

Letters

Studies in Southeast Asia

Under the headline "Defense Department Ethnography" (Book Reviews, 31 May, p. 983), Edmund Leach chose to suggest that *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, which I edited, is a political document, and then to review it by the standards of ethnography.

Many of the theoretical bases for studies of this type have come from Leach's work, a debt acknowledged repeatedly in the book, but the task set for the book was not the ethnography of Southeast Asian tribes. Some new ethnographic data are presented in areas where previously published information is slim, and some ethnographic background is included. This does not mean that the book pretends to be a "guide-book or gazetteer." Gazetteers tend to emphasize discreteness, isolation, and independence of "tribal" groups which are intimately tied to other groups, and one point of the book, as stated in the introduction, was to examine the relationships between such groups and central governments. The professional anthropologists among the contributors concentrated on describing and analyzing these relationships, and have published, or will publish, their major ethnographic contributions elsewhere.

Much of the recent stimulus for change in relationships between tribes and the Southeast Asian governments within whose territories they live has come from outsiders. American agencies and other governments have played major roles in these processes. I feel it important to document motives and intentions of the actors in these changing relationships. Some countries, including the People's Republic of China and Cambodia, did not answer my requests for information on minority policies, and we had to make do with what could be gleaned from outside sources. In spite of public interest and debate on Southeast Asian affairs, little firsthand work had been done on topics covered in the book when the articles were collected in 1965.

If the selection of contributors was in

part "political" rather than academic, as Leach states, it is because the book deals with political subjects. He incorrectly suggests that U.S. military interests dictated the choice of areas covered. Southeast Asia exists as an area within which there are cultural, linguistic, historical, and political connections, all of which have been the subjects of specialized books, independent of U.S. military interests. The inclusion of a study of China's minority policies was justified first by ethnic similarities (many tribal minorities in Southeast Asia are small fractions of larger populations in China), and second by the fact that Chinese national minority policies established models followed elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The active role of China in influencing Southeast Asian minorities was not as well documented in 1965 as it is now. The reasons for including papers on Malaysian Borneo were not, as Leach believes, that "SEATO was offering a military confrontation to Indonesia along the borders of Sarawak." Crush Malaysia and Confrontation policies were proclaimed initially by Sukarno. Malaysian response was not through SEATO, but through use of her own troops, assisted by fellow Commonwealth members. As Harrison shows in his article on Sarawak, the ethnically diverse population of Borneo poses important and interesting problems for the development of Malaysian national unity. These problems existed before and persist after Confrontation.

Leach correctly says the book includes papers prepared for a conference financed by the U.S. Department of Defense. The other papers were originally presented at a meeting of the American Anthropological Association, or were solicited by me after these two meetings. The choice of authors and topics was mine; neither the Department of Defense nor the American Anthropological Association exercised or sought to exercise control over the form or content of the book. Fieldwork on which 18 of the 21 papers were based was not supported by the Department of Defense.

Leach suggests we judge the quality

of the articles by the briefness of Mote's stay among the Yunnanese of Thailand. Perhaps I misled Leach in my too brief mention of the circumstances of this fieldwork. Mote is professor of Chinese history at Princeton University, reads and writes Chinese, and is fluent in several Chinese dialects. He gained his fluency with the Yunnanese dialect during several years of study and residence in southwest China. He spent 2 years working on Thai government policies for education of Thai Chinese minorities. His stay in the particular area he described was brief, but he brought with him more extensive training and experience than any other observer of these people, who, unfortunately, have yet to be studied with the thoroughness modern ethnographic standards would dictate. The other contributors have all had from 1 to 20 years' experience in the areas of which they write.

Leach implies throughout his review that the book is somehow a justification of U.S. military policy. The book does not advocate U.S. or anyone else's policy, though it does describe policies. The contributors to the book represent a spectrum of political opinions, and although I have taken no poll, I know many of them are more dovelike than hawkish. I applaud *Science's* continued airing of questions of relationships between science and government. I had hoped, however, that the editors and contributors would refrain from condemnation of a serious work on the basis of presumed political affiliation.

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College Image Urged for Vocational Training

Abelson's editorial, "Toward better vocational education" (16 Aug., p. 635), should be read by personnel in all types of institutions of higher learning. I suggest that experimental technical and mechanical institutes be established as part of certain first-class colleges and universities so that vocational or occupational training would receive a respectable image. The admission requirements for drop-out students should be only the desire to learn a gainful occupation. The institutions with 1- and 2-year curriculums would offer an associate degree to those who desire to work