



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 23, 2019

English Girl Finds Plea for Help From Prisoners in China in Christmas Card

Florence Widdicombe, a six-year-old girl from Tooting, Southwest London, was writing Christmas cards to send to her friends when she made a startling discovery. Inside one of cards was the frightening message, “We are foreign prisoners in Shanghai Qingpu prison China. Forced to work against our will. Please help us and notify human rights organization.”

Florence showed the card to her father, who explained the meaning of the message to her. “It made me feel shocked,” she said, adding that when she learned what the message meant she felt “sad.”

Her father, Ben Widdicombe, said he first felt “incredulity” upon reading the message, at first thinking it was “some sort of prank.”

“But on reflection we realized it was potentially quite a serious thing,” he was quoted by the BBC. “I felt very shocked but also felt a responsibility to pass it on to Peter Humphrey as the author asked me to do.”

Peter Humphrey is a former journalist who was working as a corporate investigator when he was arrested in China in 2013 and imprisoned at Qingpu on what he described as “bogus charges that were never heard in court.”

After the Widdicombe family sent him a message via LinkedIn, Humphrey said he then contacted ex-prisoners who confirmed inmates at Qingpu had been forced to work. He then wrote about the story for the U.K. *Sunday Times*.

A report in the U.k. *Sun* stated that another more recent ex-prisoner told Humphrey, “They have been packing Christmas cards for Tesco, and also Tesco gift tags, for at least two years.”

Tesco, a giant supermarket chain across the U.K. that sold the card purchased by the Widdicombes, has now launched a probe into the origins of the card and has suspended use of the Chinese factory.

As disturbing as this report of inmates at a Chinese prison being subjected to forced labor is, it is hardly an anomaly. Communist nations such as China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba are by their very nature giant prisons and very little labor done within them can be said to be voluntary.

An article in *National Review* back in 2014, “China’s Slaves,” observed that China had overtaken the United States as the world’s largest economy. The author, reflecting on this, stated,

A lot of credit has been laid at the feet of Communist China’s march toward capitalism. But there’s an element missing from the discussion. An economy is bound to grow when it’s got one billion, three hundred and fifty-seven million people available for slave labor....





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A quick Internet search will yield photos of notes slipped into Chinese products on sale everywhere from Kmart to Saks. Notes begging for help, signed by Chinese slaves.

This is hardly news to readers of *The New American* and its predecessor publications, *American Opinion* and *The Review Of The News*, all of which for decades editorialized against any aid to — or trade with — communist countries, precisely because they amount to nationwide prison camps.

Image: BrianAJackson via iStock / Getty Images Plus

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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