

Why Does the Government Apply the Policy of “Death Sentence with a Two-Year Reprieve and Forced Labor to Observe Performance” for Certain Counterrevolutionary Criminals?

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Question:

Recently, Beijing handled a group of counterrevolutionary criminals. For some of them, the authorities applied the policy of sentencing to death with a two-year reprieve, forcing them into labor to observe their behavior. Is this method dangerous? Does it weaken our struggle against counterrevolutionaries? Is it a waste of grain? Since the aim is to reform them, why sentence them to death at all—doesn't that impose a mental burden on the criminal?

Answer:

The reason for sentencing some counterrevolutionary criminals to death with a two-year reprieve is this: based on their crimes, they *should* be executed. However, because they do not have blood debts, public anger is not intense, or the harm they caused to the state has not reached the most serious level, the state adopts this method of temporarily not executing them, giving them two years of forced labor and transformation, and offering a final chance to repent.

If within those two years they genuinely reform, the sentence can be commuted to life imprisonment, followed by long-term labor reform. If they show even better behavior, further commutation may be considered. If they fail to reform and resist transformation, the death sentence can be carried out at any time.

This policy is certainly lenient. But is it dangerous? Does it harm the interests of the state and the people? Does it weaken the seriousness of our struggle against counterrevolutionaries? Our answer is no.

A two-year reprieve doesn't mean automatic release after two years—it means that whether they are executed depends entirely on how they behave during the reprieve. If they refuse to reform, they can be executed at any time. Even if they are willing to reform, they will still be sentenced to life or long-term imprisonment, thus eliminating their ability to harm the people again.

Is the two-year reprieve a waste of grain? We believe it is not. The People's Government will organize and compel them to work and produce, not let them eat for free. Forcing them to work not only saves government resources but allows them to contribute back—"producing grain" for the state. This serves both as punishment and as reform. It benefits some of the country's development efforts and also reduces the people's burden.

Since the goal is to reform them, why sentence them to death and give them a psychological burden? We believe the death sentence reflects the severity of their past crimes. The two-year reprieve is a way to give them a chance to change going forward. This is not increasing their burden, but reducing it. If we must call it a burden, it is a necessary one. Since they deserve death but we still offer them a path to live and reform, isn't it appropriate—even necessary—to place some pressure on them to reform themselves?

In short, our policy of eliminating counterrevolutionaries is firm and unwavering, but there is more than one method to achieve it. The policy of sentencing to death with a two-year reprieve is a *new method*, and its goal is still to completely eliminate counterrevolutionaries—not to weaken our firm struggle. The People's Government will neither relax in its stern suppression of resolute counterrevolutionaries nor give up hope for reforming those who still can be changed. This policy

serves the interests of the people and is more effective in thoroughly eliminating counterrevolution. It embodies the correct policy of combining repression with leniency.