The ascent of China’s economy over the past thirty years may be one of the more remarkable happenings in human history. Few understand it. Those outside China consider the massive changes a mystery. Those inside China have been challenged with taking more than 1.3 billion people from an agrarian existence into the modern world, and in the face of complex economics involving extreme conflicts of interest. Nobody ever did it before; nobody will ever do it again. Given the convulsive upheavals required, the difficulty of the task has been, and remains, hard to imagine.

This book describes those upheavals and that process over the years from 1978 to 2008. It represents a remarkable achievement in condensing a welter of events and changes down to the bare essentials. In summing up a period of history, it also serves as a query about what is to come next. Where are the convulsive changes leading, not only for China, but for the world.