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VISITOR FROM CHINA

News of Rewi Alley and His Co-operatives

NO question about it, in 1948 it is much more distinguished to arrive in these islands by ship. International air travel is a humdrum sort of business—the plane drops in as casually as a taxi, on to a runway identical with all the thousands of runways from Teheran to Shanghai. Out they come, the crushed business suits and Whitehall hats and attaché cases, to pile again with their luggage into a waiting bus and ride—if not forever, at least quite a long way to their

A "LISTENER" interview by JAMES BERTRAM with PETER TOWNSEND, Executive Secretary of the International Committee for Chinese Industrial Co-operatives, who is visiting New Zealand on behalf of a movement with which he has been actively associated for six years.

dash from Japan to Australia in an R.A.A.F. plane — by the Wahine. "Townsend?" the deck-steward ruminated, when I had made my way aboard to an empty cabin. "Tall dark chap? He's just gone ashore." Under the letter T at the barrier I found a lounging unhurried figure in flannels and a brown soft Harris tweed jacket: the cut of the clothes and some inflexions of the soft voice recalled America, the eyes were light jade-green and seemed to be enjoying a private joke.

"You've got it with you?" the Customs man was saying. "Then let's have a look at it." I expected Chinese tribute silks or a bit of silver filigree; but what came out of the pocket was a flimsily wrapped, somewhat crushed but still defiant cocktail hat. "Hum," said the Customs man professionally and began to scribble in his notebook; firmly repressing my curiosity, I introduced myself.

Though China is a large country, the number of Europeans wandering about in it is limited: and the number of those who work with the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives is more limited still. Peter Townsend's name had been familiar to me for a long time, and we knew a lot of the same people. We had barely exchanged a few of the inevitable greetings of China hands in exile when we were joined by C. S. Falconer, vice-Chairman of CORSO, who advanced down the quay wearing a highly respectable city bowler and a red-and-white CORSO armband. All identifications thus secured (and the black lace trifle, undesecrated by chalk marks, returned to its pocket) we moved off into Wellington sunshine.



REWI ALLEY

hotels. However exciting the flight may have been, the end of it is as flat as Whenuapai.

But the arrival of a passenger ship from overseas is different, now that it has become almost as rare an event as it was a hundred years ago. And the atmosphere somehow holds up—not just those immemorial associations of the sea that still have power to move the most phlegmatic Briton, but others more local and native. The tall red-and-black funnels or the squat buff ones that once more spell New Zealand in the ports of the world (will there ever come a time when a Tudor IV is as immediately distinguishable to all eyes from a Constellation as a Union Company ship is from a Matson liner?). Then the wharves and the gangways, a band from somewhere; and Customs waiting in a long dark shed on the quay.

A Question of Hats

This is all shameless digression for a serious interviewer; but the visitor from China I had set out to meet was finally arriving in Wellington—after a swift

Oxford to Paochi

By the time this interview appears in print, Mr. Townsend will have been heard in a Sunday evening talk over all National stations, and perhaps on a number of public platforms as well. He has a story to tell that New Zealanders should be eager to hear, for it is a story of rural industrial organisation and achievement and setback and reorganisation which—though the setting is China—will always remain associated as a matter of history, with the name of a pioneering New Zealander, Rewi Alley. Mr. Townsend himself (and he is not alone in this opinion) considers Rewi Alley one of the best ambassadors this country ever sent abroad. But while paying tribute to all that Alley has accomplished in China, he is still more insistent about the present urgent need of the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives for outside help.

Peter Townsend is a young Englishman who first found his way into the heart of war-torn China in the cause