

WHAT INDO-CHINA MEANS TO JAPAN

By O. M. GREEN in a "Home Service" Talk for the BBC

NOW that Japan is in possession of Indo-China, it is interesting to try to sum up what the possession of Indo-China means to Japan—on both sides of the ledger. For possession it is without doubt for all practical purposes. The figment that French sovereignty in Indo-China is to be respected has just as much value as the nominal independence of Manchukuo to disguise the fact that both are now, temporarily, parts of the Japanese Empire.

Indo-China is indeed a rich prize, one of the fairest territories in Asia. The French have always taken special pride in it as the brightest jewel of their Empire. They have laid out fine roads through it in all directions besides fifteen hundred miles of railway, and have stimulated agriculture and kept good order. The French have a happy knack of getting on with the peoples

of their colonies, and the different tribes which make up Indo-China's population have been happy and prosperous under their rule. Saigon in the south, approached from the sea by seventy miles of narrow winding river, reminds me of some beautiful provincial French town, with lofty trees over-arching the streets, fine shops and cafés, and a handsome opera house. The French Government used to send a succession of Parisian theatrical companies to Saigon all the year round. I remember a Frenchman saying to me: "They roll upon gold, those people in Saigon." And the natural wealth of Indo-China justified his envious comment.

Rich Deposits

More than twice the size of Japan proper, Indo-China has rich deposits of coal, besides copper, iron and zinc; all things that Japan badly needs. The vast plains round Saigon produce more than enough rice to satisfy all the needs of Japan, whose own harvests have been declining alarmingly in the past two



"LIKE SOME BEAUTIFUL PROVINCIAL FRENCH TOWN": A view of Saigon, showing the Municipal Theatre

years owing to the lack of labour and fertilisers due to the war. Indo-China also produces considerable quantities of rubber, and its vast forests teem with rare and valuable trees.

As a French colony its trade was so closely bound up with that of France that it did not mean much to the outside world, although the Chinese, as almost everywhere in Asia, had a great hand in its development and made huge fortunes there. The Chinese city of Cholon, about two miles from Saigon, used to be entirely plastered with electric lights and neon signs at night time, for the Chinese love brilliant illumination, and a prosperous shopman covers his shop inside and out with electric bulbs.

But now Japan reckons that all this wealth will be hers; and if she were ultimately left in possession of Indo-China it would certainly go far to compensate for her losses in the war with China. The fertile soil of Indo-China will be taught to produce all sorts of things it never thought of; the patient natives will be driven to work as they never worked before in their easy-going lives under the tolerant French; the lights of Cholon will be cut to the most economic minimum; its business will be re-

constituted (as has happened in occupied China) on lines of Sino-Japanese co-operation which in the Japanese dictionary means that they take the profits while the Chinese do the work.

"Sad, Ugly Change"

And the terraces of the Saigon cafés, where stout Frenchmen and daintily-dressed ladies sipped their evening absinthe and cassis, were certainly not built as a background for uncouth and arrogant Japanese soldiers.

You can see what the strategic importance of Indo-China is by one glance at the map. Saigon would never make much of a naval station, owing to that narrow river which I mentioned just now. But the wide plains surrounding it are ideal for aerodromes, and Camranh Bay, about a hundred and fifty miles to the north, is one of the finest natural harbours in the world. Within a radius of under a thousand miles from southern Indo-China lie the Philippines, Borneo, the Dutch East Indies and Singapore, that maritime Clapham Junction of the Far East; so that Indo-China if well fortified would be a serious threat to the chief trade routes of East Asia and down to Australia and New Zealand.



"HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS?"

PARAMOUNT PICTURES are releasing two big pictures at Christmas time. Commencing on Christmas Day at the Embassy Theatre, Auckland, is their "SKYLARK," with Claudette Colbert, Ray Milland and Brian Aherne. It's very smart and very modern, 'cos there's a little bit of SKYLARK in every good, little girl. . . . The other picture is "NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH," with Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard. It opens at the Empire Theatre, Dunedin, on Christmas Day, and at the Regent Theatre, Wellington, on Boxing Day, and it's the funniest Bob Hope picture yet. . . . So take time out from trouble and see these happy and hilarious holiday hits . . . either at the premieres or in your own town.

(Both Films Recommended by Censor for Adults.)



★ EVERY UNIT has its job to do, and that of the Ordnance Workshops is an important one. This picture, recently received from the N.Z.E.F. in the Middle East, shows two soldiers "putting out the shingle" ★