

EXCLUSIVE CCP VIRUS COVERAGE

How the Chinese Communist Party Endangered the World

The Chinese Communist Party's coverup led to a pandemic that now threatens the lives of people around the globe. What really happened, and what lessons can we learn?

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Senators Call for Reckoning With China's Dictatorship

CADEN PEARSON

Tasmanian Liberal Senator Eric Abetz said there needs to be a "reckoning with the Chinese communist dictatorship and its leadership must be held to account" for its culpability in the spread of the CCP virus, commonly known as novel coronavirus.

"The decency of the Chinese people is not the issue. The Communist dictatorship's decency under which the Chinese people suffer, however, does need to be questioned," he told The Epoch Times.

Abetz listed a number of reasons why the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) should be held to account.

"Firstly, the unacceptable 'wet markets' (the likely source) have not been closed although previous warnings and concerns were delivered after similar type outbreaks, e.g. SARS." He noted that Prime Minister Scott Morrison has also called for the markets to be shut down.

"Secondly, the fate of the doctor [Li Wenliang] who first alerted the Chinese communist dictatorship of the virus needs to be fully explained," he said.

After Dr. Li posted about the virus to a WeChat group of his medical school colleagues, Li was called in by police and reprimanded for "spreading rumors online" and "severely disrupting social order." Li ultimately contracted COVID-19 and subsequently died.

"Thirdly, the seriousness of the virus was known to the regime, which is why they got their operatives in Australia to purchase all the personal protective equipment they could and ship it to China. A particularly reprehensible activity," Abetz said.

"We are paying the heavy price of a communist regime's failure to live up to its moral and ethical duty in initially informing, and advising, and then in helping other countries

MICHAEL MASTERS/GETTY IMAGES



Senator Eric Abetz speaks in the Senate at Parliament House in Canberra on Nov. 28, 2017.

My question is not aimed at the Chinese people but at the People's Republic of China communist [regime].

Malcolm Roberts, One Nation Senator

deal with the epidemic," he said.

Abetz said an international probe into any cover-up about the CCP virus is warranted but only after the pandemic has passed.

"The focus at this time must be to fight this insidious virus," he said.

Regarding the long-term impact of the pandemic on Australia, Abetz said, "The pandemic will refocus national policy on the wisdom of our forefathers' commitment to the timeless virtues of being prepared, self-reliance, not putting all one's eggs in one basket, putting aside for a rainy day, and government cannot fix everything."

"There will be a substantial recalibration of priorities as the repayment burden hits," he said.

China Should Pay

One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts told The Epoch Times that Australians are angry over "the secrecy and misinformation from the People's Republic of China—or the Chinese Communist Party."

Roberts on March 31 posted a question on Twitter asking whether China should "pay compensation for unleashing COVID-19 on the world?"

His post was liked over 117,000 times and retweeted 28,000 times. "My question is not aimed at the

Chinese people but at the People's Republic of China communist [regime]," he said.

Roberts said an international body of health experts should be convened to conduct an investigation after which the international community should be able to design a mechanism for compensation from the CCP.

UK-based think tank Henry Jackson Society has since called for countries to take legal action against the CCP for its initial coverup of the virus. According to its report, damages would amount to at least \$4 trillion, which is how much G-7 countries have spent to stimulate their economies in response to the pandemic.

Roberts also said that the World Health Organisation has been complicit in the CCP's cover-up. "It is clearly incompetent and corrupt, and it is weak, and there is no accountability," he said.

"The WHO lacks teeth. It bowed to China, spreading Chinese misinformation in January that there was no human-to-human transmission of this virus. Two months later, in March, the WHO said that the time to act was two months ago—which was January—the time when it was saying there was no human-to-human transmission, don't worry

about it."

"It is hopeless, bumbling, dishonest, and inherently corrupt, like the whole of the United Nations," said Roberts.

Roberts said China has a duty of care that extends beyond its borders. "It is Australia's number one trading partner. When countries engage in the world that carries a responsibility to other countries," he said. "The concept of a relationship is built on trust."

Looking ahead, Roberts said Australia needs to buy Australian, and bring back the nation's productive capacity, and economic resilience. "We need to manufacture the basics in this country," he said.

Newscorp reported April 3 that politicians including Labor MP Anthony Byrne, Liberal MP Andrew Hastie, Liberal MP Tim Wilson, Liberal MP Dave Sharma, Labor MP Julian Hill, Liberal Senator James Paterson, Liberal Senator Alex Antic, LNP Senator Amanda Stoker, and Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching said they will be calling for a reset on Australia's relationship with China's ruling CCP, which is also the country's biggest trading partner.

Epoch Times reporter Rachel Qu contributed to this report.

ABOUT US

The Epoch Times is a media organisation dedicated to seeking the truth through insightful and independent journalism.

Standing outside of political interests and the pursuit of profit, our starting point and our goal is to create a media for the public benefit, to be truly responsible to society.

We endeavor to educate readers about today’s most important topics, seeking to broaden and uplift minds. We believe that rational, balanced debate is key for fostering a healthy democracy and a compassionate society.

As an independent media outlet, we use our freedom to investigate issues overlooked—or avoided—by other media outlets. We seek to highlight solutions and what’s good in society rather than what divides us.

We report respectfully, compassionately, and rigorously.

We stand against the destruction wrought by communism, including the harm done to cultures around the world.

We are inspired in this by our own experience. The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 to bring honest and uncensored news to people oppressed by the lies and violence in communist China.

We still believe journalism is a noble vocation, but only when it genuinely seeks to serve its communities and help them to flourish. In all that we do, we will hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity. This is our promise to you.

CONTACT US

Australian Epoch Times Ltd.
49A Treacy St,
Hurstville NSW 2220
02 8988 5600

Advertising
ad@epochtimes.com.au

Subscriptions
subscribe@epochtimes.com.au

General Inquiries
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Editor’s Note

We hope this finds you and your loved ones well. We live in challenging times right now, and this special edition is intended to explain the reasons behind why we find ourselves in such a situation.

Daily life in Australia has been upended, as governments seek to stop the spread of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) virus (see “Giving the Right Name to the Virus Causing a Worldwide Pandemic” below). The virus is highly transmissible, and in some cases, deadly.

Businesses have been shuttered and large numbers of people have lost their jobs with almost no notice. While the federal government is scrambling to provide aid, many households are suddenly facing economic uncertainty, if not hardship.

Some of the businesses that have closed may not be able to reopen. With the stock market responding to the pandemic with a devastating plunge, many people’s retirement savings may be threatened.

These are times that test us. In normal times, we tend to focus on the day-to-day. In abnormal times such as these, we may find our thoughts turning to what is fundamental.

Ultimately, character and morality count. If our encounter with the CCP virus pushes us to look within and ask ourselves how we can become better people, then perhaps we will have found a blessing in this chaos.

The immorality and corruption of the Chinese regime helps explain the fundamental way in which we must look at the pandemic.

If the CCP had shown compassion for the Chinese people and if it had acted honestly and openly, much of China, and the world, could have been spared this calamity.

A recent study by the University of Southampton found that if “non-pharmaceutical interventions—such as early detection, isolation of cases, travel restrictions and cordon sanitaire ... could have been conducted one week, two weeks, or three weeks earlier, cases could have been reduced by 66 percent, 86 percent and 95 percent, respectively—significantly limiting the geographical spread of the disease.”

In fact, the CCP, out of concern for its power, censored knowledge of this new, highly transmissible, SARS-like illness for six weeks, allowing millions to travel from the epicentre in Wuhan to the rest of China. The virus quickly spread across China and around the world.

Now, the CCP is waging a propaganda campaign claiming it has been a model in fighting the disease. The same campaign has been disseminating the lie that the virus originated in the United States.

This special edition sets the record straight. If the world understands why the CCP virus has wreaked such havoc, then it will understand the need to reject the CCP and its contagion of lies, selfishness, and lust for power.

EDITORIAL

Giving the Right Name to the Virus Causing a Worldwide Pandemic

EDITORIAL BOARD

There has been controversy recently about what to call the virus that has unleashed a worldwide pandemic. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) prefers “novel coronavirus.” Others have referred to it as the “Wuhan virus,” after its place of origin, as is common in naming diseases.

The Epoch Times suggests a more accurate name is the “CCP virus,” and calls upon others to join us in adopting this name.

The name holds the CCP accountable for its wanton disregard of human life and consequent spawning of a pandemic that has put untold numbers in countries around the world at risk, while creating widespread fear and devastating the economies of nations trying to cope with this disease.

After all, CCP officials knew in early December that the virus had appeared in Wuhan, but they sat on the information for six weeks. They arrested those who tried to warn of the danger, accusing them of spreading “rumors,” and employed the regime’s rigorous censorship to prevent media coverage and to delete any mentions of it from social media.

What might have been contained was allowed silently to spread, showing up in all of China. Individuals who might have protected themselves became victims, in numbers far greater than the CCP has admitted. By late January, there were reports that all of the crematoria in



Medical staff move a patient infected with the CCP virus from an ambulance to a hospital in Seoul, South Korea, on March 9, 2020.

Wuhan were operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week to deal with the crush of dead bodies.

Meanwhile, the measures taken to quarantine and treat the population of Wuhan were grotesquely inhumane. Apartment buildings were welded shut. Temporary “hospitals” were created that actually served as jails for those believed to be sick with the virus. Locked into these places with no medical treatment and little food, the unfortunates were trapped there until death.

In lying about the danger facing China, the CCP was acting according to its usual script. The CCP’s dominant narrative is that the Party is “great, glorious, and correct.” The presence of the deadly CCP virus in Wuhan, or, in 2003, of the SARS virus,

doesn’t fit the script. As with SARS, the first response was denial.

But in dealing with this virus, denial is not acceptable. The world needs to know its origin, and the CCP has refused to cooperate. Outside experts have not been allowed into Wuhan.

And there is understandable concern about the activities of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, China’s only P4 lab, one meant for working with easily transmitted pathogens that can cause fatal illness. As the official narratives offered for the source of the virus have been disproven, questions have been raised about whether the CCP virus leaked from the institute.

In any case, as questions about the origin of the virus have gone unanswered, the CCP has begun

throwing out wild charges that the United States is responsible. This will be met around the world with perplexity, if not ridicule. President Donald Trump has pushed back by referring to the “Chinese virus.”

But the CCP likely intends these charges of U.S. responsibility for its domestic audience. The CCP has victimized the Chinese people in its first denial of the virus and now seeks to victimize them again by shifting responsibility for its actions to others.

And this points out why the name “CCP virus” is needed, to distinguish the victims from the victimizer. The people of Wuhan and of China are the victims of the CCP’s arrogance and incompetence, expressed in this viral pandemic.

The name CCP virus also sounds a warning: Those nations and individuals close to the CCP are the ones suffering the worst effects from this virus, as is seen in the raging infections in the CCP’s close ally Iran and in Italy, the only G-7 nation to sign onto the Belt and Road Initiative. Taiwan and Hong Kong, which have rejected the CCP—Taiwan in a recent landslide national election and Hong Kong in months of massive demonstrations—have had relatively few infections.

Finally, the CCP virus reminds the people of the world that the source of the virus is itself evil. This is a communist virus, and with the name CCP virus, The Epoch Times reminds the world of the cure: ending the CCP.

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH and TRADITION

LIES KILL, TRUTH SAVES

HELP ALL AUSTRALIANS SEE THROUGH THE CCP’S DECEPTION

Due to budget restraints, this special edition was only sent to a limited number of Australian households. Therefore, we ask you to share **CCPVirusTruth.com** with at least 5 friends.

HELP US TO SPREAD THE TRUTH TODAY

How China’s Coverup Led to a Global Pandemic

NICOLE HAO

The global pandemic now ravaging the world—disrupting everyday life, overwhelming hospital systems, and killing thousands—began as a small outbreak in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

When 27 people were hospitalized with a mysterious pneumonia in early December 2019, eight doctors tried to warn their colleagues on social media.

When the online posts went viral, they were deleted by censors. Then, local police summoned the doctors for a verbal warning, requiring that they sign a statement promising not to engage in any more “rumor-mongering.”

Thus began the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) coverup of one of the most deadly outbreaks in recent history.

Revelations from recent medical studies, media investigations, and Chinese government officials themselves illustrate how the Chinese Communist Party’s deceit and mismanagement allowed the disease to spread, first across the country, then outside its borders to more than 185 countries and territories.

A recent study published in Science magazine examined data from 375 Chinese cities, and estimated that 86 percent of all infections in Wuhan were left undocumented prior to travel restrictions and lockdown measures enacted by local authorities on Jan. 23. This contributed to the virus’s quick global spread, the scientists concluded.

Initial Response

In its initial report confirming the presence of a new virus outbreak, the Wuhan health commission originally stated that the first patient exhibited symptoms on Dec. 12, 2019. The commission later revised the date to Dec. 8, without explanation. But a study based on data from Wuhan hospitals published in The Lancet medical journal revealed that the first patient presented symptoms on Dec. 1.

The Wuhan health commission didn’t reveal the outbreak to the public until Dec. 31.

Meanwhile, authorities downplayed the threat of the virus.

In a Jan. 10 interview with the Chinese Communist Party’s mouth-



An official in a protective suit checks on an elderly man who collapsed and died on a street near a hospital in Wuhan on Jan. 30, 2020.

piece newspaper People’s Daily, Wang Guangfa, one of China’s top respiratory specialists within China’s National Health Commission, assured the public that the disease could be contained.

Lack of Precautions

The Wuhan government went on business as usual. The city didn’t screen passengers and check body temperatures at airports, railway stations, intercity coach stations, and maritime passenger terminals until Jan. 14.

The city also allowed large-scale gatherings to go on. The Baibuting residential compound in Jiang’an district organized a large-scale dinner in advance of the Lunar New Year on Jan. 18, with more than 40,000 families participating.

Baibuting residents later told The Epoch Times that scores of people contracted COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, after attending the banquet.

The Wuhan Health Commission didn’t reveal the outbreak to the public until Dec. 31. Meanwhile, authorities downplayed the threat of the virus.

In preparation for Lunar New Year festivities, many Chinese, unaware of the virus’s contagiousness, traveled across the country or abroad to spend time with their families. Wuhan’s mayor revealed

that in the period before the Jan. 23 lockdown, 5 million residents had left the city.

Laurie Garrett, an expert on epidemics and former Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist known for her coverage of the 1995 Ebola outbreak, believes Chinese authorities had the chance to contain the spread in the first week of January.

Human Transmission

Chinese authorities initially denied that the disease could be transmitted between humans. The World Health Organization (WHO), citing Chinese research, stated on Jan. 14 that there was “no clear evidence” of human-to-human transmission.

Days later, on Jan. 20, the Chinese regime finally admitted that the virus was contagious. But authorities knew of the virus’s potential to spread much earlier.

In December, a woman who had never visited the Wuhan food market—which authorities initially linked to the outbreak—was diagnosed with the disease after her husband, who worked at the market, contracted the virus. The husband, who died on Jan. 9, was China’s first confirmed death related to the virus.

Garrett said that such a “coverup has put the people of China at risk and put the whole world at risk.”

She added that the Chinese regime similarly covered up the 2002–2003 SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak. As the initial infections coincided with the timing of the CCP’s leadership transition, the Party wanted to assure that “nothing shall rock the

boat,” she said.

Coverup

From the beginning of the outbreak, the Chinese regime underreported infection and death toll figures.

In mid-January, Wuhan authorities reported just 41 cases as Thailand and Japan reported their first cases of infections—of people who had traveled to Wuhan.

The number of infections in Wuhan, meanwhile, stayed unchanged between Jan. 12 and 16.

Researchers analyzed that given the number of foreign cases at the time, Wuhan infections would be substantially higher than officially reported.

The Epoch Times also obtained internal documents from different local governments in China, revealing how they covered up data.

In Shandong Province, the local Centre for Disease Control (CDC) kept an internal tally of the number of samples that tested positive for the virus during nucleic acid testing. In February, the daily number of samples that tested positive was consistently lower than the officially reported number of cases published by China’s National Health Commission.

In Liaoning Province—in the country’s northeastern region, thousands of miles away from the virus epicentre—authorities instructed their city governments to destroy documents and data related to the outbreak.

Officials were also required to sign letters promising that they would delete relevant documents

from their personal devices and pledge to not share the contents of the documents with any party.

Most recently, The Epoch Times obtained internal data from the Wuhan Health Commission showing that on March 14, the city found 91 new samples that tested positive during nucleic acid testing. In Wuhan, samples are only taken from a throat swab. Thus, these 91 samples can be understood as 91 new patients.

That day, Chinese authorities reported just four new cases in Wuhan.

Some officials also publicly revealed how Party politics stymied their initial responses to the outbreak.

During a Jan. 28 press conference, the Party boss of Wuhan, Ma Guoqiang, said the central government didn’t allow the Hubei CDC to diagnose the disease until Jan. 16; previously, patients’ samples had to be sent to Beijing for testing. Even then, the Hubei CDC only had enough capacity to run about 300 tests per day, he said.

Similarly, Wuhan Mayor Zhou Xianwang blamed his superiors for mismanaging the crisis.

During a news program that aired on state broadcaster CCTV on Jan. 27, Zhou said the central government made the decision to withhold information about the outbreak.

“Disclosures about the outbreak were not timely. ... As the leader of a local government, I could only publish information after I received permission from the authorities [central government],” Zhou said.

Beijing Using 10,000 Fake or Hijacked Twitter Accounts to Spread Propaganda About Pandemic: Study

FRANK FANG

China is using thousands of fake and hijacked Twitter accounts to carry out its disinformation campaign surrounding the CCP virus, according to a recent study.

New York-based nonprofit media ProPublica, in a study released on March 26, tracked more than 10,000 suspected fake and hacked Twitter accounts and found that they were “involved in a coordinated influence campaign with ties” to the Chinese regime since August 2019.

Many of these accounts, which previously targeted political dissidents and Hong Kong protests, have now begun posting “propaganda and disinformation about the coronavirus outbreak,” according to ProPublica.

These 10,000 accounts did not act independently. Using computer programs, ProPublica found that the fake accounts were part of an interrelated network of more than 2,000 accounts.

However, ProPublica warned: “The true scale of the influence campaign is likely much bigger; our tracking suggests that the accounts we identified comprise only a portion of the operation.”

Tactics

The fake accounts sought to build “momentum for particular storylines,” ProPublica explained. First, central accounts, those with “more legitimate-looking histories,” would make eye-catching posts. Then, other, more obviously fake accounts would interact with the posts, such as reposting or leaving positive comments.

Whether it was about the Hong Kong protests or the current virus outbreak, these posts used hashtags to “gain visibility for an account that had few followers.”

Sometimes, “posts would use hashtags unique to the influence network, presumably to try to make them trend on Twitter,” ProPublica added.

The study listed several known hacked accounts, such as a professor in North Carolina, a college student at the University of Nebraska Omaha, a web designer in the United Kingdom, and a business analyst in Australia.

“It is unclear whether the current fake account holders hacked the accounts themselves or purchased them from elsewhere,” the study stated.

Some of the accounts reviewed by ProPublica have since been sus-

pended by Twitter.

Links to the Chinese Regime

ProPublica showed that Beijing had influence over many of these accounts.

For example, it pointed out that the influence network “suddenly shifted its focus to the coronavirus epidemic” on Jan. 29, six days after authorities imposed a lockdown in Wuhan, the epicenter of the virus outbreak.

That same day, OneSight, a Beijing-based internet marketing company with connections to the Chinese regime, announced the launch of a new app that would track virus-related information, and help “transmit the correct voice of China” to the world.

The company’s CEO previously worked at the Beijing city foreign propaganda department. Its clients include state media outlets and regime-friendly firms like Huawei and Alibaba.

Last year, ProPublica obtained a copy of a contract won by OneSight to boost the Twitter following of state-owned news agency China News Service. According to the Jamestown Foundation, the agency also “covertly runs overseas media organizations.”

This agency is the international media arm of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau, an office in charge of influencing overseas Chinese. This office in turn is run by the United Front Work Department, a Party organ dedicated to spreading Beijing’s agenda inside and outside of China.

“Our examination of an interlocking group of accounts within our data linked the effort to OneSight,” ProPublica added.

The study noted that the fake accounts’ content and behavior were similar to those found by a 2019 report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. For example, posts were often made during working hours in Beijing.

Many of the posts expressing approval for Beijing were made by fake accounts, using the same text published by Chinese state-run media.

“Comment texts were often lifted word-for-word from state editorials, which have long served as political lodestars for government agencies and party officials,” ProPublica said.

The accounts became “cheerleaders for [Chinese] the government, calling on citizens to unite in support of efforts to fight the epi-

demic and urging them to ‘dispel online rumors.’”

Money

ProPublica found that in some instances, suspected Chinese operatives would offer influential Chinese-speaking Twitter users cash in exchange for posting messages favorable to Beijing.

The study highlighted the case of Badiuca, a Chinese political cartoonist living in Australia.

Badiuca said he was approached by an account claiming to be an “international exchange company,” which offered the cartoonist 1,700 yuan (about \$240) to tweet out specific content per post.

During feigned negotiations with the company, Badiuca said he received a sample of what he would be asked to tweet out: a 15-second propaganda clip, showing that Beijing “defeated the coronavirus and everything is back on track.”

Badiuca added that he was confident the company was working for the Chinese regime, based on their interactions.

The company eventually did not provide Badiuca with a contract, with the explanation that “upon client review, your posting style does not fit this promotional topic.”

Beijing’s ‘Mask Diplomacy’ Draws

CATHY HE

Beijing’s efforts to promote itself as a global leader in combating the COVID-19 pandemic have recently encountered blowback.

Eager to burnish its image amid the crisis, the Chinese regime has sent medical experts and much-needed supplies, such as masks and respirators, to countries ranging from Italy to Peru.

While many recipient countries initially welcomed the assistance, there are signs of a growing backlash after the Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey last week reported faulty equipment from China.

“After an initial burst of positive publicity, the narrative about Chinese aid to Europe has soured,” Peter Rough, an expert on U.S. foreign policy and senior fellow at the Washington-based think tank the Hudson Institute, told The Epoch Times in an email.

The Netherlands on March 28 announced it had recalled around 600,000 masks that had arrived in a shipment of 1.3 million purchased from a Chinese manufacturer a week earlier. Some of the masks had already been distributed to frontline health workers.

Dutch health officials said the masks didn’t fit properly or had defective filters.

“A second test also revealed that the masks did not meet the quality norms. Now it has been decided not to use any of this shipment,” the health ministry said in a statement to AFP.

Spain had similar problems with rapid test kits ordered from a Chinese company.

Spain’s health ministry on March 26 said it had withdrawn around 58,000 Chinese-made test kits after discovering they had a detection accuracy of just 30 percent. The normal accuracy rate is more than 80 percent, local media reported.

The Chinese embassy in Spain responded on Twitter that the company selling the kits, Shenzhen Bioeasy Biotechnology, hadn’t been licensed to sell the tests.

Meanwhile, Turkish health officials raised similar issues on March 27, saying that rapid testing kit samples purchased from a Chinese company didn’t meet local effectiveness standards. Another Chinese firm has since been chosen to supply the kits.

These developments, Rough said, have “burst China’s carefully cultivated aura of competency.”

Deflecting Blame

The regime’s “mask diplomacy” forms part of a broader campaign to change the global narrative—with the ultimate aim of deflecting blame away from Beijing’s initial mishandling of the outbreak that eventually metastasized into a global pandemic.

“China’s humanitarian gestures are meant to cover up its own complicity in the spread of the virus, peel away European countries desperate for an economic and medical lifeline, and win over gullible Westerners inclined to proclaim a Chinese century,” Rough said.

Alongside its humanitarian endeavors, the regime has deployed a sweeping disinformation campaign peddling claims that the CCP virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus, didn’t originate in China, and may have been brought into Wuhan by U.S. Army personnel.

“That is how authoritarian regimes deal with crises,” Helle Dale, senior fellow for public diplomacy at Washington-based think tank The Heritage Foundation, told The Epoch Times. “They tend to deflect anger and criticism outward.”

Dale said the regime has stepped in

The regime’s ‘mask diplomacy’ forms part of a broader campaign to change the global narrative.

A second test also revealed that the masks did not meet the quality norms.

Dutch health ministry

Workers produce masks at a factory in Handan, China, on Feb. 28, 2020.



to fill a vacuum in the international space, while traditional leaders such as the United States are busy handling the outbreak domestically.

Such assistance, however, is accompanied by a “massive propaganda drive for the recipients to show their gratitude to the PRC [People’s Republic of China] as the savior,” Katerina Prochazkova, an analyst at the Czech-based, China-focused think tank Sinopsis told The Epoch Times.

She also noted that unlike much of the aid Beijing received from other countries during the early stages of China’s outbreak, much of the goods supplied by the regime have been sales through export agreements.

Countries in Europe and elsewhere have begun pushing back against the propaganda campaign.

The European Union’s chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, recently warned of a “global battle of narratives.”

“China is aggressively pushing the message that, unlike the U.S., it is a responsible and reliable partner,” Borrell said in a March 23 statement.

“There is a geopolitical component including a struggle for influence through spinning and the ‘politics of generosity,’” he said. “Armed with facts, we need to defend Europe against its detractors.”

Capitalizing on Global Shortage

Prochazkova noted that the global shortage of masks and protective equipment is partly due to the regime having imported stockpiles of supplies during the height of the outbreak in China.

“This very shortage from which China is ‘saving’ us was caused by much of the medical material being sent to China in the first place,” she said.

As China heavily ramped up domestic production of masks and protective gear for internal use in late January, it also launched a campaign to source medical supplies from abroad—through its vast network of state-run and state-affiliated enterprises, and overseas Chinese associations.

China’s customs agency announced on March 7 that from Jan. 24 to Feb. 29, it had inspected around 2 billion masks and 25 million protective suits imported into the country.

Chinese state media also touted the efforts of several state-run companies in mobilizing international resources to ship millions of medical supplies to China.

Greenland Group, a global property giant whose largest shareholder is the Shanghai government, is one of those state-backed firms involved in the worldwide drive. State-run media Xinhua reported on Jan. 31 that the company had shipped to China 3 million masks, 700,000 medical protective suits, and 500,000 pairs of medical gloves.

A whistleblower employee from Greenland Group’s Sydney office in Australia told local media that workers were instructed to put normal work on hold to source bulk medical supplies for shipping back to China.

“Basically all employees, the majority of whom are Chinese, were

Key Facts

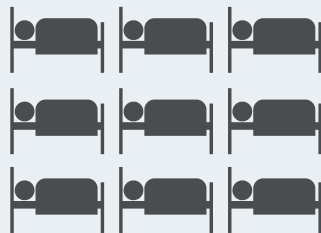
As of March 21, 2020

Unknown Origin

The CCP virus is a coronavirus, meaning it likely spreads from animals to humans and is transmitted generally by human-to-human contact through respiratory droplets.



First cluster of patients
Early December 2019



Growing Backlash



AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

asked to source whatever medical supplies they could,” the employee recently told The Sydney Morning Herald, adding that the work went on for weeks, from January to February. The Australian government banned exports of medical supplies on March 29.

Overseas Chinese associations were also enlisted.

For instance, the largest overseas Chinese association in the Czech Republic, the Czech Qingtian Hometown Association, collected 780,000 masks and more than 30,000 single-use surgical coats and N95 respirators for shipping to China, according to a Feb. 17 report by Chinese state-run news website China Internet Information Center. The head of the association is Czech-Chinese businessman Zhou Lingjian.

The country’s counter-intelligence agency warned the Czech government in early March about the Chinese embassy coordinating an operation to make bulk purchases of medical material for shipment

to China, according to local media. The health ministry then banned the export of masks and respirators on March 4.

On March 16, Czech police raided a warehouse of a private company in the northwestern town of Lovosice, where they confiscated 680,000 masks and 28,000 ventilators. About 100,000 masks were labeled as Chinese Red Cross aid to Italy. The seizure was part of an anti-trafficking operation.

In a turn of events, Zhou recently made headlines when an investigative report by Aktuáln.cz found that he was the importer of the goods seized by police.

The outlet reported that Zhou sold some of the masks found in the warehouse to a local reseller, who then attempted to sell the supplies to the Czech government at twice the normal cost.

Zhou’s associate, however, denied any wrongdoing, claiming the matter was a “misunderstanding.”

Meanwhile, the Italian embassy

said that Czech authorities confirmed the humanitarian aid slated for Italy found in the warehouse was stolen, local media reported.

Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia and director of the China Power Project at Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, told The Epoch Times that to counter the regime’s attempts to elevate its international standing amid the crisis, media should highlight that Beijing is trying to profit from the global shortage.

Outlets should “explain that China ramped up its supply of masks and other medical supplies as the epidemic raged in China, and now China has a lot of surplus that it wants to make money on,” Glaser said in an email.

“Global demand for other products is likely to remain suppressed, so the best way to earn money through exports is to sell medical supplies.”

Milan Kajinec contributed to this report.

Province in China Prepares Thousands of Hospital Beds Amid New Wave of Infections

EVA FU

A province in northern China is preparing thousands of hospital beds in anticipation of a surge in CCP virus patients—days after lockdown measures were relaxed in the epicenter city of Wuhan, according to internal documents viewed by The Epoch Times.

Heilongjiang, China’s northernmost province, locked down its border city of Suifenhe on April 7, in what officials said was an attempt to stem the flow of imported cases from Russia.

From March 27 to April 9, the city reported more than 100 imported cases, as well as 148 asymptomatic patients—those infected who don’t show any symptoms of the disease COVID-19—that were imported cases. Only three new domestic infections were reported during that period.

Residents in Heilongjiang, however, have expressed doubt about the official figures, saying authorities were likely aiming to downplay the severity of the new wave of infections by focusing on imported cases.

Suifenhe is building a 600-bed makeshift hospital dedicated to asymptomatic patients, while its 70,000 residents are now under lockdown. Only one person from each household can venture out for necessities once every three days.

A neighborhood officer, in a message on Chinese super-app WeChat seen by The Epoch Times, emphasized to residents of a complex in Suifenhe the gravity of the situation.

“Does everyone know how serious this is?” The officer said. “You have no idea who’s got it and who has not ... having no symptoms is even scarier,” referring to asymptomatic infections.

Meanwhile, an internal notice from Heilongjiang’s health commission, dated April 8, shows that provincial officials are planning to make available nearly 4,000 hospital beds elsewhere.

The notice, which indicates the authority is planning to set up a 1,100-member medical support team, also instructed local authorities to provide a candidate list within 24 hours.

Asymptomatic Carriers

Up to 25 percent of all infected individuals are transmitting the virus while never showing any symptoms, according to Robert Redfield, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Some others are also able to spread the virus 48 hours before they start to feel unwell.

Even some patients thought to have recovered from the disease appear to be testing positive again. On April 10, South Korea reported 91 cases of patients who contracted the disease again after having

previously recovered. Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of the country’s top health agency, said the virus may have been “reactivated” in those patients.

China didn’t include asymptomatic patients in its daily tally of confirmed cases until April 1, when it announced 1,541 such patients to be under medical observation.

The National Health Commission in February acknowledged in its official guidelines that asymptomatic carriers to be a “potential source of infection,” and since then, multiple Chinese health experts have played down the risk of spread from asymptomatic patients.

Chinese respiratory expert Yang Jiong, in an interview with state media in early April, said that there may be 10,000 to 20,000 asymptomatic carriers in Wuhan. That interview has since been deleted.

Official Data Questioned

While the Chinese regime has reported few new domestic infections in recent weeks, claiming most new cases are among travelers who were infected overseas, some Heilongjiang residents question whether the regime is providing the full picture.

Yu, who lives in the provincial capital Harbin, wonders if officials are simply labeling all cases as imported to downplay the situation.

“If they acknowledged local cases, it would mean that the outbreak is not under control, and ‘imported cases’ would be a convenient excuse,” he told The Epoch Times. “Local officials have been covering it up, they don’t report the true [numbers].”

Another Harbin native, Deng, said her neighborhood is currently under lockdown measures, which includes a curfew at 10 p.m. She said that at least two residents in her area, while entering the security gate, received a yellow and red flag on their mobile virus detection app, respectively, meaning they are potential virus carriers and would be quarantined.

Deng said she didn’t dare to ask too much, since she didn’t want to be accused of “not believing in the government.”

“The information is not transparent,” she said.

Hotels in Suifenhe have shut their doors over infection fears following the new lockdown, according to a local resident, who said his surname is Li. Some Chinese who recently came back from Moscow have been quarantined in local sports arenas, Li said.

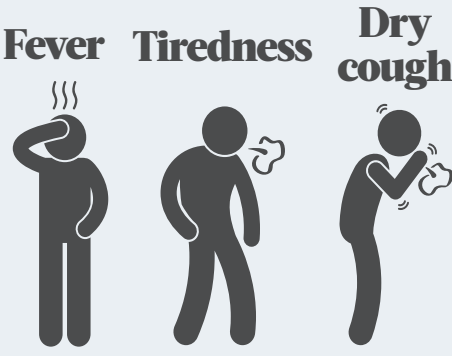
“Coming back is actually even more unsafe,” Li said. “You might not have the virus, but it’s very easy to get infected in a concentrated group. You don’t know who may acquire the virus.”

11-14 Days
Estimated incubation period for the virus (most common is five days).

March 11, 2020
WHO declares the outbreak a pandemic.

1 in 6
become seriously ill and have difficulty breathing. Older people and those with underlying medical problems have a higher chance of falling ill.

80 Percent
of people recover from the virus without special treatment. Still others become infected and might be contagious but don’t develop any symptoms.



are the most common symptoms. Other symptoms such as aches and pains, congestion, sore throat, and diarrhea can occur as well, mildly at first.

ALL IMAGES BY SHUTTERS TOOK; INFOGRAPHIC BY THE EPOCH TIMES

21 Million Fewer Cellphone Users in China May Suggest a High CCP Virus Death Toll

NICOLE HAO

The number of Chinese cellphone users dropped by 21 million in the past three months, Beijing authorities announced on March 19. Deaths due to the CCP virus may have contributed to the high number of account closings.

Cellphones are an indispensable part of life in China.

“The digitization level is very high in China. People can’t survive without a cellphone,” Tang Jingyuan, a U.S.-based China affairs commentator, told The Epoch Times on March 21. “Dealing with the government for pensions and social security, buying train tickets, shopping ... no matter what people want to do, they are required to use cellphones.

“The Chinese regime requires all Chinese to use their cellphones to generate a health code. Only with a green health code are Chinese allowed to move in China now. It’s impossible for a person to cancel his cellphone.”

China introduced mandatory facial scans on Dec. 1, 2019, to confirm the identity of the person who registered the phone. As early as Sept. 1, 2010, China required all cellphone users to register phones with their real identification, by which the state can control people’s speech via its large-scale monitoring system.

Furthermore, Chinese people’s bank accounts and social security accounts are bundled with their cellphone plans; apps on Chinese phones check SIM cards against the state’s database to make sure the number belongs to the user.

Beijing first launched cellphone-based health codes on March 10. All people in China must install a cellphone app and register their personal health information. Then the app can generate a QR code, which appears in three colors, to classify the user’s health level. Red means the person has an infectious disease, yellow means the person might have one, and green means the person doesn’t.

Beijing claimed that the health codes are intended to prevent the spread of the CCP virus, commonly known as novel coronavirus.



A security guard is reading his cellphone, while securing the entrance of a nearly empty shopping mall, in Beijing on Feb. 27, 2020.

21 Million Cellphone Users

China’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) announced on March 19 the number of phone users in each province in February. Compared with the previous announcement, which was released on Dec. 18, 2019, for November 2019 data, both cellphone and landline users dropped dramatically. In the same period the year before, the number of users increased.

The number of cellphone users decreased from 1.600957 billion to 1.579927 billion, a drop of 21.03 million. The number of landline users decreased from 190.83 million to 189.99 million, a drop of 840,000.

In the previous February, the number increased. According to MIIT, the number of cellphone users increased in February 2019 from 1.5591 billion to 1.5835 billion, which is 24.37 million more. The number of landline users increased from 183.477 million to 190.118 million, which is 6.641 million more.

According to China’s National Bureau of Statistics, the country’s population at the end of 2019 was 4.67 million larger than in 2018, reaching 1.40005 billion.

The 2020 decrease in landline users may be due to the nationwide quarantine in February, during which small businesses were shut down. But the decrease in cellphone users can’t be explained in this way.

According to the operation data of all three Chinese cellphone carriers, cellphone accounts increased in December 2019 but dropped steeply in 2020.

China Mobile is the largest carrier, holding about 60 percent of the Chinese cellphone market. It reported that it gained 3.732 million more accounts in December 2019, but lost 0.862 million in January 2020 and 7.254 million in February 2020.

China Mobile’s performance in the same months in 2019 was markedly different; it gained 2.411 million more accounts in January 2019 and 1.091 million more in February 2019.

China Telecom is the second-largest carrier, holding about 21 percent of the market. It gained 1.18 million users in December 2019, but lost 0.43 million users in January 2020 and 5.6 million users in February 2020.

In 2019, it gained 4.26 million in January and 2.96 million in February.

China Unicom, which hasn’t yet published the data for February, shares the same experience as the other two telecoms in January 2020 and in early 2019. The company lost 1.186 million users in January 2020, but gained 1.962 million users in February 2019 and 2.763 million users in January 2019.

China allows each adult to apply for at most five cellphone numbers. Since Feb. 10, the majority of Chinese students have taken online classes with a cellphone number due to their schools being ordered to stay closed. These students’ accounts are under their parents’ names, which means some parents needed to open a new cellphone account in February.

Analyzing the Numbers

The big question is whether the dramatic drop in cellphone accounts reflects the account closings of those who have died due to the CCP virus.

“It’s possible that some migrant workers had two cellphone numbers before. One is from their hometown, and the other is from the city they work in. In February, they might close the number in the city they work in because they couldn’t go there,” Tang said. Typically, migrant workers would have gone to their home city for the Chinese New Year in Janu-

The Chinese regime requires all Chinese to use their cellphones to generate a health code. Only with a green health code are Chinese allowed to move in China now. It’s impossible for a person to cancel his cellphone.

Tang Jingyuan,
China affairs commentator

ary, and then travel restrictions would have prevented them from returning to the city where they held a job.

However, because there is a basic monthly fee to hold a cellphone account in China, the majority of migrant workers—the lowest income group—are likely to only have one cellphone account.

China had 288.36 million migrant workers as of April 2019, according to the Chinese National Bureau of Statistics.

On March 17, Meng Wei, spokesman of China’s National Development and Reform Commission, said at a monthly press conference in Beijing that except for Hubei, all provinces reported that more than 90 percent of their businesses resumed operations. In Zhejiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Shandong, Guangxi, and Chongqing, almost all businesses resumed production.

If both the number of migrant workers and the level of employment are accurate, more than 90 percent of migrant workers have gone back to work.

The economic dislocation caused by shutdowns in China may have also led some people who have an extra cellphone to cancel it. With business poor or stopped, they may not want to carry the extra expense.

“At present, we don’t know the details of the data. If only 10 percent of the cellphone accounts were closed because the users died because of the CCP virus, the death toll would be 2 million,” Tang said.

The reported death toll in China doesn’t line up with what can otherwise be determined about the situation there.

A comparison with the situation in Italy also suggests the Chinese death toll is significantly underreported. Italy adopted similar measures to those used by the Chinese regime. The CCP virus death toll in Italy of 4,825 translates to a death rate of 9 percent. In China, where a much larger population was exposed to the virus, the reported death toll of 3,265 translated to a death rate of only 4 percent, less than half that reported in Italy.

Activities in the outbreak epicenter of Hubei Province seem to contradict the reported death toll in China. The seven funeral homes in the city of Wuhan were reported to be burning bodies 24 hours a day, seven days a week in late January. Hubei Province has used 40 mobile cremators, each capable of burning five tons of medical waste and bodies a day, since Feb. 16.

Lacking data, the real death toll in China is a mystery. The cancellation of 21 million cellphones provides a data point that suggests the real number may be far higher than the official number.

The Epoch Times refers to the novel coronavirus, which causes the disease COVID-19, as the CCP virus because the Chinese Communist Party’s coverup and mismanagement allowed the virus to spread throughout China and create a global pandemic.



THE EPOCH TIMES

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The Chinese Communist Party’s (the CCP) coverup led to a pandemic that now threatens the lives of people around the globe. The CCP relies critically on the control of information to uphold its power.

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At the time of the CCP virus outbreak, the CCP is flooding the world with deceptive propaganda, and The Epoch Times is at the forefront of exposing the truth.

Similarly, The Epoch Times was among the first to report on the SARS epidemic in 2003. We are truly independent and not afraid of honest reporting on the Chinese Communist Party and the threat it poses to the world.

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A woman wearing a protective mask walks past the closed Colosseum monument in Rome on March 10, 2020.

Where Ties With Communist China Are Close, the Coronavirus Follows

Severe COVID-19 outbreaks highlight different countries’ entanglements with Beijing

EPOCH TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

In the final weeks of 2019, a novel coronavirus outbreak occurred in the city of Wuhan, in central China. As the world welcomed a new decade, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) opted to suppress information about the emerging crisis until it could no longer remain hidden.

Nearly two months after mainland Chinese authorities acknowledged the outbreak and the existence of the contagious virus, the crisis had spread around the globe, assuming epidemic proportions in multiple regions. The number of infected beyond China’s borders is now in the hundreds of thousands, with thousands having succumbed to the virus. The stock market has plunged as experts warn of a possible economic recession.

A variety of factors have facilitated the rapid spread of the virus, officially termed SARS-CoV-2, and the disease that it causes, COVID-19. In light of the CCP’s role in allowing the virus to spread throughout China and create a global pandemic, The Epoch Times refers to the pathogen as the CCP virus.

Globalization has brought the peoples of the world into closer contact, making it easier for contagious diseases to spread. Yet the heaviest-hit regions outside China all share a common thread: close or lucrative relations with the communist regime in Beijing.

Medical Crisis

Under political or economic influence from the People’s Republic of China (PRC), many foreign entities and politicians, including international organizations, have been swayed to the extent that they take the side of the CCP, accommodating the pernicious communist system and turning a blind eye to unspeakable crimes committed by the mainland Chinese authorities.

Recent decades have seen the PRC greatly expand its power in economic and geopolitical affairs. Deceiving the world with a narrative of “China’s peaceful rise,” the communist regime has lured foreign governments and international firms to invest in China’s rapidly developing markets.

But the CCP has never abandoned its ideological tenets of class



Medical staff move a patient infected with the CCP virus in Seoul, South Korea, on March 9, 2020.

struggle and totalitarian control. In the 30 years since the Tiananmen Square massacre, and from the start in 1999 of the persecution of the spiritual practice Falun Gong to today’s systematic persecution of all faiths and independent thought, the state of human rights in the PRC has only worsened.

The true nature of the CCP and communism has long been known to readers of The Epoch Times. Fifteen years ago, The Epoch Times published the editorial series “Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party,” igniting a grassroots movement in China to reject communism. Since 2004, more than 350 million people have renounced their ties to the Party and its affiliated youth organizations.

Seen in conjunction with the CCP-hijacked geopolitical environment of today, the geographical distribution of what the World Health Organization (WHO) now calls a coronavirus pandemic highlights the ultimate peril facing those who align themselves with the specter of communism.

Outside China, the spread of COVID-19 was most severe in Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan. Later, Japan and South Korea were surpassed by Germany and France, respectively. Not all of these countries are located near China, but all have extensive interests in the PRC.

Italy, the most heavily affected country outside China as of March 20, was the first (and only) G-7 nation to sign onto the PRC’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as One Belt, One Road). In an attempt to prop up its weakening economy,

Italy has also sought to capture the Chinese market for selling its luxury goods.

With the outbreak forcing Rome to put the country under lockdown, such prospects have been put on hold.

Italy also has signed scores of sister-city agreements with China, with the cities of Milan, Venice, and Bergamo included among them. These are the areas hardest-hit by the virus.

In the Middle East, Iran has seen a surge in the number of infections, particularly among government officials.

The Iranian regime has had a comprehensive strategic partnership with China since 2016, and its ties with Beijing began years before that. In violation of international sanctions, Iran has imported embargoed materials from China, while continuing to sell oil to the PRC. The Islamic Republic allowed flights in and out of four major Chinese cities until the end of February.

On-the-ground footage taken by Iranian citizens is reminiscent of the tragedy playing out in Wuhan, with overworked medical staff, despondent patients, and body bags lining hospital floors.

And while official figures released by the Iranian authorities show deaths and confirmed cases trailing behind Italy’s numbers, it is likely that the real scale of the outbreak remains grossly underreported. Reviewing available data, an epidemiologist cited by The Washington Post on March 5 estimated that the actual number of people infected in Iran could have been up to 28,000, nearly five times what the regime had reported at the time. The official count for Iran as of March 20 stood at nearly 20,000.

In South Korea, the public has grown increasingly critical of President Moon Jae-in for refusing to ban Chinese tourists at large and instead only barring entry for those who recently traveled to Hubei Province, the epicenter of the epidemic in China.

More than 1.4 million people have signed a petition to the Presidential Blue House calling for Moon to be impeached. The petition text reads, “Seeing Moon Jae-in’s response to the new epidemic, we feel that he is more of a President for China than Korea.”

Political Peril

Taiwan, despite its proximity to and extensive business with mainland China, has seen a relatively small number of infections.

On Jan. 26, John Hopkins University identified Taiwan as having the second-highest risk of epidemic spread outside China. However, robust prevention measures there have proven effective.

Taiwan officials began to board planes and assess passengers on Dec. 31, 2019, after Wuhan authorities first confirmed the outbreak. In early February, Taiwan banned entry to foreign nationals who have traveled to the PRC. As of March 20, there were just 135 confirmed cases in Taiwan. The self-ruled island has been held as a model for epidemic control, despite being repeatedly denied participation in the CCP-friendly WHO.

As China affairs commentator Heng He put it, Taiwan has a clear understanding of the communist regime and may be the only state that learned the lessons of the 2003 SARS outbreak, which also began in China.

In Hong Kong, which has seen millions of residents stand up to Beijing’s encroachment on the city’s freedoms and rule of law since last year, the outbreak has been similarly subdued.

By contrast, Japan, albeit not geographically aligned with the PRC, placed profit over prudence. With millions of Chinese traveling to Japan for shopping and sightseeing annually, the country was slow to close its borders to mainland arrivals. Japan was among one of the first countries to report cases outside of China, and the number of infected is now in the thousands.

More than 256 Japanese cities and 190 in South Korea have twinning agreements with cities in mainland China.

With the CCP virus’s surge in Italy, more than a hundred thousand have been sickened in the rest of Europe. As with Italy, many of these countries have unwisely—and against admonishment by U.S. officials over the past few years—persisted in their flirtations with the PRC. France and Germany serve as typical examples, having not taken seriously the risks of inviting the PRC-controlled Huawei to take part in the construction

of their 5G infrastructure.

The Root of the Epidemic Is the CCP

In the United States, one of the earliest- and worst-hit places was the Seattle area in Washington state. By March 20, the state had seen 74 deaths from the virus, around a third of the national total.

In the late 1970s, in the early days of the CCP’s deceptive economic reforms, it was the port of Seattle that welcomed the first Chinese cargo ships. In the years since, with increasing enthusiasm from local politicians and businesses, Seattle has hosted all four of the PRC’s heads of state, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping.

The decades since saw the CCP wage a secret Cold War against the United States, funneling America’s technology and jobs to mainland China in an onslaught abetted by opportunistic profit-seekers, who compromised America’s conscience.

Recently, the CCP has attempted to portray its draconian handling of the epidemic as a triumph for the Party’s authoritarian system, going so far as to pin the blame for a disaster of its own making on the United States. Misled by the CCP’s propaganda machine and a left-leaning domestic media environment fixated on the failures—whether real or imagined—of the U.S. system, many Chinese residing overseas have made the decision to return home.

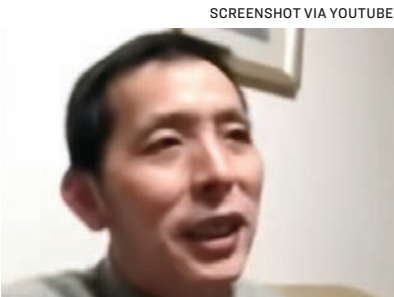
But the Chinese historical record is more sobering. Throughout the centuries, plagues and other calamities signaled the downfall of imperial dynasties. And at present—with growing numbers of whistleblowers standing up to contradict official figures that downplay the mainland epidemic—the CCP’s claim that it has curbed the virus rings as false as the lies it deployed last year to cover up the initial outbreak in Wuhan.

Taking history as a mirror, as ancient Chinese scholars did, it is apparent that the pandemic is a calamity linked with the CCP and its 70 years of brutal rule. And today, the world is an interconnected community. Any country, community, or organization that keeps too close to the CCP and falls for its deception will taste the bitter fruits of that involvement.

Silenced: Stories of Citizens Suppressed for Speaking the Truth About the CCP Virus

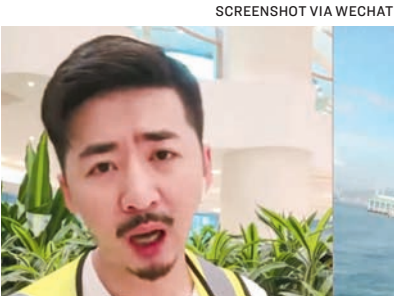
CATHY HE & EVA FU

Citizen Reporters



■ Fang Bin

Fang Bin, a Wuhan clothes salesman, began filming his trips to hospitals around the locked-down city and posting the videos online in late January. The scenes showed long lines outside hospitals, patients clinging to life, and distraught family members. In one video that went viral, Fang counts eight body bags in a van parked outside a hospital. “So many dead,” he says with a sigh. “This is too many.” Fang then walks into a room in the hospital, where doctors are seen working around a patient who had apparently just died. “Who is he?” Fang asks the man. “My father,” the man cries. “He’s gone,” Fang says, after speaking to the doctors. That evening, around half a dozen masked men in hazmat suits knocked on his door, demanding to take his temperature. Fang, who recorded the incident, said his temperature was normal and asked them to come back with an inspection warrant. The men forced their way into his house, confiscated his electronic devices, and took him to a police station. There, police questioned him about his videos, Fang later recounted. Less than two weeks later, Fang went missing. His friends told The Epoch Times that Fang had been detained.



■ Chen Qiushi

Chen Qiushi, a 34-year-old lawyer-turned-citizen-journalist from eastern China, arrived in Wuhan on Jan. 24, a day after the city was placed under lockdown. Armed with a smartphone, he said he wanted to document stories about the city’s residents.

“What sort of a journalist are you if you don’t dare rush to the frontlines?” he said in his first video in Wuhan, filmed with a selfie stick, from the railway station where he had just disembarked. In just over two weeks, he published more than 100 posts on his YouTube and Twitter accounts—both platforms are banned in China—that drew millions of views. He filmed interviews with locals who had lost loved ones, patients lying on temporary beds lining hospital hallways, and, according to Chen, a body left under a blanket outside an emergency ward. In one hospital, a woman in a protective mask holds up the body of a relative in a wheelchair, whose head is seen drooping downward. “What’s wrong with him?” Chen asked the woman. “He has already passed,” she said. The work took a toll on Chen. “I’m scared. In front of me is the virus. Behind me is China’s legal and administrative power,” he said in an emotional video, recorded in his hotel room on Jan. 30. Authorities have harassed his parents, who live in eastern China, probing for his location, Chen said. Then, he said through tears, while pointing at the camera: “I’m not afraid of dying. Why should I be afraid of you, Communist Party?” On Feb. 7, his mother, in a video shared on his Twitter account, said Chen had gone missing the day before. Chen’s friend Xu Xiaodong, a prominent mixed martial arts fighter, later said in a YouTube video that Chen had been forcibly quarantined, but didn’t show signs of symptoms.



■ Li Zehua

Li Zehua, a former anchor for Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, was the third video blogger arrested in the outbreak epicenter of Wuhan.

“I don’t want to shut my eyes and ears. ... I’m doing this so that more young people like me can stand up,” Li, 25, said in a passionate speech live-streamed on YouTube, before police entered the hotel and presumably

detained him. Li arrived alone in Wuhan by train on Feb. 12, tracing the steps of Chen Qiushi and Fang Bin, who had been arrested by local police. It was “not by coincidence”—he said in his first YouTube video—that the first hotel he checked in was right next to where Chen had stayed. Over the two weeks, before the police got him, he visited the Baibuting residential compound, where many became infected after attending a large-scale banquet, interviewed a funeral home worker, and went to a local train station where migrant workers were said to be stranded. On his way back from visiting a local virology lab, however, he realized he was being chased. “I’m driving really fast. ... Please help me,” he said breathlessly from under a mask. Hours later, plainclothes police knocked on his hotel door. He at first refused to let them in. He turned his camera on, and began alluding to the student-led Tiananmen pro-democracy protests in 1989, which came to a bloody end after Beijing deployed tanks and guns. Li lamented the ignorance of Chinese youth to recent history, the protests being a heavily censored topic in China. “I feel that it’s unlikely that I will not be taken away and quarantined. But I want to make this clear: I am not ashamed to face myself, nor my parents, the Communication University of China where I graduated from ... and this country,” he said shortly before he opened the door and let the police in. The police confiscated his phone and laptop, and cut off the signal.

Businessman



■ Ren Zhiqiang

Dubbed by Chinese media as “the cannon” for his fierce, unreserved criticism, 69-year-old Chinese real estate tycoon Ren Zhiqiang, went missing days after he took aim at the Beijing regime. In a scathing article published online in early March, he criticized authorities for their handling of the

outbreak and the censorship of internet information. “This outbreak of the Wuhan pneumonia has verified the reality: when all media ‘take on the surname of the Party,’ the people are abandoned,” he wrote. “Without media to represent people’s interests and report on the truth, people are left to the harms of both the virus and a seriously diseased system.” Ren criticized the Chinese Communist Party for praising its achievements during a February teleconference with top leaders. “The truth as seen from the outbreak is that the Party is defending its own interests,” he said. “There was no investigation into the causes of the outbreak, no one reflecting and taking on the responsibility. Instead, they attempt to cover up the truth with all kinds of grand accomplishments.” On March 12, Ren became uncommunicado. He’s not the only one recently punished for criticizing the authorities’ outbreak response. Xu Zhan-grun, a legal scholar at the prestigious Tsinghua University, was placed under house arrest after he published an article, titled “Angry People Are No Longer Afraid,” in early February, denouncing the regime’s hypocrisy. “It is true that the present level of popular fury due to the handling of the epidemic is volcanic; people thus enraged may, in the end, also cast aside their fears,” he wrote.

Whistleblowers



■ Li Wenliang

Li Wenliang, a 34-year-old ophthalmologist at the Wuhan Central Hospital, was among the first people to publicize information about the outbreak in Wuhan. “Seven ‘SARS-like’ cases from the Huanan seafood market have been confirmed,” he wrote on Chinese social media app WeChat, in a chat group with hundreds of his former medical school classmates. He attached a screenshot of a diagnosis report. That was Dec. 30, 2019, a day

before Wuhan health officials acknowledged that there was a mysterious viral pneumonia outbreak. Despite Li’s reminder to not “spread it externally,” screenshots of the conversation showing his full name quickly proliferated on the internet. On Jan. 3, police reprimanded him along with seven other medical professionals for spreading “rumors” online. The police statement said he had violated the law. “The public security department hopes you can proactively cooperate with our work, listen to the urging of the police, and stop illegal activities from now. Can you achieve that?” He wrote “yes.” “Don’t go against the authorities, don’t wear masks, don’t make careless remarks,” hospital colleague Zhao Chen recalled a department director as saying, after Li was summoned by police. Zhao told state media in a since-deleted interview that the hospital originally planned to fire Li. Days later, Li contracted the virus while operating on an asymptomatic patient for glaucoma. He died on Feb. 7, leaving behind a pregnant wife and a young son. Shaken by his death, Chinese netizens held vigils in mourning and began a wider call for free speech. At least 200 health workers at Li’s hospital have contracted the virus. Three of Li’s colleagues have died. On March 19, Wuhan police withdrew the statement about Li and issued an apology, saying they will “carefully draw a lesson” from the incident.

■ Ai Fen

Ai Fen, an emergency surgeon at the hospital, later revealed that she was the “whistle provider” who gave the diagnosis report to Li. Realizing that the virus could be contagious, she required everyone in the emergency department to wear masks. Police didn’t go after Ai, but she received an “unprecedented, very harsh admonition” from her superiors. “Many, many times, I thought how nice it would be if we could turn back the clock,” she told Chinese magazine Portrait, adding that she regretted not telling more doctors about the danger. “If I knew what it would be like today, no matter if I got criticized or not, I would have spread it all around,” she said. “Someone has to stand up and tell the truth. ... There has to be different voices in this world, right?”



Policemen, wearing protective face masks, patrol around Beijing Railway Station on Jan. 30, 2020.