

## BOOK REVIEW

*Southeast Asian Affairs 1980*. Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books [Asia] Ltd. for Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1980. Pp. 367.

This is the seventh yearly review put out by the Institute. It is becoming increasingly and deservedly well known both as a record of events during the previous year and for its background articles on significant themes. The editor notes that in this issue background articles are given greater prominence.

The question of a proper balance between factual record and interpretative essay is a difficult and important one. It is, of course, convenient to round up events over a certain period in one publication, even though there are alternative sources either in weekly, monthly or annual form. But I would agree with the editorial decision to give more emphasis to region, to theme, and to interpretation.

Thus, the present issue gains by printing, for example, Koh Tai Ann's tough-minded analysis (a tribute to the Singapore ethos?) of "cultural development in the global village". She makes the point that the dichotomy, in Singapore at least, is not just between rational, efficient, modernizing Western values and socially-backward traditional Asian values, but reflects the Western predicament of "two cultures", one humanistic and the other scientific. In contrast to the "mechanical" (scientific) standpoint of the Singapore leadership, she draws attention to Western counter-culture, expressing the protest of the individual against the dehumanizing processes of modernization.

Similarly, this volume is enriched by Huynh Kim Khanh's discussion of the Sino-Vietnamese and Vietnam-Kampuchean conflicts, grimly entitled "Into the Third Indochina War", in historical perspectives. The volume benefits no less from Peter McCawley's detailed analysis of the November 1978 devaluation in Indonesia — its implications and outcome. In his opening pages he goes beyond this event to raise the crucial question whether "outward-looking" development strategies — export-oriented industrialization — are in fact appropriate to countries like Indonesia.

The fashionable argument is that economic liberalization and greater reliance on market forces usually stimulate a range of domestic reforms which encourage entrepreneurship, efficiency, technical innovation, rationalization within industries, a new willingness to compete, and so on. Reforms in the foreign trade regime are thus said to provide much-needed discipline, which virtually forces domestic industrialists to become internationally efficient. McCawley points out, however, that the conventional view of cause and effect

may have to be reversed. "Did the adoption of an outward-looking strategy (in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore) stimulate internal reforms which promoted rapid growth, or is it that the adoption of the internal reforms made it possible to implement an outward-looking strategy?" In Indonesia, he suggests, it seems that internal reforms should come first. However, the internal conditions for healthy industrial growth in Indonesia, he argues, do not yet seem to exist.

A resolution of this problem is clearly of vital importance in working out strategies of economic growth. Growth, of course, can hardly be regarded as an end in itself. This is becoming increasingly obvious in almost all countries of the Third World, and even among the pace-makers like Korea. But without growth, and particularly under unfavourable international conditions — (recession in the West accompanied by oil price increases) — there is little chance of carrying out effective domestic policies of distribution in order to raise living standards.

One wonders whether a subject like this — the role and relevance of export-oriented strategies — could not be put to contributors to *Southeast Asian Affairs* in a wide range of countries so as to provide a regional basis for comparison. Another suggestion for future issues is to put still more stress on analysing *specific* events in member-countries — as Peter McCawley does with devaluation — even if it is at the expense of broad coverage of events over the year.

Certainly after reading the many interesting contributions to this volume, a number of major themes can be seen to stand out: the role of "indigenous" business, the question of land reform, the obstacles to democracy, the growth of urbanization, the prospects for insurgency, the activities of reformist officers, the structure of authority, the attitudes of students, and so on. It may, of course, require too much editorial co-ordination to get contributors to concentrate on one or more of these important themes, rather than follow their own inclinations; but the effort, at least in selected fields, should prove worthwhile.

The current volume, at any rate, is a useful step in the direction I have outlined. To begin with, there are no less than six articles adopting a regional standpoint. I have only space for a few brief comments. J.A.C. Mackie provides an informative political overview, which is followed by Cheong Kee Chok's detailed economic survey. Robyn Lim notes a "deep-seated malaise" in Australian-ASEAN relations, while Lau Teik Soon attributes a mixture (or alternation?) of ideology and pragmatism to Soviet policy. Masashi Nishihara assesses the causes, course and consequences of the Sino-Vietnamese war; Sharon Siddique emphasizes the rise of the dakwah movement in Malaysia and Indonesia and investigates Muslim separatism in Thailand and the Philippines.

As for the country studies, besides those previously mentioned, there is a revealing account of smuggling, narcotics and insurgency in Burma by Aung Kin, followed by Leo Suryadinata's careful and balanced survey of events in

Indonesia. Roger Kershaw contributes a sophisticated discussion of the Kampuchean crisis, while Martin Stuart-Fox views Laos from the angle of its "special relationship" with Vietnam. The contrast with the next two articles could hardly be greater; for they are the only ones in the volume to give pride of place to party politics. There is a very readable and interesting piece by Lawrence Siaw on Malaysia, dealing with UMNO organization, shifts within the MCA, Chinese education and Malay urbanization, while Mohadzir bin Mohammad Khir analyses the power struggle in Kedah between UMNO and PAS. The next article takes us back to the familiar ground of authoritarian leadership and frustrated opposition. I refer to the political situation in the Philippines, discussed by M. Rajaretnam. This is followed by a bold and thoughtful probe by MacArthur Corsino into the problem of succession. Economic restructuring in Singapore's technocratic society forms a natural subject for Lim Joo-Jock's treatment. Vichitvong na Pombhejra's account of Thailand is basically a summary of economic developments, with little hint of the political implications. Frank Frost has the last word on Indochina refugees.

As for my last word: the appearance of this worthwhile collection of essays, covering events in 1979, is "better late than never". But it would be even more useful, and still more welcome, had it been published early in the first half, rather than in the middle of the second half, of the following year.

John Girling  
*Australian National University*