

The Ministry of Internal Affairs Reports to Zhou Enlai on the 1950 Opium and Drug Prohibition Work

19-04-1951

The main contents of the report are as follows:

1. Since the Government Administration Council issued a directive strictly prohibiting opium and drug use in February 1950, extensive anti-opium and anti-drug propaganda has been carried out and received widespread support from the people. In many regions, beyond general publicity efforts, discussions and decisions were made through people's representative meetings and farmers' representative meetings. Some provinces and cities criticized and disciplined cadres who failed to enforce the ban effectively, and rewarded those cadres and citizens who made notable contributions to the anti-drug campaign—measures that achieved significant results.
2. A stern struggle was waged against drug traffickers as well as bandits and spies. According to incomplete statistics from the Civil Affairs Department of the Southwest Military and Administrative Committee, over 10,000 drug-related cases were uncovered in the region. More than 10,000 criminals involved in trafficking, producing, and selling drugs were apprehended. Among them, 37 were sentenced to death, and over 1,000 were sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment. Authorities seized more than 948,000 taels of narcotics, over 220,000 pieces of smoking paraphernalia, shut down more than 5,400 opium dens, confiscated 13 vehicles used for drug transport, and one machine for drug production. All confiscated drugs were publicly burned. Public trials and mass rallies attended by thousands—even tens of thousands—in cities like Xi'an, Chongqing, Kunming, and Chengdu were held to punish drug offenders and burn narcotics, which were well-received by the masses. These facts prove that harsh repression of counterrevolutionary drug offenders was the correct approach.
3. Key steps were taken to control the transportation and sale of drugs. Rather than emphasizing forced eradication of opium or compulsory detox programs, the government encouraged voluntary cessation of planting and use. However, traffickers and sellers were dealt with severely. This cut off the drug supply chain, caused opium prices to plummet, and facilitated the smooth progress of crop eradication.
4. Many addicts were forced to quit opium due to the unavailability of narcotics. With the combined efforts of government persuasion and public supervision, a conscious movement among addicts to quit emerged.
5. In old revolutionary base areas, opium cultivation was almost completely eradicated:
 - In the Northeast, planting was banned before the 1950 sowing season began. In remote areas of Rehe Province, 242 mu (around 40 acres) of opium seedlings were discovered and immediately destroyed.
 - In newly liberated areas, prohibition also made substantial progress. In Northwest China, the provinces of Ningxia and Qinghai had no opium cultivation outside of Tibetan pastoral areas.
 - Gansu Province eliminated more than 60% of its opium fields.

- Shaanxi eliminated 55%.
- In the newly liberated northern province of Suiyuan, 174,000 mu of opium seedlings were eradicated, about 80% of the total planted area.
- In the Southwest, where opium cultivation reached 15 million mu before liberation, it was reduced to just over 6 million mu by 1950, and it was estimated that cultivation could be nearly eliminated in 1951.
- Even in traditionally opium-producing counties of Yunnan such as Qiubei and Guangnan, most areas had successfully eradicated cultivation.