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@Forgotten Prisoners

Appeal on behalf of Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting Zhao Fengxing and Cai Decheng

JANUARY 1994

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During 1993 three well-known Chinese dissidents, who had been imprisoned in China since the late 1970s and early 1980s for their involvement in the "democracy wall" movement, were released amidst wide publicity. Wei Jingsheng had been detained since 1979, Xu Wenli and Wang Xizhe since 1981. While it welcomes these releases, Amnesty International is concerned that many other political prisoners remain in jail, including some who were detained during the late 1970s and early 1980s and who are believed to be still imprisoned. They were sentenced at unfair trials to many years of imprisonment and little has been heard about them since. They are some of China's "forgotten prisoners".

Amongst them are Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting, Zhao Fengxing and Cai Decheng who have been imprisoned since the early 1980s and who, Amnesty International believes may be prisoners of conscience. Since then Amnesty International has repeatedly raised their cases with the authorities and sought to find more information about them, but without success.¹ The Chinese authorities have never responded to the numerous requests for information made about them by Amnesty International over the years. The first three were arrested and tried together in northeast China, while Cai Decheng was arrested in a separate case in central China.

◆ **Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing** come from Jilin province. They are believed to have been arrested in late 1981 in Changchun city, Jilin province, and to have been

¹ See *The People's Republic of China: The case of four 'counter-revolutionaries' in Changchun (Jilin province): Zhao Fengxing, Shi Dongting, Cheng Xiaogang (sic) and Li Guoquan*, AI Index: ASA 17/03/85, October 1985; and *The People's Republic of China: The Cases of Geng Qichang and Cai Decheng*, AI Index: ASA 17/04/85, October 1985.

detained ever since. At their trial in late 1983 they were accused of "counter-revolutionary" crimes and received heavy sentences of between 15 years' and life imprisonment.

Before his arrest Cheng Xiaogang was a teacher at a middle school in Jilin province, Shi Dongting was a worker at Shengyang City No.1 Transport Company and Zhao Fengxing was a worker at Jilin Province Archives. Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing are believed to have been involved in democracy activities in Jilin province.

In 1978 a "democracy and human rights movement" started in Beijing and soon spread to other cities. Many wall posters were pasted on a wall in Beijing that became known as the "Democracy Wall" and some unofficial magazines and journals started circulating. In March 1979 the posters and unofficial magazines were banned by the authorities, and some activists were arrested. Despite this, unofficial publications continued to be printed until the spring or summer of 1981 when over 20 editors of the leading unofficial journals were arrested. Several of them were sentenced at closed trials in 1982 and 1983 to long terms of imprisonment on "counter-revolutionary" charges.

In the autumn of 1983 Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing, plus another man named Li Guoquan, were tried at a court in Changchun city and convicted of "counter-revolutionary" offences. Cheng Xiaogang received a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment plus deprivation of political rights for five years. Shi Dongting was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment plus deprivation of political rights for life and Zhao Fengxing was sentenced to life imprisonment plus deprivation of political rights for life. The fourth man, Li Guoquan, a purchasing agent at Huaide county gelatine factory, was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment plus deprivation of political rights for three years. It is assumed that he has now been released.

An official report of the trial of Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting, Zhao Fengxing and Li Guoquan was broadcast by *Changchun Radio* on 1 December 1983. According to the broadcast, they were accused of forming a "counter-revolutionary" organization called the "Preparatory Committee for North East China People's Autonomous Republic" with the alleged intention of setting up a separate republic in the three provinces of northeast China. They were also accused of "making false charges against others" and "stirring up counter-revolutionary activities". The radio report said that they had "admitted their guilt". Shi Dongting, who is thought to have been the leader of the democracy group, was accused in court of having incited Cheng Xiaogang to set up a periodical entitled "North East China News Report" and of disseminating it in Shanghai, Hangzhou and other places. He also allegedly established ties with editors of unofficial magazines in other cities.

Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing were last reported to be detained in Changchun Municipal Prison in Jilin province, although no recent information has been received to confirm that they are still there.

◆ **Cai Decheng** () was a worker in a chemical fertilizer plant in Henan province before his detention. He is believed to have been tried in December 1983 on "counter-revolutionary" charges and was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.

According to a report broadcast by *Zhengzhou Radio* on 3 January 1984, the Zhengzhou Intermediate People's Court held a "public rally" on 31 December 1983 to pronounce sentence on Cai Decheng and another man, Geng Qichang. The radio broadcast stated that between January and April 1982 Cai Decheng wrote 70 "extremely reactionary counter-revolutionary banner slogans and big-character posters" which he stuck on walls, doors and trees in the streets of Xinxiang and Zhengzhou cities. Cai Decheng was convicted of "carrying out counter-revolutionary propaganda

and incitement" and in addition to 15 years' imprisonment was sentenced to deprivation of political rights for five years to serve after his prison sentence.

The radio report stated that Cai Decheng had told Geng Qichang about "the crimes he had committed" and that Geng Qichang, "though a state cadre" had "failed to make a report or exposure" of Cai Decheng. Geng Qichang had been elected secretary of Henan province Communist Party in 1971, but at the time of his arrest was Deputy Director of the Zhengzhou Vegetable Research Institute. He was charged with "concealing a crime" and sentenced to three years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for two years. It is believed that he has now been released. Geng Qichang was expelled from the Communist Party after his arrest in 1983.

Amnesty International has not received any news about Cai Decheng since 1984.

Despite Amnesty International's numerous requests for information about Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting, Zhao Fengxing and Cai Decheng to the government of the People's Republic of China, no reply has ever been received. Amnesty International is concerned that these four men may be prisoners of conscience held for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and is further concerned that they did not receive a fair trial in accordance with international standards.

Please send telexes/express or airmail letters in English, Chinese or your own language:

- ◆ **Expressing concern that Cai Decheng, Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing are reported to have been imprisoned since the early 1980s for their involvement in peaceful political activities and requesting the Chinese authorities to disclose their current status and whereabouts.**

- ◆ **Expressing concern that the trials of Cai Decheng, Cheng Xiaogang, Shi Dongting and Zhao Fengxing did not meet with the minimum international standards for fair trial. Requesting full details in each case about the accusations on which the charges were based and about the procedures followed at their trial.**

Please send appeals to:

Minister of Justice

XIAO Yang Buzhang

Sifabu

Xiaguangli

Beijingshi 100016

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN (Please forward to Xiao Yang Buzhang)

Faxes: + 861 467 7351

Telegram: Minister of Justice Xiao Yang, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Jilin Provincial People's Government

GAO Yan Shengzhang

Jilinsheng Renmin Zhengfu

11 Xinfu Lu

Changchunshi 130051

Jilinsheng

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Governor Gao Yan, Changchun, Jilin Province, China

Salutation: Dear Governor

Acting Governor of Henan Provincial People's Government

LI Changchun Daishengzhang

Henansheng Renmin Zhengfu

1 hao lou, Weier Lu

Zhengzhoushi

Henansheng

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Governor Li Changchun, Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China

Salutation: Dear Governor

<p>KEYWORDS: POLITICAL PRISONERS1 / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / TRIALS / TEACHERS / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS / MANUAL WORKERS / CENSORSHIP /</p>

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