

# Deconstructing CCTV's Footage

## Deception or Self-Immolation?

In the afternoon of January 23rd, 2001, the alleged "self-immolation" incident took place on Tiananmen Square. China's government-controlled Xinhua News Agency broadcast its report of this incident to the whole world within two hours of the time of occurrence. They claimed that the self-immolators were Falun Gong practitioners. Normally, every report from Xinhua must be approved by all levels of government before it can be broadcast to the public. However, news of the self-immolations was broadcast in an unusually short time.

After analyzing CCTV's footage of the incident in slow motion, many suspicious points surfaced.

- 1) Government officials claim that Wang Jindong drank gasoline from the bottle before he set himself on fire, and that he was very seriously burned. How is it possible that a plastic bottle filled with gasoline, encompassed by a burning man's legs, remains in perfect condition?
- 2) It was reported that Wang was seriously burned, yet it is obvious that his hair remains untouched and forms a clear-cut line above his forehead.
- 3) The ears of the Wang Jindong in the CCTV film do not match those of the man in the photograph supplied by the government. In the photo of Wang, the shape of the ear is long, whereas the self-immolator's ear is small and round. Was he really Wang Jindong?
- 4) Practitioners of Falun Gong are required to sit with both legs crossed while meditating, called Full Lotus position. Beginners are allowed to sit in Half Lotus position, with just one leg crossed over the other. In the CCTV film, the man Xinhua claims to be a Falun Gong practitioner is not even sitting with one leg crossed. The media reported that Wang Jindong had been practicing Falun Gong since 1996. For someone who had practiced for so many years, isn't it strange that he is unable to sit in the required Full Lotus position?
- 5) *The Beijing Evening News* reported on February 16 that there were three or four policemen putting out the fire of each self-immolator and that the fires were put out one minute after they started. Police officers who patrol the Square do not normally carry firefighting equipment with them. The closest building to the immolation site is at least 10 minutes away. Where did the policemen get the equipment?



- 6) Normally, the Tiananmen Square surveillance camera covers a fixed area. But on this particular day, the camera follows the police to the scene and zooms in to focus on the incident. It seems as if this camera was set up specifically to tape the self-immolation.
- 7) The Chinese media claims that it was CNN journalists who recorded the close-up shots. But the head of the International Department of CNN stated that CNN did not film anything because at the very beginning of the incident, CNN reporters were arrested and their equipment confiscated.
- 8) In the film from CCTV, we can see a man carrying a camera bag at the scene. He seems to be shooting the whole incident. Why didn't the police stop him the way they stopped the CNN reporters?

The purpose of this apparent staging of multiple self-immolations is clearly to incite hatred among the Chinese people toward Falun Gong practitioners and to discredit Falun Gong in the eyes of the world. However, all information about the self-immolations that occurred in Tiananmen Square was blocked. Access to the victims and the scene after the incident was restricted. Only Chinese government officials were allowed to conduct any investigation. The interviews of the victims, conducted by the state-run Xinhua News Agency, resulted only in more questions about the authenticity of the self-immolations and further speculation about the role that Jiang's regime had in orchestrating it. No third-party investigation has ever been allowed to uncover the true facts. The horror of this self-immolation incident truly reveals the lengths that the Jiang Zemin regime will go to in its attempt to wipe out the practice of Falun Gong.