

A CHINESE EMBASSY IN

L O N D O N

THESIS 1943

BY

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## CHAPTER 1

### I N T R O D U C T I O N

#### Reasons for the choice of the Subject

It is difficult to ascertain reasons for the very few embassies specially built as such among numerous diplomatic headquarters in the largest capital in the World, London. In other capitals, a similar condition prevails. As in the past, the embassies of the present day are still housed in various town houses, usually of good design of a period. For smaller embassies, these houses are really quite good enough, as long as there are spacious reception rooms, adequate dining rooms, sufficient living accommodation for the Ambassador and various smaller rooms for his staff. The Russian, Polish, Egyptian, Netherland and Chinese embassies are all of the same description. My visit to the aforementioned embassies helped me very little in the solution of my subject, except in drawing up the programme. The

*Chinese Embassy, like the*

various countries, ~~seem to have~~ spent nearly £10,000 on renovation in 1936 under the direction of a Chinese Architectural student who had just finished his study in this country in that year. Very few countries, however, would go the whole hog and build a permanent embassy specially designed to meet the particular requirements. Could this be attributed to that unstable and precarious international relation in the pre-War period and before? To attempt to answer that question will be only a matter of conjecture.

It may be argued that to put up a new, permanent building for an embassy is as much a diplomatic as any tactful move in the intercourse between nations. However, it is an interesting fact that those few "purpose-built" embassies in the World do belong to nations on friendly terms. There is the American Embassy in London, and the British Embassy in Washington, for example. Since 1902 when the British Government and the Japanese Government formed an alliance, the two governments had been on the best of terms



till that fateful day in December 1941. The British Embassy in Tokyo was built during that period. To take the building of embassies as a measure of the diplomatic policies, will be a grievous mistake indeed, nevertheless, it does show a considerable amount of goodwill between nations. In this World War, China has at last found friends among the righteous nations. This friendship, as I am convinced, is not just war-time expediency, but a lasting one which will be more strengthened than ever during the post-war period of World rehabilitation.

It is with this conviction, my subject for the thesis 1943, is chosen. It is commonly accepted now that the tasks lying ahead of the Allied Nations after victory is won will be possibly greater than <sup>those</sup> ~~that~~ we are now facing. This will naturally mean closer co-operation. Then there is every reason to expect that the embassies of the various nations will have an important role to play.

#### Possibilities of its realization

Since the War, the staff in the Chinese Embassy has increased manifold. The limited

accommodation at 49, Portland Place is now taxed to the extreme. Already the military attachés and the Chinese Ministry of Information have to be accommodated in premises in the neighbouring streets to Portland Place, thus causing considerable inconveniences. His Excellency Dr. Wellington Koo actually proposed to the Chinese Government to purchase a larger house in Kensington Palace Gardens to meet the increasing needs of the Embassy. I was told that the house which His Excellency intended to take was next to the Russian Embassy. I later visited the house but doubted whether that house would be sufficient to accommodate the whole staff. His proposal was rejected by the Chinese Government, for the present Embassy is regarded by Knomingtang Party almost as a sacred place. Dr. Sun-Yat-San, the founder of Chinese Republic was once unlawfully detained by the Chinese Legation of the last Imperial Dynasty. Dr. Sun was in exile in London, labouring for the liberation of his countrymen from the imperial yoke. It was only by a miracle that he managed to pass a message to his devoted friend

Lord Salisbury who secured his release after two weeks' illegal custody. Had his fate been otherwise, the birth of Chinese Republic might be delayed even up to this day. This incident occurred on the 11th October, 1896.

In China, this event is now observed every year by the Komingtang Party and other public bodies. Because of this sentimental attachment the Chinese Government was reluctant to give up these premises. The more decisive reason for the rejection was probably a financial one. Certainly it was not a very sound proposition when the National resources were being strained to the limit to conduct this war of national existence. When the conditions return to the normal after a few years of peaceful rehabilitation, financing will be a comparatively trivial matter. A new embassy could be built and at the same time the old embassy might be used as the Consulate General or as a Club for the Chinese residents in London.

#### Reasons for the choice of the site

The first choice:

At first, the proposed Embassy was to be erected at the present site at 49, Portland Place

just opposite to the Royal Institute of British Architects. My regard for the national sentiment induced me to give exclusive preference to this site. Although it is conveniently situated in the centre of the City it has some obvious disadvantages which made me think twice after careful examination. In the first instance this present site is too small. There is a house of similar type next door. Even if it were presumed that the adjacent site was added to it, the frontage would be as much as the Royal Institute of British Architects, but far less in depth. This might be sufficiently big for the Embassy. But the character of the building would be uncompromisingly business-like. It would be hardly suitable as an ambassadorial residence. The absence of a garden would deprive the ambassador of the best attraction of a garden party. Dr. Koo, when the Chinese Ambassador in Paris, used to entertain more than 2,000 guests in a garden party in the Embassy. Such facilities must be maintained.

Conditions for the second choice:

The discovery of Kensington Palace Gardens as a possible location of the proposed new

Embassy was a rather easy matter. I was told that there were many embassies on that road. When I visited the Russian Embassy and the Nepal Legation, I was much attracted to that neighbourhood. The corner site particularly appealed to me. It falls in with all my conditions. It is within very easy reach of Whitehall and is itself in a diplomatic quarter. The Russian Embassy, the Norwegian Embassy, the Polish Government and Nepal Legation are all in Kensington Palace Gardens. There is ample space for a garden. The view of Kensington Gardens is magnificent. It is extremely quiet in the neighbourhood. Kensington Palace Gardens is a very exclusive private road and is closed to public traffic. There are two monumental gateways at either end of the road. The site is shown on the map. It is on the corner of Bayswater and Kensington Palace Gardens, with Kensington Gardens at its back. As seen from the map, there is practically no possibility of any building which might be erected in the park to obstruct that glorious view of Kensington Gardens.

Another added reason for choosing that

particular site is that those four houses are in the most delapidated and partially damaged condition. They are now occupied by the military authorities. It would be rather cruel to pull down other magnificent houses of Italian Renaissance design on the same road.

An assumption:

The land belongs to the Crown. It may be safely assumed that this land could be leased to the Chinese Government for 99 years. The British Government would probably grant us this diplomatic privilege.

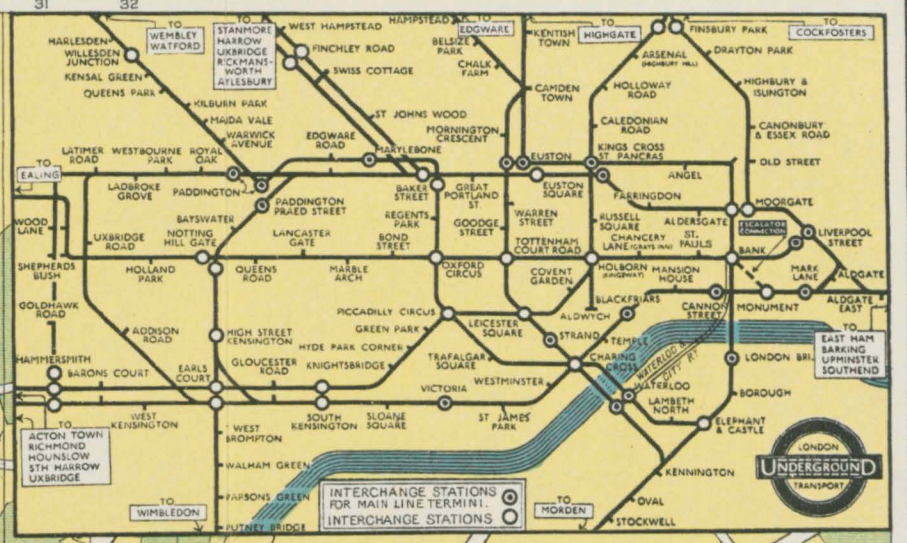
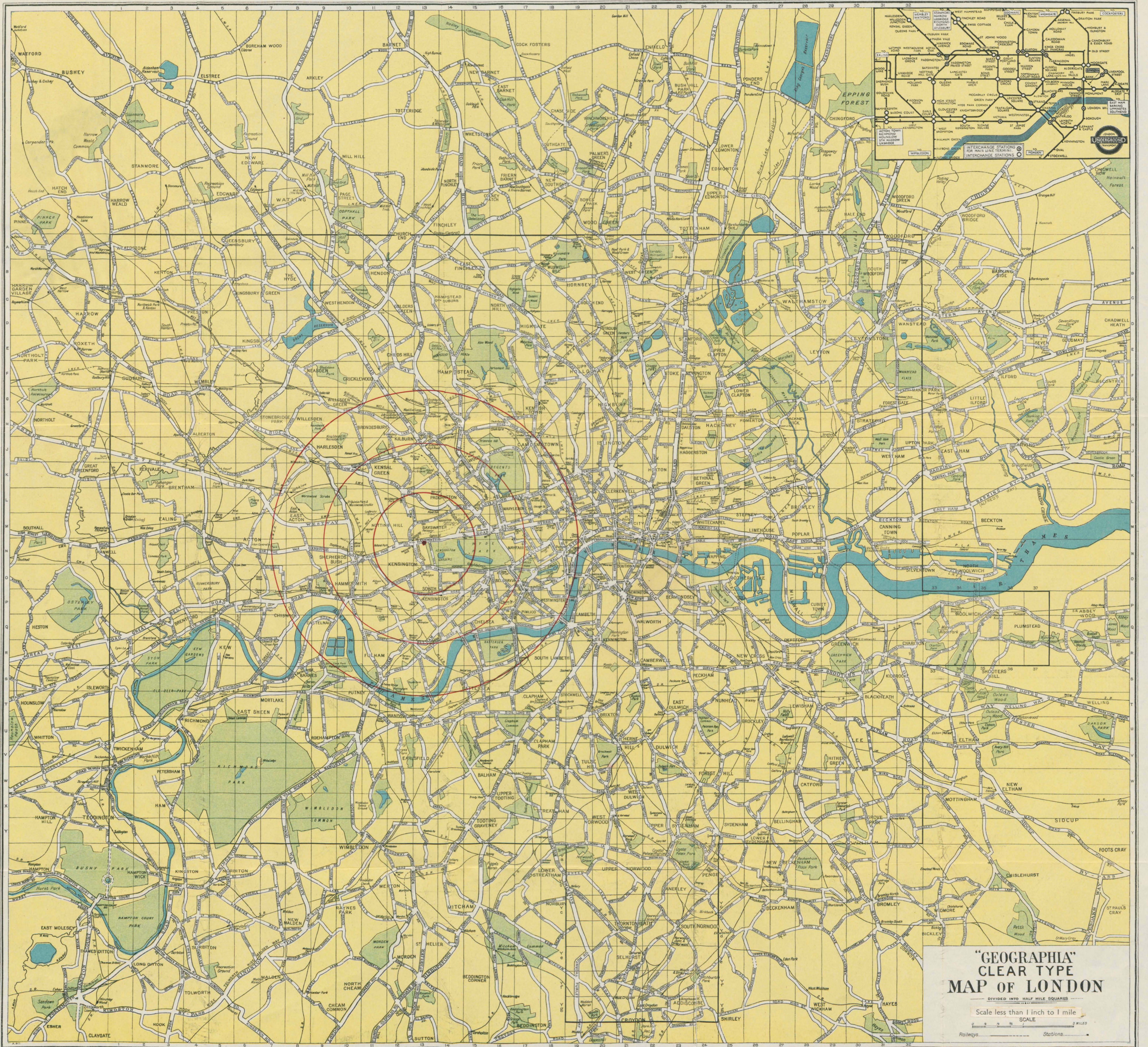
Transport:

Kensington Palace Garden is easily accessible by the underground. Bayswater, Nottinghill Gate and South Kensington Stations are all within few minutes walking distances.

\* Note Owing to War-time conditions I was unable to take any pictures during my visits. The Defence Regulation does not permit me to do so.

MAP OF LONDON



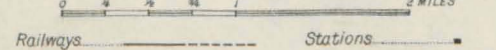


**"GEOGRAPHIA"  
CLEAR TYPE  
MAP OF LONDON**

DIVIDED INTO HALF MILE SQUARES

Scale less than 1 inch to 1 mile

SCALE





## CHAPTER 2

### Brief history of the Chinese Embassy

In 1792 Lord Macartney was the first British Ambassador to the Imperial Court of Kei-Lung of the Chin Dynasty. His refusal to "Kowtow" to the Emperor still remains as a diplomatic episode of extreme oddity. In the ensuing half century, China first received the impact of the Western World. The result was not a happy one. Although the intercourse with the Western Nations became more complicated in the years of many wars and treaties, the Chinese Government did not establish any legation in the European capitals until 1792, when London, being the political centre of Europe, was chosen as the site of the first Chinese Embassy in Europe. Sir Halliday Macartney, a descendant of Lord Macartney, was a devoted friend to the Chin Dynasty to which he rendered his loyal service for many years. It was said that he was more Chinese than Chinese themselves. When the first Kow Mission was chosen the representatives

of the Chinese Government, Sir Halliday was appointed as the first Secretary who virtually had more responsibility than the Ambassador Kow who was a great literal scholar, and did not have the slightest knowledge of English nor had any of his Chinese Staff.

49, Portland Place, then known as Richmond House, was taken as the Legation House. It was chosen by Sir Halliday's friends in London while he was on his way home with the Kow Mission. As it is pointed out, in the beginning, the choice of an Embassy did not entail any serious consideration in those days. Richmond House was quite adequate for a Chinese Embassy. The diplomatic status remained at that of a Minister until 1935, when it was raised to the Ambassador. In this global War the Chinese Embassy has changed from the comparatively inactive institution into a busy working machinery. I hope that in the future years of peace, our Embassy may not only remain as an efficient diplomatic working body but as an effective means of promoting better understanding between our two nations.

## CHAPTER 3

### Development in Planning and Design of Embassies

#### Difficulties in research:

The lack of embassies specially built for the purpose makes research on this subject rather difficult. As mentioned in the Introduction, most of the embassies are just town houses turned into embassies. The Chinese Embassy at 49, Portland Place is a case in point. The German Embassy in Carlton Terrace, considered to be the best decorated in London, was no exception. But the Luftwaffe did not share the same opinion and their own embassy also fell as a victim of their destructive forces during one of the raids on London.

#### Historical examples

As far as I know, there is no historical example of an embassy. This is quite understandable. In the past the Embassy was really nothing but an ambassador's residence where he entertained his guests in the stateliest manner probably comparable to the magnificence of the Court.

Therefore any palace would be an ideal building for an embassy. The two had similar requirements and did not demand any different treatment. Now, with the increasing complication in the international relation, the function of an embassy has turned towards requirements more business-like than domestic. Although most of the embassies may still be quite happy in their town houses, some nations will soon discover the need of having more adequate buildings to meet the increasing commercial, diplomatic and military relations between them. The American Embassy in Grosvenor Square, London, is a typical example.

#### Grand Prix de Rome design

The first design for an Embassy seems to appear in the competition for the Grand Prix de Rome. The winning design is by F. Duterb. It is the reminiscence of the classical idea of an embassy, intending as it were, to show to a foreign court the wealth and power of its country. The design is an excellent embodiment of all the stately grandeur and magnificence on the most lavish scale. It is a superb essay on design. But as far as requirements are concerned it has

hardly any difference from a palace.

### German Embassy in Petrograde

Peter Behren designed the German Embassy in Petrograde in 1907. This seems to be one of the very early embassy buildings. Illustrations are unfortunately unavailable. Words are mentioned in Peter Behren's biography. The author praised him in having achieved an admirable exposition of German architectural tradition blended with modern design. How successful he is, is difficult to judge. It is interesting to note the expression of patriotism in an architectural design.

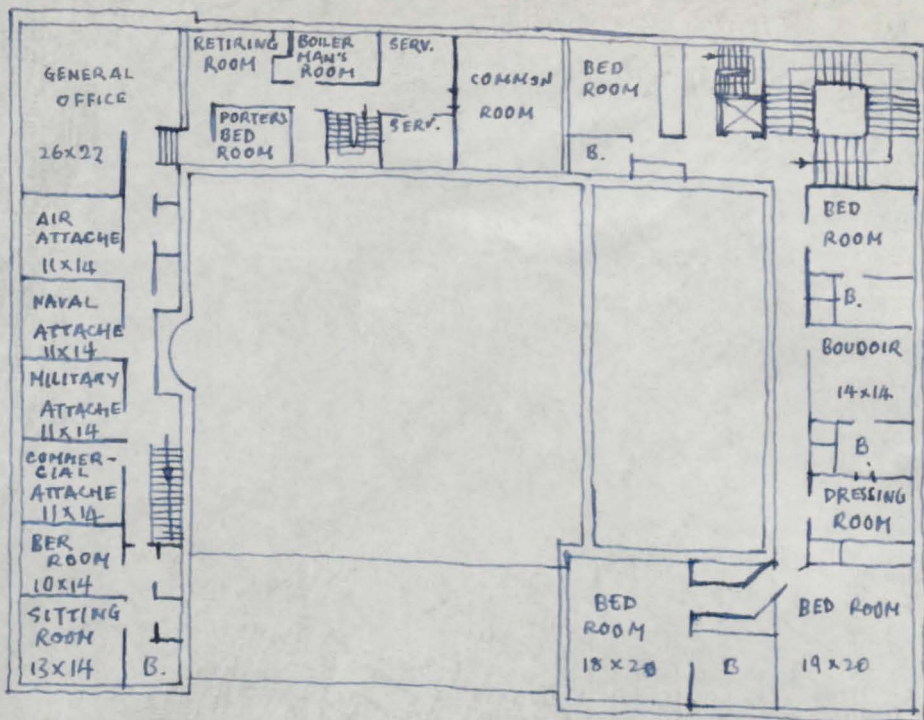
### British Embassy in Tokio

The British Embassy in Tokio does not include the chancellery which is housed in the city. Here, we see an English manor house transferred to Tokio designed with true Georgian gusto.

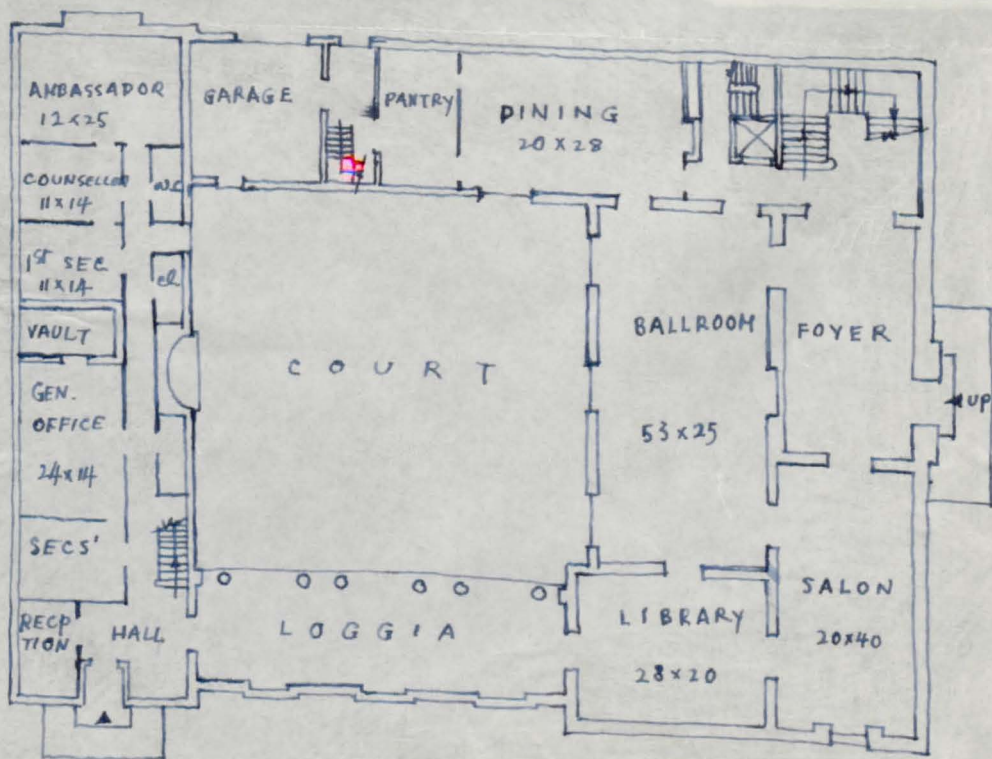
### Italian Embassy in Washington

The Italian Embassy in Washington designed by Warren & Wilmore, has some feeling of the Italian Renaissance in planning (fig.1) The Courtile seems to be a pre-conceived idea around which the embassy is planned. The accommodation

ITALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON



1ST FLOOR PLAN



GR. FLOOR PLAN

is rather small. There is clear distinction of the grouping of the three elements, reception, residence and chancellery. But the solution is by no means a happy one. The addition of a small flat in the chancellery, the placing of retiring room in the servant's quarter, and the awkward disposition of the ambassador's flats are the obvious weak points in plans.

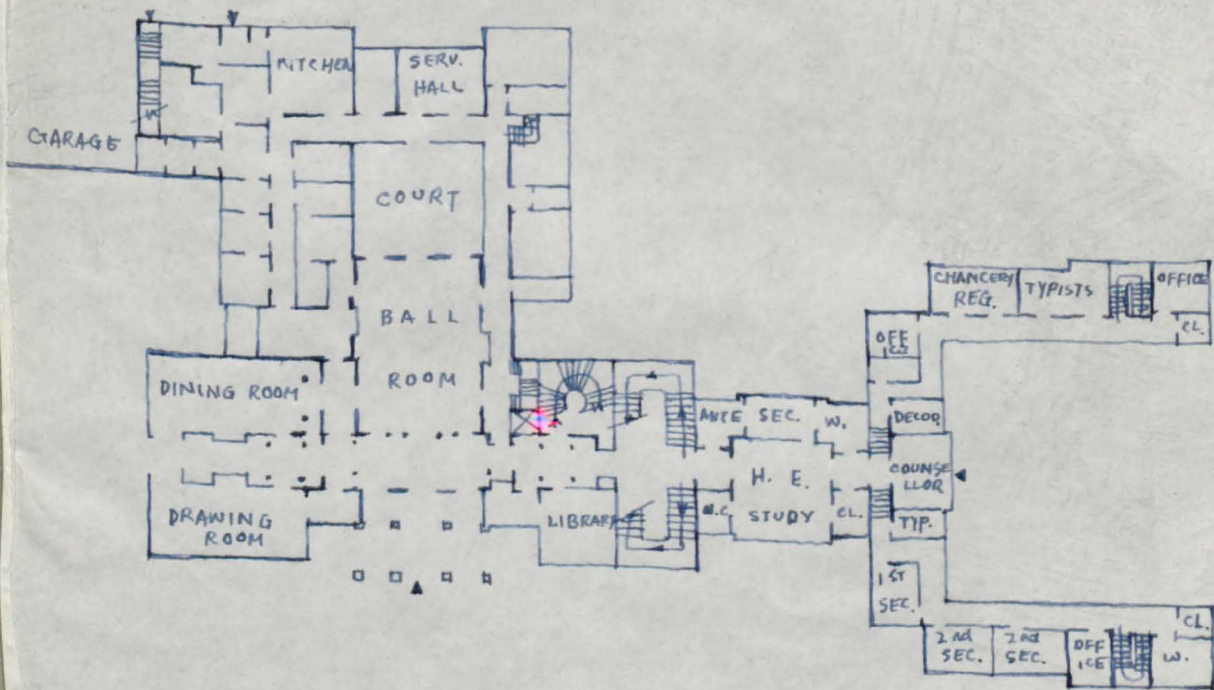
#### British Embassy in Washington

The British Embassy in Washington by Sir E. Lutyans, is to my knowledge, the most satisfactory one (fig. 2) Here again the distraction of the three elements is evident. The chancellery is placed near the main road with embassy at its back. The two buildings are linked by the ambassador's study, under which is the entrance to the embassy. The architect made use of the level in a very ingenious way. There is considerable slope from the Embassy to the Chancellery. The ground floor of the former is level with the first floor of the latter and both are connected by the Ambassador's study which is placed at the end of a magnificent gallery in the Embassy leading to the garden door. The



BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON

BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON BY SIR E. LUTYIN



Ballroom is rightly placed in the most prominent place in the Embassy. It is a pity that the Ballroom opens onto a miserable court of very small size, which is hardly adequate during sultry summer days on the American continent.

The service arrangements seems a bit doubtful. The ambassador's residence is presumably on the first floor of the Embassy, the plan of which is not available.

In this design it may be noticed that the chancellery is given much more prominence than the Embassy at the back, as a recognition of the fact that nowadays the Embassy is more often a place of complicated diplomatic transaction than a rendezvous of representatives of nations.

The Embassy has an imposing portico for the main entrance from garden. It gives no access to motor vehicles thus avoiding any disturbances to the garden. This domestic, dignified and yet modest character is most commendable and so very English in quality. Externally, the whole design speaks with a distinct English accent. This is quite appropriate, in another English-speaking country which not only has linguistic sameness but also shares the same tradition and culture.

It will be more appropriate, of course, if this architectonic accent which is so pronounced in Washington Embassy, is also the contemporary expression in this country.

#### American Embassy in London

In the same manner, the Americans reciprocated the compliment by the erection of a huge office building in Grosvenor Square as their Embassy in London. The design is a Georgian one. The plan, however, reveals a maze of small and large offices ingeniously placed together as in a jigsaw puzzle. For office area, this embassy may, in a favourite American description, be the largest Embassy in London. The Consulate is also housed therein. To crown this huge office are the apartments on the upper floors! There is no garden, a great drawback indeed. Here the business character is over-emphasized at the expense of the true function of the Embassy.

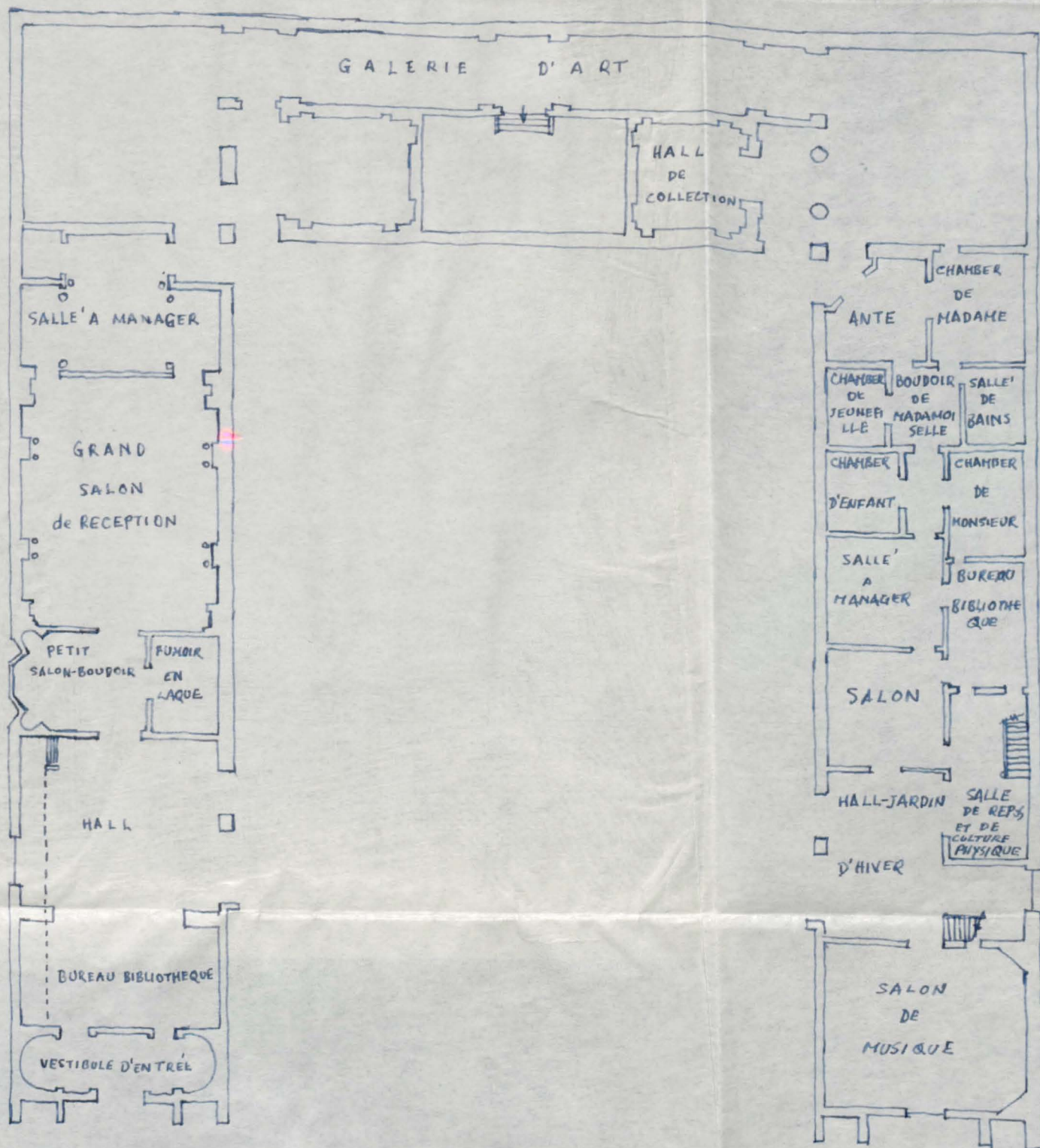
#### Und Ambassade Francaise

In 1925 French architects Pierre and Selmasheim built a French Embassy in a Building Exhibition in Paris. The object of this project was a commercial one rather than with a view to show the ways of an embassy building. It was built

D'UNE AMBASSADE FRANCAISE



PLAN D'UNE AMBASSADE FRANÇAISE : ARCHITECTS PIERRE & SELMERSHEIM.



around an open quadrangle (fig.3). Reading the plan from the left to the right, one is led to a plain statement of practical requirements. Shapes of rooms are embellished by half engaged columns, recesses and niches, but are not too closely related to one another. Interests are mainly centred on the interior treatment of the building which bears some reminiscence of Art Nouvre and heralds the interior of Shakespearean Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon.

Some conclusions from the above

It may be said that in the past the word "Embassy" was applied to any palace, a town house or manor house which was the residence of an ambassador. The splendour and dignity of these edifices were in keeping with the status of such a high official representative of a foreign nation. This engendered the concept of an embassy and now still holds good in certain ways. The design for Grand Prix de Rome was an expression of that conception. Actually the winner designed a magnificent palace for a subject which was called an Embassy. Grandeur was the main theme of that abstract design.

The earlier embassy buildings, besides keeping that classical characteristic, introduced another feeling in the design: "Nationalism". Peter Behren's Embassy at Petrograde was said to have a strong Germanic character. The British Embassy in Tokio is an English country home in the midst of cherry blossom. Italian chancellery in London is typical of the great tradition of their architecture. In so far as there is certain resemblance of traditions which is true in the case of the European Nations, this is quite tolerable. If an Eastern nation decides to erect a traditional edifice for its embassy in a foreign capital, such as London, the result will be very unsatisfactory. A Chinese Embassy after that manner will be at its best, as picturesque as the pagoda by Sir William Chamberlain in Kew Gardens. In so doing, we shall forget the real qualities of a certain culture but be led to the superficial embellishment of the facade. In every ambassadorial reception, the various hosts have never been seen in their respective traditional costume. Then why should the edifices be clothed in their traditional costume? However, we should



aim at the expression of the qualities of a certain nation such as is achieved in the British Embassy in Washington regardless of its bowler hat and umbrella.

The more recent American Embassy in London shows another change in planning. The embassy is now a complicated piece of diplomatic machinery installed in a foreign capital. This is inevitable in view of the ever-growing international relations. But it must be noted that on no account the embassy should be reduced to a mere business institution; it should still keep its real function of promoting understanding among nations. It should be dignified but to the standard of the present day. Such dignity as is existing in New Delhi will deteriorate the friendship rather than increase it.

## CHAPTER 4

### Programme of the Proposed Chinese Embassy

New international understanding during the War:

In this War, there are many Allied peoples rallying in this country in the fight against the World's aggressors. Among us, now there is a better understanding than ever before, This arises not merely from the fact that we are all in the same boat but because of efforts made by the various nations to promote that understanding by introducing their respective cultural achievement to the people of this country. A ballet company, National music, paintings, architecture, dramatic presentations, film shows, pageantry of the national costumes and many other ways of depicting the life of a people, are far the most effective means of augmenting better understanding and fostering friendship. After the War when all the Allied nationals will return to their homelands, I hope that their representatives in this country,

in fact all over the world, would keep up all these activities, instead of engaging themselves in nothing but diplomacy which only deteriorates the relations between the nations. "Diplomacy" is an unfortunate name and an unfortunate conception, and has that unfortunate implication of "skill in negotiation and tactful or adroit dealings" ( Oxford Dictionary).

Convinced of the possibilities which a new and better Embassy could offer, I intend to design the Chinese Embassy not just as an efficient working office but as a place where thousands of citizens of this country can be entertained and be introduced to our cultural traditions, and other aspects which are the make-up of our nation. The German Embassy in Bagdad often entertained School children before the War, whereas the other embassies entertained only a selected few all having an axe ~~for the others~~ to grind. Understanding is indeed difficult under these circumstances and with that diplomatic frame of the mind.

#### Programme

The requirements of the embassy seem to fall into the following categories:- reception, residence, chancellery consulate and service.

The consulate is accommodated in the Embassy on the lines of the American Embassy. When the Government spends so much money to build an Embassy there is no reason why it should not be built spacious enough to take its consulate in it. Convenience gained by this arrangements is obvious.

His Excellency, Dr. Wellington Koo, Chinese Ambassador to the Court of St. James rendered me great help in drawing up the programme. According to His Excellency, 2,000 or more guests is quite a usual number at a garden reception and other public occasions. In the various evening functions such as balls and so on, five or six hundred guests may be expected. The number of Chinese staff in the Embassy is well over forty. In addition, there is a considerable number of the English members on the staff. His Excellency specially pointed out that living accommodation should be provided for a resident secretary besides that for the Counsellor. A conference room where various private and public meetings can take place was also suggested.

According to the calendar, there will be

many meetings taking place in the Conference Room. On New Year's Day, there is "Group celebration" ceremony in the Embassy attended by most of the Chinese residents in the Capital, and a few English friends. New Year's Day is also for the observation of the formation of the establishment of the first Chinese Republican Government in 1912, after the overthrow of the last Dynasty. March 29th is observed in commemoration of seventy-two revolutionists who staged an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Chins in 1909 in Canton. May 4th is to celebrate the Students' movement, the launching of the famous literary revolution led by Dr. Hu-Hsiah, once Chinese Ambassador in Washington. July 7th, when the Japanese started the present conflagration in Marco Polo Bridge in 1937, is now the day of our National re-birth and is undoubtedly celebrated throughout the country. August 13th, 1937, the Chinese troops defending Shanghai took a gallant stand for three months in face of overwhelming odds. This date is now also observed in China. September 18th is a tragic day for us to commemorate the loss of Manchuria to the Japanese in 1931. This is now observed with sombre

determination till the day of its liberation.

October 10th known as the "Double tenth festival" marks the successful overthrow of Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and is naturally of national jubilation. On that day there is usually a big celebration in the Embassy.

The above are the most important occasions, the lesser ones such as Dr. Sun's London detention, various dates when many unequal treaties were signed, and many others are observed by the political bodies and government bodies. The Kuomintang Party holds a Dr. Sun's memorial service every Monday, when political controversies are discussed.

So it will be noticed that such a Conference Room is highly necessary. Besides the aforementioned meetings, the room will also be used for conferences with other diplomatic representatives, for press conferences and other committee meetings.

The following is the completed list of accommodation to be embodied in the proposed Embassy:-

#### Reception

Main entrance hall to the Embassy 2,000 sq.ft.  
spacious enough to cope with influx

and exodus of large numbers of guests.

Ladies cloak rooms)  
Gentlemen's " " ) each to handle 1,000 guests.

Grand staircase

2 lifts

Garden Reception Room 700 sq.ft.

Telephone boxes

Porter's room

Reception Hall about 2,000 sq.ft.

Ballroom

Dancing space for 400 persons

Salon

(Used in conjunction with the  
Banqueting room. The dinner party  
is usually fairly small)

Banqueting room about 1,250 sq.ft.  
(to seat about 40 persons)

Servery about 600 sq.ft.

Conference room about 2,000 sq.ft.

Cleaner's room

Chair stores

#### Chancellery

Entrance hall about 500 sq. ft.

Porter's room and enquiry about 200 sq. ft.

Telephone operator 120 sq. ft.

Lift

Staircase

Office area about 30,000 sq.ft.

1st floor is devoted to the  
Consulate; 2nd and 3rd floors to  
the Chancellery.

(On each floor there must be a general office for typists and other assistants, lavatories for both sexes, an emergency staircase, stationery store, cleaners' tea-making room. The Counsellor's offices should be a self-contained unit, comprising sec. attaché, waiting, cloak and his own study)

Decoding room	200 sq.ft.
Editing	120 sq.ft.

Ambassador's offices:

Ambassador's study.	550 sq.ft.
Chinese secretary	200 sq.ft.
English secretary	200 sq.ft.
Private cloakroom	
Store	
Waiting room	

Library:

Reading room	1,800 sq.ft.
Librarian room	120 sq.ft.
Store space	2,000 sq.ft.

(The collection of books in the Chinese Embassy is considerable. The present library (about 40' x 20') is literally packed with books periodicals and numerous other publications. Many



of the books are now kept in the various offices. The library is mainly used by the embassy staff for their work, which usually entails a lot of research. It is also accessible to outsiders on application)

Information attaché	about	120 sq.ft.
Staff dining room	"	900 sq.ft.
Staff common room	"	280 sq.ft.
Archives	"	2,000 sq.ft.

Residence:

Ambassador's flat

Entrance Hall		
Cloakroom		
Living room		400 sq.ft.
Study		200 sq.ft.
Dining Room		350 sq.ft.
Ambassador and Ambassadors bedrooms	each	200 sq.ft.
Dressing room		120 sq.ft.
Bath room		80 sq.ft.
4 bedrooms	each	120 sq.ft.
	with baths "	80 sq.ft.
Servery		150 sq.ft.

Counsellor's flat

Entrance Hall		
Cloakroom		
Dining room		200 sq.ft.
Servery		180 sq.ft.

Living room		400 sq.ft.
Study		200 sq.ft.
2 principal bedrooms	each	200 sq.ft.
Dressing room		120 sq.ft.
Bath		80 sq.ft.
2 bedrooms	each	150 sq.ft.

#### Resident Secretary's flat

Entrance hall		
Cloakroom		
Living room		400 sq.ft.
Study		200 sq.ft.
3 Bedrooms	each	120 sq.ft.
Bath		80 sq.ft.
Servery		180 sq.ft.
Cupboards and stores as necessary.		

#### Entrance block

Staircase		
1 lift		
Stores on each floor		120 sq.ft.
Luggage room		250 sq.ft.
Pram store		

#### Basement

Stores for trunks etc. convertable to  
A.R.P. shelter.

#### Service

Kitchen		3,000 sq.ft.
Chef's offices		60 sq.ft.
Cold store		60 sq.ft.
Store		60 sq.ft.
Dry store		180 sq.ft.

Crockery store	180 sq.ft.
5 food lifts	
Staff's sitting room	200 sq.ft.
Staff's dining room	280 sq.ft.
Cloak room	

Basement

Store and Wine cellar	3,000 sq.ft.
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(Large space is required. Special Chinese foodstuff will be ordered directly from home. Large consignment will be expected periodically).

Garage

To take 5 cars  
Store and Workshop

Boiler room	1,200 sq.ft.
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Garden

Ample covered space and tea terrace to provide shelter to guests in case of sudden inclemency of weather.

Conservatory.

Servants' Quarters

6 bedrooms	each about	200 sq.ft.
{ 5 double bedrooms } { 1 single bedroom }		

(two butlers, one janitor, four chefs, two chauffeurs, boilerman, gardner)

Bath

Shower

Washroom

W.C.'s

Luggage room

Living room

400 sq.ft.

entrance hall

## Garden

The Chinese garden is essentially a landscape gardening in miniature. The Chinese words for landscape are "Shan Shin" meaning hills and water, the former to stimulate and the latter to induce tranquillity. The Western garden is mainly for the purpose of recreation, the Chinese garden for meditation. The great Summer Palace in Peiping is a full scale reproduction of the landscape of the West Lake, Hangshow in Cheking Province. It was built by the Empress Tze-She of the Chin Dynasty. A cultured scholar would not go the extent of Summer Palace but try to design a miniature landscape to the inspiration he gained from his favourite poems and some great paintings. Perhaps the window of his study would be of the shape of a fan and placed in such a way that when he sat down in the study with a book of poetry in his hands, he would see the miniature landscape in the garden through the fan-shaped window as if a great master had painted a master-piece on his

fan.

Therefore it is essential that the garden in the Embassy should preserve those characters by having those traditional features of "Shan Shin". It may not be an ideal place for meditation when the Embassy is suddenly crowded with 2,000 guests, but it will certainly provide many points of interest to the visiting guests.

Formal garden is quite alien to the Chinese conception. Love of nature does not permit us to force geometrical shapes on the creation of nature. The layout of a Chinese garden does not bear any formal relation with the houses. Houses are usually hidden by bamboo and other trees. Surprise and modesty are the principles of the designer. "A zig-zag path leads to a nook" is a favourite key phrase in gardening. The Chinese idea is that when one enters a garden, he does not expect to have a full glance of every feature in the garden, he loiters and finds out himself. Only by so doing he will notice small details and the subtle arrangement.

The difference of the Occidental and Oriental ideas of gardening may be evident in my impressions of the Priory Park, Bath, and that of a Chinese garden in Soochow. Viewing the Priory Park from

the imposing portico of Wood's magnificent edifice, I was much taken by the grand landscape below and had a most peculiar urge of rolling down the slope like a playful animal. Because of the size and distance, the view was more or less limited to one angle, the impression was therefore just grand view growing rather tiresome after a while for its monotony. The garden in Soochow gave me an entirely different impression. On entering the garden gate I found myself in a bamboo grove leading to rockery forming curious caves through which I approached a small timber bridge across a pond of lotus. The bridge led to a pavilion in the middle of the pond. The pavilion was connected to the other side of the pond by a zig-zag bridge not to allow, as it were, visitors to run through the bridge and forget the mass of lotus underneath. The whole garden was full of this kind of interest. Were I a poet I could write poems at every scene which unfolded itself before me as I proceeded along. Actually there were many poems written on the walls or on the face of rocks, few of the good ones were carved by many were left in ink.

The garden in the Embassy, however, will

only have to be symbolic of those qualities, for it will have to serve the purpose of entertaining guests, en masse. Therefore a part of the garden is devoted to "hills and water" leaving a large proportion of the ground open for guests to play croquet. The earth excavated from the basement may be conveniently used for the building of a mount in the South East corner overlooking Kensington Gardens. The mount is judiciously laid with rocks from which springs a stream passing the South boundary and forming a lily pond at the end of the ballroom. The gap between the Embassy and the next house is planted with trees to form a screen from the main road.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Solution

General layout and site planning: size

Although the site is many times bigger than 49 Portland Place, it is still far from being sufficient to provide a good-sized garden. The British Embassy in Washington covers an area of nine acres. This site is about 2.3 acres. Extreme care should therefore be exercised in order to leave as much space as possible for the layout of the garden. It is squarish in shape and has no difference in level.

#### Chancellery entrance:

As the site dictates it is obvious that the chancellery should be placed along Nottingham Gate which is a comparatively busy thoroughfare. The private entrance to the flat is also from Bayswater for the sake of convenience.

#### Embassy entrance:

The main entrance to the Embassy is on Kensington Palace Gardens. The atmosphere of that street is exceedingly appropriate for such an entrance.

At the back of the site, there is an



existing road leading to the Kensington Palace and this may be conveniently used as a service road.

Block plan:

The Chancellery block is therefore placed along Bayswater in the West. The residential block should command a fine view and face east. This suggests that the block be placed parallel with the Chancellery and facing the gardens.

The reception rooms are along Kensington Palace Gardens. The site has rather a long frontage compared with its neighbours. If the building has a rather narrow facade, it will leave a very big space between the embassy and the next house. It will then break up the rhythm of the street. Therefore, by placing the reception rooms along Kensington Palace Gardens, the front elevation will be elongated to give a good spacing between the buildings. Thus the residential block and the reception rooms form an "L" shape, giving a sense of enclosure to the garden, which is quite essential.

Kitchen and other services are placed at the back for its proximity to the service road. This, however, exerts considerable influence in

planning, for all the dining rooms in the building will have to be grouped together.

Car parking:

It may be expected that most of the guests to the Embassy will come in their private cars. This may amount to hundreds of cars. Obviously it will be quite impossible to provide such a big car park. Even the staff cars will present a problem. There are about twenty cars belonging to the present embassy staff. It will have to be assumed that some parking space will be available along Kensington Palace Gardens and Bayswater.

### Internal Planning

General:

The following considerations give rise to some difficulties in planning:

1. The three entrances, namely Embassy, Chancellery and residence, should have distinct character yet not be in conflict with each other.

The entrances to the former two should be so designed as to reduce supervision to the simplest.

2. The rather fixed position of the kitchen

and other services has uncompromisingly influenced the disposition of all the dining rooms in the embassy.

3. To handle over 2,000 guests in a garden reception is a problem made more difficult by the uncertain weather of London.
4. The relation between these three elements.

#### Embassy

The block plan is thus settled according to the afore-mentioned facts. It may help in the solution of planning by imagining the various receptions taking place in the Embassy in order to arrive at a well-ordered plan.

In a garden reception, over 2,000 guests will be expected. The ambassador will probably receive the guests in the early part of the reception when most of the guests will be expected to arrive within a period of one hour. Most of them will not stay for the whole reception. This bulk of guests can easily throw the Embassy into temporary confusion if their movement is not confined to a certain area. With this in mind, I place all the important reception rooms on the first floor, to avoid all those rooms being unnecessarily messed up. The guests only have to

go through a garden reception room on the ground floor to reach the garden. The weather is most uncertain in this part of the World. So adequate covered space is provided for the sheltering of guests in case of sudden showers in the summer. The guests can wait in the covered space for the weather to lift up or gradually leave the party.

In an evening function, less guests are expected, usually about five or six hundred. They will arrive fairly punctually at almost the same time, leave their coats, meet their partners in the hall, ascend the grand staircase, be received by the Ambassador in the Reception Hall, then proceed to the Ballroom or to the Salon, in case of a dinner party directly to proceed to the salon where drinks are served before dinner. Diagrammatically the circulation will be thus:-

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



### Entrance Hall

In view of the large number of guests arriving at practically the same time, a large entrance hall is called for to cope with conditions comparable with those in a theatre, concert hall and other public buildings. Two cloakrooms each to look after 250 guests are disposed symmetrically about the hall. To meet larger numbers of guests, extra cloakrooms are provided in the basement below the entrance hall, access to these is from the cloakrooms on the ground floor. This arrangement is preferred for its straightforwardness. and mobility of use.

### Reception Hall

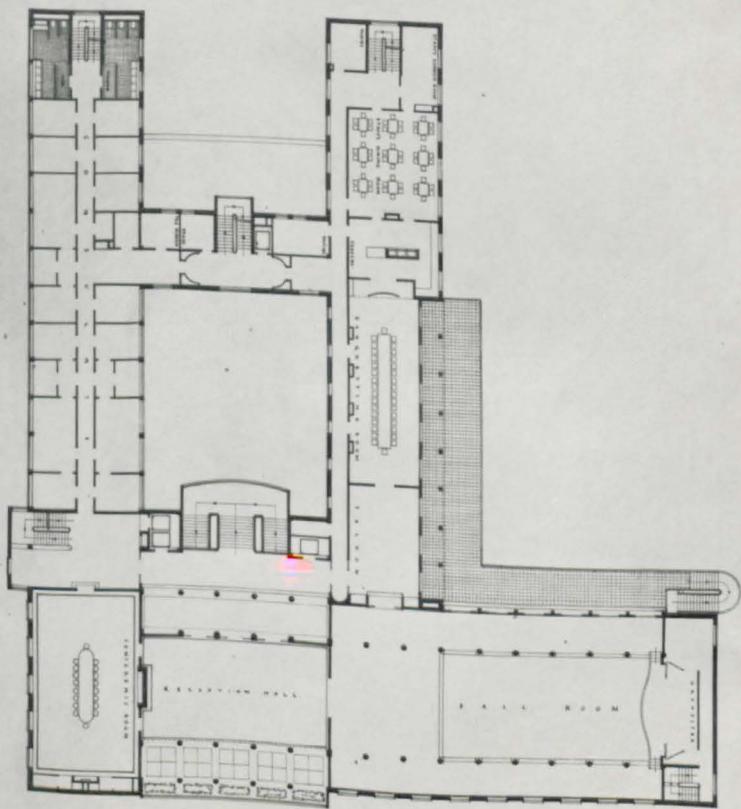
This is also very large. During the reception, dancing or other forms of entertainment do not take place. The guests usually loiter in the Reception Hall chattering with their friends. The extra space above the entrance vestibule is furnished with seats. At the back of the Ambassador special provision is provided for the display of a profusion of flowers to gain the characteristic atmosphere for which the Chinese people have a known fondness.

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



A CHINESE EMBASSY IN LONDON

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



## Ballroom

The dancing area is sunk 1.5 ft. below the floor level of the reception room and also that of the sitting area of the ballroom. Ample stage is provided for a full dance orchestra. This can also be used for some Chinese theatrical production. "Lady Precious Stream" and "The dream of the Western Chamber", both by Mr. S. I. Wsiang, were produced in the present Chinese Embassy and proved to be a great success. Such cultural interpretation helps us to understand each other much more than many prolonged diplomatic negotiations. The production of a Chinese play does not require much space and equipment of a modern theatre. An improvised stage such as this one will meet all the requirements.

## Salon

This is comparatively small, as the dinner party in the Embassy is usually rather small, and the salon is used in conjunction with the banqueting room.

## Banqueting Room

The Banqueting room is separated by folding and sliding doors, by opening these the two rooms may be turned into a big banqueting room

in case of an unusually large dinner party.

The two rooms are all set back 5 ft. from the stanchion to give extra space on the balcony for guests to sit out.

### Balcony

The Balcony runs past the banqueting room salon and then turns round to pass the Ballroom. There are stairs to give direct access to the garden from the balcony.

### Conference Room

The Conference room is adjacent to the Reception Hall, so that after the meeting, visitors may have some tea there and talk to their friends. In case of a dance or other function this may be reserved for the use of the lady guests.

### Chancellery and Consulate

Entrance Hall:

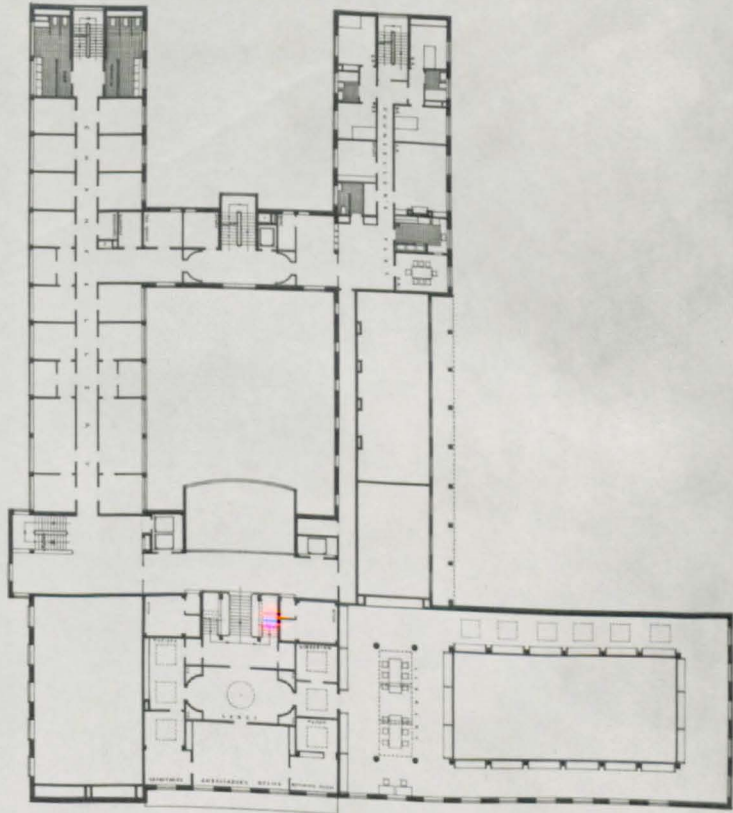
The Entrance Hall to the Chancellery is adjacent to the embassy entrance hall. This will minimize the amount of supervision by the porter. Telephone operator's room is placed here so that the visitor may ask the operator to inform the person whom he intends to call.

The consulate is on the first floor and the chancellery on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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SECOND FLOOR PLAN



## Offices

This is a simple straightforward problem and presents no difficulties. Each member of the Embassy is accommodated in one room which is the desire of every member of the Chinese Staff whom I consulted during my visits to London.

### Staff Dining Room

This faces the garden. The common room is in the next room. It is rather a long way from some of the offices on the upper floors. But it has to be near the servery, hence that disposition.

### Ambassador's Offices

Ambassador's offices are over the Reception Hall, being the most prominent part of the Embassy. This floor is between 2nd and 3rd floors which gives easier access to either of these floors in the Chancellery.

### Counsellor's offices

Like Ambassador's offices, the Counsellor's offices are also self-contained. They are above the Conference room.

### Library

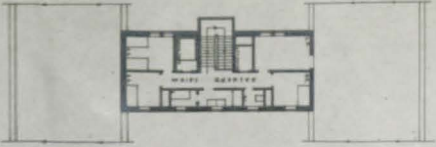
Library is on top of the Ballroom. The access is through the Ambassador's offices floor.

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

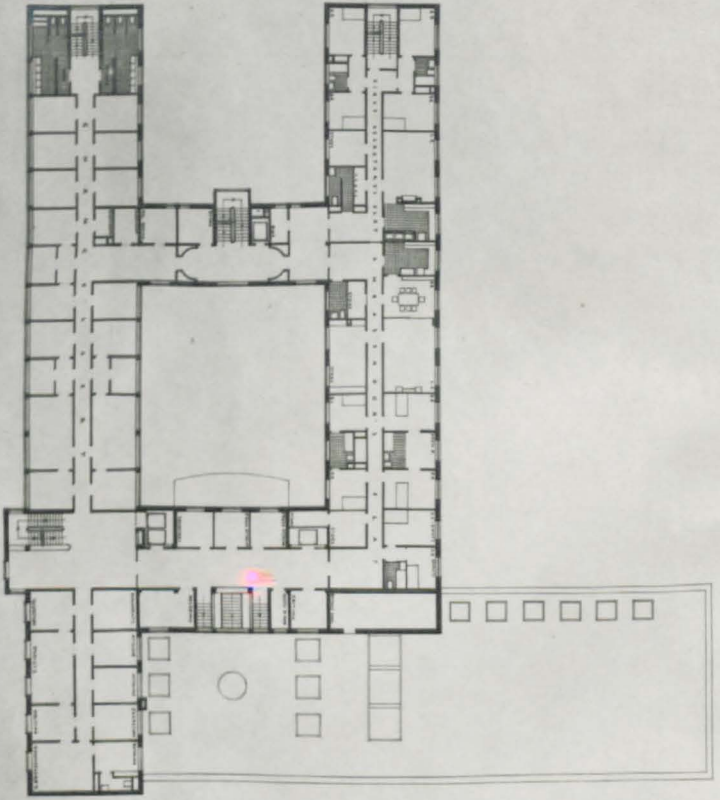


A CHINESE EMBASSY IN LONDON

TOP FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN





The gallery with complete circulation is used for the stacking of books. The reading space is top lit.

### Residence

Ambassador's flat is on the 3rd floor of the block facing the garden. Counsellor's and resident Secretary's flats are on the 2nd floor. They all command a very good view of Kensington Gardens. The placing of food lifts determines the arrangement of the three dining rooms. Small kitchens are also provided in the flats for the wives to prepare some special dishes of their own. Kitchen rubbish may be disposed of by means of a chute in the common entrance hall. On the whole, the planning of the flats does not present much difficulty.

The entrance to the flats is from a private court. There is a door to the garage at the back of the entrance to avoid the lone driver having to take a detour in order to come to the entrance hall.

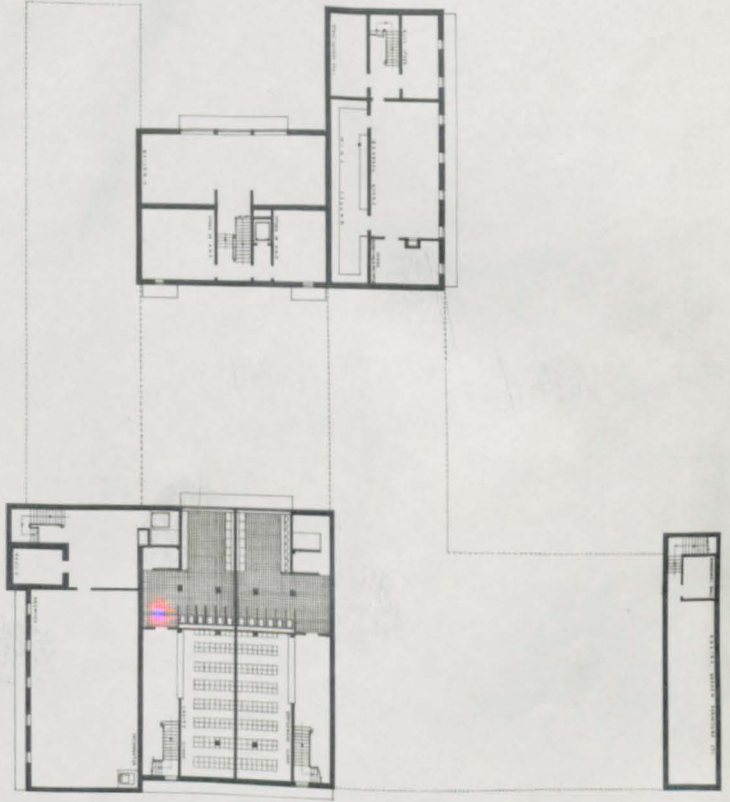
The basement below the entrance hall is for the storage of heavy trunks and other luggages, and may be converted to an A.R.P. shelter in the times of War.

BASEMENT PLAN

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BASEMENT PLAN



## Services

Kitchen is on the ground floor of the flat block and is so placed because of service entrance. There is an ample service yard in front of the garages. The kitchen serves the tea terrace in the garden, banqueting room, staff dining room, servants dining room, and the three flats, in fact the whole building. The kitchen will be entirely a Chinese one. In Chinese cooking, preparation requires more labour than the actual cooking, which is a rather simple affair of mere frying. The Chinese dinner is always a great success in the present Chinese Embassy, with the Epicurean visitors who find the cuisine a great change after caviar. From the experience gained by the author in the Chinese Seamen's Welfare Centre in Liverpool, three large gas stoves will be quite sufficient to cope with all the cooking in the Embassy.

Tea service is separated from the main kitchen in order to facilitate the catering of a garden reception without throwing the main kitchen in confusion.

Chef's room, refrigerator, stores are off the main kitchen.

The basement below is used entirely for storing of specially imported Chinese food-stuffs and for wine cellar.

#### Boiler room

Boiler room is under the garage and is lit and ventilated by light wells.

#### Servants' Quarters

Six bedrooms are provided. Except for the Chief Cook's room the rest are all double rooms. It is assumed that the servants will all be Chinese and they come over as singles. One living room for their communal use is provided. The quarter occupies the ground floor of the Chancellery block.

#### Elevations

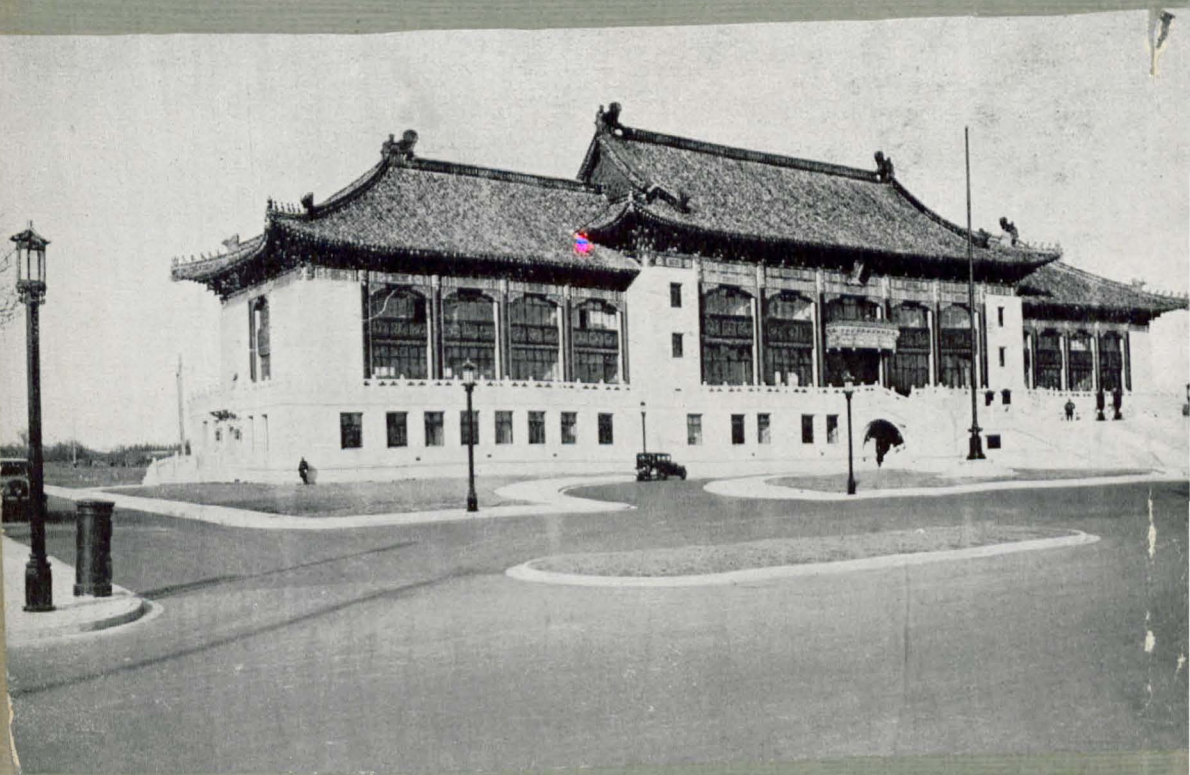
When this was first chosen, the idea of designing something characteristic of Chinese architecture was very tempting indeed, though I had no intention of building a pagoda in the heart of London. To attempt this would entail a thorough knowledge of Chinese architecture which I completely lack. In the years before the present War in China, numerous public buildings were erected in the manner of ancient palaces and

YING KING UNIVERSITY, PEIPING.  
&  
THE MAYOR'S OFFICES, SHANGHAI.





YING KING UNIVERSITY, PEIPING.



THE MAYOR'S OFFICES, SHANGHAI.

temples in Peiping. The Mayor's office in Shanghai, Ying King University and other Government buildings are all typical examples. In fact it was, perhaps still is, a period revival which is mistakenly called "Chinese Renaissance" style. To express the characteristics of a national culture is admirable. But by "clothing" the edifice with an ancient cloak in order to reach such an aim is a solution which is as simple as it is unsound. One must digest the qualities of Chinese architecture and then proceed to interpret this tradition in a contemporary way. Then a truer contemporary Chinese architecture may be brought into being. At the moment I do not wish to attempt such an adventure. I can only rely on my Chinese outlook guided by my training to arrive at a solution.

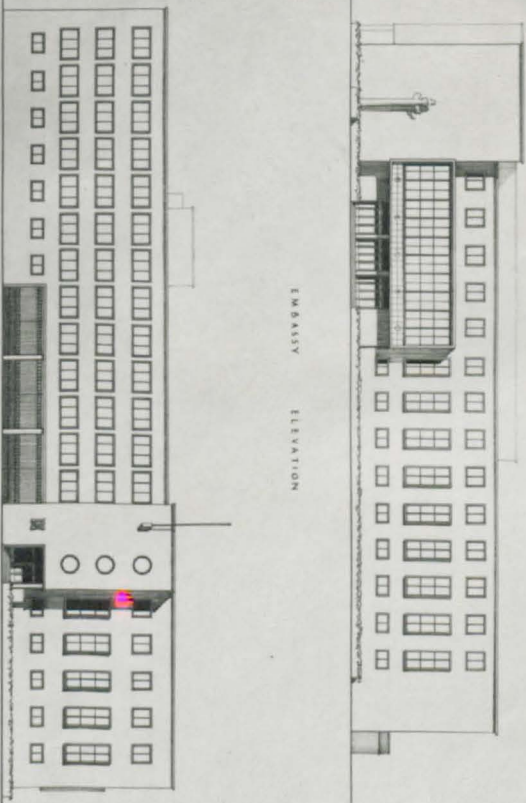
#### Front Elevation

The elevations are a simple statement of the plans in this design. On the front elevation, the vertical Chancellery block is brought forward slightly for emphasis. The long Horizontal block of the reception hall and ballroom is derived according to functional and structural considerations. The horizontal is balanced by the vertical on the



EMBASSY ELEVATION

CHANCELLERY ELEVATION



EMBASSY ELEVATION

CHANCELEERY ELEVATION



A CHINESE EMBASSY IN LONDON

fulcrum which is the main entrance with cantilevered and heavily glazed reception hall on top. It is not austere nor ostentatiously dignified, but just reasonable and honest. The whole effect relies on good proportion, and well-balanced massing.

### Chancellery Elevation

The Chancellery elevation has a rather business-like character which may be appropriate or falls into being rigid. The office part is made slightly lower than the part where the conference room and Counsellor's office are. This is designed to give a balance on elevation, the heavily fenestrated and longer and lower block to balance the shorter and higher block with less fenestration on the right.

The top and bottom lines of windows to the Conference room are not in line with the windows to the offices on the 1st and 2nd floorw. Hence the round windows to the landing are introduced to give a sort of fusion of lines at these points. These round windows also suggest some central interest which is enhanced by projecting out this block of vertical circulation

GARDEN ELEVATION

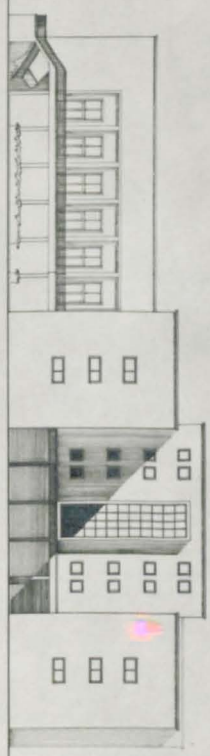
BACK ELEVATION



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GARDEN ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION



Thus the entrance to the Chancellery is given certain prominence. A rather ornate tablet and a flag pole give further interest to the facade.

The end bays are widened to give some feeling of solidarity.

### Garden Elevation

On the garden elevation, difficulties are encountered on account of the various accommodation on the plan. The height of the first floor rooms is unfortunately almost equal to the height of the columns supporting the balcony, the effect of which is slightly obviated by introducing low parapet walls with flowers to surround the terrace below. The apparently smaller height of these columns carries one's attention to the first floor which should be emphasised.

### Back Elevation

The back elevation happens to have rather austere symmetrical elevations and is treated as such.

## CHAPTER 6

### Constructional System

#### Steel frame:

Steel frame construction is adopted with bays at 11' x 33'. The large span is necessary in order to get maximum space for the offices and flats. The span is three times the width of the bay for reasons of better connection of the Embassy block to the Chancellery. Two end bays of the Chancellery block are 15' wide. The end to the Conference room is to give an emphasis on the Embassy elevation. The other end is to give ample space to the escape staircase, the end of the residence block facing the garden is similarly treated.

Three sets of stanchions are employed. They are 9 x 10, 8 x 6, R.S.J. with 10 x  $\frac{1}{2}$  plates for the Chancellery block and the residence block. The conference room, reception hall and ballroom are similarly loaded with one principal room on the first floor and offices on the second floor. The nature of these rooms is similar. The

stanchion is  $8\frac{3}{4}$  x 10, 8 x 6 R.S.J. with 10 x  $\frac{3}{8}$  plates. The stanchions of the covered way, having to take the double load, are  $10\frac{3}{4}$  x 12, 9 x 7 R.S.J. with 12 x  $\frac{7}{8}$  plates.

#### Wall Construction

9" brick walls fill in between stanchions, faced with  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " reconstructed stones measuring 2'9" x 1'0" in hair-pin joints. The brick wall is faced with 2" of cork internally and then plastered over.

#### Internal Partition

12" x 9" x 3" Phorpres hollow partition blocks with intermediate vertical studs are used for internal partition wall. The blocks are set in 1:3 rapid hardening cement mortar.

#### Floor Construction

Hollow tile floor construction. Each tile measures 6" x 12" reinforced by steel way. European oak floor boards are laid on battens 10" x  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Spring-mor dance floor is used for the ballroom.

Kitchen, Lavatories, Bathroom floors are laid in quarry tiles 6" x 6".

The floor of the Entrance Hall is Yung-Kong



marble laid according to the design.

### Roof

Hollow-tile roof with 3" screed and covered by asphalt.

### Foundation

Bloom-base rests on R.C. foundation base.

### Services and equipment

Central panel heating is adopted throughout the building. 4 Boncourt Patent Town Gas-fired boiler and water heaters are preferred to other types of boilers for its cleanliness and easy control. Room temperature is automatically controlled by thermostats.

The cubic contents to be heated is about 1,000,000 cu. ft. Therefore four boilers each with a capacity of 500,000 B.T.U.s are installed. A space of 17'.0" x 11'0" is allocated to each boiler in the boilerroom.

## CHAPTER 7

### Costs and Financing

An Embassy is naturally not a business proposition. It will be maintained by the government for which it stands, as much as the national treasury would allow. Therefore financing is really out of question. The initial costs of the building only will interest the client.

Rough costs are arrived at by cubing the three different elements. The Embassy which is more or less like a town hall or other important building only more elaborate in design, is taken at  $2/6$  per cubic foot. Chancellery is at  $2/6$  per cubic foot, and flats at  $2/6$ .

	Total cubic contents	cost
Embassy @ $2/6$	230,000	£28,750
Residence @ $2/-$	260,000	£26,000
Chancellery @ $1/6$	395,000	£26,000
Entrance block @ $1/-$	29,700	£ 1,480
Garage @ $-/6$	12,100	£ . 242
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	986,800	£82,472 — 7
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