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Party History and What The People Can't be Told

Amid a multifaceted campaign to [maintain ideological orthodoxy](#), President Xi Jinping's administration has reinforced efforts to preserve the CCP's monopoly on [history](#), reinvigorating a drive against "historical nihilism," or challenges to the version of [history](#) on which the Party's legitimacy partly rests. The ongoing drive has been spurred on by the belief that [slackness on this front](#) helped to [bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union](#).

CDT Chinese editors have posted leaked internal minutes from a discussion of a speech delivered by Xi Jinping to the [Central Party School](#) in 2010, prior to his ascendancy to PRC President and CCP General Secretary. In the discussion of Xi's speech, the [panelists display their grasp of the "spirit of Xi Jinping's words," which lay out justification for the limits placed on the officially-sanctioned public understanding of Party history](#). CDT has translated the minutes in full:

Participants: Luo, Wang, Li Feng, Ren, Guo, Han, Wang, Hu, Xie, Cheng, Chen, Liu, Cao, various professors, and 14 additional doctorate advisors.

Host: University President, Politburo Standing Committee member, and Vice President Comrade Xi Jinping's speech at our campus on July 24 (2010) was extremely important, indicating for us the future path for the study of Party history, and the formulation of principles for publicity and publication. Everyone knows, over the past year there has been some confusion over how to treat questions about Party history—mainly about whether or not to clarify some controversial questions about that history, how to evaluate controversial issues, what is mentionable while teaching, what can be divulged to the public, what can be published, whether teaching staff should have access to confidential archives, whether to allow implicated parties to be interviewed, what is passable research conduct, what is considered research results, whether or not to link position titles to salaries, and etc. Headmaster Xi's lecture solved all of these questions. All of our work needs to offer unwavering support for the Party's interests, and defense of Party leadership. To accomplish these two points, we must do everything in our power to firmly refuse anything that degrades the glorious image of our Party—resolutely refrain from both writing and from doing these things. I will now invite some comrades to speak.

Luo: I firmly endorse the spirit of Comrade Xi Jinping's speech, especially in our Party school, which isn't a normal Party school, but is the Central Party School. Our students aren't ordinary students, they all make up the nucleus and backbone of our Party. Our mission is to allow these students to replace the nucleus, to replace the backbone, permit them to believe that our Party has always stood for the [Three Represents](#) since the day it was established, nearly 80 years it has been magnanimously correct—this mustn't be at all vague. If a student asks certain historical questions, especially about negative things, how are we to respond? I think it is only a matter of time before someone makes a mistake, even the Party has a learning process. We also must stress that opportunists and overly ambitious members can interfere in the great direction of our Party, but we have defeated them, further indicating the [great glory and correctness](#) of our Party.

Wang: Some data from our Party history cannot be published for the common people. Why? Isn't there a saying that the masses have the "right to know"? Yes, that is one aspect. Another aspect is that our Party has the right to confidentiality. All countries, and all parties have secrets which cannot be made public, and moreover disallows inquiries. Just as every individual has a right to privacy, the Party also has a right to privacy—that right cannot be infringed upon. If some of our Party's secrets are made known to the public, it is certain to cause ideological confusion and lead to doubt over the legitimacy of our Party's power. That would be chaos. Once there is chaos, how can society be harmonious, how can the economy develop, how can the livelihood of the common people be raised? The clearest case is the [disturbance of 1989](#), we of course can't again speak of this because it cannot be easily explained. Insisting on speaking of this will only expose scars, it won't change things, it would only coerce more bleeding. We didn't speak, you see, and so these 20 years have seen good development. Our parents don't speak, schools don't speak, and our youth don't become aware—this is good for everyone. Also, the [difficult period from 1959-61](#), if you officially told the commoners that

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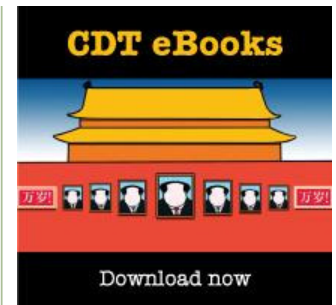
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our Party was in control during this period we'd be responsible for the starvation of 38 million and countless of villages, how dreadful! Even more Chinese people than the Japanese killed, even more efficiently, easily, and without losing soldiers. If the common people learned this truth they would rebel against us. Therefore, we say that Party history has a bottom line, and that crossing this line is a break of the rules and must be punished. This is the meaning of Comrade Xi Jinping's address.

Ren: I cannot understand why some people must attempt to clarify historical matters with their own conclusions in publications and lectures. We say you must look forward, no need to become tangled up in history. Don't speak, it's better for everybody. One manifestation of the intelligence of the Chinese people is recognizing it is "sometimes better not to get to the bottom of the truth, and instead just let it go." All leaders, doctorate advisors, and professors present, we are Party members and researchers teaching the history of the Party, our interests and the interests of the party are inseparably linked—a glory for one is a glory for all, a loss for one a loss for all. We all have spiritual wealth, high-ranking positions, and social status. Our material wealth has substantially improved from 20 years ago—housing, cars, household electronics, vacations, medical insurance, savings, ample food and clothing, retirement insurance, many of us have children, and even our grandchildren will have houses waiting for them. If you die, your work unit will cover your funeral service. I've also left the country to arrive in developed nations and discover that our material life is no less than in other countries. This is all due to our Party, the one to which we are inseparably linked, as closely as fish to water. This is not to say that you aren't allowed to speak about history, just first consider the pros and cons, or better yet don't bring it up. Premier Zhou [Enlai] once said there are some internal Party matters that can't be discussed until after death. Speaking of negative aspects of Party history is like smashing your own feet with rocks, and also will seriously confuse the thinking of the masses. Once there is confusion, everything is finished, just as it was during the [Cultural Revolution](#). So we must not speak carelessly, this is in line with the broad interests of the masses. It goes without saying that certain things don't need to be known by the masses, some facts about the history of the Party, let's not fake our passion.

Guo: I will bring up the case of the War of Resistance against Japan. For decades, for generations, everyone has known and believed that our Party in 1934 launched the [Long March](#), climbing snow-capped mountains and passing grasslands in order to head north and resist Japan. After arriving in Shanbei, it became the cornerstone of the War of Resistance against Japan, leading people from across the country to resist for eight years and defeat the Japanese aggressors. We also always denounced the Guomindang government, like the saying from the Beijing opera "Shajiabang": "The Guomindang reactionaries have sold their country's glory, faking resistance against Japan, thoroughly opposed to the Communist Party, accepting compromise and acting as their accomplices." This has already deeply entered people's hearts, and people across the country believe this [propaganda](#). However, some who teach and research Party history somehow get access to the Party's decision at the 1937 Luochuan meeting in Shaanbei. There our Party formulated a resistance strategy, namely to stay out of large-scale conflict with the Japanese, save and accumulate strength, expand ranks, and allow the Guomindang to fight with the Japanese. After both sides were injured and waiting until the Japanese withdraw, we took the opportunity to seize political power. Secondly, we must thank Japan for invading China, without their invasion there wouldn't be a CCP today, so our thanks is sincere. Now let's take a close look at this, can we freely make public these two matters, let all the common people know? If we did, the people will say that the Party played part in a conspiracy and cheated the country for decades. Are there more things that the CCP has hidden from us for generations? So, that which shouldn't be talked about mustn't be talked about, that which shouldn't be acknowledged mustn't be acknowledged.

Han: Some say that it is difficult to discuss the history of the Party for the 30 years of 1949 to 1979, I acknowledge this. We want to disseminate our Party's [greatness](#), [glory](#), and [correctness](#), but there aren't many good things to promote from this period. However, as long as we study earnestly and deeply comprehend the spirit of Headmaster Xi's speech, it won't be hard to accomplish this task. We are not officials. We don't hold executive power in the government or Party. If one has such power, then their audience has to believe what is say, whether or not they truly believe it. As teachers of the Party School, if we want to convince others, we must first have confidence in ourselves. We have experienced so many ups and downs, but are still here, carefree and with potential, keeping up with the times, are able to be modern teachers and advisors and explain that we are able to adapt to new circumstances, accomplish new assignments, and produce persuasive articles and teaching modules. Another of our advantages is that our students have all received the essence of the Party cadres, they understand discipline, consistency with the central authorities, and



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the guiding [ideology](#). They will not be drawn to misguided practices and ideas, whatever we say is what they will hear, and they won't give us any problems. Headmaster Xi asked us to stick to the mainline when talking about Party history, but what is the mainline about the three decades between 1949 and 1979? That we adhered to the path towards socialism, adhered to the Party leadership, adhered to Marxism-Leninism, and all the people of the nation united as they listened to the words of the Party. There was no division, we overcame unimaginable difficulties laying the foundation for the rapid development of the past 30 years. According to this mainline there were no problems and no refutations. We all have extraordinary brains, and I believe we can say this well.

Hu: Two years ago I saw an article which attacked Party writings, saying that we seized power of the gun and the pen, and that after our Party came to power maintained the regime along those two poles. The meaning of that article was that one suppresses the people's protests by force of gun first, and then uses the pen to distort and cover up historical facts. Which country doesn't rely on the gun to defend its regime? In western countries the police all carry arms, and use the police as a replacement army to safeguard the regime. Our country's police don't carry arms, and use armed police or the army in times of crisis, which is essentially the same. As for the pen, I think today it is even more significant than the gun barrel. Our country is different from western nations, where people have developed habits over the years, involuntarily accepting the words of politicians and the viewpoints of various publications, everyone can freely speak. No matter what the press or the public thinks of the ruling party, it will remain in power until the next election. Our national conditions are not the same. After the founding of the nation, regardless of what our Party says, the common people all believe it to be true, if anyone says that the Party has made a mistake the whole country will condemn them and punish them. This is the success of our propaganda work, this is the effect of the pen, this is a tradition we cannot discard. Today, what do these commoners easily believe? Any information unfavorable to our Party. And one commoner will pass this information to 10, then those 10 to 100, and then it will become a rebellion. Under these circumstances, you mustn't give the common people anything about our history, and never admit to so-called "events". If you admit to one, they will come and question you about ten more, and you'll be in an awkward situation. As the saying goes, "Good news never passes the gate while bad news travels far and wide," in this way as soon as you speak it it multiplies into innumerable crimes. Due to this, I full-heartedly endorse Headmaster Xi's speech, the spirit of which tells us to say what must be said, and not to say what shouldn't be said.

Xie: Speaking of Party history cannot be separated from the Party's guiding ideology. What is the guiding ideology of our Party? All along we've spoken of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong thought, this is the main line of Party ideology. Prior to 1949 this was easy, no matter what questions other asked, in the end we were victorious and seized political power. Under the guidance of the incorrect path victory was impossible, there would be no success by luck, this is called *reductio ad absurdum*, nobody could refute it. How do we speak of the 30 years after liberation? Some teachers suggest that false ideology guided the revolution and construction. I think the main direction of the campaign to suppress counterrevolutionaries was correct, only it killed a few too many, jailed a few too many, and overdid reeducation-through-labor. But without a bit of red terror, our regime wouldn't be stable. Including the anti-rightist, anti-reactionary, and [Four Cleanups](#) campaigns, despite mistakes, these campaigns strengthened the sacred ideas of the Party in the masses' minds, reinforced the idea that anyone opposed to the Party will be sent to reeducation. The very fact that our Party maintained firm power even after a decade of [the Cultural Revolution](#) has something to do with these movements. Until today, you must say that any one who goes against the Party must be scared even in their sleep. Those who are part of the so-called democracy movement and advocate open elections also won't dare to publicly go against the Party. I just talked about internal affairs, now I will move into international affairs. Before 1979, one of the important parts of our Party's guiding ideology was the international opposition of revisionism, criticizing the revisionist clique led by the Soviet Union. Our Party, under the command of Chairman Mao, published nine classical articles, the "Nine Commentaries." They comprehensively, deeply, and accurately mirrored the guiding ideology of our Party at that time. We criticize revisionism, which in practice to warm the domestic cadres and masses, nobody dares to retort, commoners accept and inherit this ideology, which played a significant role in stabilizing things after the Cultural Revolution. But today if you let the commoners look at that "Nine Commentaries" it will be very troublesome, they will say that it's all babbling nonsense, that the CCP has practiced revisionism a hundredfold more than the Soviet revisionists. It's written there in black and white, we can't argue it. Today, middle-aged age and young people are basically unaware and uninterested in these things. Chairman Mao said "it is important that one knows his own limits," we don't want to invite trouble, this is the deeper meaning of Headmaster Xi's



speech. From 1979 until today, these 30 years are easy to deal with. We can confidently state that our Party is constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics under correct ideology and guidance. Deng Xiaoping theory, Jiang Zemin's Three Represents, Hu Jintao's Scientific Outlook on Development, they all successfully attracted international attention to the development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. This proves the greatness and correctness of our Party. The whole world has been won over by our past 30 years, I say not so humbly, the whole world is studying us, making pilgrimage here to learn from us. Foreigners criticize us saying this is bad, that is bad, but do they stop coming to China? Do they dare compare their speed of development with ours? You can't deny that our Party's propaganda strategy has been a great victory. We must inherit it and continue it.

Cheng: Speaking of [Mao Zedong Thought](#), especially during the period from 1949-1979, we must first look at the major policies of the time. During the 2009 National Holiday, our military parade had a formation dedicated to Mao Zedong Thought. The main gate of Zhongnanhai, the backbone and central nervous system of our Party and government, displayed the slogan "Long Live the Invincible Mao Zedong Thought." The [huge portrait of Mao Zedong still hangs](#) at the main gate of Tiananmen. This explicitly states that, for one, you cannot reject Mao Zedong, he is still the greatest leader of our Party. Secondly, Mao Zedong Thought still triumphs and is still the leading policy of our Party. We have summarized that Mao Zedong Thought after the founding of the nation was the dictatorship of the proletariat theory on continuing revolution, we must take class struggle as the guiding principle, oppose the restoration of capitalism, oppose and reverse revisionism, and be alert for revisionist elements hiding in the Party seeking to usurp power. Today, without exception, these mustn't be talked about again. What problems could arise? Our students don't ask these questions, they have special status and boundless prospects. It is only when people among our teaching and research staff raise these questions, speaking about collectivization, joint public-private operation, anti-rightist, the [Three Red Banners](#), the [Sino-Soviet Split](#), the [Four Cleanups](#), and the [Cultural Revolution](#) all as initiated by Mao Zedong, all as Mao Zedong Thought put into practice, or all end up as failure. How are we to treat this issue? I think, first, not in classroom lectures. Second, off-campus lecturers also shouldn't speak of them by their own accord. Third, if there really are people who are not amenable to reason who ask these questions, don't get nervous. A few days ago some people asked these questions and our Professor Cao responded very cleverly. I suggest that we organize a few people to research a theoretical answer, and consider it an academic research product. Then in the future when we run into trouble we can handle it with ease and save embarrassment.

Chen: I say again that Party history cannot be separated from the current situation, as the current situation's biggest challenge is so-called corruption. When the common people talk about the Party, they don't say how great it is, they don't say how much thanks they have for it, but they immediately talk about how much corruption there is. They use metaphors such as disease throughout the entire body that is incurable. They use every negative Chinese expression and still have more to say, combining ancient and modern times, connecting home to abroad, joining rhyme and rhythm, weaving common phrases into new terms that discredit our Party, and lead to chaos. Raising the issue of anti-corruption to the central authorities highest priority is a matter of life and death for the Party. I believe that this is critical. Of course this is akin to not treating a disease, especially a slowly developing one. It's like treating only the symptoms and not getting to the root cause—the patient will not die, they can still last another ten years. Internal Party corruption is what type of sickness? A chronic disease, an acute illness, or a cancer? In any case, I believe that it is curable, and that if it is not cured it will spread very quickly. If we use preventative therapy it won't be eradicated, and we won't be able to stand a major surgery. This is a new problem for our Party in a new era, extremely challenging. Severely punishing corrupt elements is not a problem, randomly find several cadres and you will surely discover corruption, sentence them to 8-10 years no problem. But this is not eradicating the issue from its roots, and it can easily grow back. When talking about the root cause, some people get a shine in their eyes and say that the root is that we don't have democracy and freedom, which would ensure people the right of choice, the right to criticize, and the right to supervise. With critique and supervision the root cause of corruption could be found, and with the right to choice the people can then eliminate them. This is all great to hear but is ultimately useless. The bourgeois democratic freedom of the U.S., now that times have changed, we no longer speak of it like that, but that doesn't mean we can accept it. Party and state leader Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, and He Guoqiang have all stressed again and again that China absolutely must not engage in western democratic freedoms and the separation of powers because history has entrusted the CCP to represent the interests of all its people. This is a status and responsibility that cannot allow any person or political party to challenge it. An even less appropriate analogy is "divine sovereignty." Without the

persistent leadership of the CCP, China will turn to chaos, and the people will suffer greatly. Of course, none of the speeches of our leader's have clearly stated what is wrong with western democratic freedoms, they don't discuss that in detail, and this is precisely the justification for our Party school's existence. The honorable task to discuss western system's wrongs in detail must be taken on by our school's teachers and researchers.

Cao: When central leaders put forth major national policies, we must then elaborate on them to allow all levels of leadership not only to implement but also to clearly understand them. That is the responsibility of our Central Party School. Why can only the Central Standing Committee act as our headmaster? Because our students will become cadres at all levels in the future, some of them have already, and they will listen to the central authorities. The headmaster directly represent the central authorities, and his speech has absolute authority. In Chinese history, only the [Whampoa Military Academy](#) and the Yan'an resistance have such status. Our students come to learn theory, but in fact they come to receive political thought education, not to do academic research. We give them a diploma so they can go and launch their work. Students are all successors of important Party positions, manage their thinking well, allow them to take the correct path, this is our responsibility. For them to do their jobs well starts first with us. We must profoundly understand the spirit of headmaster Xi's words and manage our own mouths well, don't say what must not be said.

Liu: I believe we must be very careful when discussing corruption with students. The common people say that our Party has already spoken of corruption and need not say it again, and our students have heard it and need not hear it again. In today's economy-centered atmosphere, everything is about creating wealth, accumulating capital, again creating wealth, and again accumulating capital. For individuals and families, it's all about acquiring more money, more assets, and more enjoyment. And everyone has this legal right. The easiest and fastest way to do this is through a combination of hard work, knowledge, good luck, courage, and power. Our Party is the ruling party, and all levels of officials are intelligent, daring, and qualified to get rich. Officials usually deal with politics publicly, and secretly engage in commerce, or let their wives and children do business to make money. The easiest way is to not engage in business, and let the merchants deliver money, so that all sides benefit. This is the reason it is so easy today to catch corrupt elements in China, you don't need police or investigators, the common people could at any moment say who is a corrupt official. Our Party's current policy is to catch the typical model, kill one to warn a hundred, not to catch them all, which would lead to chaos. If we investigate everyone and arrest everyone, we would need ten times the police, courts, and lawyers and we'd still not have enough. And do you think the current stock of police, courts, and lawyers are all clean themselves? If we arrest them all throughout all level of the Party and government there would be no way to function, it would be paralysis, just like during the Cultural Revolution. As the saying goes, "if there are too many violations, it is hard to implement the law." As we speak to our students, of course we emphasize that the amount of corrupt officials is extremely small, that the overwhelming majority are honestly pursuing public affairs, that is the main line. This is headmaster Xi's spirit. In fact, corruption is opposed, twenty years ago if you embezzled 5,000 yuan you were a criminal, but today if you embezzle 100,000 yuan it doesn't matter worth a fart.

Host: There are still others who wish to speak, but in the interest of time, the conference must stop here. Today, I am very happy to see that all comrades in our Central Party School Party History Teaching Department have a particularly high level of spirit, and fully believe in integrating this spirit into their teaching and research. I also see that our teaching staff and research environment is different than that of off-campus. We have great advantages to understand the spirit of the central government, and we will continue to enjoy this advantage.

Before this meeting adjourns I want to remind everyone that this symposium was held internally. I saw some comrades taking notes. Our campus is not the same as general educational institutions, and our point of view is unique. In order to avoid unneeded and unhealthy argument and the undermining of social harmony, please don't disseminate this. [\[Chinese\]](#)

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