health aides. A World Bank investigation team (1984 : 71) put this trend as the following :

The weakening of collective organization in the countryside has impaired the mobilization of collective resources to finance basic needs. It has also generated a substantial increase in rural incomes, which appear both to have raised the opportunity cost of barefoot doctors' services and also to have stimulated a demand for higher quality health services not perceived to be available through the cooperative system.

In other words, rural decollectivization led to an undermining of financial and organizational foundation of both the cooperative insurance system and the health service network (see Table 2).

As the Chinese state continues to exhaust its limited resources for public health care in maintaining much better developed urban facilities and service programs, health care in the decollectivized countryside increasingly requires *self-reliance* at the *household level*. Affluent families will manage to acquire partially commercialized, fee-for-service health care when they are not catered to by cooperative services. In a similar situation, however, poor families will have to sacrifice other basic needs or endure illness unless they are

designated as officially protected families.

Elderly : The demise of family production in the post-revolutionary socialist development entailed a most damaging effect on rural elderly who had governed the multi-faceted traditional family life. Their domestic authority resting with ownership of major production assets and expertise in subsistence family farming could not be sustained in collective farming. Furthermore, the CPC once tried to guard its revolutionized society against any feudal sociocultural remnants which were most likely to be carried in the attitude of the aged population. Relatedly, family obligations and attachments (in particular, filial piety) were at times ideologically condemned as obstructive elements to a new socialist morality.

The early-to-mid 1950s saw a drastic increase of neglected and maltreated elderly people across the country...attesting to the weakening of traditional family support and care for the aged (Chao 1967).

Having devoted themselves to the revolutionary cause for such a long, arduous time, the peasant elderly, as far as they hoped to remain central to family-centered peasant life, were betrayed by the revolution itself.

For the Chinese state, the elderly population was nonetheless a major...perhaps the most important...target group for welfare protection. An early article in *Chinese Youth* (1 January 1957) noted :

According to the 1953 census, there were 64,000,000 men over sixty and women over fifty. If the government has to support all of these people even with a small sum, say 50 yuan per year for each person, the total cost...will come to 3,200,000,000 yuan. This

sum is greater than the total 1955 expenditure for welfare and education and is more than 10 percent of the total expenditure of the nation according to the budget of 1956. If the system of state care for the aged is adopted, it will plunge the nation into deep financial troubles and cause serious interference with the development of socialist reconstruction.

This overwhelming burden rendered the Chinese state to assume a rather self-contradictory position of encouraging peasant families to strengthen the Confucian tradition of family support and mutual dependence (Chang 1990a ; Davis-Friedmann 1983).

Earlier, the 1950 Marriage Law embodied such a position ; after innumerable cases of deserted and impoverished elderly provoked widespread emotional repercussions in the early-to-mid 1950s, a campaign was launched to reiterate young people's responsibility for elderly support (Chao 1967). Except for the communalization drive when many elderly were accommodated in commune-run Elderly People's Homes, "prime responsibility for the welfare of the aged has certainly remained with the family, as the state or the collective provides welfare support only for those unable to gain assistance from their families or to support themselves" (Dixon 1981 : 248).

As pointed out earlier, this policy line was reaffirmed in the 1980 Marriage Law which legally promulgated even grandchildren's as well as children's "duty to support" the elderly. Furthermore, the restoration of family farming under rural decollectivization has meant a recovery of the economic basis for autonomous family life. Thus, if their families have successfully seized the liberal opportu-

nity for improving economic conditions, rural elderly can now more comfortably enjoy family support without being constantly interrupted by the state.

However, there is another state policy which particularly worries young or middle-aged parents in rural China, that is, the one-child family policy (Kallgren 1985 ; Devis Friedmann 1985). Most of those elderly currently in need of living support from children are likely to have at least one or two cohabiting children who provide them with material support and emotional care. By contrast, for those who have to take into account old-age security in their current reproductive decision-making, the one-child norm brings serious anxiety and uncertainty.

The worry is particular grave when a couple has a daughter born...the daughter is not expected to earn as much as a son, nor is there a high hope for being supported by her under the same rood during their old age.

The state has not yet prepared any persuasive welfare programs in this regard but only cut down on social welfare expenditure, so that young parents are further convinced about the need for "at least one son", the minimum condition for family support in old age.¹⁰⁾ Even Elderly People's Homes, the main institutional mechanism for coping with the rapid growth of the elderly population, tend to reinforce young and old parents' desire for family support (see Table 6) ; for meager living conditions, emotional difficulties, and

Table 6. Elderly People's Homes in Rural Areas

Year	(1) Number of Homes	(2) Total persons adimitte (1,000)	(3) Percent elderly	(4) Percent Orphan	(5) Persent disabled	(6) Fund Per Capita (Rmb)
1979	7,470	106				174
1980	8,262	112				249
1981	8,544	114				264
1982	10,586	138				332
1983	14,047	169				433
1984	21,190	246				560
1985	27,103	309	89.4	2.6	8.0	485
1986	26,678	285	89.6	2.3	8.1	
1987	28,014	313	89.7	2.1	8.2	

Sources : China Rural Statistics 1988 for (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) ; China Social Statistics 1986 for (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) ; Author's computation for (3), (4), (5).

somewhat spartan life styles have been known as major traits of the institutionalized life therein (Dixon 1981 ; Davis Friedmann 1985).

V. Conclusion

The role of the family in supporting the elderly and children and in internally sharing frequent economic destitution has long been acknowledged and even encouraged by the Chinese state except during the communalization drive in the late 1950s. Relatedly, the rural welfare systems in general have been much worse equipped and financed than the urban welfare systems—one of the core aspects of the dualist position of the Chinese state. Even the much publicized “five guarantees” were mostly provided by the family itself while the redistributive mechanism of collective fund played only a supplementary role.

The institutional decollectivization in the reform period has generated an inevitable consequence of threatening the financial and organizational foundations of the rural welfare systems which had operated as part of collective production organizations. Furthermore, the fiscal crisis of the Chinese state makes it difficult to financially compensate for the weakened collective welfare. To make matters worse, the personnel of rural welfare institutions such as barefoot doctors are increasingly lured into personalized

professional service sectors under the changing environment.

It seems critical that all these setbacks are occurring when social groups in need of welfare benefits are rapidly increasing. While some people have been “allowed to get rich first” (Deng 1987 : 12) under the liberal development strategy of market socialism, many others have been left rather impoverished and unprotected. In addition, more and more people enter into transitional, insecure workplaces ; rural towns are increasingly populated with migrants who lack basic living accommodations ; the Chinese population is now rapidly ‘aging’ mainly as a result of the effective family planning effort. Facing all these problems, the Chinese state does not seem to have any other option than encouraging rural families to reinforce their traditional functions as a rural welfare institution.

Although the use of the familial organization for rural welfare still needs to be supported with tax benefits and other comprehensive state supports, the Chinese state has merely issued frequent calls for rural welfare reform instead of launching decisive policy measures. If any, it has increased its dependence on the family and on the mutual aid tradition among peasant families in providing material relief for needy family members and neighbors. The success or effectiveness of this

10) The internal contradiction between the reliance on the family for rural welfare (and for rural economic development) and the one-child family policy has yet to be theoretically resolved by the CPC. One related effort is to emphasize that smaller families, having less room for internal conflict, can be more harmonious and more productive (Su 1982). Yet this type of speculative advocacies of smaller families seem far overshadowed by the economic advantages of larger families in the decollectivized rural economy (Chang 1990c).

strategic dependence on the family will be largely determined by the extent of economic inequality and social differentiation created in the marketplace. An irony is that those families which are less successful in capturing new private economic opportunities...and thus need welfare protection...are also less likely to have sufficient family resources and networks for self-support.

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脫集團化 中國 農村의 社會福祉危機와 家族

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本論文에서는 中國 改革期間 중 農業集團體의 社會保障 機能이 점차 家族에게로 넘겨지는 過程을 研究했다. 集團農業이 解體되고 市場社會主義 體制가 導入된 가운데 中國 農村은 전반적으로 生産性이 向上 되었으나, 安定된 社會·經濟的 基盤을 잃은 상당수 農家들의 福祉需要가 增加되는 結果를 가져왔다. 改革以前 시기의 社會福祉는 集團生産 및 不平等分配을 통한 經濟過程의 방책이 중심이었기 때문에 農業의 脫集團化는 곧 社會福祉制度의 근본적 危機를 意味했다. 이같은 상황에서, 財政的 어려움을 겪고 있는 中國政府는 農村家族의 傳統的인 自體社會保障機能을 復活·強化시키기 위해 노력해 왔다. 本 研究는 이 같은 國家의 家族에 대한 依存關係를 一般 福祉政策의 變化 및 食糧調達·醫療·老後保障의 側面에서 分析하였다.

附 錄

- I. 1989年 人口移動 結果
- II. 1989年 人口移動 深層調查 結果
- III. 1989年 死亡原因統計 結果要約

經濟企劃院 調查統計局

