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The Chemistry of a Conflict: The Chinese Government and the Falun Gong

PATSY RAHN

This article examines elements shaping the conflict between the Chinese government and the Falun Gong movement. It explores the historical relationship between China's rulers and sects, the *qigong* boom in contemporary China, the Chinese government's style of conflict management, and the development of the Falun Gong teachings since the group was banned. It discusses the extreme language both sides use to define themselves and their opponent as part of a media-campaign to legitimate their respective causes. It also examines the intensification of the millennial message in the Falun Gong teachings and the potential justification for violence even though the teachings continue to condemn the use of violence. It concludes with reflections on the future of the Falun Gong and the Chinese government.

A Brief Background

In 1992 Li Hongzhi founded a *qigong* movement in China called Falun Gong (FLG). *Qigong* is a general term designating a system for improving and maintaining good health based on ideas found in traditional Chinese medicine and culture. It involves a wide range of physical, mental and breathing exercises. *Qi* can be translated as vital energy, and *gong* as skill, so *qigong* is the skill of developing vital energy so as to obtain good health. The name Falun Gong is translated on the FLG website as 'Law Wheel Qigong'. *Fa* means law, *lun* means wheel, so it implies gaining achievement through work with the Wheel of the Law.

The 'law' in FLG refers to the law of the universe which is stated as 'Truthfulness, Benevolence and Forbearance'. In 1992, the group was legally registered with the national *qigong* association called the Chinese Qigong Scientific Research Organization. Li traveled for several years throughout China teaching under the auspices of the association. In 1995 his teachings began to come under criticism for being superstition, and in 1996 he withdrew the group from the *qigong* association, thereby removing its official registration. Li then left China to travel and teach in the United States and Europe and in 1998 he immigrated to the United States. From

1996–98 Falun Gong members in China, at the request of Li, tried unsuccessfully to re-register the group with different organizations.¹

In 1998 New York City became the headquarters for the group and the Falun Gong website was established. In April 1999 there was a peaceful gathering of 10,000 Falun Gong practitioners outside government buildings in Beijing to request official recognition and complain of mistreatment. The large gathering surprised officials. The government requested a panel to study the group and three months later in July 1999 it was banned. The government has since waged an intense campaign to discredit the group and suppress it through re-education and intimidation. It has jailed several hundred leaders of the group, banned and burned its books, detained tens of thousands, sent thousands through re-education labor camps and denied claims of death or torture of members in detention. The Falun Gong has become its own social movement of protest, waging a campaign of words and press relations, calling on members of the US government, human rights groups and the United Nations to help it.

The Chinese Government's Response

Cultural Context

Randy Kluver advises that '[p]olitical conflict must be considered within a larger context of cultural meaning, something that is critically missing from most political analysis'.² He explains that when diplomats, politicians and reporters 'do not understand cultural cues and issues involved', events tend to be focused on in isolation from cultural context and interpreted from a 'radically dissimilar worldview'.

One brief example is the difference between placing primary importance on the right of the individual over the collective right as in the United States, or the reverse of placing primary importance on the good of the collective over the right of the individual as in China. Seeing from a 'radically dissimilar worldview' not only makes it difficult for outsiders to 'understand why certain strategic choices are made'³ but can also create a frustrating pattern of miscommunication that only increases distrust and tension.

A word of caution here: I do not mean that by understanding the cultural cues and issues one thereby accepts non-critically the strategic choices made by the Chinese government. The point is that by including the Chinese frame of reference on an issue, one can discuss, debate and dialogue without the immediate mishap of being at cultural loggerheads. In relation to the government's response to the Falun Gong, this paper argues that the Chinese government's response to the FLG is not a style of response unique to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); rather, the government's response

and its subsequent actions are part of a cultural paradigm that has been a feature of Chinese history and now continues under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

While news reports about the Falun Gong have sometimes referred to earlier religiously-inspired groups that confronted China's rulers, most often mentioned is the mid-nineteenth century Taiping rebellion, the history of sects and their potential threat to the Chinese state (imagined and real) has an extensive and intensive history in China. This pattern of ruling power in conflict with sectarian groups may have first developed as early as the second century.

For the purpose of this paper, *sectarian* refers to groups that China's rulers considered to be heterodox because their belief systems had branched off from larger, traditional systems of belief. One common feature among these groups, as Robin Munro points out, is that 'virtually all the sects and societies (even the Triads) evolved quite complex religious belief systems. These were generally highly syncretic in nature and drew freely and sometimes indiscriminately from Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (and later from Christianity and Islam as well)'.⁴

This religious syncretism is characteristic of sectarian groups in China, including the Falun Gong. This is not to suggest that throughout Chinese history these groups had similar teachings, but rather that a paradigm was developed based on the interplay of the ruling power with these groups, that is, the 'ruler-sectarian' paradigm.⁵ I suggest that the Chinese government's campaign methods and justifications in use against the Falun Gong are indigenously Chinese and part of this historical paradigm.

The Creation of a Paradigm

The Pattern. The pattern of ruling power keeping a watchful eye on sectarian groups, at times being threatened by them, at times raising campaigns against them, began as early as the second century and continued throughout the dynastic period, through the Mao era and into the present. The collapse of the Han dynasty in the second century produced a period of profound political and cultural crisis. The development of popular movements at this time 'marked an important development in the history of Chinese religions, [namely]the beginning of religious sects, with their own gods, beliefs, scriptures, rituals, leaders, and organizations, separate from the state and family'.⁶ According to David Ownby it was at the end of the Han dynasty that millennial elements from Buddhism and messianic elements from Daoism mixed with popular religion to form the first Chinese sectarian movements.⁷

The millennial Buddhist elements included the belief in a cyclical pattern of *kalpas*, a period of time which would end in calamities and

destruction as one cycle ended and a new one began, and the Daoist millennial elements included the belief in a messianic figure who would appear to lead a select group to survive the calamities of a purged world. During this period (following the fall of the Han dynasty), the 'apocalyptic undertones' of one strain of Daoism⁸ characterized their followers as 'seed people', a group of elect who would 'repopulate a new world purged by disasters'. The texts speak of 'mysterious beings' who intervene to judge and save humankind, or more precisely, a select few.

According to Frederick Wakeman, this millenarian belief of a new *kalpa*, accompanied by calamities from which one could find salvation by belief in a sect's teachings, would at times 'call for a popular rebellion against the dark forces of secular government that held back the victory of light'.⁹ It was thought that although '[e]ach successive rebel group might be destroyed, ...a new one would arise in its place'.¹⁰ 'This apocalyptic amalgam of Buddhist chiliasm, Manicheanism, and messianic Taoism repeatedly inspired a pursuit of the millennial in China'.

Whether or not it was intentional on the part of Li Hongzhi when he created Falun Gong, his teachings owe a great deal to this legacy. He too, teaches that the 'Ending Period of Catastrophe' is here, that the current age is degenerate and will be purged and only those who are FLG practitioners will be saved.¹¹ He too, speaks of 'mysterious beings who intervene' and calls Jiang Zemin, the president of China, 'the highest representative of the evil force in the human world' who is being used by higher beings to persecute the FLG. Only when the evil is eliminated can FLG practitioners 'return home' through Consummation to the Falun Dafa paradise (Falun Dafa is another name for the movement. It means the Great Law of the Law of the Wheel).

Regarding the response of the state to such groups: Judith Berling comments that '[a]s far back as the Han dynasty, and increasingly from the Sung on [960-1279], millenarian cults and secret societies had been linked with uprisings and rebellions. Nervous scholar-officials came to see a potential rebellion in every religious gathering'.¹² Since the state assumed 'the right to control religious institutions and to define acceptable religious practices... [a] religion whose adherents offended the government might be legally proscribed and its books burned'.¹³

According to David Ownby, 'The Chinese government has suppressed movements like the Falun Gong hundred of times over the course of Chinese history', adding that the Chinese Communist government did 'the same thing the imperial state had always done, which was to arrest and generally, not always, execute the leaders and pretend to reeducate the others and send them back home and hope that they would be good people from there'.¹⁴

While many sectarian groups in Chinese history did not foment revolt or cause the state problems, the ones that did formed the basis for the state's fear and the ruler-sectarian paradigm. At the end of the Han dynasty in 184 there was the messianic rebellion of the Yellow Turbans, and according to Ownby, in the fifth and sixth centuries in northern China there were 'ten "Buddhist-inspired uprisings" [which] led believers to rise up against both church and state'. Ownby mentions one instance in 445 when an emperor 'ordered that all Buddhist monks in the empire be killed and all Buddhist buildings, images, and books destroyed'. He comments that '[t]he decree was not carried out on this scale, but it suggests nonetheless the fear such incidents evoked'.¹⁵ The most successful of all sectarian leaders was Zhu Yuanzhang who, in 1368, led a rebellion that overthrew the Yuan dynasty and founded the Ming dynasty with himself as the first emperor. During the Ming (1368–1644) alone, there were 41 sectarian disturbances¹⁶ and in the final dynasty, the Qing (1644–1911), there was the famous Taiping rebellion and the Boxers movement.

In the modern era, the case of the Yi Guan Dao is an illustrative example. The imperial Qing government, the Nationalist Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party, all campaigned against it. When the CCP first came to power, it initiated a campaign against the 'counter-revolutionary forces of superstition' with particular focus on the Yi Guan Dao. It enacted an intense mass campaign against the group for ten years before it finally claimed success. And when the Yi Guan Dao fled to Taiwan in 1949 it had to go underground to survive and was only finally recognized by the Taiwan government in 1987.¹⁷ Even so, the Yi Guan Dao continues to exist today in Taiwan and other Southeast Asian countries and as recently as the 1980s was listed once again as one of the active sects in China.¹⁸

The long-term campaign against the Yi Guan Dao may be the most recent modern-day forerunner and possible model for the Falun Gong campaign.¹⁹ Ironically, Li Hongzhi has called the Yi Guan Dao an 'evil religion' predestined by history to be eradicated, perhaps evidence of the success of the government's intense propaganda campaign against the Yi Guan Dao,²⁰ a campaign the likes of which Li would experience himself decades later. News reports generally describe the Falun Gong as a *qigong* movement, and while it is true that Li developed it during the 1980s *qigong* boom in China and began his teaching of it as a *qigong* healing movement, I believe the development of the Falun Gong most closely resembles a sectarian group including its role as contender to the Chinese state.

The Communist Party and the Paradigm. Many charges made against the Falun Gong by the Chinese government are found in campaigns against earlier groups such as the Yi Guan Dao. The following partial list from a

1985 report by the PRC Ministry of Public Security No.1 Bureau, titled 'Main Activities of Sects and Societies in Recent Years',²¹ describes the offending features of groups that moved them from acceptable to unacceptable in the eyes of the CCP. These characteristics include: recruiting from within the ranks of the CCP, organizing across provinces and counties, membership that proselytizes, making criticism of the CCP, claims by the leader to be a god or emperor, spreading superstition and heterodoxy and receiving support from 'forces overseas'. These were elements considered common to potentially subversive groups, and, according to the Chinese government, the Falun Gong met all the criteria.

The character of the government's response is connected, as Kluver points out, to whether the conflict is seen as legitimate and 'in-house' that is, a 'contradiction from among the people' in which case it may be dealt with gently, or whether the conflict is viewed as a 'contradiction between the people and their enemies', in which case the group 'must be addressed ruthlessly and radically'.²²

Within this paradigm, ruthless and radical responses are seen as appropriate, necessary and acceptable. The CCP sees the conflict with the FLG as one 'between the people and their enemies' for several reasons: 1) the government believes Li's teachings endanger people, mainly due to the teachings regarding medicine; 2) the government believes Li's teachings were gaining enough adherents across China and specifically within the CCP to be a potential rival ideologically; 3) because Li moved to the US and has, according to the government's view, linked up with those in the West who wish to see the fall of the CCP. The conflict between the government and the FLG is, therefore, seen as being between 'the people and their enemies' and according to the crisis management style of the CCP, it is appropriate, acceptable and necessary to utilize ruthless and radical responses.

At the end of this 1985 report by the PRC Ministry of Public Security, the concluding comment states that 'our struggle against the reactionary sects and societies is going to be a long-term and protracted one',²³ a comment echoed almost word for word decades later regarding the Falun Gong campaign. For the Chinese historically, the struggle between the government and sectarian groups has indeed been a long-term and protracted one. Perhaps the main question to be raised is whether or not this paradigm remains viable. This question will be addressed later. But first I will explain the contemporary *qigong* boom in China from which the Falun Gong movement arose, and how it relates to the ruler-sectarian paradigm.

The *Qigong* Boom

Li Hongzhi's Falun Gong movement developed during a period in China known as the '*Qigong* Boom'. Following the Cultural Revolution when China began reforms in the late 1970s, there was an opening up to religion which included not only the main religious practices but also folk religion practices 'packed away' during the Mao era. Hand in hand with this revival of religious beliefs came the long-established conflict in China between superstition and orthodoxy, or in the case of the CCP, superstition and science. In modern China, to be scientific means to be legitimate, to be superstitious is to be feudal and in need of education or eradication. Part of this cultural revival included the practice of *qigong* and it was prime material to be caught up in this conflict of science and superstition.

While the revival of *qigong* was seen by some as 'a forerunner of the scientific revolution of the twenty-first century',²⁴ it was seen by others as a marriage of *qigong* practice to strange and marvelous tales of the paranormal found in traditional Chinese stories. The *qigong* revival thus balanced precariously between the traditional gap between science and superstition. On the one hand, there was the claim that the theory of *qi* was a distinctly Chinese science, and the *qigong* boom since the 1980s has made explicit and enthusiastic linkage between *qigong* and a scientific basis.²⁵ On the other hand, there were claims, beginning in the late 1970s, of paranormal and miraculous abilities connected to *qigong* beginning with the well-publicized feat of a young boy said to be able to read with his ear.²⁶ Lines were drawn between those who wanted to use scientific claims to legitimize paranormal skills and those who wanted to use scientific claims to debunk superstition, while both sides wanted to use science to investigate and legitimize the Chinese theory of *qi*. 'Science' now sat on both sides of the divide: orthodoxy and heterodoxy, science and superstition. Which category a group fell into as a *qigong* teaching meant the difference between registration and legitimacy or elimination. Important in this regard was the amount of support your group had from those in high places and the accompanying official sponsorship, one reason the Falun Gong and other *qigong* groups cultivated friendships, clientele and members from within the CCP.

The *qigong* boom in China was massive. It began in the late 1970s and by 1986 there were over 2,000 *qigong* organizations. To regulate these groups, the government established the Chinese Qigong Scientific Research Organization. The year 1986 was a pivotal year because it saw the emergence of a new type of *qigong* master and *qigong* movement. Up until the mid-1980s *qigong* was taught by 'orthodox *Qigong* masters, generally of a fairly conservative tendency'.²⁷ In 1986 a new kind of teacher emerged

who offered not only good health but fast results, and their movements could number thousands. The most famous of these new *qigong* masters was Yan Xin who, at the height of his teachings was referred to as 'the spiritual hope for the Chinese masses who feel they have lost their way'. His meetings drew up to as many as 30,000 at a time.²⁸ *Qigong* had moved beyond the role of health-care and now encompassed a mixture of benefits: it offered a form of spiritual practice, a form of moral guidance, a form of social organization which sometimes included civic-type activities,²⁹ and it offered a sense of goodness and pride to people living in a time of great insecurity and change. Some have suggested it even acted as a nationalistic counterweight to anger at the Japanese and the West:

The shame our nation has experienced over the last hundred years, and in particular the sense of helpless humiliation in the last ten years when we opened ourselves to the West, has suddenly disappeared. In its place is the glory of a great and splendid China! 'Chinese *gongfu* is truly something special!'³⁰

The *qigong* movement and its many masters offered instant help, certainty, goodness, power and greatness. As long as they were registered and remained a *qigong* group that did not present contradictions to the tenants of the CCP, the government stood aside. It was always willing, however, to step in if it seemed necessary.³¹ With the development of these new large, charismatic *qigong* movements however, came the specter of the sectarian threat as they began to offer more than health benefits and to adopt the 'offending features' of previous sectarian groups.

Language

To think that my person would mingle with this vulgar, stinking flesh, with these slaves, dogs, and goblins and act the part of one of these evil rebels. These villainous imposters of today spout heresies and destroy the orthodox writings.

The above quote is by Kou Qianzhi, a fifth-century Chinese aristocrat who had the Daoist title of Celestial Master.³² He had been 'visited twice by the god Laozi' and had the power to 'exercise control over the religious affairs of the dynasty'. Here he is complaining about all those 'frauds' who claim to be Li Hong (the messianic name of Laozi) as he tries to clean up the Daoist practices at the popular level. This intense language of labeling the 'other' seems to accompany the paradigm of ruling power versus sectarian 'other' and is being used in the current conflict by both sides. As Kluver describes it, in China '[o]nce conflict has emerged into the open, the

language used to describe one's rivals becomes almost violent, in ways that make the Western partisanship seem almost collegial'.

The Chinese government has used the word 'cult' to label the Falun Gong along these same lines as a label to brand, to degrade, to define and to marginalize. While the Chinese term *xie jiao* (deviant teachings) has been utilized for over a millennium as part of the ruling power-sectarian paradigm, its current translation into the word 'cult' may reflect the government's adaptation of modern Western discourse. The irony is that the Chinese government may have chosen the Western discourse as a means of gaining sympathy and understanding from the West, whereas it appears to have achieved the opposite effect and annoyed and prejudiced the West's willingness to listen.

The use of intense derogatory language to berate and degrade the 'other' reached a modern height in China during the Cultural Revolution. To be 'labeled' was dangerous and frightening, and terms such as 'ox-monsters', 'snake-demons', 'evil spirits' and 'monstrous freaks' were used. The cruder the language used, 'the more one was perceived as being one with the workers, peasants, and soldiers'.³³ Li Hongzhi, a young man during the Cultural Revolution, did not escape the influence of this use of language. Li used the rhetoric of possession to describe and warn off his practitioners from other spiritual or *qigong* masters: 'The human society is very terrible. Most of the so-called masters of great reputation in India are possessed with boas. The *Qigong* masters in China are mostly possessed with foxes, or yellow weasels, and some with snakes'.³⁴

When Li was confronted by a challenger to his role as master within the Falun Gong movement his response was not too different from that of Kou Qianzhi in the fifth century. Li warned that 'a vile person in Hong Kong who lost her senses has severely interfered with Dafa by saying absurd things due to demonic interference from her own mind... nobody should pay attention to what the saboteur in Hong Kong has instigated or give her an audience... At present, those irrational scum are already under the manipulation of secret agents'.³⁵

Another aspect of the use of this language is what Barend ter Haar refers to as the 'demonological paradigm'.³⁶ He suggests that the idea of exorcising demons, which comes from the 'traditional religious culture in China as a whole', is an integral part of Chinese culture that allows violence to be legitimized. It is operating on a mostly unconscious level to set up the 'other' against which one can legitimate violence, and is playing a similar role in China as racism plays in the West.³⁷ While the demonization of the 'other' is often found in violent conflict, ter Haar suggests that this cultural element of literal demon exorcism forms an underlying justification for use of violence in China.

This demonizing dynamic is mutually employed. It could be argued that the entire campaign by the Chinese government has been a means of demonizing the FLG movement in order to justify any measures taken against it. On the other hand, Li Hongzhi has also used this paradigm, dehumanizing and demonizing Falun Gong's enemies.³⁸ In Li's 'Suffocate the Evil' posted to the FLG website 22 October 2000, Li comments on a re-education camp where '[m]ost of the disciplinary guards there are reincarnated minor ghosts from hell'. And in his 'Beyond the Limits of Forbearance' statement posted 2 January 2001, Li states that 'the present performance of the evil shows that they are utterly inhuman and completely without righteous thoughts'.³⁹ The Chinese government calls the FLG an evil cult and Li Hongzhi an evil man and speaks of protecting China from chaos, while Li Hongzhi calls for the elimination of evil from the universe and speaks of protecting the cosmos from chaos.

Self-Definition and Beyond

To a large extent, this conflict has become a war of words; a 'propaganda war' as some journalists call it. The prize of this war of words is the claim to truth, the ability to have one version of reality accepted over another.⁴⁰ The ramifications include not only the right of Falun Gong practitioners in China to practice and to have the ban lifted, but also issues of international relations, arms sales, trade, economics, cold wars and hot wars. In this process, each side presented their version of reality as a simple, powerful story to legitimate their actions and reach their goals.

Each side has had to define itself, as well as their opponent. The Chinese government has put most of its energy into defining its adversary the FLG movement, although as of Spring 2001 it began some efforts at self-definition to counter-act the Falun Gong's message. The government's attempts at defining its opponent have been played out mainly within China, with some success, particularly due to the intensified campaign following the self-immolations in Tiananmen Square in January 2001.⁴¹ During the first year after the ban, the FLG spent most of its energy defining itself, mainly as a means of counter-acting the government's accusations that it was a cult, although as of September 2000 the FLG began to put more effort into defining its opponent, the Chinese government, with a specific focus on Jiang Zemin, the president of China. The Falun Gong's attempts at defining itself and its opponent have been played out mainly in the West.

Chinese Government – Self-Definition and Beyond

The Chinese government states that it wants to protect its people and protect its country's stability by banning a group it believes is harmful to its own

followers and a threat to social stability. It believes the group is led by a charismatic leader who 'hood-winked' millions of Chinese into following him and is now using them for his own political ends. It believes the Falun Gong has joined anti-China forces in the West to bring down the Chinese Communist Party. Having banned the group, it claims it is now resisting anti-China forces that want to destabilize its society, and helping to re-educate Falun Gong followers back into normal lives. This is the public self-definition presented by the Chinese government.

Yet it is also the story of a nation in the midst of major economic and social changes whose governing ideology is progressively seen as irrelevant and whose one-party rulership increasingly feels the pressures of change and the weakening of its ideology. After officially banning the FLG on 22 July 1999, a number of official statements issued within the Communist Party and mentioned in the press described the threat as being ideological. In a circular from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China it stated that 'Li Hongzhi preaches idealism and theism and denies all scientific truth and thus is absolutely contradictory to the fundamental theories and principles of Marxism'. Several days later, the *People's Daily* said: 'If Li Hongzhi's heretical theories spread, the Party's foundation will be shaken, and the great cause will be undermined'. And on 29 July 1999 an article in the *China Daily* bluntly stated that: 'It is a political struggle in the ideological sphere about winning over the broad masses of the people'.⁴²

Since the self-immolations in Tiananmen Square in January 2001, the government has increasingly expressed its opposition to the group using the anti-cult theme, but initially, this expression of ideological threat was substantial. The final straw in the government's decision to ban the group may have been the number of CCP members who followed FLG, possibly as many as 400,000.⁴³ The threat, as seen by the government, was that Li's 'theology' was the exact opposite of the Communist Party ideology and therefore had the potential not only to undermine it, but to replace it. The leaders and people of China had already lived through the Cultural Revolution and the 'personality cult' of Mao. They had seen what faith in an unquestioned leader could do and had experienced the trauma of a people giving themselves over to the power drive of a charismatic leader. Seen in tandem with the cultural paradigm, it seemed possible that someone who offered protection, enlightenment and supernatural powers through the unquestioning acceptance of his teachings and leadership, might fill the void of the current transitional period with yet another personality cult.

The Chinese government's response in July 1999 was, therefore, the obvious one for it to take. However, this time the ruler-sectarian paradigm met the twenty-first century and the global community. What is new is that the group in question moved its center to another country, opened an

internet website which provided instant communication back into China and around the world and adopted a Western stance on human rights to combat the suppression and to help formulate its identity.

Whereas the Chinese government sees its response as legitimate and necessary, others see it as draconian and containing infringements of international legal and human rights norms. Given that the Chinese government's ban on the FLG is arguably legal under Chinese law,⁴⁴ the manner in which the ban has been implemented raises questions of legality. Because of the government's methods, the group's struggle has brought renewed attention to China's system of detention and re-education labor camps and intensified questions about police abuse and fairness of trials.

The FLG have made repeated claims of torture in custody, stating that as of May 2001 over two hundred practitioners have died either during or soon after detention. The government denies the allegations, stating that those who have died in custody died of natural causes, complications from hunger strikes, refusal of medical treatment or suicide. A 2001 Amnesty International report states that: 'Torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners is widespread and systematic in China' and that this is especially true during 'high-profile political campaigns'. Regarding the FLG accusations against the government it states that: 'By mid January 2001, at least 120 Falun Gong practitioners...were reported to have died since the beginning of the crackdown.... All had died in official custody, or shortly after release, in circumstances that remain unclear and most following reports of torture and ill-treatment'. It acknowledges that 'Amnesty International is not able independently to verify these reports of torture resulting in death', however it goes on to say that the 'blanket denial of official wrongdoing will not be convincing'.⁴⁵

In regards to this issue, a recent report published by a department within the Communist Party's Central Committee gives a surprisingly frank description of the present social unrest in China and its potential for increase,⁴⁶ as well as a suggested list of countermeasures. What was not mentioned on the list, and should be added, is vigilance on the part of the government to prevent incidences of abuse or torture of detainees as they move within China's legal system, and prevention of government policy being used implicitly or explicitly by local officials as excuses for mistreatment of those detained.

Falun Gong – Self-Definition and Beyond

The FLG defines itself as a movement whose teachings promote good health and moral living. The teachings are found in the books and FLG website statements of its teacher and founder, Li Hongzhi. It is a non-

political, non-violent movement that is fighting for its right to practice FLG within China and to have the ban lifted. Because of the ban, the movement's struggle has been identified with the issue of human rights in China: the right to freedom of belief, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and, more specifically, freedom of religion. The FLG story is one of a group of people suffering as it tenaciously fights for its rights. It is the story of a pacifistic movement fighting a despotic regime. This is the public self-definition presented by the FLG.

Yet this story is also the story of FLG practitioners trying to reach Consummation, of defending the *Fa* and eliminating all evil from the universe. To date, there has been very little discussion or analysis of Li's teachings and I will do so in the next section.

The Evolution of FLG Teachings Since the Ban

Communication and Information. After the ban was placed on the FLG in July 1999, Li Hongzhi went into seclusion for nine months, when he neither appeared in public, gave interviews, nor spoke to his followers. In May 2000 he broke his silence and made a statement on the FLG website Minghui (also known as Clearwisdom), a website which became the official website of FLG and an important tool in the struggle.⁴⁷ On the one hand, Li teaches his followers that they must read only his books regarding their inner life, that is, religion, spirituality, *qigong*, cultivation, and so on. And on the other hand, in terms of what is happening in the outer world, they are told to get their information only from the FLG website. The site was sanctioned by Li as his means of communicating with his followers, and it was designated as the only source of information that the practitioners could trust or believe. Everything placed on the website is pre-approved. Because of this, the website has come to play an important role in communicating 'correct understanding' as well as providing additional teaching literature in the form of articles written by FLG members.

When a news article is posted to the website it is edited to exclude opinions contrary to the FLG view, statements by or reference to the Chinese government's position and any use of the word 'cult' or 'sect'. Followers are thereby limited in their information to a single source with a constantly reinforced viewpoint. Practitioners are warned not to read the 'bad things' that the 'evil people' say about the FLG (therefore they are edited out of anything placed on the FLG website), and they are not supposed to repeat anything they hear from other sources, for to do so would only strengthen the evil.⁴⁸ This limited information and strong dualistic thinking may make it difficult for practitioners to either accept that others may not agree with them, or to give validity to the alternative view of others.

The FLG management has expressed a similar tendency towards information in dealing with the Western press. In an April 2001 posting, a practitioner described a FLG press conference where the Western press was allowed in but the Chinese press forbidden. He described this act as suffocating the evil and helping to create 'some positive media'. He then goes on: 'We missed a chance to change the hearts of the Western media with our compassion. We could have told them that China's media would interfere with them getting their questions answered, and the vicious fabrication and slander would continue contaminating people's minds. Then they would not only agree, but they would be thankful. When we can answer their questions we are also saving them and all those who read their articles'.⁴⁹

In a FLG press release titled: "Show Tours' Planned to use Media for Spreading Beijing Propaganda' FLG management asks the Western press not to participate in upcoming tours of detention centers or interviews with reformed FLG practitioners that the government plans to offer. From the FLG perspective, the FLG must protect the media from reporting the words of the evil opponent so that people may 'regard the *Fa* correctly' and it may be truly known and accepted by all, thereby saving their souls.⁵⁰

The Message. Using the Minghui website as means of communication, Li began to regularly post messages to the site starting from May 2000. While representatives from the FLG office in New York spoke to the press and public in terms of human rights, Li spoke to his practitioners, not in terms of human rights, but in terms of eliminating all evil from the universe and reaching Consummation. Li's teachings prior to the ban focused on how an individual practitioner could 'study and obtain the *Fa*' (called 'cultivation') and ultimately reach Consummation, but his teachings after May 2000 focused on taking an activist stance towards events in China. The task of practitioners became to 'clarify the truth' and 'spread the truth' about FLG to counteract the government's claims.

Then, in September 2000, messages began appearing on the FLG website specifically criticizing the president of China, Jiang Zemin, and spoke of the necessity for FLG practitioners to 'step forward' to 'validate the *Fa*'. This activist 'stepping forward' for practitioners in China can include: going to Tiananmen Square to protest and being detained, going on a hunger-strike once in detention, passing out flyers to the public (usually into mailboxes since this is done surreptitiously at night), and printing and distributing FLG website articles and Li's teachings (obtained either by skirting the internet restrictions in China or via email from practitioners outside China),⁵¹ contacting Western reporters, reporting information on abuses, detentions, etc., as well as sending testimonials to the New York FLG office.

In 'Serious Teachings', posted 26 September 2000, Li tells those who have not 'stepped forward' that they 'must break-away from humanness' and join those 'who have been persecuted in the tribulations'.⁵² Those 'afraid to step forward to validate the Fa' are being controlled by demons and have 'forever lost their chance' to reach Consummation. Li makes it clear that the persecution continues and intensifies only because FLG practitioners have not let go of all their attachments and been able to step forward. Those followers who step forward and are beaten or die, those who sacrifice everything, are gods. Those who renounce FLG while in re-education camps and become 'reformed' are said by Li to be 'fiends' and 'malignant tumors'.⁵³ This contrasting of those willing to 'step forward' and sacrifice everything to those who do not, is a continuing theme after September 2000. 'Stepping forward' becomes a proof of faith, a test to prove your moral worthiness,⁵⁴ it is the only way they can save themselves and help the Teacher in this cosmic undertaking.

The possible effects of this was reported on by Ian Johnson: 'But dozens of interviews with Falungong members in recent months reveal another, more subtle source of pressure: the demands of their beloved founder, Mr. Li['s]... [r]ecent writings, ...have also stressed unwavering activism and opposition to the state. While few complain, they say they can meet Mr. Li's requirements only by sacrificing everything, in a desperate – and probably hopeless – bid to force the government to lift its ban. In a series of essays over the past few months, Mr. Li has asked of his disciples almost impossible feats of loyalty and shown little sympathy for those who buckle, in one case denouncing them as "depraved"'.⁵⁵

Practitioners cannot reach Consummation (and hence ascend to their own Falun paradise) until what Li calls the 'Fa-rectification' ends. In August 2001 Li states that 'disciples must not depart until the Fa-rectification is over'. He also states that '[t]he very final stage of Fa-rectification is taking place'.⁵⁶ The Fa-rectification is the process they are all currently involved in (also referred to as a time of 'tests' and 'tribulations'), during which all evil will be eliminated from the universe and the Fa will receive its rightful place as the universal truth.

During the Fa-rectification the tasks of practitioners have again increased. They must 'clarify the truth' (about Falun Gong), validate the Fa (let people know it is good), save sentient beings (convert others), eliminate evil (elaboration on this follows), and increase their personal cultivation level which is based on the level of suffering they endure and the amount of 'stepping forward' to defend the Fa they are able to do. This not only encourages practitioners to maintain a pro-active stance to hasten the moment, but may also create a frustrating situation for them, since it

is implied that as long as the persecution continues, they will not be able to reach their final goal.⁵⁷

Possibly in order to respond to this sense of frustration and failure, a number of new elements have developed in the FLG belief system. In mid-April 2001, after the United Nations Committee on Human Rights declined to accept the US proposal to inquire into China's human rights record, there appeared a series of testimonials on the FLG website where practitioners talked about taking the fight into 'other dimensions'. Shifting the battle to other dimensions may be one way for Li and practitioners to claim victories through supernatural powers in other dimensions when things do not go well on the worldly plane.⁵⁸ This may also help solve the problem for Li of his claimed powers being perceived as failing, or of his control over events and his 'pre-arrangements' being called into question. Another recent development is the addition of 'Retribution of Evil' stories where 'evil is met with evil'. The FLG website has a 'Retribution' section with up-to-date examples describing how those hostile to the Falun Gong (or their family members) have suffered or died from disease, accidents, poisonings, explosions, etc., thereby illustrating the efficacy of the Fa in distributing retribution.⁵⁹

Potential Justification for Violence

At the end of the Fa-rectification is the apocalyptic moment when practitioners will reach Consummation and depart to their Dafa paradise and others will receive punishment and death.⁶⁰ In early December 2000, Li posted a message to the FLG website: 'When this test concludes, all bad people will be destroyed by gods. Those Dafa disciples who are able to come through the test will leave through Consummation. Those people who'll be left behind will have to eradicate sins by paying, with horrible suffering'. Several weeks later, Li posted another message: 'Let me tell you, when this Fa-rectification matter is over, human kind will enter the next stage, and those people and beings who have in their minds "the Dafa of the cosmos isn't good" will be the first eliminated'. And in March 2001 he stated that: 'if people's minds contain thoughts that resist Dafa, once this evil drama is over a large-scale elimination of human kind will commence'.⁶¹

As groups feel an increased frustration of their ultimate goal and an increased persecution, their apocalyptic ideas may increase and the battle between good and evil intensify. This appears to have happened for the FLG. Whether or not this leads a group to violent behavior is a major question whose answer is impossible to predict. It should be noted that most millennial groups never instigate violence. However, some groups who believed in other dimensions, supernatural powers and great cosmic battles did resort to violence, such as the Aum Shinrikyo.⁶² This does not, however,

mean that the FLG will leave or alter their message of non-violence in order to fight their battle.

There is however, a trend in Li's recent teachings that could become a justification for the use of violence. Li's message has increasingly intensified the need to 'eliminate the evil' and recent postings have stated that it is now possible for practitioners to 'use different abilities of different levels to eliminate it'. This was first mentioned in his 2 January 2001 message 'Beyond the Limits of Forbearance' and was again stated in his 19 May 2001 message given at a Falun Dafa conference in Canada.⁶³ Regarding eliminating evil Li said: 'So in the process of eliminating it don't be lenient at all, just eliminate it!' He then added: 'Here I am not referring to humans, but to those evil beings that manipulate humans'.

The problem is that the distinction between the evil beings in 'other dimensions' and the evil beings on earth is a fine line and crossing that line could be justified by Li's teachings, should he decide to make that shift. Li has already established that people in China who take part in the government ban are 'demons' and 'utterly inhuman' so they do not have to be seen as humans. As David C. Rapoport points out, when '[t]he enemy is wholly evil ...something other than human ...[a]gainst such an antagonist the temptation becomes over-whelming to argue that everything is permissible, that he must be mercilessly destroyed'.⁶⁴

For now, the practitioners are encouraged to fight and destroy the evil in the 'other dimensions' using supernormal powers and righteous thoughts, but it is a fine line between the evil 'it' in the other dimensions and the people in the here-and-now who are no longer considered human or are seen as housing the evil. This was true for the nineteenth-century Taiping revolution leader. He battled demons in various levels of heaven and hell and then was directed by the 'Heavenly Father' to 'wait until they had gone down to the level of heaven which is the world, and then to decapitate them'.⁶⁵

On 29 May 2001, there was a testimonial by a nine-year-old practitioner posted to the Falun Gong website titled 'What Pengpeng Saw in Other Dimensions on the Morning of May 27, Beijing Time'. The date and time are important because that is when FLG practitioners first observed their new 'eliminate evil' practice that Li gave them in which all practitioners world-wide 'send forth' their 'righteous thoughts' at a certain time to 'eliminate evil'. The sending forth of righteous thoughts to eliminate evil has since become a major part of the practitioners practice in this 'time of Fa-rectification'.

The 29 May 2001 testimonial is important because it has some new features: it describes the battle in the 'other dimensions' but now there are names of actual persons given to the demon images in the battle, one of them

being Jiang Zemin.⁶⁶ It is only the Teacher who can identify and name who each demon is in the ordinary world. It also speaks of using bombs to kill these demons. On 30 May 2001, another testimonial by a child was posted in which warehouses and 'bases for making tanks' were blown up in the 'other dimensions', and military computer systems had their data deleted and replaced with a CD of information from the Falun Gong website.⁶⁷

Nearly a year later, FLG practitioners cut into the cables of a television station in China and replaced the station programming with a FLG video.⁶⁸ The similarity to the actions witnessed by Pengpeng in the 'other dimensions' may be coincidental. However, if actions in the 'other dimensions' are seen as approved forms of protest, it would indicate a crossing of the line from 'other dimensions' to reality.

Not only is the 'other' being demonized in the Falun Gong teachings, but Falun Gong practitioners are increasingly told they are now elevated to a status higher than human. In a Falun Gong website posting 3 June 2001, practitioners make the following comments: 'When we still consider ourselves as human beings, we will really be restrained by the principles of human beings'. Another practitioner states: 'I realize that, at present, the human notions are the biggest factors that hold us back. Those human notions are different from thought karma. They could be conceptions or conventional thoughts on integrity and righteousness formed in our long period of human life'.⁶⁹

Demonizing the 'other', believing that one is more than human and no longer bound by the 'conventional thoughts on integrity and righteousness' of the ordinary human, accepting violent behavior in 'other dimensions', and believing that one's task is to 'eliminate evil', has the potential to justify violent behavior. However, other factors present decrease the likelihood these influences would justify violence. They are:

Public image: The FLG movement has developed a publicly acceptable role in the West as a human rights movement and thereby possesses a positive public self-image. This is in contrast to the Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, which was heavily ridiculed publicly after its failed attempt at forming a political party and having members, including its leader, run for public office.⁷⁰

Retribution: Retribution stories prove to practitioners that divine justice is being meted out by the Fa to those who deserve it, thereby relieving individual practitioners of the responsibility to bring about retribution. A 12 November 2001 posting titled 'Ignoring the Vicious Persecution of Falun Gong Practitioners Is a Crime' states that 'Some people believe that 'evil will be met with evil' is just a curse or a threat, but it is not...' Immediate retribution in this lifetime' is a warning that comes from caring and

compassion. If people still do not awaken, more severe consequences will follow. When people go past the point of redemption, further advice or warnings will be useless'.⁷¹ As long as this retribution remains the task of the Fa and not individual practitioners, it will not be used to justify acts of violence.

Protest movement options: The group continues to develop its identity and its means as a protest movement giving them a sense of efficacy and empowerment. Development along these lines include law suits brought against Chinese officials and law suits in the West brought against those seen as slandering or inciting others towards hatred of them. Their cause has also received attention from politicians in the House of Representatives and in the Senate.⁷²

Instructions: Continued instructions from Li and the Minghui site editors, as well as in articles by practitioners, remind practitioners to avoid using violence or doing or saying anything that might 'injure the Fa', that is, bring the group bad publicity.

Concluding Comments

The Falun Gong

The FLG has three goals: its goal as a protest movement is to have the ban lifted in China, the goal of its teachings is the Fa-rectification of the world and universe, and the goal of the individual practitioner is to reach Consummation and ascend to Falun Dafa paradise.

The FLG's identity, both public and private, is strongly linked with the issue of human rights. American acceptance and support is based on its recognition as a human rights movement rather than on Li's teachings as a spiritual or cultivation system, and therefore the persecution of the FLG in China plays a major role in the group's identity.

As the ban continues, the FLG will continue to function as a social protest movement with a focus on the human rights issue. It is likely the group will continue to protest within China and without, while also trying to maintain, if not increase, its membership. There is a possibility the group could reach a period of internal crisis if the situation in China does not improve, if the practice of practitioners 'sending forth righteous thoughts' to 'eliminate evil' is seen as ineffective, and if the Fa's acts of retribution are seen as insufficient. The question of when the final moment of Fa-rectification will arrive may cause anxiety within the group and require further developments in Li's teachings.

For now, the crisis in China and the group's involvement as a social protest movement, along with the great cosmic battle between good and evil and the longing of practitioners to reach Consummation, are the group's driving force.⁷³ On the one hand, the group struggles in the political sphere for its right to practice freely in China and on the other hand, the group struggles to eliminate evil from the universe and reach Consummation. How these goals will interact and affect one another is worth continued observation and study.

The Chinese Government

The questions raised for the Chinese government are many and pressing. The primary question is; is the ruler-sectarian paradigm still valid in the twenty-first century? Do 'heterodox' sectarian and religious groups with certain characteristics actually pose a threat and if so, what is the best way to occlude that threat? This over-riding question includes other questions: Is the use of intense national campaigns productive or counter-productive? Is the goal of 'keeping stability' legitimately achieved through intense campaigns if they cost the credibility and trust of the Chinese people? Are these campaigns believable anymore to the Chinese people? Is the crisis-management style of legitimating 'ruthless and radical' actions against perceived 'contradictions between the people and their enemies' still valid in the post-Mao era?

Then there are the issues of violence in the culture starting with the demonization paradigm and extending into the legal structure of detention without trial and re-education camps, as well as the issues of police abuse and use of torture outside the established official legal norms. Although the press in China is incrementally gaining openness and the ability to report more freely, it may ultimately be a question of how much trust can be put into the Chinese people to receive freely gathered news. It may also be a question of how much trust can be put into the Chinese people to express views and openly discuss and debate issues, even ones which differ from the Communist Party line.

The Chinese government may truly believe that the teachings of the FLG have been harmful to those who practice it, that the FLG organization is a destabilizing influence, and that Li Hongzhi is a potential charismatic leader with political intent, yet, the question remains; is the old paradigm still the solution? The government needs to ask: what is our society lacking that could cause a group like this to be such a threat, and what is our society lacking that we must resort to burning books and banning beliefs? The early answer given to the first question has been 'science'; the people need to be educated so that 'science' will win out over 'superstition'. The early answer has been development of a 'social safety net' to decrease the anxiety level

so that people do not turn to such 'irrational' beliefs. However, education and social safety-nets will not prevent 'irrational' ideas from being promulgated, they will not prevent people from being attracted to them, nor will they prevent ideas unpleasant to the CCP from being offered and considered in the future. The question for the Chinese government is; how much longer can the old paradigm be used?

NOTES

1. James Tong, 'Behind the Falungong Façade: Organizational Structure and Finance', unpublished article (Sept. 2000). The FLG tried to re-register with: the National Minority Affairs Commission as a nonreligious, academic organization; the China Buddhist Federation as a nonreligious, cultural organization for the study of Buddhism; and the United Front Department as a nonreligious, academic organization. p.4. I want to thank David Rapoport for requesting that I write this second paper on the issue, and for his continued encouragement, patience and support. I also thank Catherine Wessinger for over a year of email discussions on new religious movements and the FLG. Any errors or inadequacies in this article are solely my responsibility.
2. Randy Kluver, 'Political Culture and Political Conflict in China', in G.M. Chen and R. Ma (eds.), *Chinese Conflict Management and Resolution* (Westport: Greenwood 2001), received via attachment Feb. 2001.
3. *Ibid.* pp.25–6.
4. Robin Munro, 'Syncretic Sects and Secret Societies: Revival in the 1980s', *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 21/4 (Summer 1989) pp.10–11. Munro credits Harrell and Perry for describing Chinese 'secret societies' as 'syncretic religious sects'.
5. To address objections to the use of the word 'sect' I use the word 'sectarian' in the hope that it will not be taken as a derogatory term but as descriptive and historical. I use the word to refer to groups considered unorthodox or heterodox by the ruling power in China.
6. Daniel L. Overmyer, *Religions of China: The World as a Living System* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1986) p.37.
7. David Ownby, 'Chinese Millenarian Traditions: The Formative Age', *The American Historical Review* 104/5 (Dec. 1999) pp.1–21, www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr.
8. Celestial Masters Daoism. Note: Daoism can also be spelled Taoism. I use Daoism except when quoting.
9. Frederick Wakeman, 'Rebellion and Revolution: The Study of Popular Movements in Chinese History', *Journal of Asian Studies* 36/2 (Feb. 1977) pp.201–36.
10. *Ibid.* pp.205–6.
11. Li Hongzhi, *Zhuan Falun II*, <http://www.falundafa.org/book/eng/2f12.html>, accessed 31 Aug. 1999, chapter entitled 'Mankind in the Ending Period of Catastrophe' pp.3/4, 4/4. 'The human morality is slipping down rapidly and mankind are facing an impending danger ... Each time the catastrophe comes to the world, mankind have lost their morality. This is the manifestation of the Ending Period of Catastrophe'. Note: This book is not numbered sequentially, rather, each chapter begins with number 1. I therefore give the chapter title and the page number within the chapter. Also, this book used to be available for downloading in English from the Minghui website, which is how I obtained my copy in 1999. As of December 1999 it was removed from the list of English available books. It remains available in Chinese. This is one example of how some FLG material is available to Chinese readers but not to English readers.
12. Judith A. Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia 1980) p.48.
13. *Ibid.* p.24.
14. David Ownby, Transnational China Project Commentary, 'Falungong as a Cultural Revitalization Movement: An Historian Looks at Contemporary China', talk given at Rice

- University 20 Oct. 2000. Text based on audio transcript. <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~tchina/commentary/ownby1000.html>.
15. Ownby (note 7) p.12.
 16. James W. Tong, *Disorder Under Heaven: Collective Violence in the Ming Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991) p.59.
 17. Thomas DuBois, *The Sacred World of Cang County: Religious Belief, Organization, and Practice in Rural North China During the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, PhD dissertation 2001, University of California Los Angeles. See ch.7, 'Yiguandao: Sectarian Recruitment, Wartime Collaboration, and Showdown with the Communist Government, 1930–1960'.
 18. Munro (note 4) pp.102–3. In this 1985 Appendix titled 'Sects and Societies Recently or Currently Active in the PRC', 57 groups are listed including the Yi Guan Dao (Way of Unity).
 19. DuBois (note 17).
 20. Li (note 11), chapter entitled 'All Ways Lead to the Origin', p.1/2.
 21. Munro (note 4) ch.15, pp.49–84.
 22. Kluver (note 2) p.25.
 23. Munro (note 4) p.84.
 24. Zhu Xiaoyang and Benjamin Penny (eds.), *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology: The Qigong Boom 27/1* (Fall 1995) p.35.
 25. Ibid. p.5.
 26. Ibid. p.35. The phrase 'Reading with the Ear' came to be synonymous with paranormal abilities.
 27. Ibid. pp.37–8.
 28. Ibid. p.42.
 29. Benoit Vermandeer, 'The Law and the Wheel: The Sudden Emergence of the Falungong: Prophets of Spiritual Civilization', *China Perspectives* 24 (1999) p.19. 'A petition calling for better environmental protection, launched jointly by some Qigong groups from Sichuan and Heilongjian managed to gather several hundred thousand signatures'.
 30. Zhu (note 24) p.46.
 31. Elizabeth Perry mentions that, 'At the time of the 1989 demonstrations, the government set up hotlines in the major cities to encourage citizens to report any suspicious behavior by qigong masters'. From idem, 'Reinventing the Wheel? The Campaign against Falungong', *Harvard China Review* (Spring/Summer 2000) p.68.
 32. Ownby (note 7) p.8.
 33. Kluver (note 2) p.21.
 34. Li (note 11), chapter entitled 'All the Ways Lead to the Origin', p.2/2.
 35. Li Hongzhi, 'Deter Interference', 5 July 2000, http://www.falundafa.org/book/eng/jw_16.htm. Note: Many of Li's articles are only available via the Falun Gong website Minghui (Clearwisdom). Because the website addresses for these articles change over time, if you cannot locate the article at the webpage cited, go to the Falun Gong homepage, <http://www.clearwisdom.net>, where Li's articles can be accessed by title and date.
 36. Barend ter Haar, 'China's Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm', *China Information* XI 2/3 (Autumn/Winter 1996–97) pp.54–88. Also see ter Haar's website on the Falun Gong, <http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/bth/falun.htm>.
 37. Ibid. p.85. It does not, according to ter Haar, 'directly cause violent incidents, but functions in the setting of human targets, establishing a sense of legitimacy for actual violence and defining the general parameters for actual violence'.
 38. Li's teachings have always expressed a strong dualism. See Patsy Rahn, 'The Falun Gong: Beyond the Headlines', *Cultic Studies Journal* 17 (2000) pp.168–86. Since the ban, the dualism has increasingly been expressed via the demonological paradigm.
 39. Li Hongzhi, 'Suffocate the Evil', 22 Oct. 2000, http://falun-ny.net/cgi-falun-ny/index.pl?lan+english&id=outer_url&outer_url=http://www.falundafa.../jw20.ht; idem, 'Beyond the Limits of Forbearance', 1 Jan. 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Jan/02/JingWen10201.html>.
 40. 'Asiaweek names Falun Gong founder most powerful communicator', *Kyoto News Service*

- 24 May 2001. 'The magazine said it redefined power this year as "those who can communicate – or control the message" because they are the ones who "wield the greatest influence" in today's information age'.
41. The government's campaign against the group intensified following the 23 Jan. 2001 self-immolations in Tiananmen Square of four adults and one 12-year-old girl who were reported to be Falun Gong practitioners. The FLG deny that they were FLG practitioners and suggest that the event was staged by the government. However, the Hong Kong-based Information Center on Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China reports that '[a]ll but the 12-year-old Liu Siying had protested Beijing's actions against Falun Gong in Tiananmen Square previously', in Philip P.Pan, 'Human Fire Ignites Chinese Mystery', *The Washington Post*, 4 Feb. 2001.
 42. 'CPC Central Committee Forbids Party Members to Practice Falun Gong', *China Daily*, 22 July 1999; 'People's Daily Article Calls for Strengthening Party Discipline', *China Daily*, 25 July 1999; 'Chinese Urged to Understand Nature of Struggle Against Falun Gong', *China Daily*, 29 July 1999.
 43. Randy Peerenboom, *China's Long March Toward Rule of Law*, unpublished manuscript (2001), see chapter entitled 'Post-Mao Reforms: Competing Conceptions of Rule of Law'. Peerenboom cites Chu (1999) for the 400,000 figure, 'One report claimed that the Party itself estimated the number of party members who believed in Falungong to be 400,000. "Three-Pronged purge" of Falungong Cited (1999)'.
 44. Ibid. Peerenboom includes a discussion on legal issues regarding the ban.
 45. 'People's Republic of China: Torture – A Growing Scourge in China', Amnesty International Online, ai-index ASA 17/004/2001 12/02/2001.
 46. 'China Investigation Report 2000–2001: Studies of Contradictions Among The People Under New Conditions', in Erik Eckholm, 'China's Inner Circle Reveals Big Unrest', *The New York Times*, 3 June 2001.
 47. See Mark R. Bell and Taylor C. Boas, 'Falun Gong and the Internet: Evangelism, Community, and Struggle for Survival', *Nova Religio* 5/2 (April 2002), copy received from Mark Bell in April 2001.
 48. 'Resisting All Evil Forces in the Human World', 27 April 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2201/4/27/9090.html>. 'The words from the corrupt people are full of evil. We should resist them and should not repeat them in order to diminish their evil power. In addition we are practitioners and will be enlightened beings in the future. How can we say dirty words?'
 49. 'Looking Within Myself During the Fa Rectification', 20 April 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/4/20/6831.html>.
 50. 'Media Advisory – for Immediate Release', 26 April 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/4/27/9091.html>. See also Li Hongzhi, 'Eliminate Evil', 2 Dec. 2000, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Dec/02/Editorials120200.html>.
 51. Bell and Boas (note 47).
 52. In 'Master Li Hongzhi's Lecture at the Great Lakes Conference in North America', 23 Dec. 2000, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Dec/23/JingWen122300.html>, Li states: 'Some of our students outside of China wonder: "Being overseas, we don't suffer as much the students in China do. Does this mean that we won't be as good as the students in China when we reach Consummation?"' The answer Li gives is that they are all equal as particles of Dafa as long as they do what they can to step forward and defend the Fa.
 53. This changed in Li's message 'Coercion Cannot Change People's Hearts', 6 March 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Mar/06/JingWen030601.html>, where he indicated that reformed practitioners could come back into the fold if they renounced their renunciation. However, they will need to 'make up for the losses they have caused Dafa because of their own misconduct' by 'doubling your efforts to make amends ...', 'Double Your Efforts to Make Amends, Catch up With the Fa-Rectification Process', 2 Jan. 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Jan/02/VSF0102012.html>.
 54. See David C. Rapoport, 'Messianic Sanctions For Terror', *Comparative Politics* (Jan. 1988) p.205.
 55. Ian Johnson, 'The Burden of Belief', *The Wall Street Journal*, 27 March 2000.

56. Li Hongzhi, 'Fa-Rectification Period Dafa Disciples', 15 August 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/8/16/12965.html>; 'Lecture on the Fa at the Washington D.C. International Conference', <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/7/30/12636.html>.
57. The period of Fa-rectification is identified with the persecution that the practitioners experience in China. The persecution is described as a 'test' of practitioners and referred to as the 'time of tribulations'. It is implied that the Fa-rectification process will be completed and the Fa-rectification (as an end result) arrive, when the period of persecution of the Falun Gong has ended. This also implies that the practitioner's moment of Consummation cannot arrive until the ban in China is lifted. There are hints that there is not much time left before the Fa-rectification is complete. The exact ending time for the Fa-rectification and the time of Consummation to arrive, is kept vague, and Li tells practitioners not to think about it or they may become 'attached' to it. A 'common resident' in China is quoted in a Minghui article as saying: 'They said the Fa would be rectified very soon. I am looking forward to the coming of that day'. In 'Despite the Blanket of Terror, Changshun Falun Dafa Practitioners Remain Determined and People Are Awakening', 28 March 2002.
58. 'What Shanshan Saw in Other Dimensions – Part I', 28 April 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/4/28/9140.html>, and 'Part II', 2 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/5/2/9205.html>; 'With Teacher at the helm, the Fa saves all beings – Part I', 5 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/5/4/9259.html>; 'One Wink in the Boundless Dafa – Part III', 5 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/5/5/9287.html>.
59. See 'Two Examples of Sudden Death for Unlawful Officers', 17 Sept. 2001, <http://www.minghui.ca/mh/articles/2001/9/9/16276.html>. Other examples include the explosion of a barge and the death of six on board, and various cases of food poisoning in wine, rice, vegetable oil 'and even poisonous moon cakes appeared one after another', <http://minghui.ca/mh/articles/2001/10/30/18838.html>.
60. Li Hongzhi, 'The Foretelling' (updated), posted 15 February 2002, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2002/2/15/18801.html>. In this poem Li states: 'What humans don't believe in, all now comes forth/ The sky cracks open and the earth burns/ The evil tries to hide the wicked ones to flee/ As gong surges forth, evil spirits wail and scream/ The Dafa disciples, ascend into the highest heavens/ In control of Heaven and Earth, rectifying the human realm'.
61. Li Hongzhi, 'Eliminate Evil', 2 Dec. 2000, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2000/Dec/02/Editorials120200.html>; 'Lecture at the Great Lakes Conference in North America' (note 58); 'Persons in Charge of the European Fa Conference and All Attendees', 19 March 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/eng/2001/Mar/20/JingWen032001.html>.
62. See Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press) 2000. Also, see Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press) 2000.
63. Li Hongzhi, 'Teaching the Fa at the 2001 Canada Falun Dafa Cultivation Experience Sharing Conference', 19 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/5/22/10271.html>.
64. Rapoport (note 54) p.208.
65. Scott Lowe, 'Western Millennial Ideology Goes East: The Taiping Revolution and Mao's Great Leap Forward', in Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases* (Syracuse: Syracuse Press 2000) p.23.
66. The FLG internal-campaign against Jiang Zemin became intense during his trip abroad in April 2002, when practitioners were to Send Forth Righteous Thoughts every hour to eliminate this 'chief wretch'. See 'Fa-rectification During Jiang's Trip to Germany-I', 21 April 2002, <http://www.minghui.org/mh/articles/2002/4/17/28616.html>.
67. 'What Pengpeng Saw in Other Dimensions on the Morning of May 27, Beijing Time', 29 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2001/5/29/10543.html>; 'What Shanshan Saw in Other Dimensions (VII). Events that Took Place in Other Dimensions During the Fa-Rectification', 30 May 2001, <http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/>

- 2001/5/30/10591.html. These testimonies by children about events taking place in the 'other dimensions' came in series and were referred to in other postings.
68. Philip P. Pan. 'Falun Gong Seized City's State-Run TV to Broadcast Message', Washington Post Foreign Service, Friday 8 March 2002, p.A20.
 69. 'Excerpt from the Discussion about "Sending Forth Righteous Thoughts, Eradicating the Evil"', 3 June 2001, <http://www.minghui.ca/mh/articles/2001/6/1/11708.html>.
 70. According to Reader (note 62) the loss of the political election and the harsh ridicule had a major influence on Aum. After this, the group's leader Asahara, changed his teachings from striving towards the enlightenment of all beings to the salvation of his followers as the elect few, finally leading to the belief that the outside world was evil, intent on destroying Aum, and deserving of retribution.
 71. <http://minghui.ca/mh/articles/2001/10/30/18838.html>.
 72. 'With appeal for data, Falungong promises to deploy US justice against China', *AFP*, 5 Sept 2001. 'The group has already slapped US civil lawsuits on several top Chinese officials during visits to the United States under legislation that extends US jurisdiction over foreign cases of torture'. Also, see Barry Schweid, 'Expelled Protesters Rally in D.C.', 19 Feb 2002, '94 House members sent Bush a letter last weekend asking him to express concern over what the Falun Gong calls a campaign of terror. In a separate letter, five US senators expressed concern about restrictions on the sect and treatment of its adherents'.
 73. Li Hongzhi, 'Towards Consummation', 16 June 2000, <http://www.minghui.ca/eng/2000/Jun/17/JingWen061700.html>. Li says that 'Disciples are waiting to reach Consummation, and I can wait no more'. This theme of not wanting to wait anymore is reflected in statements and testimonials by practitioners. It may be an indication that practitioners are motivated in part by a sense of imminence. If so, this could fit into a pattern of conditions necessary for religious messianism to turn violent. Rapoport states that two conditions are necessary for this to occur: 'Believers must think that the day of deliverance is near or imminent, and they must also think that their actions can or must consummate the process' (note 54) p.197. As of June 2001 comments have begun to appear on the FLG website warning practitioners not to become 'attached' to reaching Consummation, possibly a message to calm down the sense of imminence for those who 'can't wait'.