

Washington Post: Enabler of Beijing's Propaganda

Post runs scurrilous advertising supplements for profit

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Frank Lee. I am the spokesperson of Falun Dafa Association of Washington, D.C. We are a 501©(3) non-profit volunteer organization comprised of those who practice Falun Gong (a.k.a. Falun Dafa), which is a spiritual meditation practice rooted from ancient Chinese culture. We are also the presenter of classical Chinese dance performance Shen Yun in Washington DC, Baltimore, and Norfolk, VA.

As you may have seen from the media alert, on [Jan. 25, 2017](#), the China Daily paid supplement in the Washington Post carried on its back cover an article, titled "Blasphemy masquerades as art," which viciously attacks Shen Yun that just finished a successful week-long run at the Kennedy Center.

Before going into details of this article, I would like to provide you some background.

The Washington Post has been carrying these paid supplements in print on a regular basis for quite some years. Online, its hosting China Daily content under the WashingtonPost.com domain blurs the line of advertising and content even further. James Fallows observed in *The Atlantic*, "Official Chinese Propaganda: Now Online from the WaPo!" in 2011 that the URL chinawatch.washingtonpost.com misleads readers to think it is a blog focused on China issues that are written and approved by the Post.

Imagine, if someone sends you an email or posts such a China Daily article on Facebook: hey, here is an article on the Washington Post, then the URL of the article, then the actual article title and content. You wouldn't be able to know this article was not written by the Post, because the article title is in the URL, which looks like just any other Washington Post article. You probably wouldn't even bother to click the link; thus, no chance to see the tiny font, "a paid supplement to the Washington Post," on the website. Then you will just believe this is an article written by the Washington Post. That is indeed very misleading.

What is China Daily?

China Daily is the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party. Its distribution in the U.S. and the rest of the world is not a bona fide business practice. While having the appearance of a news outlet, it is really a component of the Communist regime's elaborate propaganda strategy to manipulate public opinion overseas, disparage, slander, and vilify whomever it targets, whitewash its human rights record, and infiltrate U.S. markets, potentially endangering America's national security.

As reported by Washington Free Beacon, China Watch remains one of the most glaring examples of the Communist government's campaign to influence American thought leaders, and policy makers, through proactive perception management.

In the same Free Beacon article, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher said, "The *Washington Post* is well aware that the China Watch section is designed to look like the rest of their paper and to fool readers." Just because they put 'advertising supplement' at the top in small print does not relieve them of the moral responsibility of knowingly supporting the world's worst human rights abuser, the Chinese Communist Party, at a time when they are engaged in a belligerent military build up and are making aggressive territorial claims."

China Daily's paid supplement in western newspaper is part of the Grand External Propaganda Strategy of the communist regime. As Financial Times reported on June 9, 2016, David Shambaugh, a professor at George Washington University, estimated that China spends \$10bn a year on external propaganda, which is unprecedented.

One may argue this kind of advertising relationship won't affect the independence of the newsroom, but as ChinaLawandPolicy.com and some other websites have reported, the Post's editor killed a feature length article on Falun Gong in 2010 due to pressure from the Chinese Embassy.

In February, 2012, the Post's own ombudsman, Patrick Pexton accused his paper of "Caving to China's Demands" for posting an "interview" with Chinese vice president. Instead of answering journalists' questions, the Post revealed, "the Chinese government modified, deleted, and added questions to those The Post submitted." Pexton called it "more press release or propaganda than news."

Why did China Daily slander Shen Yun, a Chinese cultural show?

Shen Yun Performing Arts, the world's premier classical Chinese dance and music company, was founded in New York in 2006 by a group of artists who practiced Falun Dafa meditation. Its mission is to revive China's 5,000 years of divinely inspired traditional culture, arts and values, which have been largely destroyed in China under communist rule.

In ancient times, China was known as the Land of the Divine. Everyone, from emperors to the common people, believed that their culture was a gift from heaven. They lived in harmony with the universe, believed oneness of heaven, earth, and humankind, and saw a connection among all things. Traditional Chinese culture carried these principles for thousands of years.

But Communist Party advocates struggle against nature and man. It sees this culture as a threat to its power, and for decades it has tried to destroy it or co-opt it. It nearly succeeded. Today, though one can still find traces of traditional Chinese culture in mainland China, it is no longer mainstream and the underlying spiritual essence is mostly lost. The persecution of Falun Gong, a Buddha school practice deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, is yet another episode in Beijing's on-going war against traditional Chinese culture.

In each Shen Yun show, out of 20 numbers that are mostly about ancient legends, there are a couple of dance pieces that depict the persecution of Falun Dafa in China. What is the reason for these dance stories about the spiritual persecution? As Shen Yun revives traditional Chinese culture, Shen Yun artists also want to help audiences understand how the traditional culture was destroyed, and to depict the sacrifices of those who are reviving the lost culture.

While the persecution serves as background, what is really highlighted in those two dance pieces is the human spirit—compassion, courage, and desire for freedom. Many audience members find these two pieces very touching and enlightening.

Indeed, the human spirit under adversity is always a favorite topic in art, drama and movies. In "The Sound of Music," part of the story line is about the von Trapp family's escape to freedom from the Nazis' persecution.

BTW, both Shen Yun website and Kennedy Center website clearly stated that Falun Dafa Association of Washington, D.C. is the presenter of the show in DC. The Shen Yun brochure we mailed out also illustrates the dance pieces about the persecution of Falun Gong.

Every year Shen Yun tours over 100 cities and graces many top venues worldwide each year, becoming a global cultural phenomenon. Despite Shen Yun's international acclaim, Beijing has felt threatened by it for two reasons.

First, the CCP fears its persecution against Falun Gong will become more widely known.

Secondly, The Communist Regime has been telling the Chinese people for years, there is no China without the Communist Party. So much so that they associate the Chinese government with the concept of China. Clearly this is false. China has thousands of years of history without Communism.

But the government has staked its legitimacy with the Chinese people that it is the heir of Chinese culture. As part of that, China has been sending art troupes abroad to perform.

These programs have been greatly outshined by the success of Shen Yun. Why do some Chinese fly to the U.S. to see Shen Yun? Because it is not available in China. Shen Yun's success outside of China is telling Chinese people that the true essence of Chinese culture is not something the Communist party can give them.

Even a top art official in China grudgingly admit the success and high caliber of Shen Yun performances, and accused the government of ruining Chinese culture, as reported by a South China Morning Post article in 2013, titled, "State-funded arts troupes fail to shine against Falun Gong rivals abroad." This makes it hard for the CCP to claim it is the heir of Chinese civilization and is the legitimate ruler of China.

So what is their response? Slander, attack.

The Communist Regime has tried every possible means to sabotage Shen Yun shows. From cyber-attack to Shen Yun's ticketing website, to hire local thugs to slash Shen Yun's bus tires, and to mobilize its online commenters to post negative reviews about Shen Yun online. Chinese embassies and consulates around the world also called, wrote to, and visited theaters, urging them not to sign a contract with Shen Yun or to cancel existing ones. When these attempts to thwart Shen Yun have failed, they even organize people to pose as Falun Gong practitioners to send letters to theaters with delirious, nonsensical content in order to give the venues a negative impression of Shen Yun and Falun Gong.

Now it uses the supplement in reputable western media, such as the Washington Post, to slander Shen Yun.

The China Daily article attacking Shen Yun on Jan. 25 includes many false claims and crude propaganda in an inflammatory tone. Isn't it ironic that this atheistic regime, which during Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-76) viciously attacked China's traditional culture, destroying religious and historical artifacts, desecrated monasteries and other religious sites, and condemned non-Communist literature and art, now claims in the article that Shen Yun is committing "blasphemy to real art"? We are stunned to see that the Post is comfortable with carrying state propaganda that turns truth on its head, and seeks to perpetuate the marginalization, isolation, and hatred of an innocent group that is violently persecuted in China to this day.

As a group demonized and brutally persecuted by the communist regime, we know firsthand how China's communist regime's propaganda can effectively sway and distort public opinion, incite hatred towards those without media access that the state commands, and advance the regime's agenda so that honest folks turn a blind eye to what's happening in China today.

Many of us came to the U.S. right after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, holding America as the lighthouse of freedom in our hearts. But we are deeply disappointed to see the fourth pillar of our democracy—the free press as exemplified in the Post—sacrifice their principles for profits.

Though there is a standard disclaimer on the top of the page: “An advertising supplement to the Washington Post,” we believe the Post cannot be absolved from responsibility for what it prints. Would the Post print advertisements with anti-Semitic language or racial slurs? Would the Post print an advertisement from the Nazis that painted Auschwitz as a happy, wholesome workplace? If the answer is no, then why did the Post print an article attacking an American arts company by a foreign regime. This is a regime that the U.S. Congress unanimously condemned for killing large numbers of prisoners of conscience and selling their organs for profits (see H.Res.343 passed on June 13, 2016).

We are deeply saddened to see the Washington Post, one of the most respected newspapers in the country, sacrifice its principles for profits, and assist an evil regime to spread its propaganda to the American people.

The Countering Disinformation and Propaganda Act, authored by Senators Portman and Murphy, was signed into law by President Obama in December, 2016. The American people and our government are fed up with foreign governments' propaganda, particularly China, which is explicitly mentioned in the act.

We request that the Post issue a public apology for carrying China Daily's attack on us, and we urge the Post to stop carrying China Daily's paid supplements and remove its online content from the Post domain. We reserve the right to take further actions.

Almost 30 years ago, on June 12, 1987, when President Reagan stood in Berlin and challenged Gorbachev to “Tear down this wall.” Two years later, the wall did come down.

Today, China is at a crossroads like that of the former Soviet Union. We hope we all can contribute to the historic process that will happen one day in China, and effect positive change to it, instead of assisting the evil regime to spread its propaganda. After history turns over this page, we hope the Washington Post would want to be able to claim, “We were not among those who were complicit in assisting this evil regime.”

Many audience members said they saw a different China in Shen Yun shows—a China liberated from Chinese Communist Party culture; a peaceful, moral and tolerant China; a China before communism, and likely a China after communism. The media should embrace this China, not attack it.

Today, China Daily supplement slandered Shen Yun, and Falun Gong. Tomorrow, it could be Tibetans, house Christians, or any other groups or companies the communist regime dislike or feel being challenged. If we don't speak out today, the communist regime will know they can continue to push the envelope, and the Washington Post may continue to print whatever vilification they provide under the name of advertisement. That must be stopped now.