

3 MAY 1968

group questioned every tourist, businessman and teacher who came through Peking about his travels inside China, then sent the information out of China in the safety of French diplomatic packets. Forbidden to visit the grave of Confucius in Shantung, Girard contrived to overfly it in a small plane so as to describe it better. When the two-year task was finally completed, a copy of the book was sent to Chou, who found only two things to complain about: that the book called Chiang Kai-shek's regime in Taiwan a "government" and Hong Kong "a British colony" (he called it a "Chinese territory occupied by British imperialism, which China is determined to recover").

CHINA

A Vicarious Trip

Not long after he was posted to Peking as French cultural counselor in 1964, Marcel Girard met Premier Chou En-lai and told him of an ambitious plan. He would like, said Girard, to put together the first guidebook to China since the Communists took power in 1949—and indeed, since the Japanese railways tried to produce one in 1924. Chou looked at the Frenchman in disbelief, saying only: "I wish you lots of luck."

Girard needed not only luck to gather any meaningful information about the vast, xenophobic country, but a lot of patient plodding and unusual methods as well. His persistence paid off, and the result, *Nagel's Encyclopedia Guide to China*, was published in French last year and has just appeared in an English translation. A 1,504-page compendium of hard-to-come-by information on China, it should be a delight both for China-watchers and for general readers who want to shell out \$19.95 for a vicarious trip.

Girard first mobilized 20 youthful Sinologists who had been admitted to Peking on a cultural exchange program, then set to work. Some parts were easy. "The price list for food," says Girard, "was taken right off the stalls in the Peking markets, the section on Chinese cooking from actual menus of banquets we attended." The

No Cheating, No Cheese. Though the book pulls few punches to please the Chinese—it deplores, for example, the effect of Communism on China's historic intellectual creativity—it is basically apolitical. Its 391-page introduction includes sections on the history of Chinese art, literature, architecture, religion and philosophy, as well as an analysis of Maoism as a cultural phenomenon, a study of the organization of Chinese Communism, pieces on how to work an abacus and play Chinese chess, and an informed article on "The Principles of Chinese Gastronomy." Two other sections describe some 200 Chinese cities and towns and tell how to get around in them, give a series of practical hints to the traveler.

If the day ever comes when U.S. tourists start traveling in any numbers through China—travel there now is discouraged by both the State Department and Peking—they will find a wealth of practical information in *Nagel*. The guide gives the number to call in Peking (07), if you want to hear the correct time in Chinese, reveals that in China there is no cheating in commerce, no cheese, no tipping, and "absolutely no night life"—and very few flies, either. The trains run on time, and Chinese guests, one should be forewarned, usually arrive a few minutes

early. The visitor should not seek to discard anything of even residual value in China; it is bound to pursue him until the Chinese can return it.

Calls to Calisthenics. The guide also warns that a headwaiter will insist that a visitor take with him any food he orders and does not eat (but fails to mention if he will provide doggy bags). After a toast, it is polite to turn a glass upside down (to prove that you have drunk every drop). The guide recommends travel by train rather than by airplane, though it warns the traveler that trains are equipped with loudspeakers that incessantly give forth Mao thoughts, martial music and calls to calisthenics. For those who wish more maps and charts include a map of Peking's bus lines—the first to be published in or out of China.