

The Falun Gong Story - CCP Propaganda & Censorship

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A hate-filled propaganda campaign of enormous proportions has been central to the persecution of Falun Gong.

Under the direction of the aptly named Ministry of Propaganda, Chinese state-run television immediately launched disinformation marathons, broadcasting defamatory attacks on the meditation group 24 hours a day.

To target the entire society, the propaganda was spread across every medium imaginable: state-run radio stations, newspapers, billboards, comic books, posters, movies, a TV series, and even theatrical plays. “Beijing has ratcheted up the campaign to a fever pitch, bombarding citizens with an old, communist-style propaganda war,” *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Feb. 13, 2001.



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—Wall Street Journal

The Kingdom of Fake News

Mr. Clive Ansley, Esq., a renowned lawyer who has practiced and taught in China for 14 years, would joke with his Chinese colleagues that the only truthful thing in the Chinese media was the date. Mr. Ansley, an advising professor at Shanghai’s Fudan University,

worked and taught international economic law at Shanghai's Jiaotong University and lived in China for 14 years.

After the Falun Gong persecution officially started on July 20, 1999, Ansley testified that he witnessed on a daily basis "the most extreme campaign of unmitigated hatred" that he had ever seen in Chinese print and television media, including young people's programs, cultural presentations, comic books, and news programs.

What he found equally shocking was how his highly educated colleagues could fall for the same propaganda tactics in the media that they had all ridiculed in the past. It was then that he knew this campaign was different from the rest.



How does the Chinese Communist Party utilize state-run media and its control over society to bend the minds of its people to its will? Censorship. Propaganda. Unfortunately, these tactics work to tragic effect. In this video, we'll take a close look at exactly how the Chinese Communist Party terrified the Chinese people into submission. Watch more videos and movies on tv.faluninfo.net

Hypocrisy in Action

The CCP had initially used its state-run media to promote Falun Gong for its health benefits and for uplifting the morality of society. Falun Gong was [respected](#), [awarded](#), and [praised](#) by government bodies, including the Public Security Bureau, which lauded Falun Gong for "promoting the traditional crime-fighting virtues of the Chinese people, safeguarding social order and security, and promoting rectitude in society." The Public Security Bureau even invited Mr. Li Hongzhi, Falun Gong's founder, to give a seminar on Falun Gong at the bureau office in 1993, which he accepted.

China experts believe that Falun Gong's rapid growth surprised then-Party chief Jiang Zemin, who regarded Falun Gong's skyrocketing popularity and its Buddhist-like precepts of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance as an existential threat to the CCP's doctrines of atheism, class struggle, and violent revolution. So on July 20, 1999, Jiang started his campaign of persecution and propaganda, demanding that the regime "use all measures necessary to eliminate Falun Gong."

The Deadly 'Evil Cult' Label

A 1999 *Washington Post* article reported that it was Jiang who ordered that Falun Gong be labeled a "cult," and then demanded that a law be passed banning cults. David Ownby, a leading scholar on Chinese religions, notes: "The entire issue of the supposed cultic nature of Falun Gong was a red herring from the beginning, cleverly exploited by the Chinese state to blunt the appeal of Falun Gong and the effectiveness of the group's activities outside China."

In 2017, a Freedom House report titled *The Battle for China's Spirit* stated that the "evil cult" label against Falun Gong only appeared in Party discourse in October 1999, months after the repression was launched, suggesting that the term was applied retroactively to attempt to justify a violent, irrational campaign that was provoking international and domestic criticism.

In 2014, a BBC News China article reported that 13 years after the start of the persecution, Falun Gong was still not on any of China's official lists of "evil cults." The severity of the persecution, including spreading dehumanizing messages, however, has not abated.

Some international media outlets have chosen to adopt the perpetrator's language by including the CCP labels "cult" and "evil" in their reporting of Falun Gong, perhaps under the guise of "balanced reporting." Canadian human rights lawyer David Matas explains that using propaganda terms to contextualize what the propagandist thinks validates the propaganda and the propagandist, thus giving credence to slander and aiding in the oppression. No media outlet today would report what Hitler labeled Jewish people.



When journalists use the labels crafted by a tyrannical regime to demonize the oppressed, they're putting innocent lives at risk. It's important that reporters and readers understand clearly what demonizing terms are—tools of oppression, not genuine attempts at characterization and not valid reporting. Falling short of the truth is simply allowing the media to be used by the Chinese Communist Party to extend the reach of its propaganda and its ability to oppress.

The Staged Self-immolation on Tiananmen Square

In the year 2000, the persecution seemed to be losing the hearts and minds of people in China. In addition, the international community viewed Falun Gong as yet another victimized group attacked by the world's largest human rights abuser. But everything changed on Jan. 23, 2001, when Communist Party mouthpiece Xinhua News Agency falsely claimed that five Falun Gong practitioners, including a 12-year-old girl, had attempted to “enter heaven” by setting themselves on fire on Tiananmen Square. (See sidebar: “Beijing’s Deadly Hoax.”)

Around the clock, gruesome videos and pictures were broadcast through every newspaper, magazine, radio, and TV station in China. They featured a badly burned and mutilated little girl lying on a stretcher, her face and lips charred black, whimpering, “Mama, Mama.”

Days later, reports from Western media started to blow gaping holes in the story that pointed to a government conspiracy. A CNN reporter who was on the scene never saw a 12-year-old girl at the site. For *The Washington Post*'s investigative report titled "Human Fire Ignites Chinese Mystery," the reporter interviewed neighbors of the 12-year-old and her mother, who died at the scene. The neighbors said that the mother had mental problems and that "no one ever saw her practice Falun Gong."

However, nothing could stop the power of that terrible story of self-immolation. What was once seen in the West as a peaceful meditation group and a victim of an oppressive regime was now seen as a fringe group and possibly a questionable one at that.



False Fire Documentary – Analysis of the "Self-Immolation" Incident.

Hateful Messages Complete the Violent Machinery

Between 1999 and 2001, media watchdogs such as Reporters Without Borders grew more concerned about the inability to report on Falun Gong in China and the arrest and harassment of reporters who tried.

A few of the successful reporters included John Pomfret and Philip Pan from *The Washington Post*. In August 2001, they published an article titled "Torture Is Breaking Falun Gong, China Systematically Eradicating Group." They secretly interviewed a government official who exposed the three ingredients that the regime was using against Falun Gong.

The first ingredient was the CCP's sanctioning of widespread violence against Falun Gong practitioners. The second was intense brainwashing sessions to get practitioners to give up their faith. And the third and most crucial was the high-pressure propaganda campaign. As Chinese society turned against Falun Gong after the staged Tiananmen Square self-immolations, pressure on practitioners to abandon their beliefs increased, and it became easier for the regime to use violence against those who did not.

"Each aspect of the campaign is critical," the official told *The Post*. "Pure violence doesn't work. Just studying doesn't work either. And none of it would be working if the propaganda hadn't started to change the way the general public thinks. You need all three. That's what they've figured out."

Online Trolls-for-hire — The 50-Cent Army

In addition to controlling the message, CCP leaders knew from experience they had to prevent the masses from having access to the big picture and the free flow of information. Internet censorship has been a major concern for the CCP since 2000. They created the world's largest firewall system as part of the Golden Shield Project. Not surprisingly, all Falun Gong-related websites are blocked, including MIT's website at one point because it hosts the MIT Falun Gong club.



"We estimate that the [Chinese] government fabricates and posts about 448 million social media comments a year."

— Harvard Study "How the Chinese Government Fabricates SocialMedia Posts for Strategic Distraction" (2016)

A 2016 Harvard study reported this finding: "The Chinese government has long been suspected of hiring as many as 2 million people to surreptitiously insert huge numbers of pseudonymous and other deceptive writings into the stream of real social media posts, as if they were the genuine opinions of ordinary people. ... We estimate that the government fabricates and posts about 448 million social media comments a year."

These online commentators are called "the 50-cent party" because they are reportedly paid 50 cents for every post. Inciting hatred, spreading misinformation, and promoting state propaganda against Falun Gong is their job.

Falun Gong practitioners have resisted the onslaught of falsehoods about them through their courage, ingenuity, and technical know-how: They've tapped into state-controlled cable television networks to broadcast truth-telling videos, invented and circulated software to circumvent the internet blockade, hung banners in trees, and produced and distributed CDs, DVDs, fliers, and leaflets—all to get the truth to the Chinese people. For these seemingly simple acts, many have been abducted and tortured, and many have died in detention.

In the words of U.S. Congressman Chris Smith, “[Falun Gong](#) practitioners have been great witnesses of courage and peace.”

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