

Mass Campaigns in the 1950's

Key Issues:

The purpose and key features of the mass campaigns

The methods that made them possible

Their success and failures

Main Topics/Campaigns:

- Context in which the CCP established its rule over China and Mao's role with the system of government
- Land reform/collectivisation
- Resist America - aid Korea
- Patriotic health campaigns
- Suppression of Counter Revolutionaries campaign
- Combat Illiteracy campaign
- Three Antis Campaign
- Five Antis Campaign

Source: A great source is www.chinese posters.net which has posters for all the campaigns, simply search Campaigns 1949-65 or click here for the list of themes <https://chinese posters.net/themes/index.php>

Their comment about the **purpose of the mass campaigns** is to the point:

An almost continuous stream of mass movements that addressed national, international, political, moral and social topics arked the first decade of the PRC. This 'flow of campaigns', organized both at the national and the local levels, and in the rural and urban areas, was intended to strengthen the support for the CCP and eliminate various types of enemies, to deepen the understanding of the new ideology that guided China, and to promote economic production. The goals for most of these initial mass movements were comparatively easy to understand.

Fear of the party ran throughout the country.

Land Reform and Collectivisation

See previous notes but, in addition, note that alongside Land Reform and Land redistribution ran the **Speak Bitterness** campaign which allowed peasants to air their grievances (ku 苦) against their landlords. These denunciation meetings ranged in ferocity from mild/reluctant to fierce and aggressive where the outcome could be the murder of the landlords.

This campaign was a key part of the land redistribution policy but also helped spread the Communist word AND spread fear/obedience to the party.

Source: Alpha History website

Resist America-Aid Korea

The Chinese entered the Korean War in 1950. The US landed in South Korea in June. Zhou Enlai (China's foreign minister) declared 'North Korea's defence is our defence' and demonstrations ensued. In October 1950, US forces crossed the 38th parallel and China declared they were fully engaged in the war.

NB The North Koreans had crossed the parallel in the first instance.

NB Mao was 'encouraged' into the war by the USSR (ie did he have a choice?)

Thus, as Mao himself may not have been entirely convinced of whether China's involvement was sensible, plus he was struggling with the economy and unification at home, he needed to gather support for his campaign.

This link to Chinese Posters.net has great posters and good discussion of their meaning

<https://chinese posters.net/themes/north-korea.php>

Patriotic Health Campaigns

<https://chinese posters.net/themes/index.php>

This was directly linked to a concern over US germ warfare but is not entirely separate from the public health campaigns discussed earlier. (Education notes)

Suppression of Counter Revolutionaries Campaign 1950-52

Source: Alpha History

<https://chinese posters.net/themes/counterrevolutionaries.php>

<https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/dealing-with-opposition/>

The precursor to the Suppression of Counter Revolutionaries campaign was launched in March 1950 as an attempt to wipe out opposition to the CCP, particularly Nationalists. As such, it started in the South with the imposition of Martial Law in Chongqing (Jiang Jieshi's capital during WW2) where insurgency had started. End 1950, Chongqing was under control, 7400 former Nationalists were jailed and weapons seized.

The campaign was extended but with a less brutal approach as Mao understood he needed the support of some Nationalists as he needed their skills. Propaganda was used effectively.

Other religious and political groups were banned: Christian Churches, Buddhist temples, Shanghai's Green Gang.

The People's Tribunals - est'd 1950 - were also used to deal with anyone who 'plot sabotage activities and undermine social security'

The campaign gained momentum in 1951 with mass meetings in stadiums/public spaces where urban counter revolutionaries (ie Speak Bitterness was the rural version) must be denounced. Mao stated 700,000 counter revolutionaries or 'class enemies' were killed in this time. Some say this does not include many suicides (up to 500,000).

The campaign was halted in July 1953.

Combat Illiteracy Campaign

See previous notes

<https://chinese posters.net/themes/ combat-illiteracy.php>

Three Antis Campaign (*san fan*)

Launched in November 1951 to eradicate three specific evils in government:

- Corruption
- Waste
- bureaucracy

This followed on from the campaign by Gao Gang in Manchuria to target CCP cadres who were embezzling money.

Main targets: urban CCP officials with access to finances and business contacts. Again, cadres were encouraged to identify and criticise officials with links to business or those who had taken bribes. Those targeted were called 'tigers'.

Ended October 1952

Key victims of the campaign: Liu Qingshan and Zhang Zishan of Tianjin. Accused of embezzling funds set for large scale civil construction works and for inflating costs of contracts.

Executed Feb 1952 although their guilt is uncertain.

They were used as an example to other party members.

Five Antis Campaign

Launched early 1952, concurrent to the 3 Antis.

Five antis were:

- Bribery
- Tax evasion
- Theft of state property
- Cheating on government contracts
- Stealing economic information

Targets: Businessmen and Capitalists who were 'suspected'. Capitalism was said to spread greed and thus nurture corruption hence the targeting of businessmen and capitalists.

Secret denunciations and false accusations abounded. By 1953, 340,000 businesses had been found guilty of one of the Antis.

More were terrorised into handing over their businesses to the state, public meetings again used, suicides were common.

