

The Beijing Bureau

**Eds., Trevor Watson & Melissa Roberts,
Hardie Grant, \$32.99**

When Paul Raffaele arrived in Beijing in 1973 as Australia's first journalist in Mao's China he felt like he was stepping into a John le Carre novel. And much of his contribution to this terrific collection of articles by Australian journalists who have at various times worked there, reads like one.

His arrival is bookended by the departure of Mike Smith, the last Australian journalist to leave China as relations between the two countries sunk to new depths. Both are vivid, evocative and clearly come from intense, lived experience.

As does Ali Moore's remembrance of being there at a pivotal moment when, as she puts it, the CCP made a deal with the people – wealth for obedience. Likewise, Helene Chung's memories of China in the mid-1980s has real immediacy. Reminiscences by boots-on-the-ground journalists.

