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THE EPOCH TIMES

# CHINA INSIDER

Falun Gong practitioners take part in a candlelight vigil commemorating the 20th anniversary of the persecution of Falun Gong in China, on the West Lawn of Capitol Hill on July 18, 2019.

## 21 YEARS OF PERSECUTION

FALUN GONG PRACTITIONERS REMEMBER  
A BRUTAL CAMPAIGN OF SUPPRESSION

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OPINION

# Sanction the Leaders of the Chinese Communist Party—Then Work Downwards

All members of the CCP are complicit in its crimes at home and abroad

STEVEN W. MOSHER



On July 16, William Barr gave the speech I have been waiting 25 years to hear. The U.S. attorney general flatly declared that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks “to overthrow the rules-based international system and to make the world safe for dictatorship. How the United States responds to this challenge will ... determine whether the United States and its liberal democratic allies will continue to shape their own destiny or whether the CCP and its autocratic tributaries will control the future.”

Using some of the toughest language ever used by any U.S. official, Barr described the People’s Republic of China’s attack on the United States as “an economic blitzkrieg—an aggressive, orchestrated, whole-of-government ... campaign to seize the commanding heights of the global economy and to surpass the United States as the world’s preeminent superpower. ... The PRC’s predatory economic policies are succeeding. ... China overtook the United States in manufacturing output in 2010. The PRC is now the world’s ‘arsenal of dictatorship.’”

Our struggle with the CCP isn’t limited to economics and trade, Barr went on to suggest, but threatens the very existence of the United States itself.

“The CCP has launched an orchestrated campaign, across all of its many tentacles in Chinese government and society, to exploit the openness of [U.S.] institutions in order to destroy them.”

He closed by reiterating “the threat that the Chinese Communist Party poses not only to our way of life, but to our very lives and livelihoods,” urging Americans to “stand together ... in resisting the Chinese Communist Party’s corrupt and dictatorial rule.”

The China threat that Barr’s words outlined is one we have been living with for some decades now. But until Trump took office, few Americans of influence—out of fear, greed, or simple ignorance—had openly acknowledged it. Those of us who did, such as Peter Navarro, Gordon Chang, and myself, were generally dismissed as fear mongers.

The fact is that the CCP is, and has always been, unutterably hostile to every aspect of American life. It’s not just that they’ve rejected the free market and democratic rule, but rather that they’re actively seeking to undermine and destroy it. We know—because they have said so—that they’re the sworn enemy of every aspect of the liberal democratic order, from human rights and civil society to freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

But although Barr laid out, perhaps more clearly than any official up to now, the deadly threat that America faces, he was careful to identify our adversary as the Chinese Communist Party and not the people it oppresses: “The CCP rules with an iron fist over one of the great ancient civilizations of the world. It seeks to leverage the immense power, productivity, and ingenuity of the Chinese people to overthrow the rules-based international system and to make the world safe for dictatorship.”

The attorney general even intimated that the day would come when the CCP no longer ruled China, telling Americans that they should “reevaluate their relationship with China, so long as it continues to be ruled by the Communist Party.”

**Working Toward Regime Change**

Now, I believe that the Red Dynasty that currently rules China will one day soon come to an end, and that the United States should be proactively working toward that end. It’s not enough to talk in general terms about the promotion of human rights and democracy in China. We need robust programs, specifically directed at the weaknesses of the CCP, to bring about its demise.

Working for regime change in China is, at the most basic level, a matter of simple reciprocity. If the policy of the CCP is to undermine and destroy the U.S. economy and its democratic institu-



WANG ZHAO/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Chinese Communist Party’s Politburo Standing Committee, the nation’s top decision-making body (L–R): Han Zheng, Wang Huning, Li Zhanshu, Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, Wang Yang, and Zhao Leji meet the press at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Oct. 25, 2017.

tions—which, as Barr indicated, it clearly is—then our China policy ought to mirror that. It should be focused on the destruction of the CCP, along with the dissolution of the political and economic institutions through which it controls China and preys on its people.

One of the most efficacious ways to accomplish this, in my view, is to impose sanctions on a widening number of CCP officials and their immediate family members, while encouraging our allies to do likewise. Denying visas to leading CCP officials and their families, while confiscating any assets they hold in the United States, is an appropriate punishment for the crimes they have committed against the Chinese people and the world.

Such sanctions would also sow ran-

**Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of CCP officials have over the years moved some of their ill-gotten gains offshore as ‘insurance’ against their own political downfall, or against the collapse of the CCP itself.**

cor and division within the ranks of the larger Party, as well as drive a wedge between the Party and the Chinese people, by exposing truly massive corruption.

It’s widely known that many members of the criminal enterprise known as the CCP engage in what might be called “international money laundering.” Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of CCP officials have over the years moved some of their ill-gotten gains offshore as “insurance” against their own political downfall, or against the collapse of the CCP itself.

China expert Jonathan Manthorpe estimates that some \$1 trillion has been “spirited out of China by Communist Party leaders and their hangers-on” for the purpose of hiding their assets “in stable overseas havens like Canada, the United States, Australia or Europe.” I believe this number may well underestimate the real amount.

These funds are accompanied by family members, who are tasked with watching over the family’s overseas “investments,” and creating a safe haven for the officials themselves if it’s ever necessary for them to flee the country. I would venture to say that each and every one of the 25 members of the Politburo has a family member in the United States or another Western country. Even CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping’s own daughter is a graduate of Harvard University, and is said by some to be pursuing a graduate

degree there even now.

The same is true of countless other CCP officials at every level of government. The former spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, Geng Shuang, had a child attending school in the United States while he was, on a daily basis, denouncing the United States. If the visas of these family members are revoked, and their assets confiscated, it will hit home in a way that few other U.S. actions would.

The good news is that the sanctioning of CCP officials, in this case for egregious human rights violations against Xinjiang Uyghurs, has already begun. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in conjunction with the U.S. Treasury Department, announced on July 9 that Chen Quanguo, the Party secretary of Xinjiang, and two other CCP officials would no longer be welcome in the United States. A fourth official also faced sanctions. The sanctioning of Chen was especially significant since, as a member of the 25-man Politburo, he’s one of the CCP’s top leaders.

The CCP retaliated—predictably—with sanctions of its own against an identical number of Americans. This new “gang of four” are Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), and the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback. (Curiously, they’re all Republicans. Not a single member of the Democratic Party is being sanctioned.)

China’s sanctions are merely symbolic, of course, since the “gang of four” have no interest in traveling to, much less investing in, China. America’s sanctions, on the other hand, have real bite, since some of the CCP officials sanctioned probably do have homes and bank accounts in the United States, along with family members to oversee them. The sanctioning of Politburo member Chen, in particular, must have shocked its 24 other members, who now understand that their assets in, and access to, the United States is no longer assured.

Perhaps this explains why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman, after sanctioning the “gang of four,” seemed so eager to suggest that the two sides had now reached closure.

“We don’t plan any further sanctions,” she said, sounding plaintive, “and we hope the American side doesn’t either.”

We have only begun to sanction, we should say in response.

But I would counsel those making China policy not to waste everyone’s time by sanctioning low-level, or even mid-level, officials.

The authors of the CCP virus pandemic and the authors of the Uyghur genocide are one and the same. And they aren’t the heads of Chinese companies like Huawei, or provincial-level officials in

Xinjiang. Rather, they are the members of the Politburo and, most importantly, Xi himself. Power in China is concentrated in the hands of very few, and it’s those few who should first be sanctioned.

So let’s start with the Politburo and take away the assets that they and their family members have stashed overseas. What better way to illustrate to the Chinese people how the highest leaders of the CCP have pillaged their own country and people than by confiscating—in a highly public manner—their ill-gotten holdings in the United States? What better way to illustrate that their corrupt, criminal behavior is unacceptable in the civilized world than by denying them visas to the United States?

When we are done publicly humiliating the members of the Politburo, let’s move on to the entire Central Committee and the National People’s Congress, and from there to sanctioning each and every member of the CCP. These actions, if taken sequentially, would cause tremendous unrest within the ranks of the Party, as well as widen the already enormous gap between the Chinese people and their political masters.

CCP leaders surely understand the danger that they’ll face if the United States delegitimizes their rule in this way. That’s why, as soon as the idea of sanctioning CCP members began being discussed in U.S. policy circles, the Global Times responded in a panic with rhetoric about how the CCP was the “heart and nervous system” of Chinese society.

“Opposing all CCP members is undoubtedly opposing all Chinese people,” it claimed.

Another article in the CCP mouthpiece screamed that a “US travel ban on CCP members would be ‘paranoid.’”

“The CCP comes from the Chinese peo-

**The fact is that the CCP is, and has always been, unutterably hostile to every aspect of American life.**

ple,” the authors wrote, “and it cannot be alienated from the Chinese people.”

Oh yes, it can.

The CCP’s worst fear should be our policy.

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

PROPAGANDA

# How China’s Propaganda Department Directed Coverup of Virus Outbreak Information, Messaging Around US-China Trade War

HE JIAN

The Epoch Times recently obtained internal documents issued by the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Propaganda Department, revealing how it gives direct instructions to state mouthpieces, such as Xinhua, on how they should cover sensitive issues such as the U.S.-China trade war and the pandemic.

**January Propaganda Instructions: Hide the Truth of the Pandemic**

The documents, obtained from a trusted source, showed at least 90 instructions were issued by the Chinese regime in January this year.

The first two propaganda instructions were issued on Jan. 2, with one aimed at the CCP virus (COVID-19) and one at the U.S.-China trade war.

The first propaganda directive read: “With regard to the pneumonia epidemic of unknown cause in Wuhan, Hubei Province, when it is reported, information released by authoritative departments shall be followed.”

At the time, a large number of infections had appeared in Wuhan.

On Dec. 30, 2019, the whistleblower doctor Li Wenliang posted messages on WeChat, a popular social media platform, about seven confirmed cases of a SARS-like pneumonia that appeared connected with the Huanan Seafood Market. The patients at his hospital were being isolated at the ER, he added. The SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) pandemic of 2002 to 2003 infected more than 8,000 people worldwide and killed hundreds.

On Dec. 31, the Wuhan government said during a briefing that there was “no evidence of significant human-to-human transmission.”

After the propaganda directive was issued on Jan. 2, 2020, Li Wenliang was interrogated and warned by Wuhan police to stop spreading “rumors” on Jan. 3.

In another set of documents issued on Jan. 4 and 6, the Propaganda Department reiterated the Jan. 2 directive and strictly prohibited “any citations or reposts of foreign media reports” and “any reports [linking the epidemic to] 2003 SARS.”

All instructions from the Propaganda Department prior to Jan. 20 focused on prohibiting any epidemic information that was not “endorsed” by the authorities and keeping a low profile.

On Jan. 20, Chinese leader Xi Jinping gave his first public comments on epidemic prevention and control. Immediately, the Propaganda Department turned around and issued a directive to highly publicize the authorities’ containment measures.

According to a Jan. 22 directive from the Propaganda Department, journalists were restricted from visiting Wuhan.

Then, a series of instructions were issued after Jan. 26 to strictly forbid reprinting any epidemic reports from foreign media and to publish reports that create a positive image of the Party among the international community.

According to the documents The Epoch Times obtained, there were at least 18 directives on the epidemic issued in January to domestic media by the Propaganda Department.

**January Propaganda Instructions: Downplay the China-US Trade War**

In the January directives, there were nine instructions issued on the trade war.

On Jan. 2, domestic media were warned not to print any articles on their own regarding the “phase one” deal that would be signed on Jan. 15.

The CCP and the United States had reached the first stage of negotiations for the trade agreement in December 2019.

China’s Ministry of Commerce stated at a regular press conference in Beijing on Jan. 9, 2020 that Vice Premier Liu He would lead a delegation to visit Washington from Jan. 13 to 15 to sign the phase one trade deal with the United States. On the same day as the presser, a propaganda directive warned not to

**A series of instructions were issued after Jan. 26 to strictly forbid reprinting any epidemic reports from foreign media and to publish reports that create a positive image of the Party among the international community.**

print any unauthorized articles. The same directive was issued again the next day.

On the day Liu He signed the agreement, the Propaganda Department issued specific directives to “strengthen on-line censoring” and “identify and punish any harmful information that suggest [the regime is] surrendering or ... destructive information that attacks the [communist] system and mechanisms.”

**February Propaganda Instructions: Keep Quiet on Global Purchasing of Surgical Masks**

The documents showed that there were 89 directives issued in February and 50 of them were relevant to the pandemic.

Among them, three directives issued on Feb. 3, Feb. 5, and Feb. 12 confirmed news reports alleging that the Chinese regime was purchasing and hoarding global medical supplies used to treat COVID-19 patients or prevent the spread of the disease.

On Feb. 3, the directive requested, “Do not publicize our mobilizing of global efforts to purchase protective supplies.”

On Feb. 5, the same instruction was reiterated. The directive stated clearly, “Prevent interference with our overseas procurement.”

On Feb. 12, a directive stressed: “Do not publicize the mobilization of purchasing global supplies, avoid causing a rebound in the public opinion of relevant countries and causing interference to the overseas procurement work.”

The virus spread widely around the world in March.

According to China’s official customs data, from Jan. 24 to Feb. 29, the country imported 2.46 billion pieces of medical materials, including masks and protective equipment. Among them were 2.02 billion masks from overseas.

On April 6, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said that during the early days of the virus outbreak, when the world was still unaware of the dangers of the virus, China bought up global supplies of surgical masks.

“They hid the dangers from the rest of the world even as Chinese citizens were flying around the world seeding the world with the virus,” Navarro said on Fox News.

Five directives were issued on Feb. 6 and 7 regarding the death of Li Wenliang, who had contracted COVID-19 from a patient he was treating. The Propaganda Department ordered “no reporting” on his death, and said media outlets could only “reprint the authorized report.” It also said the concept of

“whistleblower” was prohibited.

Also, the department issued an order to downplay “negative information” regarding Chinese citizens living in Russia and Malaysia who were being prevented from returning to their home country. At the time, authorities had strict border control in an effort to prevent imported COVID-19 cases.

More than 50 directives related to the pandemic in February mostly instructed media outlets to censor “harmful information” regarding the CCP, or to filter out overseas media reports that expose information about China’s epidemic.

**March Propaganda Instructions: Maintain Authoritarian Stability**

For the first 10 days in March, there were 46 directives, 34 of them relevant to the pandemic.

A March 1 directive forbade media from reporting on big data analysis of Wuhan residents’ travel patterns during the initial outbreak.

On March 2, four directives were issued to forbid any reports or comments on Beijing’s efforts in pandemic containment. These came after an ex-inmate was confirmed as COVID-positive, but was allowed to travel to Beijing on Feb. 22 after being released from prison in Wuhan.

On March 10, Chinese magazine People interviewed a Wuhan doctor, Ai Fen, and published her first-person account. Ai Fen was director of the emergency department at the Central Hospital of Wuhan. She was among the first people to spread information about the mysterious illness that had spread in Wuhan.

On the day the magazine article was published, a directive was issued to demand the removal of the article and all relevant media coverage about Ai.

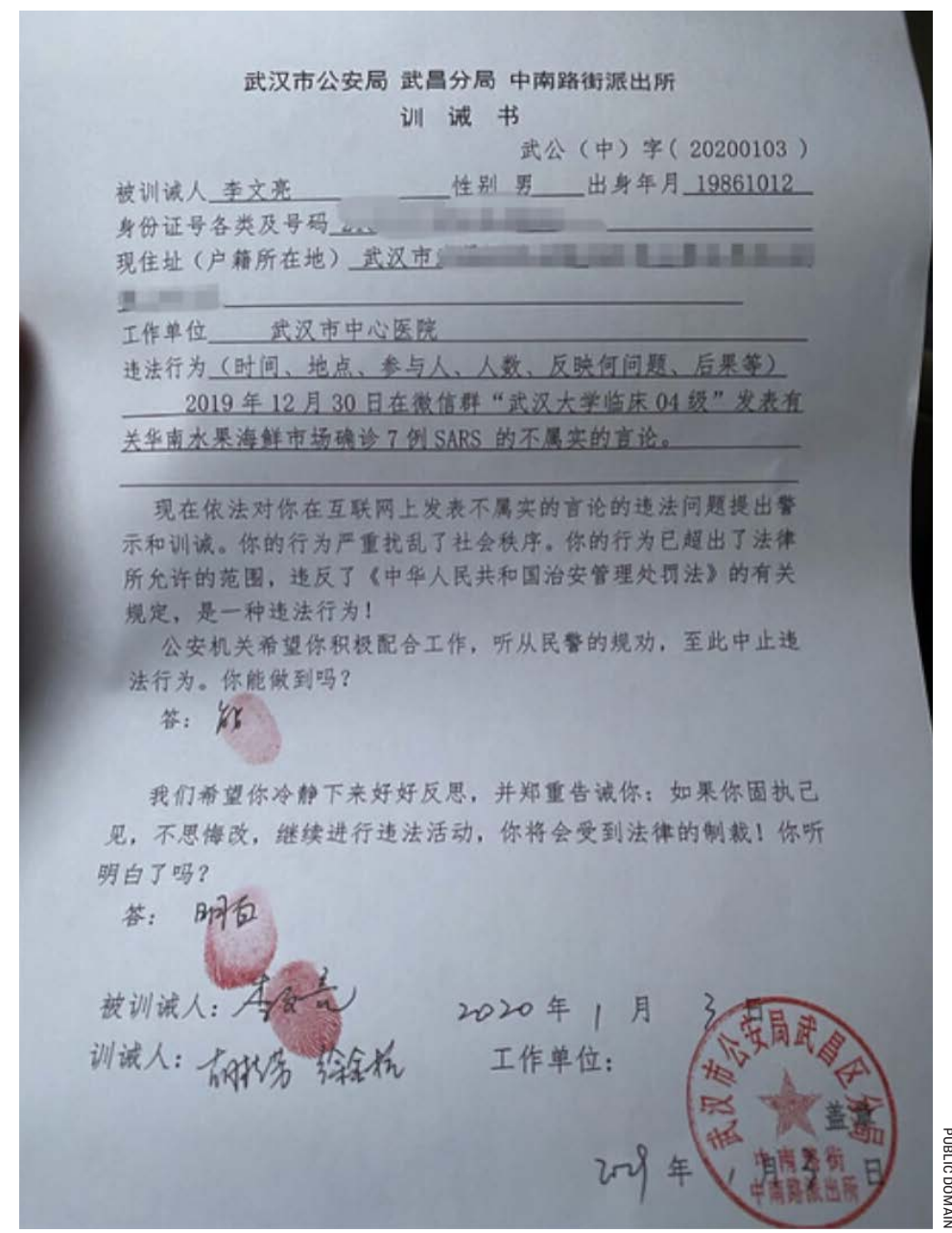
On March 3, a directive instructed that any reports of COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes and mental hospitals should follow authorities’ reprinted information. No overseas data or NGO report could be used.

On March 5, a directive demanded media outlets to remove reports about a patient who supposedly recovered from COVID-19.

In addition, a number of propaganda instructions in March required the media not to forward, hype up, or publicize the pandemic in Russia and Iran. Russia and Iran are regarded as political allies of the regime.

The CCP Propaganda Department is directly subordinate to Wang Huning, one of the CCP’s top officials, and a member of the Party’s most powerful decision-making body, the Politburo Standing Committee.

Letter of Admonition by Wuhan Public Security Bureau.



NYPOST.COM



A character formation event involving 5,000 Falun Gong practitioners, forming the Chinese characters for "truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance," the core principles of Falun Gong, in Wuhan, China, in 1998. Annita Bao attended the event when she was a young child.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

# 'The Sky Was Falling' Memories of Growing Up Under Religious Persecution in China

EVA FU

Jiang Lianjiao has been an outlier since birth.

As the fourth child in her family, she was not supposed to be born under China's one-child policy. She had to be hidden in her grandmother's home from the time she was one month old. She called her parents "aunt and uncle" until age 7 in order to evade authorities' suspicions. Her parents spent all their savings—a big sack of pennies and dimes—to bribe local officials so that she could live at home with them.

After she was reunited with her parents at age 7, she began practicing a spiritual discipline called Falun Gong with them. Each day, around 30 people would join Jiang and her family in their apartment building's courtyard to practice the meditative exercises together. Jiang, her sister, and parents traveled via boat to her father's hometown in nearby Wufeng Township to demonstrate the meditation to fellow villagers. She and her sister were always in the front.

That blissful life came to an end overnight.

On July 20, 1999, Jiang, then 8 years old, found herself and her family targeted in a nationwide campaign to extinguish Falun Gong. Some practitioners who worked for the state were tipped off about plans to arrest and detain adherents. Despite this, dozens still showed up at Jiang's courtyard for the exercises, undeterred. Police cars soon appeared, and officers brought everyone to the local police station. Her father was detained for a month.

The persecution was initiated by then-Communist Party leader Jiang Zemin (no relation), who considered Falun Gong's enormous popularity a threat to the Party's rule.

By the late 1990s, up to 100 million people in China were practicing Falun Gong, an ancient practice with moral teachings centered around the core principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. Over the following two decades, Minghui.org, a clearinghouse dedicated to documenting the persecution, would identify more than 4,500 adherents who died under torture. Due to the authorities' extensive efforts to censor information around the topic, the true death toll is likely much higher.

## Home Turned Into a Prison

The abrupt turn of events made little sense to young Jiang and her family, nor to millions of other Falun Gong practitioners across the country, who were drawn to the practice for its healing benefits and calming effects but now faced arrests for their beliefs.

In 2000, Jiang's family of six, along with about 100 other local practitioners, went to Beijing to appeal the Chinese Communist Party's decision to suppress their faith. Almost as soon as they unfurled a banner reading "Falun Dafa Is Good" in Tiananmen Square, the police pinned her mother to the ground and kicked her as Jiang stood by, trembling in fear. They were dragged into police vans—her 16-year-old elder sister pulled in by her braids. A police officer waved a baton around, hitting Jiang on the head, causing her to faint.

Following this appeal, Jiang's father was sentenced to three years in prison, while her mother got two years. Her 16-year-old sister was also detained for a month. Jiang, her older brother, and younger sister were left to fend for themselves at home. The eldest was just 12 at the time. Fearing they would run away, their building manager routinely locked them inside the house, only unbolting the door in the morning to escort the children to school.

During that time, Jiang and her siblings often struggled to find enough food. To stave off hunger pangs, mother would fill herself with water or eat wild plants in the fields nearby.

The family was slowly reunited after Jiang's older sister and mother were released from detention. In 2003, her mother and older sister saw Jiang's father for the first time in three years. He was still imprisoned and due to be released in a month. The formerly healthy man looked bony and had to be carried out by six men. He had missing teeth. His legs were crushed from repeated torture sessions, which left him on crutches. He had forgotten how to speak due to prolonged isolation. The torture was meant to "transform" him—to coerce him into giving up his faith.

It was a pitiable sight and devastating for the family, who had relied on him as the breadwinner.

It felt like "the sky was falling," Jiang said. Jiang Liyu, Jiang's younger sister, was arrested in 2017 for putting up stickers with messages supportive of the practice. She is



(Middle) Annita Bao in a photo taken in 2017.

(Above) Falun Gong practitioner Jiang Lianjiao (R), pictured with her sister, in her hometown in Hubei Province, China, in this file photo.

How can they do this—creating rumors by telling us lies? Not only did they persecute [my parents], they also went out of their way to deceive the public. ... It was extremely shameful.

Jiang Lianjiao, Falun Gong practitioner

still in detention.

Before the persecution, her father was a top surgeon at a local hospital in Shiyan City in central China's Hubei Province, and her mother worked as an administrative officer. After they were released from detention, the hospital slashed their pay to 250 yuan (less than \$36) per month—less than a quarter of their colleagues' earnings. Her father was demoted to toilet cleaner, while her mother was made to launder the patients' bedsheets by hand.

To save money, the family turned off fans in the summer despite sweltering heat; the children wove bamboo curtains they sold for 1.1 yuan (\$0.16) each. They only bought the cheapest food possible: rice contaminated with mice feces, and vegetables that were about to spoil.

## Web of Lies

Over the past 20 years, the regime has broadcast damaging propaganda through state-controlled outlets in an attempt to vilify the practice and its adherents. The most infamous was a staged self-immolation performance on the eve of the Lunar New Year in 2001. This incident helped swing Chinese popular opinion against the practice.

The web of lies permeated the very fabric of Chinese society.

Annita Bao, a 30-year-old jewelry designer in New York and Falun Gong practitioner, fled China in 2016. She recalled that in her hometown of Wuhan, the capital of Hubei, all students at her elementary school were forced to sign their names on a huge banner that denounced the practice. "It's a show" to create the impression that the entire Wuhan population had turned their backs on Falun Gong practitioners, Bao said.

The neighborhood committee officers also frequently visited her home and inquired about whether she was still practicing, in the name of "caring about her academic performance."

If the family refused to give up the practice, they warned, they would make a public announcement at Bao's school to humiliate her. For years, Bao's family kept the lights off in the living room so as not to alert the police that they were home.

Lü Zhongyang, currently an undergraduate at the University at Buffalo, said students at his elementary school in China were forced to watch and listen to defamatory videos and broadcasts. Similar propaganda was disseminated in school

textbooks throughout the years.

The air was "depressing," Lü said, "as if life may fall into pieces anytime." His father, a news editor in Beijing, spent about four years in jail for writing on currency notes messages raising awareness about the persecution.

When Jiang's parents were first detained, their hometown broadcaster, Shiyan Radio and Television Station, sought out Jiang and her siblings, saying that it wished to film some footage of them to show their parents that the siblings were doing all right.

Only after a neighbor came across the segment on television and told Jiang about it did the siblings realize they had been fooled: The videos were part of a propaganda program to describe how "obstinate" their parents were in practicing Falun Gong, and it claimed the state was taking care of the children, Jiang said.

The more the [Party] thinks we are weak, the more we need to prove them wrong.

Anita Bao, Falun Gong practitioner

"How can they do this—creating rumors by telling us lies?" Jiang said, calling the tactics "inhumane." "Not only did they persecute [my parents], they also went out of their way to deceive the public. ... It was extremely shameful."

## Bittersweet

If fear was a recurring theme for these practitioners as they grew up under the shadow of persecution, today they try hard not to let it define them.

Jiang, whose great-grandfather was driven to madness during the Cultural Revolution for his belief in Daoism, vowed that "the adversity won't crush my spirit." The series of persecutions her family has experienced over generations, she said, has allowed her to see the regime's true face and has motivated her to tell more people about the ongoing persecution in China.

"The damage the Chinese Communist Party has inflicted is not just about one generation ... nor one kind of people," said Jiang, who has since escaped from China. Submitting to the regime's scare tactics would only encourage the authorities to act more out of hand. Only when you know the true situation can one emerge stronger, she said.

Like Jiang, Bao took up the practice when she was seven. She said her past experience has given her a "sense of mission."

In her approach to designing jewelry, that translates to a strive for perfection while not emphasizing material benefits, she said.

"The more the [Party] thinks we are weak, the more we need to prove them wrong," she said, adding that she took challenges as opportunities to elevate her character. "He who laughs last laughs best."

## HUMAN RIGHTS

# US Decries Beijing's 21-Year Persecution of Falun Gong



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference at the State Department in Washington, D.C., on July 15, 2020.

The United States has called on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to immediately end its "depraved abuse and mistreatment" of the spiritual practice Falun Gong.

"Twenty-one years of persecution of Falun Gong practitioners is far too long, and it must end," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a rare statement by a top administration official about the repression.

"Extensive evidence shows the [People's Republic of China] government continues to repress and abuse this community to this day, including reported torture of Falun Gong practitioners and detention of thousands," he said on July 20, the 21st anniversary of the start of Beijing's persecution campaign.

Pompeo also demanded that the Chinese regime release imprisoned adherents of Falun Gong and account for the whereabouts of missing practitioners.

His comments are in addition to 29 U.S. lawmakers and officials who issued statements expressing solidarity with Falun Gong practitioners on the anniversary. Hundreds of lawmakers around the world also condemned the regime's brutal suppression.

U.S. Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback said he spoke with Falun Gong representatives on July 20 about Beijing's ongoing persecution.

"I'm inspired by Falun Gong practitioners' perseverance, while under threat from PRC government pressure to renounce their beliefs," Brownback wrote in a tweet.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a spiritual discipline that includes meditative exercises and a set of moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The practice spread widely in China, with at least 70 million people practicing by the end of the decade, according to government estimates at the time.

On July 20, 1999, Falun Gong adherents in China found themselves the targets for persecution when the CCP deemed the popularity of the movement a threat to its rule and banned the practice. Adherents have since been subjected to harassment, detention, and torture in an effort to coerce them into giving up their beliefs. Millions have been detained, according to estimates by the Falun Dafa

Information Center (FDIC). More than 4,000 are confirmed to have died from torture, according to Minghui.org, an online clearinghouse for information about the persecution of Falun Gong. That number may be an understatement of the real death toll, given the difficulty of obtaining sensitive information from the regime in Beijing.

Twenty-one years of persecution of Falun Gong practitioners is far too long, and it must end.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

## Survivors of Persecution Met With Trump

Pompeo described the story of Zhang Yuhua, a Falun Gong adherent who survived detention in China, whom he welcomed last year at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington hosted by the department.

"After surviving what she described as torture while in a labor camp and a prison in China, she advocates on behalf of her imprisoned husband, Ma Zhenyu, who has endured months of torture because he refuses to renounce his Falun Gong beliefs," he said.

Zhang was repeatedly imprisoned and suffered torture in China for a total of 7 1/2 years before escaping to the United States in 2015.

She was among 27 survivors of religious persecution to meet with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office last July. Zhang told Trump about the plight of her husband, imploring the president to take action. She feared Ma would have his organs harvested by the communist regime.

"Forced organ harvesting still exists, so we should take action," Zhang said at the time. "Words don't work."

Evidence of this grisly practice has grown since allegations first emerged in 2006. An independent people's tribunal in 2019, after a yearlong investigation, found beyond a reasonable doubt that the CCP has killed—and continues to kill—imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners for their organs for sale on the transplant market. FDIC spokesperson Zhang

Erping applauded the United States' support for the group's "cause for freedom of conscience, association, and expression."

"His [Pompeo] press statement will inspire tens of millions of Chinese people to continue their struggle for freedoms," Zhang said in a statement.

"We call on the international community to follow America's lead and help end this two-decade-long, horrific persecution of Falun Gong in China."

## US Congress, Other Officials

Gary Bauer, commissioner at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and 29 bipartisan lawmakers also expressed support for Falun Gong practitioners and called on the Chinese regime to stop its assault on the practice.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) was among many who expressed hope that the persecution won't reach a 22nd anniversary.

"I hope that one day soon, Falun Gong practitioners in China and all over the world may exercise their principles free of oppression," she wrote in a letter.

USCIRF's Bauer denounced the CCP for continuing to detain Falun Gong practitioners earlier this year, "when it should have been focused on containing the coronavirus pandemic."

Brownback said the administration would continue to raise this issue before international bodies and ask Beijing to open its organ transplant records to "let the rest of the world see where their organs are coming from in the transplants that they're doing."

A November study published in the scientific journal BMC Medical Ethics found that there was "highly compelling evidence" that the Chinese regime was systematically falsifying its organ donation data. It found that the official figures conformed almost precisely to a mathematical formula, a quadratic equation.

Bauer said the USCIRF urges the United States to conduct a thorough investigation into Beijing's state-sanctioned organ harvesting.

"We believe an official U.S. government investigation will help shine a greater spotlight on this issue, and mobilize the political support necessary to take concrete action against Communist China for its crimes," he said.

## CENSORSHIP

# Former Internet Police Reveals Censorship Operations at Chinese Social Media Companies

NATHAN SU

Working as a content reviewer in China, Liu Lipeng was in charge of sifting through social media posts and flagging those that violated the Chinese regime's censorship guidelines.

He saw many posts—which were slated for deletion—about Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement, when masses occupied the city's main thoroughfares to demand universal suffrage in elections. Upon Hong Kong's transfer of sovereignty from British to Chinese rule in 1997, the city was promised free and fair elections—but Beijing had instead hand-picked candidates for the city's highest official.

Watching videos from the 2014 protests, Liu saw with his own eyes Hong Kong people's fight for freedom and democracy. Watching them made him feel eager and compelled for freedom in his own life.

"Hong Kong is the frontline for China's freedom and democracy. It needs support from the world," he said.

During his interview with The Epoch Times, Liu, who recently immigrated to California, wore a black-colored T-shirt printed with a yellow umbrella and the word "strong" underneath.

The yellow umbrella became an icon for the 2014 pro-democracy movement, after 10s of thousands of Hong Kong protesters used umbrellas to protect themselves from police who had fired tear gas in an attempt to disperse them.

With Beijing recently implementing a national security law for Hong Kong—criminalizing acts deemed as subversion, secession, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces with up to life in prison—international tech firms operating in the city suspended their reviews of government requests for user data, citing concerns about violating users' freedom of expression.

TikTok, the popular Chinese-owned video-sharing app, soon announced that it would leave the Hong Kong market. Liu, who previously considered working for the company's China office in a role that would monitor and censor overseas users' content, said the firm would likely have no choice but to comply with Hong Kong authorities' requests for user data. But the company—which has recently faced intense scrutiny in the United States and elsewhere for its data collection on international users—would be wary of a public relations fallout resulting from such compliance.

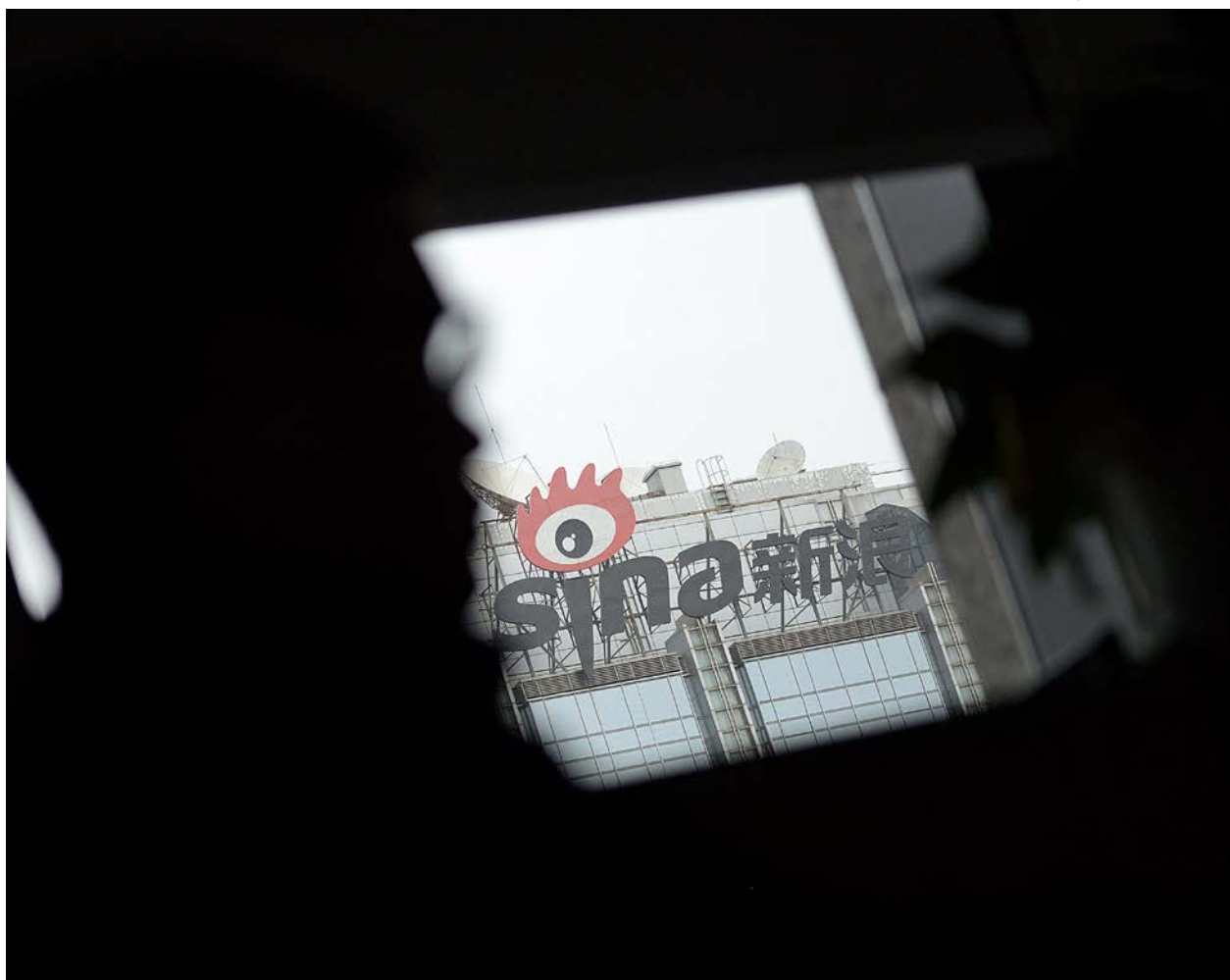
"They know it is impossible for them to take a stand against the Chinese Communist Party's new security law in Hong Kong," said Liu.

He added that it would be impossible for a Chinese-owned app like TikTok to be completely transparent, though the firm promised to build a "transparency center" to alleviate public concerns about its operations. The app is developed and owned by Beijing-based tech firm ByteDance.

## The Past

Liu worked for two years as a content reviewer for Weibo, a Chinese social media platform similar to Twitter. He also worked for four years as a manager of content moderation for Leshi, a Chinese social media platform similar to YouTube.

Liu described the role of content reviewers or moderators in China as labor-intensive and high-stress positions that were closely watched and controlled



WANG ZHAO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The logo of Sina Weibo, widely known as China's version of Twitter, is displayed in Beijing on April 16, 2014.

by the central government's chief censorship agency, the Cyberspace Administration.

He said that reviewers in China need to remember many words, names, or subjects considered politically sensitive by the regime. He gave the following examples: Falun Gong, an ancient meditation practice with moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, that has been severely persecuted by the Chinese regime since July 1999; June 4, also known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989, when authorities sent troops and tanks to crush a student-led pro-democracy movement in Beijing;

Liu Xiaobo, a political dissident who won the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize; and Xi Jinping, the name of China's leader, are all considered politically sensitive. Chinese social media users have tried in many ways to avoid their comments related to Xi from being censored. As a result, Liu said there were more than 35,000 words, symbols, or different combinations of words and symbols related to Xi that were considered politically sensitive, and thus, slated for removal.

Liu said that in most job recruitment notices for this kind of role, companies say that "members of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and Chinese

**We all know who the Party members are in our offices, and they usually are very friendly to everyone. They never tell you what to do. But on the important issues, they will speak loudly about what they believe, and you know that's [the] official [stance].**

Liu Lipeng, former Chinese internet censor

Liu Lipeng in the United States.

Communist Youth League are preferred." Job requirements also include: "candidates need to have political sensitivities," meaning, toeing the Party's line.

Higher education backgrounds are usually required, but without requirements for specific majors, Liu said. Liu graduated from university with a major in human resources. He naturally became a target of headhunters for content reviewer jobs.

Liu believed that the real reason for the college requirements is because in China, college graduates go through political indoctrination in their education.

Liu said fear was a part of daily life for content reviewers in China: "you wouldn't see it, but you know it's there. It's in the air."

Liu stated that CCP has party branches in all social media companies' offices. "We all know who the Party members are in our offices, and they usually are very friendly to everyone," Liu said. "They never tell you what to do. But on the important issues, they will speak loudly about what they believe, and you know that's [the] official [stance]," he added.

## TikTok

TikTok and its Chinese-language version Douyin both belong to ByteDance, a Chinese

social media company founded by Zhang Yiming in 2012. The social media platform allowing users to upload 60-second-long videos quickly became popular after its launch.

In April 2018, ByteDance's most popular social media program Neihanduanzi, was forced to stop its operations by one of China's censorship authorities, the National Radio and Television Administration.

Following the ban, Zhang made a public apology and admitted that "the product was going in the wrong direction, and deviated from socialist core values ... [the company] has focused too much on technology, but ignored that the uses of technology have to be under the direction of socialist core values."

After the ban, ByteDance announced an expansion of its content reviewers team by 67 percent.

In a previous Epoch Times report, Liu recalled his experience in 2018 being interviewed for a role at ByteDance monitoring and policing videos posted by international users of TikTok.

At the time, Liu explained that American users were accustomed to freedom of speech and therefore would be dissatisfied with their content being over-regulated. He was ultimately passed over for the job.

Though he was a professional censor, Liu tried to expose the truth to the Chinese public. On January 25, Liu posted the American CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)'s guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19, including frequently washing hands, via his account on Toutiao, another social media platform owned by ByteDance.

"I thought it was totally legit, not political," said Liu. But his post was taken down by ByteDance's censors.

The Chinese version of TikTok, called Douyin, also published a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman's outlandish claim that COVID-19 was brought to China by the U.S. army.

Liu became disillusioned with life under authoritarian rule and decided to immigrate to California with his family.

In May, he received a text message from a headhunter asking if he would go back to China to have a job interview with ByteDance again. Liu declined.

"We want to stay away from fear," he said, with his wife and children standing around him.



THE EPOCH TIMES

LIONEL BONAVENTURE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



The logo of the social media video sharing app TikTok displayed on a tablet screen in Paris on Nov. 21, 2019.

## TikTok Hires Internet Police to Monitor US Users, Former Censor Says

CATHY HE &amp; EVA FU

A former Chinese internet censor said he was interviewed for the role of monitoring and policing videos posted by international users of TikTok, a Chinese-owned short-video app used by millions of Americans.

Liu Lipeng, who worked as an online censor in China for a decade, said he was passed over for the job in 2018 after suggesting during the interview that TikTok shouldn't overly censor content because Americans value freedom of speech.

He described TikTok's parent company ByteDance Technology Co., the Beijing-based digital technology firm with a reported valuation of \$100 billion as of May, as "the largest and most terrifying censorship machine" he has ever seen.

Liu's claims coincide with rising public concerns over TikTok's ties to the Chinese regime, and come as the Trump administration considers banning the app over national security risks. U.S. officials and experts have sounded the alarm that the app could be used to spy on and censor American users.

The company rejects those claims. Liu, from the northern Chinese city of Tianjin, built his career as a "content reviewer" for the popular Chinese media apps Weibo, a Twitter-like platform, and Leshi, a video platform similar to YouTube. In China, all social media companies must comply with the regime's tight censorship rules, and use algorithms and human censors to monitor and scrub posts deemed sensitive by the Chinese Communist Party.

Liu says he wasn't asked only to monitor content inside China's walled-off internet. He said he interviewed with ByteDance on Oct. 18, 2018, for a content manager position that would inspect "globalized videos" on TikTok, according to the job recruitment notice.

Alongside TikTok, ByteDance runs a Chinese version of the app named Douyin.

Liu, who moved with his family to the United States in March, described the interview experience as "ridiculous"—the firm took extreme measures to ensure secrecy, which baffled him at the time.

A ByteDance staff member was waiting for Liu as he arrived at the company's office in Tianjin, and "took him to walk in circles" inside the building. The employee also instructed him not to look around.

"You may as well put a black cover over my eyes," he told The Epoch Times. "It

**We are doing the dirtiest work, with police's guns behind our backs.**

Liu Lipeng, former Chinese internet censor

felt like visiting the den of a drug lord." He couldn't turn his head sideways, nor would they let him see the work cubicles, he said.

"I won't be able to find it [the ByteDance office] if I go there now," he said, adding that there were surveillance cameras monitoring the workers to make sure they wouldn't remove any materials from the site. He estimated that the ByteDance facility housed at least 4,000 employees at the time, with a portion of the staff working on TikTok.

He said the level of secrecy puzzled him, until he realized the purpose of the role for which he was interviewing.

"They are directly censoring Americans' speech," he said. The ByteDance staff "have gone through over a decade of the Chinese Communist Party's [CCP] political indoctrination ... people who are scared out of their wits by the CCP and live in fear."

During the job interview, Liu expressed a different vision for the role. Having previously lived abroad for a number of years, Liu said he told the interviewer, "I understand more about how much Americans care about freedom of speech, and therefore, we shouldn't overregulate."

Liu was ultimately rejected because of those views, he believes. The company approached him about another job after he came to the United States earlier this year, which he declined.

TikTok didn't immediately respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment.

The app has previously said it doesn't use Chinese moderators to handle content on TikTok. In March, the company announced it would open a "transparency center" in Los Angeles to allow outside experts to see how TikTok moderates content.

Liu says being in the United States means that he needs to defend U.S. interests, and there's "no turning back," he said.

"We [were] doing the dirtiest work, with police's guns behind our backs," he said, noting that the CCP's censorship apparatus has ballooned and become more restrictive over the past decade.

Party membership wasn't mandatory when he first entered the trade, and hiring was conducted furtively, he said. These days, recruitment is out in the open, while one of the main qualifications is to have strong "political awareness."

He noted that posts with CCP-endorsed ideologies, such as patriotism and socialism, are allowed to stay on the platform.

The recruiters also target college graduates whose worldviews have been shaped by years of the regime's brainwashing education, according to Liu. This new generation of recruits have a tendency to zealously over-censor, and even have to be trained on "how not to delete mindlessly," he said.

## Censorship

This isn't the first time TikTok has drawn scrutiny for imposing Beijing-style censorship on overseas users. The Epoch Times recently reported that the app closed the account of a Chinese international student in New Jersey after he posted a video spoofing the Chinese national anthem.

The company came under fire last December for suspending the account of a U.S. teen who posted a video criticizing Beijing's suppression of Uyghur Muslims in China's far-western Xinjiang region.

In September 2019, The Guardian reported that TikTok instructed its moderators to censor certain videos that mention topics considered taboo by the Chinese regime, such as the Tiananmen Square Massacre and Falun Gong, a spiritual practice that has been severely persecuted in China since 1999. The report was based on leaked documents detailing the app's moderation guidelines.

TikTok, in its response at the time, said that such policies were replaced in May 2019 and are no longer in use.

A U.S. review panel is currently probing ByteDance's \$1 billion acquisition of U.S. social media app Musical.ly—which was rebranded to TikTok—in 2017. It is investigating whether the deal raised national security risks.

The Pentagon last year ordered U.S. military personnel to delete TikTok from their work phones. Wells Fargo recently followed suit, while the Democratic and Republican National Committees have warned staff members about using the app.

Following India's recent decision to ban TikTok and 58 other Chinese apps, the Trump administration confirmed that it's considering a similar move. White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said on July 15 that a number of administration officials were "looking at the national security risk as it relates to TikTok, WeChat, and other apps."

"I don't think there's any self-imposed deadline for action, but I think we are looking at weeks, not months," Meadows said.



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