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# Zhao Ziyang: A Major Opportunity Lost for China

By HON. DAVID KILGOUR

The publication this year of "Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang" contains important insights into modern China by the leader who for almost 15 years played a key role in the management of its economy. Tiananmen Square events in mid-1989 sidelined Zhao, but party-state governance has probably worsened since and Zhao's observations, recorded before his death in 2005, are useful to any student of China.

From the time of his house arrest in 1989 until his death, Zhao kept a secret audio journal at his home in Beijing. The memoir, which consisted of 30 tapes of about one hour's length each, constitutes a candid and eloquent cri de coeur by an intelligent and reflective leader, who constantly sought to do his best for the Chinese people.

## CAREER

Zhao's career as a Communist Party administrator began in Henan Province after the Japanese invasion in 1937 forced him to leave high school. He made his reputation as a reformer in Guangdong Province in the 1950s and 1960s when, at only 46 years of age, he became its party chief. He was purged during Mao's Cultural Revolution as a "revisionist," specifically for ending agricultural communes and leasing land to farmers in an attempt to recover from Mao's disastrous "Great Leap Forward" in which millions starved to death.

In 1971, Zhao was reinstated by the party leadership and within two years rose to become a member of its Central Committee. Only a year afterwards, he joined the Politburo Standing Committee and at Deng Xiaoping's request he later took charge of China's national economy as the Premier of the State Council.

By 1986, when Deng Xiaoping was firmly established as Paramount Leader of the party (despite being purged twice by Mao), he made Zhao head of a group invited to propose a political reform package. As acting General Secretary of the Party, Zhao proposed to separate the party from the government. He told Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989 that the rule of law should replace the rule of party officials and that more transparency was needed. The economy, he argued, needed an independent judiciary.

## TIANANMEN DISASTER

In 1989, Zhao's immediate hopes for a China with acceptable governance were dashed. In response to the student demonstrations in April against corruption and other issues, Zhao proposed a return to classes, dialogues, and punishment only those who had committed crimes. Unfortunately, a few days later, Deng, then aged 85 and

holding only the official position of Chair of the Military Commission, condemned the protests to party insiders. When his remarks were circulated by hardliner Li Peng, events at Tiananmen quickly escalated.

Zhao nonetheless called for the protesters to be dealt with "based on principles of democracy and law." A week later, when Deng decided to impose martial law, Zhao showed enormous courage by telling his mentor that he would find it difficult to carry out such an order. Two days later, he visited the Square and pleaded with the demonstrators to leave, knowing that a brutal assault was imminent.

This was in fact his last public appearance as Premier. Soon after the massacre of hundreds of students and others in and around Tiananmen Square, Zhao was stripped of all party offices and put under house arrest for 16 years until he died.

## THREE KEY INSIGHTS

### DENG XIAOPING

Deng, the acknowledged Paramount Leader from 1981 and 1997, is presented as sympathetically as possible by Zhao in his memoirs; he was, after all, Zhao's longtime friend and patron in the party. In addition, he was in the process of making Zhao General Secretary of the party when the Tiananmen events intervened. Nonetheless, Deng emerges as deeply flawed. While he is noted as supporting economic liberalization after the crippling central planning of Mao since 1949, including various initiatives by Zhao in the 1970s and 1980s, Deng at key moments opposed the rule of law, multi-party democracy, and virtually every principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He is also responsible for the terrible violence that was unleashed upon his own people at Tiananmen Square and for encouraging a small group of like-minded hardliners, Li Peng and Jiang Zemin, in particular, effectively to swallow the Party. China and the world would be much better places if Deng had continued to support Zhao.

### GOVERNANCE

In large part because of Deng's choices in 1989, the party-state of China continues to govern in the same fashion as some of the world's most authoritarian regimes. The country's constitution remains an empty vessel. Not even the party charter was heeded in the treatment of Zhao. For example, the decision to remove him as General Secretary of the Party was made by Deng and a few cronies at a meeting held in Deng's home. This was in complete violation of the charter, which mandated that such a decision must be made by the Standing Committee of the Politburo. As Zhao notes, two of its five members

(including Zhao) were not invited to attend. At a subsequent meeting of the Central Committee, Zhao's statement of defence was not even shown to all present. The book provides other examples of Cultural Revolution practices being applied against the people of China following 1989.

Zhao notes that even during the height of the class struggles in 1962, Mao did not deprive Marshal Peng Dehuai of his personal freedom over his criticisms, sending him instead to do useful work. Jiang Zemin, as General Secretary, claimed the party would govern according to the rule of law, but much of what happened to Zhao during Jiang Zemin's eight years as leader was a violation of both the laws of China and the party charter.

### ECONOMY

Zhao's insights into the reasons for his country's economic growth after 1978 are important. In his view, the key elements encouraging breakneck growth were allowing direct foreign investment, the creation of special economic zones on the coast, expanded autonomy for enterprises and allowing land to be leased.

Here, I offer some personal views (not Zhao's), including my essential concurrence with Peter Navarro, a professor at the University of California, who argues that consumer markets across the world have been "conquered" by China largely through cheating on trade practices. These include export subsidies, widespread counterfeiting and piracy of products, currency manipulation, and environmental, health and safety standards so weakly enforced that they have made China a very dangerous place to work.

Navarro says new trade legislation by all of China's trade partners could achieve fairer trade by enacting the following:

1-All must refrain from illegal export subsidies and currency manipulation and abide by the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO);

2-For currency manipulation, he supports what the bi-partisan U.S.-China Commission has recommended to the American Congress: define it as an illegal export subsidy and add it to other subsidies when calculating anti-dumping and countervail penalties;

3-Every trade partner must respect intellectual property; adopt and enforce health, safety and environmental regulations consistent with international norms; provide decent wages and working conditions; and ban the use of forced labour;

4-Adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy for anyone who sells or distributes pirated or counterfeit goods;

Defective and contaminated food and drugs must be blocked more effectively by measures which make it easier to hold importers liable

for selling foreign products that do harm to people or pets;

5-Despite growing criticism, China's party-state continues to trade its U.N. Security Council veto for energy, raw materials and access to markets from Angola to Burma to Zimbabwe. Increased monitoring and exposure of China's party-state activities everywhere is important;

6-To reverse the "race to the environmental bottom" in China, to require all to compete on a level playing field, and to reduce acid rain and smog affecting populations abroad, all bilateral and multilateral trade agreements should henceforth include strong provisions for protection of the natural environment.

Many Canadians allow our respect for the people of China to mute criticism of their government. When apologists for its party-state insist that the situation for a growing part of the population is getting better, many of us appear willing to overlook bad governance, official violence, growing social inequalities, widespread corruption, and chronic nepotism.

The Chinese people want the same things as Canadians, including, respect for all, education, public safety, good jobs, and a sustainable natural environment. Living standards have improved on the coast and in other urban areas in China, but there is a huge cost. Most Chinese continue to be exploited by the party-state and firms, often owned by or contracted for manufacturing to multinationals, which operate today across their country like 19th century American robber barons. This explains partly why the prices of consumer products "made in China" seem so low—the externalities are borne by workers, their families, and the natural environment.

### LABOUR CAMPS

In doing our final report on party-state organ pillaging from Falun Gong practitioners since 2001, David Matas and I visited about a dozen countries to interview adherents sent to China's forced labour camps since 1999, who managed to later leave the camps and the country itself. They told us of working in appalling conditions for up to 16 hours per day with no pay and little food, being cramped together on the floor for sleeping, and being tortured. As subcontractors to multinational companies, they were forced to make export products ranging from garments to chopsticks to Christmas decorations. This, of course, constitutes both gross corporate irresponsibility and violations of WTO rules.

The labour camps are outside the legal system and allow the party-state to send anyone to them for up to four years, without hearing or appeal. There is a link between the involuntary labour done since 1999 by tens of thousands of Falun Gong

practitioners and other prisoners in these camps and the resulting loss of manufacturing jobs in Canada and elsewhere. As of 2005, the number of camps across China was estimated at 340, with a capacity of about 300,000 inmates. In 2007, a US government report estimated that at least half of the inmates in the camps were Falun Gong.

Such grave abuses would not be occurring if the Chinese people enjoyed the rule of law and their government believed in the intrinsic importance of the most basic of human rights. It is the combination of totalitarian governance and "anything is permitted" economics that allows such practices to persist. Canada and other countries should ban forced labour exports.

The attempted crushing of democracy movements; truthful journalists; Buddhist, Falun Gong, Christian, Muslim, and other independent faith groups; human rights lawyers; and other legitimate civil society communities in recent years indicates that China's party-state must still be engaged with caution.

If its government stops abuses of human rights and takes steps to indicate that it wishes to treat its trade partners in a mutually beneficial way, the new century will bring harmony for China and its trading partners and neighbours. The Chinese people have the numbers, perseverance, self-discipline, entrepreneurship, intelligence, culture, and pride to make this new century better and more peaceful for the entire human family.

## CONCLUSION

The people of China and the entire world can only regret that Deng did not allow his protégé to continue leading the party and the government towards the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Imagine how different China and so many other countries—from Sudan to Burma to Iran—might have been today had the leader Zhao, who was so much more in tune with the rule of law and other good governance values emerging in numerous authoritarian countries in the 1980s and 1990s, succeeded. The world must hope that the next time a leader like Zhao rises in China, he or she will be allowed to succeed.

4  
PUZZLES. PEACE  
Suggested Solution

The handwriting is on the wall

Presented By

FREE THE CHILDREN  
children helping children through education  
PUZZLE ON P2

## QUITTING THE CCP



Inspired by the 'Nine Commentaries,' as of September 30, at 10:20 p.m.

61,203,650

Chinese people have announced their intentions to quit the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations on a special Web site established by The Epoch Times. Many others, unable to break through the Chinese Internet blockade, have posted their withdrawal statements on poles or buildings. Others have written them on Chinese currency. Read recent statements of Chinese quitting the Party, the latest news on the "Nine Commentaries," and more at <http://www.NineCommentaries.com>

The 'Nine Commentaries' is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China. This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialized here.

# Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

## Commentary Eight (cont.)

On the Chinese Communist Party is an evil cult

This political party, which openly announced its desire to "beat, smash, and rob," not only denies that its point of view is evil, but also declared self-righteously in the "Communist Manifesto," "The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional relations; no wonder that its development involved the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."

Where do traditional thoughts come from? According to the atheist's law of nature, traditional thoughts come naturally from the laws of nature and society. They are the result of systematic movements of the universe.

According to those who believe in God, however, human traditions and moral values are given by God.

Regardless of their origin, the most fundamental human morality, behavioral norms, and standards of judging good and bad are relatively stable; they have been the basis for regulating human behavior and maintaining social order for thousands of years.

If mankind lost the moral norms and standards for judging good and bad, wouldn't humans degenerate into animals? When the "Communist Manifesto" declares it will bring about "the most radical rupture with traditional relations," it threatens the basis for the normal existence of human society. The Communist Party was bound to become an evil cult that brings destruction to mankind.

The entire "Communist Manifesto," which sets forth the guiding principles for the communist party, is permeated with extreme pronouncements, but not a bit of kindness and tolerance. Marx and Engels thought they had found the law of social development through dialectical materialism. Hence, with the "truth" in hand, they questioned everything and denied everything. They stubbornly imposed the illu-

sions of communism on the people and did not hold back in advocating the use of violence to destroy existing social structures and cultural foundations. The "Communist Manifesto" had the effect of injecting into the newborn Communist Party an iniquitous specter that opposes the laws of heaven, exterminates human nature, and appears arrogant, extremely selfish, and totally unconstrained.

## IV. THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S DOOMSDAY THEORY

Marx and Engels instilled a wicked spirit into the Communist Party. Lenin established the Communist Party in Russia and, through the violence of villains, overthrew the transitional government built after the February Revolution,<sup>i</sup> aborted the bourgeois revolution in Russia, took over the government, and obtained a foothold for the communist cult.

However, Lenin's success did not make the proletarians win the world. Quite the contrary, as the first paragraph in the "Communist Manifesto" says, "All the powers of

old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter. ..." After the Communist Party was born, it immediately faced the crisis of its survival and feared elimination at any time.

After the October Revolution,<sup>ii</sup> the Russian Communists, or Bolsheviks, did not bring the people peace or bread, but only wanton killing. The front line was losing the war, and the revolution worsened the economy in the society. Hence, the people started to rebel. Civil war quickly spread to the entire nation, and the farmers refused to provide food to the cities.

A full-scale riot originated among the Cossacks near the River Don; its battle with the Red Army brought brutal bloodshed. The barbaric and brutal nature of the slaughter that took place in this battle can be seen from literature, such as Sholokhov's "Tikhii Don" and his other Don River story collections.

The troops, led by the former White Army Admiral Aleksandr Vailievich Kolchak and General Anton Denikin, almost overthrew the Russian Communist Party at one point. Even as a newborn po-

litical power, the Communist Party was opposed by almost the entire nation, perhaps because the communist cult was too evil to win the people's hearts.

The experience of the Chinese Communist Party was similar to Russia's. From the Mari Incident and April 12 Massacre,<sup>iii</sup> to being suppressed five times in areas the Chinese communists had controlled, and eventually being forced to undertake a 25,000-kilometer (15,600 mile) "Long March," the CCP always faced the crisis of being eliminated.

<sup>i</sup> The February Revolution refers to the Russian Bourgeois Revolution in February 1917, which resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II.

<sup>ii</sup> The October Revolution, also known as the Bolshevik Revolution, was led by Lenin and occurred in October 1917. During the revolution, the revolutionaries of the capitalist class who had overthrown the Tsar were murdered, thus strangling the Russian Bourgeois Revolution.

<sup>iii</sup> Both the Mari Incident and the April 12 Massacre refer to the Kuomintang's attacks on the CCP. The Mari Incident happened on May 21, 1927, in Changsha City, Hunan Province. The April 12 Massacre occurred on April 12, 1927, in Shanghai. In both cases, some CCP members and pro-CCP activists were attacked, arrested, or killed.

Letters to the Editor



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