

Political Prisoners in China

Free the Li-I-Che 40 Million

1977

Last March in Canton, China, an unnamed Peking official replied to questions by the *New York Times*, on the subject of political prisoners in China, by stating, "A few intellectuals deprived of free speech is only a minor question. In the Soviet Union, the workers, the peasants and the intellectuals are all being oppressed."

He went on to say, "China is the country where human rights are best observed. Over 95% of the population enjoy human rights, and the other five percent, if they are receptive to re-education, they can also enjoy human rights."

Simple mathematics shows that 5% of 800 million people is an alarming 40 million, and there's no reason not to believe that the number is actually much higher. Even though the Chinese government goes to great lengths to point out that they are only the "legal" representatives and captains of the Chinese "Workers' State," (and many people around the world have been suckered into this sham) there is absolutely no proof, in the face of recent history, that these tyrants are any less the liars than their Western brethren—just more crass.

In a letter sent to us by the 70's Front' (a group of Chinese libertarians, including several ex-Red Guards, living in Hong Kong) comes the information on a few of the 40 million (plus) people that the Peking government has deemed "counterrevolutionary."

Shortly before the most recent power struggle and purge involving the defeat of so-called "Gang of Four" by the right-wing of the Chinese bureaucracy, the massive military machine arrested a group of ex-Red Guards and ultra-leftists who went under the collective pseudonym of Li-I-Che.

Their "crime" was the publication of a giant wall poster entitled "Concerning Socialist Democracy and the Legal System; Dedicated to Chairman Mao," even though the Chinese Constitution states that "Citizens have the freedoms of speech, communication, association, demonstration and the right to strike." (Chapter 3, Article 28)

The poster was a description of what has been happening in China since the so-called Cultural Revolution, criticizing the "Red Capitalists who use privilege and the legal system to exploit the Chinese people and crush any form of resistance to their rule.

Li-I-Che's fate was sealed when the vice-premier of the State Council of China, Li Hsien-nien, labeled them as "reactionary through and through, vicious and malicious to the extreme," terms that have been used all too many times as a prelude to the disappearance of those who dare challenge the prevailing ideas of the bureaucracy.

The Chinese authorities identified Li Cheng-t'ien, who lived in Wuhan, as the major author of the big character poster, and have paraded him in front of various army units and mass meetings for public "criticism" and humiliation. After five months of inquiring about the whereabouts of Li and his comrades by friends in Hong Kong, news has come from Canton saying that authorities have sentenced the members of Li-I-Che to Labor Reform Camps (prisons) for being "counter-revolutionary."

The letter from the '70s Front also informed us of another ex-Red Guard member, Yang Hsi-kuan, who, in 1968, was arrested for publishing a now famous wall poster, "Whither China." He was arrested ten years ago, and although he should have been released by now, Yang has disappeared and the Chinese government refuses to give out any information on him.

These four people are but a small percentage of the political prisoners in China (whose number is greater than the population of many countries), but the campaign by the '70s Front to free them is only the beginning of a concentrated effort to free all Chinese political prisoners. The Front has sponsored demonstrations at Chinese embassies around the world and has available stickers in English, French, and Chinese calling for the freeing of Li-I-Che and are available along with other information on the situation from The '70s Front, 180 Lockhart Rd, 1st Floor, Wanchi, Hong Kong.

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