

UA 104/02

Fea.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC Yao Fuxin (m), aged 54]
OF CHINA Xiao Yunliang (m), aged 57] workers' representatives
Pang Qingxiang (m), aged 58]
Wang Zhaoming (m), aged 39]

Thousands of workers in northeastern China have been demonstrating against layoffs, alleged management corruption and insufficient severance pay. The four workers' representatives named above have been arrested and charged with "illegal assembly and demonstration" for their part in organizing protests in Liaoyang city, Liaoning province. Yao Fuxin, who was detained on 17 March, has reportedly been hospitalised for "heart problems" which may have been caused by his detention.

Yao Fuxin works at the Liaoyang city Ferroalloy factory. Workers from this and around 20 other factories in the region have been taking part in demonstrations since 11 March, involving at their height up to 30,000 workers.

According to the police, Yao suffered heart problems while in detention and had to be taken to hospital for treatment. They informed Yao's family of this, but did not allow them to visit him. According to his family, Yao has never had heart trouble before and there are concerns that the problems may have been due to ill treatment while in detention.

Yao Fuxin was detained incommunicado until 31 March, when the police apparently allowed him to call his family and assure them that he was in good health. However he is reportedly still not allowed to receive visits, and the true state of his health is not known. This phone call is the only contact his family have had with him.

He is reportedly held in Tieling City Detention centre, about 60 miles from Liaoyang city.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years China has been steadily shifting its economy from a predominantly state run socialist one to that of a market led economy with a flourishing private sector. Since the 1970s and especially in the past few years, state owned enterprises (SOE) have been shut down resulting in the underemployment or unemployment of thousands of unskilled and skilled workers. In recent years, labour protests have been increasing throughout China. Workers are demonstrating against layoffs, redundancy terms, management corruption, working conditions and delayed welfare payments. Protests are often repressed with the use of force by public security personnel and labour activists, workers' leaders and those who appeared to be outspoken face detention and imprisonment.

In February 2001, the Chinese government ratified the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This was a welcome move in general but the Chinese government asked for a reservation on its obligations towards Article 8 of the Covenant, which guarantees trade union rights and specifically the right to freedom of association and the right to strike. All Chinese trade unions are controlled by the state All China Federation of Trade Unions, and none are independent.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Yao Fuxin, Xiao Yunliang, Pang Qingxiang and Wang Zhaoming have been arbitrarily arrested for peacefully attempting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and association;
- expressing concern at Yao Fuxin's medical problems, which appear to have been acquired in detention and urge the authorities to investigate any allegations of ill treatment;
- urging the authorities to release the workers immediately and unconditionally, and to ensure that while they are in custody they have access to their families, lawyers and doctors of their choosing;
- welcoming the authorities' ratification of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), but urging them to remove their reservation to Article 8, which gives workers the right to freedom of association and the right to strike.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of the Liaoning Provincial People's Government

BO Xilai Shengzhang

Liaoningsheng Renmin Zhengfu

45 Huangguqu, Beiling Dajie

Shenyangshi 110032

Liaoningsheng

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 80039 LFAO CN or 80040 SYFAO CN (Please forward to the Governor)

Telegram: Governor, Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China

Salutation: Dear Governor

Fax: + 86 24 86892112

Director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Public Security

WANG Enfu Tingzhang

Gong'anting

2 Qishan Zhonglu, Beiling Dajie

Huangguqu

Shenyangshi 110032

Liaoningsheng

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Director of the Provincial Department of Public Security, Shenyang,

Liaoning Province, China

Salutation: Dear Director

Email: wxgz@dps.ln.gov.cn

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and to diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 May 2002.