

Dates of Meeting:

10-5-1951 – 16-5-1951

Type of Meeting:

3rd national conference on public security works

Major Agenda Items:

Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign

Speeches and Reports:

Liu Shaoqi: speech, may 11, 1951

He pointed out the significance or the problem, He told the conference that a solution for accommodating the high numbers of prisoners was urgently needed. Ways had to be found for the prisoners to be guarded, organized, reformed and, if necessary, punished (Cai 1988: 9).⁷ He proposed that the Public Security apparatus should be in charge of the prison sector. Liu, furthermore, suggested organizing the camps in such a way that the prisoners were given incentives to comply with the rules and to engage earnestly in labor. Those who work should be rewarded: "If One works well, give him a little reward or give him a little pay. Give him small things like cigarettes, meat, or soap in order to heighten his activity." Another point he made was related to the benefits of prison labor for the national economy: "If we handle this matter well, it has many benefits. This is a workforce numbering XXX people (deleted in the text. KM) as much as the whole workforce of a Bulgaria, [this workforce] does not insurance or wages: it can do a lot of work, can build great things. In the Soviet Union, prisoners were used to build several canals. If we do this well, it has economic and political benefits. Because we did not kill them, we can let them work and possibly they will at some time in the future turn into good people " it is now better to err to the Right than to the Left in the Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign.

"Once the gongs and drums of resisting the United States and assisting Korea begin to make a deafening sound, the gongs and drums of the land reform and suppression of counter-revolutionaries become barely audible, and the latter becomes much easier to implement. Without the loud gongs and drums of resisting the United States and assisting Korea, those of the land reform (and zhenfan) would make unbearable noise. Here a landlord is killed and there another is beaten; there would be fuss everywhere Things would then become difficult. Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750 Door Odd Arne Westad pg.322

Yang Kuisong. Reconsidering the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries The China Quarterly, 193, March 2008, pp.102-121. PDF file.

Peng Zhen, "[Report on Political and Legal Work](#)," *Current Background* 91: in which he addressed the problems brought on by a lack of legal personnel. He cautioned against mass participation unfettered by legal procedure and stressed the need to establish political/legal committees "responsible for directing and linking up the work of organs concerning civil affairs, public security, judicial affairs, bureaux of investigations, law courts, and supervision as well as for the disposal of mutual relations between organization and work" These committees would serve to control further mass participation in the campaign against counterrevolutionaries.

that the time for complete and detailed codes of law was not yet ripe and that they were not urgently necessary; in any case, laws should proceed gradually from the simple to the complex, from general rules to detailed articles, and from single decrees to comprehensive codes.

affirms the point made above by Liu Shaoqi.

Mao Zedong, May 15, 1951

"[mass line & Resolutions of the Third National Conference on Public Security](#)

articulates the resolutions of the conference as enumerated in Other Decisions and/or Actions: below.

Luo Ruiqing, Speech: summarizes the experience with counterrevolutionaries during the previous seven months.

"[we] must not miss this opportunity. Probably this is our only operation for suppressing counterrevolutionaries. This will not happen again in the future and therefore is a golden opportunity. Full advantage of this asset must be taken. The purpose is not just to kill several counterrevolutionaries. More importantly, this [campaign] is for mass mobilization." "The process of reform through labour of criminals ... is essentially an effective method of purging and eliminating all criminals. Labour reform production directly aids in the development of the nation's industries and also saves the nation a great deal of expenses. It is a dependable source of wealth." "Looking at it from an economic perspective, these counterrevolutionary

criminals, if not executed right off, are a source of labour, and if we organise them and force them into the service of the nation, ,, they will have a definite effect on national development.” See remark

Other Decisions and/or Actions:

Conference adopted resolution with the following measures:

- Take steps immediately to organize reform through labor, decision to put 300,000 prisoners to work;
- Have the public security organs conduct inspection in a more systematic way;
- Execute 10-20 percent of those sentenced to death and place the remainder on probation with forced labor to see whether they reform adequately;
- Err on the side of leniency rather than severity in passing sentences;
- Strictly examine the name lists of the people identified for arrest or execution and carry out propaganda work and education extensively and well.

Remarks:

1. The resolution that was adopted on May 15, 1951 was a crucial document that determined the basic organization of the Laogai.⁹ One of the important issues addressed was that of the supervision of the prison sector. The conference approved the ruling that the Ministry' of Public Security should from now on oversee the whole prison sector. The resolution also contained detailed regulations that mapped out the internal structure of the Laogai (Sun 1994: 22). Convicts sentenced to five years and more should be organized in detachments that were administered by Laogai organs at provincial level. Major production and construction projects, which were drafted in accordance with the need for national reconstruction, were all to be assigned to Laogai detachments. The Laogai detachments were, in organizational terms, tantamount to large labor camps; they formed, so to speak, the backbone of the Laogai system (Domenach 1995: 89). Convicts sentenced to more than one year, but less than five years were to be sent to smaller Laogai units administered by special districts or the counties. They would therefore remain in the vicinity of their homes and under the control of local authorities. Convicts sentenced to a prison term of under one year should work under surveillance and remain in their units and homes. Apart from labor and production, it was stressed that the camps should organize educational measures in order to re-educate the criminals. Education in the Laogai included political, ideological and cultural education as well as hygienic education. Good performance in regard to thought reform and labor should be rewarded with privileges up to parole, while insurgent behavior was to be punished, the most severe available punishment being the extension of one's prison term.

Finally, the resolution called for the creation of an administrative apparatus responsible for the Laogai. The Public Security organs at all levels were called upon to open special bureaus for the administration of the Laogai facilities. The provinces and large cities should assign 20 to 30 officials to the Laogai bureaus, the districts, 5 to 10 and the counties, 2 to 3. The regulations concerning the administrative structure are quite remarkable, in particular when compared with the Soviet Union. The Chinese leadership obviously did not want the creation of separate, central administration for the Laogai, which was the system in the Soviet Union. Instead, the existing Public Security apparatus was used. All large Laogai divisions or Laogai camps were thus governed by the provincial Public Security organs and not by any central agency in Beijing. While the central agency for the corrective labor camps in Moscow (Gulag) was in charge of all camps (Applebaum 2002), the Public Security Ministry in Beijing did not directly have command of the majority of Laogai institutions. Apart from a few inter-provincial infrastructure projects, the "eleventh department" of the Ministry confined itself to loosely overseeing the provincial Public Security Bureaus which in turn supervised the day to day operations of the camps.¹⁰

From May 1951 onwards, the establishment of Laogai started on a large scale. In order to coordinate the Laogai policy, the central government organized joint administrative committees staffed from different departments such as public security, finances, water works, public construction, heavy industry and railways at various branches and levels of the administration. The committees should implement concrete steps for setting up Laogai institutions. A very important issue that was discussed at the meetings was related to the contribution of the Laogai to the national economy.

1. On May 16, 1951, the CCP Central Committee issued a classified notice demanding that the PLA and the CCP, as a whole, must firmly carry out resolutions of the Third National Conference of Public Security. The resolutions specifically indicated that in rural areas, killing, as a rule, should not exceed five per thousand of the local population. In urban areas, the quota was 0.5 per thousand. Under special circumstances, exceeding the limits could be allowed by the CCP Central Bureau after an appeal was filed.
2. The resolution specifically instructs cadres to kill the counter-revolutionaries with quota: no more than 1 out of 1,000 in rural areas, and 0.5 out of one thousand in urban areas. Moreover, within the Party, the People's Government, the People's Liberation Armed Forces, the education and cultural sectors, the businesses, all religions, all democratic parties, and civil organizations, the counter-revolutionaries who were sentenced to death should be executed about 10% to 20% in principle and send the rest of them to labor camps.
"Only by doing so," says the document, "can we acquire social sympathy, avoid making mistakes ourselves, disintegrate the enemy and put the task of completely exterminating the enemy in a favorable light, and preserve massive labor power for our state constructions." For those villages and cities where the quotas of killing have already been met, the CCP asks them to "stop massive killing."
- 4 Mao's own explanation of his change of mind was revealed in a conversation with Luo Ruiqing, Minister of Public Security. Mao reasoned that the CCP could not suppress counterrevolutionaries on a large scale earlier because conditions were not yet ready, as there were any number of outstanding economic and financial problems and the CCP's relationship with the bourgeoisie was still too fraught. Now that economic and financial problems were basically solved, and the war of resisting the United States and assisting Korea had already begun, "[we] must not miss this opportunity. Probably this is our only operation for suppressing counterrevolutionaries. This will not happen again in the future and therefore is a golden opportunity. Full advantage of this asset must be taken. The purpose is not just to kill several counterrevolutionaries. More importantly, this [campaign] is for mass mobilization."
- 5 Resolution drafted under Mao's personal supervision.
This meeting convened toward the end of a very severe campaign to suppress counterrevolutionary elements in the urban areas.
Mao Zedong viewed the large number of prisoners as a huge source of manpower, and therefore he added an amendment to the "Resolution of the Third National Public Security Conference", as follows:
"The large number of people who are serving their sentences is an enormous source of labor. In order to reform them, in order to solve the problems of the prisons, in order that these sentenced counterrevolutionaries will not just sit there and be fed for nothing, we should begin to organize our Laogai work. In the areas where this work already exists, it should be expanded."
Among the results was the continuation of the SAD as the nation's premier foreign and domestic intelligence service.
In addition, two new CCP intelligence organizations were established. A central United Front Work Department was established, charged with maintaining links with Chinese citizens overseas who could be used, when needed, for covert operations. Also created was an International Liaison Department to maintain relations with out-of-power communist and revolutionary groups and to fund, train, and supply arms to some of those groups.
A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century. Jeffrey T. Richelson - Oxford University Press.: New York.: 1997. 243
- 6 Over a million people lingered in prison, and Luo Ruiqing ordered all arrests to cease for several months so that the backlog could be cleared. But by the summer the lull in the

slaughter came to an end, as Luo expressed regret for the kindness shown to enemies of the regime and announced that 'we must kill and resolutely eliminate the remnant forces of counterrevolution'. *Minutes of the Third National Conference on Public Security, 16 and 22 May 1951, Shandong, A1-4-9, p. 38; see also Shandong, A51-1-28, p. 215; Luo Ruiqing's talk at the Government Administration Council, 3 Aug. 1951, Shandong, A51-1-28, p. 212.* Tragedy of liberty