

# **Calling for the Destruction of Class Enemies in China: Unveiling the Turmoil of 1949-1953 in East Asia**

When examining the impactful historical events that shaped China in the mid-20th century, one cannot overlook the era known as "Calling for the Destruction of Class Enemies." Spanning from 1949 to 1953, this period was an ideological crusade that sought to reshape society by eliminating those considered to be traitors or enemies of the Communist Revolution. This article delves into the tumultuous years that marked the rise of the Communist Party in China and the consequential violence that unfolded as part of the class struggle in East Asia.

## **The Birth of the People's Republic of China**

In 1949, the Chinese Revolution, led by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party, triumphed over the Nationalist Kuomintang forces, ending a long-standing civil war. With the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Mao's vision of a socialist country had come to fruition. However, the transformation of China's social structure had only just begun, igniting a revolutionary fervor that would target perceived enemies of the Communist regime.

## **The Concept of Class Enemies**

Inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideology, the Communist Party sought to create a classless society. They identified four main categories of enemies: landlords, rich peasants (kulaks), counter-revolutionaries, and traitors. These groups were seen as obstructing the establishment of a Communist state and impeding the progress of the proletariat.



## Words Kill: Calling for the Destruction of 'Class Enemies' in China, 1949-1953 (East Asia: History, Politics, Sociology and Culture)

by Cheng-Chih Wang(1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Landlords were typically wealthy landowners who leased land to peasants and collected rent in return. Rich peasants, known as kulaks, were farmers who owned substantial land or had a sizable income. Counter-revolutionaries were considered individuals who opposed or undermined the Communist regime. Traitors, on the other hand, were individuals who had previously collaborated with the Japanese during the brutal occupation of China.

### **Mobilizing the Masses: Struggle Sessions and Fanatical Ideology**

The Communist Party embarked on a nationwide campaign to identify and purge class enemies. As part of this strategy, they encouraged the masses to engage in "struggle sessions" to publicly shame and physically abuse those deemed enemies of the revolution. These sessions aimed to create a climate of fear and encourage self-criticism among the population.

The ideology behind these struggle sessions was rooted in Mao's concept of "continuous revolution." This ideology emphasized the need for unceasing revolution to eliminate counter-revolutionary elements and purify Communist ranks. Mao's belief in perpetual revolution allowed for the ongoing targeting of class enemies, which further fueled the intensity of the violent campaigns during this period.

## **The Human Cost: Violence and Mass Killings**

During the "Calling for the Destruction of Class Enemies" campaign, violence became pervasive in Chinese society. Class enemies were subjected to humiliation, harassment, and often arbitrary executions. Families, friends, and neighbors were compelled to denounce suspected enemies, leading to the creation of an atmosphere of mistrust and betrayal.

Estimating the exact number of casualties during this period remains challenging, as records were inadequate and many were deliberately destroyed. However, conservative estimates suggest that between 1 million to 3 million people lost their lives due to executions, suicides, or through death resulting from labor reform camps known as laogai. These camps, reminiscent of Soviet Gulags, were established to indoctrinate and "re-educate" class enemies.

## **The Aftermath and Reassessing History**

Following Mao's death in 1976, China underwent significant political and ideological transformations. The economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping shifted the focus from class struggle to economic development. The period of Calling for the Destruction of Class Enemies became a taboo subject, and discussions around the era were silenced or suppressed.

However, in recent years, there has been a re-emergence of interest in this dark chapter of Chinese history. Scholars and researchers are making attempts to uncover the truth and revisit the personal narratives of those who experienced the violence and persecution during that time. This renewed scrutiny prompts a reassessment of the long-term impact that the campaign had on Chinese society.

The "Calling for the Destruction of Class Enemies" campaign, which took place from 1949 to 1953, represented one of the most violent and tumultuous periods in the history of East Asia. Fueled by an ideologically driven crusade to create a classless society, the Communist Party targeted and purged individuals deemed enemies of the revolution. This resulted in widespread violence, mass killings, and the destruction of countless lives.

While the legacy of this period has been largely buried in Chinese history, the recent resurgence of interest demonstrates the importance of understanding the past to shape a better future. By confronting the dark periods of our history, we can aspire to create societies that champion equality and justice, free from the violence and persecution that plagued China during these turbulent years.



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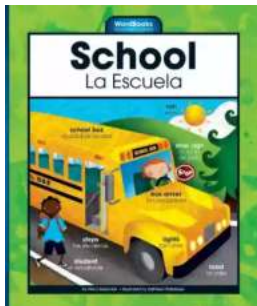
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