

Chinese Police Detain Maoist Leftists Ahead of Ruling Party Centenary

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Authorities in the eastern province of Shandong are detaining Maoist activists ahead of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) centenary celebrations on July 1, Taiwanese media reported.

Police in Shandong's Jining city are running a nationwide operation targeting leftwingers in a bid to "maintain stability" ahead of the politically sensitive anniversary, Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA) quoted sources as saying.

The operation, which began on May 12, has largely been carried out in secret, with no information given to detainees' families after going incommunicado.

- Among them is Maoist dissident Ma Houzhi, 77, who was released from a 10-year jail term in 2019.

A retired Qufu Normal University professor, Ma Houzhi was jailed for setting up a **Chinese Maoist Communist Party**, defying a ban on the registration of new political parties under the CCP.

- Other prominent leftists including Liu Qingfeng, Fu Mingxiang, Hu Jiahong, Nie Jubao and Wu Ronghua have been detained. Most of them are under 30, CNA said.

- Several others are believed to have been summoned for questioning and then released, it said, quoting Jining police as saying that the arrests were "nothing to do with their promotion of Chairman Mao."

Independent scholar Wu Zuolai agreed that the detention of leftist activists is likely linked to the forthcoming centenary celebrations.

He said people who still support late supreme leader Mao Zedong offer a potential challenge to CCP rule.

"Some of those who still revere Mao approve of the rebellious tactics used during the Cultural Revolution," Wu Zuolai said in reference to a decade of political turmoil that saw denunciatory "struggle sessions," kangaroo courts, beatings and summary executions, factional armed conflict and the replacement of doctors and teachers with unqualified "revolutionaries."

"They are likely to create instability for the CCP regime, so the CCP is cracking down on Maoists as well as rights activists and democracy activists," he said. *"The stability of the regime trumps everything."*

"They regard any kind of social movement as a disturbance once it gains a bit of momentum."

Wu Zuolai said the CCP fears that smaller social movements and non-government groups will eventually network and organize against it.

"They are worried that could trigger something like the 1989 pro-democracy movement," he said.

"They are very aware of growing discontent and a widening gap between rich and poor, as well as a large number of young people who have no real future."

"They actually have a huge amount of data on the wealth gap, and they know that there could be a tipping point for social unrest, so they go in hard and fast," Wu said.

The reported detentions come after the CCP canceled a conference of prominent Maoist ideologists slated for May 16, the anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), suggesting that CCP leader Xi Jinping is unwilling to allow the faction to increase its power base in a

possible challenge to his “core” leadership.

While many commentators have noted an apparent shift towards political practises and ideological tropes that echo the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) under late supreme leader Mao Zedong in recent years, it appears that **Xi is unwilling to allow actual Maoists free rein under his rule.**

Toning down criticism of Mao misdeeds

Maoist, leftist websites and groups like Hongzhan, Practical Communism, Utopia, the Mao Zedong Thought Banner, Mao Zedong Research Institute, the Protagonist, The Red Song Society had all said they would take part in the canceled conference.

Political theorists have said there are signs that the CCP under general secretary Xi Jinping is moving away from a positive evaluation of late supreme leader Deng Xiaoping, whose economic reforms in 1979 are usually credited in the official narrative with ushering in three decades of rapid economic growth.

CCP officials have recently become somewhat less critical of Cultural Revolution in public comments, according to Song Yongyi, a professor at California State University in Los Angeles. *“Will Xi Jinping reverse the official narrative around the Cultural Revolution? Of course he wants to do that, but he has to achieve it in a covert manner,”* Song told RFA.

He said the Maoist leftists are potentially more attractive to the general public than the mainstream CCP, because they are very open about what they stand for.

“Xi Jinping is highly likely to sacrifice them [to stay in power],” Song Yongyi said.

China’s Maoist left straddles the established party and unofficial activism alike, and, as such, isn’t an entirely controllable quantity.

Leftists, including dozens of young labor activists who tried to set up an independent labor union at the **Jasic** Technology factory in Shenzhen in 2018, have been detained, placed under house arrest, and silenced as part of the CCP’s “*stability maintenance*” regime.

Ma Houzhi was arrested in 2009 after he tried to set up a new political party, the Maoist Communist Party, something that the CCP has never tolerated.

He was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment on charges that haven’t been made public.

Ma Houzhi and around 200 of his supporters nationwide held a meeting of the new political party in Chongqing, seeking the protection of then CCP party secretary Bo Xilai.

Bo Xilai was handed a life sentence in prison on bribery charges, a 15-year jail term for embezzlement, and seven years for abuse of power in September 2013.

Reported by Gao Feng for RFA’s Mandarin and Cantonese Services. Translated and edited by Luisetta Mudie.

P.S.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/maoists-detentions-06092021114100.html>