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# Former Communist Chief's Memoir Outlines Tiananmen Struggle

by SKY CANAVES

HONG KONG -- A new memoir by the deceased former Communist Party chief ousted for refusing to help suppress 1989 pro-democracy protests offers a rare window into the power struggle that surrounded the bloody crackdown as its 20th anniversary nears.

"Prisoner of State: The Secret Journal of Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang," to be officially released this month in the U.S. by Simon & Schuster, is based on 30 hours of tapes recorded by Mr. Zhao before his death in 2005 and smuggled out of China. The Wall Street Journal purchased a copy from a bookstore in Hong Kong.

The book marks the first time a former top Chinese leader has spoken so openly about his experiences at the center of power. Mr. Zhao, a proponent of economic reforms, was general secretary of the Communist Party when students and others held pro-democracy protests in April and May of 1989 centered in Beijing's massive Tiananmen Square. In the book, Mr. Zhao discusses how he opposed the imposition of martial law, as well as the ultimate use of armed force to quell the largely non-violent demonstrations on the night of June 3 and the morning of June 4, 1989.

The timing of the book is likely to be a sore point for Beijing. China's government, which has defended its response to the protests, has never given a full accounting of the casualties that resulted from the crackdown, but hundreds of people are believed to have been killed. Authorities have taken efforts to suppress commemoration of the anniversary, including the detention or harassment of activists in recent months, say overseas human rights groups.

On Wednesday, the family of Zhou Yongjun, an exiled participant in the 1989 democracy movement and permanent U.S. resident, said he was detained while entering China in November and has been held without charge since then, according to the Associated Press.

In the preface to the memoir, co-editor Adi Ignatius suggests that Mr. Zhao, in recording the tapes, "perhaps was making his arguments for a future generation of leaders who may revisit his case and decide whether he should be rehabilitated in the memory of the Party, and of the nation."

The memoir opens with Mr. Zhao's recollections of the dramatic events leading up to June 4, which were recorded based on notes Mr. Zhao took down in 1992. Recalling the night of June 3, he said: "While sitting in the courtyard with my family, I heard intense gunfire. A tragedy to shock the world had not been averted, and was happening after all."

The book says other party leaders marginalized Mr. Zhao quickly after the crackdown, stripping him of power and placing him under house arrest, where he remained until his death in January 2005.

Mr. Zhao, who was never charged with any crimes, traced his fruitless efforts to be released. The book also covers other

events, such as China's post-1978 economic reforms, and the power struggles within the upper echelons of the leadership that presaged his own fall from grace. Well before students took over Tiananmen Square in 1989, Mr. Zhao was aware of a growing "Overthrow Zhao" campaign within the party, the book says.

The book ends with Mr. Zhao's reflections on China's political future. Although politically conservative when he promoted economic reforms in the mid-1980s, in his later years Mr. Zhao came to realize that major political reform was needed to sustain China's economic progress. "In fact, it is the Western parliamentary democratic system that has demonstrated the most vitality. It seems that this system is currently the best one available," Mr. Zhao said.

Another more detailed inside account of the events leading up to the June 4 crackdown, "The Tiananmen Papers," was published in 2001. Its editors said it was based on a collection of classified documents smuggled out of China. The Chinese government claims that "The Tiananmen Papers" is based on forgeries. Perhaps to counter similar accusations against Zhao's memoirs, the book's editors are making clips of Mr. Zhao's recordings publicly available.

**Write to Sky Canaves at [sky.canaves@wsj.com](mailto:sky.canaves@wsj.com)**

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