

a monstrous order were to be avoided, complications which would have created more agonizing horrors than the religious massacres that followed Indian Independence. And for that withdrawal the public had been prepared if not consulted. But, even now, there seems no preparation by Johnson for what must inevitably come: sooner or later America must get out of Vietnam, win or lose, and what then will be the meaning of this bloody drain of men and treasure? China will still be there, still Communist, and much stronger. And China will have to be lived with.

But it's not only the discussion of Vietnam that makes this book worth reading, for it also lays bare the complexity of the President, and his essential weakness. What becomes apparent is Johnson's distrust of intellectual capacity. What a loss America has had in the great exodus from Washington of those outstanding intellectuals whom Kennedy grouped around him. Fortunately, they seem to be re-forming in New York and Boston, ready doubtless for 1968, when, maybe, conviction and courage in a President will once more be combined with high intelligence. This book spells out the need and, after reading it, one could wish it could be sooner.

Geyelin's book also raises larger issues. How long can the West go on putting supreme power in the hands of self-

taught, amateur politicians? Kennedy had had some training in political and economic theory, and so has Wilson; but this is unusual. The dominant figures of the West since the war—Truman, Eisenhower, Churchill, Macmillan, de Gaulle, Adenauer—were totally devoid of strict intellectual training in politics and economics, as is Johnson. But look to the other side—Stalin, Khrushchev, Kosygin, Mao, Chou En-lai, Ho Chi Minh. In the practical arts of day-to-day politics they may not be so adept, and their blunders many, but who is winning and who is losing? All these were, or are, men rigorously trained in political theory as well as in political tactics. Such men are professionals in the strictest sense. They have scarcely ever missed a major strategic opportunity, whereas the West's golden chance to exploit the rift between Russia and China seems to have been lost for the sake of General Ky.

In a short review, it is hard to be fair; time and time again Geyelin stresses the great qualities which Johnson possesses and which, at times, even operate in the world of foreign affairs. Maybe the President will cut his losses, change his route, and find his way to the summit. If not, America will suffer deeply, both within and without. Reading this book would be salutary not only for the President, but for the nation. It points the way with inexorable logic.

a biography: it is an intensely human portrayal, not only of Thant as a world leader but also of Burma's traditions and recent political history. There is a keen sense of balance in the author's treatment of Thant's family and educational background, his political ideas and methods of work, and his important role in both Burmese politics and at the U.N.

Behind Thant's serene and warm exterior is a dynamic diplomat with a pragmatic mind. Formerly a school-teacher and journalist, he was for many years Burma's top administrator—most importantly as secretary to the Prime Minister and secretary to the Economic and Social Board. He had traveled extensively before he became Burma's Permanent Representative to the U.N. in 1957. According to Mrs. Bingham, Thant's "view of man is based on Buddhist precepts, that there is more evil in man than good, but that with change being a universal law there is always a chance for improvement."

Like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thant likes to describe the world community—in this case the U.N.—as "a common soul in this vast body." For that reason he takes pride in playing the role of a catalyst in such events as the signing of the Partial Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the settlement of the West New Guinea dispute. Said he: "Patriotism, national pride, or ideological conviction can and must take new and more creative forms."

With the inclusion of more than sixty Afro-Asian members in the U.N., the General Assembly has been elevated to a position of vast importance. At present, 85 per cent of the daily operation of the Secretariat concerns social, economic, and educational endeavors in the developing areas. Thant has stated in unequivocal terms that he cannot remain neutral in this gigantic struggle. He is considerably distressed that \$120 billion is spent annually on military items by Communist and Western powers. While giving support to socioeconomic improvement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the Secretary General remains uninvolved in the Cold War confrontations because both sides are in his judgment "guilty of vast oversimplification."

One can read Mrs. Bingham's sympathetic but objective biography of U Thant with steady pleasure. Though not written in an academic manner, it draws upon most of the important works on Burma by such well-known scholars as Richard Butwell, John F. Cady, J. S. Furnivall, Mi Mi Khaing, Hugh Tinker, Frank Trager, and Shway Yoe (Sir James Scott). Moreover, the author shows a great deal of human understanding of the traditionally tranquil Burmese way of life and the zigzagging path of the country's political history since the nineteenth century.

A View Toward Change

U Thant: The Search for Peace, by June Bingham (Knopf, 300 pp. \$5.95), sees the present Secretary General as a dynamic, pragmatic diplomat whose "view of man is based on Buddhist precepts." K. K. L. Kuliang is a political sociologist and Asian expert.

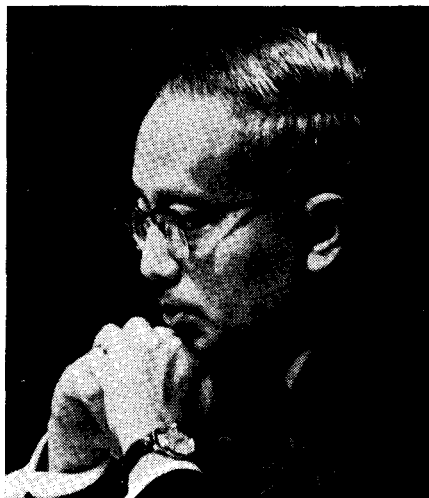
By K. K. L. KULIANG

SEVERAL brilliant biographies on the life and work of Dag Hammarskjöld have appeared since his untimely death in September 1961.

But June Bingham's excellent book on U Thant is the first to appear in any language. Surprisingly enough, Hammarskjöld is reported to have remarked to Ralph Bunche about the Burmese diplomat: "There's a man who would make a good Secretary General."

Mrs. Bingham's credentials for her undertaking are impressive. As wife of Congressman Jonathan B. Bingham, who has been deputy director of the Point Four Program and American Ambassador to the U.N., she became ac-

quainted with Burma and some of its political leaders, and has had ample opportunity to watch Thant at work and to observe diplomatic activities at the U.N. These unique experiences are reinforced by research and interviews. [see SR May 28]. The result is more than



—Vytas Valaitis (Pix).

U Thant—"a catalyst."

Stars at Night But No Electric Light

A Giant Step, by Clyde T. Ellis (Random House, 267 pp. \$5), records the struggles of the REA and the NRECA to bring electric power to America's rural population. Theodore C. Sorensen, SR editor-at-large and former special counsel to the President, is author of "Kennedy."

By THEODORE C. SORENSEN

ONE OF my clearest childhood recollections is of my father addressing the dedication of an early Nebraska rural electrification project (REA). He illustrated his point with a story his children found only fairly funny—the tale, herein abbreviated for the sake of more sophisticated readers, of the farmer berated by his wife for purchasing a pair of overalls some twelve inches too long. In the dark of the night, upset by their quarrel, the wife found the overalls and her scissors and snipped off a foot from each pant-leg. So did the farmer. So did his mother-in-law, hoping to restore peace. In the morning all discovered that their good intentions had been ruined by a lack of cooperation—and cooperation, concluded my father, who had helped found Nebraska's unique public power system, was the theme of REA.

It is also the theme of this book. The struggles of American public power development in general, and of the Rural Electrification Administration and its programs in particular, are here related with understandable pride and prejudice by one of their foremost champions, Clyde Ellis, general manager of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) since its founding in 1942, and for the previous four years a young Congressman from Arkansas. Ellis provides a readable, personalized, "inside" account of the battles lost as well as those that were won in the process of this nation's taking "a giant step."

That the electrification of American farms was a giant step is no longer denied by the private power companies who, with few exceptions, openly fought the REA and the NRECA every inch of the way. Rural America in 1934 had many of the attributes of an undeveloped nation. Nine out of ten farms had no electricity. Days were spent in needless drudgery, nights in near-darkness. Franklin Roosevelt, George Norris, Sam

Rayburn, and a host of others—including Congressman Lyndon Johnson—fashioned in the REA the instrument by which federal credit and leadership, working through local cooperatives and power districts, could revolutionize life on the farm. Today, with power lines serving the most remote and humble farm family in America, nations that despaired of ever developing their own countryside now look to the REA experience as a model.

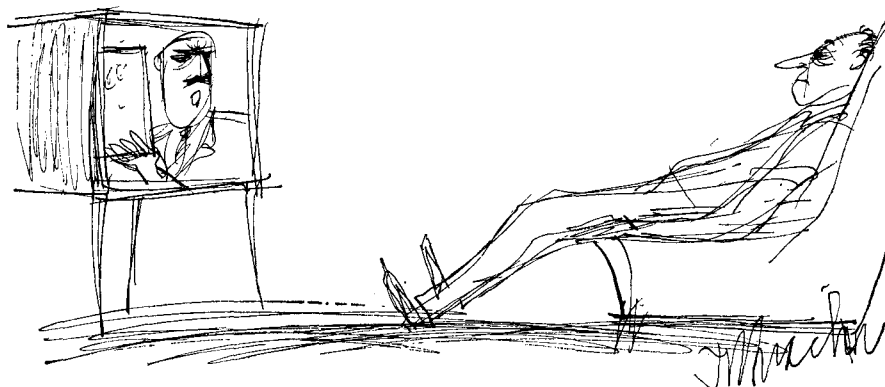
Indeed, the steps taken since 1961 to "export" the REA pattern form one of the most interesting and important parts of this book. In Latin America, in Vietnam, and elsewhere in Asia and the developing world, REA and NRECA specialists have been at work, establishing cooperatives, building projects, and demonstrating American idealism, compassion, and talent in a way no ambassador or Voice of America broadcast could match. Ellis recalls his role in helping initiate these efforts, and his many visits to these areas. The pride he expresses can be shared by all his fellow citizens.

These fascinating episodes in American history—particularly the birth-pangs suffered by REA at the outset and its buffeting under Ezra Taft Benson—are here set forth in a low-key, dry, and often colorless fashion that relies on the facts themselves to provide the drama. Indeed, the book in many ways is like Clyde Ellis himself—modest for a man who has worked with five Presidents; uncompromising but soft-spoken; dedicated but easygoing; more intent upon proving a point than upon leavening his message with humor or human interest. Thus a potentially hilarious tale of how

Ellis and President Truman included identical paragraphs in their speeches at a dam dedication, and a potentially moving account of a poverty-stricken Latin American farmhand offering his child for sale to Ellis's group of touring AID advisers, lack the elaboration which a professional writer might have offered.

Clyde Ellis makes no pretense of being a professional writer. Nor does he pretend to live up to the stereotype of the typical high-powered lobbyist who dispenses vast funds or ugly threats. Nor, finally, does he pretend to be the naïve idealist who wants his crusade untarnished by political considerations, pressure tactics, and the use of such devices as the filibuster or the unauthorized disclosure of government memoranda. Ellis is, as this book makes clear, unabashedly a single-interest lobbyist. That is both the book's strength and its weakness. Some will complain that he overstates his case and oversimplifies the problems, that he magnifies both the virtues of REA's friends and the vices of REA's enemies. But others will profit from his firsthand insight into the operations of political, public relations, and, especially, legislative campaigns. It is to his credit that he recounts those efforts which ended in defeat as well as his successes.

IT IS further to his credit that this book looks ahead as well as back. In many ways the original goals of REA have been all but fulfilled. The farms are electrified, the Agency is secure, the cooperatives are flourishing. But Ellis and his associates are not resting on their accomplishments. As long as farms in other parts of the world need help with their electrification programs, as long as poverty continues to scar large parts of rural America, as long as the need for more sources of credit and electric power in the future concern NRECA members, and as long as the great potential of electric power pooling and interconnections in the country lies largely untapped, Clyde Ellis will not be satisfied. Neither, may I add, will I.



"Independent research having established that the attention level of any audience that would watch this show is practically nil, I must ask you to pay particular attention while I repeat this commercial message for the third time."