

THE GLOSSIES

China: Portrait of a Country

Edited by Liu Heung Shing
Taschen, 423 pages, \$59.99



In putting together this collection of work by Chinese photographers, editor Liu Heung Shing—himself a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer with Time and the Associated Press—realized that a full portrait of China was impossible unless the book included work from recent decades that had been never been published for fear of government retribution. He traveled the country personally urging photographers to bring out negatives that had been locked away. Many agreed—a quarter of the photographs here have never been published before—and the result is eye-opening. Some of the 81 photographers represented in "China: Portrait of a Country" had access to high-level officials—and to rarely witnessed events like the "struggle sessions"

from the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when party leaders were humiliated and sometimes killed. One disturbing photo by Jiang Shaowu shows a terrified provincial bureaucrat being denounced on a stage by young communist fanatics. From the 1980s, the photographs include one of the definitive images of the Tiananmen Square protests: two wounded men being rushed to the hospital on a flatbed rickshaw. Even though the book offers a wealth of historical documentation, it also takes us right up to today's virtually apolitical boom times. There are the obligatory shots of the gleaming Shanghai cityscape but also suggestions of the vast spiritual revival taking place across the country: A photograph of a rural funeral by Lü Nan seems to have been taken from heaven, looking down on a crowd kneeling before a grave. As a whole, the book acknowledges and explores the country's past but impresses upon readers the vitality of China's dynamic present.

—Ian Johnson