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CHINA: Beijing's foreign 'useful idiots' support its Xinjiang propaganda

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (05.05.2021) – They tell stories confirming that Uyghur culture is flourishing in Xingjiang, that Uyghurs are sent to vocational training centers and not to internment camps. They justify the necessity to fight against Islamic terrorism in Xinjiang by all means and any means. They denounce American imperialism and a huge disinformation operation carried out by the CIA and NGOs financed by the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED). They criticize the vested interests of their own country with regard to China and the Uyghur issue.

Those foreign propagandists of the People's Republic of China (PRC) are both lauded by Beijing and disparaged in their countries of origin where they are presented as useful idiots, negationists and sometimes superspreaders of conspirationist theories. Who are they?

AFP blacklisting some foreign CCP's policy propagandists

On 4 May, AFP published an article titled "Sino-béats? Des Occidentaux stars des médias chinois, décrits à domicile" (China-blissful? Western stars in Chinese media disparaged at home", in which it listed a number of propagandists supporting China's policy concerning the Uyghur Muslims:

Maxime Vivas (French): He is a French retired ergonomist. He is the author of a recent book titled "Ouïghours, pour en finir avec les fake news" (Uighurs, to put an end to the fake news) and published on Amazon. On two occasions, he was invited by the Chinese authorities to have "a guided tour" of Xinjiang. He was highly commended by China's Minister of Foreign Affairs for his book which describes "a prosperous and stable Xinjiang" and criticizes "those who fabricate fake news and spread rumors about the alleged repression in Xinjiang without ever visiting the region."

Vivas claims to have 2500 followers on Twitter. He also published on Amazon "Behind the Smile, the Hidden Side of the Dalai Lama" (2013) and "The Hidden Face of Reporters Without Borders" (2007).

Max Blumenthal (American): He is a journalist, author, blogger and filmmaker. He claims to have 225,000 Twitter followers on his Grayzone website. In a recent tweet, he depicts the World Uighur Congress (WUC) as "a network of right-wing US govt-funded exiles which provides every testimony that US media relies on for its information war on Xinjiang."

Blumenthal has broadcast on RT (formerly known as Russia Today) on many occasions. In December 2015, during a trip to Moscow presumed by multiple sources to have been paid for by the Kremlin. He has also contributed on multiple occasions to *Sputnik* radio, as well as to Iran's Press TV and China's CGTN.

Daniel Dumbrill (Canadian): He promotes China's policies with videos on YouTube, such as Hongkong is far freer since its return to China or Debunking anti-China allegations. He claims to have 110,000 subscribers. He has been living in China for almost 12 years. He was first in business in Shenzhen before moving to Hong Kong. After staying there for a couple of years, he came back to Shenzhen where he opened a brew pub, several thousand kilometers away from Xinjiang...

Raz Gal-Or (Israeli): This young blogger claims to have 1,7 million followers on the Chinese network Weibo. He makes videos promoting China. In an article titled "Pékin cherche idiots utiles désespérément" (Beijing is desperately looking for useful idiots) and published in *Le Monde*, Frédéric Lemaître said he met him at the Economic Forum of Boao, the "Chinese Davos". He admitted that he had met Uyghur farmers chosen by the government.

Bitter Winter blacklisting some foreign CCP's policy propagandists

Bitter Winter also recently revealed the names some other pro-China and pro-CCP propagandists such as:

Laurène Beaumont (pseudonym): According to her, "the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is the perfect habitat for Muslims and everybody else, and all you heard about the Uyghur genocide perpetrated by the CCP is a gross lie." The 'truth' – 'her truth' – was published in an article entitled "*Mon* Xinjiang: halte à la tyrannie des fake news ("My' Xinjiang:

Stop the Fake News Tyranny”), published on March 28 on the French web site of China Global Television Network (CGTN).

CGTN is a 24/24 all-news tv channel in six languages, registered under the State Council of the People’s Republic of China and controlled by CCP’s Central Committee Publicity Department. The author of the article is introduced as “Ms. Laurène Beaumont,” “an independent journalist based in France, holding a degree in art history and another in archeology from la Sorbonne-IV, as well as an MA in journalism,”

Marco Respinti writes in *Bitter Winter* that “her article of March 28 of course mentions, in passing, “terrorism,” but basically hers is a fairy-tale Xinjiang where everybody is happy and loves the Chinese Communist Party. ‘Laurène Beaumont’ plays the smiling, good cop. The bad cop is played by a four-parts propaganda “documentary” by a “state broadcaster” that “blames ‘terrorist threats’ to justify the clampdown on Uyghurs in region”, as the *Financial Times* clearly put it.”

Laurène Beaumont goes on hiding her real identity, claiming that she does not want to be harassed “by the media sphere” critical of China’s Xinjiang policy.

Noteworthy is that her Twitter account was suspended for violating Twitter rules.

Prof. Golley, an Oxonian Dphil (i.e., Ph.D.) in Economics,

directs the Australian Centre on China in the World at the Australian National University in Canberra. On April 21 she led the panel for a symposium, *The China Crisis*, hosted at the National Press Club of Australia in Canberra and designed to launch the *China Story Yearbook 2020*, precisely entitled *Crisis*. The *China Story Yearbook* is both a blog and a series of annual themed overviews of Chinese current affairs. Prof. Golley is one of its co-editors. In an article published by Bitter Winter titled "Xinjiang Genocide: An Anonymous 'Scholarly Article' Echoes CCP's Lies", Marco Respinti stresses "Prof. Golley said that the figure of 1 million people detained in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)'s dreadful transformation through education camps is exaggerated."

As proof of this exaggeration, Prof. Golley referred to a "scholarly article" the authors of which sent her anonymously. On the basis of this anonymous "scholarly article", she told the world that dozens of signed and independent pieces of research, supported by respected international organizations, parliaments, and governments, rely on false information. In an interview after the symposium, she admitted that she had received the article "via a former Australian ambassador to China, whom she declined to name, and said she had consulted two other colleagues before going public."

Palestine Solidarité, Le Grand Soir and others

Marco Respinti also identified two other propagandists: the news web portal, in French, *Palestine Solidarité* ("Solidarity with Palestine"), which reprinted the article by Laurène Beaumont as well as the CGTN's self-defense of April 1 from a French leftist web site, *Le Grand Soir*. In spite of an entire section dedicated to religion, mainly featuring Islam, *Palestine Solidarité* shows no solidarity for the Muslims (Uyghurs and other Turkic people) persecuted by

the CCP (held dear by *Le Grand Soir*) in Xinjiang, Respinti commented. Last but not least, Respinti also pointed at Italy's best-selling conservative newspaper *il Giornale* which published a propaganda article *Così la Cina combatte il terrorismo nello Xinjiang* (How China fights against terrorism in Xinjiang), probably not for free, by *Cinitalia*, the official bilingual media outlet owned by state China Media Group, of which CCP's CGTN is a division.

HRWF identified a CCP's policy propagandist in Brussels

Human Rights Without Frontiers also identified a CCP's policy propagandist who tried to instrumentalize a well-known media outlet in Brussels and the *Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations* (CIAOSN) under the Ministry of Justice of the Belgian Federal Government.

Roland Delcourt recently said he interviewed a spokesperson of the Center, and published an article on 1 May about this meeting in an online media outlet covering EU issues in Brussels which was quickly removed from its website for failing to meet journalistic ethics and the General Data Protection Regulation. This article was titled "Beware of false refugees, the cult nature of the Eastern Lightning (The Church of Almighty God)."

Delcourt provided the CIAOSN with an 18-page report denouncing allegedly false refugees from China who belong to The Church of Almighty God. In his article, he wrote:

"According to the information from the report, the worship of the Eastern Lightning (The Church of Almighty God) corresponds to the very definition of a harmful sect. The Center would therefore give an unfavourable opinion to the Immigration Office in the event that individuals presenting themselves as a member of the sect would request political or other asylum."

The manipulation strategy was obvious. The interview about the activities of the CIAOSN was just a vicious pretext to manipulate the Belgian state institution and convince it that the CAG was a harmful cult whose members should be denied asylum and sent back to China, where they would of course be arrested and imprisoned. I assume that the CIAOSN will not be deceived by this gross attempt of manipulation and will refrain from playing in the hands of China's propagandists.

HRWF personally knows those refugees in Belgium and has interviewed them. There are only 11 of them. They are all young people in their 20s, mainly girls. They are neither dangerous nor harmful.

This is not the first time that China tries to use anti-cult organizations to campaign against the CAG. The best-known example is the organization of Ms Oh in South Korea where over 1000 CAG applications for asylum have been rejected.

In early May, CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions founded in 1988) published a 135-page issue of its scholarly magazine about the administrative and legal management of The Church of Almighty God Asylum Cases from 2015 to 2021 in Europe and other continents. This extremely well documented report was written by Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR), James Richardson (University of Nevada, Reno, USA) and Rosita Šorytė (International Observatory of Religious Liberty of Refugees). Thousands of members of the CAG have escaped China, where they are heavily persecuted, to seek asylum abroad. Their asylum cases offer a unique opportunity for a comparative study of how religion-based refugee claims are dealt with by administrative authorities and courts of law in several different countries. The article examines and summarizes 271 decisions rendered in CAG asylum cases throughout the world,

and analyzes the main issues that led to grant or deny asylum.

Roland Delcourt, a 76-year-old Belgian citizen, presents himself as follows on the website of The Brussels Times: “I am a former student of UCL and the School of Journalism. I got my start in the daily newspaper La Cité. I worked with the Iranian press before the revolution and then in Belgium for various women’s magazines. I have been travelling in China since 1999. In 2005, I met my wife, Wang Xu, in Beijing.”

He mainly writes on social media and blogs. When Laurène Beaumont was hunted by prominent media all over Europe he immediately flew to her rescue.

All his recent articles accessible from open sources reveal his full support for China’s policies, in particular concerning the COVID-19, and whip those who criticize China’s responsibility in the pandemic.

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