



## 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. ● *Micheline 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'* 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*

These books are all very well, but they won't tell you where to find good bars or the cheapest restaurants. The **Rough Guides** (*Routledge and Kegan Paul*) are well on the way to being the key good advice books of the 1980s. They already cover most of Europe, keep extending (recently China and Eastern Europe soon), and are well worth tracking down.

The familiar names in the guide book world keep coming out. *Fodor's*, *Frommer's*, *Baedeker's*, *Blue Guides*, *Berlitz* and the like.

I prefer the *Baedeker's* country and city guides because of their excellent typography and design. They are also accurate and genuinely useful.

For exotic mouth-watering reads, I'd just as soon settle down with **Speedbird's Worldwide Brochure** (*British Airways*) or the **Wildlife, Cultural and Wilderness** journeys put out by *Twickers World*. ● *David Brazil*

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.

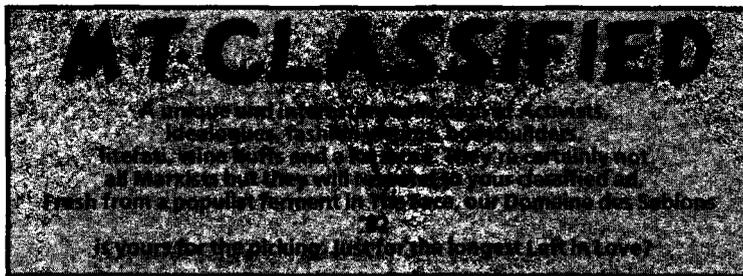
Beware of Japanese puffer fish cooked by an amateur; death is preceded by a tingling of the lips... Don't forget that the best time to cross the Sahel coincides with the meningitis season. Guinea worm is an



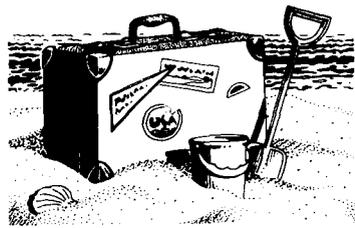
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- **Black guy** into health in a big way, looking for female company jogging, etc. Box 055.
- **Socialist feminist**, 31 who likes art, soul, salsa, looking for a humorous man. Box 056.
- **Single woman**, mid-thirties wishes to meet gentleman South-Wales area. Box 057.
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- **Happy, clumsy, feminist** loves books, films, dancing, seeks hipster (M/F) for casual safe sex. No puritans please. Box 059.
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- **The Ubiquitous Chip**, Ashton Lane, Glasgow. Trendy, up-market but great selection of beers, and intellectual crowd from Yooni.

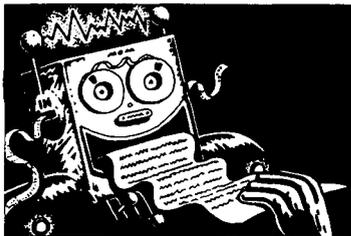


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- **Collets Chinese Bookshop**, 40 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PJ. Tel: 01-580 7538. Books in Chinese and English from and about China. Chinese language aids. Oriental art books. Traditional Chinese embroideries, antiques, prints, jewellery, porcelain and embroideries.
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## PHOTOGRAPHY

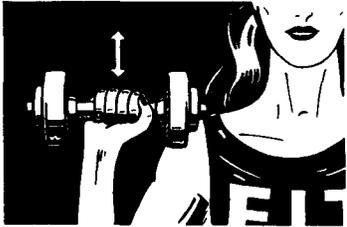
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## PUBLICATIONS

- **Gay Scotland** reflects lesbian, gay and bisexual thought and activity in Britain and overseas. Buy from 'Gays the Word' or other Left Bookshops, or subscribe £5/5 issues: 58A Broughton Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3SA, Sample £1.50.
- **Radical Scotland.** Scotland's top political magazine, bi-monthly. 70p. 40pp. Socialism; radicalism; Home Rule. Annual subscriptions £5.40. From 48 The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ.
- **Gay Life.** The fizziest gay magazine in Britain. Monthly from your local pub or bookshop. Subscriptions £9 12 months. Ring 061 236 6026.

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## MARXISM TODAY READERS GROUPS

Initiating everything from dialectics to discos Marxism Today Discussion Groups are springing up all over Britain. We now have available blank Marxism Today Group posters, plus a range ready-made for meetings on Marxism, Style, and Drugs (more to follow). For these, or help with speakers, advice etc, write to us at Box P001. Marxism Today, 16 St John St., London EC1M 4AY. Same goes, if you want to know if there is a group near you.

- **Glasgow** February discussion on 'The media of the Left' with Alan Lawson, Editor of Radical Scotland and Willie Thompson of Marxism Today Editorial Board. Wickets Hotel, Partick, Wed Feb 18th at 8pm. Details: Box P017.

- **Wellingborough** Discussion Forums for the Spring being planned on Aids, Labour's Defence Policy, and Socialist-Democracy. Interested? get in touch. Box P018.

**Queen Mary College, London** Meeting to talk about 'Drugs – Public Enemy Number One?' Thursday February 12th, 1pm in the Students' Union. Box P020.

**University College Cardiff** All-Wales Gramsci Conference coming in March. Speakers, seminars, entertainment. Details, P024.

**Bradford University** Feminist Forum with Ros Brunt, Jean Gardiner & Vicky Seddon. Thursday February 25, 7.30pm at Bradford University. Info: Box P025.

**Bristol** 'Beat the Blues' Marxism Today Festival in May. With workshops, videos, bands etc. Helpers and ideas needed. Contact: P026.

**Lewisham** Discussion on article in current MT. All welcome. 22nd Feb, 22nd Mar, 26th April (Sundays 4.00-6.00pm). Details 01-635-8661.

**NOTE:** In all cases, send your enquiry to Marxism Today, 16 ST John St. London EC1M 4AY. Quoting the relevant box number.



## EATING OUT

**Orex Restaurant.** Greek Food to Take Away. Fully Licensed for parties. Recommended by many M.T. Readers Groups. 236 Hornsey Road, London N7 7LL. Telephone 01/607 7098.

## VALENTINE MESSAGES

- **Ki-Ora Pussy-Love** Big.
- **Get your blanchmange, DO? DO.**
- **My heart aches,** and my soul is quelled, David.
- **Spank, Luv Dollop.**
- **Paul, Keep it up, Mark.**

## EVENTS

- **Breaking Out?** Sexual politics for the 90's. We need help organising our first event. Islington. May 16th. On Men. Phone Jonathan Rutherford 01 272 4756.

- **Stop Sizewell B.** Lobby of Parliament on 4th Feb. Evening meeting with top speakers. Details Friends of the Earth. 01 837 0731.

- **Communist Party National Student Conference.** 21-22 February. A lively mixture of debate, training and fun. Contact Paul Hassan for details. Get those red bases built! 16 St John St. London EC1M 4AY. Phone 01 251 4406.

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- **Lineage:** 50p per word, except where otherwise stated.
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**Further Enquiries and late copy:** telephone Malcolm 01-608 0265. Box Number entries and replies are strictly confidential. Mark entries 'Left in Love' or 'Left at Play', and replies with the appropriate Box No. on the envelope. Please enclose a stamp for postage costs.

## CONTRIBUTORS

This month's contributors include: **Keith Dixon** teaches at Grenoble University, and is a member of the French Communist Party. **Tony Levene** is a journalist specialising in financial affairs and editor of *Fund Management International*. **Fred Halliday** is Professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, and visited Kabul in 1980. **Martin Weaver** works for North West Thames Regional Health Authority's Aids Education Project. **Patrick Wintour** is the labour correspondent on *The Guardian*. **Elizabeth Wright** is a broadcaster on Far Eastern affairs. **Beatrix Campbell** is a journalist on *City Limits* magazine and a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board. **Fedor Burlatsky** is vice-president of the Soviet Political Sciences Association, Professor of philosophy in Moscow, lecturer on Soviet Communist Party history and author of many books and articles on political sociology. **Monty Johnstone** is a writer on Soviet and East European politics, and a member of the Communist Party's executive committee. **Tony Lane** is a director of the Merseyside Enterprise Board and former consultant to the TGWU. **Jon Bloomfield** is a member of CND's international committee and of the Communist Party's executive committee. **Eric Hobsbawm** was formerly Professor of economic and social history Birkbeck College, London, and is a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board. **Elena Lieven** is a vice-chair of CND and a lecturer in psychology at Manchester University. **Brian McNair** lectures in media studies at the University of Ulster. **Stephen Wagg** is a lecturer in sociology at East Warwickshire College, Rugby. **Rosemary Betterton** is a senior lecturer in art history at Sheffield Polytechnic. **Jack Lindsay** is a novelist, playwright and member of the Communist Party. **Andy Croft** works in adult education. **Bernard Crick** is the author of *George Orwell: A Life* and of the Fabian Society pamphlet *Socialist Values and Time*. **Jill Tweedie** is the author of the recent novel *Internal Affairs*. **Fred Steward** is a lecturer at Aston University's Management Centre, and a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board. **Micheline Wandour** is a playwright. **David Brazil** writes on travel for *City Limits*. **Anya Schiffrin** works at Granta. **John Gittings** is *The Guardian's* China correspondent. **Steve Iliffe** is a GP, an editor of *Medicine In Society* and a member of the Communist Party. **Bob Lumley** is an Italian teacher and freelance writer.

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**Umberto Eco**

*Newsweek* in December ran a front cover photo of Umberto Eco with the headline 'The Code Breaker - Name of the Rose Author has won Fame and Fortune Interpreting the Signs we Live By'. Inside, a long article celebrates a success crowned by the film adaptation of Eco's novel starring Sean Connery, which is about to go on general release in Britain. To his publisher's delight, the movie has created a strong new demand for *Name of the Rose*, which has sold more than 5m copies, and has been translated into 25 languages.

Here we have not rags to riches, but monastic obscurity to international fame; not the absent-minded professor, but the worldly wordsmith and code breaker. And yet our hero 'looks like a friendly gnome' and 'teaches a subject so complex and abstruse that only a few hundred people in the world have mastered its rudiments'.

Hype? Yes, but then Eco has understood how to handle as well as analyse the media, and plays different roles according to the occasion. Faced with American students' demands for the formula for writing a best-

**'Here we have not rags to riches, but monastic obscurity to international fame; not the absent-minded professor, but the worldly wordsmith and code breaker'**

seller, Eco speaks in riddles; surrounded by academic obscurantism, he goes in for plain speaking. In America, he plays the Italian humanist, and in Italy, the American 'techno-buff'. However, this public recognition in *Newsweek* is appropriate in another sense. For Eco, the relationship America-Italy/Europe has been crucial not only for his recent acclaim but for the development of his writing and cultural analysis since the early

1960s. While this has a personal dimension, it also relates to the dramatic postwar transformation of Italy in which America has loomed large as a model of the future.

The United States is far from being the only country with which Eco is familiar. He teaches at the University of São Paulo in Brazil as well as at Yale, and is a speaker of five modern languages. However, while he has written about the literature of various countries (particularly France), America occupies a special place in his work; the 'America', that is, of mass culture, not its 'cultured' side. Above all, it has been a place (metaphorical as much as real) for getting and testing ideas - a sort of laboratory.

Eco first made his name with *Apocalittici e Integrati*, which, since its publication in 1964, has been an obligatory point of reference for debates on contemporary culture in Italy. Its importance can be compared with that of Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* or Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*. Basically, through studies of American cartoon-strips (Steve Canyon, Superman, Charlie Brown), television and popular fiction, Eco demonstrated the need to analyse mass cultural forms as texts. Today, it all seems obvious (thanks also to the likes of Eco), but at the time it meant developing an alternative approach to that of the pessimistic enemies of mass culture (from marxists to arch-conservatives), who he calls 'apocalyptic', and to that of optimistic conformists, for whom the expansion of the media was automatically beneficial for all. (Eco, for instance, has been Marshall McLuhan's acutest critic).

Over the years, in fact, Eco's work has shown the different levels and contradictions within mass culture, distinguishing, for example, between 'closed' texts that

impose stereotypes which prevent rather than provoke thought, and 'open' ones which show the complexity of things. Perhaps his most important contribution has been to analyse the role of the 'reader', and how people can, and do, interpret television, films or whatever, so that they 're-make' them.

One of the main reasons for Eco's importance as an intellectual in Italy has been his part in interpreting the major cultural changes symbolised, if not induced, by the importation of American cultural models. He was a leading figure in national cultural life long before becoming internationally famous. Especially as he has put his skills as a semiotician to 'practical' use, proving himself an astute cultural operator and valuable political interlocutor and commentator.

Interestingly, Eco has been a failure as an academic in the sense that his proposals for reform at the university have made little headway. To his credit, he has failed to become one of the corrupt 'barons' who use party-politics to feather their nests.

Eco has always seen his role as an intellectual in the broadest sense. There is his prolific scholarship and commitment to teaching (even though he is rich enough not to have to); it is not by chance that Eco wrote a manual for students on thesis-writing which explains the mechanics and know-how involved. Then there is his journalism, especially his regular columns and features for the weekly *L'Espresso*, not to mention his fictional writing. The 'whole' is so impressive because the 'parts' add up to a project and life's endeavour - a rare feat in these opportunistic times.

Above all, Eco regards his 'public', or rather 'publics', as citizens to be engaged in dialogue. This is evident in Eco's own attempt to practise what he preaches about 'open' texts and 'active' readers. When the press in Italy became virtually a vehicle for propaganda, at the height of the terrorism emergency,



**Eco: worldly wordsmith**

Eco lucidly examined the Red Brigades' media strategy, and debunked the case for a news blackout. Then, from 1968 onwards, he has looked sympathetically as well as critically, at the social movements that have erupted in Italian society, making sense of their seeming 'nonsense' for puzzled bystanders. Against the 'guard-dog' apologists, who have identified democracy with silent majorities, Eco has been one of an honourable band of intellectuals who have seen forms of conflict as the sign of a healthy society and culture.

The success of *Name of the Rose* has made Eco famous as a novelist. However, his best-seller, in the longer term, will probably be judged to have promoted a revival of the gothic genre - a fascination with the Middle Ages - not to have opened a new chapter in Italian contemporary literature (though other writers, like Primo Levi, have suddenly become marketable outside Italy due to the 'Eco-effect').

Hopefully, in the meanwhile, his other writings will become available in translation to a wider public in the same way that Barthes' have. Certainly he has much to teach, not least concerning the positive role intellectuals can invent for themselves in society. ●

Bob Lumley