Over a year ago work was started on a motor-road through the mountain to Kanting. Trade has, however, been going on for centuries, goods being carried on the backs of men and yaks.

The refugees who are finding their way into this great reservoir of human effort and future national greatness have among them many artisans and craftsmen. Some have brought tools with them, and those who could not will benefit by the Government’s great efforts to transport machinery and workshop equipment from the areas in the East threatened with destruction. It is a common sight to see on the highways streams of vehicles, from donkey carts to trucks, piled with machinery, steadily and laboriously trekking westward through the mountains, with thousands of men, women, and children, most of them heavily laden, patiently trudging after them.

The outstanding feature of this great migration is the fortitude of the sufferers in their adversity. Natural calamities have bred in the blood and the bone of the Chinese race those powers of survival that enable them quickly to subdue and overcome the effects of appalling catastrophes.

Already in the West new life is appearing. There is an amazing growth of factories and other buildings for educational purposes. Universities and cultural institutions are now appearing in places in the West where little of the kind existed a year ago. Students, 400 of them, of the Nankai University of Tientsin found their way to Changsha, and walked all the way from there to Kunming—a forty-day tramp through endless mountains. Students of a military school also walked there all the way from Nanking, as well as crowds of boy and girl students from schools and colleges. Hundreds went north-westward to Yunnan, in Shensi Province, where they live in caves.

Japan has been responsible for a new outlook in China—and that outlook is westward. ‘Westward the course of empire takes its way’ was written of one empire. In her own West, China is destined to find the means for her rejuvenation, and time will tell the story.

III. LAND OF WHITE ELEPHANTS

In the early nineteenth century the King of Siam built a tall five-towered pagoda across the river opposite his palace and covered every inch of the walls with his own and his subjects’ spare crockery. Ornamental tiles and medallions jostle against dinner-plates and teapot-lids and form a distinctive and surprisingly beautiful whole. The Wat Arun dominates most views of Bangkok and seems to typify Siam. It is gay, ingenious, unexpected and somewhat fantastic, but in excellent taste for all its elaboration. To complete the symbolism, it is now dwarfed by three vast unpleasing wireless masts, which have never been in use.
The chief social event of the Bangkok season is the Fair of the Constitution, when for a week the capital celebrates the document that officially ended royal absolutism in Siam, signed grudgingly but in great splendor by King Prajadhipok on December 10, 1932. Now, after some years of a tactful regency, Siam is unalterably a constitutional kingdom. The Siamese peasant, who first thought that this Constitution of which he heard so much must be a new-born son of the King, is beginning to understand its import. And this winter King Ananda Mahidol has been able to visit his kingdom.

A beflagged Bangkok waited to receive him. He arrived with his mother, his brother and sister and sailed up the river with an imposing naval and air escort. The din was tremendous. Ceremonial drums and trumpets and conch-shells announced the King’s approach to the royal landing-stage at Bangkok, where King Ananda set foot on his native soil amid more enthusiasm and more noise than Siam had known for centuries. The excitement showed the joy of the Siamese at having a king among them once more. But King Ananda has made it clear that he deserves it on his own merits. A king aged thirteen is romantic in theory, but in practice might easily be spoiled and difficult. The King of Siam lives up to the ideal. In private he is an eager, natural child. In public he combines admirable dignity with a suitable boyish diffidence; he is obviously happiest when his little brother can sit next to him. His charm is of the sort that can make itself felt by the crowd. During his visit his qualities have been fully tested in a program that might well appall older and tougher monarchs. King Ananda’s only quiet hours were the two or so that he spent daily during this visit on his lessons —more for the sake of giving him a little repose than for increasing his knowledge.

After the King had officially opened the Fair, the tempo of festivity accelerated. Flags and bunting returned to the streets. Warships anchored up the river, looking curiously modern next to the temples on the banks and the houseboats and floating shops that throng Bangkok’s many waterways. Booths sprang up round a great open space near the Grand Palace.

Throughout the following week smart Siam could be seen nightly wandering in the gaily lit fair-grounds, admiring the excellent modern sculpture and the not quite so good modern painting at the Palace of Art, or trying its skill at the rifle-ranges, or dancing at a dance hall whose décor was altered nightly to depict a different scene of Siamese mythology, culminating in the Seventh Heaven. Royalty en masse was present at the beauty competition, where Miss Siam was chosen from among simple country girls (no cosmetics permitted). The Prime Minister gave away the prizes at the fancy dress ball. His Britannic Majesty’s Minister was judge of the golf competitions.

II

With the close of the Fair life grew quiet again. The Siamese could revert to their usual pleasures, such as to visit the cinema to see the usual range of American talkies or Siamese films that seem to be talkies till you notice high up in a gallery one man
with an amplifier who alone provides all the voices and the sound effects and adds racy comments of his own. But there were still many functions to remind the citizens of Bangkok that the King was among them; and these continued until he set sail again for Europe, with the affection and best wishes of his people.

King Ananda’s visit augurs well for his reign. Indeed, the superstitious can find only one serious cause for dissatisfaction. No white elephant has been found while he has been king. This is regrettably, for white elephants in Siam have not the unloved quality they possess in England. The Siamese white elephant is not really very white. It has certain pinkish-gray markings on its face and somewhat albino eyes. Every white elephant that is found must be sent to the King; and the King’s prestige and good fortune are enhanced by the number he acquires. But only male white elephants count. They are made dukes and live in grand elephant-houses, with their names and titles inscribed in gold on the walls.

Female white elephants are allowed no such honors, not even the venerable lady, aged 128, who skittishly graces the royal elephant enclosure. The emancipation of women has gone far in Siam, but not far enough. There are only two elephantine dukes at the moment, a twelve-year-old belonging to King Prajadhipok’s reign and one, of whom purists are a little doubtful, belonging to his predecessor. But we may hope that the occasion will soon arise for the creation of a new duke-dom.

King Ananda has the advantage of never having known the old days of the autocracy; and in the meantime Prince Aditya and his fellow-regents have paved the way for a constitutional king by their wise and loyal co-operation with the Constitutional Government. Every one recognizes the value of a king as a symbol of national unity and a magnet for national sentiment. Siam is far better off with her royal child than she could ever be with the most distinguished of top-hatted presidents.

III

The casual onlooker receives a pleasant impression of Siam. There is certainly poverty. Next to the gorgeous pagodas and palaces you see the poor living in squalid huts and sampans (almost a third of the population lives permanently on the water). But the poverty is not misery. The Siamese peasant has few requirements in life, and those are easily and cheaply satisfied. The epidemics that used to ravage the land are being conquered by an efficient medical service. So long as the rice crop does not fail, all is well.

For the politicians things are not easy. The political development of Siam has been rapid but is still incomplete. The People’s Party is the only politically conscious body in the country. It alone, therefore, can provide a Government. But the mere title of ‘People’s Party’ does not create a democracy; the Government should depend on a popular Assembly. The Siamese people, however, are hardly ready for that. The leaders of the revolution feared that an unscrupulous king might soon, by making free use of the right of dissolution, acquire a Parliament that his prestige and influence would entirely dominate.
They therefore arranged that for ten years only half the Assembly should be elected; the other half should be nominated by themselves and be irremovable. The result is not happy.

The present head of the Government, Luang Bipul Songgram, the Minister for Defense, is a man who was already its most forceful figure before the latest Cabinet reshuffle. By his personality and his abilities he dominates Siamese politics today. Under his control the Army, the Navy and the Air Force work in harmony. He is the founder of the Yuva-jon youth movement, to which, incidentally, King Ananda belongs. As a constitutionalist with all the gifts of a dictator, he makes an ideal leader for modern Siam.

The most disquieting events recently have been two attempts to assassinate him. His death was clearly to be the first step in a coup d'état that would be the more effective because the young King was in Siam and could therefore be forced to accept its outcome. The world may be thankful that the murder miscarried. Though Luang Bipul's elimination might please a few malcontents, its consequences would be disastrous to Siam and probably to all southeastern Asia.

IV

At present, the keyword in Siam as elsewhere in the world, is nationalism. But here it takes various forms. Some irresponsible deputies preach currency restrictions and the boycott of all foreign goods, doctrines difficult to justify in a land whose currency is completely secure and whose trade balance is favorable. Some even wear their hair shaved to the scalp, so as to demonstrate how to avoid the use of foreign combs, that otherwise indispensable article not being made in Siam. Other patriots tirade against the Chinese, who conduct all the shop-keeping and much of the business of the country. 'The Chinese,' they say, 'are the Jews of Siam.' Others air Pan-Asiatic doctrines and extol the Japanese as the models of Asiatic imperialism.

The Government is more temperate. Nevertheless some of its actions have not failed to alarm foreign Powers. Siam is undoubtedly rearming. Her only neighbors are French and British territories. If she means them no harm, why is she enlarging her army, why building submarines? And what about those new gunboats from Italy? Quite recently a map was semi-officially published, showing Siam Irredenta, consisting of those Cambodian districts, including Angkor, some Siamese-speaking lands that she ceded to France about thirty years ago, and the four Malay sultanates whose suzerainty she soon afterwards gave over to Britain. Over it all looms the shadow of Japan. In Malaya and still more in French Indo-China lurid tales are told of the growth of Japanese influence in Siam.

A visitor cannot hope to discover the truth. Certainly Japan is deeply interested in Siam and is spending money there freely, particularly on the native press. And certainly Siam cannot afford to ignore Japan. If Japan is to become the dominant Power in southeastern Asia, if the Japanese are to be able with impunity to attack next the colonies of Britain, France, or Holland, then clearly Siam cannot afford to range herself in an opposite camp. There are economic
considerations, too. The wealth of Siam comes largely from her export of rice to Southern China. If Japan is to control Southern China, Siam’s markets will depend on friendship with her.

The educated Siamese have no pro-Japanese sentiments. As a very responsible personage said to me, ‘We have no intention of becoming a second Manchukuo.’ As for the strangely indestructible legend of the Japanese-made canal across the Kra Peninsula, a few months ago a hopeful American journalist toured wearily over every mile of the isthmus. He saw a road under construction, running from north to south, but of the canal or Japanese not the slightest trace.

V

Nor need the Western Powers be alarmed by Siamese rearmament. Siamese irredentism is empty talk. Members of the Government declare that it is hard enough to govern their present territory. But in the present world even the most neutrally minded State must be well armed; and further, a well-armed State is worth courting as an ally. There may be anti-European feeling in Siam, but it is not apparent in responsible circles. There it is still considered desirable to give the King an English education.

The Government’s nationalist program includes anti-Chinese measures, but only in the mildest form. The vastly increasing numbers of Chinese in Siam do present a problem; yet were they all suddenly to be removed the country would be reduced to stagnation, if not to starvation. The Siamese do not take kindly to shop-keeping. They enjoy giving—no race is more exquisitely generous—but, the pleasures of selling leave them profoundly indifferent. The Chinese, therefore, form a necessary part of their lives. The Government, while restricting immigration from China, is trying to educate in the Siamese a taste for commerce.

Most attractive in the nationalism of the Government is its interest in old Siamese traditions and encouragement of Siamese arts and customs. The traditional theatre and the traditional dancing are eagerly kept up, though it seems to be difficult to induce boys nowadays to join the ballet school. There are attempts to produce plays that will combine the old dancing, miming and music with music and dialogue in the Western style. The results are not yet wholly successful; the idioms are too far apart to mix. The dancing is sufficient in itself, with its rhythmic suppleness, its delicate precision and its wealth of symbolism. Few arts can be more moving or more satisfying. It is an extraordinary experience to see the Apsaras carved on the bas reliefs of Angkor and then to watch their exact images living on the Siamese stage.

Such nationalism is wholly admirable; and it is all tempered by the national religion which gives a continual stimulus to the natural kindliness of the Siamese. This kindliness is felt by every visitor to Siam. Indeed, Bangkok should be the tourists’ paradise, for you see there a gay ingenious people, with an old tradition embodying the arts and the fantasy of the East, with an eager desire for Western comforts and conveniences, and with the vitality that only independence can give.
The burial of a worker who knew comradeship in death as in life.

Requiem to a Worker

By Libby Benedict

It was the day before Yom Kippur, and Warsaw was streaming to the Jewish cemetery. On foot and in drozhkys, in taxicabs and streetcars. Women in shawls and women in astrakhan coats. Men with their feet wrapped in rags and men with their necks collared in furs. Girls dressed like caricatures of Parisian midinettes, with the darns in their thin silk stockings protruding out of their worn shoes. Children. God, yes—children...

Hurrying, they all still had time to haggle over the prices the ambulant florists were asking for wreaths.

Not only Jews came, but people of all kinds. The racial admixture in Poland has become very complicated during the centuries of crowding, recrimination and assimilation. The bodies that found their way at last to the Jewish cemetery had housed all kinds of souls—orthodox, atheist, liberal, assimilated, converted. And even more kinds were left behind to mourn them.

On the day before Yom Kippur all those who had any connection at all with a grave went to it. To good Jews, Yom Kippur is a holy burden. Most others—loudly though they may proclaim their disbelief—cannot quite escape a heightening sense of guilt and fear as the day approaches. The concept of a bogey-man God grows, and they try to look for ways in which to bribe him. The dead seem to be the most promising intermediaries. So to the dead they go—with wreaths and with wailing, with humility and with hope.

On that day the beggars of Warsaw come to the cemetery en masse. They line the paths, plucking at the sleeves of the passersby, whining into their faces or groveling wretchedly on the ground on emaciated or crippled stumps. If they were war-maimed, they would be otherwise cared for. But these—and they stand or squat two paces apart—are life-maimed, starved, condemned to perpetual shrunkenness by rickets, eaten away by scrofula,