

Industrialization is rapidly overtaking the regions southeast of Asia

Fight for the Indies

By WILLIAM DANGAIX ALLEN

AMERICA was first bumped into by a man impatient to reach the Spice Islands. Today, once again, from under the smoke-screen of world war, the agricultural and mineral riches of southeastern Asia have leapt into our headlines. After centuries of colonial somnolence, the region that Columbus and his generation of explorers were seeking is back with us as a land of promise for which the powers of East and West are struggling, as a potential buyer of American goods, as a new civilization to be reckoned with in world affairs.

Take any map of Asia and draw a horn of plenty downward from India and China, tapering off into the Pacific Ocean just north of Australia. Although it is broken up politically into the Chinese province of Yunnan, Indo-China ruled by France, independent Siam or Thailand, the British colonies of the Malay peninsula, and the East Indies which are mainly Dutch but include British and ex-German territories, this area is really a

unit, a subcontinent with a personality of its own. Its native peoples belong to the *café-au-lait* race whose cultural parents are India and China. The spirit of these people is something you do not find elsewhere in the older worlds—a cheerfulness, a non-aggressive exuberance, a sort of latent democracy. One cause of this New-Worldish atmosphere is perhaps the great independence of womankind as compared to other regions of Asia. More fundamentally still, the spirit of hope and opportunity southeast of Asia is based on knowledge that there is space around you, scope for progress with plow, coal-pick or oil-drill, and for the pioneering, mechanically inventive mind.

With a population totalling just about the hundred and thirty millions of this country, this Asian Horn of Plenty is capable of feeding eight or ten times as many mouths. Kept in hermit-isolation and simplicity for centuries, it is now beginning an industrial revolution which inevitably

pushes ahead its standards of living and political activity at a surprising rate. The value of this vast territory is consequently growing—and just at a time when the “have” nations, France, The Netherlands and England, can least afford to surrender to the “have nots” of whom Japan is the most aggressive in Asia. To the most powerful will go the victory for control of these markets and resources. Not necessarily to the most powerful in a military sense. The economically virile, the racially most eager, are just as likely to win as the bomb-throwers. Maybe domination of this region whose riches are epitomized by its tiny, almost legendary Spice Islands will be won by its own native peoples. Or by the door-closing battleships of Japan. Or by China’s shrewd merchants and swarming emigrants. Maybe they will continue to be held by the present rulers, the “have” nations of Europe. This far-off fight for the Indies may, in the light of future history, stand out as one of the main aspects of the present struggle going on in Europe. Meanwhile, America is wondering how wise it is to relinquish the Philippines, gateway to this great Milky Way of an industrialized Orient, to which we have promised to give complete independence by 1946.

CHINA and Japan are both competing for the rubber, tin, oil and markets of the Indies. Japan’s invasion of China these past few years, as a matter of fact, has the Indies among its stakes. Japanese policies toward the United States and other nations are deeply influenced by her expansionist equivalents to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Nothing could be

more logical than that Japan should wish to take over regions which financially weak or timid Holland has held, dog-in-the-manger style, for centuries.

Time is pressing and Japan finds that she cannot even wait politely for America to move out of the way five years hence. It would have been much safer from a Japanese viewpoint to have avoided any risk that American opinion change from an isolationist mood to one of concern for the welfare of the Filipinos and against the contagious spread of Closed Doors. Before routine affairs can lead to the withdrawal of the United States from southern Asia, Japan must move, not only because she is hard pressed for the quick returns a direct grab at the Indies offers, but because of the rapidity of China’s own trek southward. Already, China’s government has shifted the heart of Chinese political and economic activity from the Yangtze River down into the hitherto unexploited province of Yunnan, which is in direct contact with the outside world through French and British possessions.

To combat this Chinese move, the Japanese have been extending their naval and air offensives. A year ago their forces went south of Hong Kong and captured Hainan Island. Last fall they took the port of Pakhoi from which to send out planes to bomb the truck roads and railway that carry vital war materials from French Indo-China into this new center of Chinese resistance, Yunnan, whose name “South of the Clouds” no longer means “out of sight.”

Yunnan is not merely of strategic importance. Japan strikes at this province whose extent is as great as

Japan herself not as if it were a temporary camping-ground or simply a communication line through which to bring in guns to Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese realize that in this mountainous, fertile area rich in mines and water-power the Chinese are creating with great speed and daring a new nation economically able to resist military force for many years. And if that were not in itself danger enough for Japanese plans, the effect of this shift southward is to strengthen the hand of China in all of southeastern Asia, stimulating the ties between China and her southern neighbors..

THE opening up of Yunnan, previously a barrier shutting off China from the south, has made of it a link binding China's life more intimately to the Indies, particularly to the large, economically powerful colonies of Chinese race settled throughout the region, from Siam and Indo-China through the Malay Peninsula and Singapore to Java, Bali, Borneo and the Spice Islands.

The Chinese trek south has a long, romantic history. In the age when the Spice Islands lured Europeans round the world, the Chinese merchantmen were exploring these islands, charting these southern seas. Arab traders exchanged occidental merchandise in the Indies for Far-Eastern fineries as well as for local spices. The Emperors of China for a thousand years considered the petty kings of Siam, Indo-China and the Islands to be vassals.

Since the First World War, China's contact with the Indies has been even more significant. It has constituted one of the greatest racial migrations in history, a third of a million Chinese emigrating sometimes in

a single year. This racial march of the simple Chinese laboring class toward the equator may some day turn the tables on the trek of Japan even if the present European rulers (who appear to count on American aid if ever in extreme need) cannot repel the military forces of Germany.

For the present, however, the Chinese merchants settled in the Indies have a much more direct influence than the millions of coolies in the plantations and mines. These merchants dominate the retail trade in most cities of this vast region. They are the money-lenders, the pioneers in tin mining and in the promotion of smaller local ventures neglected by the big European capitalists. Their banks have a stranglehold on the finances of Siam. Industrial activity in Indo-China, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies owes more to their initiative than to either native or European enterprise.

To these well-informed, well-fed, pugnacious patriots of Chinese race who play such an influential role in the economic life of the Indies, Japan's drive against their motherland and Japan's drive toward the Indies are one and the same thing. Their fierce opposition to Japanese expansion is not a sentimental chauvinism. Through long contact with such great ports as Manila, Hong Kong and Singapore, they have come to believe in the permanent, universal soundness of international interdependence. And in their well-founded judgment, Japan is heading toward a domination mortal to all trade not directly helpful to the great trusts and cartels of Nippon.

WATCHING the Japanese and Chinese fight for the Indies, the

natives of the countries being fought for are developing nationalistic notions of their own. Quite naturally, to them the only just rule for the Indies would be by and for the benefit of the permanent native populations. They have become somewhat reconciled to their old enemy, the white man. The European (and American) ruler has been forced to democratize things in most places. For instance, the Indo-Chinese formerly hated the French conqueror with a consuming bitterness. But, some eight years ago, after terrorists murdered an impressive list of petty officials, 48 in one month, and incited native regiments to mutiny, the French began fulfilling some of their promises and putting through excellent, obviously needed agrarian and judiciary reforms. In Malaya the British at last feel safe in admitting Malay natives (but definitely not the domiciled Chinese or Japanese) to the armed defenders of Singapore. Until Japan showed her cards in China there was likelihood of native sympathy for a Japanese invasion which would oust, for instance, the Dutch. But today nationalism, while rapidly crystallizing in southeastern Asia, is less directed against the white man than against militaristic Japan and socially, financially aggressive China.

Native nationalism in the Indies expresses itself against the Chinese wherever the latter have become overwhelmingly powerful in numbers or in local finance. Indo-China has laws to reduce their trading powers. Malaya until recent months would not permit anyone of Chinese race to cultivate rice. The Philippines have new immigration laws clamping down as much on Japanese as on Chinese. Na-

tive nationalism is swerving away from this suspicion of the Chinese nowadays for two reasons—relatively greater fear of Japanese militarism, and the discovery that development of local industries can mean amiable co-operation between the moneyed Chinese and the native worker.

THEN at long last, awakened to the need for drastic defensive methods to prevent loss of their possessions to Japan or other Orientals, the white rulers of the Indies hustled ahead. Beautifully timed to be completed by September 1, 1939, the naval base at Singapore represents a strength believed capable of retarding any exclusively military conquest of the Indies provided the attacker does not have active support from the native population. The old British, French and Dutch colonizers not only spent last year in a frantic, lavishly financed arming of their centers of defense but made such efforts to become efficient as to suggest a real rejuvenation.

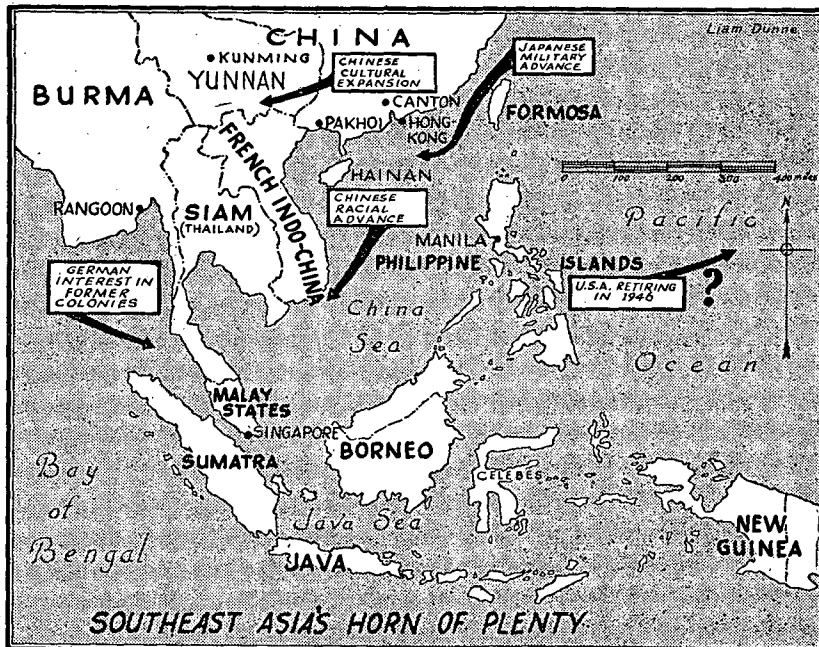
The British have fortified not only Singapore but Penang, halfway up the Malay Peninsula. They have brought troops from India, increased the local air-force and modernized the soldiers' equipment to put them on a par with the best troops of any country. Able administrators in these areas have been ordered to continue on duty indefinitely and previously jealous home governments have given them dictatorial powers for speedy autonomous action. Strongest of all indications of the European will to survive in the Indies is the careful coördination between military forces worked out by previously inharmonious leaders last summer. These military plans

were formulated openly by the British together with the French, but there is excellent reason to believe that not only the Dutch but the Americans were included in ultimate plans if not in the official parleys. Whether or not they have any basis for it, the British, French and Dutch holders of possessions in southeastern Asia appear confident of American support against Japanese or other attack south of the Philippines, at least if such an attack should occur before 1946 when the United States is pledged to withdraw from her control of those islands.

The region's peace-loving masses of the *café au lait* and Chinese races are experiencing as deep-rooted an industrial revolution as we in the western worlds went through two centuries ago, as startling as the transformation Japan went through three generations ago. Even from the viewpoint of far-off America, such a change in the life of a hundred and thirty million souls

can be considered as significant as the discovery of a continent.

These peoples of the Indies have some important advantages to help them through this usually very painful and chaotic change in ways and standards. When compared with the rest of the world, they have gotten along splendidly as neighbors. In many senses they have been developing along democratic lines, with enlightened tendencies suggesting peaceful sharing of powers and riches in the future. For instance, the peoples of Siam and Indo-China have become accustomed to the coöperative idea not only in ancient forms common throughout Asia, but in the form of coöperative credit-banks and farmer coöperatives sponsored by governments. Too, all these lands of the Horn of Plenty have worked together for years in harmony under quota arrangements regulating the exporting of such products as rubber and tin.



Italy Views the Nazi Position

By MAURIZIO CLAREMORIS

From *Regime Fascista*, Cremona Fascist Daily

OUR READERS must draw intelligent conclusions on the factors at play in today's war in Europe; and not compare it (as do the puerile French) with the war of 1914-18. The situation now is entirely different.

After liquidating Poland in twenty days, the Germans only face the Anglo-French front in the West, and the Germans are in the dominant position for several reasons. One is that the Reich is greatly superior on land and in the air; another is that, since Poland has been destroyed, Germany has no war-aims, no territorial objectives to attain, in the West. Protected by the invulnerable armor of its land, sea and air defences, Germany whenever she pleases can inflict blows upon her enemies, in any form and at any time desired without the least risk. Moreover, eventually Germany can undertake a general and decisive offensive, with the advantage that the Reich can select the moment for that offensive without need to consider the activities of the enemy.

In compensation for the dominance of the German position today—an advantage that will endure unless the war-front is greatly extended—the Allies have one small advantage, but it is one in which they place excessive hope. This is the blockade. But Ger-

many, enjoying free traffic with northeastern and southeastern Europe, and with access also to the enormous wealth of Russia (and thus virtually with all of Asia) is not blockaded in any comprehensive sense. The Reich, moreover, continues in some degree its trade with the United States as well as with a certain neutral country [Italy] with whose ships even Britain does not dare to interfere—unless she wants to risk the most dangerous reprisals. While it is true that Germany's considerable trade with France and Britain has come to a standstill, that loss is mutual and of somewhat greater cost to the Allies than to their enemy.

With respect again to supplies, Germany foresaw the potential danger of blockade a long time ago and, with characteristic efficiency, made her preparations. Her line of communications for food-stuffs and certain raw materials is a much safer one than England's, which is entirely by way of the exposed sea. Allied and neutral shipping losses to date illustrate how precarious that line of communication is. The German rovers of the sea will certainly not diminish their activity in the months to come. Contrary to Allied propaganda, the factor of time operates in Germany's favor, and not *vice versa*.