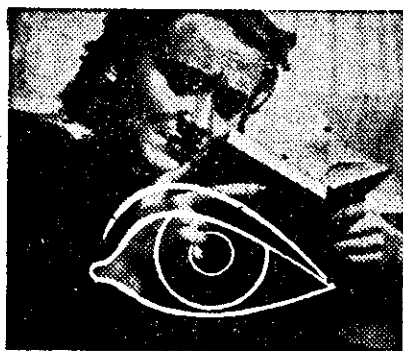




The care of the Eyes in the Home

Here are a few simple hints that will help keep your eyes healthy and comfortable.

- (1) Sleep with the window well open. Fresh air benefits the eyes.
- (2) Don't read facing or backing the window. Arrange if possible, for the light to come over your left shoulder.
- (3) Never rub the eye if you have a piece of dirt in it, or if you have a sty or boil. Always bathe the eye and if the trouble persists, consult a doctor.
- (4) Don't read in bright sunlight or twilight.
- (5) If you have the slightest doubt as to the efficiency of your sight, consult a Qualified Practitioner at once.

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CHINA SETS THE STAGE

This is the second of a series of articles written for "The Listener" by JAMES BERTRAM.

CHUNGKING in 1941 was the focus of immense and exciting political forces; but this was pretty well concealed.

I shall always remember Hankow in 1938 as a war capital worthy of China's struggle. In the desperate months after the fall of Nanking a new spirit had been born, and the salutary shake-up of military disaster had spurred the Government to a genuine effort at popular leadership. When the first People's Political Council was held that summer, blue cotton uniforms jostled the silk gowns and silkier beards of Kuomintang veterans. Chou En-lai, subtle and eloquent Communist spokesman, was a Vice-Minister; Yeh Chien-ying, Chief of Staff of the 8th Route Army, was slated to head a National training school for guerrilla forces. Debates were fiery and unprompted, rude things were said about the heads of Government departments, and it was all very stimulating and extremely good for the country.

Hankow in that period provided China's first—and last—taste of wartime democracy on a national scale.

Twilight in Chungking

Three years later, Chungking presented a very different picture. With the fall of Hankow and Canton, the fronts had "frozen" and the war had passed into the stage of stalemate. The Kuomintang had got over its scare and its liberalism, and there were no longer any Communist officials in the Government. Chou En-lai was still about, but now he lived furtively down a dark alley, closely watched by the agents of the new power behind the throne, the sinister General Tai Li, head of the Secret Police. The air of Chungking was not merely damp; it was oppressive.

In the newly-built National Assembly Hall I attended sessions of the People's Political Council, where the Generalissimo discussed national resistance and the War Minister (now Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Armies) reported remotely on immobile strategy and heatedly on political recalcitrance. It was more like a puppet show than a Parliament. An accurate index of the temper of the administration at this time was the exodus of the intellectuals. Writers, artists, and academic liberals whose first enthusiasm had taken them to the war capital were drifting silently out of Chungking and seeking sanctuary elsewhere. Provincial capitals in the south proved hardly more hospitable, and many of these Chinese progressives finally ended up in Hong Kong, where a British colonial government which none of them especially liked did at least guarantee protection against secret arrest and the oubliettes.

My own work in Chungking kept me in close contact with journalists and writers, though as I have suggested they were fast becoming a vanishing race.

There were days when the *Hsin Hua Jih Pao* appeared with the whole of its front page blank (though the favourite trick of writers under censorship in China from time immemorial has been to write poems, in which recondite allusions to situations in ancient history make the points as neatly as any Paris feuilleton). It was a strange unreal atmosphere, in which one gave and attended picturesque parties in decrepit or half-bombed restaurants, pouring wine with elaborate Chinese courtesy while one tried to assure excessively polite editors that the whole of British policy in the Far East was not summed up in the recent temporary closing of the Burma Road, or in the humiliating experiences of our nationals in the British Concession in Tientsin, where the Japanese literally as well as figuratively were taking our pants down.

Diplomats on Parade

The diplomatic front at Chungking was pleasantly varied. Nelson Johnson, genial U.S. Ambassador who is now Secretary of the Far East Advisory Commission in Washington, and who was at his best wise-cracking in beautiful Pekinese at Chinese banquets, was transferred to Canberra early in 1941. His successor was tight-lipped Clarence E. Gauss from Shanghai, who spoke a language more convincing if less soothing in Chinese official ears. The French were mixed Vichy vintage, and there was a bewildered Italian whom many liked and nobody trusted. The Germans had a curious representative in the smooth, Oxford-trained Graf von Plessen, who had filtered in mysteriously through Indo-China from Ceylon and whom many of us had known when he was Councillor in Peking and professedly anti-Nazi. (Now the men who had once played polo with him on the old Legation glacié looked through him stonily on rare encounters at Chinese functions.

The Soviet Ambassador, Paniushkin, was in poor health; but the Russians

generally maintained a sumptuous establishment in a mansion some old Chinese warlord had built on the heights of Chungking, and gave much the grandest parties. TASS, the Soviet News Agency, was also strongly represented; and I got along particularly well with them because my book on the North China guerrillas had just come out in a very handsome Russian edition, with the blessing of *Goslitizdat*. It was a convention of all Soviet citizens in China never to take a rickshaw, for this humble conveyance was considered an insult to human dignity. Instead of being drawn by their fellow men, the Russians drove everywhere in large black cars, and whether by accident or design undoubtedly gave the impression of belonging to the prepotent foreign delegation.

We British imperialists, on the contrary, were very meanly housed in the old Chungking Consulate, which was always being knocked down in the bombing season and rebuilt in lath-and-plaster. But the tenacity which kept the Union Jack flying on the north bank of the river through all Chungking's vicissitudes (when everyone else except the Soviets had moved to country villas in the comparative immunity of the south bank) gave us considerable "face," and was a good reflection of the personality of the British envoy, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr.

Portrait of an Ambassador

Kuibushev and Moscow, to say nothing of Berlin, have since won further laurels for this brilliant diplomat. But it was Chungking that first made him a world figure, and the reasons were plain to anyone who saw him at work. References to Sir Archibald in many of the current China books (possibly because most of the authors are American) reveal a certain puzzled scepticism: writers and newspapermen accustomed to the usual chilling formality of British officials in the Far East clearly did not know what to make of this lean, brown, extremely unconventional Scot who liked journalists, generally received them in his shirt-sleeves, and called himself a Socialist. There was nothing of pose here: it was all of a piece with the whole career of a man who had fought in World War I. in the ranks, who alone of mortals went swimming in the yellow and turbulent Yangtze, and whose very diplomatic passion for painting was only matched by his equally undiplomatic passion for sun-bathing.

When the Ambassador had serious matters to discuss with the Generalissimo, the pair of them went hiking over the steamy and precipitous Chungking landscape, shedding clothes as they went and often out-distancing their guards. It was a new type of diplomacy in China, and for a while it certainly got results. The Americans hitherto had been accustomed to regard themselves as the young and virile Westerners in the Far East; but Clark Kerr's



Portrait by Karsh.
SIR ARCHIBALD CLARK KERR
He was tougher than they thought

(continued on next page)