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British Activities in South-East Asia: Britain and South-East Asia

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Cardinal virtues (Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude); the last, with the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Each of the sections (further subdivided into three parts) provides meditation material for one day. The readings are so arranged that they fit a schedule (suggested as a working plan for the retreatant) which takes little time away from the regular tasks of the housewife.

Halo for a Housewife is full of references to the familiar—situations which form part of the daily routine of the modern mother who is without domestic help. (To a number of Filipinas, some of the examples are familiar only in the sense that what you read or hear about can be familiar.) Still in a general sense, the suggestions for self-improvement are appropriate for all homemakers. The apparently trivial subject of personal appearance is transformed into proper matter for meditation.

Next to her complete trust in God, the most remarkable thing about my friend was her stubborn determination not to 'let herself go.' At Sunday Mass or on her rare evenings out, she always looked as young and trim as another woman with a fraction of her duties. She kept her figure and she always wore her hair in an attractive hairdo.

For all the concrete and practical suggestions that the book has to offer, it seems to want something, a hardly definable something. The warmth and wonder of a deeper insight into the meaning and significance of a higher union with God—most welcome to dwell on during a retreat—seems (to this reader at least) to have been somewhat overlooked.

MARIA TERESA COLAYCO

BRITISH ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

BRITAIN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA. By Saul Rose. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962 (first published by Chatto and Windus, London). 208 pp.

This book is the second in a series called 'Britain in the World Today', which originates from St. Anthony's College, Oxford, a newly founded institution devoted chiefly to research into subjects of present-day interest. It contains a historical account, with special emphasis on the post-war period, of the activities of the British in this region. The two areas formerly under British administration—Burma and Malaysia—are treated in detail and some account is given of other countries which felt British influence.

One-third of the book covers events up to 1914, and records the process of British colonisation. The earliest settlements, in the 17th century, were purely for the sake of trade, and concentrated on Indonesia. But Dutch competition was too strong, and attention was diverted to India. The main colonising move in South-East Asia began in the 19th century, for strategic rather than commercial reasons. The placing of colonies in Malaya was originally to provide a base on the Eastern side of the Bay of Bengal and to safeguard the passage of the China trade. The expansion into Burma was to protect the Eastern frontiers of India, and to prevent encroachment by the French. There was, however, little general sense of an 'obligation' to colonise and bring civilisation. Although the author cites this as a cause in his final summary on page 196 (and it recurs out of context on the dust-jacket) this is not supported by his main text. This sense of obligation was, however, important in determining British policy in the territories once acquired. In fact the gradual spread of British rule was haphazard and often reluctant. As the author shows clearly, the uncertainty of communications allowed energetic men on the spot, like Raffles and Brooke, to commit the authorities in London to colonising policies they had never intended.

The years between the two World Wars are treated more thoroughly, and with special attention to economics and strategy. The economic chapter, however, suffers from an imprecise use of statistics and terms like 'profit', which makes the assessment of 'exploitation' unbalanced. The necessity of treating together the very different situations in Burma, Malaya and Borneo also leads to some strain. The general impression of this period is of an increasing awareness by Britain of her responsibilities to the countries under her administration; and of increasing resources devoted to their development, which are soon swallowed up by their ever-growing needs. During peace, Britain was able to sustain her responsibilities. But when the Second World War came, she was not strong enough both to defend herself, left alone in Europe, against the German Axis, and to protect her empire overseas. The chapter on strategy shows clearly how the defence plan based on Singapore was steadily eroded by more pressing needs nearer home.

At the end of the war, the British South-East Asia Command was given the responsibility for restoring the pre-war governments to the countries of the region except the Philippines and Northern Vietnam. In almost every colonial territory the effect of the war had been the same. The rapid collapse of the administering powers and the false Japanese propaganda about 'liberation' had vastly encouraged the movements pressing for early independence. But once disenchanted with the oppression of the Japanese, these movements (with which the Communist parties identified themselves when they could) became centres of underground resistance. When the Japanese surrendered, these movements were often the best organised forces remaining, and con-

trolled large areas of the country. In every country, however the reaction to the return of the administering power was different. In Burma the British found the independence movement to be in effective control of the whole country. With some reluctance, independence was therefore granted in 1948, outside the Commonwealth. In the succeeding years British influence in Burma has steadily diminished, and there are now few overt survivals of the period of British rule. This is perhaps not surprising. The British administration was too brief and in a sense too unimaginative to strike such deep roots as, for instance, in India; it may even have accentuated the natural xenophobic tendencies of the Burmese. In Malaya the radical forces had less popular support. By an enlightened racial policy and a prolonged guerilla campaign, Britain was able to bring Malaya peacefully to independence in 1957, with good hopes of a stable and prosperous future within the Commonwealth. The Dutch in Indonesia and the French in Vietnam, both of whom were assisted by the British in regaining control, tried to follow stricter, less flexible policies, both with unhappy results.

This book was published by Johns Hopkins in December 1962. The text was clearly finished early in that year. The final stages in the progress to independence of Singapore and British Borneo are therefore incomplete. There is some account of the preparations for Malaysia, but the author, perhaps not fully adjusted to the universal acceleration in the granting of independence since 1960, evidently did not foresee the speed with which Malaysia would be implemented. He does, however, hit at the Philippine claim to Sabah in his reference on page 156 to the Congressional resolution of March 1962—one of the latest events recorded in the book. In a shrewd passage on pages 163-4 he predicts the likelihood of Indonesian attacks on Sabah and Sarawak, after the disposal of the West Irian dispute; and warns that any grouping based on Malay kinship (such as Maphilindo) would inevitably be dominated by Indonesia because of her great size and population. But his assessment of the plan for Malaysia, made before the confusion and hostility of the last two years, is wholly favourable. In his final pages he concludes that the preparation of it would be "the best parting gift that Britain could make to South-East Asia".

The closing chapters bring out the great change in Britain's position in South-East Asia caused by the granting of independence to her colonial possessions and the decline of her influence in Thailand. But the author regards Britain as having considerable influence in the region, which should be used to the full in promoting stable government and economic development. He tends to belittle SEATO, largely because of its limited membership. Britain's greatest contribution should be through economic and technical assistance of all kinds, and the author is clearly disappointed that Britain does not devote a larger share of her resources to the region. His reasons

are sound, but do not perhaps give enough weight to the conflicting claims of other parts of the world (though he recognises the needs of India) nor the great part being played by the United States, whose vast contribution is far beyond anything Britain could hope to offer.

Local readers will find the scarcity of references to the Philippines a disappointment. British involvement has certainly been slight in the post-war period. But the British occupation of Manila in 1762-4 deserves a mention, and so does the part played by British merchants in the development of Philippine trade (especially abaca and sugar in the 19th century. The figure £17 million given for Anglo-Philippine trade in 1936, quoted on page 65, is in fact a misprint for £1.7 million. The table of post-war trade on pages 176-7 omits the Philippines altogether.

There are some maps to illustrate the early chapters, and an adequate index. The short bibliography lists chiefly modern, secondary works. The text, however, abounds in extracts from British official sources (quoted not always with malice); it would be useful to be able to identify these more closely. But in general this book gives a fair and balanced, though not uncritical, account of British activities in South-East Asia. There is plenty of lucid, well-documented exposition of fact, and the opinions expressed are moderate and not obtrusive. It forms an excellent background to studies both of recent Philippine history, and of the present situation in the region as a whole.

NICHOLAS BAYNE

A PRACTICAL MAN'S ECONOMICS GUIDE

THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A Non-technical Guide for Policy Makers and Administrators. By Louis J. Walinsky. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963. xiii, 248 pp.

Mr. Walinsky acknowledges at the start of this trite little volume that it rests on twelve years of work with Robert R. Nathan Associates, whose business it is to advise backward countries on problems of development. Aside from occasional flashes of observation yielded only by personal experience in the field, the manual has nothing fresh to offer. It is a kind of practical man's guide; it does not pretend to shed new light. Chapters are brief, often dessicated. Some pages are little more than a passel of tedious questions. The one novel suggestion which I found in the book appears to be of dubious practicality: the village bank. One nagging question in a country like the Philip-