

Prisoner Profile: Hu Shigen

COMPILED BY STACY MOSHER

Hu Shigen, born in 1954 in the revolutionary stronghold of Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province, was nine years old before he had an opportunity to go to school. Through perseverance and hard work he managed to gain admittance to the prestigious Peking University in 1979, where he graduated with a degree in Chinese in 1983, and continued on at the university as a graduate student.

After receiving his Master's Degree, Hu was deployed to the Beijing Language and Culture Institute (now Beijing Language and Culture University) as a lecturer, and was eventually promoted to instructor and deputy department chairman, facing a bright professional future. A friend once asked him, "The Party nurtured you, why didn't you follow the Party?" Hu reportedly replied, "My country and my people nurtured me, so they're the ones I should repay."

In January 1991, Hu Shigen established the China Freedom and Democracy Party (CFDP) with Wang Guoqi and others. Hu also participated in the Chinese Progressive Alliance established by Kang Yuchun. In December 1991, Hu Shigen joined Liu Jingsheng and Gao Yuxiang and others to establish the China Free Trade Union (CFTU) Preparatory Committee. He drafted



Hu Shigen photographed secretly in prison by a visitor.

a number of key documents for the CFDP and the CFTU. Hu Shigen was also active in organizing memorials and calling for accountability for the government's violent suppression of the Democracy Movement in June 1989. In April and May of 1992, Hu Shigen, Liu Jingsheng and others planned memorial ceremonies for Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and other major cities, with plans to drop leaflets over Tiananmen Square on June 4.

The Chinese government strongly opposed the establishment of the Freedom and Democracy Party, which was made up largely of teachers and students in dozens of universities, and included as many as 100 members of the Chinese Communist Party. The participation of FDP members in June 4th memorial activities exacerbated the group's sensitivity in the eyes of the authorities, who ultimately arrested and imprisoned dozens of members, including Hu Shigen.

Hu Shigen was detained on May 27, 1992, and was formally arrested on September 27 of that year. He was held in the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau Detention Center until his trial at the Beijing Intermediate People's Court. On December 16, 1994 Hu Shigen was sentenced to a total of 20 years in prison and 5 years' subsequent deprivation of political rights on charges of leading a counterrevolutionary organization counterrevolutionary propaganda.

Hu Shigen launched an appeal, but on June 15, 1995 the Supreme People's Court rejected his appeal and upheld the original sentence.

Hu Shigen is currently being held in the Beijing No. 2 Prison. Because he has steadfastly maintained his innocence, and has refused to express regret for his political activities, Hu Shigen has been treated harshly in prison, and is held under Class Two Close Supervision. He is not allowed to telephone his family or have overnight family visits and can apply to see a family member only once a month. He is also allowed to spend only 80 yuan on food in addition to the meager fare provided in prison. He is monitored around the clock by three to six prisoners who have been assigned to record his every movement and to keep him from talking to others. One prisoner broke the middle finger of Hu Shigen's right hand, and as a result of lack of

access to medical treatment, Hu's finger is now permanently disfigured.

Hu Shigen suffers from intestinal and heart ailments, malnutrition and chronic migraines, and requires a hearing aid. A friend reported in 2001 that Hu was "so weak the wind could practically blow him away," that he looked 20 years older than his actual age, and that he sometimes had to be carried to weekly visits to the prison infirmary. More recently, Hu has suffered the dislocation of several vertebrae, and friends worry that he will become paralyzed if his condition is not treated. His family's requests for medical parole have been ignored by prison authorities.

In spite of poor health, Hu is reported to be in good spirits and is still avidly interested in politics and in his linguistic research, which he has continued to carry out in spite of constant discouragement and obstruction in prison.

Hu Shigen met his wife, Wang Nianci, while both were graduate students at Peking University in the early 1980s. Wang is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the combined long-term psychological pressures of work and home duties, and worries over Hu Shigen's condition, have taken their toll on her health.

Hu Shigen and Wang Nianci have a daughter named Junjun who was born on October 2, 1988. She has only seen her father once in the past 13 years. Junjun attended Baiyunlu Elementary School from 1995 to 1999, and Beijing Foreign Studies Academy from 2000 to 2003. Her current situation is kept confidential for the sake of her personal wellbeing.