

to govern themselves; we are merely teaching them to co-operate with us and govern under our guidance." This statement, writes Dr. Purcell, could have been made with almost equal truth in 1941; yet in spite of weaknesses, he adds that, seen in perspective, "the Malaya of between the wars was free, cultivated and even glorious."

Nevertheless, Malaya for just over six years has been torn by a civil war which has reached a stalemate, and where Western statesmanship appears to be failing as ignominiously as Western arms. That, on the critical side, is the thesis of Dr. Purcell's book. On the positive side, he believes that he has the answer. And his anger, which at times flames from the closely-printed pages, arises from his conviction that the much publicised and praised régime of General Templer has, in fact, been an intolerable intensification in a crucial area of all the worst elements which have marred British colonial policy.

Dr. Purcell's case is clear. The terrorists can not be eliminated by force alone. If pressed they merely withdraw further into the jungle, and can without any difficulty recruit all the men they can use. They can only be eliminated by curing the political and economic tensions on which they live. This has nothing to do with Communism, though the terrorists preach Marxist-Leninist doctrine, with a Chinese slant; nor is it as yet a Malayan national movement. On the contrary, in Dr. Purcell's view, it is quite essential to create a Malayan national sentiment, which cannot be done under the wing of a military régime, however professedly benevolent. Experience—in Malaya and elsewhere—shows conclusively that a "colonial" régime, however reforming, cannot win gratitude, develop responsibility, or heal communal strife. The only conceivable policy, so it is argued, is to throw power and responsibility together where they belong: to the people of the territory concerned. Admittedly, the slow build up of experienced personnel would be desirable, but the time has passed. Delay encourages suspicion. Admittedly, too, there are economic risks, and injustices may be inflicted.

Yet, Dr. Purcell argues with hammer blows, the risks are greater if we try to solve 20th Century problems by the methods of Lord Palmerston. One cannot destroy the emergence of Asia merely by closing the eyes; but one can turn a gang of terrorists into popular heroes by ignorantly insisting that they represent a national movement. The new Asia is a plain fact; one could almost rephrase Dr. Purcell's argument by saying that one must deal with it either according to the spirit of Hitler or of Burke and John Stuart Mill. He has, in fact, written a pugnacious appeal to the West to deal

with its human problems according to its own best thinking—humane, freedom loving, honest. If, he adds, this is also good business, is that a disadvantage? Burke would have understood the argument.

On any given detail Dr. Purcell for anything I know may be wrong. Even the general argument of his book may be modified by further experience and criticism. Yet it can be ignored only at manifest peril alike to our spiritual values and material prospects. The British peoples, of whom we are one, must search their consciences and dig back into their own experiences to frame a policy in relation to the most momentous developments of our time. In dealing with Malaya, and with Asia that lies behind it, have we learnt sufficiently from our experiences with the Thirteen Colonies, with Ireland, India, Egypt, and the Dutch in South Africa? Have we faced honestly the implications of our own democratic Christian and humane principles? Have we even heeded the platitude imbibed from every text-book that Western civilisation is based on science, on the dispassionate study of facts, not on the passionate demand that facts shall conform to our wishes and preconceptions? Whatever one's judgment may be on the individual problems of Malaya, there is need for patience and wisdom as well as strength in handling the current crisis. Within the last few weeks there have emerged glimpses of common ground amid the clash of open recrimination, and those who are to build on it must take Dr. Purcell seriously.



"A 'Colonial' regime, however reforming, cannot win gratitude, develop responsibility, or heal communal strife." ABOVE: Captured Communist guerilla under guard. BELOW: Chinese from villages which sheltered Communist bandits being "screened" after a raid in the area

