

the western parts of China where a growing Muslim population resides.

10. The Chinese are anti-Semitic

The myth: We see that China votes against Israel in the UN all the time. So the Chinese must be anti-Semitic.

The average Chinese person knows

nothing about Jews or Judaism. In Christian and Muslim nations, even if a person has never met a Jew, at least they know about us from their books, which often (especially in Muslim countries) picture us in anti-Semitic ways. They hate—or at least know about us—from their religious tradition. China has no such tradition. Many Chinese people have simply never heard of Jews or even know that we exist or existed.

Indeed, I remember a funny scene. Our

group was walking down an alleyway. Then some elderly Chinese came out of their doors to watch us pass. Several of us took out our cameras and took pictures. Then, from other doors in the alleyway, other Chinese people came out with cameras in their hands. They wanted to take pictures of us!

In short, the average Chinese person knows little or nothing about Jews. We were as much a spectacle to them as they to us. ■



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with his Chinese counterpart, Li Keqiang, May 8, 2013.

A Visit to a Chinese Slave Labor Factory

The Dark Side Of Utopia

Just as people don't like to think about the cow as they eat a steak, Westerners don't think about the Chinese who are forced to produce their apparel and electronics. These include everything from furniture, clothes and household items, down to computers and cell phones. The global hunger for cheap electronics and other products is driving Chinese factories to maintain millions of workers under inhuman conditions for extremely low wages.

Should you travel to Shenzhen, the sprawling industrial city in southern China, and visit the large complex belonging to Foxconn, you will immediately notice the huge safety nets. They surround everything taller than 20 feet above the ground, be it the buildings, the steel pillars

or light poles. The nets were installed after several employees of Foxconn jumped to their death from the roof.

Foxconn is a company serving Americans faithfully for a number of years. Your cell phone, and numerous other electronic devices, were likely produced in one of Foxconn's

factories. When you look at your phone you will only see the logo of the American (or Canadian or Japanese or Korean) company that produced it, such as Apple, HP, Microsoft, Dell, Blackberry, Samsung or Sony. Actually, the gadget was produced and assembled by a laborer who spent an exhaustive day somewhere in distant China working under impossible conditions for a pittance.

Foxconn, the largest private company in China, produces many of the products that constitute the \$150 billion consumer-electronics industry, be they motherboards, camera components, MP3 players and more. Foxconn's production is responsible for nearly 40% of those \$150 billion. The company employs one million workers! Half of them work at the Shenzhen complex that is now 20 years old.

Until a few years ago, few Americans heard of Foxconn. Everything changed in 2007, when it was reported that workers there were jumping off of the roofs. At first, most assumed that these were just isolated incidents. It soon became clear, however, that they were actually just the beginning of a trend—especially after around 150 Foxconn workers threatened to kill themselves in January 2012, to protest their horrendous work conditions.

Foxconn responded by forcing all new employees to sign a document promising that they would not kill themselves or become injured while at work. The company hoped to protect itself from the high cost of legal defense against the charges of the victims' families.

When more and more reports leaked out claiming that millions of Chinese were working in factories that were essentially sweatshops, Foxconn and its Western partners, especially Apple, could no longer ignore the issue. Apple Corporation's products account for a significant percentage of Foxconn's output. Investigations determined that Foxconn employees worked extremely long shifts for minimal wages and lived under inhumane conditions.

Apple and Samsung launched their own



Entrance to the massive Foxconn complex where many large American corporations manufacture their products.

investigations in an attempt to minimize the negative publicity. They promised to end the terrible abuse that was going on.

Factory of the World

China has been called the "Factory of the World." Both legitimate products and illegal counterfeits are mass-produced, covering everything from large furniture to minute electronics. Large companies such as Wal-Mart, Payless, Toys R Us, Nike and Gap all rely on China's massive production facilities to produce their merchandise in large quantities at incredibly low prices.

Despite the incredible growth of China's economy over the past decade, over 482 million Chinese—46% of the country's population—live on less than \$2 per day. Around 85% of China's poor come from tiny, remote villages, but their extreme poverty forces them to move to the large cities for work.

China's industrialized economy is heavily dependent on these cheap laborers, who comprise a majority of the country's workforce. There are over 150 million such "internal migrants," referring to Chinese citizens who are forced to leave their hometowns and wander to other parts of the country in order to earn a livelihood.

Before China opened its economy to the world in 1978, it maintained the same strict control over people's movements as other communist nations. Wandering from one city to another was forbidden. But once it switched over to a market-driven economy and opened its doors to foreign investors,

the massive base of cheap labor became a tremendous asset in expanding the country's economic growth. Restrictions on domestic travel were ignored, although they were never officially lifted. The result is that people can travel around for jobs, but they do not enjoy any government protection or rights.

The Chinese peasants who flee poverty at home are caught in a bitter trap where they find themselves compelled to work for nominal wages under extremely difficult conditions. Most of these workers are women whose pay is even lower than that of cheap male laborers. Their average monthly salary with overtime included is 1,690 Yuan, worth just over \$200. To earn that paltry sum they must work 10 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week. Many are not under contract and suffer constant discrimination. They share tiny quarters with 5 to 10 other workers in dormitories that lack basic amenities.

Many factories do not allow any sick leave. Nor are the workers permitted to bring their families to live with them. The communist government—which theoretically looks out for the rights of the working class and the discriminated—does not allow workers to unionize. Groups that attempt to lobby for the hapless laborers are targeted by the government for attack. Should workers dare protest, they are likely to face criminal charges and imprisonment. Protesting is illegal in China.

Both large foreign corporations and national factories benefit from the anti-union climate and lack of legal protection for workers. In a fantastic ironic twist, the communist system that was supposed to champion the cause of the working class is actually far more pro-big business and anti-laborer than the capitalist West!

Add to this the fact that there are virtually no regulations in place in China to protect factory workers. For example, many companies use highly toxic chemicals without providing workers with protective clothes or masks. Others use very dangerous equipment without offering the most basic

protection for the machines' operators. Last year, around one million workers were wounded on the job and around 20,000 were sickened as a result of their exposure to dangerous chemicals.



Workers prepare to begin their shift at a giant factory in Shenzhen.



The global hunger for cheap electronics drives Chinese factories to subject millions of Chinese workers to unhealthy and unfair work conditions.



In spite of its beautiful external appearance, Shenzhen is hiding very dark truths.