SHANGHAI AND ALL THAT JAZZ

On tour. It’s Shanghai tonight, they say. The little band of travellers, tourists from Au Da Li Ya step heavily down from their lumbering bus in Nanjing Lu and receive brass keys to colonially spacious rooms in what they now call Peace Hotel, the Bund a few steps away. Here many a famed westerner’s form reclined thankfully on laundered sheets in Sassoon’s halcyon days; when Coward wrote ‘Private Lives’ and Shaw or Chaplin savoured an admiring glance.

But after supper our tour leaders declared we’d be entertained in the famed Jazz Bar by legend’s ancient snazzy jazz band, still thumping ‘Lazy River’ and ‘Ye Shanghai’. So we tapped a toe with a glass of Qingdao beer in hand. Found anything but peace til 2 am. After all, it was ‘Crippled Sassoon’ who made sure the Bank of China remained twelve centimetres lower than the Peace Hotel.