

PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION

On May 19, 1989, **Yu Dongyue**, fine art sub-editor of the *Liuyang Daily*, travelled from to Beijing with two friends. As representatives of the Hunan Delegation in Support of the Beijing Students, their mission was to join the pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square. All of them had already been active in the democracy movement in their home province, and they had tried to display a "reactionary slogan" sign in the railway station.

On May 23 in Beijing, the young demonstrators decided to make a gesture that would mark their disdain for the old regime. Hanging in the centre of the Square was a giant portrait of Mao Zedong. The three men filled empty eggshells with paint and threw them at the portrait, hitting the former Chinese leader in the forehead, neck and shirt-collar, and splattering his face. The act was reported around the world. Chinese authorities denounced it as one of the principal "counter-revolutionary"

Yu was convicted in August 1989 for "counter-revolutionary propaganda, sabotage and incitement", and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and five years' deprivation of civil rights. In prison, Yu reportedly continually refused to admit that the sabotage act had any counter-revolutionary aim and made "reactionary statements", resulting in his being subjected to various forms of punishment by prison guards.

In January 2001, Yu's sentence was reduced by two years. One of the friends who had received a life sentence, Yu Zhijian, was released, while his other friend, Tang Decheng, was released in August 1999, six years before the expiry of his sentence. The Justice Ministry said Yu had his 20-year sentence reduced in March to 18 years "because he sincerely expressed regret and a willingness to reform." Reports in late 2004 indicated that Yu had gone insane because of repeated torture in prison. He is due to be released on May 21, 2007.



A portrait of Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong at the heart of Tiananmen Square is defaced with a trail of blue, red and yellow paint on May 23, 1989. Photo: AFP/Files

PEN Canada considers Yu Dongyue to be detained in violation of his right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. PEN Canada is further concerned by reports that Yu Dongyue is in ill health and incarcerated in deplorable conditions. We are calling for his immediate and unconditional release. While he remains in detention, we seek assurances that Yu Dongyue be treated humanely.