

Recalling the erased past of Jian Yang

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A recent conversation with a friend sparked the thought that I should write something to highlight again the continuing questions about National MP Jian Yang. After all, it is now only a year or so until the next election and there is no sign National won't again have Jian Yang on their party list.

My friend has just come back from visiting his family in China. He started by telling me how helpless he felt witnessing first-hand the lies in China's state media about the Hong Kong extradition bill protests.

Then he turned his topic to the Luoyang People's Liberation Army University of Foreign Language. Speaking very confidently he said, "Jian Yang is surely a spy. I know two graduates from the school who lived near me in my hometown. They both studied Russian and I heard one of them works somewhere near Sino-Russian border to monitor Russian radios."

That's just one person's view of course, but my friend went on "It is an entirely militarised school. Even a chef working in the school's kitchen wears a military uniform, let alone someone like Jian Yang..."

The school my friend mentioned is the PLA university that has been the centre of debate over Jian Yang's intelligence background in China.

Since Newsroom and the FT broke Jian Yang's undisclosed past two years ago this month I've talked about Jian Yang to some Chinese immigrants, friends of other ethnicities, and even a few National MPs I've met. Few people seem to find Jian Yang's defence, claiming he was just a civilian officer teaching in this spy school, convincing.

All of the sources I have researched are publicly accessible, although most of them are in Chinese. For instance, here is an article published in the official website of the Ministry of Defence of the PRC which describes [in some detail how a female student, in full military uniform, spends her day at the university](#). The article begins with an image of the motto of university, displayed in both Chinese and English, of "Dedication to the mission, Knowledge of the world".

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The nature of the mission is not specified but the student has explicitly explained her focus in the following words. [At 7:30am](#), she records, is the time for female students to recite new vocabulary. Here she explains why she is so dedicated to her studies.

In front of the newly-built school building, we are testing each other's words, and the clear and beautiful voice echoes over the building. The girls in the foreign language school know that every word we have learnt, every piece of information about the target country, and every knowledge of the foreign army are indispensable foundation for building a strong military dream. Every morning in the square, the sound of reading is the strength of our ability to fight for victory. Everywhere on campus is a great place to read in the morning.

Isn't it implausible or maybe a bit of stupidity if Jian Yang still asks us to believe that he was just an English teacher, without any knowledge of or interest in what his students were focused on?

But even if he still claims that, he can't avoid scrutiny of the information he declared in his [residency application](#) which was released in mid-October 2017.

In this nine-page document, Jian Yang declared that the whole period from 1978 until 1993, the year he departed for Australia was spent solely at one school, Luoyang University.

But the facts reveal, and Jian Yang later acknowledged, that the relevant certificates are falsely made to cover up his total 15 years with the two military universities, the PLA Air Force Engineering Institute and Luoyang PLA University of Foreign Language. The notarised document in both Chinese and English declares that Jian Yang enrolled in Luoyang University in 1978. But a simple search - [Wikipedia](#) or the Chinese [Baidu](#) - indicates that that university wasn't even founded until 1980.

Jian Yang eventually told us that Beijing instructed him to misrepresent his past, but never explained the notarised certificate. It won't be just anyone who has the authority to instruct a state-owned university to issue a series of false documents just to satisfy a request from an ordinary Chinese citizen. Chinese intelligence authorities perhaps?

It is commonly understood among the Chinese community that an active serviceman in China is not allowed to emigrate overseas, and does not even have an ordinary citizen's passport.

Soon after I read information released in 2017, I interviewed Yu Luo who is the second son of [Ruiqing Luo](#), a very senior figure in the PLA under Mao. Luo's father was the chief of the PLA general staff department, while the PLA language school

Jian Yang had worked is just directly under the administration of division three of this PLA general staff department.

Yu Luo, who resided in the USA, told me on the phone that at the time when he quit the PLA in 1989, he had to submit a formal resignation application and to denounce his membership of the CCP. After completing these procedures, he was required to transfer to a local business and wait several years before he was able to leave China.

Luo clearly rejected the possibility that a member of the military with rank can obtain a passport when he is still an active serviceman.

Yu Luo's comments are consistent with the immigration experience of one of my friends in New Zealand. As a doctor working in a military hospital, my friend left the hospital first to settle himself in an ordinary business for some years before he was even able to get a passport, and thus be able to apply for a visa to New Zealand.

Against this sort of background, the apparent ability of Jian Yang to get a passport while he was still teaching in a spy language school should be a matter for NZSIS to look into, and something that should raise questions for the National Party bosses.

In the past two years I have seen Jian Yang's smiling face on his sign displayed on Auckland's Great South Road. The same smile I have seen in pictures of a number of occasions including him meeting Politburo member Guo Shengkun on his recent trip to China with Simon Bridges, and his visit to the new PRC consul general in Auckland with the National Party's president Peter Goodfellow in July.



I hope that one day Jian Yang will smile on some other groups from China. Among the Chinese diaspora they include Falun Gong practitioners and human rights

activists. They also include the Xinjiang Uyghurs, exiled Tibetans, and members of house churches in China. Most of them fled to New Zealand to escape persecution. Many don't speak much English and so aren't easily about to tell their stories to National's leaders.

I could have chosen not to write this article, but the embarrassment of Simon Bridges' performance in the staged interview with CGTN, the CCP's English-language mouthpiece, has led me to decide to give Jian Yang a chance.

A chance to stop encouraging and assisting New Zealand politicians like Simon Bridges to worship the brutal regime and people like its representative Guo Shengkun, one of the most powerful figures in the CCP who is responsible for all of the religious and political repression apparatus. To stop praising the CCP. And to stop hiding from the local English-language media, or anyone who might ask awkward questions.

Over the last two to three decades, there have been significantly increasing numbers of Chinese who have moved overseas and the majority of these immigrants are well educated middle class and business people. The main reason for them to leave China is that they hated the corruption, pollution, and suppression which are all the problems caused by the CCP's 70 years in power.

It is naive to believe pro-CCP politicians can receive more votes from their Chinese constituents for praising Xi and Guo, or for being silent about a brutal regime that continues to corrupt and repress their families and relatives in China.

Jian Yang's role in helping his leaders keep close to the CCP dictators won't help National increase support from the wider Chinese community.

Although any news and comments covering Jian Yang's controversy in the CCP funded NZ Chinese media is largely censored, there are still some independent platforms like this [YouTube piece](#) that can be a good reference for National Party leaders to evaluate him.

The next election is approaching and the public deserve better answers from Jian Yang.

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