



Prisoner Profile: Mu Chuanheng

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Mu Chuanheng, a native of Yantai City, Shandong Province, was detained on August 14, 2001 and sentenced to three years imprisonment on September 10, 2002 for "incitement to subvert state power." He is serving his sentence at Qingdao Dashan No.1 Detention Center.

This is not the first time that Mu has been punished for his efforts in the cause of human rights and political reform in China. Born on September 23, 1955, Mu was inspired by the 1978 Democracy Wall movement to initiate, with 30 others, Shandong Province's first public political opposition group, the "Friends of Democracy Study Group." The Study Group's two magazines, *Theoretical Flag*, and *Loyal Friendship Forum*, became vehicles for circulating news and ideas about the democracy movement. Mu also contributed to *Sea Spray*, a magazine established by Sun Weibang, another influential Shandong-based activist of the Democracy Wall era. Using the pen name Lu Ji, Mu published many articles proposing social reforms and advocating democracy before he was arrested in April 1981 and imprisoned for one year on counterrevolutionary charges.

After his release from prison, Mu maintained informal links with like-minded activists, but without establishing a formal organization. He obtained a law degree through self-study in 1986, and one year later passed the lawyer qualification exam.

Although never approved by the government to practice law, Mu began working at the Jingchen Law Firm in Qingdao in 1990, where he served as legal advisor for more than ten companies.

In 1991 Mu and his brother published *The Study of Negotiation: Theory, Method and Skill Behind Negotiation*, the first of many books on what Mu referred to as "win-win" negotiation strategies. Mu subsequently won many honors for his work, including an award for Excellence in Research in Social Science and a first-class award in legal studies in Shandong Province. But in 1995, when Mu published a series applying his "win-win" theories to political compromise, the authorities banned the books, and his publisher, Qingdao Ocean University Publishing House, was forced to suspend business for one year. The director and executive director of the publishing house were dismissed from their positions, and Mu's forthcoming title, *China Must Have Reconciliation*, never saw print.

In 1997 Mu began to express his opinions through the Internet, continuing even after he lost his job at the law firm. He openly advocated what he called "New Culture" ideas of "mutual compromise, reconciliation among all citizens, equal democracy for all people and a win-win policy of mutual coexistence." Mu had just finished working on a new book, *Changing the World and Reforming China in an Era of Confrontation*, and was looking for a publisher at the time of his arrest in August 2001.

The immediate reason for Mu's arrest was his continuous appeals on behalf of his friend Yan Peng, another Qingdao dissident who had helped Mu publish his articles in various on-line magazines. A private entrepreneur, Yan Peng was also a democracy activist who donated much of his income to support human rights work. Constant harassment and suppression by the authorities forced Yan to close his business in 1998. On July 11, 2001, while Yan was traveling with a tour group in Beihai City, Guangxi Province that was on its way to Vietnam, he was detained on the suspicion of intending to cross China's borders illegally by policemen who had followed him all the way from Qingdao. His family was told that Yan would soon be released, but on July

14, the day after China won its bid to host the 2008 Olympics, officials searched Yan's home and formally arrested him.

Mu Chuanheng was arrested in Qingdao one month later, on August 14, after issuing an open letter to the National People's Congress Standing Committee with 13 other Shandong activists demanding Yan's immediate release. More than ten police officers searched Mu's home and confiscated his computer and various articles and letters. On August 28, 2001, the Qingdao Public Security Bureau formally arrested Mu on charges of subverting state power.

After more than a year in detention, Mu and Yan went to trial on August 30, 2002. The court accused Mu of publishing eight subversive articles on the Internet and claimed Yan was guilty of aiding and abetting publication of these articles. The defense lawyer for Mu and Yan pleaded not guilty to all charges and appealed to the judge to draw lessons from history and refuse to hold another trial that disregarded citizens' legal rights. But while Mu was making a statement in his own defense at the conclusion of the proceedings, the chief judge granted the prosecutor's request to cut him off. The hearing ended without any judgment and Yan and Mu were sent back to detention.

Finally on September 10, 2002, the Qingdao Dashan Intermediate People's Court passed sentence on Mu and Yan. Mu was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and five years' deprivation of political rights for subverting state power, while Yan was sentenced to one and a half years in prison and two years' deprivation of political rights on the same charge. Both men expressed deep disappointment with the failure of Chinese law to deliver justice and the lack of independence shown by the judiciary. Dismissing the likelihood of a fair hearing, they did not file an appeal, but their families, who were not allowed to contact or visit them following their arrests, appealed on their behalf.

Yan was released upon completion of his term on Jan. 13, 2003, but Mu is still awaiting the result of his appeal in the Qingdao Dashan No. 1 Detention Center. He is reported to suffer from an enlarged liver and severe insomnia.