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## For Far-Out Adventure...

By Jane Morse

Like a mushrooming number of curious travelers, she was gearing up for a trip to the People's Republic of China. But where do you go for background information on "unknown" areas? How do you get briefed on communist countries so long out in the cold?

Being a reasoner, she reasoned, and came to a perfectly obvious conclusion: Ask the people most likely to be keeping track of "mystery" spots, the Central Intelligence Agency.

So she did. And it worked. Among the many things you may never have guessed about America's superspies is that they're into producing "traveler's aids"—so far some 50 maps, six atlases and (for who knows what reasons) a street guide to Leningrad.

Now, thanks to China's latest leap forward in the tourist business, the CIA may even have a semi-best-seller on its hands. The "Atlas of the People's Republic of China" (\$6.50) is an uncommon atlas and a fascinating work. It offers 82 pithy pages of smoothly and clearly presented material that graphically summarizes China's geography, economy, history and culture.

You like pictures? It's got pictures. Lots of maps, of course—one marking premier sightseeing spots in Peking. Interspersed are to-the-point analogies that put the information into terms immediately comprehensible to westerners.

What else the intelligence community has done for you lately includes producing another intriguing work, the "Indian Ocean Atlas" (\$5.75). This one is for far-out adventurers, of course, since Zanzibar, the Laccadive Islands, Mauritius and the rest are not yet places that rival Las Vegas and New Orleans as tourist draws.

Stay-at-homes who are also diehard romantics ought to eat it up anyhow. Few if any guide books or other atlases so explicitly answer unspoken questions and explain, for instance, that "Under these conditions [temperatures in excess of 100 degrees], the body's cooling mechanism is disrupted; the body sweats, but the sweat does not evaporate, and cool, thus any strenuous activity increases the danger of heatstroke."

Of course, the CIA is not alone among U.S. government agencies in publishing

what every tourist might conceivably want to know. The Defense Department, in fact, does some of the most in-depth "guidebooks" around, an "area handbook" series, 105 volumes covering Afghanistan to Zambia.

These are really for serious travelers as opposed to fun-in-the-sun seekers, since they deal with each nation's history, politics and culture, not "Where the Discos Are" or "How to Live in Style on 4 Cents a Day." They are nonetheless a good read and don't require true grit to get through.

If you secretly like shortcuts, though, you can still consult the Defense Department. It has also done a group of pocket guides that do get to tourist tips but summarize the rest of what you need to know in order not to appear too stupid. They were written for service people, of course, so they cover mainly areas where the United States has troops stationed, include some useful phrases, a reading list in case you're up to more, and (the best part) lots of basic material that sophisticated guidebook writers forget that first-timers would like—and need—to know.

And whereas the area handbooks have real book prices (averaging \$6-\$8), the pocket guides, which really are pocket-size and no thicker than a checkbook, cost 55 cents to \$1.80.

There's also a series of inexpensive phrase books from the same folks. Again, they're conveniently pocket size, range in cost from 75 cents to \$1.90, and easily cover the most vital areas of tourist-to-local conversation in a dozen languages, French to Malay.

The quasi publisher-distributor of all these works is the Government Printing Office, and it aims to please travelers who stay closer to home, too. Noteworthy is its hardcover book "Presidents" (\$8), which should be a boon to history-minded tourists. It's just what they need to plan a Lincoln Trip or a Truman Trip or even a Presidents' Boyhood Homes Trip, since it's full of "this is where it happened" and "this is how it is now" news.

"Soldiers and Braves" (\$7.10) is a similar work in that it narrates the sad yet stirring story of the Indian Wars, with

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## The CIA Has the Answers



Illustration by Cootner for Newsday

### MORSE, From K1

detailed attention paid to pointing out the now-historical places associated with the events.

Of course, if you're planning a See-the-Indians Trip, the Government Printing Office is a prime source of help, from three publications in particular: "The American Indians" (subtitled "Answers to 101 Questions"), "The Calendar of Indian Events," and the map of Indian lands.

Unfortunately, lots of what the government prints is neither as good nor as useful as the works mentioned. That's why your best bet is to look first, buy later. You can do it two ways. If you're on the road somewhere and suddenly get an itch to see if the GPO can contribute to your knowledge, there are bookstores in 20 cities that you can drop in on, namely Atlanta, Birmingham, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Dallas,

Denver, Detroit, Houston, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, Pueblo, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington.

Alternatively, you can check your local libraries. A growing number are now "Federal Depository Libraries," meaning they should have lots of GPO publications or can arrange to borrow what you want from the regional library. Actually, your first move might best be to write for the free "Consumers Guide to Federal Publications" (from the GPO, Washington, 20402), which gives titles of subject lists, explains all about ordering and tells about federal publications (mainly maps) that are available from other government sources.

Someday maybe the CIA will even publish "Untold Spy Stories" and provide the government with a real best-seller. Meanwhile, though, keep an eye out for more good atlases.