

abortion
The Whole Story
Mary Kenny

Slippery Customer

Abortion, The Whole Story
Mary Kenny
Quartet Books £9.95 hbk.

Ms Mary Kenny is a slippery customer, and those ignorant of her skill at jumping on and off bandwagons might take her latest campaign offering, **Abortion, The Whole Story**, to be an entirely objective inquiry.

Like those music-hall artistes equipped with suction shoes, she leans at gravity-defying angles to distance herself from the rigid Catholic line on abortion that she personally adheres to. As the nippier Catholic polemicists often do, Ms Kenny refers to her own views as if they were DIY instead of a painting-by-numbers delivered to her ready-made by an authoritarian church.

Though the author admits at the end of her book that she is an anti-abortionist, *albeit* she says a wholly understanding

one, she raises matters that are well worth considering.

Few women today feel entirely comfortable with the earlier, simplistic slogan 'Abortion on Demand'. We realise that the issue is now more complex than it once seemed, when back-street abortion was the only remedy, technology had not yet shown us a scan-picture of the unborn child and was not yet able to bring to full term outside the womb babies of an erstwhile lethal immaturity.

Nor can women of conscience now duck recognition of the burden, sometimes moral, sometimes plain human, that abortion puts upon the doctors and nurses who must carry it out.

Ms Kenny has witnessed the various abortion procedures and describes them carefully. She is also objective in describing the feelings of women after abortion, admitting that the experience 'varies almost as much as individuals vary'.

Where men's feelings are involved, she is also res-

trained. Ms Kenny confines herself to exploring emotions, mentions that 'a sense of powerlessness' is a common experience, cites a macabre and almost unbelievable American finding that 'the majority of men interviewed... said they would like to be present at the abortion' and thankfully lets the subject drop.

She also has a stab at raising adoption as an alternative to abortion, on the grounds that an unborn baby ought to be given a chance of life, but one senses that even she feels that this is a non-starter; possible, perhaps, for those women with 'a spiritual dimension' but an anathema to most of us - one thing to be haunted by the ghost of an aborted baby, another to know the ghost is real.

In the end, the argument resolves itself into two interlocking issues - that technology, by making the foetus 'real' with scans, should make us reconsider the time limit set in this country for routine abortion (later in the

UK than in most European countries), while that same technology may soon enable us to terminate a pregnancy before it is legally established, thus discreetly and privately circumventing the law.

But since, as Ms Kenny points out, neither the right-to-choosers nor the anti-abortionists are willing to give an inch on the time question for fear of appearing to concede on broader issues, so 'the usual English notion that you can always find a compromise just does not apply here', we can only hope that technological circumvention will shortly break the deadlock.

In the meantime, I personally wish that Mary Kenny would in future direct her energies to the alleviation of the far greater suffering and sexual oppression of the women of her own country. In her earlier, less 'spiritual' days, she did a good deal. What a pity the embrace of Mother Church has so softened her options. ●

Jill Tweedie

Appliance of Science

The Politics of British Science
Martin Ince
Wheatsheaf £8.95 pbk

Martin Ince's book is a readable and up-to-date guide to the British science policy system. If you want to know what Acard, ABRC, 'Alvey', Esprit and Eureka are then this is the place to look. The statistics of survival in the battle for research funds are also conveniently summarised from UK and OECD sources. As well as the committees and budgets, a picture of scientists at the research front is also given.

Two of the main problems of British science, funding restrictions and the dominance of the military sector, are shown to have been reinforced under Thatcher. However Ince also argues that there have been new initiatives in the promotion of science for economic objectives. These address the two

other endemic problems in Britain of very weak policy coordination and lagging industrial research.

'Selectivity' has been the Thatcherite counter to 'expansionist' pleas from science in response to the squeeze. Ince faces up squarely to the challenge. Rather than opting for 'a wave of some budgetary wand', he embraces the notion of choice within science policy - but one located in a popular and democratic context.

The emphasis on choice rather than expansion raises some critical questions about social and economic priorities in science. While some long-term objectives are readily identified, their translation into more immediate policy is not fully resolved by Ince. He presents a strong case for shifting resources from the dominant military and nuclear research sectors to peaceful and socially-useful areas. Although this principle enjoys popular support, there remain very serious differ-

ences within the Left over the pace and scale of such a shift.

Such a debate merits further attention. At the same time, Ince shows that Thatcherism has allied the shift to increased selectivity in research funding to industrial goals, defined in narrow economic terms.

Ince goes on to present powerful opinion poll evidence which shows a popular preference for areas such as health and the environment over both narrowly economic, and militaristic, scientific fields. This disparity between popular and official priorities clearly reinforces the case for a democratic transformation of science towards social needs and welfare goals. Yet Ince remains a realist, and acknowledges that 'the consequences of a British failure to secure a reasonable share of world markets in a restructured world economy would be highly unpalatable'.

This poses a key political choice. Should the Left back

the incipient trend towards the planning of science for economic goals, even if these are defined in technocratic terms, or should it concentrate its efforts in espousing an alternative orientation towards broader social goals? More specifically, should the pressures for industrially-relevant strategic science be encouraged or criticised? Martin Ince shrinks from making a choice, and instead sees the current changes in scientific practice as creating the opportunity for raising broader issues of social choice in science. Ince looks to initiatives which foster a democratic voice from below through locally-based participative schemes which link the community to scientific institutions. The integration of realist modernisation with democratic transformation is the task of a larger political project, but in the realm of science policy, Martin Ince has had the insight to raise, if not resolve, some of the consequent issues. ●

Fred Steward

THE POLITICS
OF
BRITISH SCIENCE





Open Doors to China and Tibet

Until 1980 no more than 2,000 foreigners had ever visited Tibet. One of them was Alan Winnington, *Daily Worker* correspondent in China, whose fascinating memoirs, titled **Breakfast with Mao**, are now published (*Lawrence and Wishart* £4.95 pbk).

It was not until after the Cultural Revolution and Red Guard vandalisations that Tibet was open to visitors.

Nowadays the doors are open. Two new guide books cater particularly for the independent back-packer. *Lonely Planet*, whose **China: A Travel Survival Kit** is now clutched in foreign hands from Shanghai to Shenyang, has produced a similar guide to Tibet. **Tibet: A Travel Survival Kit**, (*Michael Buckley & Robert Strauss*, *Lonely Planet*, £4.95) shows points of entry, both allowed and in theory banned, from four adjoining Chinese provinces.

The *Collins* guide by *Elizabeth Booz*, **A Guide to Tibet** (£8.95) is less adventurous, but strong on Tibetan history. Both books tell you, quite calmly, at what point on the highway to Nepal you can turn left for Mount Everest.

The *Lonely Planet China* will shortly be challenged by *Routledge & Kegan Paul's The Rough Guide to China* by *Rhonda Evans*, *Catherine Sanders* and *Chris Stewart* (£6.95). It is also strong on historical detail and some less familiar stopping-places, but it cannot keep up

with the pace of change as the door swings open wider. Much more is now possible than it admits says a recent backpacker scanning its text.

This could not have been imagined by Alan Winnington in 1949 as he drank moonshine with the leaders of the Chinese revolution on the eve of their victory.

Winnington went on to report on the Korean War from the Northern side. Accused of treason and deprived of his passport, he then worked in Beijing till he became disillusioned with the Great Leap Forward.

Breakfast With Mao is a curiously incomplete book and not only because Winnington died in the final stage of writing it. There is a sense of conspiratorial mystery and his Korean observations are enigmatic. The exception, is germ warfare, where he explains exactly why he is still convinced it was used.

Winnington becomes more discursive on the joys of China before the Great Leap – the 'golden years' before Mao when, 'half-way to madness', he insisted on trying to create 'overnight socialism' in Tibet and everywhere else. Mao created a fantasy world, Winnington concludes, in which the only winners were time-serving cadres. That is at least half true. The other half – the genuine excitement of mass mobilisation for many Chinese – is now only a historical truth which can never be relived. ● *John Gittings*

Trecks in Foreign Parts

In Trouble Again a special issue of travel writing is *Granta's* latest collection (£3.95).

Travel writing is a rather hybrid beast; part reportage, part autobiography, part journalism. At the very least it challenges the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction', in that the recording of the traveller's impressions will always provoke her/him to explore ways to evoke the exotic/frightening for the alien reader.

Perhaps with this in mind, the editors began the collection with *Redmond O'Hanlon's* extraordinary 'Amazon Adventure', a vivid account of two companions with different responses to the hardship of the jungle. This piece is really a story about hedonism and

curiosity, fear and resilience, with the documentary elements as back-up.

By contrast, *Hanif Kureishi's* 'Bradford' could have been an article in *The Guardian*, locating the complexities of Asian life in a British city. In between these we touch briefly on Cuba, Angola, China, India – a kind of white person's trek around foreign parts.

If I feel somewhat uneasy, it is nothing to do with the quality of the writing. With journeys to so many different places it's as if one were reading a collection of exotic fiction rather than documentary. But then again, perhaps such a collection highlights the fact that when the journey is done, it remains in the traveller's mind as a story to be told to others. ● *Michéle Wandor*

Travellers Tracts

Travel literature is a boom area these days. There are many tomes available for armchair consumers of travelling sagas. **A Book of Traveller's Tales** edited by *Eric Newby* is out in paperback (*Picador* £4.95) and is enjoyable to peruse before a warm fire. *Jan Morris's* offerings do encourage the reader to leave the armchair. Her two latest paperbacks are **Among The Cities** (*Penguin* £4.95) and **Journeys** (*Oxford* £4.95).

John Julius Norwich's A Taste For Travel (*Papermac* £7.95) is again for the armchair. *Granta* devotes another whole issue to travel.

Martha Gellhorn revisits Cuba, *Salman Rushdie* in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan... And though it's been on the shelves for a few months now, *Pandora's Half The Earth* (£5.95) deserves another mention.

Two other quick mentions. *Richard Barber's Penguin Guide to Medieval Europe* (£6.95) is ever so tasteful, and the 50th anniversary facsimile reissue

New York New York

Want to visit New York cheaply? Then you'd be wise to acquire the newly-published **Rough Guide to New York** by *Martin Dunsford* and *Jack Holland* (*Routledge & Kegan Paul*, £4.50 pbk).

New York is certainly 'a helluva town', as the song goes, but it's an expensive one too. The guide's suggestions for cheap accommodation are extremely useful and unusual. Points too for the sections on the outer boroughs and up-state that are too often ignored by visitors, and for the reminders that New York is not just glitz but also home to many unassimilated

ethnic groups and homeless people.

But guidebooks are always a little out-of-date and it shows here in the nightclub section (rich, chic hangouts and the passé) and sketchy coverage of upper west side (home of left intellectuals, blacks and Hispanics).

However, if you ignore the laboured and mis-spelt dictionary of New York slang, and chance your luck with the many cheap, ethnic restaurants not mentioned, the **Rough Guide to New York** should prove an invaluable introduction to the Big Apple. ● *Anya Schiffrin*

alarming and distasteful infection that few travellers catch, but it gets two absorbing pages. The chapter on intestinal parasites is brilliant, and the lines on 'creeping eruption' will change your view of dogs forever.

A wonderful, juicy book that will help people with serious medical problems (like diabetics) to cope with different environments, whilst warning the truly intrepid against local pathologies. Tuck a copy into your toupee before you take off. ● *Steve Iliffe*

The Itch

If you have the itch to travel, **Travellers Health** (*Richard Dawood*, *Oxford University Press*, pbk £6.95) should cure you. No sniggering jibes at *Montezumas* revenge here, just gruesome detail and sound advice parcelled into neat essays custom-made for that long flight or slow train.

Beware of Japanese puffer fish cooked by an amateur; death is preceded by a tingling of the lips... Don't forget that the best time to cross the Sahel coincides with the meningitis season. Guinea worm is an

