

**Dates of Meeting:**

10-5-1951 – 16-5-1951

**Type of Meeting:**

3<sup>rd</sup> national conference on public security works

**Attendance:**

Liu Shaoqi presided

**Major Agenda Items:**

Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries Campaign

**Speeches and Reports:**

**Liu Shaoqi:** speech, may 7, 1951

a report on the importance of the Party's propaganda work. He emphasized the need for the propaganda front to vigorously study, research, and promote Marxism-Leninism, using it to educate the people and raise the entire nation's class consciousness and ideological standards.

The report stated that mass propaganda, education of Party members, and ideological criticism are all essential components of Party work. It criticized the insufficient leadership by Party committees at all levels in the past, where propaganda work was often overlooked or wholly delegated to propaganda departments without proper oversight. Mistakes in propaganda work, unlike other fields, can quickly lead to serious consequences. Thus, strengthening Party leadership over propaganda is a decisive issue.

In parallel, propaganda organs must also be strengthened and their capabilities enhanced—this is key to improving the quality of propaganda work. Regarding the national economic construction policy, Liu noted that although some have already begun discussing socialism, such talk is premature—at least ten years too early. While it is necessary to speak of socialism in ideological education, practically speaking, socialist construction would not be feasible within the next decade. Depending on the situation after ten years, steps towards socialism may be considered, but this must be determined based on actual conditions.

**Liu Shaoqi:** speech, may 11, 1951

He pointed out the significance of 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).<sup>7</sup> He proposed that the Public Security apparatus should be in charge of the prison sector. Liu furthermore, suggested organizing the tamps 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 resolutions of the Third National Public Security Conference"](#)

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

**Chen Yun**: Report 16 may 1951 on the national fiscal and economic situation. He noted:

According to statistics from the former government, China had approximately 1.45 billion mu of arable land. Prior to the War of Resistance Against Japan, annual grain production peaked at over 270 billion jin. This declined to just over 210 billion jin by 1949 but recovered to over 240 billion jin in 1950. Overall, agricultural production had not yet reached pre-war levels.

To develop agricultural production, the following measures were proposed:

1. **Completion of Land Reform in Newly Liberated Areas** – This is critical for increasing agricultural output. Only land reform can truly motivate the peasants.
2. **Disaster Prevention and Water Control** – China, as a large country, faces the constant threat of floods and droughts. Annual budgets must allocate funds for disaster relief. Water infrastructure must be regularly maintained; otherwise, it cannot withstand flooding. Nationally, water resources remain insufficient, and droughts are frequent in many areas. In the long term, water conservation must be prioritized, including the construction of reservoirs, ponds, and dams, especially in mountainous areas where afforestation and soil conservation are essential. In some northern regions, wells must be dug to secure water.

Flood control and drought mitigation both require substantial annual investment. Water conservancy is foundational and a long-term endeavor. In preparation for natural disasters, it is essential to maintain a reserve of at least 10 billion jin of grain. This not only helps ensure stability but also serves strategic purposes should imperialist powers provoke conflict. Grain is a strategic resource, and grain reserves must rely primarily on peasant accumulation in good harvest years.

3. **Railway Construction in the Southwest and Northwest** – This will help adjust agricultural distribution. The Southwest has surplus grain, but due to poor transportation, agricultural products cannot be transported out, nor can industrial goods be brought in. Whether for economic or national defense reasons, railway construction in these regions is vital. If grain reserves and railway development are both achieved, food shortages can be alleviated and agricultural distribution adjusted. For instance, the Northeast can grow more soybeans, the South more cotton, expanding cotton cultivation from 57 million mu to over 80 million mu. Rubber, being a strategic material, should be planted extensively in Hainan Island and other suitable areas.

Adjusting crop planting areas can significantly raise peasant incomes. Although China used to rely on imports for grain, cotton, and other agricultural goods, and while the situation has improved, agricultural development remains a top priority. Without agriculture, industry cannot flourish.

**Liu Shaoqi:** 23 May 1951 concluding report on the history and current state of the Party's propaganda work. He summarized the following six key points:

1. **Evaluation of Past Party Propaganda**

In the course of long and arduous revolutionary struggle, the Party broadly propagated Marxism-Leninism, simplifying its principles and adapting them into Chinese national forms—a tremendous and difficult task. Although Marxism-Leninism originated in Europe, the Party's efforts have successfully integrated it with the real-life struggles of China's working people. Moreover, the CCP has significantly enriched and developed Marxist-Leninist theory, adding many new tools to its arsenal. These theoretical innovations are highly applicable to revolutionary movements in the East, especially in colonized and semi-colonial countries. As a result, China's theoretical level has reached an unprecedented height.

## **2. Current Situation of Party Propaganda Work**

With the victory of the revolution, conditions are now more favorable for promoting Marxism-Leninism. Raising class consciousness cannot rely solely on experiential knowledge—it must also be elevated through theoretical understanding, especially for Communist Party members. The widespread dissemination and acceptance of Marxist-Leninist ideas among the masses provides a uniquely advantageous environment for propaganda work today. Under the new conditions, the Party's task is to use Marxist-Leninist theory and methodology to educate both Party members and the people. This is a long-term mission.

## **3. Strengthening Future Propaganda Work**

Propaganda is fundamentally ideological work, which underpins all revolutionary efforts. Every Communist Party member is obliged to propagate Marxism-Leninism, as stipulated by the Party constitution. The Party cannot rely solely on professional propaganda organs; instead, it must mobilize all members, non-Party activists, and sympathetic communists to participate. The Propaganda Department should serve as a planning, coordination, and leadership body. It should regularly (every few months or half-yearly) assess and guide propaganda work throughout the Party. A variety of propaganda tools should be employed, including: networks of propagandists, newspapers, periodicals, publishing, theater, film, art, music, radio, and schools—all of which should be strengthened and mobilized.

## **4. Integration with the Party's Central Tasks**

Propaganda work must align closely with the core tasks determined by Party committees at all levels. Detached from these tasks, propaganda work will fail. Every piece of work must be accompanied by political messaging to the masses. Only in this way can practical efforts succeed and political consciousness be raised. The actual core tasks and the focus of propaganda must be unified. Propaganda organs must mobilize all tools to serve and guarantee the success of the Party's practical work.

## **5. Establishing Routine Propaganda Structures and Activities**

The Party must maintain constant propaganda efforts among the masses to build confidence, raise awareness, and drive progress. This includes disseminating domestic and international news, publicizing Party policies, exposing counterrevolutionary propaganda, and engaging in critique and debate of erroneous ideas—all of which contribute to democratic practice. The more people pay attention, the more ideas will be generated, creating demand for even stronger propaganda efforts. Content and methods must be tailored to local and current conditions, and coordinated with Party leadership, not decided unilaterally by propaganda departments.

## **6. Emphasizing Ideological Struggle and Opposing Liberalism**

Party members must reject liberal attitudes and tendencies. Within the Party, only one ideology is legitimate: proletarian, Marxist-Leninist thought. While non-proletarian ideas may be permitted outside the Party, they must still be criticized and corrected. Within the Party, no ideological deviation is acceptable. Some ideas may wear the guise of Marxism but are in fact anti-proletarian or even anti-Marxist. Party members must be vigilant and discerning toward such tendencies.

### **Other Decisions and/or Actions:**

Conference adopted resolution with the following measures:

- [Resolution on Organizing the Labour Reform of Prisoners in the Country.pdf](#)
- 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.

*Klaus Muhlhahn "repaying blood debt" state violence and mass crimes during the 1950's in China 42-43 Berlin 2007*

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*