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THIRD SENIOR SEMINAR IN FOREIGN POLICY
Foreign Policy Study

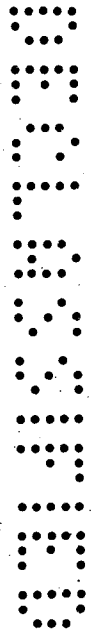


Certain Factors and Problems Affecting
Political and Social Stability in
Southeast Asia, With Comments
and Suggestions

by

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June 2, 1961

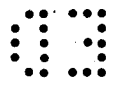


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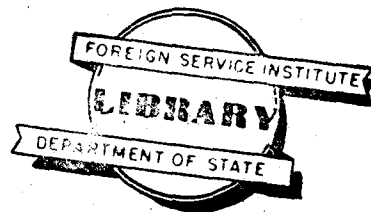


PREFACE

It had been my intention, upon first undertaking this study, to examine some of the nations of Southeast Asia with a view to discovering, isolating and commenting on factors in their societies and political life which might be considered as encouraging political and social stability. From that examination it was hoped to draw observations and conclusions which might be of use to those interested in promoting the continued independent existence of those nations, and furthering their political and economic development along lines desired by the United States. I brought to the undertaking only a general and superficial knowledge of the area, plus whatever portions of over twenty years of professional experience with Latin America might be useful. For the past three months I have read intensively concerning the area, including a number of unpublished documents, and I have travelled through it for three weeks. As I became better acquainted with the area, my interest was increasingly drawn to the multitudinous social and political instabilities existing there, and to the nearly equally numerous misconceptions and questionable assumptions concerning it appearing in the popular image, and unfortunately, showing up occasionally in the writings concerning it. This study has therefore been perforce expanded. The emphasis is still on the search for stability, but it also includes observations on several factors which in



my opinion should be borne in mind by anyone considering the course of future developments there. While I am indebted to a large number of persons with much more specialized knowledge, the observations and conclusions are my own.



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SUMMARY

This study was undertaken as an assignment for the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy of the Foreign Service Institute. It covers three countries of mainland Southeast Asia, Thailand, the Union of Burma, and the Federation of Malaya, with comments on Singapore. They have a number of similarities and problems in common, as well as pronounced differences in problems and in the solutions they have undertaken. Originally planned as an examination of factors promoting social and political stability, it was expanded into an examination of a wider range of factors and problems including many which cause instability.

A principal factor tending to promote stability in the three countries is the mass of the people, with their traditional social structure and values. They are basically content, and have few unsatisfied demands. Another stabilizing factor is the religions of the countries, which foster feelings of moderation and tranquility. Another is the dominant position of the traditional elite, which are themselves largely homogenous and sharing similar values. The desire to preserve national independence and integrity encourages regionalism, now nascent at best, as well as stability.

The ethnic minorities in Burma and the Federation of Malaya are a principal factor of instability. Others are the rapidly growing urban

societies, with their disproportionate influence on the governments. The potential dissatisfactions which may arise as the societies change may cause future difficulties. Population growth will not constitute a problem in Burma and Thailand for some time, but it is an imminent source of trouble in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore. The existing economies should become more diversified if possible, but are at present fairly stable.

The attitudes of the three countries studied are neither pro-Communist nor anti-Western. There are elements of anti-Colonialism in Burma and the Federation of Malaya. But the basic values of the societies, and the orientation of the ruling elites, are close to the Western values and views. The desire for an independent existence, coupled with a feeling that the power and prestige of the Western powers have diminished, encourages neutralism, which seems fundamentally pro-Western. The "East-West struggle" causes instability and uncertainty in the area, which is fearful of being drawn into the conflict. The thought that Chinese hegemony over the area is probably inevitable is held by some observers, but the local peoples do not consider it so and will endeavor to avoid it.

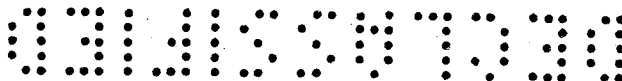
In American attitudes and policies toward the area, we should bear in mind the basically pro-Western values of the societies, the reduced prestige of the Western powers since World War II, the forces urging the area toward regionalism and neutrality, the instabilities in the national economies, the special situations created by Western colonialism, and the present level of political development, in which the bulk of the people are at present content with a situation in which they have not, and do not participate significantly in government. We cannot, and should not disengage from the area.



INTRODUCTION

Although the area generally understood by the term Southeast Asia forms neither a political nor a cultural entity, it contains a group of countries whose social structures have much in common, and whose past history and present politics show many similarities. Geographically, the region is fairly well defined, though again it does not form a natural unit. It really comprises two broad geographical groupings: Mainland Southeast Asia, or the Indo-Chinese peninsula, containing the countries of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and Malaya; and island Southeast Asia or the Malaysian archipelago, stretching from Sumatra eastward and northeastward to the Philippines. Together they form a great wall with a few narrow gateways between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. They also form a causeway - partly a series of stepping-stones - from Asia to Australia. The northern limits of the region are well defined by the mountain barriers which stand between the Indo-Chinese peninsula and the continental mainland of Asia. This barrier at present roughly corresponds to the frontiers of Burma, Laos and Vietnam with China.

The region has a tropical climate, occasionally modified by altitude, and consequently the mass of its some 200 million inhabitants share broadly similar methods of food production and ways of living. Rice is the basic food, and the peasant family and the village community the mainstays of the social structure.



In a broad sense, Southeast Asia has never been an isolated or self-contained unit. It has always been peculiarly exposed to external influences because of its crossroads situation. Its role in history has meaning and significance only against the background of the history of Asia as a whole. The basic theme of its history is "culture-contact" - the story of the successive waves of cultural and commercial influence which have swept over the area in a dual process of destruction and creation, and of the repeated challenge to the peoples of the area to relearn, to readapt, and to reinterpret. We are now concerned with the efforts of the peoples of the area to free themselves from Western colonial and economic dominance of the past four centuries, and to adjust themselves to the emergence of a unified and aggressive China to their north after a lapse of some 800 years. Simultaneously, those peoples are endeavoring to adapt themselves to modern industrial civilization and to retain with suitable modifications those aspects of Western culture which they consider desirable. Their present situation thus has in it elements of paradox: They are endeavoring to free themselves from Western dominance and influence, while at the same time retaining and adopting the advantages of Western culture and industrialization.

Limitations of time, plus the necessity to reduce the project to manageable size, counselled against any attempt to consider all of the peoples and nations of Southeast Asia. Accordingly, it was decided to examine only the three principal countries of Mainland Southeast Asia -- Thailand, the Union of Burma, and the Federation of Malaya, with Singapore as a supplemental factor associated with Malaya. In the following pages



I will examine some factors of their background in common, some which have particular significance for one or another, and certain views and reactions which those countries have concerning the larger nations of the world which are especially interested in the area. In concluding sections I will comment on some factors which affect the policies and actions of the United States there.

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I. THE FRAMEWORK - THE AREA OF THE STUDY

This study is concerned with an area somewhat more than twice as large as Texas, with a total population in excess of 50 million persons. Thailand has an area of some 200,000 Square miles, about 4/5 the size of Texas, with a population of about 25 million. The Union of Burma has some 22 million people in about 261,000 square miles - about the size of Texas. The Federation of Malaya, about the size of Florida with 50,600 square miles, has about 6.5 million people. Adding Singapore, it is about 8 million. All are agricultural economies, and basically mono-producers - that is, the national economy depends basically on the production and marketing of a single commodity. In Thailand and Burma it is rice; in Malaya rubber. In all, production and population are concentrated in productive lowlands in river valleys and along the seacoast. They all have extensive areas of heavy jungle. The climate is tropical and benign, with pronounced wet and dry seasons.

All have other, though less important, sources of income, principally from the exploitation of mineral resources. Something like 80% to 90% of the people live in rural areas, mostly earning their living from agriculture, and are organized in the traditional social forms. All of the nations have metropolises which dominate the national life, and the differences between rural and urban social structure are striking.



II. SOCIAL VALUES

The history of these countries is one of nearly continuous wars. The Thai, the Burmans and the Malays all first appear as invaders and warriors. But despite long centuries of war, the peoples do not appear to have prized the military virtues. Wars were the affairs of the kings and the noble classes. Rather, the values which are preferred and sought are those of tolerance, moderation, peacefulness and politeness. There is a desire to keep relationships peaceful and on an even keel, to shrug off frustrations and small disagreements, to prevent anger and passion from coming to the surface. This is a formula for minimizing the needless difficulties which, as they see it, arise when personal and social relationships are not kept under control. It is important to them to maintain equanimity and to avoid situations which might cause embarrassment.

A basic trait of all three peoples is individualism - a feeling that a person is responsible only to himself and that his actions are no one else's concern. They are therefore not amenable to sustained regimentation, and they have a poor sense of administrative regularity or punctuality according to our standards. This trait of individuality, with its inclination toward self-gratification, coupled with the tendency to avoid emotionally charged situations and the anxieties of preparing for the future or lamenting the past causes the peoples to live mostly in the present



and to enjoy above all the passing moment. This characteristic has been particularly noted in the Thai, who rate highly the ability to have a good time. This includes such things as gossiping, attending religious festivals and village fairs, or simply relaxing. Observers are united in describing the Thai as easygoing, hospitable, carefree, and with a notable sense of humor.

But such a system, in which the individual travels a relatively uncharted course and must find his own way, produces considerable psychological strains. These show up among the Malays in the amok, when an hitherto peaceful individual suddenly embarks on a course of indiscriminate killing, and among the Thai and Burmese in signs of insecurity and anxieties which are shown frequently in distrust of strangers and even neighbors.

The primary social values of the Chinese are substantially different. Their basic orientation is toward the family, with the traditional Chinese ideals of filial respect, memorialization of ancestors, respect for age, and the drive to acquire wealth all present. This divergence of values leads to difficulties in the national societies of all three countries, but most particularly in Malaya, where the Chinese number nearly half the population.

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III. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The basic society of the area has been agricultural from earliest history. This has led to the formation of settled villages, with an unchanging pattern of relationships. The villages are permanent in the lowlands, and move only occasionally in the uplands. This picture changes, of course as one gets into the true jungle and the more extreme forms of slash and burn agriculture, but even here the village nucleus remains unchanging for generations and the entire village moves as a unit.

The basic social unit in all countries studied is the family - husband and wife with unmarried children. Children are raised in a highly permissive atmosphere. There is little punishment, and training is by example. In the rural society the largest economic and social unit is the village, or perhaps a group of hamlets, in which the families tend to live in close proximity and to be inter-related. In some cases the members of the village community exchange labor. It is customary in all three countries for the village and the area it controls to be identified with one or more, but usually one, religious centers, and to be responsible for the welfare of the monks and the physical buildings.

Villages are controlled by a head-man, sometimes designated as such by the community, frequently not. He tends to be the leading citizen of the community, and often has the position forced on him. The trait of avoidance of public disagreement, of a desire for peaceful relationships,

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mentioned in the preceding section, causes the people to shun elections as Westerners know them. In discussion with a Thai educator who had studied in the West and become interested in comparative politics, I pursued the question of the manner of choosing the village head-man with a view to developing information on basic democratic practices. His description tallied closely with that of careful observers who have written on the subject. There is no real similarity with our New England town meeting. In fact, there may be no meeting at all. The elder members of the community simply discuss the matter. There is no comparison of the merits of various individuals, and candidates are not proposed. Rather, having had a pleasant conversation, someone in the group mentions that so-and-so is a delightful person and worthy of all respect. Frequently he is the same man who has led the conversation. In most cases he is not designated as the head-man. The foreigner who enters a community and inquires for the head-man is therefore often greeted with the statement that there is none. However, inquiry of someone obviously not an important figure as to the leading local personage will lead to the man who is in fact head-man. If one asks the head-man himself by inadvertance the answer will be vague and confusing. The local leader exists by general consensus, and everyone knows who he is and respects him. But the traits of individualism and of the placid existence militate against too great a public recognition of that fact.

Village life is essentially egalitarian. Merit and position are obtained by religious acts and by individual effort. Wealth does not

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equate with position, but wealth used for religious acts may. Thus, a wealthy man who builds or contributes to religious edifices is considered meritorious, but one who does not is not respected. The rural societies are best described as "open." The opportunity to rise, to improve one's position, is there, but because of the nature of the society there is little mobility.

Overlaid on this basic society there was formerly an hierarchical structure of nobility and governmental officials above, and slaves below. Slaves were frequently prisoners of war. Slavery has disappeared; the noble and ruling classes remain. In all countries the nobility culminated in the person of the king. This personage was divine or semi-divine, protected and was protected by the national religion, and was considered the personification of authority. His rule was absolute. He could and did demand from his subjects forced labor and military service. His representatives collected taxes and tribute, but were not regarded as heads of the local government - that concept stopped at the level of the head-man. What we might call the socioeconomic infrastructure was the concern of the king. Thus, systems of transport other than the purely local, national affairs, relations with other kingdoms, and the like were and are regarded as matters for royalty to handle, and of no concern to the individual citizen.

The villager as a private citizen insists on a final measure of independence. He is docile and courteous toward authority, but inwardly may be strongly critical. There is a limit beyond which he will not accept regimentation, but his resistance does not take the form of active opposition. Rather, he ignores the law, or order, or authority he finds excessive, and

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turns to a substitute authority which he chooses to follow. The experience of General Ne Win in Burma is, in my opinion, exemplary of this trait. The military had imposed needed reforms and efficiency, and the military government had unquestionably benefitted the nation. However, the individual Burmese disliked the regimentation and ordering around to which he was subject, and returned as promptly as possible to the relaxed inefficiencies of civilian government.

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IV. GOVERNMENT

I do not propose to describe the individual governments in any detail, but to mention certain factors which in my opinion affect the possibilities of political stability.

The traditional form of government was absolute monarchy, with the potentate ruling by divine right. The government was staffed by members of the nobility. This was not a completely closed class, and entry could be obtained by individual ability and by royal order. Sometimes exit from the nobility was also possible. In Thailand, for example, nobility is hereditary only for a few generations in some cases. This system was shattered in Burma by the colonial experience, and the Burmese found themselves in the peculiar situation of being governed largely by British and Indian civil servants. The present Burmese government is a federated republic, with the President a figure-head and the national leader the Prime Minister. It is important to bear in mind that the Federation of Malaya is a British creation, and that it is composed of nine sultanates plus two former Crown Colonies. The sultans had been accustomed to absolute rule, which they found tempered but not destroyed during the British colonial period. The present government of Malaya is best described as a federation of constitutional monarchs. The popular conception is that the sultans are colorful symbols of national unity and "defenders of the faith",

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with political power residing in the Prime Minister of the Federation. Clearly, some of the sultans do not have so limited a view of their position. This is particularly true of the states such as Kelantan and Trengganu, where the Malay and Moslem majorities are large and the economy backward. Several of the sultans can be expected to take an extremely dim view of leftist trends and governments in the cities of Malaya and in Singapore, and may well find strong support among their Malay subjects.

In Thailand absolute monarchy existed until a palace coup in 1932. Since then the form of government has been, at least in theory, a constitutional monarchy. In fact, government has been by oligarchy, with increasing emphasis on the military. In Thailand pride in the nation and an independent national existence is exceptionally strong, and the king is a vital symbol and personification of that emotion. His position vis-a-vis the oligarchy may alter, depending on personalities and characters, but the continued existence of the institution seems essential at present.

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V. THE DOMINANT CLASSES

The people still ruling all three countries are in general drawn from a select minority. They are from the former nobility and upper classes, mostly with Western training and a basically Western orientation. Their culture pattern is that inherited from their traditional society, overlaid with Westernization which runs the range from the thinnest patina to a sincere conviction of the supremacy of Western values. It is exceptionally difficult to determine their true feelings, for in addition to the national characteristics of individual reserve and placidity in personal relations, they have nearly all acquired the veneer of the cultured and unimpassioned Western university graduate. It is little short of startling to listen to them discuss their countries and problems in tones which seem more appropriate for after-dinner conversation in a Faculty Club about an esoteric event in Mesopotamia. Only with time and attention does one comprehend that one's partner considers himself "on stage" and is engaged in a performance polished by many repetitions.

This governing elite, in Southeast Asia as elsewhere, presumably has a fundamental motivation to maintain itself in power. They seem well intentioned, and in general sincere in their determination to improve and strengthen the position of their people and nation. There is an underlying assumption, however, that only they and the members of their class are properly qualified to do so.



In all of the countries, one has the impression that the bulk of the politicians and military are members of a somewhat exclusive club. Whether of government or opposition, they hold common basic values, they grew up in the same social group, their educational experiences are similar, and they have probably known each other for a number of years. In Burma and Malaya, the present generation has the further common ties of anti-colonial struggles.

A disturbing aspect of the foregoing is that the present governing groups may not be in close contact with their own people. They may lose sight of, or interpret improperly, the fundamental motivations of the people. This situation existed in the past, of course. So long as the general populace is reasonably content with the existing situation and tolerates the existing government, the degree to which the governing class accurately reflects the general desires is not vital. However, when the governing class demands change and works for change in the existing government, in the name of the general public, the degree to which those demands are indeed reflections of the public desire becomes of fundamental importance. In Southeast Asia at present the governing class, which as I have pointed out is the same as the traditional ruling class, is the most vocal advocate of change. Indeed, it may well be very nearly the only advocate of change. It is sometimes alleged that "the people want" the change. This is at best questionable. At other times it is alleged that the proposed change "is in the people's interest". This seems to be the basic justification offered in Burma for imposing a

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socialistic system. The most cursory investigation discloses that "the people" have no conception of a socialist system and have never expressed themselves as to their desires about it. In Burma at least the general desire among the public seems to be for the government to leave them alone to engage in their traditional pursuits without undue interference and without incessant warfare. If the government wants to implant a socialist system, or a Platonian republic, that's all right - just so long as "those people in Rangoon" stick to their governing and don't stir things up too much.

The governing classes may be right in their contentions. All one can say with certainty is that there is no apparent consultation with the general public, either formal or informal, worthy of the name. Further, the governing classes appear to be advocating changes in government which will first jeopardise and then destroy their own position if carried to their logical conclusion. One assumes that a fundamental desire of the governors is to continue to enjoy their present position. If that is correct, then they have concluded that they can successfully accomplish the hitherto impossible task of riding the tiger they propose to unleash, or their protestations concerning changes are insincere to some degree. The logic of such a stand is about on a parallel with that of the lady who felt she was only a little pregnant.

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VI. RELIGION

In all three countries examined, religion plays a highly important part in the life of the people, and is a definite and strong factor for continuing stability. In Thailand and Burma the dominant religion is Buddhism; in Malaya it is Mohammedanism. But the effect of each on the people seems basically similar. Buddhism is the great cultural influence which India has left on Southeast Asia. However, in neither Thailand or Burma does there appear to be any feeling that India is the "mother country" of the religion. On the contrary, and particularly in Burma, there is a strong feeling that the Buddhism practiced by themselves is the "true religion", with a strong connotation that other peoples, including the Indians, have backslid. In passing, one wonders why Confucianism has had so slight an impact on the Southeast Asian societies, especially since many of the Confucian precepts seem well adapted to the Southeast Asian desire for order, harmony and tranquility in personal relations. One explanation I have read is that it is impossible to be a Buddhist without being an Indian, but that only a Chinese could be a Confucian.

It is interesting to observe that educated Thai and Burmese, when discussing Buddhism, consistently insist that it is not a religion but rather a way of life. They are perhaps arguing that the original tenets

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of Buddha said nothing about the existence of supernatural beings, and very little about the nature of the universe, nirvana - "the unknowable state of contentment and fulfillment, achieved only after the suppression and extinction of all desire" - or transmigration. Rather, the teachings of Gotama Buddha were precepts for living a proper life. But in both Thailand and Burma, as in many other countries, original Buddhism has been overlaid with the addition of a number of gods, plus a residue of the original animism of the indigenous culture. One has only to listen to representatives of the mass of the people, and to observe their behavior in the Buddhist temples and monasteries, to conclude correctly that they consider Buddhism a religion, and that they worship many deities in that religion, including Gotama Buddha. The religion of Thailand and Burma is Theravada (Doctrine of the Elders) Buddhism, which derived largely from the ancient Buddhist centers of Ceylon. This cannot be easily described. Its spirit of tolerance has permitted the absorption of many beliefs and practices from other sources. Buddha said that life is pain and sorrow, which the wise man must escape. Deliverance from the chain of existence is attained by suppressing every act that entails a consequence, for this suppression will enable the individual to break the chain and achieve a perfect state of rest; of nothingness - nirvana. This original system did not attempt to explain all phases of man's relationship with the supernatural world.

Apparently, Buddhism was introduced into Southeast Asia beginning around the third century B.C., by a combination of Indian traders and wandering monks and wise men. In India at this time and for the next



several centuries Buddhism was undergoing a modification. The new doctrine became known by its practitioners as Mahayana (the Greater Vehicle), and they referred to the older Theravada doctrine as Hinayana (the Lesser Wheel). Instead of upholding individual salvation through individual effort, the new form held that the moral ideal was the happiness of all living creatures. It also held that living beings in the mass could be aided in their search for nirvana by the actions of a single man through the transference of merit, and that the good man who strove for merit to benefit others could expect to become a Buddha in some later life. Gotama Buddha and the more advanced of the seekers after knowledge and merit (bodhisattva) were supernatural beings and practically deities. Gotama and countless other Buddhas who preceded and succeeded him were the rulers of paradises in other worlds.

The Mahayanist doctrine seems to have swept over all of Southeast Asia in the first several centuries A.D. However, about the twelfth century Burma sent to Ceylon for Buddhist instructors in Theravada, and there was a Theravadic revival there and in Thailand which has held to this day. This accounts for the Burmese contention that they are the defenders and chief practitioners of the true Buddhist teachings. Similar views are held in Thailand, though there seems to be no feeling of rivalry between the two countries in this respect.

In both Thailand and Burma there is a complete functioning religious system in which the Buddhist doctrine is embedded in an amorphous mass of customs, attitudes, traditions and daily actions. Religion is the

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keystone of the native cultures. The government was, and is, the defender of the faith, though in both countries there is freedom of worship. Astrological beliefs have long dictated some concepts and forms of governmental structure and rituals, and affect the timing of human activities. The concepts of supernatural power and of the deities continue to affect human relations, agricultural and other rituals, and the arts. The Buddhist code determines the ethical and moral system, influences the belief in an afterlife, forms the justification for the priesthood, and is the greatest influence on literature and architecture.

The Buddhist temple or monastery (wat in Thailand, pagoda in Burma) dominates the typical rural village and is prominent in the largest cities. Next to the family, the greatest loyalty of the Thai or Burmese is to the local Buddhist center and to the Buddhist monks - not individually but in the whole. Every boy is expected to serve as a temple boy and later as a novice. Men can and do become novices and monks for a time, entering and leaving at will. The most preferred time is the Buddhist lent, in the rainy season between planting and harvesting, since one is understood to obtain more merit for service during that period. Monks are greatly respected, and in general maintain a high standard of conduct within the framework of the very strict rules governing their moral and material life. While they cannot serve as men do, or become nuns, women seem equally if not more dedicated than the men.

The attainment of merit within Buddhist precepts is a basic objective of the people. This can be done in various ways - by living according to



the precepts, by supporting the local temple, and by supporting the community of monks being the principal ones. The social goal of the rural population, and to a considerable extent of the urban population, is the acquisition of merit and preparation for one's future existence. If at all possible, one builds or contributes to the building or ornamentation of a temple. All families contribute to the feeding of monks, who daily make the rounds of the village and city to receive their food. This is in no way considered begging, nor is the supplying of food considered charity. The financial investment is unquestionably great. It has been estimated that the cash outlays including food costs for merit-making range from 7% to 84% of the total cash expenditures of a single family, and that the average is around 25%. These expenditures, as much as anything else, account for the economic leveling of the rural population and help to maintain the classlessness characteristic of the rural society.

A recent development in Thailand has been the appearance of what might be called neo-Buddhism, as a result of the Western philosophical and scientific thought. It is characterized by abandonment of much of the traditional faith's superstructure and a turning back to the basic teachings of Gotama Buddha. It is found principally among the elite and the intelligentsia - those groups who have been most exposed to the West. What is stressed is Buddha's actions and examples rather than his teachings, with emphasis on his sympathetic and cooperative nature, his love and respect for people. Even desire is meritorious, if directed

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toward social ends. The moral code is stressed, with rewards said to take place in the present life. There is a vivid emphasis on reward or punishment in heaven or hell. Some sources indicate that this revival or alteration is widespread among the population, but there seems no accurate means of checking it. Clearly, the traditional practices and observances are continuing, and appear to provide religious satisfaction.

It will be noted that Neo-Buddhism is approaching Christian concepts. I was interested when in Thailand to hear some Western-educated men, when maintaining that Buddhism was a way of life and not a religion, add that consequently one could be both a Buddhist and a Christian at the same time. They held, however, that the strains placed on the personality by some Christian concepts were too great for the average Thai, and that Christianity consequently would not gain many converts in their country.

In Burma there has been no such Neo-Buddhist movement. The government and the elite have stressed a revivalist movement. The Prime Minister, U Nu, has served short periods in a monastery, and plans to do so for an extended period in the coming lenten season. His actions are greeted with nearly universal approbation. The fact that they leave the government headless and drifting is disregarded. The most noteworthy example of governmental efforts at revivalism and the staging of religious spectacles was the Sixth (Great) Buddhist Council, attended by representatives from many other nations, in session on the outskirts of Rangoon from May 1954 to May 1956, in quarters built by the government for that purpose.

In both Thailand and Burma, primary education is still provided largely by the monks in the local temples, and accounts for the high level

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of literacy among the populations. The situation is changing, but the intention seems to be not to replace the temple schooling, but to integrate it into a general public schooling system.

An accretion to Buddhism in both Burma and Thailand which comes from the earlier animism is belief in household, nature and personal spirits, many of which are malevolent. In Thailand they are phi, in Burma nats. The people feel that they must be propitiated, and such actions are sometimes called "nat worship". Belief in nats, and legendary accounts of them, are interwoven into Burmese Buddhist teachings, and special ceremonies and rituals for their worship and propitiation are practised. All of this is of course quite contrary to strict Buddhist teachings, but that fact causes no concern to the average Burmese. The Prime Minister, U Nu, in addition to his retreats as a Buddhist monk mentioned above, has recently publicly participated in a ceremony to propitiate malevolent nats. He seems somewhat broad-minded in religious matters, and is said to have referred to "Our Mother Mary" in conversation with Roman Catholic prelates.

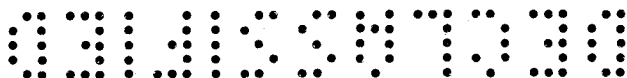
The Malays of Malaya are Moslems, and Islam is the state religion. They follow the Sunnite sect of the school of al-Shafi'i, though the basic beliefs of Islam have been modified by time, distance, and the influence of Hinduism and animism. The sultans are "defenders of the faith" and the highest religious officials. They appoint the state kadi, or administrator of Moslem law, who in turn appoints local kadis. Each village of any size has its mosque and kadi. These men administer both

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the Moslem law and the Malay customary law, the adat, frequently intermingling the two. The imam, the presiding elder of the mosque, is generally chosen locally.

The mosque is the social and religious center for the community it serves, and leads to a considerable sense of local unity and cohesiveness. The mosque community also adheres to a common system of adat law, which may differ slightly from that followed in neighboring communities. Associated with the mosques is the Moslem school. These schools are found even in communities too small to have a mosque. This is a group of teachers and what we would call divinity students. Most students do not graduate, dropping out after a few years. Below the level of the mosque and the Moslem school are the village halls of prayer, where the villagers pray and receive elementary instruction in the Koran. The teachers are people who have attended the Moslem schools for a time. They are primarily responsible for the strength of Islam in Malaya. They are in intimate contact with the people, and give the basic instruction in Islam which is an essential part of every child's education.

The blend of Islam with Hindu and animistic elements which is characteristic of the religion of the Islamic Malays continues to have a strong hold on the mass of rural and urban Malays. The educated classes have been influenced by Western thought and secularism, and the Islamic theory of the brotherhood of all believers has been reinforced by the spread of democratic ideas. Thus, a Malay ruler today, far from claiming possession of divine attributes, is apt to describe himself as a servant of Allah and of his people.



VII. THE URBAN SOCIETY

Under the heading "Social Structure" I discussed the traditional society of the three countries under examination. This society continues to exist unchanged in the rural areas, where upwards of 80% of the people live. But all three of the nations have metropoleis - Bangkok, Rangoon, Singapore and the rapidly growing boom city of Kuala Lumpur - which are the nerve centers of the nations and the seats of virtually all authority. In them there is developing a typically urban type of society, whose basic characteristics are familiar to students of Western industrial development. There, the traditional social values have altered. The dominant class is still the traditional and the educated elite. Indeed, the elite tends to be concentrated in the metropoleis. But the values of the mass of the population of those cities have shifted, and are continuing to shift at a rapid rate. The old and simple loyalties to the family, the village community and the local religious center are weakening. The family no longer offers the safe haven; the essential classlessness of the village is replaced by the fluctuating values and class structures of the neighborhood; the religious center loses its drawing power in the face of the attractions of the movies, the clubs, the myriad additional sources of entertainment and interest. In short, the city stimulates restlessness and dissatisfaction; replaces classlessness and contentment with a materialistic

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class structure based principally on wealth and possessions; appeals to the frivolous and momentary as against the more permanent values of the village; and substitutes for the permanence of traditional life a feeling of rootlessness and impermanence.

At the same time, the city awakens its inhabitants to the world around them, broadens their interests, and offers many more opportunities for learning and acquiring knowledge. The centers of higher learning and of government are located there. The students and graduates in their majority appear to share that aversion to physical labor characteristic of the educated in so many under-developed nations, and consider governmental employment the most desirable goal. Already there are indications of "unemployment of the educated" - many of them cannot obtain the kinds of employment to which they consider themselves entitled. Student radicalism has appeared in Bangkok and Singapore to an extent that it worries the authorities. Instability and leftist views characterise the cities, and there are no indications that the trend will be reversed. This is already of concern to the Governments of Thailand and of Malaya, and the leftist control of the Singapore Government is nearly as great a factor in the reluctance of the Malayan government to form a political union with Singapore as is the Chinese dominance of that city.

The outside observer will do well to bear in mind the fact that the societies he sees in the capitals of the nations of Southeast Asia - restless, leftist, unstable, discontent - are not typical of the societies of the nations. The rural societies are much more stable. In some areas they



are considered virtually reactionary. If their views prevail, change will be slow, orderly, evolutionary. Offsetting this is the tendency of governments to heed first those of their constituents who are nearest, most restless and most vocal.

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VIII. COMMUNICATIONS AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Influence on the governments in the three countries studied can be separated into three levels - that of the political elite, the level of what has been called the "newspaper reading public", and the mass level. This situation is closely associated with the foregoing discussion of the urban societies. The elite tends to be concentrated in the metropolises. International transportation and communications are rapid and efficient. One can be whisked from capital to capital in at most a few hours, and news of developments throughout the world is received in minutes. But internal transportation and communications are difficult and slow, and conditions in the interior primitive by the standards to which the cosmopolitan elite have become accustomed - or desire to become accustomed. They become disconnected from the rural society - their "consultation coefficient" is low.

On the other hand, the urban society constitutes the very sea on which the fragile cockle-shell of the elite unsteadily bobs, and by which it is in constant danger of being engulfed. These two groups endeavor to influence and direct one another by newspapers, meetings, speeches and governmental maneuvers. There is a tendency, on the part of both native and foreign observers, to seriously exaggerate the distribution and effectiveness of such activities, particularly newspapers, as reflectors



and molders of public opinion. For example, with a population of some 25 million, Thailand has around 35 daily newspapers, all published in Bangkok with the exception of two in the northern city of Chiengmai, with a total circulation estimated at slightly more than 120,000. Burma has some 22 million people, and about 30 dailies with a total circulation in the neighborhood of 100,000. It is estimated in both countries that the significant circulation and influence of newspapers stops at a radius of approximately 15 miles from the metropolis and two or three other principal cities or towns. Those few copies which do reach the larger villages are generally a week or more late, and appear to be principally status symbols of the local leaders.

In Malaya - Singapore the situation is comparatively considerably better. In a total population of around 8 million, some 22 dailies have a circulation upwards of 600,000. Partly this reflects the size of Singapore, partly the better transportation system, partly the higher educational and interest level of the people. An indication of the communal problem and the language diversity in Malaya is the fact that the leading paper is the English-language Straits Times.

The most logical public information media with which to reach the rural masses of the people would appear to be the radio. All the governments are interested in this, and radio broadcasting is government-sponsored and controlled in all three countries. Surveys by both USIA and the UN indicate that in Thailand there are upwards of a million sets, in Malaya about 300,000, and in Burma only some 110,000. These are listened to by an estimated five persons per set except in Burma, where

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the estimate is nine. Lack of power in many rural areas, the humid climate, and expense all appear to have combined to limit radio use in the past. In Burma, I understand, the situation is further complicated by difficulties in medium-wave reception for technical causes. In both Bangkok and Singapore I was told that there is heavy demand for the new transistorized radios, with their longer lasting batteries and relative immunity to the climate. It seems possible that radio may become the most important mass information media in the area, and result in a better informed (and hence probably more vocal and influential) rural society. But for the near future at any rate the situation can be expected to remain basically the same - the political elite governing the nation, with the "newspaper reading public" - the urban society - exercising an influence on the elite and on public affairs heavily disproportionate to its size in terms of the total population. This disassociation of the rural masses from influence and participation in governmental actions is nothing new in Southeast Asia. What is relatively new is the emergence and influence of the urban societies.

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IX. ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

I have noted some expressions of concern about the lack of reliability of the information and alleged facts concerning Southeast Asia. On the basis of my own recent and limited knowledge, I am inclined to share that concern, and to have pronounced reservations concerning some of the available information. For example, I have read sweeping and detailed statements concerning the social values and motivations of the rural societies of the area, which in their dogmatic approaches and conclusions go far beyond anything that has ever been said about the exhaustively studied societies of the West, where available information and means of communication are incomparably greater. As another example, I have read it stated as fact that the Burmese Kingdom invaded Siam and beseiged Ayuthia, the then capital, in 1760 with an army of 200,000 men, and upon defeat returned with a three-pronged invasion culminating in seige and conquest of the capital in 1767 with an army of over 250,000 men. Those of my readers with knowledge of the terrain between Burma and Thailand and of the condition of overland transport in the area, will share my caution in accepting these figures. The experiences of the military commanders in the area during World War II would also indicate a certain reserve in accepting them.

I have also been struck by the facility and precision with which some writers delineate the early history of the area, with kingdoms waxing



and waning, populations transported into bondage, and armies marching and counter-marching, all within the framework of a precise calendar. Elsewhere, one learns that there are no written records of the history of Thailand prior to the fall of Ayuthia except for occasional references in "the Chinese chronicles", that all but the most recent history of Burma is virtually unknown, that the local calendars are marvels of complexity and uncertainty, and that dates tend to be fixed with relationship to rulers and kingdoms which are at least partly mythological. Two quotations are perhaps apposite. In describing the pre-colonial history of Indonesia, Feith says that in much of the area dry rice agriculture was practiced, based on systems of shifting cultivation. This was true until recent centuries in Thailand and Burma as well. He adds "in these areas clan organization played a central role, and few large political units existed. Furthermore most kingdoms and empires attained little stability of governmental power. An empire would arise as one of a large number of petty local rulers established wider powers, exacting tribute and a certain degree of obedience from other local rulers by dint of repeated punitive expeditions against them. It would fail as he failed, either militarily or in terms of retaining the local rulers' loyalties. Political power over more distant territories was....confined to periodical embassies carrying gifts from the vassal to the suzerain". And Mills, writing in 1949, felt compelled to open his preface with the sentence "Southeast Asia has been the preserve of a few specialists who write articles and books for one another". It seems possible that those specialists have sometimes

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been prone to assume without question the accuracy of the statements and observations of the other members of their fraternity.

In my own experience, I found Western technicians in one Southeast Asian country inclined, after long and careful examination, to doubt the accuracy of certain of the basic statistics they had been furnished as established fact prior to commencing their examination. A member of the educated elite in Thailand said that he had enough difficulty in understanding his colleagues, and that the attempt to communicate with the Thai agriculturalist was nearly impossible. And a learned Burman of philosophical bent sighed "I wish we knew what the people really want."

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X. COMMUNALISM

Perhaps the most acute problem confronting all three countries studied is that of Communalism, or Pluralism as it is sometimes called. In each of them there are large ethnic or racial minorities. Their integration into the national life is an exceptionally difficult and pressing problem in both Burma and Malaya. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many of these people are Chinese, and hence the problem has ramifications which extend beyond the national boundaries. The picture varies from country to country, and hence they will be discussed individually.

1. Thailand

The communal problem is least difficult in this country. Thailand preserved its independence during the period of greatest colonial pressure by a process of playing off the two great colonial powers, France and Britain, against each other, and by judicious surrender of outlying territory when inevitable. The British were on the Thai borders in the north and on the Malay peninsula. The French were pressing westward from Annam into Laos and Cambodia. At the beginning of this period, in the last quarter of the 19th Century, Thailand claimed suzerainty over its present territory as well as four Malay states, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and

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Trengganu; considerable Lao area including Luang Prabang and Vientiane; and several Cambodian provinces. By 1909 these had been yielded to Britain or France. These areas were those in which the population as a whole was mostly non-Thai, and one wholesome effect of the sacrifices of territory was the resultant general homogeneity of the indigenous population. With the exception of the relatively few Malay Muslims isolated in provinces on the southern border and an even smaller number of primitive hill peoples, the native population of the country is Thai speaking and culturally unified. There are, however, a large number of immigrants, almost entirely of Chinese origin. There is strong national feeling on both sides which, coupled with the economic position of the Chinese, causes a substantial and continuing problem.

The problem of the Chinese minority is a matter of the size and distinctness of the group within the whole society. Estimates of the size of the ethnic Chinese community vary widely. I prefer the larger figures, which runs around 3,500,000. Authorities are agreed that the number born in China is considerably less than a million, and is rapidly diminishing. For the past several decades Thai governments have followed a highly restrictive policy concerning Chinese immigration, and there are no signs of change. Ethnic Chinese born in Thailand are generally able to speak Thai as well as Chinese, and tend to be physically indistinct from the Thai. Although the Chinese Community has a number of strong organizations and is highly conscious of its identity, it is not rigidly separated from the Thai community. The Chinese are integrated in the economic groups, and work closely with the Thai in a variety of occupations. The problem is

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therefore largely social and political - will the Chinese assimilate, and be politically motivated by domestic interests, or will they remain culturally distinct and act as an integrated and separate political group?

The problem does not appear to be critical. The Thai Government is encouraging assimilation, restricting immigration to an absolute minimum, and doing its best to forestall either official or unofficial influence from either of the two Chinese regimes. A factor which facilitates assimilation is that there is no recognized intermediate status between being Chinese or Thai. A Chinese who speaks Thai, has a Thai name, and assumes Thai behavior characteristics is a Thai. Most second generation Chinese can and do do this.

2. Burma

The problem of the ethnic minorities in Burma is acute. It is one of the major problems confronting the national government - the other being that of building a stable national economy in an area seriously damaged by war and insurrection, with a people and administrators frequently lacking in efficiency and drive.

The population of Burma is not precisely known. Projections from censuses give it as from 19 to 20 million. Knowledgeable foreigners estimate that it is more probably around 22 million. If this figure is accepted, then there are some 16 million Burmans, and 6 million others, including principally Karens (the largest group, from 2.5 to 3 million), Shans (Thai people), Kachins, Chins, Mons, Arakans, Indians and Chinese. These people distrust the Burman majority in varying degree. By their

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lights, they have good reason to do so. The pre-colonial history of the area can be generalized as one of constant attempts by the Burmans, periodically successful, to consolidate their hold on the area by conquest. This was not a gentle operation - early foreign observers repeatedly commented on the unparalleled ferocity and cruelty of the Burmese soldiery toward their enemies. In addition, the Western doctrine of self-determination of peoples has a strong appeal to the minorities.

The Burmans fully appreciate the feelings of the minorities, and have made sincere efforts to overcome them. The constitution provides for a "Union of Burma", and has various provisions intended to insure respect for minority rights and views. The six states forming the Union correspond roughly to the ethnic groups, and in theory have the right to secede unless expressly forbidden. Thus far, both the Karen and Kachin states have been expressly denied the right. The Burmans seek to develop a viable national entity on the basis of diversity in unity, but in their drive to promote things Burman as part of the reaction against colonialism the minorities see disturbing evidence that the ultimate objective is the implantation of Burman culture and dominance throughout the nation.

Effective central government had not existed in Burma since World War II, and with the establishment of the Union of Burma in 1948 various local groups entered a state of insurrection against the national government. The principal force of irregulars, as the insurrectees are called, has always been Karens, though groups of other minorities are also active. A separate group of Communists has also existed. This insurrection has

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been uninterrupted, and it is estimated that there are now some 8,000 guerrillas so engaged. Unquestionably, both the national army and the guerrillas are tired of the continued fighting, but there are few indications of any guerrilla intention to abandon the struggle. Their numbers are smaller, but the remaining forces constitute a "hard core", and occasionally members of other groups show signs of rebelling. Some of the forces are dacoits - bands of armed robbers - which further complicates the problem. The government forces must defeat the irregulars. If able to concentrate on that problem they would probably succeed, but inefficiencies and confusion in the central government make the task even more difficult. The situation may improve drastically in the near future. The Burmese Army is training units in anti-guerrilla tactics, and results to date have been highly encouraging. However, an air of fear and insecurity pervades large areas outside of the cities and garrisoned towns. There is an occasional derailment of a train, or ambush of a motorcade, or raid on a village, which affect the nerves of all. The government must maintain large forces in the field, requiring a large military establishment (roughly 80,000 in the army, plus 40,000 in the Union Constabulary), plus the diversion of resources from pressing civilian needs.

3. Malaya

Communalism is the basic problem in Malaya and Singapore. As a result of heavy immigration during the past century because of the need for labor in the rubber plantations and tin mines in Malaya, and for port

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workers and light industry and business in Singapore, the Malayan people are outnumbered in their own country. In the Federation of Malaya, of a total population of 6,850,000, there are about 3,406,000 Malays, 2,520,000 Chinese, 767,000 Indians, and 100,000 others. The society is heterogenous in the extreme. There are Malay farmers and fishermen, taxi drivers and politicians; Chinese shopkeepers, building laborers, factory owners, laborers and university professors; Indian doctors, lawyers, laborers and watchmen; Singhalese and Eurasian clerks; British plantation officials; Australian and American engineers and technicians. The three major ethnic groups contrast sharply in their physical appearances, languages, religions and customs. Not many can speak, or are literate in each other's languages; market Malay and English are the *linguae francae*. Intermarriage and assimilation are unusual and slow, and groups within communities tend to follow traditional economic pursuits.

The Malays are overwhelmingly small agriculturists and fishermen. Perhaps 50 percent are engaged in rice cultivation. Another substantial portion grow rubber as well as part of their food requirements. Their holdings tend to be small. They tend to be improvident, and to borrow too freely. In many cases they have fallen victim to Chinese and Indian moneylenders and shopkeepers, and sometimes to aristocratic Malay landlords. Malays have also shown interest in government clerical employment, teaching, and the police and military forces. Generally, they are poor and those who are "middle class" usually have a raja (aristocratic) background or have acquired wealth through control of land or governmental connections.

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The Chinese are diverse in their origins, mostly having come from the coastal regions of South China, where there are pronounced district and linguistic differences. Though weakened in Malaya, the differences have persisted. Upwards of 60 percent of the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore were born there.

The Chinese have an important position, or an ethnic monopoly, in virtually every phase of the economy and in the technical branches of the government. They are the businessmen and entrepreneurs of the economy. The community is prosperous and well to do - much more so than the Malay. This of course covers extremes from poor laborers to wealthy owners of tin mines and rubber estates.

The majority of the Indians are Tamil-speaking Hindu from South India, though there are considerable numbers of other groups such as the Sikh. Mostly, they work on governmental public works projects, as day laborers, and on European rubber plantations. A few are found in nearly every economic endeavor. There are almost as many in the professions as there are Malays and Chinese combined. These are affluent, but the majority of the laborers are among the poorest people in Malaya.

Singapore has a population of about 1,675,000. Of this, 233,000 are Malay, 141,000 Indian, 40,000 are "other", and the balance, 1,251,000, are Chinese. It is for all practical purposes a Chinese city, and the Chinese dominate all phases of its life.

The Malays are determined to keep a dominant position in their country. Their desire was recognized and assisted by the British, and the present

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governmental structure is designed to assist them. The Malays may harbor feelings of resentment toward the Chinese, but they hope that time will weaken the "Chinese orientation" of the Chinese and lead to their "Malayanisation". The Chinese resent the restrictions imposed on their activities and tend to feel that they could and should dominate the country. Both groups consider that the Indians do not constitute a difficult problem.

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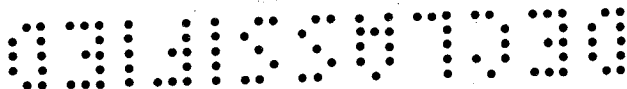
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XI. THE OUTSIDE WORLD - AS VIEWED BY SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. Thailand

From the Nanchao era, when the Thai people were a nation in Yunnan Province in southern China, certain themes have always been present in Thai policies and attitudes toward others. The primary goal has always been political independence, and this has been pursued with a high degree of success. The Thai have enjoyed full sovereignty except for a few brief interludes: About 1253 the Mongols conquered Nanchao, and the Thai began their long move as immigrants and conquerors into Southeast Asia, defeating and occupying the Chiengmai and Subothai nations in the process; in 1568 and again in 1767 Burmese kings sacked Thai capitals and controlled the country for a short time; during the last quarter of the nineteenth century certain tributary areas were lost in the face of French and British colonial expansion; from 1942 to 1945 Japan exercised virtual dominion over Thailand, though technically the Japanese were allies invited into the country.

Though independence and security have always been the dominant goals of policy, the methods used in achieving them have varied widely. Thailand has not quarreled with much stronger states or fought wars for principles; it has made and broken alliances for strictly practical purposes, and has often warred against smaller neighbors to expand Thai power



and enlarge the nation's dominion. Thai diplomats have a reputation as skillful negotiators, and Thai foreign policy has been more inclined to gain its ends by talk and maneuver than by force and bluster. Playing off foreign powers against each other has been a Thai forte, and ability to remain on good terms with stronger powers, while retaining Thai integrity, has been another. Thai kings paid tribute to China for centuries, and did not object to the Chinese view that Thailand was a formal tributary; but the Thai thought of the tribute as gifts freely and generously given and used the tributary missions as profitable commercial ventures. When Europeans entered the kingdom first in the sixteenth century, the Thai adroitly balanced each interest against others until they could get rid of them all. Thai kings skillfully played French and British interests against each other in the nineteenth century. During World War II, Thai rulers outwardly acquiesced to Japanese demands while simultaneously building an underground organization to assist the Western powers and to subvert the Japanese.

With the defeat of Japan, Thailand took prompt steps to strengthen its ties with the West. Premier Pibul, who had led the somewhat pro-Japanese government since 1939, was conveniently dismissed and his Deputy Pridi, who had assisted in the establishment of the clandestine anti-Japanese movement, became the new leader. Seni Pramoj, Ambassador to the United States during the war and leading figure in the Free Thai movement, was named Premier. The United States was inclined to the view that Thailand had always been basically pro-Western, and to forgive and forget. Both

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the British and French had stronger views. But the Thai returned all their lands taken from their possessions during the War (lands which had originally been Thai), and the march of events soon rendered any British and French objections unimportant. The Thai have rather strong feelings against the French but seem to bear little animosity toward the British.

Beginning about 1950, under the leadership of governments which are controlled by the armed forces, Thailand has followed an anticommunist, pro-Western policy. It controls trade with Communist China carefully. It was a charter member of SEATO, and Bangkok is the headquarters of the organization. There has been increasing Thai participation in international organizations, and increasing foreign aid coming into the country - principally from the United States.

Thailand has some interest in promoting Southeast Asian regionalism. They appear to recognize that SEATO cannot form the basis for a regional organization, and are currently displaying interest in alternatives. Thai leaders appear to have abandoned any pretensions to recovery of the formerly dependent territories of Laos and Cambodia, and in the past few years have several times proposed to the governments of those countries that they form a united anti-Communist bloc. The proposal has been received coolly by the neutralist governments of those nations. But Thai spokesmen continue to stress the bonds of fraternity between the three countries.

Burma is the traditional enemy, which conquered Thai capitals and briefly controlled the country twice. Some authorities profess to find

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signs of a warming of the Thai attitude toward that nation. This may exist on the surface, but I found no signs of any fundamental change. The Thai appear to regard the Burmese with a high degree of distrust. In view of the differing experiences of the two nations since World War II, a strong element of scorn has been added. This has old roots, of course - Thailand was able to resist the thrust of the Western colonial powers, while Burma fell.

2. Malaya

The Federation's foreign policy is almost a reflection of the traditional attitudes of the Malayan people - be polite and non-aggressive; steer clear of extremes, avoid too many commitments. It is pro-Western, but avoids identification with the West's policies more than necessary for immediate Malayan purposes, such as the struggle against local Communism during the "Emergency". The Malaysians are pro-Asian, but not anti-Western. Their attitude toward the outside world might be summed up as "anti-Communist neutralism."

The Malays display few signs of anti-colonialism. Most of the present leaders were involved in the struggle to free the country from British control, but that struggle was marked by a great deal of British cooperation. Further, it must be remembered that the traditional local governments, the sultanates, were not destroyed, and that the Federation is a new national entity. The Chinese population has apparently felt all along that the British constituted a protection for their continued

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opportunity for progress as well as a guarantee for stability. They hope that the independent Federation can continue stable, and the responsible Chinese leaders cooperate thoroughly in the efforts to avoid divisionism and racial tension and to develop a peaceful and united Federation.

While the Chinese still consider themselves Chinese rather than Malayan, the lack of travel between the two countries and the fear of what Communism would mean to the local Chinese community economically, appear to be strong influences impelling them toward a sincerely felt view that Malaya is their homeland.

There are some signs of interest in regionalism in Malaya, discussed later. The Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, admires the Thai and encourages close relations - feelings which the Thai reciprocate. Malayan relations with Burma are friendly, but there seems to be no feeling of any special ties.

3. Burma

There are three fundamental factors in back of Burma's attitude toward the outside world: The determination on the part of her present leaders to create Pyidawtha (defined as "The Welfare State", though I understand that the literal translation is more nearly "happy royal land"); the national religion, Buddhism; and the desire to preserve national independence.

Contemporary Burmese national goals are a blend of the ideas of a westernized urban group and of a traditional rural society. The present

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leadership was formed during the period of British colonial control. The avenues for social and economic advancement for Burmese became western education and the adoption of western ways of life. Under the Burmese monarchy, the aristocracy shared the same culture as the mass of the people. When the British and the westernized Burmese replaced that aristocracy, they represented a culture not shared by the masses. Independence has meant that the westernized Burmese have become the leaders of the nation, but the cultural gap remains.

In view of their background, the ideas of the leaders on how to develop Burma are largely Western. Both ideas and institutions of present-day Burma have been borrowed from the West, directly or through the British. The Burmese leaders desire to copy the West particularly in connection with the material aspects of life. They feel that the West was able to subjugate Asia mainly because it was technologically superior (though historically this view is incorrect). The Burmese want to create the visible attributes of western technology by developing at least a partly industrialized nation. Such industrialization would certainly create a more balanced economy, but much of the urge seems based on a desire for the outward trappings of technology rather than on sound economic planning. Along with this desire to "technologize", there is an ambition to duplicate the social welfare programs of western Europe. Here again, this seems based more on the imitative impulse than it does on any realistic assessment of Burmese needs.

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Finally, it is intended that both industrialization and welfare policies should take place within a framework of Marxian doctrine, but with individual rights being preserved. A number of authorities and observers have commented that many of the ideas and programs seem reminiscent of those of the British Labor Party. It seems to me that at this level the motivating forces are not only the imitative impulse coupled with the drive for national independence (The unexpressed desire to imitate the conqueror, thus achieving equivalent strength), but that there is the additional factor of the essentially gentle and charitable nature of the basic teachings of Buddhism, especially Theravada Buddhism (the variant practised in Burma, as explained earlier), including emphasis on the attainment of merit through the doing of good acts.

These ambitions for the new Burma have been incorporated by the leadership into the Pyidawtha Program, which they consider as sacrosanct. The leaders are clearly aware of the cultural gap between themselves and the Burmese masses, and of the Western origins of Pyidawtha. They seem to be attempting to bridge the gap, and to muster support for the program, in three ways: By publicizing the program and its potential universal benefits; by making the individual Burmese identify himself with national objectives (hence, in part, the continuing distrust by the ethnic minorities); and by the leaders identifying themselves with Burmese cultural symbols, especially the protection and promotion of Buddhism (witness the Greater Buddhist Congress of 1954-56, and U Nu's periods of retreat as a Buddhist monk - also his public participation in ceremonies of nat propitiation).

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The attempt to create a Burmese copy of western nationalism is not in harmony with some aspects of traditional Burmese life. The concept of the welfare state is something new to Burmese political and governmental patterns. Further, Burmese society emphasizes the individual and individual status achievement, and there is a lack of emphasis on group activity and group achievement. These attitudes are in accord with the Buddhist doctrine of the individual's responsibility for working out his own fate. The average non-westernized Burmese is not likely to show much enthusiasm for programs designed to improve the lot of all Burmese or to encourage nationalistic feelings of identification with "Mother Burma". He is much more likely to concern himself with the affairs of his own village, and with his own welfare, especially his religious welfare. But the results of the attempts of the leaders to identify themselves with Buddhist symbols, and the promotion of Buddhism, are notable. This may in part be due to the "cult of the leader", but U Nu's public displays of proper religious behavior have received nearly universal approbation.

The Burmese dislike and distrust the Indian minority more than any other group in the country. There appear to be a variety of causes for this. Some are cultural. A principal one is religious. The Burmese practice Theravada Buddhism, and consider Hinduism an alien belief. Also, the Indians are much more materialistic than the average Burman. Another reason is that the other minority groups (with the exception of the handful of Europeans) are in general Mongoloid in appearance, and since the Indians are not they stand out as a distinctly foreign group. There

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are more materialistic reasons, of at least equal importance. The Indians have appeared in Burma as competitors with the Burmese, and as controlling the Burmese economy. Under colonial rule, large numbers of Indians entered Burma, lured by higher wages. They worked for little, were frugal, and sent most of their earnings home. Burma has introduced rigid exchange controls in an attempt to stop that practice. But even today the Indians are the backbone of the laboring force in much of lower Burma. Also, until 1937 the British ruled India and Burma administratively as one country, and preferred the Indians as civil servants. The result was that the Burmese administration was largely staffed by Indians, leaving deep resentment against them as representatives of the colonial power. Perhaps the most important cause of the resentment were the Indian money-lenders. The British pushed the development of the Irrawaddy delta region as a commercial rice-growing area, encouraged Burmese settlement, and offered reclaimed and developed land. The Burmese mostly lacked capital, and were often naturally profligate. The Indians became the source of the required funds, lending money at very high rates. When a depression in rice came in the 1930's, many Burmese lost their land to the money-lenders, and the memory is strong and unpleasant. Since independence, the Burmese government has restricted the activities of the Indian money-lenders, and the associated merchant class, in many ways.

The Chinese population of Burma is estimated as around 300,000, said to be concentrated in the cities, particularly Rangoon, though accurate

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information is lacking. Relations with this group are relatively smooth. They are regarded as "cousins", and considered culturally more acceptable than the Indians. They do not constitute a problem. They apparently do not operate as a separate political entity, and are not aggressively pro-Chinese internationally.

The Burmese have a generalized attitude toward Westerners, based in part on their colonial experience with the British, in part on feelings of distrust of foreigners in general (as noted in their feelings toward Indians), and Westerners in particular. Interestingly, in Burmese eyes Russians are included among the Westerners. There was clearly strong basic resentment against the colonial status under the British, which the Burmese elite were able to utilize in their anti-colonial struggle. However, the average Burmese has had relatively little contact with Westerners, whose numbers in the country have never been very large. The British are not particularly disliked. British imperialism is blamed for most of Burma's ills, both past and present. Britain is charged with having destroyed the Burmese kingdom, and in the next breath with having failed to prepare the Burmese for self-government and having acted selfishly in giving Burma its freedom before the country was ready. There are a number of illusions involved in such thinking. But while inveighing internally and internationally against colonialism, the Burmese elite respect and even admire British institutions. They visit Britain when they can, and Pyidawtha is in many ways modeled on British examples.

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To the average Burmese, Americans are little different from other westerners, particularly the British, and they tend to view Americans with a degree of distrust and suspicion. Our public protestations of interest in their welfare and concern for their independence serve, if anything, only to heighten that feeling. In my own view, the Burmese elite have strong feelings about Americans and our motivations which are not flattering and constitute a definite handicap in our relations. They may, and frequently do, like individual Americans. However, they are convinced that the United States has long supported the Kuomintang Chinese forces in northeast Burma against the interests and requests of the Burmese government, that we attempt to use international organizations to create an anti-Communist bloc rather than to avoid and diminish tensions, and that we dislike Pyidawtha and will try when possible to alter it. For good measure, it is sometimes added that the United States supports the Karen and Shan irregulars. Thailand, of course, gets involved in this general picture. The Thai government is also accused of helping the irregulars, and of helping or at least conniving with the Kuomintang forces. No amount of protestations on our part appear able to alter the Burmese view. The presence of the Kuomintang forces has been used as an excuse for failure in various fields, and has been a constant irritant to the Burmese, particularly in their relations with China. The Government deliberately fosters the idea that the United States is responsible for the situation. This led to serious anti-American riots earlier this year, and could do so again. The presence of the Kuomintang forces is particularly

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irritating to the Burmese military. It is universally agreed that those forces are far from efficient or well disciplined, that they are engaged mainly in the opium trade, and that their numbers are limited and have never exceeded six to eight thousand. Yet the Burmese military have not been able to dispose of them. It is persistently rumored that the defeats imposed on the Kuomintang forces in late 1960, which led to the evacuation of many and their reduction to the present number of some five hundred who are not subject to military discipline, were possible only with the cooperation of troops from the Chinese Peoples Republic. Burmese leaders including Premier U Nu have flatly denied this, but their statements have failed to halt the rumor.

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XII. THE OUTSIDE WORLD - ITS VIEWS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

In my readings and during my trip to the area, I endeavored to form some impression of the views of the outside world, including the United States, concerning Southeast Asia. The following impressions are tentative and personal, and based on incomplete information, but I believe they are basically accurate.

1. China

The government of the Chinese Peoples Republic is aggressive and dynamic. It controls some nine hundred million people, pressing on the northern frontiers of Southeast Asia. Should it decide to conquer the area, there is little likelihood that the nations of the region unaided would be able to prevent it. It is my impression that the Chinese government would prefer peaceful conquest, by economic and political penetration, and is supremely confident that it will be successful in that undertaking. I am convinced that the Chinese regard the United States, the only nation in a position to offer substantial help against penetration and domination, as a "paper tiger," which will probably not respond effectively to requests for help when received and in any case can be easily disposed of. The Chinese consider themselves the predestined rulers of the Far East, including Southeast Asia. The view is sometimes

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expressed that the Chinese will overrun and occupy the area by sheer weight of numbers, but I have seen nothing to indicate that they themselves have that idea. Rather, they appear at present content to dominate the area. Meanwhile, outside observers generally express the view that the Chinese Government has serious problems internally, and that for the near future China will not embark on notably aggressive policies toward the area.

2. Japan

The basic Japanese view still appears to be that there is a sound mutuality of interests between Japan and Southeast Asia, and that the resources and trade of the area are important to Japan and worth considerable effort to cultivate. However, there is a considerable note of scepticism as to the future. This is due partly to acceptance of the concept of the inevitability of Chinese dominance of Southeast Asia, partly to a recognition of the high degree of instability and inefficiency of some of the local governments. It is reported that some Japanese feel that their country should assist in the economic development of the area and in attempts to promote stability there. Interestingly, though the problems arising from World War II and Japanese occupation of the area are not entirely settled, there seems to be an underlying Japanese assumption that there is little hostility toward them left in Southeast Asia. My own observations tended to confirm this. There are developing economic problems which will cause difficulties in relations between the area and

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Japan. Japan is becoming more self-sufficient in rice, for example, and I was told that there is a tendency for the governments of the area to retaliate against Japanese exports.

3. Britain

The British view is that things were obviously much more stable under colonial rule. However, there is a feeling almost of relief that that period with its attendant headaches has ended. They often say that there was never any intention of an indefinite continuation of the colonial system. They have no feeling that the colonial era was in any way improper, simply that it has passed. Many of them maintain that it has left lasting benefits for the local peoples. This view is certainly at least partly true in both Burma and Malaya - though the current leaders of those countries are most chary of expressing it publicly. The British are interested in maintaining and increasing trade with the area. In that field their influence seems as great or greater than it was before. They refrain from long-term predictions, and prefer a flexible, short-range view. These, of course, are traditional British traits often commented on in the past.

4. Russia

I do not know what the Russian Government's views of the area are, other than those indications to be gained from the constant harping on the anti-imperialist theme, and the idea of the inevitability of the world

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spread of Communism. It is interesting to speculate whether Russia would be pleased to see the area fall under Chinese hegemony, or would prefer it to have a continuing degree of independence. I can report that in the countries I visited I found broad distrust of Russian motivations. Burma, for instance, would accept Russian economic assistance (always giving something in return), but Burmese officials were quite cynical in their evaluation of the motivations. I was told that the realization of the motivations behind Russian actions was causing some difficulties even within the local Communist parties.

5. United States

Our basic policy in Southeast Asia is that the nations should be free and independent, and able to work out their own future according to the will of their peoples. They need help in reaching economic (and perhaps political) maturity, and we are prepared to extend assistance as requested and as we can. In my readings and conversations I have found very full and sympathetic understanding of the nature of the nations and of their problems. This has been tempered from time to time by some of the inaccuracies and mistaken assumptions which I have mentioned earlier. It is sometimes said that the peoples of Southeast Asia should be firmly anti-Communist and pro-Western, since otherwise they will fall prey to the Communist world. The view is coupled with an attitude which assumes that the peoples and governments of the area should know better than to follow policies of neutralism and appeasement. Such statements lose sight

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of the realities of the Southeast Asian situation. Those nations have a long history of struggle and survival in a highly troubled world in which the burdens and problems have been borne by the ruling elite and the rural masses been relatively little disturbed. The bulk of the people have not participated in their own government and its decisions. They have virtually no tradition or experience of democratic government. Their inarticulate acquiescence to government and indifference to national politics are fundamental in the political system. While the countries I studied have the external trappings of democracy, they still lack to a very substantial degree any concept of the essentials of democracy. In our evaluations of them we must realize this. One frequently reads that "Thailand feels thus," or that "the Burmese people want this." We should bear in mind that while it may be true that the Burmese people want something or other, all we can be sure of is that the ruling elites make certain statements and take certain positions.

Again, it is frequently stated that the peoples of the area are inefficient, and lacking in energy and drive. We should realize that those are relative terms. The peoples are the products of their environments and racial traditions and culture, which are different from ours. In their view they are sufficiently efficient and energetic to cope in ways which they consider satisfactory with their known environment. They are not likely to change because of criticism or exhortations on our part.

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We sometimes seem to form an image of the area along the lines that it is caught up in "The Revolution of Rising Expectations", and that the peoples are in a ferment caused by new and unsatisfied demands. I have not found this to be a valid assumption. The peoples of the three countries undoubtedly want some improvement in their condition. But the rural masses, meaning the great majorities in all three countries, appear to be basically content with their traditional way of life and display little desire for industrialization and the attendant social upheavals. The emphasis on industrialization and diversification on the part of the political leaders seems motivated by the desire to maintain independence and the consequent need for a broadly based economy, rather than on any serious unrest or unfulfilled expectations on the part of the people.

Finally, while the "population explosion" is a grim reality in some parts of Southeast Asia, it is only a vague future threat to Burma and Thailand. Both are under-populated by Asian standards, and can support populations much larger than at present. Malaya has no immediate population problem, but will have shortly.

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XIII. MAJOR PROBLEMS

All of the three countries studied have a basic objective in common: Their leaders, and in some respects their peoples, desire the continuation of the nation as a sovereign entity, free from external domination and with all the rights and respect of a full-fledge member of the family of nations. The threats confronting this desire are both internal and external, and vary in intensity from country to country. The responses and proposed solutions or counter-measures also vary. It is therefore better to discuss them on a country basis.

1. Thailand

Throughout its history, Thailand has been proud of its status as a free and independent nation. Pride in this tradition, and a desire to see its continuation, are widespread throughout the Thai people. When possible, Thai governments have sought and used a countervailing force to offset an external threat. Failing that, they have sought by means short of surrender to placate the external threat. During the colonial period, they preserved their independence by playing the French against the British. Prior to that, they placated the Chinese governments for long periods by payment of tribute which the Chinese regarded as an acknowledgement of Thai tributary status, but which the Thai looked on as gifts

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form sovereign to sovereign. When necessary they fought, as was the repeated case with Burma. The Thai do not have the Western concept of national honor to any considerable extent. What is important to them is the preservation and continuation of the nation.

Today, the Thai see themselves threatened by the emergence of a strong and aggressive China for the first time in many years. They have sought and found a countervailing force in the Western powers, and most especially the United States. They are also members of SEATO, but they look even within that organization to the United States for protection. So long as the Thai governments estimate that the force of the United States is sufficient to counterbalance the threat posed by China, they will be anti-Communist. They are naturally opposed to the expansion of Chinese influence and control in neighboring areas, and the degree of their opposition will vary with their evaluation of the opposing forces. I have seen frequent references to what some authors regard as lamentable recent signs of a drift toward neutralism on the part of Thailand. In my opinion this is due to a lessening of the confidence held by the Thai leaders in the ability and determination of the West, particularly the United States, to oppose the spread of the influence of the Communist bloc. Should the Thai leaders conclude that the West cannot or will not successfully oppose Communist influence, they will endeavor to make other arrangements to preserve the national independence. The first step would be the adoption of neutralism, followed later by a pro-Communist stand if necessary. At some point they would abandon SEATO. All else failing, Thai

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leaders might arrange for the country to become a Communist nation.

Speculation on the foregoing line is sometimes heard from Thai leaders themselves. They point out that the Thai people would not become Communists on two scores: The doctrine is Western, and foreign to their ideology; and Communist regimentation runs contrary to the fundamental individualism of the Thai. But these same people suggest that Thailand might be prepared to adopt the trappings of Communism if necessary.

In my opinion the most pressing internal problem which Thailand, apparently the most stable of the three nations studied, confronts is the stability of its political system. Constitutional democracy under a limited monarchy has not achieved any notable success in that country since the revolution of 1932. That revolution was in actuality a coup, organized within and for the bureaucracy. Since then government has become broader and stronger as the techniques of suppression and regulation have been developed. Behind a somewhat transparent veil of parliamentary democracy, the bureaucracy has since then been struggling for power within itself, and politics has become a matter of competition between cliques for the benefits of government. In the process a considerable degree of what constitutes corruption in Western eyes has developed. It is to be expected that in competitions of this sort the best organized, most concentrated and most powerful of the cliques will come out on top, and this has held true in Thailand. The army has been effective in control of the nation since at least 1948.

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There are forces in Thailand which oppose this tendency toward bureaucratic oligarchy, competition between cliques, corruption, and the dominance of the most powerful, which in this as in many other cases is the army. The Thai ruling elite is undoubtedly well aware of the danger of killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Within the army itself there are indications of a strong desire for honesty and improved discipline and efficiency of the governmental machinery. It is also clear that the elite, including the military, are well aware of the respect for and approval of the monarchy on the part of the Thai people, and of its strong unifying influence. The Thai political system has moved away from absolutism, and has not achieved a firm substitute. For the time being, government will probably continue to be in the hands of an elite which includes the principal members of the bureaucracy, but the situation has considerable elements of instability.

2. Burma

Of the three nations, Burma is the most vulnerable to Chinese domination. Burma has not sought a countervailing balance to that threat. There is no national tradition of such action preserving independence. Moreover, the only powers capable of offering such a balance are Western, and after the colonial experience the Burmese leaders are not prepared to depend on Western powers. Further, in the eyes of the Burmese as indeed of all Southeast Asia, the prestige and reliability of the Western powers suffered a precipitous and extreme decline from which they have not

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recovered, as a result of the rapidity and ease of the Japanese conquests of the area in 1942. It was clearly impossible for Burma to rely on India, since India is a most vocal exponent of peaceful ways and reliance on neutrality.

Beginning in 1948, the Burmese leaders therefore adopted a policy of reliance on international organizations for the preservation of Burmese independence and the careful and scrupulous avoidance of entangling alliances. The Burmese believe strongly that small nations, if truly independent and neutral in the East-West struggle, can have considerable moral strength in the present world, can preserve their independence, and can possibly serve to reduce tensions. They follow this policy of "positive neutralism" scrupulously, and it has gained for Burma a remarkable degree of respect among many nations, particularly in the Afro-Asian bloc. An excellent defense of it was made by Prime Minister U Nu in his speech before our Congress in June 1955, when he said: "Both of our nations adopted in their early years an independent foreign policy, designed to maintain the friendship of all nations and to avoid big-power alliances. You are aware that this policy of ours is not without its critics. Nor, for that matter, was yours."

The Burmese policy has met with success in the matter of relations between that country and China. The two governments have recently reached agreement on their long-standing border problem, in which the rival claims were widely divergent, in a manner which on any reasonable evaluation is highly satisfactory to Burma. The Chinese government has

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not displayed aggressiveness, but has repeatedly manifested a desire for cordial relations. The potential menace of the Chinese giant remains, however, and the Burmese display extreme sensitivity in any matter involving that country. This is probably due in part to a clear realization of the essential fragility of the United Nations as a protective shield, and of the necessity for extreme delicacy of balance on their part. Such a posture, though sometimes involving positions and statements which we find objectionable or unsatisfactory, is basically pro-Western. Should Thailand abandon its present pro-Western stand, we could do worse than hope that it would adopt the Burmese posture.

Burma has another major problem, shared in lesser degree by the other two countries. Kenneth Young has called it the problem of one-man prestigious leadership. U Nu personifies and symbolizes the present Burmese government. When he is absent there is at best a sort of holding operation until he returns. In the elections it has been found that the voters are strongly inclined to vote for a local candidate simply because he is a follower of U Nu. The opposition in the 1960 elections strongly objected to the fact that the local ballots contained a picture of U Nu at the head of the Clean AFPFL (U Nu's party) slate, rather than the required symbol. They claimed bitterly that the pictures played a large part in the Clean AFPFL victory. At present at least, the people of Burma are solidly "pro - U NU." Whatever he is for, they are for; what he is against, they are against.

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The problem exists to a lesser extent in Thailand. There, the monarchy is supreme in the affections of the people. But next comes General Sarit, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, etc. There is not the same blind devotion. Indeed, there is considerable doubt. But there does exist the strong feeling that he is well-nigh indispensable at this time. This is in part due to his successful pose - which may be perfectly sincere - as a most loyal and dedicated supporter of the monarchy.

In Malaya there is an interesting variation on this theme. There, the ruling elite seems united in its belief that the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, is the indispensable figure. What they most admire is his blend of tolerance, moderation, patience and understanding in handling the difficult and potentially explosive problem of relations between the Malay and Chinese communities.

Another Burmese problem, discussed earlier, is that of internal security caused by the dissatisfaction of some of the sizeable ethnic minorities. It will be many years before they are fully integrated into the nation, and there will certainly be sporadic outbursts of complaints and tension. But there is reason to hope that the problem can soon be reduced to manageable proportions, so that it does not constitute a serious and perhaps fatal drain on the nation. Informed sources have told me that there are now fewer irregulars than for several years past. In addition, the capability of the Burmese military in anti-guerrilla operations is improving. Also, the reduction in size of the problem of the Kuomintang

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troops coupled with the settlement of the border problem with China serve to release government troops for anti-guerrilla activities. Finally, the fact that the national government, with all its weaknesses and inefficiencies, has nevertheless managed to survive for twelve years is in itself disheartening to the irregulars. But discontent and potential disruption will exist for a long time to come.

Burma's final major problem is peculiarly her own. It is a combination of Pyidawtha - the welfare state program - and extreme governmental inefficiency. In its attempts to obtain national support for Pyidawtha, the government oversold the people on the benefits to be derived from it. In attempts to install the program, they seriously distorted and further damaged an already weakened economy. And finally, in administering the program and in running the government in general, the lack of trained, competent, hard-working personnel has caused confusion, disappointment and delay. In my view these factors of frustration and disappointment, more than any personal desire for power, were responsible for the seizure of power (to give it its right name) by General Ne Win in 1958. Ne Win was disappointed in his desire to remain in control of the country by the impressive victory of U Nu and his supporters in the 1960 elections. He respected the results, and stepped down. However, the military set an example of comparative efficiency during the two years, is still a most important factor in the economy, and may well be prepared to move in again should conditions warrant.

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3. Malaya and Singapore

In Malaya, the problem and threat of mainland China is not so acute or immediate as it is in Thailand and Burma. Malaya has a different problem - an internal Chinese problem - resulting from the nation's plural society which I have discussed earlier. Somewhere around 40% of the inhabitants of Malaya are Chinese. The Malays constitute about 45% of the total. They are a minority in their own land, and are understandably determined to retain control. The Chinese community, the great majority of whom have been born in Malaya, strongly desire to retain the position they enjoyed under British rule - which means largely unrestrained opportunity to utilize their characteristic traits of industry, frugality and business acumen to achieve and maintain wealth, which means positions of prominence and control in the local community. They feel that they are being discriminated against in a variety of ways, and that given any sort of equality of opportunity they would shortly run the country. That, of course, is exactly what the Malays wish to avoid. In essence, both groups are dissatisfied with the existing situation. They are held together by realization of the accuracy of the old saying, "We must hang together, or we will all hang separately."

The present government of the nation is composed of a coalition of the leading parties of the three ethnic groups - Malays, Chinese and Indians - know as The Alliance. Its leaders are moderates, inclining toward conservatism, who hope that time, patience, economic prosperity and moderation will

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provide the solution to the plural society's problems. Their major approaches to date have been two: Measures to raise the living standards of the rural Malays and generally to strengthen and widen Malay participation in the economic life of the nation; and the establishment of a national school system with a Malayan-oriented curriculum. The school program does not yet include compulsory education, but attempts to provide primary education for all who desire it. Instruction may be in Malay, Chinese or Tamil, but both Malay and English are compulsory subjects.

The best augury for success in solving their plural society problem lies in the moderation and responsibility shown by the leaders of the communities in the Alliance government. They are confronted with extremist opposition from both sides. Some rural Malays, particularly in the relatively large and undeveloped states where the population is overwhelmingly Malay, have a strongly conservative and anti-integration attitude, reflected in the views of their political leaders who are opposed to the present Malay leadership in the Alliance. At the other end of the spectrum are the extreme leftists, largely Chinese, who have considerable strength in some local urban governments.

Ultimately, success will depend on whether life in their plural society has given Malaysians the restraint and toleration sometimes lacking in societies where one ethnic group dominates. The desirability of such attitudes should be clearly apparent in Malaya, where everyone belongs to a minority.

A major problem which confronts both Malaya and Singapore is the question of the political and economic relationship between the two. The



people of Singapore and their leaders ardently desire union with Malaya, while the Malay inhabitants of the Federation are opposed to such a step. The reason for the attitude of the Malays is simple: Singapore is over 80% Chinese, with a population approaching 2 million and growing at well over 3% yearly. If it becomes part of the Federation, the Chinese community will be in the majority. In addition, the government of Singapore is much more leftist than that of Malaya, and some Malay leaders feel that the tendency will be toward extremism. They do not want such an influence in their country. Singapore is an entrepot and a banking and commercial center. Its continued prosperity depends on trade with the surrounding geographic area, including particularly Malaya. But while Singapore needs Malaya, it is becoming clear that Malaya can get along without Singapore, and is prepared to do so under present circumstances rather than enter union with it. Some people who are concerned over the possibilities inherent in this situation are now proposing as a solution the formation of a Federation to include Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and possibly Brunei. Such an arrangement would retain a Malayan ethnic majority, and thus remove one of the causes for opposition to union with Singapore. It would not dispose of the problem of the radicalism of the Singapore government.

Mention should be made of the "Emergency", as the armed insurrection of Malayan Communists beginning in 1948, is called. Combined British and Malayan military operations, which were difficult, costly and disruptive of the normal life of the nation, eventually overcame the insurrection

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and the Emergency was officially declared ended in August of 1960. There are still some 500 Communist guerrillas, concentrated along the northern border between Malaya and Thailand. They form an item of minor irritation between the two countries, since the Malayan government feels, with justification, that the Thai Government has not taken sufficiently energetic measures to ensure final solution of the problem.

A factor, not a problem, in Malaya is the special position of the British. Malaya has a defense and mutual assistance treaty with Great Britain, providing for British assistance against external attack, in coping with the Emergency, and in training and development of Federation of Malaya forces. Both countries agree to consult on measures to be taken in the event of threats to peace in the Far East. Britain is permitted to maintain forces in the Federation, including a "Commonwealth Strategic Reserve". In Singapore the British have a greater role, being responsible for external defense. Singapore and Malaya are still a British bastion in the Far East.

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XIV. STABILITY AND INSTABILITY

In my opinion, the principal factors tending to promote stability in the three nations examined are, first of all, the people themselves, their traditional social structure and values. The mass of the people, rural dwellers and agriculturalists, are basically content with their lot. They have few unsatisfied demands. They are not in a ferment of discontent. Their religions encourage them in this general attitude and foster feelings of moderation and tranquility. Another stabilizing factor is the dominant position of the traditional elite, and their basically homogenous character. The people now ruling the countries are from the same group that has traditionally done so or otherwise have a common background, and are in general the products of Westernization resulting from some Western education, frequent exposure to the West, and considerable awareness of Western culture if not actual assimilation. The elite are interested in the continuation of their status and the preservation of their power. They are attempting to create modern nations, largely because of their own motivations and determination as results of Western influences on themselves and their environment. These nations are not completely new creations, and have varying bases in history. In two of the nations, Thailand and the Federation of Malaya, the task of the elite is rendered easier because of presently prosperous economies. The great desire of the leaders of the three nations to maintain their independence is also a



factor of stability. In Thailand this desire is fully felt by the people. That is probably true also, though in lesser degree and at a more provincial level, of the people of the Federation of Malaya. The desire to preserve national independence and integrity is also the basic motivation of the international positions of all three countries, ranging from the pro-Western position of Thailand, through the British-oriented, milder Westernism of Malaya, to the positive neutralism of Burma. These varying positions are caused by differences of geographic location coupled with varying evaluations of the international scene by the different governments. The similarities of background, of international experience, and of present desire are creating an atmosphere favorable for the development of regionalism. This cannot take the form, however, of essentially military alliances with outside powers such as SEATO. A more probable development of regionalism would be along the lines of the SEAFET (Southeast Asia Friendship and Economic Treaty) project of Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. Burmese influence would be exercised toward the adoption of the Burmese position of positive neutralism. This, if adopted by others, would be a disappointing development from the American point of view. In itself, however, it is a stabilizing influence since, once adopted, it is improbable that it would be voluntarily abandoned. None of the governments is now pro-Communist, and there are no signs of really serious internal Communist threats.

A principal factor promoting instability in the region is the East-West struggle, and what we call the Communist menace. At present the

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Western powers would be content to see the three nations develop as independent entities, pursuing policies internationally which are pro-Western in varying degree. What we fear is Communist domination, and the adoption of pro-Communist policies by the nations of the region. Both China and Russia, for their part, can be expected to object to and oppose the adoption of pro-Western policies. The resultant constant pressure on the area by two powerful adversaries creates tension and instability.

Internally, the Federations of Malaya and Burma are confronted by potential (Malaya) and actual (Burma) instability caused by struggles between ethnic communities. All three nations have a factor of possible instability in potential dissatisfactions among their people. The bulk of the people have been largely content within the framework of their traditional society. Those societies are now being altered, and not in response to demand from the people. The people have been accustomed to non-participation in their government and to relative freedom from governmental interference in their daily lives. The social and political structures now being erected in their nations encourage, even require, participation by all the people. Such participation will be further encouraged by increased ease of communications. These developments constitute a source of potential dissatisfaction and political and social instability.

Another factor of instability is the urban societies which have developed in the metropoleis. In these the values and sense of permanence of

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the traditional societies are broken down and a new society based on materialistic values arises, with many attendant insecurities. In addition, ethnic minorities are heavily, sometimes predominantly represented. They are almost always radical, in comparison with the conservatism of the rural and traditional society. Because of the "newspaper-reading public" they exercise a disproportionate influence on the ruling elite.

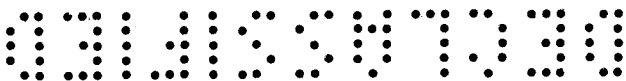
A final element of potential dissatisfaction is found in the rapid growth of populations. This is still only a cloud on the horizon in Thailand and Burma, but it is a more imminent threat in the Federation of Malaya and an actuality in Singapore. Annual rates of population growth in both are among the highest in the world. The fundamental economic problem is how to provide jobs for the rising labor force as well as governmental revenue for expanding social services. If economic expansion based on diversification cannot be achieved in the Federation, the people will not only fail to attain the higher standard of living to which they aspire, but will see the disappearance of the comparatively high standard which many now enjoy. In Singapore, the problem is to develop additional employment in an environment where there are considerable doubts concerning future political stability and security and consequent reluctance to invest additional capital. Many people in Singapore apparently already exist at a level considered below the minimum standard of living.

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XV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

On balance, Thailand and Malaya have a reasonably good chance of continued independence and stability for the near future. In Malaya, this depends upon continued control of the central government by the moderate, tolerant leaders of the three principal ethnic communities. Singapore will be a continuing source of difficulties and trouble. Its chances of integration with the Federation of Malaya, and consequently increased stability and economic viability, are virtually zero unless some solution can be found, perhaps in the shape of the larger federation to include Borneo and Sarawak, which will insure continued Malay control of the resultant central government. The short-term future in Burma is uncertain. The mere fact that the central government has managed to exist for some twelve years is of itself encouraging. But the irresponsibilities of the national leaders, their determination to implant Pyidawtha on an inadequate and unsuited economic and social structure, the continued activity of the irregulars, and the generalized inefficiency of the government are negative factors which the more positive and hopeful characteristics of the leaders and the Burmese peoples may be unable to overcome.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from the foregoing examination of these three countries which will be useful to representatives



of the United States in deciding upon and implementing policies in that area. Some of them are:

1. These countries, in their fundamental concern for the individual and his welfare as distinct from regimentation, are basically pro-Western. That is, they admire and subscribe to Western values. But they are most reluctant to see themselves deeply involved in the East-West struggle except as it constitutes a protection for their continued independent existence. They are not prepared to adopt an anti-Communist stand on principle.

2. The prestige of, and local respect for, the Western powers in the area has suffered a sharp reduction since the beginning of World War II. This trend has been accelerated by the events of recent years. The leaders of those countries have most serious reservations about both the ability and the determination of the Western group to win the contest with the Communist nations.

3. An attempt on our part to weld Southeast Asia into an anti-Communist bloc at this time would be exceptionally difficult, and would probably be unsuccessful.

4. There is a strong influence toward regionalism which it might be wise for us to encourage. The United States cannot take the lead in promoting such a move, since one of the forces pushing in that direction is neutralism. The other major force in that influence is the desire for continued independence. India is not the indicated leader of such a regional grouping, either, since that country and its peoples are not

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greatly respected in the area, and since the Indian attitude internationally is viewed by the governments of Southeast Asia as a sort of exaggeratedly passive neutrality which, while not pro-Communist, is frequently anti-Western. This Indian attitude may be undergoing a change, and some authorities write of a natural grouping of nations in the area which would embrace both Southeast Asia and India. But in my readings and travels I have yet to find a native Southeast Asian who shares that view.

5. The United States should be careful to avoid wherever possible actions which have a deleterious effect on the economies of the Southeast Asian countries. I am not familiar with the details, but I have both read and heard comments that our program of surplus food disposal has had unfavorable results on the economies of both Thailand and Burma, in that it has displaced some rice sales in their traditional markets. The economy of the Federation of Malaya is overly dependent on the revenues from rubber and tin. Our actions in connection with our stockpiles of those commodities affect their prices, and we should endeavor to avoid too rapid liquidation of those stocks.

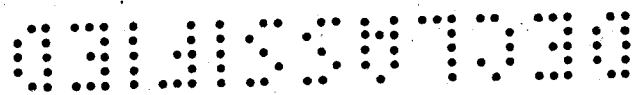
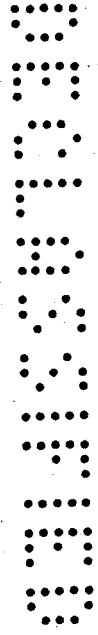
6. We should be careful to recognize (as I believe we do) the special relationship between Britain and Malaya and Singapore. Within that framework, we should encourage any plan which appears to offer a solution to the problem of union between the Federation and Singapore. As noted earlier, the current proposal is for an eventual federation to include them plus Borneo and Sarawak.

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7. We should avoid too close an identification with the government of General Sarit in Thailand. It is heavily, perhaps dangerously, militarized, and if the trend continues might become unpopular with the Thai people.

8. We should avoid insistence upon, or preaching about, parliamentary or republican democracy as the ideal form of government. The social values and degree of political sophistication in the area are such that there is incomplete understanding of our meaning.

9. Such technical assistance as we extend to the area should be aimed at improvements in the efficiency and balance of the existing economies, rather than rapid change in their nature.



XVI. POSTSCRIPT

In the public debate about our foreign policy that has been going on since the Cuban fiasco and since the Laotian situation became intolerable, responsible men have expressed the opinion that our relations must be readjusted to a fundamentally changed situation. They take the view that the balance of power has shifted to our disfavor, but that our policies have not been altered in recognition of that fact. Walter Lippmann has said that we should "scrap the policy of American satellite states and promote instead a policy of neutralism for the weak and vulnerable peripheral states. That is the best, indeed that is the only, hope of their not being engulfed by Communism." But there are various kinds of neutralism. There is that of self-supporting, self-respecting independent nations, and then there is that which simply attempts to strike a balance between all forces within the nation and registers opposite pressures from great powers. This latter is the sort of thing we are now reduced to seeking in Laos - "a genuinely independent and neutral Laos", to be ruled by a coalition government embracing all factions from Communism to the royalist right. Presumably, once such a government has been set up, and guaranteed by the great powers, we then pull out. We have "disengaged". What we have actually done is not to neutralize a nation; rather, we have neutralized ourselves out of it.

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If we truly disengage, then we will shortly see the newly neutral nation become another Peoples' Democracy. To avoid this, we must maintain a continuing concern and vigilance over the affairs of the neutral nation at least equal to that of the Communist bloc. For of one thing we can be sure - Communism will move in to whatever vacuum we leave. It cannot rest so long as there are other nations ruled by other systems. It is implacably and unceasingly hostile to our way of life.

Neutrality in Southeast Asia, whether of the Laotian variety or the more self-respecting variety Burma attempts to maintain, will be a reality so long as the Seventh Fleet is nearby and we appear prepared to use it if necessary. We cannot "cut our losses" in the sense of withdrawing from Southeast Asia and leaving it to neutrality, for what we actually do is leave it to communism. And the road back is hard and bloody.

We should not, we cannot, disengage from Southeast Asia. We are committed there, as in many other areas. We should bend our very best and persevering efforts to achieve the development of self-respecting, self-supporting, truly independent nations there and elsewhere. The possibility of defeat will always exist, and foreign policies and actions formulated on the criterion of avoidance of that possibility are nothing more than acknowledgements of surrender.

There is a quotation ascribed to Secretary Rusk which is apt: "If you don't pay attention to the periphery, the periphery changes. And the first thing you know the periphery is the center."

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BIOGRAPHY OF WRITER

Mr. Topping was born in New York, N. Y. on September 19, 1913. He received his B.A. from Williams College in 1936. He has been a career Foreign Service Officer since 1940 and has served for fifteen years in the field in Latin America, where his assignments have covered nearly all aspects of Foreign Service duties, including administrative, consular, economic and political. His assignments in the Department of State have also been in connection with Latin America. His most recent post prior to attending the Senior Seminar was at Habana, where he was head of the Political Section of our Embassy for four years.

At college Mr. Topping majored in history and political science. He has continued his interest in the social sciences since then. This paper resulted from his interest in examining the peoples and societies of an area of the world with which he was hitherto unfamiliar.

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