

Organ harvesting, Falun Gong and the Future of China

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by David Matas

What impact is the killing of Falun Gong for their organs having on Communist Chinese Party control of China? Are we seeing now, because of these killings, the end of Communism in China?

Before I address those questions directly, a bit of background is in order. Falun Gong is a blending and updating of ancient Chinese spiritual and exercise traditions. It began in 1992 with the teachings of Li Hong Zhi and quickly spread throughout China with the encouragement of the Government officials who considered the exercises as beneficial to health and to the finances of the health system. By 1999 Falun Gong practitioners were, according to a Government survey more numerous than the membership of the Communist Party. At this point, out of fear of losing its ideological supremacy and jealousy at its popularity, the Party banned Falun Gong.

Those who did the exercises after 1999 were arrested and asked to denounce the practice. Those who did not were tortured. Those who refused to recant after torture disappeared.

What happened to the disappeared? David Kilgour and I, in two reports dated July 2006 and January 2007 and a book dated November 2009 all under the title *Bloody Harvest*, concluded that many were killed for their organs used in transplants sold to patients, many of them foreign, for large sums. While it would take me too far afield to go through all the evidence which led us to that conclusion, I will mention a few bits.

- Investigators made calls to hospitals throughout China, claiming to be relatives of patients needing transplants, asking if the hospitals had organs of Falun Gong for sale on the basis that, since Falun Gong through their exercises are healthy, the organs would be healthy.

We obtained on tape, transcribed and translated admissions throughout China.

- Falun Gong practitioners who were detained and after torture recanted and who then got out of detention and out of China told us that they were systematically blood tested and organ examined while in detention. Other detainees were not. The blood testing and organ examination could not have been for the health of the Falun Gong since they had been tortured; but it would have been necessary for organ transplants.
- Waiting times for transplants of organs in China are days and weeks. Everywhere else in the world waiting times are months and years. A short waiting time for a deceased donor transplant means that someone is being killed for that transplant.
- There is no other explanation for the transplant numbers than sourcing from Falun Gong. China is the second largest transplant country in the world by volume after the US. Yet, until 2010 China did not have a deceased donation system and even today that system produces donations which are statistically insignificant. The living donor sources are limited in law to relatives of donors and officially discouraged because live donors suffer health complications from giving up an organ.

The Ministry of Health of China accepts that organs for transplants are coming almost entirely from prisoners. The Ministry claims that the criminals sentenced to death not executed prisoners of conscience.

The number of prisoners sentenced to death and then executed that would be necessary to supply the volume of transplants in China is far greater than even the most exaggerated death penalty statistics and estimates. Moreover, in recent years, death penalty volumes have gone down, but transplant volumes, except for a short blip in 2007, remained constant.

The Ministry of Health acknowledges that sourcing of organs from prisoners is wrong and promises eventually to end the abuse - in five years but not immediately. The reason the Ministry gives for not ending the abuse immediately is politics.

I and others had pressed the World Medical Association to expel the Chinese Medical Association because of organ transplant abuse in China. Dr. Wonchat Subhachaturas, President of the World Medical Association, in a letter dated July 18th, 2011, to Dr. Torsten Trey, Executive Director of Doctors against Forced Organ Harvesting, wrote:

"[Deputy Health Minister] Prof. Huang ... said that he would not get the necessary political support to change the practice of harvesting organs from executed prisoners immediately."

The use of the word "immediately" is a euphemism. Deputy Minister Huang had been advocating an end to the practice at least since August 2009, at that point, almost than two years earlier. Why in the intervening years had the abuse not stopped?

And what did politics have to do with it? Organ transplants are done by medical practitioners, not politicians. One could maybe understand Deputy Minister Huang's pleading economics, that too much money was being made from transplant abuse to stop it. But instead, he pleaded politics.

To understand the politics of organ transplant, it is necessary to understand the politics of repression of Falun Gong. The political dynamic preventing the end to organ transplant abuse was explained in a cryptic nutshell by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in March this year. According to a source, the Premier, at a closed Communist Party meeting in Zhongnanhai on March 14, 2012, stated:

"Without anaesthetic, the live harvesting of human organs and selling them for

money - is this something that a human could do? Things like this have happened for many years. We are about to retire, but it is still not resolved. Now that the Wang Lijun incident is known by the entire world, use this to punish Bo Xilai. Resolving the Falun Gong issue should be a natural choice."¹

The Party announced the next day that Bo lost his position as Communist Party General Secretary of Chongqing.

So, the Chinese Premier Wen urged using the Wang Lijun incident to punish Bo Xilai. Live harvesting of organs for money, he was asserting, is tied up with the Falun Gong issue. Resolve the Falun Gong issue, that is to say end the banning of Falun Gong, and the killing of people for their organs, according to Premier Wen, would end.

This statement of the Premier needs unpacking. What does organ transplant abuse have to do with the ban on Falun Gong? A lot, if you conclude, as David Kilgour and I have, that Falun Gong are being killed for their organs.

What is the Wang Lijun incident? On February 6th this year, Wang Lijun, then deputy mayor and police chief in Chongqing, visited the American consulate in Chengdu for a full day. When he left, the Chinese security police arrested him. He went on trial for his attempted defection secretly on Monday of this week and publicly on Tuesday. He pleaded no contest.

What is the connection between organ transplant abuse and Bo Xilai? That takes a bit of explaining.

Although this is a simplification, the civilian power struggle in China revolves around three

¹ Cheng Jing "Wen Jiabao Pushes for Redressing Falun Gong, Source Says" Epoch Times April 9, 2012.

factions - the hardliners, the reformers, and the harmonizers. The leader of the hardliners used to be President Jiang Zemin. He led the banning of Falun Gong in 1999. His successor in the current Standing Committee is Zhou Yongkang, the Party head of Chinese security and also of repression of Falun Gong. The man designated to replace Zhou Yongkang in the Standing Committee this fall was Bo Xilai.

The position of premier has sporadically been held by a line of reformers - Zhao Ziyang from 1980 to 1987, Zhu Rongji from 1998 to 2003, and Wen Jiabao from 2003 to the present. Before President Jiang Zemin began his campaign to ban Falun Gong, Premier Zhu Rongji was encouraging the practice of Falun Gong as beneficial to health.

The harmonizers, exemplified by the current President Hu Jintao and his vice-president and designated successor Xi Jinping, are not trying to keep everybody happy, just the various factions within the Party. They attempt to avoid confrontations and paper over differences.

Bo Xilai was not just tough on Falun Gong. He and his assistant the Wang Lijun were central to the killing of Falun Gong for their organs.

The investigation David Kilgour and I did was triggered by a statement by a woman using the pseudonym Annie. She told the Epoch Times in Washington D.C. in a story published in its March 17, 2006 edition that her ex-husband harvested corneas of Falun Gong practitioners in Sujiatun hospital between 2003 and 2005. Annie said other doctors at the same hospital harvested other organs of these victims, that Falun Gong were killed during the harvesting and that their bodies were cremated.

The details of the story Annie told about the work of her husband were not that different from the details of the story Doctor Wang told this Congress about his own work, a story

which, as you can see, was initially vehemently denied by the Government of China and then years later admitted. The only substantial difference in the two stories, Annie's and Doctor Wang's, was a difference in the type of prisoner from whom organs were extracted.

Sujiatun, where Annie's husband worked, is a district in the city Shenyang. Shenyang is a city in the province Liao Ning.

Bo Xilai was appointed Mayor of Dalian City in Liao Ning Province from 1993 to 2001. He was appointed Deputy Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party for Liao Ning Province in 2000. From February 2001 to February 2004 he was Governor of Liao Ning Province.

While he was in Liao Ning, Bo developed a reputation as a brutal leader of the persecution of Falun Gong. The period that Annie's husband worked in Sujiatun hospital and the period that Bo Xilai was Governor of the province in which the hospital was located overlapped, for the years 2003 and 2004.

From 2003 to 2008, Wang Lijun was the head of the Jinzhou City Public Security Bureau On-site Psychological Research Centre (OSPRC), Liao Ning province. He conducted research on a lingering injection execution method which would allow organ removal for transplants before the person died from the injection. He conducted further research to prevent patients who received organs of injected prisoners from suffering adverse effects from the injection drugs.

One of the calls the investigative callers made which we used for the reports and book David Kilgour and I authored was placed to the First Criminal Bureau of the Jinzhou Intermediate People's Court. The call, dated 23 May 2006, had this exchange:

"Investigator: Starting from 2001, we always [got] kidneys from young and healthy people who practise Falun Gong from detention centres and courts... I wonder if you still have such

organs in your court right now?

Official: That depends on your qualifications... If you have good qualifications, we may still provide some...

Investigator: Are we supposed to get them, or will you prepare for them?

Official: According to past experience, it is you that will come here to get them."

In September 2006, Wang Lijun received the Guanghua Science and Technology Foundation Innovation Special Contribution Award for his research and testing of this lethal injection method. In his acceptance speech, he talked about "thousands" of on site organ transplant cases from injected prisoners in which he and his staff participated. He said "to see someone being killed and to see this person's organs being translated to several other person's bodies is profoundly stirring", a remark that would have worthy of Josef Mengele.

Wang Lijun worked directly under Bo Xilai in Liao Ning province in 2003 and 2004. Bo in February 2004 went to Beijing where he became Minister of Commerce. While Minister of Commerce, Bo travelled around the world to promote international trade with China and investment into China. His travelling gave victims the opportunity to serve him with lawsuits for his role in the persecution of Falun Gong in Liao Ning Province. Lawsuits commenced against him in thirteen different countries, including one in Canada in which I am acting as counsel.

The American Consulate in Shanghai wrote in December 2007 to the State Department in Washington:

"Gu [Nanjing's Professor Gu] noted that Bo had been angling for promotion to Vice Premier. However, Premier Wen had argued against the promotion, citing the numerous lawsuits brought against Bo in Australia, Spain, Canada, England, the United States, and elsewhere by Falungong members. Wen successfully argued Bo's significant negative international exposure made him an inappropriate

candidate to represent China at an even higher international level."

Bo became a member of the Politburo and went from Minister of Commerce in Beijing to Communist Party head of Chongqing in November 2007.

In 2008, shortly after Bo was moved from Beijing to Chongqing, Bo brought Wang Lijun from Liao Ning province. Wang held various positions in public security in Chongqing and in 2011 became deputy mayor of the city under Bo. Wang attempted his defection from that position in February this year.

Superficially, the attempted defection of Wang Lijun related only to the murder of British national Neil Heywood by Gu Kailai, the wife of Bo Xilai. However, as the remarks of Premier Wen Jiabao at the March Communist Party meeting indicated, there was more going on than that.

What happens in China behind closed doors at Communist Party meetings is, by its very nature, not a matter of verifiable public record. What could be seen though by anyone at this time was the lifting of censorship on the killing of Falun Gong for their organs.

In late March 2012, search results about organ transplants on the officially sanctioned Chinese search engine Baidu showed information about the work David Kilgour and I did, *Bloody Harvest* and the involvement of Wang Lijun in organ harvesting. There appeared to be an active attempt to discredit the Bo faction through disclosure of organ transplant abuse in which Bo was complicit.

The focus on the murder of Neil Heywood looks to be the work of President Hu Jintao and Vice President Xi Jinping to minimize the scope of the dispute between the factions. The banning of Falun Gong and their killing for their organs are issues too big for the Party to handle easily.

President Hu and his successor Xi then, in the grab for places in the new Communist Party Standing Committee were prepared to sacrifice Bo, but wanted to take Falun Gong and organ transplant abuse off the table. I suggest that those of us who are interested in ending organ transplant abuse in China should make every effort to prevent that from happening.

There may be a tendency to watch from the sidelines and speculate on what the future holds. We must not forget that, when it comes to human affairs, we hold the future in our hands. We do not need to sit idly by and predict the future. We can make the future. We should be making effort to fashion the future in a way that respects human rights.

The struggle to shape the new Standing Committee of the Communist Party shows that the Party is far from monolithic. Bo Xilai was moved from the Ministry of Commerce in Beijing to the City of Chongqing because of the lawsuits against him abroad. Foreign resistance to Chinese Communist Party oppression, when it is knowledgeable and directed, has an impact.

Killing innocents for their organs is a tragedy and a disgrace, a delegitimization of the whole Communist Chinese regime. Wen Jiabao used the killing of Falun Gong for their organs to discredit Bo Xilai. In reality, it discredits the whole Communist Party control over China.

Repressive regimes look stable because they are not threatened by elections. However, their repression is brittle. Each human rights tap on the hard shell of a repressive regime may seem to have little impact. The cumulation of these taps over time though leads to the shattering of the shell unpredictably, at any time, all at once.

That is the experience through which we lived with the apartheid regime in South Africa,

Communist tyranny over the Soviet Union, Soviet control of Eastern and Central Europe, and the national security states of Latin America. Yesterday they were there and looked impervious to change. Now they are gone.

Communist China awaits a similar fate. We can not be sure when it will happen. But we can help to make it happen, accelerate its happening. We should not stand idly by in the face of Chinese Communist Party atrocities, wringing our hands, hoping for the best, when we can actually do something to counter these atrocities.

The book *State Organs* that Torsten Trey and I have co-edited, which addresses organ transplant abuse in China and which has just been published, begins with a quote from Athenian ruler Solon from the 7th century B.C., almost three thousand years ago. He said "When will we end injustice? When those who are not victims feel as much outrage as those who are?"

That is a universal truth. Not only will the concerns of outsiders have an impact on the evolution of events in China. Only when those outside China who are not victims of the Communist regime show as much outrage at the crimes of the regime as the victims themselves will Communist party oppression in China end.

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