



The Epoch Times UK Ltd



To Leveson Inquiry

30 July 2012

Dear Sirs

Re: The Epoch Times UK (Da Ji Yuan)

We are writing to you to inform you of certain alarming developments affecting the public's right to a free press and freedom of expression in the UK.

The Epoch Times newspaper was founded in 2000 in response to the great need to provide uncensored news to a people immersed in propaganda and censorship in China. The Da Ji Yuan, which means "The Great Epoch" began as an online Chinese language publication operating in the U.S. and China. The Chinese office was closed in 2000 after it was raided and the principal employees sentenced to hard labour. Overseas, the Epoch Times continued to expand launching an English edition in 2003. Today the Epoch Times publishes online and in print in 35 countries and 19 languages. It is the world's largest free newspaper with a distribution of 2.1 million copies a week.

The Epoch Times specialises in providing the global community with uncensored news on China. It is particularly known for its work to expose the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) by publishing the "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party". [Exhibit 1] In 2006, it also broke the story that the CCP in China has been responsible for killing members of the Falun Gong spiritual group for their organs.[Exhibit 2 & 3]

In June 2001, a group of British-Chinese founded The Epoch Times in the UK as a Chinese paper; an English edition was added in April 2005. There are many challenges in setting up a free, public-service newspaper and to this day most employees and all contributors are unpaid for their work.

Unfortunately, one of the main challenges we face in the UK is the influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the form of the Chinese Embassy. There are also a number of Chinese language newspapers circulating in the UK which are sympathetic to or funded by the CCP.

In recent years, the Chinese Embassy has tried to undermine The Epoch Times in the UK by contacting members of the Chinese community and persuading them not to stock our newspaper. The extent of this activity was revealed in 2007 when a number of retailers stopped stocking The Epoch Times while others cancelled advertising contracts explaining that they had been forbidden to deal with The Epoch Times by the Embassy. We know that the Embassy is in contact with Chinese businesses in the UK, because we witnessed the Chinese ambassador Fu Ying visiting one of the large Chinese supermarkets that distributes our paper in June 2007. To this day, a number of Chinese retailers and supermarkets refuse to stock The Epoch Times.

The Chinese Embassy's interference with the distribution of The Epoch Times in the UK, is just one example of the way the CCP seeks to extend its censorship and promote its ideology in the UK as well as other countries. For example, earlier this year Embassy officials tried to stop the ENO from hosting Shen Yun Performing Arts - a leading classical Chinese music and dance company from New York - for a 4 days performances at the London Coliseum. [Exhibit 4] Similarly the Embassy attempted to interfere with the Shen Yun shows at the Royal Festival Hall in 2008. [Exhibit 5] (The Epoch Times is also a media sponsor of Shen Yun).

We think it important to draw the Inquiry's attention to these matters as they present a threat to British values and the British way of life. In the end, Shen Yun was a great success with over 8000 people seeing the performances. Had the CCP been successful, those 8000 people would have been deprived of the opportunity to experience authentic, traditional Chinese culture which is free of Party ideology and influence. Similarly as The Epoch Times UK distributes over 35,000 copies per week; we think that the rights of those readers, as well as those who have yet to discover the value of The Epoch Times, should be protected.

When faced with the interference described, we did consider legal action, but the unfortunate truth is that we did not and still do not have the financial or human resources to defend our rights. It is also unclear how much protection the law would give in this situation.

We note that the actions of the CCP that we have described may seem surprising. Unfortunately however, they are part of a disturbing pattern of CCP attempts to spread disinformation and export its divisive ideologies abroad. We have included an exhibit from the book Bloody Harvest by lawyers David Matas and David Kilgour which recounts a similar experience in Canada.

We hope that this letter provides a useful contribution to your examination of the issues of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the UK under Module 4 and regret that due to lack of funds and human resources we have not been able to provide more extensive submissions on the many issues raised. We would welcome any recommendations (for e.g. regulatory change) or words of support the Inquiry feel able to offer The Epoch Times and fledgling UK news providers in a similar position.

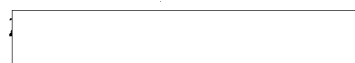
Sincerely



Dr Wei Liu
Director



Zek Halu
Director, English Edition



Exhibits:

1. "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party"- extract, The Epoch Times, 2005
2. Articles regarding Organ Harvesting, The Epoch Times, various 2006.
3. Bloody Harvest, 2009 Chapter 11 David Matas & David Kilgour
4. "Beijing's Battle for 'Soft Power' Playing Out in the West End", The Epoch Times, March 20, 2012
<http://tinyurl.com/d42bt9d>
5. "Attempts to Stop Classical Chinese Dance Show Go Back Four Years, Promoters Reveal", The Epoch Times, April 9, 2012 <http://tinyurl.com/cap9cluz>

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

25 October 2012
Date