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## CHINA / National

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## Russian expert tags Falun Gong as international cult

(Xinhua)

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BEIJING -- Russian expert in sect studies Professor Alexander Dvorkin has tagged Falun Gong as an international cult at a forum in Beijing and said all healthy and righteous forces in the world should unite to combat cults.

Cults harm individuals, families, societies and countries like "cancerous cells" in a healthy body, said Dvorkin, president of the Russian Association of Religious and Cultic Studies Centers in an interview with Xinhua after attending a Sino-Russian Forum on sect studies in Beijing on Thursday.

"They would turn individuals into tools of cults, and destroy their families," he said. "Cults make no contribution to the society. But they kept absorbing human resources and wealth from it.

"Like cancerous cells, they obtain nutrition from the healthy body of society until it collapses."

He said that in the case of Falun Gong, the cult's head Li Hongzhi bases its headquarters in New York and the activities of Falun Gong have infiltrated to many countries and entered various social circles.

"The Falun Gong practitioners feel they do not belong to any country and act entirely in accordance with Li's will. The cult even gained support from other international cults and from the governments and parliaments of some western countries."

Dvorkin said cults can be identified by four characteristics. First, the founder of a cult either calls himself God, or the only way to God. Second, cults usually have methods, which are easily acceptable to people, to achieve their goals. Third, cults are well organized with strict rules, and has a vertical totalitarian structure of leadership. Fourth, cults are deceptive, they can even change a person's character and turn them into tools for cults.

The 52-year-old scholar is a prominent sectologist, historian and theologian. He has published more than 500 articles and more than a dozen books, which were translated into 16 languages.

Prof. Dvorkin said every cult is an independent kingdom. Followers of the cults would do anything that is beneficial to their organizations, and did not abide by laws and ethics. They would regard all the people as their enemies, and the anti-humanity nature of cults may lead to large-scale manslaughter, suicide and injuries.

Falun Gong is a cult established in China in early 1990s. Its head Li Hongzhi first appealed to people through physical exercises to improve their health. Then he talked people into believing his theories of "doomsday" and "nirvana", and controlled their minds. More than 1,700 practitioners are alleged to have died from practicing Falun Gong.

Dvorkin said Falun Gong was not able to practice "truthfulness", "benevolence" and "forbearance". They often lied, and never said anything truthful.

Li Hongzhi claimed that Falun Gong stemmed from Buddhism, but in fact it had nothing to do with Buddhism, said Dvorkin. Li claimed that he was a scientist, but he did not even have basic scientific knowledge. He promised he would make every practitioner healthy and happy, but many practitioners died and their families were devastated.

He said cults always define themselves as "guardians of human rights", and Falun Gong is no exception. "We have to reveal how cults harm human rights and help people to see their true colors, and tell them who are the real 'guardians of human rights'."

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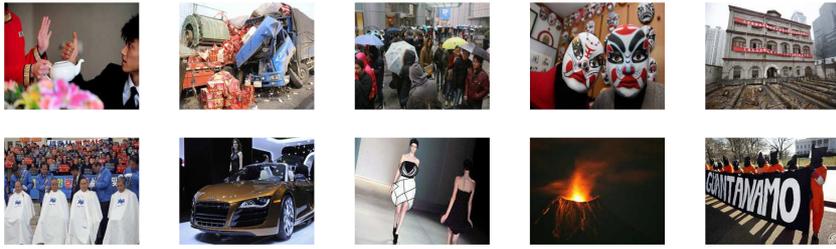
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