

SHOCKWAVES IN CHINA

THE past week's horrors in Peking's Tiananmen Square have stunned the world.

Someone who understands China and the Chinese better than most is Canadian writer Nancy-Gay Rotstein. She was granted the rare privilege of an unrestricted literary visa to the country, giving her a unique opportunity to see areas of China never before opened to a Westerner.

Nancy's book, *China: Shockwaves*, went some way to predicting the current turmoil.

In her foreword to the volume of poems written about her experiences, Nancy warns the greatest threat to China is the influence of the West.

Deafening Silence

"IT'S VERY hard for people to appreciate just how many personal restrictions are still placed on the Chinese people," Nancy told me when I met her in Glasgow last week.

"During a visit to a Chinese school



■ Nancy-Gay Rotstein surrounded by schoolchildren in Hangzhou

in Hangzhou I was allowed to talk to the children.

"I asked them what careers they wanted to follow when they left school and was greeted with a deafening silence.

"It was later explained to me that the children had no choice in their future. They do what the state demands of them."

Although Nancy's work is renowned throughout the United States

BOOKSHELF

By John Ryan

and Canada, this is her first publication on this side of the Atlantic.

While a book of poetry may not grab everyone's imagination, it would be a mistake to ignore the opportunity to see the land through the eyes of the author.

"I chose to write the book in poetry form to give my experiences more life," she explained.

"This was an awakening land, and I couldn't find any other way of expressing it."

In the light of the current crisis, two poems in particular, Beijing Guide and Tiananmen Square, serve to illustrate the tragic problems facing the Chinese in their quest for a new freedom.

■ *China: Shockwaves* by Nancy-Gay Rotstein (Weidenfeld & Nicolson £9.95)