

"Directive of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Addressing the Issues of 'Mid-level' and 'Inner-layer' Personnel"
May 21, 1951

With the success of various construction efforts, the deepening of political education among staff, and the development of the Korean War effort, land reform, and especially the nationwide campaign to suppress counterrevolutionaries, all types of counterrevolutionary elements and politically questionable individuals who have infiltrated our organizations — primarily among retained personnel and newly recruited intellectuals — are currently in a state of extreme anxiety and unease.

Some of these individuals are urgently seeking to clear themselves of suspicion, to confess their past, and to unburden themselves so they can focus on serving the people. Some wish to openly declare their break with reactionary parties, start a new life, or atone for past misdeeds. Some are so distressed they suffer from insomnia, nervous breakdowns, flee, or even commit suicide. Only a small number of die-hard counterrevolutionaries persist in their hostility, continue sabotage, or attempt to lie low and wait for an opportunity to act.

If this issue is not resolved, many will be unable to work with peace of mind, and the Party and the state will have difficulty accomplishing their tasks. Therefore, we must seize the current moment and, starting now and continuing through the summer and autumn, carry out a preliminary, organized, and step-by-step purge of staff in a rectification-style campaign, to clarify the situation, deal with the most prominent issues, and enhance the purity of our organizations.

Accordingly, the Central Committee issues the following instructions:

1. Scope of the Purge

The purge should cover all staff in democratic parties, government, military, mass organizations, financial, economic, cultural, and educational institutions, as well as students in cadre schools — focusing mainly on retained personnel and newly recruited intellectuals. The primary targets are various counterrevolutionary elements. The purge should begin with leadership and key departments, then extend to ordinary departments, and finally cover all cadres and support staff.

In government and united front-related organizations (including democratic parties), the purge should be led by appropriate leadership bodies such as the National Committee Standing Committee in Beijing, or local consultative committees in other cities. In schools and factories, non-Party personnel must participate in the purge committees to avoid isolated action by Party members alone. Leadership may be reinforced with Party groups if necessary. Within the Party and Youth League, ideological standards should follow the Party or League charters, and leadership should remain with the respective Party or League committees.

2. Method and Procedure

Due to the heavy workload and shortage of experienced cadres in some areas, exhaustive one-by-one investigations should be avoided in all but the top-level and key departments. Instead, a rectification-style method should be adopted:

Start with studying documents on the suppression of counterrevolutionaries, followed by reports from leaders to build ideological momentum. Then, call on individuals with problems (not everyone) to honestly and voluntarily confess their histories and disclose hidden issues. They should also report known counterrevolutionaries, suspects, or hidden problems of others.

During the leaders' reports, the following should be emphasized:

- Those who previously hid or exaggerated their history should correct it.
- Those who haven't explained clearly should clarify.
- Those who had ties to reactionary organizations or engaged in counterrevolutionary activities should confess.
- Those holding reactionary or illegal items should turn them in voluntarily.

This way:

- The guilty may receive leniency,
- Minor offenders may be pardoned,
- The innocent may be unburdened,
- And all can earn the trust of the Party and the people.

Those who fail to be truthful will be considered disloyal if discovered later. Those who conceal others' counterrevolutionary actions will also be considered disloyal.

Experience shows that this approach leads many to voluntarily confess or be exposed by others, clarifying the political makeup of staff.

Leadership must promptly make appropriate conclusions based on the severity and sincerity of confessions, allowing honest individuals to return to work peacefully. This strengthens the majority, isolates the minority, and focuses resources on more serious cases.

3. Dealing with Unrepentant Counterrevolutionaries

Some die-hard counterrevolutionaries or those guilty of serious crimes will not confess, or will only partially admit guilt under pressure. These individuals — especially those with blood debts, enemy agents, or local tyrants — should be arrested and tried (with reasons announced publicly). Suspects and individuals with serious past issues should be removed from sensitive posts and placed in special training or less critical roles for further investigation. Unclear histories should be investigated.

4. Caution Against Misuse

Our government is a coalition of revolutionary classes and democratic parties, and includes many retained and newly recruited intellectuals. Veteran cadres and Party members are a minority. Thus, purges must be carried out carefully, with reliable veteran cadres leading, relying on the majority.

We must:

- Encourage retained personnel and new intellectuals to confess honestly,
- Avoid turning this into a campaign of "old cadres vs. new," "Party vs. non-Party," "workers and peasants vs. intellectuals," or "attacking retained staff."

This avoids isolating Party members and veteran cadres.

To prevent forced confessions and encourage honesty, public confessions should be minimized. Prefer small-group or written confessions, or confessions to supervisors. Only in cases of proven guilt and continued denial may pressure be applied.

All other cases must be handled with voluntary participation. Forced confessions only lead to disorder and must be firmly opposed.

5. Terminology and Attitude

Popular labels like “struggled household,” “suppressed household,” “Party/League member,” “retained personnel,” “wandering soldier,” “sect member,” etc., are inappropriate and harmful in this context.

Issues should be assessed based on:

- The individual’s political attitude,
- Thoughts,
- Work performance,
- And personal history.

Family background and class origin may be referenced but must not be the sole basis for judgment. Confessions must be handled seriously and cautiously. Do not indiscriminately denounce intellectuals, whether old or new.

6. Leadership and Timing

No matter the method, purging staff is detailed and heavy work that must be led by senior leadership. With current workloads, clear division of responsibilities is essential.

According to initial experience:

- From document study and reports to full confessions takes about 4–5 weeks.
- The most intense period is 2–3 weeks in.

During that time, some work must be paused (half-day or alternating rest days). But avoid dragging the process out too long, which can disrupt work or cause forced or stalled confessions. Work-time arrangements should be decided by unit heads.

7. Follow-up

Beyond this preliminary purge, key departments and leadership organs must undergo focused reviews to gain experience for a deeper purge in the winter.

Issued based on original documents provided by the Central Archives.