BOOK TALK

Frank Dikötter on the Rise of the Party

Writer and historian Frank Dikötter discusses his new book, The Tyranny of Utopia, and the rise of the Communist Party of China.

By Jeremy Goldkorn, Founder and Editor-in-Chief, Sinopsis.cz (Subscribe)

SINOPSIS · JULY 1, 2025

Sign in to view Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Sinopsis.cz

Sign in to view Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Sinopsis.cz

Sign in to view Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Jeremy Goldkorn's Profile, Follow Sinopsis.cz

> Every dictatorship portrays itself as a democracy. The dictatorship is supposed to represent the people, but the people are never consulted. Elections are suffered by the Romans, or by aristocrats, or by bourgeois, or autocrats.
>
> — *Frank Dikötter*

Speakers

Frank Dikötter is a historian of modern China. He is Chair Professor of Humanities at the University of Hong Kong and Professor of Chinese Studies at SOAS University of London. His books include *The Tyranny of Utopia*, *Red Dawn Over China*, *The Cultural Revolution*, *Mao's Great Famine*, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, and *Crime, Punishment and Prison in Modern China*.

Jeremy Goldkorn is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Sinopsis.cz, a weekly newsletter and podcast about China, and the Founder and Managing Partner of Beijing-based consultancy Goldkorn Strategy. He is a regular contributor to Sinopsis, and has been a guest on the podcast many times. He has also been interviewed on Sinopsis, on podcasts, on Instagram, on newsletters.

Transcript

Hyperlinks, in a mouse-and-keyboard interface, signal the importance and value of a link. Hyperlinks, in a tactile interface, signal the importance and value of a finger. Hyperlinks, in a voice interface, signal the importance and value of a voice. Hyperlinks, in a brain-computer interface, signal the importance and value of a thought. Hyperlinks, in a neural interface, signal the importance and value of a neural impulse. Hyperlinks, in a brain-to-brain interface, signal the importance and value of a shared thought. Hyperlinks, in a neural-to-neural interface, signal the importance and value of a shared neural impulse.

Frank Dikötter: Mao's Great Famine. Through the Gate of Heaven, Mao's Great Famine.

Jeremy Goldkorn: Hello and welcome to Sinopsis. Today we are talking to Frank Dikötter, who is a historian of modern China. He's the author of many, many, many books, including *The Tyranny of Utopia*, which is his latest book, and also *Red Dawn Over China*, which is his latest book. He's also the author of *The Cultural Revolution*, *Mao's Great Famine*, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, and *Crime, Punishment and Prison in Modern China*. He's also the author of a very, very, very long trilogy of books about the Communist Party of China. He's also a professor at the University of Hong Kong and a professor of Chinese studies at SOAS University of London. Frank, welcome to Sinopsis.

Frank Dikötter: Thank you very much for having me.

Jeremy Goldkorn: Frank, I'm very, very, very,