



ZHONGNANHAI: A map shows where the petitioners were on April 25, 1999, when Falun Gong practitioners went to appeal to the Chinese Communist Party. They were calling for the release of practitioners who were unlawfully arrested. The Chinese regime later used the event as an excuse to launch its brutal persecution against them, saying they had surrounded the regime compound at Zhongnanhai. Photographic and video evidence shows otherwise. THE EPOCH TIMES

An Appeal for Others that Led to Persecution

By GENEVIEVE LONG
Epoch Times Staff

Ten years ago on April 24, when Jinying Gao took a train to Beijing from her hometown in Liaoning Province, China was a different country.

Gao, who has practiced Falun Gong since 1994, set out on a mission of faith with little more than the shirt on her back for the six-hour journey to her country's capital. With her husband, also a practitioner, beside her, they arrived in Beijing in the middle of the night. Thousands of other Falun Gong practitioners were at the train station, waiting for dawn to arrive.

The travelers, whose numbers would eventually swell to 10,000, had come from all corners of China to appeal to the central regime about a case of 45 imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners in the city of Tianjin. The imprisoned practitioners were beaten and arrested by police on April 24, 1999, after days of appealing over a youth magazine's slanderous article against Falun Gong.

"In China, the media blocked the news of [of the arrests]," recalls Gao who is now 64 years old and escaped to the U.S. close to 17 months ago.

Falun Gong is the most popular qigong practice in China. By 1999 it was estimated that between 70 and 100 million Chinese people were practicing it. But in the China of ten years ago, as today, to be popular with the public is to be suspect by the communist party.

Three years earlier, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and then-head, Jiang Zemin, began to view Falun Gong's popularity as a threat. The Beijing Youth Daily had listed the practice's main book, "Zhuan Falun" as a bestseller in 1996. Not long after, the regime issued a nationwide notice forbidding the distribution of all Falun Gong publications.

There were other problems during those years that eventually escalated to a full-blown, state-



PEACEFUL APPEAL: 64-year-old Jinying Gao reads the main book of her practice, "Zhuan Falun." She went to appeal to the Chinese regime on April 25, 1999, for the release of unlawfully arrested Falun Gong practitioners. Gao was later arrested by the regime and was sentenced to more than a year in solitary confinement. JOSHUA PHILIP/EPHOTO.COM

sanctioned persecution. Various state-controlled media outlets began broadcasting and publishing negative reports about Falun Gong. Reports from the Guangming Daily in 1996 and Beijing Television in 1998 directly slandered Falun Gong.

Despite growing restrictions and attacks by state-controlled media, the practice continued to grow in popularity.

"Falun Gong is so good—after practicing I benefited mentally and physically, I felt very, very happy," says Zhenyu Jin, who also traveled to Beijing in April, 1999 to appeal. "I knew how to be a good person, and my family became harmonious."

The practitioners appealing in Beijing had three basic goals, which they were eventually able to communicate to then-Premier Zhu Rongji.

"We wanted to tell [the government] the truth about Falun Gong," says Gao. "Also, to let the [Falun Gong] books be published, and to release the practitioners in Tianjin."

The appeal was successful, and those arrested in Tianjin were released on the evening of April 25.

But the events of that day were soon used by the CCP to frame Falun Gong as "protesting" and "surrounding" Zhongnanhai, the Party's compound that sits near Tiananmen Square.

However, numerous eyewitness accounts, video footage, and photographs of the day's events, which lasted from sunup to sundown, contradict the position taken by the regime. No banners, slogans, or protesting can be seen in the numerous video footage and photographs still readily available on the Internet.

"The CCP report said we had 10,000 practitioners surrounding Zhongnanhai," recalls Gao, who adds that the accusations meant to convey aggression on the part of the petitioners were false. "We were not at or near Zhongnanhai, we were lining Fuyou Street." The well-known street is to the southwest of the compound they were accused of surrounding.

After that, the situation for Falun Gong practitioners in China rapidly deteriorated. Several of those who had gone to Beijing to appeal over the arrests in Tianjin soon found they were being monitored, watched, and followed—including Gao, who even had a coworker assigned to monitor her every move during the day.

On July 20, 1999, Jiang Zemin ordered it illegal to practice Falun Gong, making it a state law. Tens of thousands of practitioners were summarily rounded up, detained, and arrested—some for years, including Gao.

"On July 20, they searched the house and arrested me," says Gao, whose husband was not home when she was taken. She was imprisoned for a year, months of which were spent in solitary confinement.

"In China the police are very evil," she says. "They need no reason to arrest you."

But knowing what she knows now, Gao doesn't show any regret for her decision to appeal over the Tianjin arrests. When asked if she had it to do over again, would she still make that six-hour train ride, she simply says, "Yes."

Swedish Currency Weak Despite Good State Finances

By BARBRO PLOGANDER

STOCKHOLM—Sweden has sound state finances, yet some say it is of little value since the country opted to keep its own currency, the krona, rather than switch to the Euro.

Sweden has a positive trade balance and strong state finances. In the U.S., the financial crisis is raging and enormous sums are being borrowed to cover the holes. Despite this the dollar has gone up and the Swedish krona, or crown, has gone down. One U.S. dollar now buys more than 8 Swedish kronor. Before the crisis it was even lower.

From a global perspective, the krona being small-used currency

carries more weight than the fact that Sweden's economy is in order. Despite their financial troubles, the U.S. dollar is considered a safe currency, so even in times of global economic unrest, the Swedish krona drops against the dollar.

When the European Union wanted a common currency for its member states, Sweden took a national poll in 2003 to decide whether to do the same. Fifty-six percent of Swedes wanted to keep the krona, but the drawbacks of their decision has become painfully obvious.

Still, there are also advantages. With the weak krona, the U.S. can buy Swedish goods at a lower price, which strengthens the Swedish economy. In the current social state however, demand is weak in general in the world economy, and

if the krona remains weak, Sweden risks inflation.

Sweden also pays a membership fee to the E.U., being one of its member states. Since the crown has dropped against the Euro, its membership will be several billion kronor more expensive, which will affect the Swedish tax payers.

At the time of the Swedish election in 2003, 42 percent of Swedes wanted to switch to the Euro. This number has remained relatively constant, according to a survey published in Svenska Dagbladet, one of Sweden's major newspapers, on April 19.

The difference is that those who wanted to keep the krona is now only 47 percent, compared to 56 percent in 2003. Many more people are uncertain now.

Indonesia Orders Red Cross Out of Papua

JAKARTA (Reuters)—Indonesia has ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to leave the politically sensitive Papua region after its officials visited "separatists" in jail, the foreign ministry said.

Papua, the underdeveloped but resource-rich western half of New Guinea island where independence activists have waged a separatist campaign for decades, is geographically isolated and foreign journalists need special permission to visit.

There is a strong military and police presence in Papua, especially around the huge Grasberg copper and gold mine. Police recently shot demonstrators calling for a boycott of Indonesia's April 9 parliamentary election.

Foreign ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah said that the government was offended both by the ICRC's failure to obtain proper permission to operate in Papua and by the prison visits.

"Any organization must be aware

that, yes, this is a new Indonesia but we are a sovereign country," Faizasyah told Reuters, suggesting that other aid organizations might also face a clampdown.

"They should not abuse our democratic reform and act as though they can do whatever suits their interests."

The ICRC said it runs sanitation projects in Papua and also visits detainees, including jailed members of the secessionist Free Papua Movement (OPM), to ensure they are treated properly. "People accused of crimes which might be called subversion, or rebellion could be at risk of being discriminated against," said Vincent Nicod, the head of the ICRC's Indonesia delegation.

"When we visit detainees, it is not to look into the reason for the detention. It's part of our activity relating to international humanitarian law to ensure that political prisoners are provided worldwide with decent conditions."

The dispute follows last year's

release of stricter new rules on the funding of foreign non-governmental organizations in Indonesia.

The foreign ministry's Faizasyah said that the government first asked the ICRC to renegotiate the deal under which it operates in Indonesia in 2000 but the ICRC said talks stalled after the tsunami in December 2004 when 170,000 Indonesians died.

In March 2009, the government told the ICRC to close its Papua office and return to Jakarta to renegotiate the agreement.

"Do they question our ability to manage our prisons? We have a free media now, functioning NGOs and if there is any mishap in the handling of an institution, it will, of course, be reported to the government," said Faizasyah.

The ICRC's Nicod said that the Indonesian government had approached the ICRC in early 2000 to rewrite the deal but said the existing agreement officially had no expiry date.

Global Q&A: Helping the Environment

Founded by an American Senator in 1970, April 22 is now celebrated as International Earth Day in about 175 countries around the world. In honor of Earth Day, Epoch Times reporters asked citizens in a handful

of those nations, "What one thing could you change in your life to help improve the environment?"

Many people mentioned that they are already trying to live more lightly on the planet by riding their

bikes, planting trees, using environmentally friendly products, or educating those around them to do the same. But nonetheless, everyone found ways they could do even better.

Mathew Kuriakose Kallumpurath, 40, Fair Trader for handicapped villages in India
Delhi, India



"I can tell my kids about the environment and have our artisans use eco-friendly products and not plastics. And I can give priority to protecting trees and planting more trees. Also, to spread awareness about why we must protect nature, because it is beautiful. If each individual thinks, 'I am not important, because of me it will not make an impact on the environment it's so silly...' It's like you take a mosquito to bed with you and the mosquito is so small, yet you will not sleep the whole night! The same thing with us, we all must play our role because the environment is so important!"

Amanda Colmar, 41, Graphic Designer and Mother
Hamilton, New Zealand



"I recycle everything. Now at 41 years of age, I have a baby. I use cloth nappies and biodegradable wipes but if I could, the one thing I would like to do is have solar power. We switched off for Earth Hour and it was amazing knowing we were joining people all over the world to make a very small difference—hopefully to make people realize that every little thing can eventually become a big thing."

Panagiota (Yiota) Xenogianni, 26, Lawyer
Athens, Greece



"The thing I will do to help the environment is recycling. It is easy if you consider it, you just pay more attention to the consumed products you put on your rubbish bin. You separate plastic, paper, aluminum, and glass products and then place them in the special public rubbish bins that there are in many areas. Those special public rubbish bins are even designed to pay you if you put in a considerable quantity of those materials."

Gelu Buzuriu, 39, Client Relations in a tourism firm
Darvari, Romania



"Getting involved more! Getting the attention of the authorities who have funds allocated that can make a difference, and be noticed by the community. All this can be driven by personal example. One such example is my wife, who is a geography teacher. She took the children from her class and planted 600 trees. That was fun and very good for the environment."

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY THE EPOCH TIMES

April 25: Falun Gong Parade and Rally

2009 is a year of particular significance as it is the 10th anniversary of the persecution of Falun Gong in China. Over the past 10 years, more than 3,200 identified practitioners of Falun Gong have been killed for their beliefs in China. More than 87,000 have been tortured in Chinese police custody and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, have been unlawfully imprisoned in Chinese labor camps and prisons. Recently, several New York residents' family members were reported to have been tortured, illegally sentenced, and even killed in China by the commu-

nist regime. It was on April 25th, 1999, that thousands of Falun Gong practitioners peacefully gathered in Beijing to appeal for the release of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners. The event captured headlines around the world, but more importantly to those who were there, it was a chance to explain to the Chinese leadership how Falun Gong had brought peace and harmony to their lives, and that the attacks by Chinese officials were unwarranted.

Falun Gong practitioners will be joined by members of the community and local gov-

ernment officials to mark this historic day during an event in Flushing, Queens on Saturday, April 25.

What: Parade and Rally

Where: Flushing, Queens

Time: Sat. 04/25/09 12:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Parade: 40th Road & Main Street 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Rally: Kissena Blvd, across to Barclay Ave., near the Queens Library