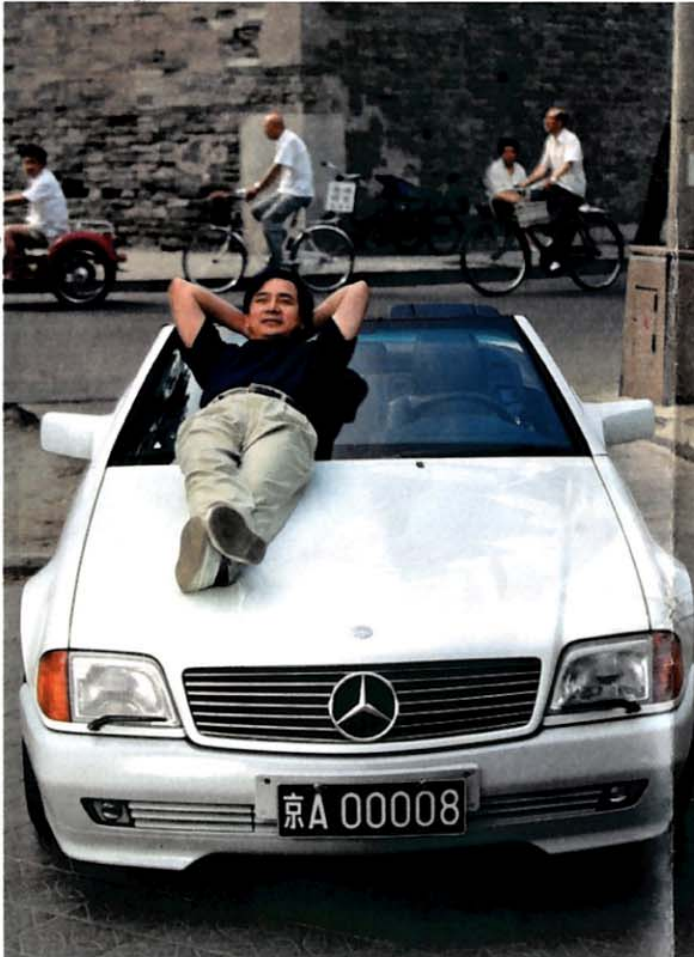


**Bigger Picture**

**THE NEW RICH, 1996**

China's first millionaire, the entrepreneur Li Xiaohua, lies on his brand new Mercedes-Benz in the Forbidden City



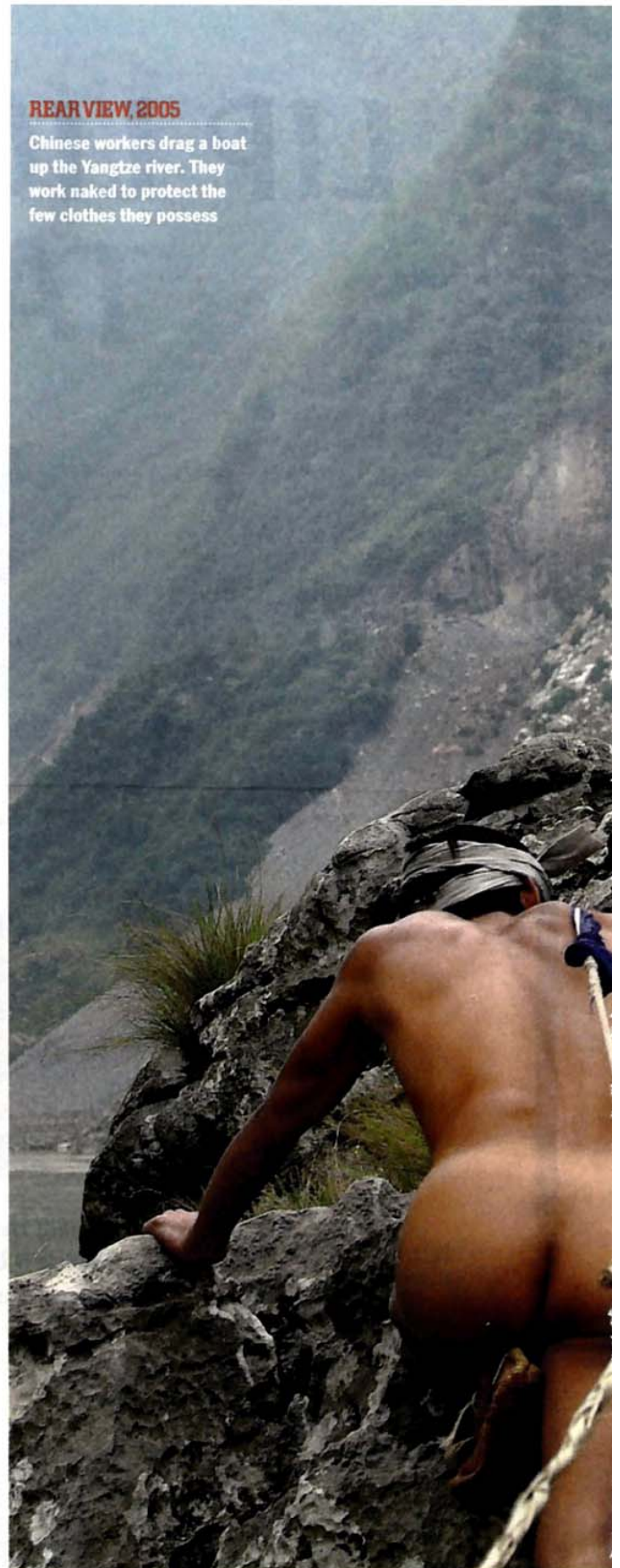
TOP LEFT: LIU HEIUNG SHING. RIGHT: QIN WEN

# CHINA STRIPPED BARE

The unseen photographs that chronicle 60 years of growing pains. By Tony Barrell

**REAR VIEW, 2005**

Chinese workers drag a boat up the Yangtze river. They work naked to protect the few clothes they possess







← **SIGN OF THE TIMES, 1966**

A senior official in Liaoning province in northeastern China is publicly humiliated at a rally in the provincial capital of Shenyang. He is forced to hold up a billboard that reads: 'The biggest capitalist in the northeast'

→ **END OF AN ERA, 1976**

Red Guards in Shenyang, Liaoning province, mourn the death of Chairman Mao. He died on September 9, 1976, age 82, after suffering a heart attack a few days earlier



★ 'When China won the bid to host the Olympics, I said to myself, when all these people come here, would they understand the journey that China and its people have taken?' ★

**H**efty chunks of China are now turning up across the globe. Second only to the Germans in the export stakes, the Chinese fill the world with everything from toys to computers, knickers to suits, ginseng to goji berries, bicycles to cars and table-tennis tables to oil-drilling platforms. There are even two new Travelodge hotels, in Uxbridge and Heathrow, currently being assembled from enormous modules prefabricated in the People's Republic. But photojournalism has never been high on the export list for this notoriously secretive nation. This is what makes Liu Heung Shing's achievement all the more jaw-dropping. The Chinese photographer has spent nearly four years gathering pictures, from 88 indigenous photographers, for a mighty new tome telling the story of the People's Republic.

A 56-year-old veteran of Life and Time magazines, Liu Heung Shing won a Pulitzer prize in 1992 for his coverage of the downfall of the Soviet Union. He conceived the China book as a storm of firecrackers swept across his country five years ago. "When China won the bid to host the 2008 Olympics," he explains at his home in Beijing, "I said to myself, when all these people come here, would they or would they not understand the journey that China and its people have taken to get here?"

Heung Shing travelled widely through urban and rural China to meet other photographers and see their archives, which were often in the classic form of "dusty negatives in shoe boxes under beds". Much of the material rekindled old memories. Born in 1951, two years after the foundation of the People's Republic, he had been caught up in Mao Tse-tung's grand ideological follies at an early age. Inspired by the Destroy Four Pests campaign that →

→ **MODEL WORKERS, 1957**

A group of 'model workers' – a coveted title during Mao's time – light Mao's cigarette

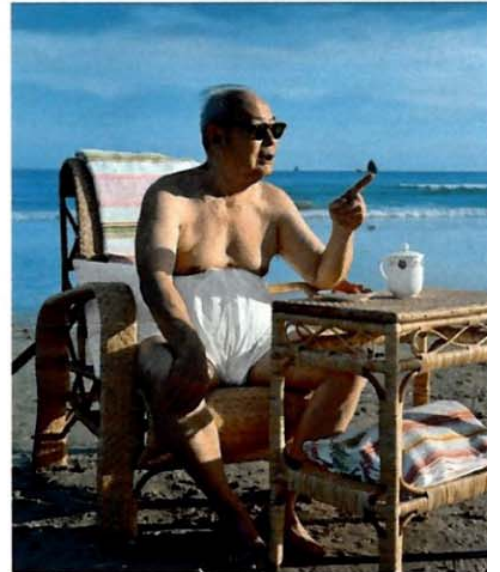
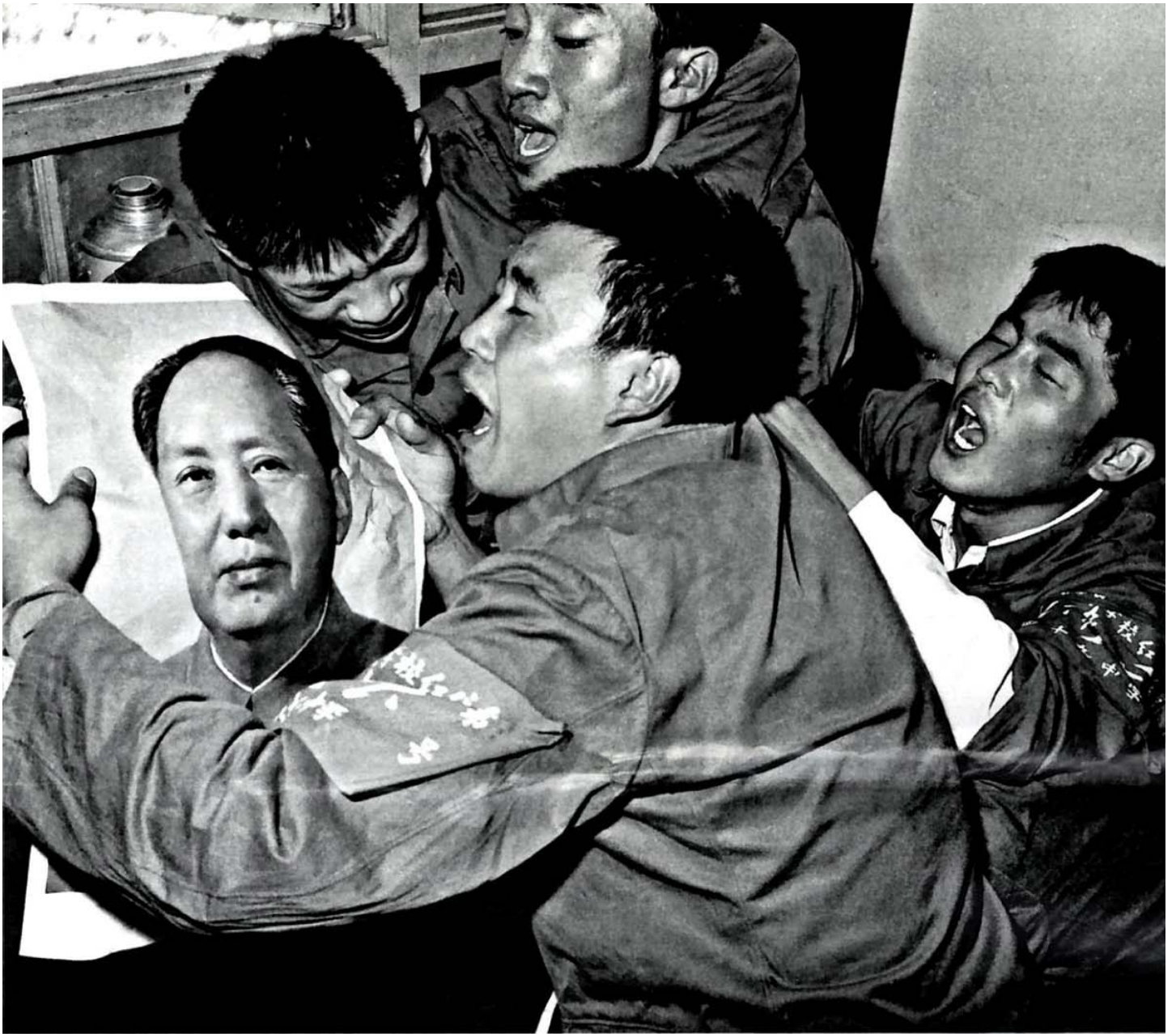
→ **MAO'S LOVES, 1974**

Jiang Qing (bottom centre, left), Mao's third wife, who went on to lead the Gang of Four, with Zhang Yufeng, his mistress and nurse

→ **THE REFORMER, 1973**

Marshal Ye Jianying (bottom right) holds court on a beach in Hainan province. Ye played a key role in arresting the Gang of Four, which effectively put an end to the Cultural Revolution



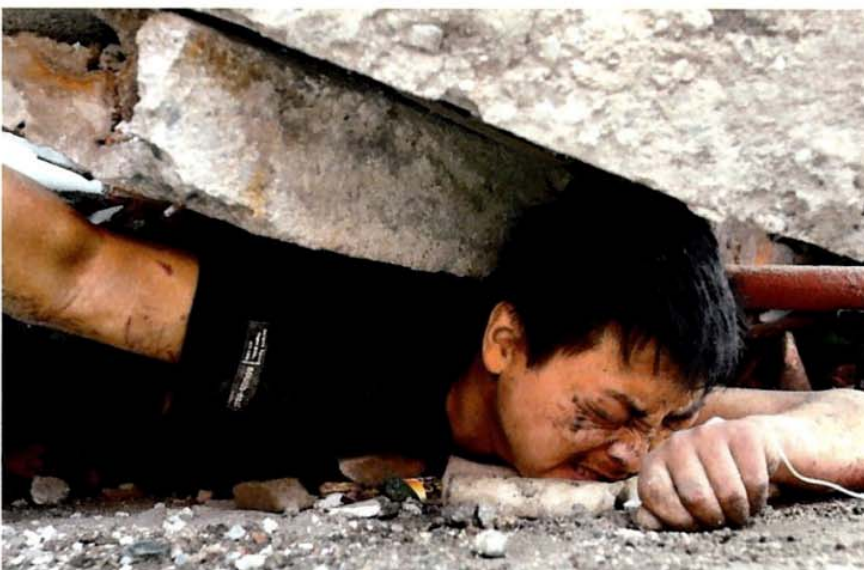




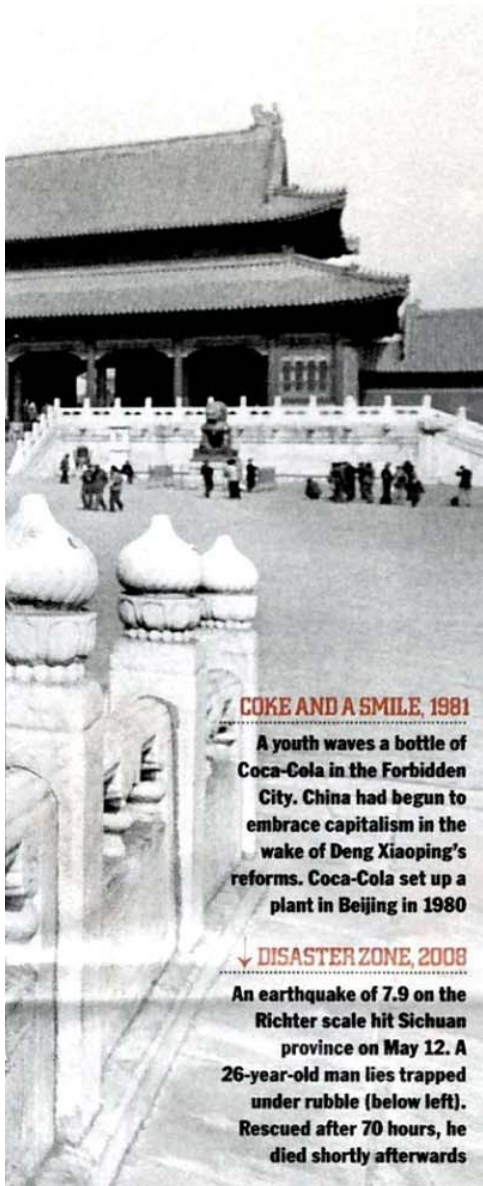
★ 'Going through the editing process for the book, I sometimes got frustrated how one person like Mao Tse-tung

advocated the mass killing of rats, sparrows, mosquitoes and flies, young Heung Shing handed in "matchboxes brimming with mosquitoes and flies" as his school homework. Mao's Great Leap Forward, which saw people herded into thousands of agrarian communes with impossible production targets, led to the starvation of millions. "Going through the editing process, I sometimes got so frustrated," says Heung Shing, "how one person like Mao could devastate the lives of so many people."

In 1989, Heung Shing found himself involved in another ugly chapter in Chinese history. On the day after the massacre in Tiananmen Square, he photographed a scene that he saw as profoundly symbolic. A fearsome People's Liberation Army (PLA) tank rolls over a bridge (above right), underneath which is a diffident young couple riding a bicycle. "It seems to me that the weight of the tank represents the weight of the government, and the individuals are so tiny underneath the bridge."



TOP LEFT AND TOP RIGHT: LUI HEUNG SHING; BOTTOM RIGHT: YONG HE; BOTTOM LEFT: GUO TIELOU

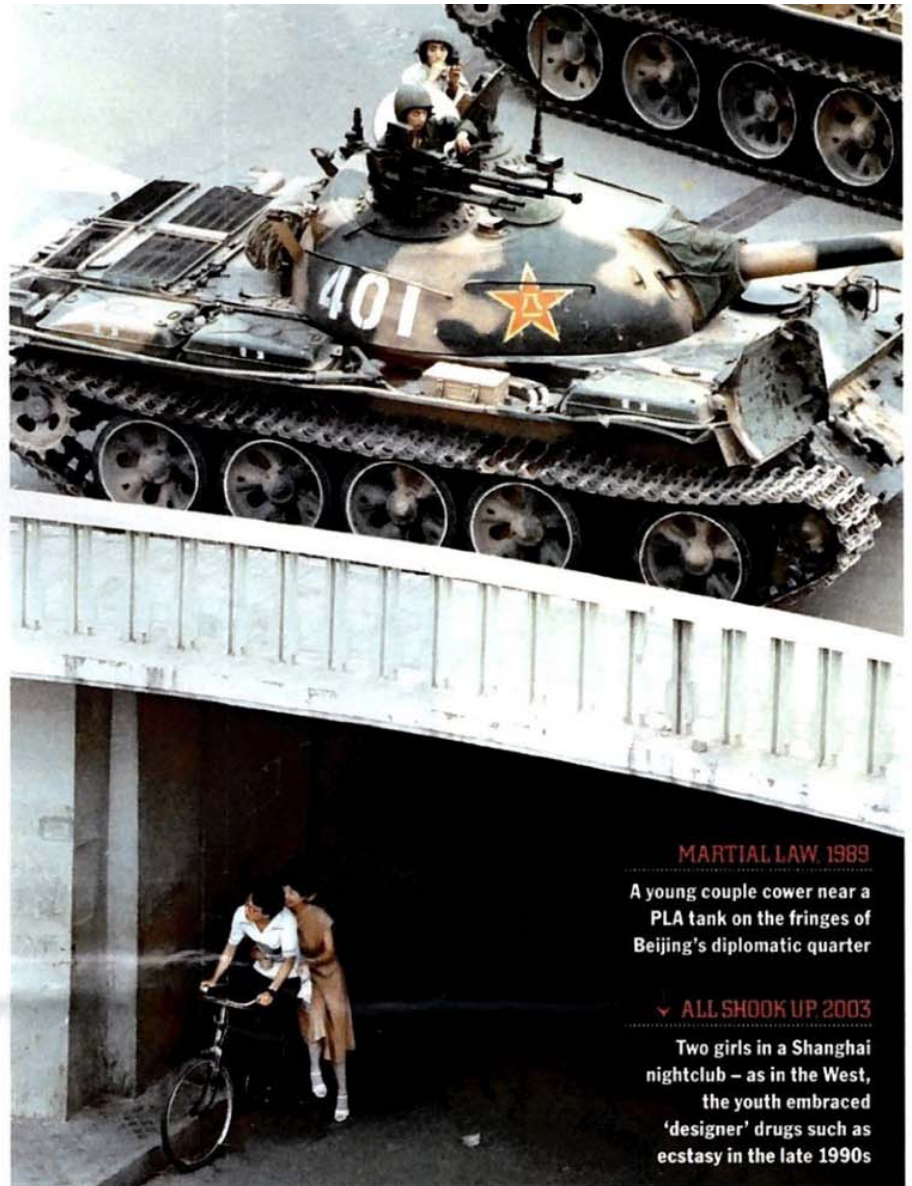


**COKE AND A SMILE, 1981**

A youth waves a bottle of Coca-Cola in the Forbidden City. China had begun to embrace capitalism in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's reforms. Coca-Cola set up a plant in Beijing in 1980

**DISASTER ZONE, 2008**

An earthquake of 7.9 on the Richter scale hit Sichuan province on May 12. A 26-year-old man lies trapped under rubble (below left). Rescued after 70 hours, he died shortly afterwards



**MARTIAL LAW 1989**

A young couple cower near a PLA tank on the fringes of Beijing's diplomatic quarter

**ALL SHOOK UP 2003**

Two girls in a Shanghai nightclub – as in the West, the youth embraced 'designer' drugs such as ecstasy in the late 1990s

could devastate the lives of so many' ✨

Nearly 20 years on, China is an economic marvel, building up to three power stations every week and boasting at least 460m mobile-phone users. Close to a billion tons of cargo is carried by the Yangtze river every year. But *plus ça change...* One striking photograph (see pages 30-31), showing seven naked workers dragging a boat up the Yangtze, looks remarkably like the pictures taken by the Life photographer Dmitri Kessel in 1946 – but it was in fact taken in 2005.

Is China ready, politically, for this book? "I don't think so," says Heung Shing. "I think the authorities still have trouble recognising certain events." President Hu Jintao's government would be likely, he says, to censor it if it were published in his homeland. After all, as Confucius said, "You cannot open a book without learning something." ■

*China: Portrait of a Country*, edited by Liu Heung Shing (published by Taschen on July 21, £29.99), is available at the special-offer price of £26.99, including p&P, from BooksFirst, tel: 0870 165 8585



LIU HEUNG SHING IS GIVING A LECTURE AT THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY ON SEPTEMBER 23 (WWW.PHOTOVOICE.ORG, TEL: 020 7033 3878)