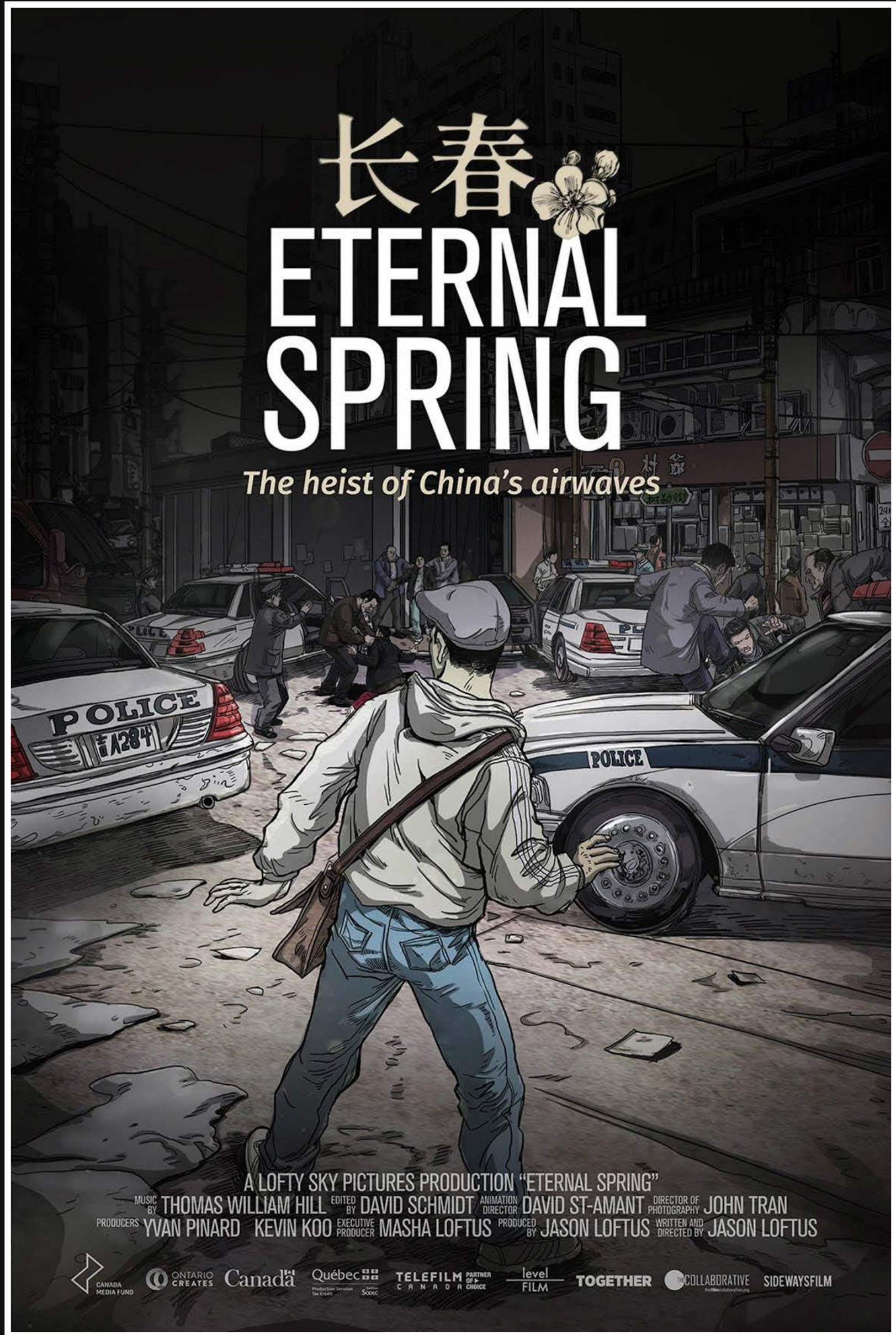


WEEK 42, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

CHINA INSIDER



'ETERNAL SPRING'

A DOCUMENTARY RETELLING
A DARING ACT OF DEFIANCE

See Page 6

CCP CONGRESS

Xi Jinping May Attack Taiwan to Secure His Legacy, Analysts Say

DOROTHY LI

As the country's economy loses momentum, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader Xi Jinping is shifting the basis of his legacy to conquering Taiwan, though there is no indication of a looming invasion, according to analysts.

Xi's speech at the opening of the 20th Party Congress, a twice-a-decade-event, on Oct. 16 received the biggest applause when he praised the Party's determination to quash Taiwan's independence.

"We will never promise to renounce the use of force, and we reserve the option of taking all measures necessary," Xi told the gathering of over 2,000 hand-picked CCP delegates in Beijing.

Analysts pointed out that Chinese leaders haven't used such hawkish language at Party congresses during the past two decades, prompting speculation that a war with Taiwan could come sooner rather than later.

One reason is Xi's legacy, according to three experts.

Xi, 69, is almost certain to claim a record-breaking third five-year term in office, which will be unveiled when the week-long political conference closes. Should he secure the position, Xi will cement his role as the Chinese regime's most powerful ruler since its first leader Mao Zedong.

"The concern is that now he's consolidated power, he may decide I'm going to make my mark and create my legacy. That's a scary thought for Taiwan. But it's a scary thought for the whole region and for the world," Jon Pelson, author of the book "Wireless Wars: China's Dangerous Domination of 5G and How We're Fighting Back," told NTD, a sister media outlet of The Epoch Times.

Wang He, a U.S.-based Chinese commentator, expressed a similar viewpoint, saying Xi has tied his legacy to controlling the self-ruled island.

"Xi is telling the CCP elites that annexing Taiwan could only be achieved by himself," Wang told The Epoch Times.

While the CCP claims that Taiwan as part of its own territory, the island has never been ruled by the regime and has been governed as an independent entity for more than seven decades.

Xi's predecessors, like Deng Xiaoping, had often used strong economic performances to extol the successes of their reigns. But China reported nearly stagnant growth in the previous quarter, marking its worst performance since the country began recording data in 1992, not taking into account a 6.9 percent contraction in the first quarter of 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

If he can't revive China's economy, Xi may use all-out war across the Taiwan Strait to divert the public's attention at home and reduce pressure within the Party, according to a Taiwan-based expert Su Tzu-yun.

"Xi will only be able to launch an attack [on Taiwan] if he has to divert attention away from internal pressures to the external," said Su, a senior analyst at Taiwan's government-funded Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

Not Imminent

But Su said there is no immediate indication of the conflict across the Taiwan strait, though Beijing has ratcheted up military pressure towards the island.

"The real possibility for the CCP to mount an invasion [of Taiwan] in the next five years is low," Su told The Epoch Times.

According to Su, Beijing is not fully capable of conquering the democratic island. If it attacks Taiwan by force before 2027, the Chinese military is likely to lose the war, especially with the potential intervention from countries like the United States and Japan.

The regime's current tactic, Su said, is to escalate military intimidation of Taiwan's forces by flying warplanes and sailing warships near the island on a regular basis.

"The Chinese regime is piling military pressure by frequently sending aircraft and warships to harass Taiwan. This is what [the CCP] called a 'new norm,' the core of its hardline strategy," said the Taiwanese analyst.

Such harassment is happening on a near-daily basis. The latest incursion occurred on Oct. 18 when Taiwan's defense military reported 11 Chinese military aircraft and two vessels were seen in its surrounding region.

Beijing's plan for Taiwan will become clearer when the country's next top lead-



China's leader Xi Jinping waves as he arrives for the opening session of the 20th Chinese Communist Party's Congress in Beijing on Oct. 16, 2022.

ership is unveiled, according to Su. He said if the CCP promotes more economic officials to its top leadership bodies, this would suggest that Beijing prioritizes economic development over seizing Taiwan.

Above all, Su warned that Taiwan must be prepared.

"No matter what [Xi said], Taiwan should continue its preparation," said Su. "Being ready is the best way to maintain peace and prevent a fight [with the CCP]."

Sluggish Economy

Xi gave little sign that the CCP would change its pandemic-handling approach that has hammered the country's economy: its draconian "zero-COVID" policy.

In opening the highly-choreographed meeting, Xi defended zero-COVID—which relies on strict lockdowns and repeated testing—calling the strategy a successful "all-out people's war."

"While he boasts the success of its pandemic prevention policy, [this description] is completely contrary to reality," said Feng Chongyi, a professor of China studies at the University of Technology Sydney. "The fact is all industries are suffering and the economy is declining."

Feng noted that Xi made it clear that the CCP will continue the zero-COVID policy despite the heavy economic tolls. The widespread travel restrictions and repeated lockdowns have led to soaring unemployment among young jobseekers, which is now at nearly 20 percent, hitting the worst level since 2005 when authorities began compiling unemployment data.

Foreign economists and investors further slashed China's economic growth forecast as renewed lockdowns swept through the country ahead of the Party congress. For example, Japanese Bank Nomura revised its forecast for China's

full-year economic growth to 2.7 percent, far lower than the regime's growth target of "around 5.5 percent."

On Oct. 17, China's National Bureau of Statistics delayed the release of key economic data scheduled for publication this week without any explanation. The latest figures—including the country's third-quarter gross domestic product (GDP)—were closely watched by outsiders after China reported only 0.4 percent year-on-year growth from April through June. Officials didn't give a new date for the release.

"COVID is just one example of the damage [Xi] did to his own country, because the value there is more strengthening control, than success and flourishing economy or society," Pelson said.

Citing the example of Shanghai, a city of 25 million that endured a two-month lockdown earlier this year, Pelson said that such punishing restrictions were ultimately a matter of the CCP exerting its control.

"When [Xi] had the crackdown in Shanghai, I had friends in [the] country saying, 'do you know why he's doing this?' They say, 'after Hong Kong, Shanghai is the most Western liberal, capitalistic city in the country.'"

But Pelson's reply to them was: "This was Xi saying, 'you have to remember who is boss.'"

"It was a flexing of muscle," he said, adding that it also amounted to "killing the goose that lays the golden egg," given the city's status as mainland China's financial center.

"The zero-COVID is a great example of what's motivating Xi's actions is not the common good of the people—it all ultimately is about power."

Tiffany Meier, Luo Ya, and Ning Haizhong contributed to the report.



A woman uses her mobile phone as she walks in front of a large screen showing a news broadcast about China's military exercises encircling Taiwan, in Beijing on Aug. 4, 2022.

US ELECTIONS

Election Software CEO Surrenders to LA Authorities; Prosecutors Allege 'Massive Data Breach'

EVA FU & JOYCE KUO

LOS ANGELES—Los Angeles prosecutors on Oct. 14 accused the CEO of a Michigan-based election software company of involvement in a "massive" data breach affecting at least a thousand victims, including minors.

Eugene Yu, 64, who heads Konnech, a company that provides software to electoral districts for the management of poll workers, was charged with the felony crime of embezzlement of public funds. He appeared in a Los Angeles County court on Oct. 14.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office has accused Yu of stealing personal identifying information of poll workers. The office alleged that such data was stored on servers in China, in violation of Konnech's contract with Los Angeles County.

Superior Court of Los Angeles County Judge Victoria Wilson ruled that Yu be released on a \$500,000 bond and remain under house arrest until his next hearing, which is set for Nov. 17. Yu was ordered to remain in Los Angeles County and wear an ankle monitor.

Donning a gray suit, metal-rimmed eyeglasses, and a white N95 mask, the 64-year-old CEO seemed to be in good spirits in the courtroom, where he appeared alongside his four lawyers.

'Astounding' Data Breach

Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney Eric Neff alleged in court that the amount of data involved in the breach was "astounding," adding that "this is probably the largest data breach in United States history."

In Los Angeles alone, there were "probably thousands of victims," Neff said. "They have contracts all over the country."

He alleged that many minors' data had been compromised because during the 2020 election, in the midst of the pandemic, the government had encouraged them to work

at poll stations so that the elderly, who generally make up a large portion of poll workers, could stay at home.

It's "a massive data breach," Neff said.

Yu's lawyer, Janet Levine, rejected the allegations, saying there was no evidence of personal identifiable information being distributed.

There's "no breach in this case," Levine said.

Neff argued against bail for Yu, a naturalized American who was born in China, for fear that he may be able to return to China, where he lived for 33 years and had business operations. Yu's alleged crimes, he said, pose "a broad danger to the community."

"He has extensive friends and family contacts out there," the prosecutor said. "The company is still operating, still uses Chinese contractors to conduct its business," he alleged.

Neff rebuffed allegations that Yu had extensive ties in China, calling it "disingenuous."

It's all "shenanigans," she said. She noted that Yu doesn't have a Chinese passport and has lived in the United States for most of his adult life.

Neff confirmed that Yu's U.S. passport is in their possession.

Prosecution's Allegations

Konnech first began supplying poll worker management software to Los Angeles County in 2019. In October 2020, Yu's company entered into a \$2.9 million, five-year contract with the county. The contract required Konnech to keep the county's data in the United States and allow access only to U.S.-based staff who are citizens or lawful permanent residents, according to the Los Angeles County district attorney's office.

Despite these obligations, Konnech employees were sending personal identifying information of Los Angeles election workers to third-party software developers in China



The office of Konnech Corp. in Okemos, Mich., near Lansing, on Oct. 8, 2022.

"who assisted in creating and fixing" Konnech's software, known as PollChief, according to the complaint filed by California prosecutors on Oct. 14.

In August, Luis Naberger, a Konnech project manager overseeing the Los Angeles contract, wrote in a Chinese-owned messaging app that any employees for Chinese contractors working on PollChief software would have "superadministration" access to the client data, the complaint states.

The message also described the situation as a "huge security issue," according to the complaint.

On Oct. 4, the day of Yu's arrest in Michigan, Naberger allegedly told employees in an internal email that the company was "moving to a new stage in the company maturity and we need to ensure the security privacy and confidentiality," according to the court filing. Naberger added that to accomplish this, personal identifying information would "no longer be included in the fixing of Konnech's PollChief software," the complaint said.

Investigators have searched Yu's Michigan home and two other locations, and are still examining evidence, a spokesperson for the county district attorney's office told The Epoch Times.

The company before and after Yu's arrest has repeatedly denied it has stored data in China and any ties to the Chinese Communist Party. It also brought a lawsuit against True the Vote, a Texas nonprofit that first alleged that they had evidence of Konnech's data on Chinese servers.

Konnech has acknowledged that it had a subsidiary in China, which, it said, it closed last year.

After Yu's arrest, Konnech assured its customers that its data are stored in a data center in Lansing, Michigan.

"We have never hosted your data or system in servers outside of the United States," the company said in an Oct. 6 email to customers.

The company said in an earlier statement that the detention of Yu was "wrongful."

"Any LA County poll worker data that Konnech may have possessed was provided to it by LA County, and therefore could not have been 'stolen' as suggested," Konnech said in a statement.

Fairfax County in Virginia and the city of Detroit in Michigan say they have severed ties with Konnech in light of the arrest. Virginia's Prince William county said they have suspended their use of the PollChief software and have erased data from Konnech's server. DeKalb County in Georgia voted earlier this week to keep the contract but said it will store data on a government-controlled server rather than Konnech's, and monitor access control and logging 24/7 to protect poll worker data.

Yu's lawyer didn't respond by press time to a request for comment regarding the allegations.

A woman walks by the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center in Los Angeles on July 21, 2021.

THE
EPOCH
TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION

A NEWSPAPER ABRAHAM
LINCOLN WOULD READ

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ReadEpoch.com

CCP INFLUENCE

China Conducting Influence Campaigns to Interfere in US Midterm Elections: Report

ANDREW THORNEBROOKE

China's communist leadership is attempting to interfere in the Nov. 8 U.S. midterm elections by spreading propaganda and disinformation, according to researchers.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is conducting influence campaigns with the apparent intent of increasing political polarization among Americans and damaging the reputations of people running for Congress who have been critical of the regime, according to a report published on Oct. 13 by intelligence firm Recorded Future.

"China's state-sponsored influencers are almost certainly conducting malign influence operations targeting English and Chinese-speaking U.S. audiences with divisive political multimedia content on social media," the report states.

"China is likely to conduct malign interference efforts against congressional candidates and members who are outspoken opponents of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and who support policies that will negatively affect China."

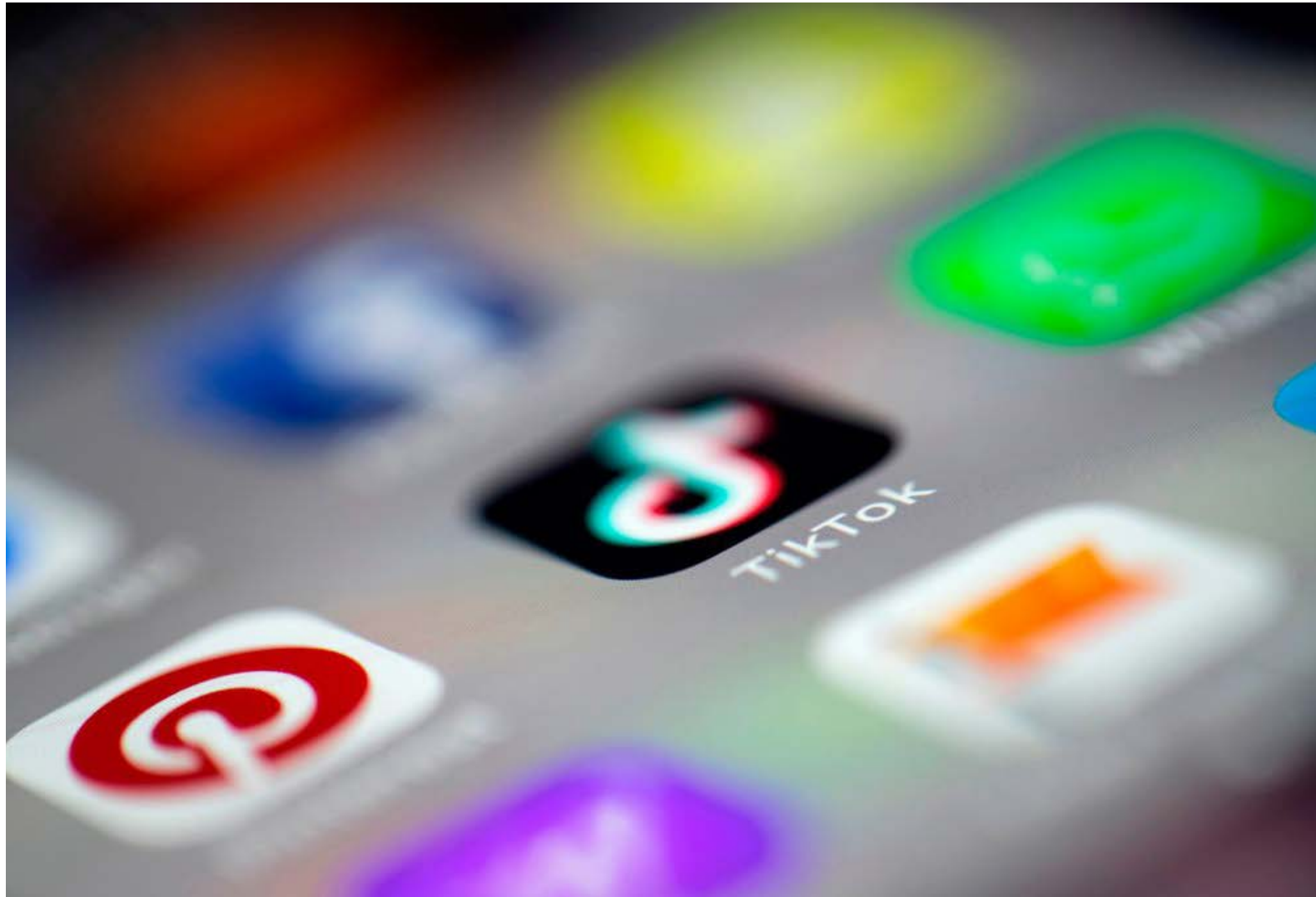
The report comes less than a month after tech giant Meta Platforms said that it had dismantled a China-based disinformation campaign ahead of the elections. That campaign intended to increase political polarization among American voters by amplifying extreme viewpoints on both sides of the political spectrum.

Likewise, the Recorded Future report found that China-based influence operations were aimed at promoting extremism and sowing discord among American voters.

"Many of these [efforts] appear to criticize both the Republican and Democrat parties and promote extreme views on both sides," the report reads.

CCP Seeks to Undermine US

Like Russia, the report states, the CCP appears to be seeding social media with



The logo of the Chinese social media app TikTok in Paris on Dec. 14, 2018.

narratives designed to undermine the United States by exploiting political wedge issues, including abortion, gun laws, fascism, homelessness, immigration, race, technological decoupling, Russia's war in Ukraine, and others.

While the bulk of these efforts could indirectly affect the outcome of the midterm elections, the report states, there was one case in which the CCP attempted to interfere directly.

That was the case of Xiong Yan, a U.S. Army veteran and congressional hopeful in New York City, who was targeted by the CCP earlier this year. The Justice Department has charged known CCP affiliates with plotting to extort and even physically attack Xiong to remove him from the race and prevent his anti-communist views from entering the political landscape.

The report's authors note that they anticipate more direct involvement from the CCP.

"We believe that China's malign interference activities, including harassment, surveillance, and physical threats, will likely target congressional candidates and members who are outspoken opponents of the CCP and legislators who support policies that will negatively affect China," the report reads.

To that end, the report states that CCP authorities rely on diplomats, journalists, and pundits to spread anti-U.S. narratives online. Those narratives, in turn, are amplified by fake personas and other inauthentic social media accounts to artificially mimic real engagement and encourage people to believe that negative feelings about the United States are more widespread than they really are.

One such example, the report states, was the Pacific Dialogue, a social media channel managed by the CCP Central Committee's propaganda department.

The Pacific Dialogue has posted more

than 600 anti-Western videos and has worked tirelessly for more than five years to spread them across platforms, including Douyin, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Weibo, and YouTube, according to the report.

China's state-sponsored influencers are almost certainly conducting malign influence operations targeting English and Chinese-speaking U.S. audiences with divisive political multimedia content on social media.

From a report by Recorded Future

The CCP is also likely to lean on people in positions of power in the United States ahead of the elections, the report adds, in order to launder its anti-American ideals through domestic actors.

"We believe that the CCP is likely to attempt to manipulate U.S. state, local, and business leaders to support Beijing-friendly policies and advance CCP geopolitical interests through political donations, incentives, and coercion stemming from malign cyber intrusions operations," the report reads.



Xiong Yan, Democratic candidate in New York's 10th Congressional District, in July 2022.

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION

A NEWSPAPER GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD READ

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ReadEpoch.com



John L. Thornton, guest professor and director of Global Leadership Program at Tsinghua SEM and chairman of the board of the Brookings Institution, speaks during the 2011 Tsinghua Management Global Forum in Beijing on Oct. 25, 2011.

ELITE CAPTURE

Soros, Thornton, Hawke: New Book Details How Beijing Manipulated Western Elites

DANIEL Y. TENG

Beijing's highly secretive Ministry of State Security (MSS) leveraged and manipulated leading Western political and business elites to deepen the Chinese Communist Party's influence around the world, according to a new book by Alex Joske, an expert on Chinese foreign interference.

The early pages of "Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World" detail how billionaire George Soros, inspired by his work establishing the Open Society Foundation in post-communist Hungary, carried out similar work for China during Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's economic reform era.

The vehicle devised by Soros, and partner Liang Heng, was to establish the Fund for the Reform and Opening of China (the China Fund) to support cultural, business, and scientific research to assist with the country's opening up, according to Joske, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

Yet amid political manoeuvring between factions in the 1980s, the China Fund was forced to partner with the China International Culture Exchange Center (CICEC), an organisation claiming to be under the control of the Ministry of Culture.

Joske alleges that Soros and Liang soon discovered, however, that CICEC had its own motives for the China Fund, and that was to support political initiatives rather than activities associated with liberalising China.

Soros later closed the China Fund with CICEC co-chair Yu Enguang, revealed to be a "high-ranking official in the external police" or the MSS.

"The MSS seizure of the China Fund was an impressive display of the agency's confidence in engaging with one of America's best-connected and wealthiest men. What it learnt could be applied to future operations as the agency grew more aggressive and internationally focused over the following decade," Joske wrote.

CICEC itself would continue to be a "custom-made organ" for meeting and secretly influencing recruits from around the world.

"Politically sensitive missions like engaging directly with George Soros or posing as liberals with the Party in order to gain the trust of foreigners are home turf for these officers," he said.

Exploiting Ambition

Joske also notes that the MSS was very adept at exploiting the ambition of Western elites and cites the example of the former co-president of Goldman Sachs, John Thornton.

After quitting the banking giant, Thornton held several prominent positions with major Chinese institutions, including a directorship at the well-known Tsinghua University.

Journalist Josh Rogin alleged Thornton developed one of the "most reliable and high-level networks with the families that run the CCP," which shaped Thornton's views on how to manage China relations.

"Thornton's beliefs about China's future have been characterised by the same false narratives the MSS Social Investigation Bureau pushed on foreign scholars, diplomats, and elites. In 2008, he argued in an essay for Foreign Affairs magazine that the Party was actively considering moving towards democracy," Joske wrote.



George Soros answers questions on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos on May 24, 2022.

The MSS seizure of the China Fund was an impressive display of the agency's confidence in engaging with one of America's best-connected and wealthiest men.

Alex Joske in "Spies and Lies: How China's Greatest Covert Operations Fooled the World"

FABRICE COFFRINI/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES

"Thornton's writings reflect the same optimism about China that Party leaders and the MSS learnt to capitalise on decades earlier."

The former Goldman Sachs executive went on to encourage the Trump administration to befriend Chinese leader Xi Jinping directly. Yet these efforts at diplomatic engagement with the Chinese leadership would eventually give way to tough sanctions on China to correct years of intellectual property theft and unbalanced trade.

Thornton, along with several major Wall Street figures, also allegedly attempted to sway the Biden administration on its China policy, but these efforts have also fallen to the wayside as scrutiny of the Chinese Communist Party becomes more widespread.

Exploiting a Love of China

Joske also draws attention to the Chinese regime's use of people's love for China outlining the example involving former Australian Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke.

Hawke was distraught in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 and famously responded by granting 42,000 Chinese nationals' asylum.

Joske says four years after the massacre, Hawke received a message from the Chinese consul in Sydney inviting him to visit China.

Hawke felt it was important that Australia-China relations grew, so agreed to do so. There he was received and welcomed by then-Chinese leader Jiang Zemin and then-Premier Li Peng.

"The special bromance between Chinese and Australian leaders was back on track. Hawke thought the fate of [former Premier] Zhao Ziyang, who eventually died in house arrest, was 'extremely sad,' but the importance of building ties to the Party leadership came first," Joske wrote.

He further added that the issue of Tiananmen was eventually "swept under the rug," and Hawke would go on to play a valuable role in selling China to the rest of the world.

Hardie Grant Books, 2022, 202 pages



FREEDOM OF BELIEF

'Eternal Spring'

Documentary That Retells a Daring Act of Defiance in Communist China Premieres in NYC

Artist Daxiong in a still of the "Eternal Spring" documentary, which tells the story of a group of Chinese citizens who brought uncensored news to China and its aftermath.

EVA FU

NEW YORK—Two decades ago, a group of ordinary citizens in China's northeast managed to pull off a feat that no Chinese had ever done before.

For almost an hour, they took over the broadcast of Chinese state television to screen information about the spiritual group Falun Gong, which had been the target of an overwhelming official hate campaign since the Chinese Communist Party marked the practice for elimination a few years earlier.

That daring operation from the spring of 2002 is the centerpiece of "Eternal Spring," an investigative documentary six years in the making that weaves together animation, live-action, and archival footage to tell the story of this group of Falun Gong adherents, from the genesis of the plan to its execution and its tragic aftermath. The film's title is also the literal translation of Changchun, the name of the city where the events took place.

The film was released in March, on the event's 20th anniversary, and so far has received 15 awards. It was selected by Canada to represent the country in the Best International Film category at the 2023 Oscars.

New York Reception

In New York City, the film has drawn two full houses since its Oct. 14 debut at Manhattan's Film Forum. The theater was so pleased with the reception that it extended the showing for an additional week, through Oct. 27.

"It really penetrated my soul," Peter Tomczyk, the son of two Polish immigrants who witnessed the Solidarity movement that paved the way for the end of communism in Europe, told The Epoch Times after the Oct. 14 screening.

"You need to see movies like this," he said, describing the documentary as a "beautiful illumination" of the humanity of the faith's adherents involved in the plot.

Falun Gong, also known as Falun Dafa, is a meditative practice that also contains a set of moral teachings espousing the values



If we have a situation where people can't speak out just because their ideas are considered wrong thoughts ... it has potentially huge consequences, not just in China.

Jason Loftus, director

of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. The practice became wildly popular in China and by the late 1990s had attracted more than 70 million adherents, according to official estimates. The Chinese communist regime, believing its power was threatened by this large following, kicked off an expansive persecution in 1999, which continues today.

The campaign has resulted in the detention of millions of adherents in various facilities, where they are subjected to torture, organ harvesting, and indoctrination. An untold number of practitioners have died.

The disruption of the TV broadcast shook the regime and set off mass police raids in Changchun that rounded up thousands of adherents, regardless of whether they were involved in the plot.

At least six Falun Gong practitioners

connected to the effort died at the hands of police in the first 10 days following the broadcast takeover, according to Minghui.org, a U.S.-based website that serves as a clearinghouse for the persecution in China. Of the core participants, only one successfully made it out of China—after 10 grueling years in prison. Most of the others died in prison or shortly after their release. Zhou Runjun, known as Auntie Zhou among her friends, is due to be released this year after a 20-year sentence.

The film's lead illustrator, Daxiong, also a Falun Gong practitioner, was himself targeted in the police raids that followed and was forced to flee his hometown of Changchun to elsewhere in China, and eventually Canada.

Daxiong, now a renowned comic book artist who has drawn for the Justice League

CHUNG HO/THE EPOCH TIMES



Promotional materials for documentary "Eternal Spring" on display at Film Forum in New York, on Oct. 14, 2022.

and Star Wars graphic novels, serves as the main protagonist in the documentary. The audience follows his journey in trying to piece together the events from 20 years ago that changed both his life and those of countless Falun Gong adherents in his home city.

On top of this documentary-style storytelling, Daxiong, in his other role as the film's lead artist, brings the bold operation to life through animation—a feature appreciated by the audience.

"Artistically, it was absolutely incredible, and the main artist ... he bound everything together," John Robinson, a New Jersey-based neurologist and regular filmgoer, told The Epoch Times after the Oct. 14 screening.

Speaking Up for Those Who Can't

The film's director Jason Loftus, a Toronto native, first encountered Falun Gong in the late 1990s while he was exploring meditation, an experience that stood in stark contrast to what he had heard from Chinese state media narratives. His wife is Chinese, originally from Changchun.

Hearing what Daxiong—who was arrested three times for his belief before coming to Toronto—and others had suffered shocked Loftus and his wife and prompted their desire to tell the story, the director told The Epoch Times.

"The problem, the couple agreed, wasn't just about the persecution of one's belief. Rather, it's that such brutality could take place in plain sight with no accountability and with few being aware of it.

"If we have a situation where people can't speak out just because their ideas are considered wrong thoughts ... it has potentially huge consequences, not just in China," Loftus said, using the example of Li Wenliang, the whistleblower doctor who was punished by the Chinese regime for warning his colleagues about COVID-19 during its initial spread in Wuhan. He later died of the disease.

Li "was trying to inform a few colleagues that there was a virus that was spreading; he was not trying to be a hero and sound the alarm and tell the whole world," Loftus said.

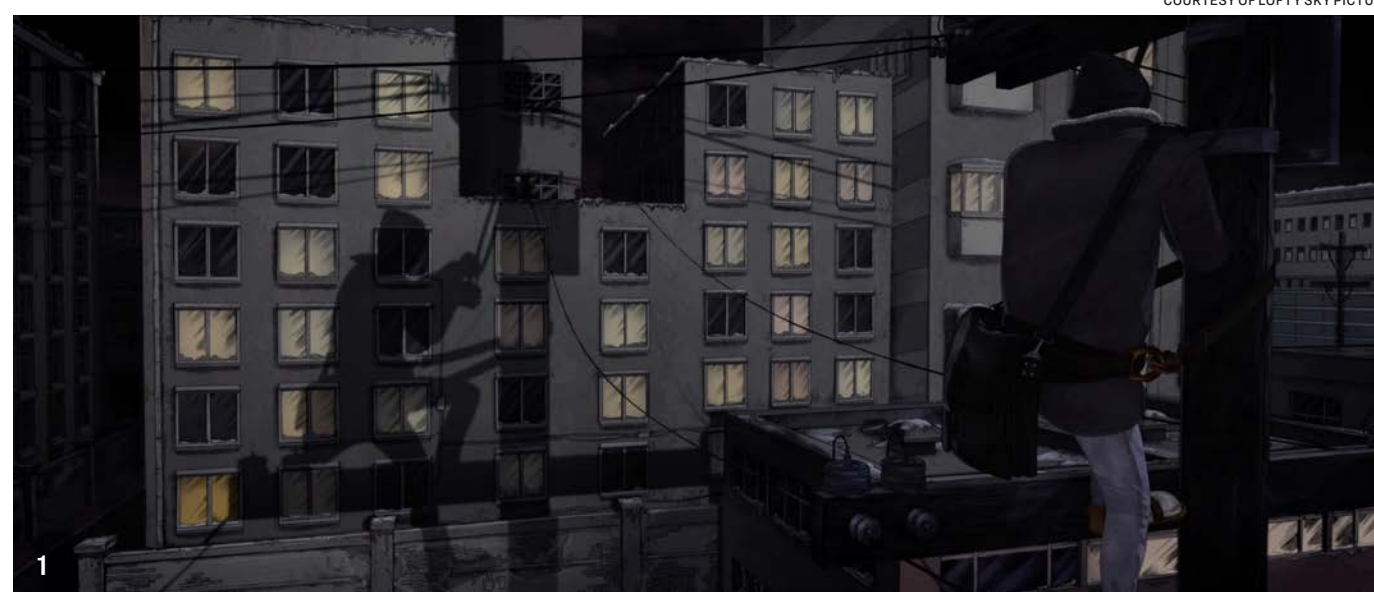
The film was an ambitious undertaking for the small independent team, not least for its unconventional narrative choice.

"Typically, for animation, you have everything prepared, very strictly organized, before you begin. You know exactly what you're going to produce. And in a documentary, you just keep shooting, and you're editing and letting the story emerge," Loftus said.

But doing both at the same time created "a big unknown": The team never knew where different elements would end up, or whether they would make it into the film at all, he explained. Compounding the challenge was the difficulty in bringing scenes from decades ago to life while still being able to preserve a feeling of authenticity.

Externally, too, the sensitivities around the project brought another risk. In the midst of the film's production, Chinese authorities contacted the production company's business partner, Chinese tech and entertainment giant Tencent, over a video game their firm was releasing on the tech platform.

"We were asked, 'Are you doing something not aligned with the Chinese government's direction?'" Loftus said, noting that they had just released another film about the persecution of Falun Gong called "Ask No Questions."



COURTESY OF LOFTY SKY PICTURES

1. An animated scene in documentary "Eternal Spring" that depicts Falun Gong adherents disrupting the transmission lines of Chinese state television in their bid to counter CCP propaganda.

2. Director-writer-co-producer Jason Loftus (L) discusses production issues with Guo Jingxiong, whose drawings were the basis for the animation in "Eternal Spring."

3. People walk past the Film Forum ahead of a screening of the documentary "Eternal Spring" in Manhattan, New York City, on Oct. 14, 2022.

4. Jason Loftus, director of the documentary "Eternal Spring" at a screening at the Film Forum in Manhattan, New York City, on Oct. 14, 2022.



COURTESY OF LOFTY SKY PICTURES

Tencent, which pulled the app a day after releasing it, wasn't the only Chinese partner that cut ties with Loftus's company—another Chinese distributor axed a mobile publishing deal. At least two Chinese cities have recently put Daxiong on a blacklist, banning his more than 100 comic books from schools.

Meanwhile, Chinese public security officers have harassed family members of Loftus's wife in China, issuing veiled threats and saying that they know what Loftus is up to, the director said.

"They don't tell you exactly what they know, and I think that's an intentional thing," Loftus said.

"What did they know? And then you can start thinking endlessly: 'Well, did they know this? Did they know that?' And then this way, you might censor yourself about things they don't even know that you're doing."

But Loftus wasn't going to be cowed by such intimidation efforts, not when there were survivors of repression desperate to be heard.

"We don't face the same consequences that they do inside of China," he said.

"If we can't, with the freedom that we have here, help them to tell their stories, then we're not really using the freedoms that we have, and already we're sort of falling victim to the same type of censorship that the Communist Party enforces on the people inside China."

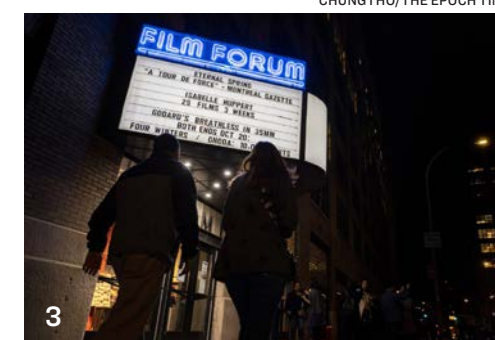
Plum Blossoms Flowering

Making the tension-filled film was also a personal journey for the now-exiled Daxiong, who, over the course of the documentary, comes to a new understanding of the TV disruption, an act that he had for years disagreed with, believing that it only worsened the persecution.

Even before the incident, the breathing room for adherents was already narrow.

In his early 20s, Wei Lisheng, a Falun Gong adherent, was detained at one point

CHUNG HO/THE EPOCH TIMES



CHUNG HO/THE EPOCH TIMES



at the same prison with two practitioners who would later become key figures in the broadcasting plot. He recalled how, with hands trembling, he stood up alongside them to resist an "anti-Falun Gong session"—an indoctrination session where inmates are forced to watch and endorse hate propaganda against the practice. The guard kicked him with military boots that left a mark still visible on his leg today.

Despite the bleakness of the regime's ongoing suppression, both Daxiong and Loftus wished to leave a message of hope, embodied in part in the film's name and the plum blossoms that flower at a tense moment when the adherents, having just successfully taken over the broadcast, are trying to evade police.

Revered as a symbol of resilience in Chinese literature, plum blossoms typically bloom for one to two weeks near the end of Changchun's harsh winters and mark the impending arrival of spring. In those flowers that thrive out of the frozen earth, the two filmmakers saw the spirit of the operation's participants.

"It captures this feeling that yes, there are still very dark and difficult times, it's still the winter in the sense that the persecution continues to get these people. But at the same time, people who witnessed the broadcast that they were responsible for will never be able to look at the state media propaganda the same way," Loftus said.

"They will understand that there's a narrative other than the Communist Party's narrative, and that has a real impact on the future."

For Daxiong, the story is not over yet, but rather an evolving part of history.

"It will be passed down like a torch," he told The Epoch Times.

"Every one of us is a protagonist—not just those few cast in the movie.

"Everyone involved is contributing their part toward our future. It's still unfolding."

And Wei is determined to be part of that effort. He has watched the film, in which he appears as an interviewee, over 10 times and says he still tears up every time.

"I want to etch their brave deeds in my heart and tell it to the world," he said.

Sarah Lu contributed to this report.

I want to etch their brave deeds in my heart and tell it to the world.

Wei Lisheng, Falun Gong practitioner



The film's director Jason Loftus (2nd R) and lead animator Daxiong (2nd L) during a Q&A session after the documentary's screening at Film Forum in Manhattan, New York City, on Oct. 14, 2022.



[The Epoch Times is] a great paper beyond current events—the arts [section] is awesome (and my favorite). I read mine and leave it at the coffee house or other places for others to enjoy. **When I share it, people love it.**

— DONNA LEE NYZIO

7 Ways to Share The Epoch Times With Your Friends and Family



Like us, you're probably a fan of fact-based journalism that lets you make up your own mind. If you think we do a good job, please help spread the word to the Americans who still remember a time when newspapers were just about the facts. Your words and actions may be just what they've been waiting for.

1 PASS ON THE EPOCH TIMES

Done with your weekly paper? Pass it along to a friend, family member, neighbor, or coworker who could use honest news.

2 LEAVE BEHIND THE EPOCH TIMES

Leave your copy of The Epoch Times in a coffee shop, waiting room, barbershop, or any other place with reading material after you're done with it.

3 TALK ABOUT THE EPOCH TIMES

Tell your friends and family about The Epoch Times—in a time when many people don't know what to trust anymore, a recommendation from someone they trust can go a long way.

4 REPRESENT* THE EPOCH TIMES

Our posters and bumper stickers are available for purchase at EpochShop.com, so you can be loud and proud about your support for Truth and Tradition.

5 FORWARD THE EPOCH TIMES

Did you know that all articles in our Morning Brief email can be read by non-subscribers too? It's our way of making sure crucial information gets to the public, whether they're a subscriber or not. Forwarding our Morning Brief** email can help reach people who have to "see it to believe it." You can also share our posts on Facebook and YouTube with your social network to spread the word, when possible.

6 GIVE THE EPOCH TIMES

Epoch Times gift subscriptions are a thoughtful present for the man or woman who has everything but a reliable source of information. ReadEpoch.com/gift

7 REQUEST THE EPOCH TIMES

For those folks who need to try before they buy (or those who just like newspaper smell), we've got you covered. Give us the name and shipping address of your friends or family members, and we'll mail a sample copy to their doorstep at no cost to you or them.

* (1) Please log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com (2) Click your name to manage your account (3) Click "Request Free Papers" on the left menu bar and follow steps
** Your friends and family can read the articles in MORNING BRIEF for FREE. They may meet different paywalls if they read other articles, which are not listed in MORNING BRIEF.

Not a subscriber yet? Visit ReadEpoch.com to learn more.



THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION