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THE COSTLY QUEST FOR THE RULE OF LAW
Zhao Faqi, a private investor who took his local government to the Supreme People's Court and won, has disappeared. Years ago, Zhao bought the exploration rights for a mine, but when the facility was found to be rich in coal, local officials cancelled his contract. In 2017, the Supreme People's Court ruled that Zhao's contract was valid, but never enforced the decision. Instead, Judge Wang Linqing – who had revealed that his colleague Zhou Qiang, China's top judge, had pressured other judges to rule against Zhao – was shown "confessing" on state TV to sealing files and making a false accusation. Cui Yongyuan, the talk show host who brought Zhao's case to light, has been silenced. In March, government investigators released the findings of a damning follow-up investigation against Zhao, and his story has been scrubbed online. "I've faced a lot of risks and pressure because of this lawsuit," Zhao said soon before he disappeared. "Chinese entrepreneurs yearn for the rule of law to replace arbitrary power. You can't say someone is protected one day and take away protection the next day." (London *Independent*, March 10, 2019)

CHAIRMAN XI CLEANS HOUSE
Back in January, Xi Jinping warned top leaders that "the party is facing sharp and serious dangers of slackness in spirit, lack of ability, distance from the people, and being passive and corrupt." "This is an overall judgment based on the actual situation," he said. While Xi has previously assembled the party's full Central Committee for "study" seminars, this was the first one held without all members. Soon after, the Central Committee issued a directive urging leaders "to veto cadres who are politically incompetent and resolutely replace those who are in a leading position." Vetoed cadres will be ineligible for promotions, or worse. According to last year's report from the country's top antigraft body, cadres throughout the government frequently fail to follow party instructions or demonstrate sufficient loyalty to Xi. (Bloomberg, January 22, 2019)

CHINESE OFFICIALS CHAFE AT NEW OVERSIGHT
There is growing dissatisfaction among officials in China's ministries and regional governments amid tightening restrictions and ideological indoctrination. Before Chairman Xi's anti-corruption campaign, many senior officials would skip work while collecting their pay and enjoying perks. Now such behavior is rare, but increased inspections and oversight by the party's disciplinary watchdog have left many cadres disillusioned. After 1978, the CPC institutionalized a system to groom young capable cadres and assign them to key positions, but that system is now breaking down as political loyalty has supersedes ability, and many are uncertain about what behavior might soon be considered disloyal. (Bloomberg, March 12, 2019)

NEW PRESSURE ON EDUCATORS...
Chairman Xi has directed educators to respond to "false ideas and thoughts" in their political and ideological classes. Inspectors are monitoring teachers for "improper" remarks in the classroom. Addressing a symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory in Beijing, Xi said the CPC must nurture future generations to support its leadership and China's socialist system. "It is essential to gradually open and upgrade ideological and political theory courses in primary, secondary and tertiary schools, which is an important guarantee for training future generations who are well-prepared to join the socialist cause. Ideological and political courses should deliver the country's mainstream ideology and directly respond to false ideas and thoughts. We are fully confident of and capable of running ideological and political theory courses better. Thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era should be used to educate people and guide students to strengthen their confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics and to boost patriotism," Xi told the group. (Reuters, March 18, 2019)

...AS CHINESE UNIVERSITIES INCREASINGLY TOE THE LINE

Nine universities with historical links to the CPC have formed the Yanhe Alliance, a league to educate the next generation of elite party talent. "The nine institutions spread the sparks of revolution across the whole country, starting a prairie fire," the Beijing Institute of Technology said in a public statement. Members include the Beijing Institute of Technology, Renmin University, the Agricultural University of China, Beijing Foreign Studies University, The Central Conservatory of Music, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Central Academy of Drama, Central University for Nationalities and Yan'an University. "They want to perpetuate this red DNA," notes scholar Zha Jianguo. "Everything in mainland China is being partified now, including the education system. These nine institutions are likely just the start. This partification is aimed at freedom of education; it will set limits and forbidden areas to free thought among students." (*Radio Free Asia*, March 22, 2019)

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