



assumed that in Korea and Indo-China, in Persia, Egypt and Burma we have reached at least a tacit basis for stability, then Malaya may well be the field where statesmen will be most urgently tested.

Up to a point, Britain's record in Malaya was excellent, and its fruit is, writes Dr. Purcell, a fund of goodwill which is by no means inexhaustible but which gives good hope of co-operation in the future. Before World War II a reasonable basis had been worked out for combining British direction with an element of local influence. The system depended on the wisdom and experience of the civil service, rather than on niceties of constitutional arrangement. It depended, too, on the assumption that Malaya was a country for Malays, even though the wealth which made progress possible came largely from the labour of immigrant Chinese and Indians. Malaya was, in fact, becoming a plural society; but the resulting political problems were masked by the fact that, in very broad terms, government was a relatively mild and benevolent autocracy, whose proceedings were not too far removed from the will of the governed.

by Professor F. L. W. WOOD

WHEN in a hundred years' time—assuming that no lunatic has meantime unleashed science's power to destroy life on this planet—our grandsons look back enquiringly on the past half century, what in that perspective, will appear to have been its major crises and achievements? It is easy guessing when none may check the answer; yet I suspect that Hitlerism, the triumph of atomic science, and even the much-proclaimed cold war may find a wholly new perspective. Maybe atom bombs will have become subjects for impatiently read schoolboy essays, the tensions of Europe of no more moment than quarrels between petty Italian states before the *Risorgimento*, and the cold war a misunderstood prelude to one of those cosmic movements which from time to time cause human development to change direction.

For our grandchildren the inescapable and salient fact of the early 20th Century may prove to be the convulsive rejection by the world of the tutelage imposed upon its mind and economy by a minority in Western Europe and their heirs in North America—a rejection made inevitable by the paradoxical combination of vitality with decline in relative strength of Western culture.

The weakness of the West may have precipitated revolt; but it was Western values that made revolt possible, and the essence of Western culture may fuse with much that is non-Western to form the dominant civilisation of the next few centuries. Or it may not. The West may use its declining strength to hold its privileged position till death or victory. In that event the new synthesis, whatever its ultimate character, will be forged in bitterness and mutual reaction.

As happens so often in the greatest human crises the decision is unlikely to be deliberately made by well-informed leaders. It will more probably be hammered out in day to day actions of pre-occupied men dealing with an endless flow of complex human problems or reached as a by-product of conflicts which in themselves have only short-term importance. The decisions which will govern our grandchildren's lives are in part being made in London and Geneva, in Washington and Moscow and Peking. In part they are being forged on the spot in Africa and Asia where a new synthesis is being sought between East and West. In both fields—that of high politics and local administration—one must presume that the pattern which emerges will be profoundly influenced, over a long period, by currents of opinion, particularly in Western countries. If that is not true,

then the West is no longer itself. Hence the extreme importance of accurate information, not only about the activities of policy-formers in capital cities, but about what is happening in areas of tension.

Of these areas of tension few have greater immediate importance than Malaya, whether one reckons in terms of strategy, of the finances of the sterling area, of intensity of local problems, or of proximity to further trouble. Yet it has faded from the headlines. Dr. Victor Purcell has accordingly done a major service in rushing through the press a vigorous, tight-packed, disturbing book.* Admittedly, it has been written in anger by one who believes that disastrous mistakes have been made and covered up by a screen of complacent publicity. It is rare for a Cambridge don, with such a record in the public service, to speak so personally and so vehemently. Yet vehemence is only the climax to a scholarly presentation of material, which must be patiently examined by all who take in the least seriously their problems of citizenship. If it may be

The main political criticism of the old régime was voiced by Governor Sir Frederick Weld in 1880: "Nothing we have done so far has taught [the people]



GENERAL SIR GERALD TEMPLER, lately High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of the Federation of Malaya

*MALAYA: Communist or Free? by Victor Purcell; Gallancz, London, 1954. English price 15/-. Dr. Purcell was born in 1896. He was a member of the Malayan Civil Service from 1921 to 1946: his positions included those of Protector of Chinese and Director-General of Information. On the liberation of Malaya he was principal adviser on Chinese affairs. After retiring from the Civil Service he became an officer of United Nations, and was secretary to the Working Group of 12 nations on Asia and the Far East. He visited Malaya for UN in 1947, and has paid two visits since then—in 1950 and 1952. He is a Chinese scholar, speaking several dialects; and he also speaks Malay. His books on the Chinese of South-East Asia are standard authorities in their field. Since 1949 Victor Purcell has been Lecturer in Far Eastern History at the University of Cambridge.