

WEEK 10, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER

CHINESE REGIME

DIRECTS MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST

SHEN YUN

See Page 6

Audience members watch a performance of Shen Yun Performing Arts at the Lincoln Center in New York on Jan. 19, 2015.

Leaked Documents Reveal Chinese Province Underreporting Coronavirus Cases 3



Security guards wear protective masks as they stand on a nearly empty commercial street in Beijing on Feb. 25, 2020.

CORONAVIRUS

Search for Source of Coronavirus Stymied by Chinese Regime's Lack of Openness, Experts Say

CATHY HE

Nearly two months after news of the novel coronavirus first emerged in China, there is still much that scientists don't know about the source of the outbreak.

The race to find the virus's provenance, however, has been made more difficult by the Chinese regime's lack of transparency, according to experts.

"There are so many questions about the origins of the virus because the Chinese government didn't provide enough transparency regarding the early investigation of the outbreak," Sean Lin, a former virology researcher for the U.S. Army, told The Epoch Times.

Chief among these questions is where the outbreak originated.

While Chinese officials have suspected the birthplace of the outbreak to be the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, a wild animal and seafood market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, recent developments cast doubt on that claim.

A Jan. 24 study by a group of Chinese researchers published in The Lancet medical journal analyzed the first 41 cases of coronavirus patients in Wuhan and found that 14 out of those patients had no link to the seafood market.

Crucially, the researchers could not find an "epidemiological link" between the first patient, who became ill on Dec. 1, 2019, and later patients. That date also contradicts reports from Chinese health authorities, who said the first patient exhibited symptoms on Dec. 8, 2019.

One of the study's authors later confirmed to the BBC that the first patient was a man in his 70s who was bedridden after suffering a stroke. He didn't have a connection to the market—a revelation that opens up the possibility that the virus may have spread elsewhere before entering the market.

A recent study, which has yet to be peer-reviewed, by a group of researchers affiliated with China's Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Institute for Brain Research suggested that the coronavirus was introduced from outside the market, then rapidly expanded inside the crowded facility in early December 2019 before spreading to the whole city.

Based on an analysis of the virus's ge-

nome data, the researchers postulated that the virus began spreading from person to person in early December, or possibly even in late November.

Missing Information

While genetic studies may gradually provide more detail on the outbreak's evolution, the task of tracing the path of the disease has faced challenges because Chinese authorities haven't released information about which animals were present in the market, nor whether they have tested animal samples from the market or elsewhere in Wuhan.

Such information is critical in identifying the animals that might have carried the virus before it jumped to humans.

Guan Yi, director of the State Key Laboratory of Emerging Infectious Diseases at Hong Kong University, traveled to Wuhan with his team in January in hopes of tracking the animal that was the source of the virus. He criticized Wuhan authorities for disinfecting the market, essentially halting any possible investigation.

"There's no crime scene," Guan told Chinese financial magazine Caixin in a Jan. 23 interview.

Lin expressed similar concerns, saying, "The problem is that the Chinese government so far has not shown any testing result of any animal sample collected in Wuhan. 'So you cannot draw a clear understanding of how the bat coronavirus ... jumped to humans.'"

Bats are thought to be the original host of the virus, formally known as SARS-CoV-2. It's then thought to have jumped to another animal or animals, called an intermediate host, before jumping to humans. Bats weren't sold at the Wuhan market.

Palm civets, mammals found in Asia, were the intermediate host of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), an outbreak originating in China in 2002, while camels were the intermediate host of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), an outbreak in Saudi Arabia in 2012. Researchers traced the original hosts to bats in both outbreaks.

The novel coronavirus was found to have 96.2 percent genetic similarity to a coronavirus found in a horseshoe bat in 2013, called RaTG13, in southwestern China's Yunnan Province—1,000 miles from Wuhan. Interestingly, Chinese scientists from the Wuhan Institute of Virology didn't publish the genome for RaTG13 until Jan.

23 this year.

Yuhong Dong, a viral infectious diseases expert and chief scientific officer at the Swiss-based biotech firm SunRegen Healthcare, told The Epoch Times that such a genetic similarity isn't enough to justify that RaTG13 is a direct source of SARS-CoV-2, as a similarity of around 99.9 percent is needed to be identified as an immediate ancestor.

Coronaviruses have more than 30,000 RNA nucleic acid bases. Even a genetic difference of only 4 percent means that at least 1,200 bases are different. This difference of 1200 bases is still significant, Dong said.

There are so many questions about the origins of the virus because the Chinese government didn't provide enough transparency regarding the early investigation of the outbreak.

Sean Lin, a former virology researcher for the U.S. Army

Recently, scientists at the South China Agricultural University in China's Guangdong Province announced that SARS-CoV-2 had a 99 percent match to a coronavirus identified in pangolins—suggesting that the scaled animal may have served as an intermediate host.

The team of scientists reviewed more than 1,000 samples and found 70 percent of the pangolins carried viruses from the same family of pathogens as SARS-CoV-2. However, they haven't released the study or any data from the testing. They also haven't disclosed where the pangolins they tested came from, making their claim impossible to verify, Dong said.

Genetically Engineered?

Some people have offered a theory that the coronavirus could be a result of genetic engineering or a lab accident, possibilities that Lin and Dong can't be ruled out at this stage.

Dong says it may be extremely challenging to prove if the virus was engineered, since such a process could be done without leaving any distinctive evidence.

"I haven't seen a scientific article that can clearly explain its natural origins, its natural reservoir, and its closest predecessor," Dong added.

The question of whether human action could have led to the virus has drawn considerable attention, with some media and scientists labeling it as a "conspiracy theory." Lin says such a label has no place in the scientific inquiry.

"When people question the origin, it doesn't mean it's a conspiracy theory. People just don't know enough about how the virus mutated," Lin said, adding there are many questions yet to be resolved.

Particular mutations in amino acids of the virus—making it more transmissible to humans—are "unusual in an academic sense," Fang Chi-tai, a professor at National Taiwan University's (NTU) College of Public Health, said at a seminar hosted at NTU on Feb. 22, adding that such mutations were unlikely to have formed in nature "in one go."

"From an academic point of view, it is indeed possible that the amino acids were added to COVID-19 [the disease caused by the novel coronavirus] in the lab by humans," Fang said, Taiwan News reported. Other scientists have dismissed the idea, saying the virus came from a natural evolutionary process.

Richard H. Ebright, laboratory director at the Waksman Institute of Microbiology and a professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Rutgers University, said that based on the genome sequence and properties of the virus, "there is no basis to suspect the virus was engineered."

But Ebright did leave open the possibility that the virus entered the human population through a laboratory accident, "because the bat coronavirus RaTG13 and closely related bat coronaviruses also are known to have been present in a lab," he told The Street website, referring to the coronavirus collection at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. "The first human infection also could have occurred as a lab accident."

The Wuhan Institute, located a few miles from the Huanan market, has publicly denied it was the source of the outbreak.

Dong said that she would like to have seen more transparency from the institute, such as disclosures of all viruses it was studying—so outsiders could verify whether it had a connection with the outbreak.

Eva Fu contributed to this report.

EXCLUSIVE

Leaked Document Reveals Underreporting of Coronavirus by Shandong Authorities

NICOLE HAO

The novel coronavirus outbreak in eastern China's Shandong Province is much worse than what has been officially reported, according to a series of internal government documents obtained by The Epoch Times.

Each day from Feb. 9 to Feb. 23, Shandong authorities underreported the number of infections, according to internal data compiled by the Shandong Center for Disease Prevention and Control (SCDC). The SCDC kept a tally of the number of people who tested positive for the virus during nucleic acid testing—using a diagnostic kit to test patient samples and detect whether they contain the virus's genetic sequence.

The SCDC's daily new infection numbers ranged from 1.36 times to 52 times greater than the officially published data by the Shandong health commission and China's National Health Commission.

As of Feb. 25, the Shandong government stated that there were a total of 755 infections in the province. But the internal document showed that 1,992 people had tested positive for the virus via nucleic acid testing as of Feb. 23.

The government publicly stated that there were four newly diagnosed patients on Feb. 22, but the internal document said that there were 61 positive tests that day.

In recent days, official data has shown new infections leveling off. For example, on Feb. 25, the National Health Commission reported only a total of nine new diagnosed cases outside of Hubei Province, where the outbreak is most severe.

In fact, Shandong alone had new infections in the double-digits daily. On Feb. 20, new infections spiked, with 274 people testing positive.

To date, it's the most definitive

evidence that Chinese authorities routinely underreport cases. Previously, The Epoch Times interviewed workers at funeral homes in the city of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei, who said they had to work around the clock to keep up with the dramatic increase in workload.

Health experts have also hypothesized that Chinese official figures are inaccurate, based on their statistical modeling. Recently, a group of U.S. researchers published a study, not yet peer-reviewed, in which they suggested cumulative infections and deaths in China could be "substantially higher" than officially stated—by a factor of 5 to 10.

U.S.-based China commentator Tang Jingyuan told The Epoch Times that authorities reporting fewer infections is likely a tactic to convince Chinese citizens that the spread of the virus was contained and thus, it would be safe to return to work.

Chinese businesses were closed for the Lunar New Year holiday, which was extended in order to prevent cross-infection in the workplace. The central government, fearing the economic inactivity could have long-term ramifications, asked firms to resume operations on Feb. 10.

"[Beijing] is trying to create an image that most of the country is safe enough to resume production," Tang said.

Shandong Data

The internal data shared with The Epoch Times includes a breakdown of diagnostic results from all 16 prefectural-level municipalities in Shandong Province, which had been sent in an email to the disease control department of the Shandong health commission.

The SCDC compiles daily statistical reports about coronavirus diagnoses, tallying positive test results at all hospitals in the province that were qualified to



A migrant worker has a sample taken after arriving on a bus from Henan, in China's Shandong Province, on Feb. 25, 2020.

conduct such testing.

For example, on Feb. 22, Qishan Hospital in Yantai city—a dedicated infectious disease facility—tested 229 patients; 12 were diagnosed with the coronavirus.

At times, the Shandong government reported just one or two new positive tests to the public, when the internal data showed many more.

On Feb. 22, for example, the government reported two new cases from a day prior, while the actual number was 59, while on Feb. 20, the government also reported two new cases for Feb. 19, but the real data was 49.

And on Feb. 19, one new case was reported, compared with 52 actual positive tests.

For the period from Feb. 8 to Feb. 22, while the government said there were 347 newly diagnosed cases, the internal data shows 1,072 new patients—more than three times the published figure.

THE SHANDONG GOVERNMENT

stated that there were a total of

755 INFECTIONS

in the province. But the internal document showed that

1,992 PEOPLE

had tested positive for the virus.

Insufficient Diagnostic Kits

One Chinese researcher suggested that diagnostic kits alone wouldn't be able to detect all the virus-infected patients.

"This disease has a character, which is not all patients can be detected positive when using nucleic acid testing," Wang Chen, director of China's Academy of Medical Sciences and a critical care medicine expert, told state-run broadcaster CCTV on Feb. 5.

Wang explained that although nucleic acid testing is currently the only official method that Chinese medical staff use to diagnose coronavirus, the result isn't accurate.

"Only 30 to 50 percent of the patients present positive," according to Wang.

He explained that all patients who test positive are infected with the coronavirus, but another 50 to 70 percent of patients are actually infected but can't be confirmed by nucleic acid testing.



People wearing protective masks walk along a street in Shanghai on Feb. 21, 2020.

China's Internal Reports on Virus Response: Our Priority Is Maintaining Stability

NICOLE HAO

Officials in Wuhan and other cities within China's Hubei Province, where the novel coronavirus outbreak is most severe, have told provincial government officials that people aren't able to secure treatment, are running out of supplies because of restrictive lockdown measures, and feel fearful and anxious about the spreading disease.

Amid such observations, authorities prioritized how to "control the society" and "manipulate public opinion" to put a positive spin on China's efforts to contain the virus, according to internal government reports obtained by The Epoch Times.

City officials in Shiyuan, for example, listed their working targets as: "monitor closely petitioners and people whose benefits have been severely damaged"—in other words, people most likely to dissent against authorities, "strictly prevent key people and groups from assembling and making trouble," and "punish heavily the people who spread improper speech or rumors related to the epidemic."

'Increased Social Anger'
The Political and Legal Affairs Commission (PLAC) is a Communist Party agency that oversees the country's security apparatus, including police, courts, and prisons. In the wake of the outbreak, local branches of the PLAC in Xiaogan, Shiyuan, Xiantao, and other cities within Hubei have recently submitted "working reports on how to control society."

"After the city was locked down,

EXCLUSIVE

the majority of residents lost their income," the Shiyuan PLAC stated. "Overall, people have strong negative emotions, such as grief, panic, anxiety, and suspicion. The feeling of anger among society has increased."

Meanwhile, a new "disease control" agency set up within the Hubei government to combat the current outbreak compiles "daily inspection reports" for Party senior officials, such as Ying Yong, the provincial Party boss; Wang Xiaodong, the governor; and Huang Chuping, the vice governor.

The reports go into detail about the residents' plight. On Feb. 19, the agency said in its report: "Residents of Hongmiao village in Anlu city [a county-level city within Xiaogan city, Hubei] complained that the city government blockaded the village by using barbed wire net. It has been six days, and nobody has visited them [to supply basic necessities]."

The Hubei Public Security Bureau, in charge of the province's entire police force, also drafts "working reports" for the provincial government on how the police are helping to "prevent and control the novel coronavirus."

The bureau described life in Hubei, on Feb. 21: "In general, residents lack basic life necessities. For example, some families used up all their gas for cooking; some families need baby formula and diapers. ... A large number of residents want to leave the city and go out to make a living. ... They become extreme in behavior."

Tight Control

Despite such conditions, the bureau didn't offer solutions to resolve such shortages. It said one of its main tasks is to "maintain order in makeshift hospitals," facilities built inside stadiums, exhibition centers, and school gyms to isolate people with mild or moderate symptoms of the virus.

According to the bureau's report, 970 police officers and 882 security guards were dispatched to 20 such facilities across the province.

"Their main tasks are controlling patients who make trouble, patients who

don't want to stay there, and patients who refuse treatment," it said.

The bureau lists as goals the tightening of security at government offices, hospitals, and quarantine centers; preparing for activities that could "damage social stability;" and locking down "all possible sources of infections."

Propaganda

Authorities also emphasized the importance of spreading positive propaganda about the virus response efforts.

The provincial "disease control" agency listed among its "achievements" in its "propaganda work report" on Feb. 20: 215 positive stories on the app of Hubei Daily, a government-run newspaper; 25 positive stories on WeChat, a popular Facebook-like social media platform; 39 positive videos on the Tiktok app; 72 positive stories on the Toutiao news app; and 42 posts on Weibo, a Twitter-like platform.

"Total page views reached 50 million," according to the report.

Another priority is censoring social media posts that portray officials in a negative light.

In a Feb. 7 document, the Hubei provincial government gave orders to the provincial "disease control" agency: "Organizing a 24-hour internet monitoring team to surveil online posts from all websites. ... Remove all negative and harmful information."

The document also noted that authorities removed "4,431 posts which severely damaged public opinion" and censored 3,066 types of negative comments from Feb. 1 to Feb. 8.

Such documents reflect Chinese bureaucrats' mentality, "which has existed since the Party controlled China in 1949," said Tang Jingyuan, a U.S.-based China affairs commentator, in a Feb. 27 interview with The Epoch Times.

"Officials from different levels want to keep their positions. In order to do so, Party members try their best to maintain social stability, which is treated as an achievement," he said.

"As for people's lives, that is not important in the officials' eyes."

The document noted that authorities removed 4,431 posts which severely damaged public opinion and censored 3,066 types of negative comments from Feb. 1 to Feb. 8.



A Chinese guard wears a protective mask and suit as he waits to check temperatures and register people entering a building in a commercial area in Beijing on Feb. 21, 2020.

OPINION

Memo to Beijing: COVID-19 Doesn't Recognize Your Authority

Communist Party leaders make one tragic blunder after another in virus outbreak

JAMES GORRIE



Facing both an epidemic and economic recession, China finds itself truly stuck between a very large rock of economic recession and an exceedingly hard place of a deadly epidemic. And worse,

there is no clear path out of this awful predicament.

Unfortunately, the nation of 1.3 billion remains in the midst of the escalating COVID-19 outbreak that began in mid-December of 2019. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) did not act upon it as early as it could have, and by late January, it was too late to contain it easily.

It's no exaggeration to say that the near future is looking pretty grim at the moment, both economically and in terms of the epidemic.

Outbreak Still Expanding

At the moment, there is no end in sight to the outbreak and no good options to stop it. Even extending the Lunar New Year holiday by two weeks had little or no effect on the spread of the pathogen. Nor did China's massive lockdowns of entire cities—up to 70 million people, a population greater than that of Great Britain—halt the progress of the outbreak.

The COVID-19 outbreak continues to widen its reach, despite the government's draconian efforts. The prospect of thousands more fatalities, if not tens or even hundreds of thousands, is real and grows more probable every day.

Struggling Economy Threatens Stability

On the other hand, China's economy is floundering. At first, President Donald Trump's tariffs dampened output and GDP. But as of January, COVID-19 has brought much of the economy and the nation to a standstill. That has huge ramifications for China's economic viability and social stability.

The disease is threatening to destroy the very heart of modern communist China: the continued existence of the middle class. It's the very existence of the middle class that legitimizes that Party's position and absolute authority over every aspect of Chinese life.

Not 'Business as Usual'

As a result of the viral contagion and its ef-

fects, millions of workers are staying home in self-quarantine or avoiding the cities out of a very real fear of infection. Supply chains for global customers and industries are now under duress. Delays in production are by now a given, but additionally, Beijing has announced that it may not be able to meet the "phase one" trade agreement requirements. That could trigger a resumption of tariffs on Chinese products.

In an effort to rescue the economy from further decline, the CCP leadership has ordered workers to get back to their factory jobs. Without the factories up and running, of course, production suffers and revenues fall. Many companies are at risk of bankruptcy. And much-needed medicines and medical supplies, along with all the products the rest of the world relies on China to provide, don't get made.

Disturbing Admissions

But Beijing's ordering of workers to get back to the factory isn't only callous, it's foolish. Forcing people back into factories puts millions of workers' lives at risk. And, doing so can only result in the further expansion of the pathogen. Prioritizing the boosting of GDP at the expense of potentially millions of lives is just one more misstep by the CCP in a series of them that led to the outbreak in the first place.

Recall that this decision was made after a number of disturbing admissions from the Chinese regime. These include the announcement that the virus is becoming stronger, that it's now airborne, that reinfections are now occurring, and that there aren't enough hospitals or medical supplies to handle the growing patient load.

Staggering Stupidity

Given these dire and dreary facts, does it make any sense whatsoever to increase human-to-human exposure at this time? Does it sound reasonable to compel millions of people who left the cities for rural areas to return to factories where the probability of infection is considerably higher?

The stupidity of this order is staggering. Adding more COVID-19 casualties will help China how? By producing more goods in an enclosed factory with potentially infected workers about, handling clothing, smartphones, and other items to be exported to the West? What customer will want to import goods produced by workers infected with a

deadly and highly contagious disease?

Too Many Unknowns

Chinese authorities admit that they don't know everything about the virus, but by latest accounts, the COVID-19 virus can live on a surface at room temperature for nine days. Measles, another highly contagious virus, can only live for two hours outside a host.

What if the COVID-19 lifespan is longer? Some coronaviruses that only infect animals can live longer than 28 days. Forcing uninfected people back into factories has catastrophe written all over it.

Creating More Victims?

Not surprisingly, some workers aren't returning to work. In response, Beijing has announced harsh punishments for those who don't return to work as ordered. But if the workers do return, it will likely be a short-term fix to the GDP problem—even that—and a long-term curse for millions of people.

If the CCP leadership is trying to get ahead of the virus, creating more victims is not the way to do that. If they're trying to instill unity within the country, they're only accomplishing the opposite. Anger at both local Party leaders and those in Beijing is growing, and rightfully so.

But the Party's colossal hubris and bitter mistakes born from it may well serve a greater purpose in China's long history. It may finally be the undoing of the CCP leadership and what it truly values, and—spoiler alert—it isn't the average Chinese workers that the Party says it's out to protect.

The CCP leadership knows that as both economic conditions and the epidemic worsen, the chances for unrest among the masses grow. The focus of their anger can only be directed at the all-powerful, all-knowing Party that has failed the country. That's a drama the CCP would like to avoid, because they don't think they'll like how it will end.

It would seem that survival is top of mind for Beijing. But that concern seems to be limited to the survival of the Party. News flash to the CCP: the COVID-19 virus doesn't care.

James Gorrie is a writer and speaker based in Southern California. He is the author of "The China Crisis."

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Paramilitary police officers guard the Beijing Railway Station on Jan. 27, 2020.

NICOLAS ASFOURI/GETTY IMAGES

CHINESE INTERFERENCE

Chinese Regime Spreads Coronavirus-Related Misinformation About Shen Yun

NICOLE HAO

New York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts has found itself the target of coronavirus-related misinformation, in an apparent attempt to dissuade U.S. audiences from attending the classical Chinese dance performance.

Recently, rumors have been circulating on social media that some Shen Yun performers were infected with the coronavirus, and advising people not to attend the company's shows in the United States.

Those rumors prompted health authorities in Utah, where Shen Yun was performing at the time, to publicly dismiss the claims.

"We have investigated them and have no reason to believe that any members of the Shen Yun dance troupe are infected with COVID-19 [the disease caused by the novel coronavirus]," the Utah Department of Health posted on Twitter on Feb. 24. "These performances pose no risk to Utah residents."

"Shen Yun is based in NYC (New York City), not China," the Salt Lake County Health Department posted on Facebook on Feb. 24. "Many inaccurate COVID-19 rumors are circulating on social media. ... False and inaccurate social media posts can be harmful."

Shen Yun is a New York-based performing arts company founded in 2006 whose mission, according to its website, is to revive traditional Chinese culture through the arts. This touring season, seven companies are due to travel to 160 cities around the world.

The company has drawn the ire of the Chinese communist regime over its on-stage depiction of the continuing persecution of spiritual group Falun Gong. As a result, the group has, since its founding, experienced persistent efforts by the regime to thwart its performances in a variety of ways, Shen Yun Performing Arts emcee Leeshai Lemish told The Epoch Times on Feb. 27.

The Chinese regime is "using a catastrophe and the deaths of people in China to try to stop Shen Yun from performing by spreading lies," Lemish said.

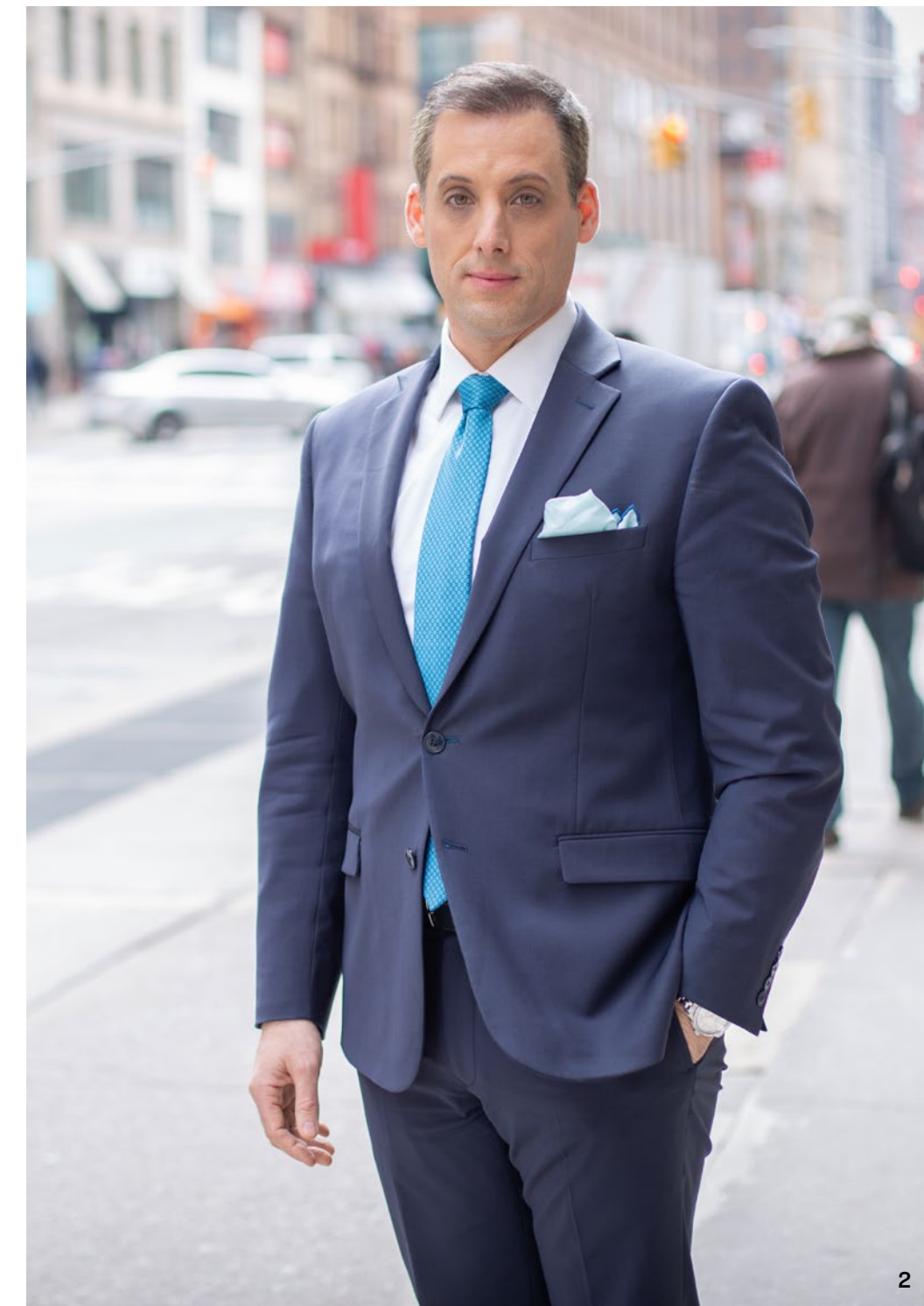
Earlier in February, the Shen Yun ticketing office in Salt Lake City had received phone calls from people with Chinese accents, Lemish said. They claimed that Shen Yun was from China or that the company had just returned from South Korea (the country where the outbreak is most severe outside of mainland China) and asked for the show to be canceled. Some callers even became aggressive and started swearing, he said.

The Utah Health Department told The Epoch Times that health authorities in the region also received similar phone calls prompted by the rumors.

"Through an email and phone calls from the Salt Lake County Health Depart-



EDWARD DYE/THE EPOCH TIMES



BRENDON FALLON/THE EPOCH TIMES

[The Chinese regime is] using a catastrophe and the deaths of people in China to try to stop Shen Yun from performing.

Leeshai Lemish, emcee, Shen Yun Performing Arts

1. Shen Yun Performing Arts curtain call at the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford, Conn., on Feb. 8, 2020.

2. Leeshai Lemish, an emcee with Shen Yun Performing Arts, in New York on Dec. 18, 2019.

ment, our agency, along with the Salt Lake County Health Department, became aware of misinformed rumors circulating in the community regarding an upcoming performance of Shen Yun," Charla Haley, director of communications at the Utah Health Department, said in an email on Feb. 27.

"We decided the best way to reassure people who had tickets to the performance was through social media and messaging outlining the facts about Shen Yun and those involved in the dance troupe."

Shen Yun held two performances in Salt Lake City on Feb. 26 and will return to the city on March 21 for another four shows.

Phone Calls

Lemish said the company's ticketing offices in Salt Lake City and Las Vegas received three similar phone calls on Feb. 27 from people with Chinese accents asking

questions about the company's touring schedule.

In one call to the Utah ticketing office, which was recorded, a woman with a Chinese accent asked questions, "trying to find out where the companies are going—who's going where and what city they're going to, what specific touring company was going to which city," he said.

Another woman later called the same box office from a different number, asking the same questions. The salesperson asked the woman for a phone number to call back, as he needed to ask the local presenter to return the query. The woman gave the same number as the first caller, Lemish said.

"So those two are connected. ... They might be friends, relatives, or [other] relationships that made them use the same phone number," he said.

The same day, a third phone call was received by Shen Yun's Las Vegas ticket-

ing office, during which a woman with Chinese accent asked the same kinds of questions.

Shen Yun performed six shows in Las Vegas between Feb. 26 and March 1.

Lemish added that he also received an email written in Chinese on the same day, from a person posing as a close acquaintance, asking where Lemish was, where he performed, and which cities he was due to tour.

He said he believes those phone calls may have been part of the same campaign to get U.S. shows canceled in various locations.

Misinformation

In South Korea, the Chinese regime also initiated false rumors about the company's origins in an attempt to thwart performances there, Lemish said.

In the city of Ulsan, where Shen Yun performed two shows on Feb. 11 and Feb.

12, the theater manager received a phone call from a TV reporter, who said the Chinese Consulate had told the reporter that Shen Yun performers were from Wuhan, Lemish said, referring to the coronavirus epicenter in central China.

"The theater manager responded that Shen Yun is from the U.S. and most members are U.S. passport holders. Shen Yun's show is banned in China, and its members aren't allowed to visit China," he said.

The company performed in South Korea, touring three cities from Feb. 7 to Feb. 16. The coronavirus outbreak escalated in the country on Feb. 20, when the number of confirmed cases doubled in one day to reach 104. South Korea currently has more than 3,500 known infections and about 20 deaths.

The outbreak in South Korea forced Shen Yun to cancel two shows in Chuncheon city scheduled for Feb. 22 and recall the company to the United States.

Lemish said all Shen Yun performers are healthy and the performances are continuing as scheduled in the United States.

Since January, many Chinese have shared on social media, such as Facebook and WeChat, that Shen Yun is from China, where the coronavirus outbreak originated.

To dispel the rumors, Shen Yun released a statement on its official website on Feb. 1, stating: "Shen Yun is based in New York, not China. Performers have not been to China in years, have not had recent direct contact with people from China, and, in fact, Shen Yun is not even allowed to perform in China."

However since its release, the company has found a doctored version of the statement being shared by people on social media, Lemish said.

"Somebody in China took that page [of the statement] and created an image. They removed the texts of our press

release. And instead of it, they put a text in Chinese and then translated it into English saying ... that Shen Yun performers have already been infected by coronavirus," he said.

Beijing's Campaign Against Shen Yun

Over the past 14 years, the regime has deployed a range of tactics, including those using its embassies, consulates, pro-Beijing Chinese associations, and students, to smear and frustrate Shen Yun's performances around the world.

"You have a performance of traditional Chinese culture that Beijing, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), wants to stop," Lemish said in a Jan. 8 interview with The Epoch Times' "American Thought Leaders" program.

Lemish said the regime opposes Shen Yun because the company seeks to revive traditional Chinese culture, which the CCP systematically has tried to destroy

and supplant with an atheist, communist ideology.

The CCP also has sought to suppress the company due to its depictions of the regime's brutal persecution of practitioners of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, involves meditative exercises and a set of moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The discipline gained immense popularity in the 1990s, with 70 million to 100 million people practicing by the end of the decade. However, threatened by this popularity, the CCP in 1999 launched a sweeping campaign of persecution and vilification against adherents.

Since then, hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been detained in labor camps, detention centers, or prisons, where many endure torture, even to the point of death. The persecution is ongoing.

ECONOMY

Supply Chain Shift Away From China Gains Steam

FAN YU

News Analysis

Later this year, U.S. consumers will begin to see Microsoft Surface laptops and Google Pixel smartphones labeled "Made in Vietnam," as a manufacturing supply chain shift away from China, which began during the U.S.-China trade war, accelerates because of the coronavirus crisis.

Despite calls by Beijing leadership to restart factories quickly, many production facilities are still lacking upstream supplies or workers, as migrants are largely still quarantined due to the coronavirus outbreak. That's one reason the Dow Jones Industry Average slumped 3,600 points last week, the worst weekly drop

since the 2008 financial crisis.

Concurrently, companies are stepping up their efforts to move manufacturing capacity away from China, which has gained increasing urgency since the outbreak began.

Microsoft will start production of its PC hardware, such as Surface laptops and tablets, in Vietnam as soon as the second quarter, sources with knowledge of the matter told Nikkei Asian Review.

"The volume in Vietnam would be small at the beginning, but the output will pick up and this is the direction that Microsoft wants," sources told Nikkei.

Alphabet Inc. is also set to make the Google Pixel 4A and Pixel 5 smartphones with partners in Vietnam "as soon

as April." The company is shifting production of smart home devices such as the Google Nest Mini to Thailand from China.

Apple is also shifting some production capabilities out of China. Assembly of a portion of its new iPad Pros, AirPods, and Apple Watch will shift to Taiwan from China, according to Taiwan News. Apple is widely expected to launch a new iteration of the iPad Pro in March, and the supply constraints from lowered China production and a partial shift to Taiwan will lower the initial supply of the popular tablet.

Coronavirus Latest Catalyst for Shift

Previously, the hardware manufacturing capacity of all three

The January coronavirus outbreak became the latest catalyst in an accelerating shift of production out of China, a trend which began two years ago during the U.S.-China trade war.

tech companies rested almost entirely within China, underscoring the huge dependency of U.S. companies on Chinese manufacturing.

But the January coronavirus outbreak became the latest catalyst in an accelerating shift of production out of China, a trend that began two years ago during the U.S.-China trade war.

In July 2018, The Epoch Times wrote that Vietnam would be the biggest beneficiary of the manufacturing shift. President Donald Trump in August 2019 also urged U.S. businesses to diversify out of China.

Companies operating on the lower end of the value chain—such as apparel and toys—are slightly ahead in shifting pro-



NOEL CELIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Workers wear protective masks while polishing eyeglass frames at the Azure Eyeglasses Co. in Wenzhou, China, on Feb. 28, 2020.

duction out of China. That was more of a cost consideration, as tariffs enacted two years ago by the Trump administration and the uncertainty of increased tariffs, made production in China less cost-effective to continue. It's also much easier to shift production of lower-tech items, which don't require as much technical expertise, than computer components, for example.

A Yearslong Process

Chinese factories unable to fulfill procurement contracts have been increasingly invoking "force majeure" clauses, which under most legal contracts are deemed to be outside the control of the suppliers and thus, they're not required to pay penalties for

breach of contract.

As of Feb. 17, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade has issued more than 1,600 such "force majeure" certificates to companies covering a total contract value of 110 billion yuan (\$16 billion), according to Chinese state-controlled media Xinhua.

Despite the effect on supply chains, there's a practical limit as to how quickly companies can shift production abroad and it will be a yearslong process.

Another constraint is existing infrastructure. China became the manufacturing hub it is because of a decade-long buildup of infrastructure—highways, rail network, and ports—that don't always exist in other emerging markets.



TRUTH *and* TRADITION

COVERING IMPORTANT NEWS OTHER MEDIA IGNORE

LEADING REPORTING ON
THE CHINESE COMMUNIST THREAT
FOR THE PAST 18 YEARS

The Epoch Times not only reports reliably on U.S. politics and the Trump administration, but also publishes authoritative China news, covering topics including:

- Impact on the United States
- Business and economy
- Communist infiltration of our government, businesses, schools, universities, popular culture, and more
- Disinformation surrounding U.S.–China trade relations
- Security and espionage
- Influence on media and Hollywood
- Overseas interference and United Front activity

The Epoch Times has also championed a new method of investigative journalism, steeped in the discipline's traditions of truth and responsibility. Combining this method with quality design, our journalists expose corruption and subversion in U.S. politics, and other important issues. Our investigative infographics have included:

- Illegal Spying on President Trump
- Hillary Clinton and the Uranium One Deal
- China's Military Expansion Into Space
- The Secret Propaganda War on Our Minds
- Spygate: The True Story of Collusion
- Clinton Foundation 'Pay to Play' Model Under Investigation

Download infographics

ReadEpoch.com/infographics

FREE newsletter signup

EpochNewsletter.com

Subscribe to the paper (print/epaper)

ReadEpoch.com

More information

TheEpochTimes.com/about-us