

COLOMBO OPENS NEW CHAPTER FOR COMMONWEALTH

In the Senate Building at Colombo, the Commonwealth Conference ends in an atmosphere of neighbourliness and goodwill. Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin and his colleagues have brought to a successful conclusion a meeting that, in Pandit Nehru's own words, has opened a new chapter in Commonwealth relations. The most important decision is the setting up of two Commonwealth committees - a preliminary step in the establishment of a permanent Commonwealth secretariat; a miniature United Nations. One of these committees will operate the Colombo plan for the economic development of South-East Asia, the adoption of which is the Conference's biggest achievement. Welcome, too, are the obvious signs that the three Asiatic nations - India, Pakistan and Ceylon - are now proud to be full and equal members of the Commonwealth family.

Meanwhile, from further East - come pictures that tell of the doom of one Asiatic nation and the dawn of another. Straggling remnants of the Seventh Chinese Nationalist Army are pouring across the Indo-China border in ever-increasing numbers. 25,000 are interned in ramshackle camps, where they eke out a miserable existence - without hope, without a future.

Further South, in Saigon, capital of Indo-China, a new future dawns for the 20 million people of this strife-torn corner of South-East Asia. France has given virtual sovereignty to former Emperor Bao-Dai and his Viet-Nam Government, whose rule will extend over almost half of the country. Bao-Dai (native for the "great protector") will have 100,000 French troops to help him in his bitter civil war against the Communist-controlled Viet-Min rebels, who are controlling the rest of the country. Indo-China, a strategic centre, vital to the defence of Southern Asia, may find in self-rule a solution to its internal differences.