The Chinese Communist Party’s Three Antis Campaign of 1951–1952 targeted waste, corruption, and bureaucratism. The party’s Five Antis Campaign, launched soon afterward, targeted bribery, tax evasion, theft of state assets, cheating on government contracts, and theft of capital. Both campaigns led to mass suicides, as well as placing many hitherto private industries in the hands of the government.

In the early years after the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched two political campaigns to reinforce party control over the population over 1951–1952. Both campaigns targeted mainly urban dwellers and people who worked in the modern business sector.

First, the CCP launched the Three Antis Campaign against waste, corruption, and bureaucratism. The campaign targeted cadres in industry and government, especially those who had become (or were thought to have become) overly acquainted with China’s capitalists. Second, the party launched the Five Antis Campaign against bribing, evading taxes, stealing state assets (that is, state property and economic information), cheating on government contracts, and stealing capital. This campaign targeted capitalists themselves. Some of the blacklisted capitalists were left to function as government employees; many were simply eliminated and disappeared. Estimates vary, but it is thought that upwards of 200,000 disgraced or displaced people committed suicide during the two campaigns (Chow 1980, 115 and 133, quoted in MacFarquhar 1997, 37).

The Five Antis Campaign also had a hidden agenda: It seized factories and capital from the blacklisted capitalists and placed them under government control. Through these efforts the CCP expanded its influence over China’s modern economic sectors. At the same time the campaign helped the party to identify people who could be recruited into the party, thereby consolidating the party’s grip over every aspect of Chinese society. Between 1947 and 1953 membership of the CCP increased from 2.7 million to 6.1 million.

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Further Reading