

The head of WHO's COVID-19 mission reveals China's total cover up on Danish TV

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On 12 August 2021, Danish TV2 broadcast a brilliant documentary "Virusmysteriet - en dansker søger sandheden i Kina" ("The virus mystery - a Dane hunts for truth in China"). The programme features WHO's head of the mission, the Dane Peter Ben Embarek, employed by the WHO for 20 years. He is unusually outspoken and direct for a long-time WHO employee. TV2 was the only media outlet allowed to follow Embarek's mission, which took place in January-February 2021. He filmed in places where no one else would get permission to record. He also spoke to his camera when he was alone and shared his thoughts, pretty unfiltered.

Embarek has participated in previous missions for the WHO, which have unravelled the origin of virus outbreaks, including MERS ([Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, which like came from dromedary camels](#)).

The documentary is unique for understanding the scale and nature of the systematic Chinese cover up about the origin of SARS-CoV-19. I wanted to share its messages with the rest of the world and provide a comprehensive summary below, with Danish bits translated into English.

The documentary speaks for itself. But it misses a discussion of the genetics of SARS-CoV-19, which contains genes that do not occur naturally, but which are those typically inserted in gain-of-function experiments. This is why I consider it highly likely that the pandemic is caused by a lab leak of a man-made virus, as I argued in my paper from 19 May: "[Made in China: the coronavirus that killed millions of people.](#)"

It would become a mission filled with big obstacles. And a great political power play.

Donald Trump, former US President: "And make no mistake. We hold China fully responsible for concealing the virus and unleashing it upon the world. They could have stopped it. They should have stopped it."

Mike Pompeo, former secretary of state, USA: "I can tell you that there is a significant amount of evidence that this came from a laboratory in Wuhan."

Wang Wenbin, spokesman, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Pompeo has said that COVID-19 comes from Wuhan. He has no evidence."

Embarek was highly motivated for finding the origin of the pandemic in order to prevent such a disaster in future: “We cannot help but investigate this in depth.” He, and 16 other researchers, would try to solve one of the biggest mysteries in the world right now.

While the virus spread to the whole world, the WHO negotiated with China in order to launch the mission. It has taken almost a year; now, it seems that it will succeed. But shortly before departure, it went wrong.

News: “A team of international experts from the WHO, which shall investigate the origin of the coronavirus, has at the last minute been denied entry to China.”

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO’s Director-General: “I am very disappointed with this news given that two members had already begun their journeys and others were not able to travel at the last minute.”

Embarek: “We cannot understand why they would not give us the permission. They have everything to gain, and so has rest of the world has too, of course.”

Rasmus Nielsen, Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, is head of his own lab, the Nielsen laboratory. He does research in population genetics and molecular evolution: “We should pay attention to the fact that it is difficult for Chinese researchers to do research in this area. Already in March 2020, my collaborators in China sent me an email where they told me that they could not collaborate with me any longer about the origin of SARS-CoV-2 because this had simply been forbidden. You were not allowed to do independent research; a special permission was needed from a special committee directly under Xi Jinping (China’s lifetime President). So, when the Chinese government tries to control all research in this area so strongly, is it then because they have something to hide, or is it only because they simply try to control the whole narrative about SARS-CoV-2? This is the question.”

Narrator: “It took another week, with additional negotiations with China, before the WHO team succeeded departing. The TV2 Documentary has asked Peter Embarek to film the journey to China so that we can follow the mission from within.”

Narrator: “The international research team will be quarantined for 14 days in a hotel before they can start the investigations.”

Narrator: “The WHO team shall collaborate with 17 Chinese researchers. So, it is a joint mission with China, and they will need to agree with everything. “

Embarek: “We have to reconcile some of their views as our views. This morning I used quite some time convincing everyone that it was necessary to get all the hypotheses on the table, and then we must deal with them, one by one, and argue for or against them. In any case, no matter if they are likely or unlikely, they must be included in the deliberations.”

Narrator: "The researchers agree that the coronavirus likely comes from the horseshoe bat. The big question is how it has succeeded to go from bats to humans. It is particularly weird that the closest of this type of bat live 1500 km away from Wuhan. There are two general theories about how it could have happened. The main theory is the one about a natural origin, that the virus was transferred directly from bats to humans or via another animal as intermediary host. But there is also a more controversial theory, that the virus by accident escaped from a laboratory in Wuhan."

Embarek: "Here, we have begun difficult negotiations, so to speak. We have started to talk about hypotheses, and some are of course not so popular. We should, what should I say, find a delicate balance between what we may accept and what we cannot compromise with."

Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, Professor in International Politics, University of Copenhagen: "There is of course also some science involved in investigating the origin of the coronavirus, but exactly because there is so much big politics involved, it is unavoidable that this investigation will be the victim of a political game."

News: "The corona crisis has sharpened the conflict between the big powers, the United States and China."

Trump: "They have hurt the world very, very badly. They have hurt themselves also. But they have hurt the world very, very badly, yeah. They should be held responsible."

Wang Wenbin, spokesman, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The United States has formed alliances and have incited to an ideological confrontation."

Embarek: "We experience of course also some political interference, one might say, but this is of course part of the game in the world we live in today."

Rasmussen: "There is so much at stake. In fact, it is the whole power game between China and USA, which unfolds in this investigation."

Nightly News with the title "China's scientists suggest COVID originated elsewhere. Interviewer: "Do you believe the virus started in Wuhan?" Chinese researcher, carrying a face mask even though he is metres away from the cameraman in the room: "No." "You believe it started in China?" "No."

Embarek says that no one has visited the animal market since it was closed over a year earlier.

Narrator: "For a long time, the Huanan market was the primary suspect as the source of the outbreak because many of the first cases were related to the market. It is therefore a crucial clue in the investigation of the hypothesis about a natural origin."

Embarek: "We find it highly likely that it started with the virus jumping from a bat to humans, directly or via an intermediary animal. This has happened before, several times, both with MERS and with SARS-1."

Rasmussen: "It has happened before for coronaviruses, so it is very likely that a new pandemic originates by transmission of virus from animals to humans."

Boris Johnson, Prime Minister in the UK: "When you have a zoonotic plague like coronavirus, we need to know exactly how it happened. Was it in a wet market; did it come from the bats; were the bats associated with the pangolins? We need to see the data; we need to see all the evidence."

Narrator: "Nothing suggests that bats have been sold in the Huanan market. The theory therefore is that animals might have been sold that have functioned as intermediary hosts. The animals have been sold alive or dead. There is also a theory that the virus might have arrived at the market via frozen meat products."

Embarek: "The Huanan market can still be the place where it all started. The virus may have arrived via a product that was distributed. It could also be via a person that came from the outside into Wuhan and had a contact to the Huanan market, or, ah, we don't know."

Embarek: "There is still a lot of information that has not been dug up. It is still possible to conduct interviews and look at those who traded and worked at the market. Which animals were sold, for example, and where did they come from?"

Narrator: "Peter Embarek studies in particular (at the animal market) if there has been an environment where the virus could jump from animals to humans."

Embarek: "While I walk around alone at one time, I get sight of a staircase that goes upward to the uppermost floor. I can see shoes and also personal belongings. There is really a lot of furniture and other items that suggest that it was not only a storeroom but that it was perhaps also used as a living space, and this is also a sign that it has probably been an impossible task to clean and disinfect such a market. If these rooms have been used for housing, it would mean that people who have been in contact with what was in the market, including virus and perhaps living animals, (were in contact) much more intensely. The close contact would then be multiplied many times."

Narrator: "Among other things, the research team can trace a sample of bamboo rats from the market and back to farms located in the Yunnan province in the south of China, an area which is the homestead for the horseshoe bat, which researchers think can be the original host for the coronavirus. The Chinese have tested 80,000 animals in order to find a possible intermediary host. All have been negative for corona. But the WHO has not seen any documentation that shows that the Chinese have tested the farms in the south of China, which delivered to the Huanan market."

Embarek: "The most interesting animal species in the region have not been tested. But it is in our recommendations that we should go down and look at this."

Narrator: "The market did not give any definitive answers. Now the WHO tries to search for the first person who was infected with the virus, the so-called patient zero."

Rasmussen: "It is essential when you try to find out where a new epidemic comes from that you take the first patients and perhaps also other individuals which could be the first patients, and then try to go back and find out whom they have been in contact with; what have they done in the weeks before they got the disease."

Embarek: "We meet with the first patient, the first known patient, a totally common person with a semi-boring life."

Narrator: "Nothing indicates that the patient the WHO encounters is patient zero. To find patient zero, it is necessary to trace all the contacts of those who were first infected and their whereabouts. Perhaps this would reveal where the coronavirus for the first time jumped upon a person. The Chinese authorities do not present a detailed mapping of the first patients' whereabouts to the WHO. So, the track ends here."

Interviewer: "Why wasn't this mapping already done, you think?"

Embarek: "This is again, like many of the other investigations, which should have been carried out earlier, but were not done, or were not done well enough. We also discovered that there are blood samples from Wuhan's blood bank; they have 200,000 samples from 2019."

News: "According to WHO, it has not been possible to get access to hundreds of thousands of blood samples from Wuhan, which WHO would have liked to analyse."

Narrator: "The blood samples have not been tested for corona even though they might have provided the clue that led to patient zero and perhaps to the source of the pandemic."

CNN, titled "WHO hopes to return to study blood samples in China." Interviewer: "Anyone wants to look at that urgently?" Embarek: "Yeah, that would be fantastic if we could move again."

Interviewer: "Is it not amazing that they haven't already looked through those samples?"

Embarek: "You could say that."

Embarek: "It was not like that they tried to hide or ignore those samples, they would just not ... no one had looked at them."

Rasmussen: "You need to realise that Chinese researchers cannot research freely, without special permission, in the origin of SARS-Cov-2."

Embarek: "There could be many researchers who will not even try to get started with getting these permissions because they are too difficult to obtain and there are too many problems."

Rasmussen: "I think they could have done more to find the origin of SARS-Cov-2. They could have looked at the blood banks; they could have made better contact tracing for the first patients, etc. So, I wonder why this work has not been done."

CNN: “Nick, you spoke with the lead investigator for the research mission to Wuhan, what did you learn?”

Nick: “Peter Ben Embarek who revealed the virus was likely much wider spread in China in December 2019 than we thought.”

Embarek: “We now know that the virus was circulating in Wuhan in December 2019. At that time, there was likely already thousands of cases in Wuhan.”

Narrator: “The investigation of the hypothesis about a natural origin ends unresolved. No intermediary host has been found or a direct link to the bat.”

Rasmussen: “To admit that you have caused the biggest pandemic since 1918 would be an admission, which the regime would have difficulty accepting. And I think that we can safely assume that no country in the world would be particularly proud of that conclusion.”

Embarek: “It is Tuesday, 2 February. Tomorrow will likely be the most troublesome day. We shall see the famous or infamous, or what you should call it, Wuhan Institute of Virology. The lab works with bats and coronavirus. How should we handle this? It is a big question.”

Narrators from TV stations: “Mystery surrounds the high-security lab. The Wuhan Institute of Virology houses the biggest virus bank in Asia. The institute is famous for tracing a virus that caused the 2003 SARS outbreak to a bat cave.”

Narrator: “Under great attention, Peter Embarek and the rest of the WHO team on their way to investigate the second and more controversial hypothesis that a natural or man-made virus has escaped from a laboratory. It was in the beginning of the pandemic that Donald Trump was the banner bearer for this theory.”

Narrators from two TV stations: “The USA is looking into what many have called a conspiracy theory. Have you seen anything at this point that gives you a high degree of confidence that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was the origin of this virus?” Trump: “Yes I have. Yes I have.”

Narrator: “However, Donald Trump has never presented any evidence, and the proponents for the hypothesis were called conspiracy theorists. But many esteemed researchers will no longer exclude the theory about a lab leak.”

Rasmussen: “Earlier, I have argued quite forcefully that it was not a lab leak. It was not particularly likely. But I think that when we anyhow shall investigate the hypothesis about a lab leak, then it is, for several reasons, but one of them is the way the Chinese government has acted. They have tried to suppress all research within this area. But it is also because we know that this type of virus may leak from a laboratory relatively easily. And this has happened several times earlier.”

Embarek: “Then we arrive at the lab. We need to deposit everything we have. No telephone, no cameras, nothing at all ... In 2012, a group of mine workers became ill and ended up in hospital.

Three of them died. Were they infected with something similar to corona SARS-CoV-2 virus already back then?"

Narrator: "The miners worked in the Mojiang mine, 1500 km from Wuhan. It harbours the type of horseshoe bats which we know are the origin of different coronaviruses."

Rasmussen: "The Wuhan Institute of Virology works on preventing this kind of epidemics, so they went down and sampled virus in the bat caves and mines where the miners had become ill. The virus that is closest related to SARS-CoV-2 is one they collected in 2013 from that mine in the Yunnan province."

Narrator: "The virus sample from the horseshoe bat from the Mojiang mine is called RATG13 and is the closest known relative to the coronavirus that currently devastates the world. The Mojiang mine has therefore become interesting for journalists and researchers from all over the world but during the pandemic it has been inaccessible for the outside world."

TV reporter who was denied access to the caves: "China has always said it has acted openly and transparently when it comes to COVID-19, but we are not welcome. This is a system that doesn't care for questions, and it is one that the experts from the WHO shall navigate."

Narrator: "According to Peter Embarek, the Wuhan Institute of Virology has worked with gain-of-function. This involves that the properties of the virus are changed at the lab, e.g. it can be rendered more contagious for humans."

Rasmussen: "The Wuhan Institute of Virology would like to prepare us for the next epidemic. And the argument is that to be prepared for the next epidemic, we need to know something about it. So, they do a lot of research on coronaviruses in the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Different types of genetic research where parts of one virus is mixed with parts from another virus. They don't do this because they want to create a new pandemic; they do it simply to prevent the next one."

Narrator: "Not all research has taken place in the high-security labs, the so-called BSL4 labs."

Rasmussen: "One of the things we learned about recently is that much of the research took place in BSL2 labs. Their security level is not much better than in your chemistry lab at elementary school. This is one of the things that has made many of us think that we should investigate if it could perhaps have come from this lab."

Narrator: "The WHO did not see any documentation about how the Wuhan Institute of Virology has actually worked with gain-of-function and the different coronaviruses, as they did not have a mandate to look in the lab records."

Embarek: "But we did not look at any documentation, and it was not the purpose of our visit either. It was a collaboration and discussion between two research groups. It was not us who doubted what they said. That would have been a quite different form of collaboration, or relationship or discussion, than where we were."

Narrator from a TV station: “There is rising speculation the virus could have originated from the government laboratory in the Wuhan Centre for Disease Control.”

Embarek: “There are other laboratories in Wuhan which are also interesting, e.g. the Wuhan CDC laboratory. They have also worked with bats.”

Narrator: “CDC is the authorities’ laboratory in Wuhan, located only 500 m from the Huanan market.”

Embarek: “What is more concerning to me is the other lab. The one that is next to the market, the CDC lab. You mentioned that, Peter, the other day as well (Peter tries to interrupt) that they were also having coronaviruses without potentially having the same level of expertise or, or, or, or, or safety, or who knows?” (The conversation via Embarek’s computer appears strained. Embarek likely talks with Peter Daszac, another member of the mission. [Daszac provided funding to the Chinese gain-of-function experiments](#). In February 2020, a group of virologists and others led by Daszac published a letter in *Lancet* where they called it conspiracy theories to suggest that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin).

Embarek: “While we go up and get a time round, I think it all looks very, very new; then I look at one of their electric panels on the wall, and, it is in Chinese, but I can see the date. It was a date in May 2019. I then ask the leadership how old the lab is. They say it is from December 2019; we moved on 2 December 2019 to these new laboratories. Yes, the period where it all started. And we know that when a lab is moved, it is disturbing for all procedures. You also need to move the virus collection, the sample collection, and other collections. Therefore, it is again of interest to look at this period and also at this lab.”

Narrator: “There are several leads that awakens the WHO researchers’ interest.”

Embarek: “They have perhaps worked with bats and have for some reason come into contact with the virus.”

Narrator: “In December 2019, just before the first known cases appeared, this video was published which informs about the field work of the CDC lab.”

Chinese Narrator: “The bat is the animal we know about that can harbour the most viruses. The researchers stay in the caves for several days without mobile contact or supplies from the outside. The fear is insidious. The fear of infections. The fear of getting lost. For if you find a virus, you are easily exposed to infection.”

Narrator: “The WHO finds no evidence that a lab leak has occurred, but they did not get access to lab records or other documentation.”

Narrator: “Only a few days remain of the mission. The source of the virus has not been found, so now the WHO’s researchers negotiate with the Chinese researchers about how likely the different

theories are. The two research groups need to agree to everything which is to appear in the final report.”

Embarek: “This is what is called face to face. Now, I am back in the hotel room, it is 2 a.m. We are writing on the first version of our final report. And this is tough. There are many points where we disagree. Pooh. It is not easy.”

Rasmussen: “The WHO is under enormous pressure. And the WHO must deliver a report that everyone can be happy with. But the problem is that they cannot do this. If they conclude something they do not think is wrong, the Chinese will pull the rug away from under the organisation. If they conclude something that the West and USA think is wrong, then they will pull the rug away from under the organisation. So, the WHO has become a battlefield rather than just an institution.”

Embarek: “In the beginning, we did not want to have anything included about the lab as it was impossible and therefore, we should not look at it and waste time on this. Forty-eight hours before we would finish the whole mission, we still did not have any agreement that we would mention the lab bit in the report. I and my counterpart go out in the corridor and discuss, one to one, how we should untie the knot we were in, so we could move on. This is where I said, listen now, we need to include this, otherwise, we have no report. He accepted that we could mention it in the report on the condition that we would not recommend any specific studies in order to move on with this hypothesis, we could just let it lie still.”

Interviewer: “But is it not a problem today that there are no recommendations about how to move on with investigating that hypothesis when there in fact, there is a possibility that a lab leak occurred?”

Embarek: “If one wants to investigate this hypothesis, it can be done in several ways. And for the hypothesis about the lab leak, we say clearly that one could move on, either by using new information or new evidence, which might pop up, or one can perform an audit. This is a kind of a police-like investigation where everything is checked.”

Embarek, at the press conference: “The laboratory incident hypothesis is really unlikely, extremely unlikely.”

Interviewer: “Extremely unlikely. Was it a requirement from the Chinese side that it must be called extremely unlikely in order to get it into the report at all?”

Embarek: “This was the category that we chose at the end, yes. What it says is that it is not impossible, but it is not particularly likely. This is how it should be read.”

Interviewer: “But had it been included if it had not been called extremely unlikely?”

Embarek: “Uhm, this would probably have required a, a .., perhaps even more (laughs) discussion and argument for and against, and I did not think it was worth it.”

Rasmussen: "I would say that the way I view the WHO report is that they, in fact, have not investigated the lab leak. It has not been part of the commission's mandate, and they have not worked particularly much with this."

Embarek: "This is the only document that exists where the Chinese have accepted to talk about the lab leak hypothesis. Already this is a huge result, in our opinion."

Narrator: "The researchers write in the report that a direct lab leak is extremely unlikely. But what does not appear in the report is that the WHO in fact believes that there is another likely scenario for the origin of the virus, which has a connection to the laboratories."

Embarek: "A collaborator in the main office is infected out in the field while he or she collects samples in a bat cave, and such a scenario also belongs even though it belongs to the lab leak, it also belongs to the first hypothesis we have, which is the hypothesis of direct bat-to-human transmission. And this hypothesis we have regarded as a likely hypothesis."

Narrator: "Thus, Peter Embarek believes that it is a likely hypothesis that a lab worker has been infected by a bat through his/her work outside in nature."

Ghebreyesus, WHO's Director-General: "The independent expert team to study the origins of the COVID-19 virus has completed its trip to China."

Wang Wenbin, spokesman, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The joint effort has created a global collaboration about the origin of the virus."

Narrator: "The team does not find a definitive answer to the origin of the coronavirus. Even though the hypothesis about a lab leak is included in the report, most scientists still agree that it is much more likely that the virus has jumped naturally from animal to man."

Rasmussen: "We all think, and I still think so today, that the most likely explanation still is that it has come directly from an animal. But I would like to know this with certainty. I would like to be confident that it was not a lab leak. We would like to know where the virus comes from. We don't know it today, but it is really important for the sake of the whole of mankind that we find out."

Narrator from a TV station: "We do not believe that China has made available sufficient original data into how this pandemic began to spread."

Text on the TV screen:

In May 2021, USA's President Joe Biden gives his intelligence service 90 days to come closer to a conclusion about the origin of the pandemic. The report is expected to appear by the end of August.

Zhao Lijian, spokesman, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “China has contributed to tracing the origin of the pandemic. This is broadly acknowledged.”

Embarek: “Will we find the answer to the origin of the pandemic? I hope so, but I have no idea. We must immerse ourselves in it wholeheartedly and without obstruction, and this is what a global collaborative project .. this is the only way we will get a chance of finding the origin.”

Text on the TV screen:

On 16 July 2021, the WHO comes up with a plan for further studies in China. Among other things, they suggest audits – which are in-depth investigations of relevant laboratories in Wuhan.

Ghebreyesus, WHO’s Director-General: “We are asking actually China to be transparent, open and cooperate.”

Zeng Yixin, vice minister in the National Health Commission, China: “I feel that the plan ignores common sense. It defies science.”

Text on the TV screen:

China rejects WHO’s plan about further studies in China.
