

On December 24, 2004, Maoists in China Get Three Year Prison Sentences for Leafleting

A Report on the Case of the Zhengzhou Four

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When liberal writers Liu Xiaobo and Yu Jie were recently (and briefly) detained by Chinese police, there was a world wide chorus of denunciation. The liberal writers' endorsement of the U.S. aggression in Iraq made them even more heroic in the eyes of the Murdoch-dominated press. Not surprisingly, there has been no coverage whatsoever of a more egregious case of crackdown on dissent—because it is dissent from the left. On December 21, 2004, four Maoists were tried in Zhengzhou for having handed out leaflets that denounced the restoration of capitalism in China and called for a return to the “socialist road.” The leaflets had been distributed in a public park in the City of Zhengzhou on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the death of Chairman Mao Zedong.

Two of the defendants, Zhang Zhengyao, 56, and Zhang Ruquan, 69, were both found guilty of libel, and each given a three-year prison sentence on December 24, 2004. The case has since generated a lot of expressions of solidarity in leftist circles within China. Postings to a leading leftist website in China in the last few days have set out an abridged translation of the incriminating leaflet, the commemorative piece titled “Mao Zedong forever our leader,” plus a commentary whose author went to Zhengzhou to show solidarity on the day of the trial on December 21. These pieces have been translated by our comrades at have asked that we post them here at the MR website. We are glad to do so, believing that a strong case can be made that the story of the left opposition inside China is the most important and least covered in the world.

A Brief Account of the Case

In recent years, on the anniversary of Mao's passing on September 9, many people in Zhengzhou would gather before Mao's statue in the Zijinshan Square, to pay tribute to Mao's memory by laying wreaths or reciting poems. Each year there would be a massive police presence, which inevitably would lead to incidents of confrontation and arrest.

This year a crowd again gathered on September 9; the event was relatively peaceful, as no police was dispatched to forcefully disperse the crowd. A local resident, Mr. Zhang Zhengyao, however, was taken into custody by plainclothes agents around 10:00 am, apparently because he was distributing leaflets whose contents were judged inflammatory or subversive in nature. What Zhang handed out were copies of a commemorative piece, titled Mao Forever Our Leader, specifically written for this occasion. On September 10, 1:00 A.M., Zhengzhou City Police took Zhang Zhengyao in handcuffs back to his apartment to conduct a search; they took away his computer, the remaining copies of the commemorative piece and other documents. Three other

persons were implicated in connection with this case: Mr. Wang Zhanqing has been detained for allegedly arranging the printing of the leaflets through an acquaintance in a printer's shop; Zhang Ruquan and Ms. Ge Liying, wife of Zhang Zhengyao, were placed under surveillance; Zhang allegedly had penned the commemorative piece at the request of Zhang Zhengyao, and Ms. Ge was said to have posted it on an internet Maoist website, Mao Zedong Flag.

The incident went pretty much unnoticed, even among China's left circles. Zhengzhou has acquired a reputation as a hotbed of radical Maoism. It has seen some of the most militant labor protests and repeated clashes with police over Mao anniversary in recent years. Many activists there had experienced brief detentions, many more than once. This incident and related arrests were not considered a big deal, especially since Hu Jintao was believed to be more tolerant to dissent coming from the left. The authorities, however, decided to deal with them this time by the 'force of Law'. A trial was originally scheduled for December 14, the date later changed to December 21; initial charges state subversion against them had been dropped; instead, they are being charged with a lesser crime: deliberately spreading falsehoods to damage other's reputation, and undermining social order and national interests.

The news began to spread on left-leaning websites about the pending trial; many sites, when reporting on the case, also published the entire text of the commemorative piece. It is now becoming a sort of cause celebre on China's radical left. On December 21, the scheduled trial did take place, albeit in a closed session, and not open to public, as originally announced. Many people actually went on that day, some from other parts of China, to attend the trial as an expression of solidarity, but were unable to get in. Only two defendants, Zhang Zhengyao and Zhang Ruquan were tried that day; both were found guilty, and each given three years on Dec. 24. The other two's trial date is yet to be set.

An abridged translation of the leaflet

Mao Zedong Forever Our Leader!

—A statement in commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the Passing of Mao Zedong

28 years have elapsed, since Chairman Mao left us.

In the past 28 years, the reactionary forces headed by capitalist roaders within our Party have usurped the state and Party powers and divided up state assets among themselves. Meanwhile, they have been spewing deep-seated hatred and venom against Mao Zedong and his socialist legacy. They have done their utmost to attack and slander Mao Zedong, by the use of such tactics as concocting Party resolutions, issuing official documents or reports, and publishing articles and editorials in official news media; moreover, in their attempt to smear Mao Zedong, they have resorted to such low blows as "Democracy Wall" posters, rumors and innuendos, personal memoirs and interviews with foreign journalists.

But the great majority of Chinese people, accounting for more than 95% of the population, and in particular workers and the peasants will always stand by the side of Mao Zedong. Under Mao Zedong's leadership, to serve the people wholeheartedly was set out as the fundamental precept guiding the work of the Party, the government and the army. He had repeatedly urged all Party members and all the cadres always to take the mass line and stand on the side of 95% of the

people; he emphatically stated that: “To take the mass line is a fundamental principle of Marxism.” Throughout his life, he had fought for the liberation of the people, until his last breath.

From their direct experience, the Chinese people realized that Mao Zedong and they themselves were intimately bound together, in good times and bad, in victory and defeat: with Mao Zedong as their leader, Chinese people were the masters of the country, and enjoyed inviolable democratic rights. They lived a happy life, confident, optimistic and reassured of ever better days ahead. But after Mao Zedong passed away, the working class in China was knocked down overnight by the bourgeoisie; they are no longer the masters of their own country. In this society of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics,” money means power and social status. The wealth polarization has driven working people into abject poverty; as a result, they have lost their social status and all the rights they had enjoyed previously. They are no longer dignified socialist laborers; instead, they are forced to sell their labor power as commodities for survival: they have become tools that can be bought freely by the capitalists.

Part of the working people work for so-called state-owned enterprises, but the term 'state-owned' actually means capitalist-owned because the entire state is owned by the capitalist class. The laborers are no longer working for themselves; they are working to create surplus value for the capitalist class. Another part of working people have in effect become slaves for large and small capitalists. They suffer from even more crueler exploitation and oppression. In addition, hundreds of millions of workers and peasants have been constantly subjected to layoffs, and forced migration, living from hand to mouth, always on the march, looking for jobs, and struggling for mere survival. Labor has become the only means for the survival of themselves and their families. Work is no longer a guaranteed right. As a result of the commercialization of education, health care, cultural activities, sports and legal recourse, they have been in effect deprived of the right to send their children to school, access to health care, the right to pension and other rights associated with old age, the right to participate in cultural, recreational and sports activities; and even the right to legal protection. Moreover, as a result of the waste of resources and environmental pollution caused directly by the rapacious development pursued by the capitalist class, the working people have even lost their right to healthy food, clean water and fresh air. Poverty has brought them untold suffering!

A line has thus been clearly drawn. Mao Zedong is the leader of the Chinese working class; he is the leader of over 95% of the Chinese people. The imperialist revisionists and bourgeoisie and all the reactionary forces within and outside of China oppose Mao Zedong and hate him, while the people love him. The longer he has left this world, the more vehemently his enemies oppose him, the more profoundly, unshakably, sincerely and passionately do people love him. It is indeed laughable for those who oppose Mao Zedong and stand against the people to pronounce a verdict on Mao Zedong, which of course is categorically rejected by the people. The “Mao Zedong fever” that has occurred repeatedly in China over these years have eloquently refuted the two official “resolutions” purporting to pronounce a verdict on Mao Zedong. They are unacceptable to the Chinese people and to the people of the world.

Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and the like call themselves the core, or chief architect of China's reforms, or the proud author of the “Theory of the Three Represents” a close look at their performances and deeds will lead to the conclusion that they only represent the interests of

imperialism, and the interests of the bourgeoisie. The historical practice and stark social realities of the past 28 years have opened our eyes and raised our class consciousness; the bourgeois elements within our Party is the head and the backbone of the Chinese bourgeois class. These are extremely selfish persons, stubbornly pursuing the capitalist road. They are much more sinister, ruthless, greedy, and devious than an average capitalist outside the Party.

Just take a look at what has transpired in a relatively short period of twenty plus years: the large and small capitalist-roaders in the Party and their family members have all become millionaires and even billionaires; who can deny that all their talks about socialism, and the “Three Represents”, are outright lies. What they really want is capitalism, because only capitalism will bring them the greatest benefit. They are the enemies of socialism and the people.

We, however, must not forget that the CCP after all is a Party that had been founded and led by Mao Zedong, and one with a long revolutionary tradition. It is a Party that had carried resolute struggle against Khrushchev’s revisionism, and had been tempered by the Cultural Revolution. And consequently, just as there are capitalist-roaders in the Party, there are certainly socialist-roaders in the Party as well, particularly at the grassroots level. Among the rank and file Party members and low-level cadres, the overwhelming majority are resentful of revisionist leaders within the party. They wish to see the Party change its current line and to revert to the socialist road. Some of them cannot tolerate it any more. They have stepped out to openly challenge the current leadership, but more people still find it safe for themselves or for their families not to speak their minds.

We are convinced, along with the deepening of the revisionist clique's push for privatization, the class contradictions in China are bound to become more acute; and the masses will certainly intensify their struggle on ever wider scales. When development of contradictions and mass struggles nationwide reach a climax, the people within the Party, the government and the army who have understood the true nature of revisionism will wage a resolute struggle against it, and will rejoin the proletarian class ranks to hold high the banner of Mao Zedong and to resume the fight for socialism in China.

As long as classes and the class struggle still exist in our world, Mao Zedong will remain alive, forever the leader of the oppressed and exploited classes. As the entire history of China's revolution has repeatedly shown, as long as the revolutionary people follow steadfastly the guidance of Mao Zedong, their struggle will surely advance from victories to victories.

The struggle of the people is the unexhaustible source of our confidence and power.

What Kind of Signal Is This?

A commentary on the trial of Maoists in Zhengzhou (This report is posted on the website of the book-store/political-salon Utopia. Penned by Shao Jingyan)

Today was an unusually cold day for the City of Zhengzhou, it snowed heavily, contrary to weather forecast. But despite the daunting weather conditions, many people have come to the city of Zhengzhou, from all over the country, in a spontaneous response to the news of the trial of Maoists in Zhengzhou.

They come here, without orchestration or an agreed plan, but rather, out of the deepest sense of loyalty to a socialist republic, and most profound respect and love for their deceased leader and teacher, Chairman Mao Zedong, united by a common concern for justice, and a perception that what is at stake with this case is the fate of the socialist republic and of the people. They know that the outcome of this trial will speak volume about the attitude held by the authorities of the city of Zhengzhou toward the banner and legacy of Mao Zedong. This case is a public litmus test of for the Zhengzhou authorities: Are they sincerely following the instructions of our party center regarding the imperative need to "hold high at all times the great banner of Mao Zedong Thought"? The defendants in this case, Mr. Zhang Zhengyao, and other workers, have been arrested for no crime whatsoever other than an act in honor of the memory of Chairman Mao.

As their trial began today, the informed people all over the world will be watching. Supporters in a position to do so have traveled to Zhengzhou to express solidarity. Many older workers in Zhengzhou braced the heavy snow to go to the court if only just to see these Maoist defendants in person. The trial held today, Dec. 21, only days from the 111th anniversary of Mao's birthday on Dec. 26, was supposed to be a public proceeding, but the intermediate court of Zhengzhou city without advanced notice had decided to hold it in close session. The charge was also changed from 'subverting state power' to 'libel'.

People kept waiting and waiting outside of the court in a state of suspended animation; finally, the lawyer came to give a brief account. In particular, the people learned, Mr. Zhang Ruquan had made a rousing statement, resolutely refuting the charge made against him and declaring, in conclusion, "I feel immensely proud of myself for being arrested for honoring the memory of Mao Zedong." When Zhang Zhengyao was put into a police vehicle, to be whisked away, the crowd chanted aloud: "Justice will be done" "Truth will prevail!" "Solidarity!" The police car was gone. But people still lingered on, voicing their indignation: Who are the real criminals that are daily breaking the laws with impunity? Who is it on earth that are trampling the constitution underfoot? Why are they afraid of people paying tribute to Mao's memory? One person said angrily: these evil, corrupt officials are lording over us and having a ball for now, but sooner or later people will get even with them! On September 9, an old worker was arrested before Mao's statue for an act in commemoration of the 28th anniversary of Mao's passing; On Dec. 21, a few days before Mao's 111th birthday anniversary, he and others were tried in secrecy. What kind of signal is this?