

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Quota, Class, and Political Violence in Mao's China

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Abstract

By investigating a one thousandth national execution quota issued in the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (1950–1953), the article explores an aspect of Maoist politics that has largely escaped mainstream scholarship on Mao, the CCP, and PRC history. It shows how the newly created Maoist regime sought to eliminate its political enemy based on a specific demographic estimate of one thousandth. Tracing the roots of this quantification of political enemies into Mao's class-analysis theory back to the 1920s and explaining other political campaigns throughout the 1950s as continuations of the party's use of this method, the article argues that quantitative concepts and relations were important instruments in Maoist ideology, the CCP's political strategy and the working of the party-state. By proposing a concept of "quotacide," the article identifies an ignored type of large-scale, ideologically based, and politically driven homicide in the history of political violence. The article also brings in similar quantitative policies of political suppression in other authoritarian party-states such as the Soviet Union (the 1930s) and North Vietnam (the 1950s) in this context.

Keywords: Maoism; Chinese revolution; political violence; class theory; quotacide

The relationship between numbers and politics has been studied by sociologists as "an intrinsic part of the mechanism for conferring legitimacy on political authority" in democratic societies. In such societies, numbers collected from electoral counts, opinion polls, and survey results are taken to "quantify public feelings."¹ In studies of Stalinist-Maoist authoritarian regimes, numbers are often used as statistics by researchers in the fields of national economy and state planning to find rational explanations for policy making in such regimes.² This article, however, considers how authoritarian regimes have depended on numbers in their exercise of political power. By investigating the national execution quota issued in the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (CSC, 1950–1953), it shows how, under Mao's leadership and after taking over mainland

¹Nikolas Rose, "Governing by Numbers: Figuring out Democracy," *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 16.7 (1991), 673–92.

²Arunabh Ghosh, *Making It Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People's Republic of China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sought to eliminate their political enemy based on an estimate of one out of a thousand of the most demographic percentage of the most dangerous “counterrevolutionaries.” As it later turned out, this one thousandth was the lowest possible estimate of the death toll as quota-based political violence became a driving force of the party-state under a particular circumstance. The article traces the roots of this idea of the quantification of political enemies by national population percentage in Mao’s class-analysis theory back to the 1920s and explains other political campaigns after the CSC and throughout the 1950s as continuations of the CCP’s use of this quantitative method.

The article is not a quantitative study of history but a historical interpretation of quantified politics. Three terms frequently appeared in the documents of the CSC that indicated quantified policies. The first was ratio (*bili* 比例), the population percentage of counterrevolutionaries, both active and potential. The second was quota (*zhibiao* 指标), percent for killing drawn from the ratio, one thousandth nationally. The third was control number (*kongzhi shuzi* 控制数字), a task for killing based on the national quota but figured in concrete numerals (hundreds or thousands) to fit specific conditions at various administrative levels or for specific time periods.³ With mixed or overlapped uses at times (especially between quota and control number at lower administrative levels of the party-state), the differences among the three quantities remain consistent and clear to an analytical reader. In this article, quota is the analytical key for three reasons. The first is that it establishes a connection between Mao’s quantified analysis of social classes estimated in the 1920s and the national demographic percentage for execution in the CSC in the 1950s. The second is that it converts that national estimate of political enemies into regional and provincial execution ratios to be further broken down into control numbers assigned to grassroots party organizations. Third, quota functioned not only as an accelerator in the early stage of the campaign by Mao and the CCP Center to urge provincial and municipal party organizations and, through them, lower-level organizations to commit to killing, but also as a decelerator or even a break in the campaign used to check the tendency towards political decentralization created by excessive and even fanatic violence practiced by subordinate party organizations as they began to exploit killing in their own interests.

Like a blind spot, this quantitative aspect of Maoist CCP politics has largely escaped mainstream scholarship on Mao, the CCP, and PRC history. Based on investigations of previously unused or ignored materials, from Mao’s early writings to largely not-officially-published party documents, this article argues that such a quantified suppression led to *quotacide*, a portmanteau referring to the elimination of political opposition, real or imagined, determined not only by political stance but also population ratio, with the latter being the working principle in operation. This analysis helps us to reconsider issues essential to our understanding of Maoist politics and the working of the party-state, especially in their founding stages. First, it helps us reflect on whether we should regard large-scale and continued political violence as the unfolding of Maoist class-based ideology and the expressed intention of the leadership. Or should we instead look for explanations in the complicated dynamics of decision-making and target-achievement inherent in the CCP’s layered and often region-specific system? Second, it allows us to consider whether such large-scale actions, undeniably controlled

³For example, the killings of three or four hundred counterrevolutionaries in Shanghai, Beijing, and Tianjin, respectively, were dictated by Mao himself to get the campaign started in the spring of 1951 with more than one thousand executions planned for the whole year in each city.

by a central authority and orchestrated by the entire party-state, may also, at lower levels, have been driven by randomness, chaos, and contingency created by the separate agendas of subordinate party organizations, acquiesced to by the central authority as “local initiative” until danger of decentralization began to be felt. Third, it poses the question of how, from an ethical and psychological perspective, we can seek explanations not only for top leaders but even more for ordinary executioners when the former issued quota-based directives and the latter engaged in actions that led to the loss of lives of hundreds and thousands in months and even weeks, with many obviously falling victim by random selection. Lastly, given that killing by number is not unique to China in the global history of political violence and judicial injustice, it prompts us to consider how the Maoist quotacide can be viewed in the context of this broader human experience. This article pursues these four important queries.

The One Thousandth Execution Quota: An Intriguing Question

On October 10, 1950, the CCP leadership—referred to as CCP Center in this article—issued a “Directive on the Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries,” later known as “the Double Ten Directive” (双十指示), marking the start of the CSC.⁴ In collaboration with the Land Reform and Resist the United States and Aid Korea (China’s involvement in the Korean War), the CSC was a major political campaign in the early years of the state-building of the PRC. Since the CCP never announced a death toll in the CSC in any public statement, that number has been subject to historians’ estimates. Excluding deaths caused by mob violence, suicide, disease, and malnutrition during incarceration, and only counting court-sentenced cases, two numbers have been concurred upon by most historians. One is about 500,000 executed by May 1951, when Mao decided to curb the excessive violence, and the other is about 720,000 executed by 1953 as a lowest possible estimate when the campaign ended.⁵ This article refers to the number 753,275 as the total death toll by the end of 1953.⁶ For the national population ratio of the death toll, a figure undoubtedly higher than one thousandth was agreed by all and confirmed by CCP internal sources. Luo Ruiqing, the Minister of Public Security, revealed that by

⁴The CCP’s leadership often issued documents and directives in the name of “Zhonggong Zhongyang” 中共中央, or simply “Zhongyang” 中央, literally meaning “the Central Committee of the CCP”; but in reality the term often referred to top leaders or the Politburo who made policy decisions. This article uses “the CCP center” (中央) instead of the party’s central committee except when the source referred to the full name “Zhonggong zhongyang weiyuanhui” (the CCP Central Committee).

⁵Jian Ting 简婷, “Ruhe zhengque kandai xinzhongguo chengli hou de zhengfan yundong” 如何正确看待新中国成立之初的镇反运动, *Shijie shehuizhuyi yanjiu* 2017.9, 57–63, at 62; Julia C. Strauss, “Paternalist Terror: The Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries and Regime Consolidation in the People’s Republic of China, 1950–1953,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44.1 (2002), 80–105, at 89; Yang Kuisong 杨奎松, “Xinzhongguo ‘zhengya fangemin yundong yanjiu’ 新中国‘镇压反革命运动’研究, *Shixue Yuekan* 2006.1, 45–61; Frank Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 100.

⁶“Zhonggong zhongyang pizhun zhongyang gonganbu dangzu ‘guanyu quanguo sheng, shi gonganting juezhang huiyi de qingshi baogao’ 中共中央批准中央公安部党组‘关于全国省、市公安局、局长会议的请示报告’的指示及四个附件全文, 1955.07.15. See Song, Yongyi ed., *Database of the Chinese Political Campaigns in the 1950s, from Land Reform to the State-Private Ownership, 1949–1956* (Boston: Fairbanks Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University), supported with database technology by The Universities Service Centre for China Studies. The Database was originally published in 2014 and its online version has been updated with new materials at <http://chinamovement.net/Default.aspx>. It is referred to as “Database” hereafter.

May 1951, nationally, the death ratio had already reached one thousandth. Excluding Northeastern China, among thirty provinces (China had more provinces then than at present), the death toll was below one thousandth in sixteen and reached or exceeded one thousandth in eight, while in six provinces it reached or exceeded two thousandths.⁷

Luo's use of a specific population ratio in estimating the death toll reflected the campaign's quota-based guidelines. Half a year after the "Double Ten Directive," on April 20, 1951, Mao sent a secret telegraph to the CCP's Southwest Regional Bureau (西南局)⁸ revealing a quota for execution that had been determined at a meeting held two months earlier as a yardstick for carrying out and assessing the CSC:

Regarding the ratio of killing, the meeting of the Party's Center in February set one thousandth, killing half of this number first and then deciding what to do next. Now the Southwest has reached this one thousandth, and some provinces of the Central South and the East have also reached one thousandth, with some localities even higher than one thousandth. It seems that, to solve the problem, all three regions of the East, the Central South, and the Southwest must exceed one thousandth, but it would be inappropriate to exceed too much.⁹

On April 30, in another directive sent to all party leaders above the provincial level, Mao said:

[We] should not kill too many. Too many killings will lead to losing the sympathy of the society [for us] and losing labor force. In the countryside, in principle, the killing of counterrevolutionaries should not exceed one thousandth of the population ... In cities [the figure] should be lower than one thousandth. For example, Beijing has a population of two million, and the number of the arrested will soon reach 10,000; we have killed 700, and we are planning to kill 700 more, in total 1,400. That should be enough.¹⁰

Before this national quota was set, Liu Shaoqi, the CCP leader subordinate only to Mao himself, suggested a quota for the execution of landlords in the countryside. As he remarked to the CSC officers,

Killing one out of one hundred landlords to frighten the rest into obedience is necessary. That one must be executed. Of course, we are not playing arithmetic, but if [we] don't kill one out of one hundred, we are making mistakes.¹¹

⁷Luo Ruiqing 罗瑞卿, "Zai disanci quanguo gongan huiyi shang guanyu 'quanguo zhengya fangeming qingkuang yu dangqian douzheng renwu' de baogao" 在第三次全国公安会议上关于'全国镇压反革命情况与当前斗争任务'的报告, 1951.05.10. See Database.

⁸Regional Bureaus were a level of party organizations between the Central Committee and provincial or major municipal (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin) committees in the early 1950s. The Southwest Bureau was in charge of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Xikang Provinces.

⁹Mao Zedong, "Mao Zedong dui zhenfan sharen bilie de zhishi" 毛泽东对镇反杀人比例的指示, 1951.04.20. See Database.

¹⁰Mao Zedong, "Zhuanfa xinanjie guanyu zhenfan wenti gei chuanbei qu dangwei de zhishi de piyu" 转发西南局关于镇反问题给川北区党委的指示的批语, *Jianguo yilai Mao zedong wengao* 建国以来毛泽东文稿, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang Wenxian chubanshe, 1988), 267.

¹¹Liu Shaoqi, "Zai dierci quanguo gongan gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua" 在第二次全国公安工作会议上的讲话, 1950.10.18. See Database.

Studies of politically motivated mass homicides often focus on rationale (who should be eliminated and why), methods, and death toll. But the work of the CSC raises a new question: how were the victims doomed so precisely with a quota of a thousandth? A one-thousandth death rate to punish a single offense across the entire population is demographically significant, especially given the fact that the three-year Civil War and the ongoing Land Reform had already eliminated millions of political enemies of the CCP, and another significant number had left the Mainland. The quota and its variations were top secret at the time, known only to the CCP cadre above the provincial level.¹² The existence of the quota was first revealed in 1988, when Mao's many previously classified documents were officially published, but with no explanations appended. The Database of the Chinese Political Campaigns in the 1950s, published by Harvard University in affiliation with Chinese University of Hong Kong, contained a significant number of quota-related materials. However, in all these materials, we can find neither explanations offered by the CCP Central Committee nor questions asked by their subordinates regarding the rationale for the quota. All discussions focused on its assignment, adjustment, and accomplishment. This article takes on these unanswered questions, exploring the origin of the one thousandth in Maoist class theory and investigating its logic in the working of the party-state system. A discussion hinged on that fateful figure from such a perspective can reveal new dimensions of the quantitative strategy and quantifiable technique used in the CCP's class politics, connecting two founding stages of the Chinese Revolution (the party and the state) and facilitating a discussion of quantified political violence beyond China.

In China, compared with other political campaigns of Mao's time such as the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution, the CSC has remained a very sensitive subject. The official narrative insists upon its necessity, as the newly proclaimed PRC was threatened by the former Nationalist elements and domestic tensions enhanced by the Korean War. Acknowledging mistakes made by local cadres and the imperfection of the judicial system, the narrative admits that excesses and deviations did occur but remains silent on the number wrongly executed. Moreover, it praises the Party's Center, especially Mao himself, for acting promptly to correct the erroneous tendency.¹³

Research-based and fact-revealing publications regarding the CSC came out only after 2000, with about a dozen articles appearing that cited officially published or declassified documents. They respected the official verdict but offered a more nuanced narrative by presenting cases and figures that the official account avoided.¹⁴ However, discussions on the one thousandth death quota were limited by the lack of sources related to its origin and rationale. The key event involving the quota was a meeting held in mid-February 1951. Titled "Key Points of Enlarged Meeting of the Politburo

¹²For example, the Southwest Regional Bureau prohibited leaking Mao's approval of increasing the death quota in the region to two thousandth to cadres at the prefectural level. "Xinanjue dui maozhuxi de sharen bilie zhishi de jidian zhuyi" 西南局对毛主席的杀人比例指示的几点注意, 1951.04.27. See Database.

¹³Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi 中共中央党史研究室, *Maozedong zhuan* (1949–1976), 毛泽东传 (1949–1976) (Beijing: Zhongyang dangshi chubanshe, 2011), vol. 1, 49–50; *Zhongguo gongchandang de jiu shinian* 中国共产党的九十年 (Beijing: Zhongyang dangshi chubanshe, 2016), 388.

¹⁴Representative articles include Yang "Xinzhongguo 'zhengya fangemin yundong yanjiu'" and "Xinzhongguo gonggu chengshi zhengquan de zuichu changshi" 新中国巩固城市政权的最初尝试--以上海镇反运动为中心的历史考察, *Huadong shifandaxue xuebao* 36.9 (2004), 1–20; Huang Zhong 黄钟, "Diyici zhenfan yundong yanjiu" 第一次镇反运动研究, *Yanhuang Chunqiu* 2014.12, 34–42; Li Liangyu 李良玉, "Guanyu zhenya fangeming yundong de jige wenti" 关于镇压反革命运动的几个问题, *Nanjing Xiaozuang shifan xueyuan xuebao*, 2015.5, 100–15; Zuo Ci 左慈, "Shilun zhenfan yundong zhong de chujue bilie wenti" 试论镇反运动中的处决比例问题, *Ershi yi shiji* 178 (2020), 55–69.

of the Central Committee of the CCP,” the meeting’s minutes were included in officially published *Manuscripts of Mao Zedong Since the Founding of the PRC*, indicating Mao’s role in deciding these points.¹⁵ Point four was about the CSC and was accompanied by five subpoints, cautiously brief and vague, asking party branches to follow the Center’s policies without mentioning the quota. However, the meeting minutes existed also in an unpublished version which included six subpoints with the one on quota at the top. This subpoint was also brief: “based on suggestions made by Deng Xiaoping and Deng Zihui [the leaders of the Southwest Regional Bureau],” the meeting agreed that the CSC should “kill half or two-thirds of the quota.”¹⁶ The subpoint did not explain the value of the quota (as Mao did in his April 20 directive) or reveal who had proposed it, let alone explain the rationale behind it. But it logically leads one to reconstruct a scenario of this kind: facing regional and provincial variations in the CSC, the Center suggested to provincial leaders a quota as a nationwide standard for execution and then accepted the two Dengs’ modification at the meeting. The vague and brief content of the point and the omission of the first subpoint in the published version of the meeting record indicate the highly sensitive nature of the matter.

The origin of and rationale for the quota have thus remained unknown. Only very few Chinese historians have openly expressed their inquisitiveness: “regarding the number of executions, neither the quotas issued earlier in the campaign at the local level nor later at the national level received any explanation as to how they were determined.”¹⁷ Others interpreted the quota in the context of Mao’s idiosyncratic style of leadership and its impact on the party-state mechanism. As Yang Kuisong put it, Mao himself liked “using numbers to quantify tasks,” as a result, “cadres at various levels were eager to accomplish and even surpass the quantified index [of tasks] assigned by their superiors.”¹⁸ Zuo Ci advanced the analysis from a personal workstyle perspective to a more politically strategic level—“planning quotas from the Center to the local was an important method in the CCP’s political campaigns,” but it was essentially “‘war thinking’ that continued into political campaigns thereafter.”¹⁹

In international China studies, the campaign itself is also a little-researched subject. Julia Strauss’s much earlier article “Paternalistic Terror” was a focused study of the CSC, engaging specific numbers. Strauss questioned the legitimacy of the CSC and believed that a national killing rate of one thousandth was extraordinary given China’s enormous population. However, she doubted the possibility of a nationwide implementation of the quota since the Center acknowledged regional diversity.²⁰ Frank Dikotter’s work confirmed one thousandth as a “norm” that Mao “was willing to adjust to the particular circumstances of each region.” Based on further primary sources, Dikotter dubbed such a systematic practice “killing by quota” and likened it to state planning in other areas—“like steel production or grain output, death came with a quota mandated from above.”²¹ However, in general, the question of why such a specific value—one thousandth, not two or three or four—had been settled upon was still left unanswered.

¹⁵Mao Zedong, “Zhonggong Zhongyang zhengzhiju kuodahuiyi jueyi yaodian” 中共中央政治局扩大会议决议要点, 1951.02.18. *Jianguo yilai Maozedong wengao* 建国以来毛泽东文稿 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), vol. 2, 126–30.

¹⁶Zuo, “Shilun zhenfan,” 57.

¹⁷Li Liangyu, “Guanyu zhenya,” 110.

¹⁸Yang, “Xinzhongguo ‘zhengya fangemin yundong yanjiu,’” 56.

¹⁹Zuo, “Shilun zhenfan,” 55.

²⁰Strauss, “Paternalist Terror,” 90.

²¹Dikotter, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 87.

The One Thousandth in Mao's Analysis of Classes in China

Could the origin of the one thousandth execution quota be explored without further violations of the CCP's top secrecy? A revisiting of young Mao's political thinking provides an unexpected thread, not only indicating the inception of the quota but also showing an essential relationship between numbers and Maoist class politics. In late 1925 and early 1926, Mao published three articles titled "Analysis of the Classes in China," "Analysis of Classes in Chinese Peasantry and Their Attitudes towards Revolution" and "The Causes of the Separation of the Right-Wing Nationalists and Its Impact on the Revolution," respectively. The first one, with its famous opening line ("Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the highest importance to the revolution.") leads the first volume of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*. But the second and the third were either not included in Mao's officially published works or were included so late as to therefore remain unfamiliar to most readers. These three articles responded to an urgent ideological as well as strategic need: the fledgling CCP was in a United Front with the Nationalists for a proclaimed anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist revolution, but the Front was facing a separatist danger from the right-wing Nationalists. In the face of such a political realignment, the CCP needed a clearer vision about supporters and opponents of its own agenda.

In the original version of the first article, Mao used a highly quantitative approach for his sociopolitical analysis, including a chart with population figures and demographic percentages for each class—large, middle-sized, and small capitalists; proletariat, semi-proletariat and lumpen proletariat; and their sub-groups.²² Mao counted "large capitalists" as numbering one million and broke down the class into five groups: compradors (imperialist-associated bankers, businessmen, and industrialists), big landlords, bureaucrats, warlords, and an amalgamated group including various professionals and even university students who studied abroad. Their potential ally was a four-million-strong "middle capitalist class," including middle landlords. Therefore, Mao's class analysis was primarily a population quantification, but simultaneously also a rural/urban and occupation-based distribution. Mao proclaimed: "How many of our true friends are there? Three hundred and ninety-five million. How many of our true enemies are there? One million. How many could be either our friends or enemies? Four million. Even if we count all four million as enemies, this five-million-strong group is still doomed to drowning in the ocean of saliva of 395 million people."²³

In the second article, Mao identified large landlords as the "ultimate source of all counterrevolutionary forces" and calculated that their number "roughly equals one thousandth of the Chinese rural population [320,000 out of 320 million, including their family members]."²⁴ In the third article, Mao repeated this figure for counterrevolutionaries in the countryside and estimated "0.025%" for its proportion of the

²²The chart split proletariat into industrial workers (two million), urban coolies (three million), rural proletariat (20 million), and lumpen proletariat (20 million). Their significances to the revolution were respectively categorized as the major revolutionary, second major revolutionary, radically revolutionary, and potentially revolutionary.

²³Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo shehui ge jieji de fenxi" 中国社会各阶级的分析 (Original Version). *Dang de wenxian*, 1989.1, 40–44.

²⁴Mao Zedong, "Zhongguo nongmin zhong gejieji de fenxi jiqi dui geming de taidu." 中国农民中各阶级的分析及其对于革命的态度, in *Mao Zedong Collection* 毛泽东集, edited by Takeuchi Minoru 竹内実 (Tōkyō: Hokubōsha, 1970–72), www.marxists.org/chinese/maozedong/collect/01-032.htm. Accessed November 20, 2022. The article was originally published in *Zhongguo nongmin* 1.1 (1926).

national population.²⁵ Mao's three articles thus not only identified but also quantified enemies consistently. The seemingly diminutive ratio of the enemy in the national population not only enhanced Mao's confidence of victory but also justified the elimination of an enemy that was socio-politically so evil but demographically so dismissible.

Two intriguing questions remain unanswered. First, for such a highly quantitative analysis, it is surprising that Mao did not provide any reference. Second, after several revisions, "Analysis of the Classes in China" was included in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in 1951 and has remained the officially sanctioned version, but all numbers were dropped (saving only one figure of two million for the working-class population) without explanation. In contrast to about 6,200 characters in the original version, this one has only roughly 3,700. In 1989, the original version was republished in a party archive journal accompanied by a short explanatory essay which did not explain why the popularized version deleted those figures.²⁶

The scholarship on how Mao adapted Marxist class theory to Chinese reality has basically missed this quantitative approach, let alone the reason for the disappearance of the figures. In rare cases, some Chinese historians have noticed them and speculated that those figures were Mao's "estimates" based on the "common knowledge of the time" but defended the deletions as they only made Mao's argument more "concise and precise."²⁷

Although the 1920s witnessed some Western-educated sociologists and economists applying social survey techniques to China at local and group-specific levels, before Mao's three articles, there was no national, all-inclusive population survey conducted by academic or state institutions. The source of Mao's meticulous and sweeping figures and the reason for their disappearance have remained unexamined. It could be that there were some sources to which Mao, for whatever reason, did not refer. A more likely scenario is the one suggested by those historians. Either way, the exclusion of figures originally so critical to and consistent in Mao's class theory at its formative stage not only raises questions about the credibility of his analysis but also conceals the fact that Mao applied a quantitative approach to make sense of the theoretical concept of social class for his readers.

It is in those later-disappeared numbers that we find an eerie repetition of the one thousandth: the population ratio of the "extreme counterrevolutionaries" in rural China of the mid-1920s and the execution quota for all of China in the early 1950s. Also, 2.5 out of 1,000, another estimate for the number of counterrevolutionaries nationwide proposed by Mao in these articles, limited upward flexibility for the execution quota. After these three articles and before the CSC, Mao conducted some investigations into social class, but none of them was conducted at a national (or even provincial) and all-class inclusive level.²⁸ Therefore, if we cannot find any other, more direct

²⁵Mao Zedong, "Guomindang youpai fengli de yuanyin jiqi duiyu geming qiantu de yingxiang" 国民党右派分离的原因及其对于革命前途的影响, *Mao zedong wenji* 毛泽东文集 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), vol. 1, 26.

²⁶Sha Hewen 沙鹤闻, "Guanyu 'zhongguo shehui gejieji de fenxi' de zhichu banben" 关于《中国社会各阶级的分析》的最初版本, *Dang de wenxian*, 1989.1, 45–46.

²⁷Lin Huifeng 林辉锋, "Zhongguo shehui gejieji de fenxi jiaoduo" 《中国社会各阶级的分析》校读, *Guangming Daily*, October 22, 2014. Meng Qingyan 孟庆延, "Mao Zedongzhaoqi nongcun diaocha de lishi shehuixue kaocha" 毛泽东早期农村调查的历史社会学考察, *Shehuixue Yanjiu* 4 (2018), http://cul.cssn.cn/shx/201902/t20190212_4824298_15.shtml. Accessed July 12, 2022.

²⁸Mao's famous "Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan (1927)" was based on data collected in Changsha (Hunan provincial capital) area.

sources to explain the roots of the one thousandth in the CSC, Mao's three articles seem to be the only clue that not only makes sense of the quota with precision but also connects two important stages of Maoism: the 1920s and the 1950s.²⁹

How Did the One Thousandth Execution Quota Emerge?

As a guiding policy for national execution, why was the one thousandth adopted not in the beginning of the CSC but five months into it? A brief engagement with PRC history in 1950 offers an explanation. After winning the Civil War, the CCP criminalized political opposition by adopting a "counterrevolutionary" category from its wartime judicial practice.³⁰ In mid-March, Liu Shaoqi signed the first internal directive on "suppressing counterrevolutionaries." The directive required all death sentences to be supported by "clear and definitive evidence," tried in court and approved at the provincial level, but urged that the process be "simple and swift."³¹ Later, Mao discussed the same issue but stressed a "combination of suppression and leniency" (镇压与宽大相结合).³² In July, the Central Government further specified the types of political crimes punishable by death, maintaining the judicial procedure set by Liu's directive and repeating Mao's "combination of suppression and leniency."³³

Yet three months later, the Double Ten Directive urged a nationally prioritized and full-scale engagement. What led to such a significant escalation? While official narratives portrayed an imminent danger to the newly founded PRC from subversion and justified the CSC as a preemptive strike, more independent historians have argued that China's joining of the Korean War also justified a suppression that Mao had long sought. Yang Kuisong has shown that, between March and early October, Mao agreed, but was not fully committed, to such a suppression based on his strategy of "not striking at many enemies at once" and his consideration of balancing multiple tasks in the post-Civil War economic recovery. This economic task required neutralizing the "national capitalists" (classified as the "middle capitalists" in Mao's 1925–1926 articles) for their industrial and commercial value. The attitude of large numbers of intellectuals towards the new regime also concerned Mao. But Yang also believes that Mao had another strategic goal: rather than merely punishing those active opponents, Mao wanted to "once and for all eliminate all potential social elements that were in favor of a Nationalist restoration."³⁴ For these reasons, Mao was waiting for a better time and opportunity.

Two days after the CCP decided to join the Korean War, Mao seized the moment.³⁵ In his talk with Luo Ruiqing, Mao believed that now the tension created by the war

²⁹In 1930, Mao published *An Investigation Report of Xunwu* (a township in Jiangxi Province), in which he gave "big landlords" a "4.5 thousandth" estimate. It was roughly half of the figure for the same group in his first article in 1926. Mao Zedong, "Xunwu Diaocha" 寻乌调查, *Mao Zedong Nongcun Diaocha Wenji* 毛泽东农村调查文集 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 41–181, 105.

³⁰"Counterrevolution" was first established as a punishable crime, including 29 death penalty-applicable charges, by the Jiangxi Soviet Republic (Mao was the Chairman) in 1934.

³¹Liu, Shaoqi, "Guanyu zhenya fangeming de zhishi" 关于镇压反革命的指示, *Jianguo Yilai Lushaoqi Wengao* 建国以来刘少奇文稿 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2005), vol. 1, 595–97.

³²Mao Zedong, "Zai qijie shanzhong quanhu shang de jianghua" 在七届三中全会上的讲话, *Mao Zedong Wenji* 毛泽东文集 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), vol. 6, 72.

³³"Zhengwuyuan, zuigao renmin fayuan guanyu zhenya fangeming de zhishi" 政务院、最高人民法院关于镇压反革命的指示, *People's Daily*, July 24, 1950.

³⁴Yang, "Xinzhongguo 'zhengya fangemin yundong yanjiu,'" 47.

³⁵After the troops of the United Nations Command crossed the 38th parallel on October 8, 1950, the CCP Center officially decided to send troops into Korea.

would help shut the mouths of those disagreeable or fearful of large-scale executions. He told Luo, “Do not miss this opportunity. This is the only opportunity and there will never be another one like this, not just for killing counterrevolutionaries but also for mobilizing the masses.” In a more official record, Mao expressed the same thought.³⁶ Liu Shaoqi also thanked the “loud noise of gongs and drums” of “Resist Americans, Aid Korea.” Otherwise, execution gunshots “would have sounded too loud.”³⁷

The Double Ten Directive admonished cadres for their “misunderstanding of the combination of suppression and lenience” and for showing “excessive lenience,” which was a “rightist deviation.” It requested regional and provincial party leaders to report within a month on how they had carried out the task. Luo Ruiqing immediately summoned the Second Meeting of National Public Security Work (the first such meeting was held in October 1949, right after the PRC was proclaimed), participated in by security chiefs of Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, and some provinces. However, most party organizations failed to meet the deadline. Mao sent a telegraph on November 22 to extend the deadline to the end of the year. As reports kept arriving, Mao selected some to comment upon and circulate. While commending swift, forceful, and harsh measures, Mao proposed another set of principles in three Chinese characters: the strikes on enemies must be “stable” (*wen* 稳), “precise” (*zhun* 准), and “ruthless” (*hen* 狠). “[If you follow these principles], no one in the society can question us.”³⁸ These communications suggest that Mao seized “the only opportunity” to solve the “problem,” but he did not have a solution which was forceful enough while still being consistent with previous principles. Therefore, he pushed his subordinates and was waiting for their responses.

The “excessive leniency” before the Double Ten Directive and the slackened responses after it demonstrated not only a lack of motivation, but also an apprehension among the cadres. In a self-critical but also self-apologetic tone, the report from the Party’s Hubei Provincial Committee listed a number of factors to blame. After the CCP’s national victory, many cadres underestimated the hidden threat and ignored political motives behind many criminal acts (for example hungry peasants robbing trains or warehouses in search of grain). They also either wrongly released many former Nationalists and local bullies or held them in jail for long periods without trial, taking for granted their harmlessness. More generally, the report blamed the fear of “leftist deviation” for the problem.³⁹ This fear resulted from a perennial phenomenon in CCP politics: from the early 1930s to the late 1940s, major political purges and suppressions inside and outside the Party, especially the ongoing Land Reform, often started with criticism of “rightist deviation” (右倾; overly cautious and conciliatory) and ended by denouncing “leftist deviation” (左倾; overly aggressive and violent). Local cadres were often held responsible for both deviations and therefore were caught in what Strauss calls a “Scylla vs. Charybdis” plight.⁴⁰

³⁶Mao Zedong, “Guanyu dui fangeming fenzi biexu da de wen da de hen da de zhun de dianbao” 关于对反革命分子必须打得稳打得准打得狠的电报, January 17, 1951. See Database.

³⁷Yang, ‘Xinzhongguo gonggu,’ 47.

³⁸Mao Zedong, “Guanyu zhenya fangeming fenzi de celue wenti de dianbao” 关于镇压反革命分子的策略问题的电报, December 19, 1950, *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian diyijuan* 建国以来重要文献选编第一卷 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1992), vol. 1, 509.

³⁹“The Report of Hubei Provincial Committee” 湖北省委报告, November 21, 1950. See Database.

⁴⁰For example, the report from the Southwest Bureau blamed “the historical experience of killing too many in the past and a fear of another leftist deviation” for their “overly lenient and rightist deviation.”

Another important factor that impeded large-scale suppression was that many cadres, particularly in urban centers, were preoccupied with economic recovery and civil order. They were concerned about negative impacts brought about by politically motivated strikes on local private business and commerce, which was an important source of tax revenue. They preferred a more normalized public security order. The authorities in Shanghai, for example, were drafting a criminal justice code that would limit politicization of the judicial system and therefore remained cautious about suppression after the Double Ten Directive.⁴¹

But as more directives circulated, it became obvious that Mao was looking for action rather than excuses. By the end of 1950, this center-locality communication resulted in changes in judicial procedure suggested by regional or provincial leaders. One was to delegate two authorities over the death penalty and making arrests from the province to the prefecture (专区 or 地区, an administrative level between province and county) and from the prefecture to the county, respectively.⁴² The other was to form a joint committee at the prefectural level to combine investigative, prosecutorial, and executive authority so as to expedite the process,⁴³ dubbed by some historians an “assembly line.”⁴⁴

The reports and directives also began to show a trend towards using numbers to plan executions to make local efforts more measurable. A report by the Southwest Regional Bureau in mid-November provided a count of about 10,000 death penalties administered to date and estimated 20,000–30,000 more because the region was newly liberated and therefore had more recalcitrant enemies.⁴⁵ A more definitive idea of killing planned by number was proposed by Mao himself in his comments on the report from Shanghai: “in big cities such as Shanghai, within this year, [you] will probably need to execute one thousand or two thousand people to solve the problem. Execute three hundred or five hundred in the spring to get it started.” In the same directive he urged the city of Nanjing to execute “one hundred to two hundred” in the spring.⁴⁶

Following Mao’s directive, in mid-February, Hubei Province submitted a very detailed and candid report that for the first time showed a death quota meted out against the population and executions incorporated with other sociopolitical tasks. It provided a figure of 37,399 for total arrests since the Double Ten Directive, which was “one point seven per thousand of the provincial population,” including “about eight thousand executions.” It went on to calculate further executions against the provincial population:

Given the population and assessment of the enemy in our province ... we estimate that we still need to execute seven thousand in the first half of the year, about thirty-seven percent of the arrested ... [Between now and the end of next year], Land Reform will continue, many [counterrevolutionary] cases will be investigated, members of former Nationalist organizations will be registered, secret

⁴¹“Zhonggong zhongyang xinwen jue guanyu zhenya fangeming huodong de gongzhuo qingkuang he jinghou jihua de baogao” 关于镇压反革命活动的工作情况和今后计划的报告, November 10, 1950. See Database. Regarding “Scylla vs. Charybdis,” see Strauss, “Paternalist Terror,” 91.

⁴²Yang, “Xinzhongguo gonggu,” 4.

⁴³“Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa zhongnanju weiyuanhui jingji huiyi baogao” 中共中央转发中南局委员会紧急会议报告, October 31, 1950. See Database.

⁴⁴“Hubei Shengwei baogao” 湖北省委报告, November 21, 1950. See Database.

⁴⁵Huang, “Diyichi zhenfan yundong,” 35.

⁴⁶“Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa zhongnanju weiyuanhui jingji huiyi baogao.”

⁴⁷Mao Zedong, “Mao Zedong guanyu zhenfan bushu gei shanghai shiwei de dianbao” 毛泽东关于镇反部署给上海市委的电报, January 21, 1951. See Database.

societies will be disbanded; [as these developments unfold, we] will need to execute 10,000 more. In total, 25,000 executions, which will be one thousandth of the provincial population.⁴⁷

This article thus argues that party branches were innovative in expediting execution by simplifying judicial procedures and quantifying the death toll. But concerns about the impact of the suppression on socioeconomic recovery still tied hands of many cadres. Also, an urge to kill and an insistence on vaguely defined principles were easy to articulate but difficult to measure in action. In February 1951, therefore, Mao and the Center decided to issue a quota as a solution commensurable in all regions and provinces. As this article shows, the quota with its numerical precision was the same as the estimate of the most dangerous enemies in Maoist class theory conceived about two and half decades earlier. While a quota of one thousandth was set for the whole country, in principle, the quota was lower for cities than for the countryside and higher for “newly liberated” places than for those liberated earlier. Before the quota was finally determined, however, the Center proposed it to party committees above the provincial level, likely with hope for feedback. The report from Hubei showed that, by the time of the Politburo’s meeting, the provincial committee had already incorporated the quota in their assessment and their future plan.

The decision made at the Politburo’s meeting had an immediate impact in galvanizing the campaign, in part because the quota in practice overruled those principles with its clarity and uniformity. Only days later, the party’s Beijing committee submitted a report similar to the one from Hubei: about 200 executions had been carried out, with 350 more expected by mid-March and 750 by mid-April. Small batches would follow to reach a total of 1,300 deaths in the year. Mao’s comments once again demanded that “big cities” move quickly to “kill in large numbers” but divided the task “in batches.”⁴⁸ Tianjin’s party committee submitted their plan in March, proposing 1,500 executions by the end of the year. Mao commented in an approving tone and circulated it.⁴⁹

From “Expansion” to “Contraction”

The urge to reach the quota and the desire to correct previous “rightist deviation” put great pressure on the cadres at various levels. Before long, many came under the spell of the vicious swing from “rightist deviation” to “leftist deviation.” More cautious cadres, though, implied their apprehension through such remarks as that they now “must hate those toward whom they originally had no hatred and kill those whom, originally, they did not want to kill at all.”⁵⁰

A number of factors explain how the quota drove the mass execution. First, to reach the quota, the death penalty had to be meted out not only to current political offenders but also to “historical counterrevolutionaries.”⁵¹ Some common criminals were now

⁴⁷“Zhonggong hubei shengwei jixu zhixing zhenya fangeming de jihua” 中共湖北省委继续执行镇压反革命的计划, February 15, 1951. See Database.

⁴⁸Mao Zedong, “Dachengshi yingdang renzhende yanlide daguimode zhenya fangeming” 大城市应当认真地严厉地大规模地镇压反革命, February 25, 1951. See Database.

⁴⁹Mao Zedong, “Zhuanfa huangjin guanyu Tianjin zhenfan buchong jihua de piyu” 毛泽东转发黄敬关于天津镇反补充计划的批语, March 18, 1951. See Database.

⁵⁰“Yunnansheng dui zhenya fangeming zhi buchong zhishi” 云南省对镇压反革命之补充指示, April 29, 1951. See Database.

⁵¹The category referred to former Nationalist officers who later either disengaged from politics, retired, or collaborated with the CCP. They were promised by the CCP not to be punished in the “Declaration of

judged as politically motivated and punished more severely. Secondly, to accomplish control numbers more swiftly at much lower levels, many prefectures allowed county party committees to impose the death penalty, leading to a hastier judicial process at the grassroots level. Thirdly, some party committees asked for an increase in their quota or control number, in part because it was difficult to decide who should be picked to fill the quota. Fourth, many local cadres found that, rather than impeding other tasks, the number-based execution strategy actually created an atmosphere conducive to the completion of tasks otherwise entailing tedious and diligent administrative work, such as land reform, grain requisition, taxation, fundraising for the war in Korea, or simply deterring other criminals. Lastly, quantified killing allowed cadres to escape accountability in both political and moral senses, as if decisions now were made not by humans but by the numbers. The original “rightist” hesitation was therefore replaced by “leftist” enthusiasm.

Mao was closely monitoring the campaign through reading and commenting on reports. He was still urging some to overcome their lingering “rightist deviation” and kill more but was increasingly worried about “leftist deviation” that would lead to political decentralization. Some high-ranking cadres were also unnerved by their increasingly reckless colleagues or subordinates. In mid-March, Mao approved Fujian Province’s suggestion that, after the province’s executions reached a certain figure, the authority over the death penalty should be returned from the prefecture to the province.⁵² Shortly after, reports showed a frenzy of requesting increases to the quota and rushed or even unauthorized killing. In eastern Sichuan Province, local party organizations executed 6,000 people in six days (April 10–15) after being asked to return the authority over the death penalty to the province by April 15, shocking the Center and high-ranking cadres in other provinces.⁵³

Mao’s two directives in late April further signaled changes in his assessment of the campaign. In fact, the quota now was used more as a brake than an accelerator. In his April 20 Directive, Mao asked the Southwest Regional Bureau for their opinions on handing the authority over the death penalty back to the provinces. On May 6, the North Regional Bureau telegraphed the Center to report their decision on this policy change. The report warned cadres that unauthorized or rushed killings such as the one in eastern Sichuan “would never be allowed.” The Center immediately sent it to all provincial committees with a directive. The directive adopted policy changes suggested by the North Regional Bureau: starting from June, “the authority over making arrests must be returned to the prefecture; the authority over the death sentence must be returned to the province.” The directive also demanded a four-month interval (June–September) in which no executions or arrests would be made, just to clear backlogs of arrests (estimated at 900,000 nationally).⁵⁴

Therefore, earlier on, some party branches had contributed to the CSC with suggestions to release local initiative and modify the death quota, and now they were helping

the People’s Liberation Army” issued on October 10, 1947. During the CSC, however, many of them were punished, with executions of thirty-eight former Nationalist generals a tip of the iceberg of such suppression. All victims were rehabilitated in the 1980s.

⁵²“Fujian gonganting guanyu zhenya fangeming de baogao” 福建公安厅关于镇压反革命的报告, March 18, 1951. See Database.

⁵³“Xinan Gonganbu guanyu gedi zai jiang sharen quan shougui qian buzun ganjin sharen de zhishi” 西南公安部关于各地在将杀人权收归前不准赶紧杀人的指示, April 27, 1951. See Database.

⁵⁴“Zhongyang zhuanfa huabei guanyu zhenfan wenti de zhishi” 中央转发华北局关于镇反问题的指示, May 7, 1951. See Database.

the Center to reinforce the centralized authority with equally specific suggestions. While responding to Mao's concerns and requests, these party branches also acted upon their local agendas. But would all cadres under various local circumstances heed this urgent request and halt killing? Mao, who knew the Party all too well and had demonstrated his cautiousness against extremism and alertness to decentralization in his earlier directives regarding the "principles" and the "combination," was doubtful. The Pandora's box was easy to open but difficult to close. He asked Luo Ruiqing to immediately convene the Third Meeting of National Public Security Work. When Luo told him that all security chiefs were still busy with their assignments, Mao answered: that is precisely the reason we need this meeting right away.⁵⁵

The meeting, commenced on May 10, marked the end of the campaign's "expansion" and the beginning of "contraction," as Luo Ruiqing described it to the participants. With the guideline already set by Mao and the Center's directive, the meeting seemed only to ensure that the new policy not be circumvented by local cadres. Luo said that the campaign was "healthy, correct, and achieved great success," but it also presented a "simple and rough" manner that "resulted in some people who should not have been sentenced to death being executed and some people who should not have been arrested being imprisoned."⁵⁶ Liu Shaoqi announced that although in places where "we have not executed enough, killing is still needed," he nonetheless looked forward to regular but small-scale executions. He chided those cadres who "didn't kill a single one in months or even years but now are killing thousands in days" and reprimanded those who were complaining that "killing one thousandth cannot solve the problem": "now they are asking to kill much more, two thousandths, three thousandths, and even five thousandths. It's going to be endless."⁵⁷ Peng Zhen, a member of the Politburo and the Mayor of Beijing who was also influential in the North Regional Bureau, concurred at the meeting that the killing had exceeded one thousandth in many provinces and that the evidence showed a danger of losing control. "For example, the Central South Region originally planned to kill 150,000, but when they reported [to the Center], it turned out to be 200,000."⁵⁸

There are no official statistics revealing the number of wrongly executed in fulfilling the quota at the national level. Relevant local data are rare but chilling. Based on sample statistics collected from 88 townships (administratively below the county level), Hubei Province admitted that among 382 executions, 63 of them were punished for crimes that did not deserve the sentence, and provincewide the percentage of the wrongly executed "might be above ten percent."⁵⁹ However, such admissions of excess were never made public, and no records show any high-ranking cadres being punished or disciplined for abusing power in killing.

To continue the campaign, the quota was replaced by a national control number: for the time between October 1951 and the end of 1952, a plan for 100,000 executions was made by the Center, like an earmarked fund to be allocated in batches to the provinces.

⁵⁵Yang, "Xinzhongguo 'zhengya fangemin yundong yanjiu,'" 57.

⁵⁶Luo Ruiqing, "Zai disanci quanguo gongan huiyi shang de zongjie yaodian" 在第三次全国公安会议上的总结(要点), May 14, 1951. See Database.

⁵⁷Liu Shaoqi, "Zai disanci quanguo gongan gongzhuo huiyi shang de jianghua" 在第二次全国公安工作会议上的讲话, May 18, 1951. See Database.

⁵⁸Peng Zhen 彭真, "Zai disanci quanguo gongan huiyi shang de jianghua" 在第三次全国公安会议上的讲话, May 18, 1951. See Database.

⁵⁹Chen Yixin 陈一新, "Zai hubei quansheng dierci xian gonganjuzhang huiyi shang de baogao" 在湖北省第二次县公安局长会议上的报告, November 16, 1952. See Database.

Many participants in the meeting doubted the wisdom of such a restriction. Responding to disgruntled voices, Peng Zhen's censorious remarks reveal a psychological mechanism—a tendency to self-indulged killing innate to political violence at the grassroots level—formed through mass killing:

Now you are saying that killing 100,000 more still cannot satisfy your needs as if you were redistributing portable wealth of landlords to poor peasants ... Let me say this: had we assigned you just 100,000 [to kill] before the Double Ten Directive, you might have thought it was a lot, as if it were a tough assignment of grain requisition. But now [after killing so many], the number is nothing in your eyes.⁶⁰

Hypothetical but candid, Peng's counterfactual remarks admitted a very different but likely scenario. They cast more doubt on the legitimacy of the mass killing in the CSC, even from the CCP's point of view, although under a particular circumstance. However, what happened in reality was that, starting from October 1, gunshots resumed, and by early 1953, instead of the planned 100,000 executions, at least 220,000 were carried out.

The Legacies of Quota-Based Suppression

Execution by quota in the CSC left two specific legacies. First, the CSC created a “death sentence with a two-year reprieve and forced labor,” a globally unique judicial punishment dictated by Mao when he decided to halt killing in May 1951.⁶¹ Mao explained that the purpose was to avoid “making mistakes,” “preserving laborers,” and added that during the reprieve “it is always up to us whether to kill at any time.”⁶² Regarding killing the wrong people in political campaigns, Mao offered a famous metaphor during the Yanan Rectification (a CCP political purge and ideological education campaign in the early 1940s): “human heads are unlike chives (韭菜), which, after you cut them, can regrow.”⁶³ The policy was certainly a solution to the problem of the large number of death sentences. In his April 20 directive, Mao already proposed to the Southwest Regional Bureau that now they could send those on death roll to work on road, land, irrigation, and construction projects. Mao explained to the cadres that “the drawback of these arrangements is that they bring us an extra administrative burden, obviously less preferable than killing them all. But we can benefit from them economically and use them politically to show our lenience to national capitalists and intellectuals.” This solution led to the implementation of the labor camp, an idea inspired by the Soviet Union and discussed among top leaders since 1949.

The second legacy was that the CSC established a “path dependency” that quantified enemies to deal with for each of the CCP's political campaigns throughout the 1950s. When Mao decided on the death quota for the CSC, his strategy of “once and for

⁶⁰Peng, “Zai disanci quanguo.”

⁶¹Later, the category was adopted to common criminal cases and it still exists with almost all sentences commuted to a lighter punishment after two years.

⁶²“Zhonggong zhongyang dui fan you sizui de fangeming fengzhi ying dabufen caiqu panchu sixin huanqi zhixin de zhishi” 中共中央对犯有死罪的反革命分子应大部分采取判处死刑缓期执行的指示. The directive was drafted by Mao. www.ce.cn/xwzx/gnsz/szyw/200705/25/t20070525_11494038.shtml. Accessed July 12, 2022.

⁶³Li Shengming 李慎明, “Dui Maozedong jige wujie de chengqing” 对毛泽东几个误解的澄清, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/n/2013/1218/c85037-23878430-2.html>. Accessed July 20, 2020.

all” cleansing Chinese society also became clearer, as reflected in one of the subpoints regarding the CSC in the February Politburo meeting and later fully developed in a separate directive. The inner party language used spatial concepts to identify those antagonistic “elements,” referring to their distance from the core of the party-state as “outer layers” (*wai ceng* 外层, exposed counterrevolutionaries), “intermediary layers” (*zhong ceng* 中层, those employed for their expertise in various state agencies such as education or municipal administrations), and “inner layers” (*nei ceng* 内层, those hidden in the Party). The strategy was to deal with them separately, proceeding from the outer (the CSC) through the intermediary to the inner, with some overlapping cases.⁶⁴

Quotas or quantified methods remained a regular technique for the Campaign to Purge Counterrevolutionaries, targeting the “intermediary” and especially the “inner” layers, that followed the CSC and lasted from 1955 to 1959.⁶⁵ When starting the campaign and responding to concerns over quota-caused excesses in the CSC, Luo Ruiqing insisted that it “must be planned with numbers” because this was a “method of Chairman Mao’s art of leadership,” while quotas could always be “adjusted in practice.”⁶⁶ The Center first set five percent as the quota to be purged among 51 million members of the party-state establishment but later reduced the quota to one or two percent at most.⁶⁷ The campaign purged 541,935 anti-CCP and other “bad elements,” which was “1.23 percent of the total number of the participants,” including 1,469 death sentences, 874 death sentences with two-year reprieve, 128,562 other sentences, and various non-judiciary punishments such as expulsion, demotion, or relocation.⁶⁸ As in the CSC, the national quota was top secret, known only to cadres above the provincial level. The Center’s guideline for propaganda requested publicizing only carefully selected cases to “educate” the masses and warned that there should be “absolutely no public revelation of planned numbers.”⁶⁹

In the mid-1950s, as the Campaigns of Agricultural Collectivization in the countryside and Public-Private Ownership in cities put an end to private ownership of the means of production, the CCP Center was expecting an increase of enemies in the “outer layer.” It planned another multi-year (1955–1959) strike but avoided publicity and did not even give the campaign an official name. The internal documents often referred to it as “continuing” (继续) and “reinforcing” (加强) the Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries. The Center asked provincial public security administrations to submit their estimates of the number of criminals under their jurisdiction, expected to have increased from those of 1953 and 1954, and then convened a national meeting in July. The meeting planned to arrest 1.88 to 2.02 million political and common criminals in the next four years as a national balance based on provincial estimates (the Center lightly reallocated estimated numbers between provinces). The whole process

⁶⁴“Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingli ‘waiceng,’ ‘zhongceng,’ ‘neiceng’ wenti de zhishi.” 中共中央关于清理“外层”“中层”“内层”问题的指示, May 21, 1951. See Database.

⁶⁵“Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chede shuoqing anchang de fangeming fengzi de zhishi” 中共中央关于彻底肃清暗藏的反革命分子的指示, August 25, 1955. See Database.

⁶⁶Huang, “Diyichi zhenyan yundong,” 38.

⁶⁷Luo Ruiqing, “Zai ge sheng, shiwei wuren xiaozu fuzeren huiyi shang de zongjie fayan.” 在各省、市委五人小组负责人会议上的总结发言, July 5, 1956. See Database.

⁶⁸“Zhonggong zhongyang shiren xiaozu guanyu shuqing ancang fangeming fengzi yundong zongjie baogao” 中共中央十人小组关于肃清暗藏反革命分子运动总结报告, July 1, 1960. See Database.

⁶⁹“Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai baokan shang jingxing shuqing fangeming fengzi de xuanchuan ying zhuyi de shixiang tongzhi” 关于在报刊上进行肃清反革命分子的宣传应注意的事项通知, August 1955. See Database.

showed a more interactive approach to center–locality relations than that taken by the CSC. For 1955, the control number was set between 519,973 and 537,158, including “about forty-four percent (220,000)” of counterrevolutionaries. The control number for death penalties issued to counterrevolutionaries was set from 20,843 to 21,042 for the remaining months of 1955 and from 27,892 to 28,933 for 1956.⁷⁰ The meeting record insisted that the control numbers be kept in “absolute secrecy.” By October, all provinces were demanding increased quotas, and by the end of the year evidence showed a nationwide trend of exceeding the control numbers. Beijing, for example, reported 4,031 arrests of counterrevolutionaries (including 91 executions), surpassing the “planned number [2,500] by sixty-one percent.”⁷¹

Spurred by an unexpected circumstance, another political campaign was waged concurrent with the above two suppressions. In summer 1957, responding to political dissidence among intellectuals provoked by de-Stalinization, the CCP launched the well-known Anti-Rightist Campaign. Mao was consistent in quantifying the target, the Rightists this time, who could fit the category of “intermediaries” based on their occupations. Among five million or so intellectuals outside the CCP, about twenty percent were leftists, seventy percent middle-roaders, and ten percent rightists, as he informed the party.⁷² Words such as “roughly” or “about” are the only determiners we can find in Mao’s many speeches of the time. The Anti-Rightist Campaign categorized 550,000 Rightists (with some CCP members) by labeling their opinions and thoughts as anti-party and anti-socialism, slightly exceeding Mao’s percentage.⁷³ To fulfill the quota, leaders of various work units were placed under tremendous pressure, and stopgaps such as “bathroom rightists” or even “volunteer Rightists” were not fictional.⁷⁴

An International Perspective on Quantified Political Suppression

The practice of quota-based execution was not entirely new in world history. When a group of people was assumed to be collectively guilty but was so numerous as to make any attempt to punish all of them unfeasible or even counterproductive, the solution had often been to determine an “appropriate” portion rather than to cross-examine individual cases for conviction. A known and most unimaginative but easy method was the “decimation” that had been practiced in European military history as early as the time of Roman Legions and continued episodically into the nineteenth century as a punishment for a few and a warning to other soldiers guilty of defection or low morale. A similar legal practice had existed as a tacit method of judicial racism in

⁷⁰“Zhonggong zhongyang pizhun Zhongyang gonganbu dangzu ‘guanyu quanguo sheng, shi, gongfanti, juzhang huiyi de qingshi baogao de zhishi ji sige pijian quanwen’ 中共中央批准中央公安部党组‘关于全国省、市公安局、局长会议的请示报告，July 15, 1955. See Database.

⁷¹“Zhonggong Beijing shiwei Guanyu 1955 nian zhenya fangeming qingkuang xiang Zhongyang de baogao” 中共北京市委关于1955年镇压反革命情况向中央的报告，December 31, 1955. See Database.

⁷²Mao Zedong, “Shiqing zhengzai qi bianhua” 事情正在起变化，May 15, 1957, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1977), vol. 5, 424.

⁷³Zhu Zheng 朱正, *1957 nian de xiaji 1957 年的夏季* (Henan: Renmin chubanshe, 1998), 202–3; Ye Yonglie 叶永烈, *Lishi beige: fanyoupai neimo 历史悲歌 反右派内幕* (Hong Kong: Tiandi chubanshe, 1995), 2.

⁷⁴In some work units, where people were extremely cautious of talking about politics in public, meetings had to be held to decide who were to be “Rightists.” On some occasions those who went to the bathroom were voted by their colleagues to fill the quota. In some other cases, people turned themselves in as Rightists to help their work units out.

some southern states of America and had persisted into the late twentieth century. Under this system, while there was always a certain number of executions of black prisoners carried out in a given period of time, individual selections were often determined by factors such as the locality of the case or the quality of the defense. One would hardly distinguish a crime punished by death penalty from crimes that were not. Also, the figures for the death penalty declined after the problem attracted national attention. Researchers have dubbed such an arbitrary selection process a “death penalty lottery.”⁷⁵

Although similar in using quantified and therefore arbitrary methods, decimation and the “death penalty lottery” were merely unjust judicial punishments drawn from a very specific group’s total number to meet contingent needs, rather than being based on ideological doctrines of the state and serving the political agenda of the regime at national demographic scale. The latter can be found under authoritarian regimes similar to Mao’s, and this phenomenon has been noticed and even analyzed by historians, although investigations of the practice occupy only a marginal place in the voluminous literature about such regimes. In his quest for a logical explanation of Stalin’s seemingly irrational and excessive violence in the liquidation of Kulaks and the Great Purge, Paul R. Gregory, a Russian economic historian alerted to quantitative data, noticed in declassified Soviet archives many control numbers discussed by Stalin, the Politburo, and security officers as they were determining the proper scale of suppression. Gregory’s computation of the data led him to establish a “rational choice model,” an index showing numeral correlations between the threat level (“potency rate”) estimated by Stalin and numbers of people set for death and lesser punishments as a result. When the numbers of “criminals” remained constant or relatively low by comparison, it suggested that the estimated level of the threat was stable; if they rose higher, the increase would suggest a proportional increase of such threats. In the latter case, since enemies tended to hide themselves, “certain probabilities” were allowed to ensure no criminals escaped, inevitably victimizing innocent people. This “rational choice model” thus infers Stalin’s assessment of political threat from the numbers he issued for execution, incarceration, and deportation. Since these numbers were all decided in proportion either to the population of citizenry or to the members of the party, Gregory named such strikes “terror by quota.”⁷⁶

Gregory’s “rational choice” model and “terror by quota” interpretation has been a relatively recent contribution to the long discussion of Stalin’s Great Terror from a rather technical—and often ignored—angle. This author finds it helps to explain Maoist political terror by introducing a quantitative approach. The correlation between the estimated threat and the proposed suppression in the CSC (the Korean War intensified domestic tension), in the campaign to continue and reinforce the CSC (the accelerated socialist revolution provoked more political reaction), and in the Anti-Rightist Campaign (de-Stalinization facilitated opportunities to the Rightists) becomes in each case a clearly calculated matter, as the scale of the suppression was set to meet the increased threat assessed with arithmetical figures by the Party. Also, in all these campaigns, victimization of a certain number of “innocent people” was tacitly understood as quantitatively inevitable. Thus, the Stalinist and Maoist regimes are known for their

⁷⁵Bradley A. MacLean and H.E. Miller Jr., “Tennessee’s Death Penalty Lottery.” *Tennessee Journal of Law and Policy* 13 (2018), 85–181.

⁷⁶Paul R. Gregory, *Terror by Quota: State Security from Lenin to Stalin (An Archival Study)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), especially chap. 6.

large-scale “rehabilitation” when political circumstances dramatically changed, especially after the death of Stalin and Mao.

The Land Reform in North Vietnam (1953–1956), led by the Vietnamese Workers’ Party (VWP, the Communist Party of Vietnam), presented a case of quantified suppression almost identical to China’s CSC. In May 1953, the VWP’s Politburo issued a special directive to initiate the Land Reform: “In this campaign, [we] must execute a number of reactionary or evil landlords. In our current situation, the number of executions is fixed in principle at the ratio of *one per one thousand* [italics added] people of the total population in the free areas [regions in North Vietnam under the VWP’s control].” Other policies in the directive also look similar to those of the CSC and even reflect the latter’s idiosyncratic language. The quota was highly confidential and “controlled by the leadership.” It allowed for variations to fit local conditions. It cautioned that “[h]uman lives are an important matter. It is not that we do not want to execute those who deserve execution. But the number of executions should not be too many; if so, it would make it difficult [for the people] to agree with us.”⁷⁷ Even the date of the directive—May 4—was reminiscent of the CCP Center’s Land Reform directive (issued on May 4, 1947); thus the famous May Fourth Directive in the history of the CCP. Last and most intriguingly, the VWP’s directive provided no explanation for such a strangely precise figure.

As a critical socioeconomic and political policy in the founding stage of the VWP regime accompanied by other campaigns such as the Thought Reform for intellectuals and political training for cadres, the Land Reform has been an important subject for historians of Vietnam who are fully aware of the link between the Chinese and the Vietnamese Revolutions. The CCP introduced Maoist class theory to the VWP, asked the VWP to study the CCP literature on these campaigns, urged VWP leaders to embark on the Land Reform, trained the VWP’s cadres, and sent CCP advisers to direct especially the Land Reform.⁷⁸ Liu Shaoqi, who was responsible for the CCP’s Land Reform policies especially in its early stage and at the time was directing CCP–VWP relations while Mao focused his attention on the Korean War, personally pushed Ho Chi Minh (the leader of the VWP) to wage a class war to eliminate Vietnamese landlords. Ho, however, was reluctant to make landlords a prime target of the revolution out of concern about a nationalist United Front against French colonizers. To force Ho to toe China’s line, Liu even appealed to Stalin’s intervention and eventually succeeded.⁷⁹ Liu later selected the CCP’s advisers for the VWP’s Land Reform and decided the timing of their disengagement in Vietnam.⁸⁰ Like China’s Land Reform and CSC, the Land Reform in Vietnam victimized many individuals by wrongly labeling them as landlords.

⁷⁷“Politburo’s Directive Issued on May 4, 1953, on Some Special Issues regarding Mass Mobilization,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 5.2 (2010), 243.

⁷⁸For a detailed Vietnamese account of the Chinese influence in these campaigns, see Kim N.B. Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945–1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), especially chaps 4 and 5.

⁷⁹Alex-Thai D. Vo, “Nguyễn Thị Năm and the Land Reform in North Vietnam, 1953,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10.1 (2015), 20–24; Yang Kuisong, “Mao Zedong yu yinduzhina zhanzheng” 毛泽东与印度支那战争, in *Zhongguo yu Yinduzhina zhanzheng* 中国与印度支那战争, edited by Li Danhui (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu Gongshi, 2000), 22–55, 38–39.

⁸⁰In October 1954, Liu commented on a VWP document sent to him by the Chinese ambassador to Vietnam: “the Chinese advisors should gradually leave [Vietnam] in order to allow Vietnamese comrades to independently lead their own country’s land reform.” See Liu Shaoqi, *Jianguo yilai liushaoqi wengao* 建国以来刘少奇文稿, vol. 6 (1954) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang Wenxian, 1995), 423.

Some victims were rehabilitated in the brief political liberalization in the wake of de-Stalinization in the fall of 1956, when the Party's General Secretary and a number of politburos and central committee members resigned on the basis of their direct responsibility for "mistakes" and "excesses" in the execution of the Land Reform.⁸¹

Although the Chinese influence on the VWP's politics has long been known to historians, the coincidence of the execution quotas has escaped scholarly attention, perhaps because the quota was not revealed until 2010, and perhaps also because there is a disciplinary gap for many historians trained in a national history framework. Even so, the historiography of the Vietnamese Land Reform published in English has ignored the question of the origin and logic of the strange quota since it was revealed. The same quotas in China and Vietnam can hardly be a matter of coincidence. A discussion of this intriguing sameness can certainly help to answer an important question regarding the founding of North Vietnam as a party-state: why and how the Land Reform was carried to such a violent extent.⁸² But the main implications suggested by the similarity are more relevant to the concerns of this article. The VWP's one-per-thousand death quota and the Party's silence on its origin and rationale in turn proved the arbitrariness of the Chinese death quota: what appeared to be a very precisely calculated figure was nothing more than a convenient but baseless estimate of the extent of political violence needed for the regime's population cleansing. Had the quota had any verifiable statistical foundation in one country, how could it have been so mechanically applied to another? The silence and the secrecy regarding the origin of and the rationale for the quota in both parties' historical records thus not only show how political violence was theoretically envisioned and practically administered in

⁸¹The VWP's rectification policies deeply concerned the CCP. Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the PRC, summoned Hoang Van Hoan, the Vietnamese ambassador to China, and asked him whether the Chinese advisors were blamed for the mistakes. See Hoang Van Hoan, *Canghai yisu: Huang Wen Huan gemin huiyilu* 沧海一粟: 黄文欢革命回忆录 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1987), 285. Zhou also made a timely visit to Hanoi in November 1956 during which he told the VWP leaders that "it was unavoidable to make mistakes but the Land Reform cannot be completely overturned," a position similar to the CCP's assessment of the CSC. Li Lianqing 李连庆, *Da waijiao jia Zhou Enlai* 大外交家周恩来 (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi chubanshe, 2017), vol. 4, 138–39.

⁸²This is an important question to many historians. Edwin E. Moise's *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983) was an influential study in the Cold War Vietnamese historiography. In an errata note added to the book online in 2014, Moise corrected his land-reform death toll estimate, increasing it from about 5,000 (estimated in his book) to 10,000 based on new sources in the post-Cold War years, out of a North Vietnamese population of roughly fifteen million (at most) at the time. But other Vietnamese historians believed that an estimate as high as 15,000 was very likely. Moise explained his mistake as follows (emphasis as in the original): "It is now apparent that I was seriously wrong on one issue: the question of the Chinese influence. I argued ... that reports that Chinese advisers had pushed the Vietnamese into erroneous land reform policies must be mistaken, since the record of land reform in China made it plain that the Chinese, having made mistakes of that sort in an early stage of their land reform (up to the early months of 1948), had realised that they were mistakes, and had not repeated them during the main part of the Chinese land reform (1950 onward). The logic still makes sense to me, but the conclusion seems to have been wrong. Chinese advisers *did* push the Vietnamese into making mistakes that the Chinese had not made in the most recent years of their own land reform. I still don't really know why." See <http://edmoise.sites.clemson.edu/landbook.html>. Accessed May 1, 2022. There should have been no more mystery had Moise, and perhaps other Vietnam historians as well, known that in addition to the Land Reform guideline and policies, there was also a CSC and a one thousandth execution quota as the operational principle in the Chinese advisements.

both regimes but also exposes a fundamental flaw in Maoist class-struggle ideology and its Vietnamese variant.

Quotacide: A New Category of Political Violence

A revisiting of the CSC and other political campaigns of the 1950s to focus on a previously ignored quantitative aspect thus leads to a new approach in our interpretation of Maoist class theory and class politics. Investigating the role a one-per-thousand quota played in the CSC, this article proposes a concept of *quotacide* to describe a type of large-scale homicide unknown in the scholarship of the history of political violence.

The concept of quotacide is descriptive of a mechanism for campaigns of political violence conceived, planned, administered, and measured by numbered killing. This portmanteau can help better understand and interpret several important issues regarding the working of the Maoist party-state as a complex of ideology, organization, and politics as well as moral responsibility concerning mass violence. First, it treats the killing not merely as something reactive, as if it were a choice of policy forced by circumstances. Rather, to a greater extent, the killing was a proactive measure within a national program aiming at a quantified population cleansing with a deep root in the formative stage of Maoist ideology. Such a cross-temporal connection between theory and practice is not a “literal reading” of isolated and limited sources to posit an underlying logic that excludes other elements in historical processes. Rather, Mao’s quantitatively based enemy–friend class theory and the accompanying political strategy were fully elaborated in his writings during a critical stage of his political thought, with a “one-per-thousand” ratio for the most dangerous class of enemy clearly and repeatedly identified. The figure later disappeared from his officially sanctioned works without any explanation but reappeared as the guideline for the CSC, and even reemerged in North Vietnam’s Land Reform under Maoist influence, with both cases lacking a minimum statistical basis. Such facts only prove an almost subconscious but dogged adherence to a key notion in Maoist ideology, even when nothing empirical and verifiable can be found to support it.

Second, with Mao being the founding figure behind the theory and the strategy, the quantified class politics and the quota-based polices penetrated the entire leadership of the CCP. Other leaders, especially in the Center but also at regional, municipal, and provincial levels, accepted and modified such policies with their initiatives and creativity. The evidence is abundant. Liu Shaoqi’s role was obviously preeminent. Deng Xiaoping and Deng Zihui’s suggestion to modify the quota and policy suggestions proposed and experimented with by party committees such as that in Hubei exemplify the participation of leaders below the level of the central authority.

After the four-month interval in summer 1951, “social foundation” (shehui jichu 社会基础), a new concept of quantified antagonist classes, began to appear in the CCP documents to justify continued violence and suppression, which was also a collective work of the CCP leadership. The concept expanded the category of the “enemy” to include the entire population of counterrevolutionaries and their potential allies (middle peasant and middle capitalist classes), in total slightly less than ten percent of the entire population, including those openly opposed to the regime. In his speech at the Fourth Meeting of National Public Security Work, Zhou Enlai, the Premier, asked a rhetorical question: Why, after the victory of the revolution, are we still killing, jailing, and putting under surveillance more than two million counterrevolutionaries? Because there are “thirty to forty million [people who belong to] counterrevolutionary classes.” Out of this total figure, the suppression of a much smaller number was “not a strange

thing.”⁸³ In the early stage of the campaign to continue and reinforce the CSC, Luo Ruiqing presented a figure of fifty million for the population of such classes. Within this figure, the fifteen million who represented the families of those who had been suppressed (executed, sentenced, or placed under surveillance) in the CSC remained potentially the most revengeful and dangerous elements.⁸⁴

Third, mass killing by population-based quota may sound horribly irrational and brutally haphazard compared to definitively identity-based mass killings (based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, etc.). It certainly raises a question among historians concerning the ethical and psychological state of policy makers and policy practitioners: how could the CCP leaders and their followers justify such human slaughter conceived and processed through a population quota? Can we find the “banality of evil” a convincing interpretation especially for those rank-and-file party functionaries? Paradoxically, it was the arbitrary method itself that made such a seemingly preposterous mass killing appear “rational,” “reasonable,” and even “restrained” and therefore explicable and acceptable. If we consider “banality of evil” a plausible interpretation for the absence of human sentiments and hesitation often aroused by mass killing, it ought to be contextualized in this Chinese case that quantified political violence.

At the party’s top level, a figure of one thousandth might not only sound “minimal” to Mao and other leaders, because after all, there were a certain number of enemies that must be eliminated in the revolution, but also, and more importantly, in principle such a quota set a “ceiling” for the killing. One can find this rationale implied in Mao’s essays of the 1920s and taken for granted by him and other leaders in their speeches in the 1950s. When starting the CSC, Liu Shaoqi was confident concerning the limit of the violence as he explained to public security officers, “[R]evolutionaries cannot be eliminated by killing [meaning that more people would join the revolution], but counterrevolutionaries can [meaning that their number was limited]; the more we kill, the fewer counterrevolutionaries remain, and eventually they will all be gone by killing.”⁸⁵ Decades later, to offset negative feelings aroused by the revelation of such quota-based killing, party historians argued that the quota restricted the violence and the national death rate matched it; by this logic, killing by quota was actually a restrained and merciful method.⁸⁶ The VWP’s land reform directive also implied this justification.

For many cadres at lower tiers of the party-state who were originally hesitant to kill, the quota further desensitized them to murder that had been justified by the party’s ideology and made their task more mechanical and simpler than following orders that were imperative but often vaguely worded. Killing by quota technically reduced the burden of their personal responsibility by shifting the priority from convicting the doomed

⁸³Zhou Enlai, “Zai disici quanguo gongan huiyi shang de jianghua” 在第四次全国公安会议上的讲话, September 16, 1951. See Database.

⁸⁴Luo Ruiqing, “Zai ge sheng, shi, zizhiqu dangwei wuren xiaozu huiyi shang de zongjie fayan jiyao” 在各省、自治区党委五人小组会议上的总结发言纪要, November 27, 1956. See Database. However, it is important to note that while the term “social foundation” of counterrevolutionaries appeared in official propaganda during the 1950s, its specific numbers estimated by different leaders were never publicized or issued as a definitive guideline in a way similar to the “one thousandth” was. The concept would be fully developed into “the Theory on Continuing the Revolution under Proletarian Dictatorship,” providing ideological guideline from the early 1960s until Mao’s death, especially during the Cultural Revolution. But that subject is beyond the scope of this article.

⁸⁵Liu Shaoqi, “Zai dierci quanguo gongan gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua” 在第二次全国公安工作会议上的讲话, October 18, 1950. See Database.

⁸⁶Jian “Ruhe zhengque kandai xinzhongguo chengli hou de zhengfan yundong.”

individuals based on the cadres' judgment of evidence to reaching a faceless and lifeless number. In this sense, the quota might have been experienced in the beginning, by some, as a pressure but later was accepted with relief because it meant that they now needed to focus only on executing the number they were assigned or allowed. It did not take long, however, for them to realize that killing by number was not done only to ensure their supervisors' satisfaction but could also advance their own agendas. For one thing, it saved administrative and logistic resources of local governance, just as killing prisoners of war does during war time. Also, killing-engendered terror helped push through other difficult tasks. As time went by, the local cadres' lethal cunning and political savvy grew, and almost no record exists to indicate that party organizations at provincial and lower levels "wasted" the quota or control number. To the contrary, they even asked for extra allowances. The pragmatic value of killing was obvious, especially to cadres in areas desperately short of resources such as guards, prisons, administrators, food, and medicine. When spring 1951 came, death tolls and sick cases of endemic, malnutrition, and hunger dramatically rose in overly crowded prisons. In the Southwest, where 6,000 were killed in six days, this was particularly the case. The region was known for its seasonal epidemics and, having been taken by the CCP only recently, the party organizations there were already overburdened by other pressing assignments, especially grain acquisition and maintaining local order.

Therefore, the concept of quotacide is also instrumental in our re-examination and re-interpretation of the mechanism of the CCP party-state, especially concerning the relationship between the leadership, the Center and their various subordinates in the hierarchy. This mechanism and this type of relationship in some way resembled the dynamics between "intentionalism" and "functionalism," elaborated as two theories in international studies of the "Final Solution." The former proposes that Nazi racist ideology created in the party's early years directly evolved into the practice of the Holocaust. But the latter theory emphasizes that while the intention of a comprehensive exclusion of Jews from the German national community was evident in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, there was no clear idea regarding how to achieve such a result even in Hitler's much later and even wartime speeches or directives. They thus emphasized more, or equally, killing as an inevitable means for the SS functionaries to release themselves from the burden of millions of Jews as the war progressed and brought the enormous Jewish population under their jurisdiction. They also believed that, for the Nazi functionaries, the physical elimination of the Jews could help solve other socioeconomic problems in occupied Europe. These "functionaries" were creative and resourceful in inventing methods and techniques of mass killing, and many of them had moved to implement policies related to the "Final Solution" even before the term and the policy were officially decided at the Wannsee Conference (January 1942). Studies of the "Final Solution" in general have reached a consensus that both theories should be considered and incorporated into historical interpretation regarding the working of the Nazi system on the issue of the Holocaust.⁸⁷

Borrowing this pair of theories, "intentionalism" in the case of the CSC refers to the Party's decades-long, ideology-based political agenda at the national level, reified in Mao and other leaders' desire to sanitize the society by eliminating a very "limited" percentage of the population. "Functionalism" considers the pragmatic value of the killing

⁸⁷For a brief introduction of the two theories, see Richard Bessel, "Functionalists vs. Intentionalists: The Debate Twenty Years on or Whatever Happened to Functionalism and Intentionalism?," *German Studies Review* 26.1 (2003), 15–20.

for party functionaries' local agendas, prioritizing the finding of effective methods to tackle all tasks. The secret Politburo meeting held in mid-February 1951 was thus as important in the CCP's CSC as the Wannsee Conference in Nazi's "Final Solution." Overall, as a system, the working of the party-state on the issue of political suppression hinged on a dynamic balance between the Center's intent and the locality's initiative, indicated by quotas assigned, negotiated, and eventually achieved between the two logics.

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