

SIAM WANTS TO BE ALONE

IN RECENT years many people have supposed that Siam would welcome the rise of an all-powerful Japan in East Asia. The fact that she abstained from voting on the League of Nations resolution which condemned Japan's action in Manchuria has not been forgotten. Her purchase of warships in Japan and Italy has given rise to fears that a military line-up was in the offing. Finally certain sources of friction between Siam and French Indo-China have been made much of, and, on the other hand, the old Kra Canal rumor has been brought to life at intervals as a threat to the British naval base at Singapore.

Admittedly some of these points have given rise to questions very difficult to answer and therefore more subject to speculation than to direct interpretation. But during the past few months the foreign policy of Siam has become much less nebulous. This is due in part to the fact that the denunciation of all the old foreign treaties, together with the signing of new agreements giving the coun-

try full jurisdictional and fiscal autonomy, has at last been completed. The new treaties make it possible for Siam to proceed with the task of national reconstruction without outside interference, to impose customs duties and other forms of taxation freely, levy military requisitions and claim as citizens all those born within her boundaries.

The Japanese occupation of Hainan Island has, moreover, given Siam reason to pause. French Indo-China has been drawn into the danger zone, and should Japan one day pounce upon this rich territory, there is little doubt as to what the fate of Siam might be. In any event, if Japan meets with anything approaching success in her China campaign, efforts will be made to draw Siam directly within her sphere of influence.

The Siamese now welcome every new decision to strengthen the Singapore naval base, and consider it in no way detrimental to the interests of Siam.

Expionents of the theory that there is a growing hostility toward

England in Siam might do well to study the prospects of a serious breach between the two in the light of economics. The Siamese government keeps its currency and treasury reserves in British securities, and the Ministry of Finance in Bangkok traditionally maintains a British financial adviser recommended by his own government. The latest available trade returns show that 84.56 per cent of the exports of Siam go to Singapore, Penang and other British ports, whereas only 3.49 per cent go to Japan. Moreover, Britain enjoys more than half of the import trade, selling Siam nearly twice as much as does Japan.

Perhaps the fairest approach to the question of Japanese influence is to inquire what part other countries are playing in the program of reconstruction or in the realm of government. The adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is traditionally an American, and, as noted previously, an adviser on finance is brought from London. In addition, nearly all the foreign technical experts in the government service are Americans, while there is still a certain amount of British and French influence in the law courts. The only Japanese adviser employed by the

government is an economic expert, and rumors that others are associated with the army and navy are groundless. Siamese army and navy officers may obtain their training in German, British or Danish schools, but beyond that all foreign influence has been done away with in the services. If Siam purchases her warships from Japan and Italy, the reason is said to be that ships bought anywhere else would not come within her limited budget for armament.

The most critical problem in Siam from a domestic point of view is that arising from the presence of 2,500,000 Chinese in the country. The Chinese are the traders and money-lenders of Siam, while the Siamese may roughly be separated into the peasant and upper classes: an alien minority thus virtually constitutes the middle class.

The most frequently heard charge against the Chinese is that they have shouldered the Siamese farmer with debt and all too often taken advantage of him in the rice market. The government sees a cure in the establishment of farmers' cooperatives, where money may be borrowed at a low rate of interest, and in various other enterprises. The Siamese are not a

drastic people, and their ambition is to handle the question diplomatically and with as little friction as possible. In preference to driving the Chinese out, they would rather absorb them racially, but in recent years the tendency toward intermarriage has become much less pronounced. This is laid at the doors of nationalistic feeling among the Chinese and their consequent unwillingness to

look upon themselves as citizens of Siam. Educational restrictions imposed by the Siamese government now require all Chinese schools to devote a certain amount of time to the teaching of the Siamese language, in the belief that the Chinese cannot otherwise become an integral part of the new order of things.—*William E. Fisher, condensed from Asia.*

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STUDYING POLITICS

THE training in politics offered by the universities nowadays is a mixture of theory and idealism with hard-boiled actuality and practical experience. Professors urge students to pick a party and align themselves with it. The University of Chicago uses the municipal elections as a laboratory. The state of Illinois puts into each voting place a neutral observer called a "deputy of the court," and as far back as 1924 the faculty persuaded Cook County to swear in a corps of students of political science as deputies. Distributed among the toughest wards, some students were slugged, some thrown out bodily. One, telephoning news of an irregularity to headquarters, glanced up to find a revolver pointed at his head. Chicago students still serve at every election, not only as deputies but as watchers for their parties. In fact, these days some of the watchers are co-eds.

Many of the professors themselves have varied their studies with a whirl at politics. Dr. Guy S. Ford, president of the University of Minnesota and a teacher in the Political courses, has had government administrative experience. Dean Joseph R. Hayden of Michigan served his turn as deputy governor of the Philippines under Frank Murphy. Almost all of the political-science faculty at Chicago has taken a hand in municipal politics. Columbia professors have been making, year after year, contributions to good government.—*Will Irwin, from The American Mercury.*