

Deadly Quiet City: True Stories from Wuhan

Murong Xuecun

The New Press (Mar 7, 2023)

Hardcover \$27.99 (336pp)

978-1-62097-792-7

Murong Xuecun's *Deadly Quiet City* is a harrowing compilation of testimonies from people living in Wuhan, China, during the beginning of COVID-19.

Split into eight chapters, each dedicated to a Chinese person living in Wuhan in early 2020, the book explores how the totalitarian Chinese government's "propaganda machine" allowed the emergence of a new virus to become a global pandemic of major consequence. But first, Murong describes his background and explains why he chose to travel to Wuhan when most people wanted to get out. His account of the secrecy and danger involved, should the government become aware of his actions and intentions, make it clear just how much his subjects risked in order to tell the truth.

The testimonies are graphic and heartrending. They range from people who were forced to bend to the official narrative, as with a doctor who wasn't allowed to wear protective gear lest the public learn that the virus existed, to those who were denied care because no official wanted the responsibility of signing off on a hospital transfer, as with a man who died from COVID-19 while caring for his ill wife. Throughout the volume, two common threads emerge: that the Chinese government will go to any length to silence those speaking against its decisions, and that their much acclaimed "transparency" and successful handling of the virus aren't based on fact.

The book's prose is precise and straightforward. It includes a few metaphors—a spare but effective technique to bring emotions forward, highlighting even more the devastating experiences of the people from Wuhan. And this work closes with a timeline of the pandemic compiled by Clive Hamilton, providing further context for the horrifying events described herein.

Deadly Quiet City is a historical record of COVID-19 in Wuhan, bringing the voices of its people to the fore.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (March / April 2023)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.