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## Zhao Ziyang

### ???? "Gaige Licheng" (Traditional Chinese Version)



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Author: Zhao Ziyang

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## Description

How often can you peek behind the curtains of one of the most secretive governments in the world? *Prisoner of the State* is the first book to give readers a front row seat to the secret inner workings of China's government. It is the story of Premier Zhao Ziyang, the man who brought liberal change to that nation and who, at the height of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, tried to stop the massacre and was dethroned for his efforts.

When China's army moved in, killing hundreds of students and other demonstrators, Zhao was placed under house arrest at his home on a quiet alley in Beijing. China's most promising change agent had been disgraced, along with the policies he stood for. The premier spent the last sixteen years of his life, up until his death in 2005, in seclusion. An occasional detail about his life would slip out: reports of a golf excursion, a photo of his aging visage, a leaked letter to China's leaders. But China scholars often lamented that Zhao never had his final say.

As it turns out, Zhao did produce a memoir in complete secrecy. He methodically recorded his thoughts and recollections on what had happened behind the scenes during many of modern China's most critical moments. The tapes he produced were smuggled out of the country and form the basis for *Prisoner of the State*. In this audio journal, Zhao provides intimate details about the Tiananmen crackdown; he describes the ploys and double crosses China's top leaders use to gain advantage over one another; and he talks of the necessity for China to adopt democracy in order to achieve long-term stability.

The China that Zhao portrays is not some long-lost dynasty. It is today's China, where the nation's leaders accept economic freedom but continue to resist political change.

If Zhao had survived -- that is, if the hard-line hadn't prevailed during Tiananmen -- he might have been able to steer China's political system toward more openness and tolerance.

Zhao's call to begin lifting the Party's control over China's life -- to let a little freedom into the public square -- is remarkable coming from a man who had once dominated that square. Although Zhao now speaks from the grave in this moving and riveting memoir, his voice has the moral power to make China sit up and listen.

## Insightful reviews

Trish: Zhao Ziyang, former Chairman of the Communist Party in China, was politically sidelined in May 1989 and went into house arrest as a result of his opposition to the government response to students occupying Tiananmen Square in Beijing. This fascinating personal and secret memoir recorded in the years after his arrest was published only after Zhao's death in 2005. Bao Pu, son of Zhao's trusted advisor, secretary, and speech writer, Bao Tong, transcribed, translated, and published the documents in his publishing house in Hong Kong in 2009. Simon & Schuster published an edition with a Foreword by Roderick MacFarquhar, noted China scholar.

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In that Foreword, MacFarquhar notes that Zhao was an economic reformer but a political conservative in the 1980's, but during his house arrest he became increasingly convinced that political change was both necessary and advantageous, i.e., economic development must be accompanied by development of an independent judiciary and the rule of law. MacFarquhar asks readers to consider that it took some years of house arrest for Zhao to come to these conclusions and wonders how much more difficult it would be for those involved in the day-to-day management of state and skirmishes within the Politburo to come to similar conclusions.

Though Zhao Ziyang has been erased from public discourse in China today, he did have some notion that the demands of the students in Tiananmen were not essentially undermining the state, but all about modifying the state to better represent the will of the people. Reading the full narrative makes clear that Zhao's position as Party Chairman in the spring of 1989 was already tenuous. He still had Deng's support, but that was all. After his refusal to carry out Deng's wishes in handling the student demonstration, his political career was finished.

Hu Yaobang, in the chapter about his ouster, sounds politically tone deaf. When faced with conflict Hu ignored it or went out of the country. Hu was Party Chairman when Zhao was Premier. Hu was forced to resign in January 1987, and Zhao was asked to take his place, though he'd made clear that he did not want the role of Communist Party Chairman. He would have preferred to stay focused on economic issues as Premier.

Zhao speculates that Hu was forced out because he suggested in interviews and by "loose talk" that Deng Xiaoping would (should) retire from making decisions. Zhao did the exact opposite with Gorbachev in 1989, suggesting that Deng was really in control of everything, and that Gorbachev, if he wanted the "final word" on anything, should meet with Deng. A little later we understand the reasons for this more fully.

Corporate types who have lived/worked with a group of people who disagree but who never openly voice their disagreements and instead jockey for position by leaks or by willfully excluding someone from discussions will recognize immediately the stomach-churning turmoil of the 1980's government of the most populous country on earth. Each individual was a planetary power shifting his weight yet no one was precisely sure what the actual sticking points were since no one voiced their opposition openly.

It appears that the shift of Zhao to position of General Secretary of the Party from Premier in 1987 was the beginning of his downfall. Though Deng Xiaoping created a Central Economic and Financial Leading Group with the intention that Zhao would keep his hold over the management of the economy while at the same time handling Party affairs, Zhao was sidelined and attacked by more conservative ideologues Li Xiannian, Wang Zhen, Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun.

The real writing on Zhao's headstone was Zhao's failure to push through price reforms in the fall of 1988. He'd made preparation, proposed and supported the idea but when it came to implementation, he choked. Zhao's chapter on official corruption gives a clear explanation of how vast sums can be channeled and manipulated through government enterprises unless there is price reform. Deng Xiaoping had made clear that he wanted this work done because all

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the economic reform efforts in the world couldn't work properly without price reform. Deng said repeatedly that Zhao should be strong and if it all went sideways, that Deng would take the blame. But Zhao couldn't pull the trigger, and the conservatives then had the ammunition they needed to refuse his suggestions as bank runs, inflation, and lack of available money slowed the economy. Reforms were retrenched.

Zhao later said that this was the thing he most regretted. Indeed, we learn something about the nature of leadership with his failure in this instance: a leader doesn't necessarily have to be fearless, but he must be bold. A leader may be afraid, but he sometimes must make a bold move despite that fear (think Shackleton). I think Deng understood this. Deng himself was vulnerable to ultraconservatives who sought to sideline his influence, and he tried to preempt their attempts by resigning from all posts and suggesting other elderly statesmen do the same.

What happens next is just the burying of the body. By 1989 Zhao must have known his position was extremely tenuous, and therefore convinced Deng not to resign his posts, knowing he would lose his powerful mentor and his one friend in the upper reaches of power. Zhao finally split with Deng over the student demonstrations, which Deng felt should be dealt with harshly, by forcing the students from the Square. If Western observers thought the political center in China was in turmoil during Tiananmen, they had missed the fact that power was being consolidated, in fact. Deng stepped down from his position as Chairman of Central Military Commission in 1989, despite promising Zhao that he would wait a year. Deng was still consulted on official matters until 1992.

Zhao never was released from house arrest, and very rarely left his home. He died in 2005. His memoir of his final years was discovered at his home in plain sight, recorded over his grandchildren's music tapes and tapes of Chinese opera.

This memoir was both heartbreaking and heart stirring. It has the feel of truth—Zhao Ziyang's truth—which is all we ask of a memoirist. Bao Pu did a great job condensing the material, providing explanatory text, and making a worthwhile testament to Zhao Ziyang's life.

Gary: This unprecedented look inside the inner workings of the sometimes Byzantine political workings of the inner circle of the Communist Party of China leading up to June 4, 1989 (The Tiananmen Square Incident) is quite a read! If you can make it past all the names of the seemingly endless line of Chinese bureaucrats that the author mentions, it is amazing how close China really was to democratic reforms. Deng Xiaoping comes out looking not like the economic savior of modern China (although he is credited with setting the stage for future economic growth), but instead as a politically inflexible conservative fixated on maintaining stability at all costs. It was all the more interesting to listen to this Audible audiobook while traversing some of the grounds in Beijing where it was set. Even more interesting is contrasting Zhao's explanations of what was going on behind the scenes at the highest levels of the Party with the view presented by the U.S. Ambassador to China at the time of the 6/4 Incident, James Lilley. Lilley had only just arrived in China as the events leading to 6/4 unfolded and it seems quite clear to me that the U.S. diplomatic corps was in full "reactive" mode concerning what was taking place - they could only stand back and watch. In all, an essential contribution to the

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understanding of the Tiananmen Square Incident and an interesting primer on how power is truly exercised in China.

Bob Pearson: Assembled by family and friends of former Premier Zhao Ziyang, for me today, this book is quite valuable for its history of how the Communist Party leadership in China moved from Maoist orthodoxy to pragmatic reform, as exemplified in Zhao's life. Deng Xiaoping, the man who twice survived purges, to take command of China during the 80's, turns out to have been surprisingly conservative politically. All this is strikingly relevant today. The same issue Zhao supported, that political reform should keep track with economic reform, is on the table every day for the Chinese leadership now. So far, the answer has been that there is a special "Chinese" model for economic growth. Just see the article by Evan Osnos in the October 11, 2010 New Yorker for the Chinese version of the "this time is different" argument. Zhao, who is now written out of Chinese history, may come back to haunt his oppressors one day. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo will inspire young Chinese, like those who demonstrated in Tiananmen 21 years ago, to wonder if they can't be both prosperous and free.

RyanRosewood: five megastar now not for the book, yet for the person, the very individual that shared altruistic character, made large contribution to the then poor, conservative, insane state.

Summisse: Zhao cries out from the grave, Democracy and loose markets has to be China's future."???????? (yao chi liang, zhao Ziyang)." The wordplay on his name, loosely translated, potential "if you need to feed yourself, persist with Ziyang."  
(Wikipedia)<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/con...>

Joseph: This e-book was once a desirable inspect the internal workings of the CCP in the course of the 1980s, particularly throughout the scholar protests of 1989, and it's a must-read for any student or scholar of latest chinese language heritage or politics. even though i actually came across it riveting, i will definitely know how non-China fingers may be bored through huge elements of it discussing the negotiations of financial coverage in the higher degrees of the party. the picture that Zhao Ziyang's memoir finds of rival factions jockeying for energy is almost unprecedented, and you possibly can see how simply the activities of some individuals, and hence the modern heritage of 1 of the world's most vital countries, may have replaced or been affected so easily.

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