

**“China's Policies Toward Spiritual Movements”
Congressional-Executive Commission on China
Roundtable discussion**

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**Friday, June 18, 2010, 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 628**

I want to thank the CECC, but my remarks need to go beyond the pro-forma on this point.

The Chinese Communist Party portrays Falun Gong as an evil cult and a terrorist entity. The Chinese State’s diplomatic arm has made it clear that the Falun Gong issue is non-negotiable. It is relevant that this appears to be the first US government hearing or roundtable directly focusing on Falun Gong in a decade.

As a former Beijing business consultant, I do not rely on Chinese official statistics. For example, if you attempt to generate a population figure for the Laogai system—labor camps, prisons, black jails, detention centers, and psychiatric hospitals—you get a figure well below a million. Yet if one counts every detention node and make common-sense estimates, as the Laogai Foundation researchers do every year, you get a more credible figure of three to five million.

According to the UN rapporteur on torture, Falun Gong comprises half of those prisoners, but this figure might be high. Much of my research is based on interviews with refugees and defectors. I don’t ask them for estimates of the Laogai system, but no matter how traumatized they are, I do expect them to remember how many Falun Gong were in their cell-block. After interviewing over 120 individuals, including defectors from inside Chinese security and well over 50 Laogai refugees, I estimate that Falun Gong comprises between 15 to 20% of the Laogai system. That’s about half a million to a million Falun Gong in detention on average, representing the largest Chinese Security action since the Maoist period.

We often perceive Chinese human rights problems as an entrenched structure. But the Party’s campaign against Falun Gong more closely resembles a blitzkrieg, in an increasingly global war, marked by physical assaults in the US, Chinese operatives posing as refugees, and coordinated hacking of Chinese dissident networks and US government entities.

We should understand how the war began, the casualty rates, and the stakes of our neutrality. So I thank the CECC—and especially Toy Reid—for making this roundtable a reality.

I was in Beijing on July 20, 1999, when the official crackdown began and sound-trucks flooded the streets. Western reporters flooded the zone, but with little cooperation from either the Party or Falun Gong, journalists had trouble simply penciling in the first question of any news report: What is Falun Gong?

Falun Gong, simply put, is a Buddhist revival movement: moral passion, occasional talk of miracles, are-you-running-with-me-Master-Li individualism, and a reflexive mistrust of establishments and outsider agendas.

The Buddhist aspect may be unfamiliar and exotic, but, as Arthur Waldron puts it: "...anyone who knows Asian religion will instantly see that Falun Gong fits into a tradition that extends back before the beginning of recorded history." What made Falun Gong stand out from other *qigong* exercises and meditation practices was a moral system—compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance—unmistakably Buddhist in origin.

The revivalist aspect helps explain why Falun Gong insist on being called "practitioners," rather than "followers." Actually, they don't follow well. Ask ten Falun Gong practitioners for a definition of Falun Gong, and you will get ten different answers and ten days of heated discussions. Yet it was that same do-it-yourself mentality that allowed Falun Gong to attract 70 million practitioners and skip over the barriers of Chinese society: class, education, rural/urban, civilian/military, and Party membership.

Go back to 1995, and follow a diminutive old woman around Yuyuantan Park in West Beijing. Ding Jing was a Falun Gong coordinator, meaning she taught the exercises, and kept practice sites clean. Among the sites were three locations: One catered to employees from China Central Television; two, the Xinhua News Agency; the third—very well-attended—attracted Party officials, their wives, and employees of the Public Security Bureau. From a Marxist perspective, which venerates the seizure of power using the same template, Ding's tidy practice sites represented something terrifying. In 1996, *Zhuan Falun*, in essence, the Falun Gong bible, was taken out of print.

Given the amorphous floating world in which they traveled—a world without membership lists, central authority or hierarchy—practitioners didn't panic. But Luo Gan, the head of the Public Security Bureau, began to use Falun Gong's perceived infiltration of his own department to gather, report, and study. Where no hierarchy existed, the Party, seizing on small clues such as Jing's phone calls to other practitioners, would map one. Where no political objectives existed, the Party would create them.

Until 1997, the Chinese media stayed neutral. Local Party leaders would show up at Falun Dafa day rallies, and chuck little children on the chin while the cameras rolled. Now critical language began to appear in the Party-controlled

media—flares in the night sky indicating that the Party was trying something out.

Falun Gong had a method to handle this. Show up en masse. Stay silent. Then stand around until someone talks to you. The technique smoothly reversed various negative reports—articles in 1997, a Beijing TV segment in 1998.

In Tianjin 1999, it failed. I've made my article "An Occurrence on Fuyou Street" available. Employing interviews from both sides, it tracks the events from Tianjin on April 22 to Beijing on April 25. Essentially, the demonstration was a set-up. From the portable surveillance cameras on Fuyou Street, to the armed military unit at the Forbidden City, it was a Party bait-and-switch to create momentum for a State-level crackdown.

A former district-level official, "Minister X," recalls that the Party's decision to eliminate Falun Gong circulated internally long before any public ban, and he was told to stop granting business licenses to practitioners. A Falun Gong source saw a similar communiqué at Qinghua University in 1998. A former official of the 6-10 office, the secret agency created to eliminate Falun Gong, noting the level of detail in practitioner files, believes that operations must have begun by 1998.

Without understanding the initial integration of Falun Gong into the Party, and the Party's initiative in starting the war—essentially creating the dilemma that threatens them today—one cannot understand the ineffectiveness of the Falun Gong response. Practitioners wanted to believe that it was a misunderstanding. So appearances at the petition office and signed letters were followed by mass detentions and the first deaths in custody.

Beginning in 2000, based on the safe house occupancy in Beijing, I estimate that well over 150,000 practitioners made their way to Tiananmen Square to protest over a year's time. Collectively, a remarkable number, but they trickled in at 500 to 1000 per day, and they stood up and unfurled their banners according to the dictates of their soul rather than any preconceived strategy.

Would a mass strategy have even been possible? I have provided another article, "Hacker Nation," on 6-10 surveillance:

Before 1999, Falun Gong practitioners hadn't systematically used the Internet as an organizing tool. But now that they were isolated, fragmented and searching for a way to organize and change government policy, they jumped online, employing code-words, avoiding specifics, communicating in short bursts. But like a cat listening to mice squeak in a pitch black house, the "Internet Spying" Section of the 6-10 office could find their exact location, having developed the

ability to search and spy as a result of...a joint venture between the Shandong province public security bureau and Cisco Systems.

Following capture and initial interrogation under the 6-10 Office, the Laogai system then operated to break the will and “transform” the practitioner, culminating with a public renunciation of Falun Gong. But it was within the Laogai itself that the first effective resistance began.

Wang Yuzhi was a tough, successful Beijing businesswoman. When the crackdown started she transformed her office into a secret Falun Gong printing press. It was broken up, her assets were seized, Wang ran, and was eventually caught.

The low-ball casualty figure of over three thousand practitioners who have died by torture is reasonably well-documented. Some practitioners simply refused to renounce their belief; others hoped that overcrowded prisons might contribute to the end of the persecution. Others wanted to set an example to fellow inmates.

But Wang made it personal—so personal that some of the guards force-feeding her began wearing paper bag masks so she couldn’t identify them. It became a chess game between the practitioner and the torturers. Both sides knew that Wang’s screams of rage were legendary throughout the Laogai, with rumors seeping out to practitioners scattered throughout the world. Both sides knew that checkmate—actually killing Wang—would leave a pyrrhic victory for the state.

The underlying ambiguity of the Laogai position was expressed in the following local maneuver: Rather than writing up a report of transformation failure, or the euphemism “death by suicide,” many labor camps and psychiatric centers would wait until the torture reached lethal levels, and then suddenly free the dying practitioner—especially after the so-called Tiananmen “self-immolation” and the Changchun television hijacking (and I welcome questions on those incidents).

But Wang Yuzhi lived. Considered terminal on release, she fled China, and went on to purchase printing presses for the *Epoch Times*. Today she will smile at you with her one good eye. This is the face of insurgency, and to such a face, the Party turned to a more permanent solution.

The final article that I have made available, “China’s Gruesome Organ Harvest,” documents a pattern of retail-organs-only physical examinations carried out throughout the Laogai system. I can find no rational medical explanation for the procedures, and I conclude that the commercial harvesting of Falun Gong

is real. That finding has been confirmed by a Taiwanese surgeon who arranges transplants in China.

One addition: While the Bush Administration's consistent focus on House Christians may have had a Schindler's List effect, inhibiting widespread harvesting of Christians, members of one sect, Eastern Lightning, were examined for harvesting. According to interviews by my colleague Jaya Gibson, so were some Tibetan prisoners. Yet harvesting of political and religious prisoners probably began in Xinjiang. A Uyghur policeman witnessed preparation for a procedure in 1994, and I recently interviewed a Uyghur surgeon who, in 1995, was ordered to take his medical team into the outskirts of Urumqi and remove a prisoner's organs while the heart was still beating.

Perhaps harvesting began as a purely black-market operation. But ultimately prisoners who would not transform—the Wang Yuzhi types—became too dangerous to release. But the Party had an outlet, the organ tourists of Japan, Europe, and the United States.

Now the fact that China is the one currently pulling the reins up on Western organ tourism highlights Falun Gong's stunning lack of success in making its case in the US. For many in the Bush administration, it took one outburst from Wang Wenyi on the White House Lawn to establish that Falun Gong could not be reliable allies. For many Democrats, it took one Chinese-planted Wikipedia reference alleging Falun Gong was anti-gay to ward off sympathy (Falun Gong teachings on this point are essentially indistinguishable from traditional Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism).

Practitioners in the West simultaneously watch two screens, a Western one and a Chinese one. But for them, China is always the default—and fear of the Party's manipulative abilities runs deep. Hence we see the definitional problems, the alienating public torture displays and Daoist demarcations of good and evil—again, aimed at the mainland.

But Falun Gong's tunnel vision created one unprecedented success. Along with the construction of the greatest dissident media apparatus in modern Chinese history, a small group of Falun Gong engineers based out of a North Carolina suburb devised an Internet-lifeline to transmit information in and out of China. Along the way, they facilitated the only unblocked Internet transmissions out of Iran during the aborted Green Revolution.

If the press is correct, the State Department is considering awarding these engineers (now known as the Global Internet Freedom Consortium), significant funding to do more. If my Falun Gong sources are correct, the Consortium is concerned about taking a sum too small to make a difference, in exchange for the inevitable Party propaganda point that they are US agents.

Yet the Party is pushing the two sides together. The State Department must end Chinese hacking by threatening China's Big Brother Internet. Falun Gong has perhaps a million in captivity. As much as one out of ten may have already been lost to the surgical knife.

The answer to this dilemma will not be found in parsing Wikipedia. The question is no longer—What is Falun Gong? How do they define themselves? But rather—What are Falun Gong's actions? What has Falun Gong achieved? Against what sort of odds? And here, I believe the evidence of a decade—from the Laogai to the North Carolina suburbs—speaks for itself.