

The Last Emperor by Arnold C. Brackman

(Scribner's; 360 pp.; \$12.50)

Jeffrey L. Lant

In the aftermath of World War I a series of great empires collapsed. Millions had suffered through that convulsive struggle and millions more suffered in the chaos that followed it. Among them were those imperial figures who were the embodiment of the *ancien régime*. The mercurial Kaiser of Germany, the irresolute Czar of Russia, the inexperienced Emperor of Austria, all had power that—bound by limitations of personality and circumstance—they were incapable of using well. It therefore seemed fitting they should be cast out with the systems they had headed.

None laid down power willingly or ceased to want it back. Their metier was kingship; they were capable of nothing else. Those who survived their fall spent the remainder of often long lives in the hope of restoration. Without their crowns they suffered from lost identity. But, as it turned out, no European royal house was ever restored.

The story of the last Manchu Emperor of China, P'u Yi, the Lord of Ten Thousand Years, was dramatically different. At the end of 1908, with the death of the ruthless Dowager Empress Tsu Hsi, P'u Yi, a child of three, ascended the Dragon Throne, only to be ousted by a republic coup directed by Sun Yat-sen four years later. By the Articles of Favorable Treatment, as they were called, the child-emperor kept his title and was given a sizable annual income paid by the new government. He also maintained his residence in the Forbidden City. There the Manchu writ continued to run and the bizarre regime flourished. It was a regime of eunuchs whom the Emperor had beaten to amuse himself and of concubines neglected by the homosexual P'u Yi. Dazzling wealth combined with endless intrigues aimed at the obsessively pursued goal of restoration.

In 1917 P'u Yi was actually restored for a short time. But the Manchus had no effective power base and no substantial military support. The royalist counter-coup failed, P'u Yi returned to the Forbidden City under the tutelage of a

Sinophile British instructor, and there followed years of enforced if gilded uselessness, until yet another coup forced him to flee from Peking in 1924.

Still his career did not follow that of other exiled monarchs. The involvement of the Japanese in the affairs of China made the last emperor a very useful pawn, especially when Japanese militarists wished to take over Manchuria, home of the Manchus. P'u Yi was the figurehead for the Japanese puppet régime of Manchukuo, and there he was Emperor from 1933 until the Russians captured him at the end of World War II.

Even then, however, his usefulness was not at an end. Both Stalin and Mao took advantage of his unique standing as head of one of the five historic peoples of China. Thus the curious career of the last Manchu Emperor ended, admittedly after extensive brainwashing, with membership in the Chinese Communist Party and the free gift of his imperial seal to Chairman Mao. After a short period of peace he either died a natural death or was killed in the bloody disturbances that marked the Cultural Revolution of 1968.

Arnold Brackman, a journalist who covered the Tokyo War Trials in which P'u Yi was a major witness, has dealt with this amazing odyssey very well indeed. P'u Yi emerges from this thoughtful study as an intelligent but weak man trapped by events he never controlled, motivated first by his desire to return to power in the Forbidden City and then by the simple will to survive.

Survival is the theme of the story. Throughout his life he was in danger of assassination. If it was convenient for some to keep him alive, it was expedient for many others to kill him. He was rarely a free man, usually a pawn, often a prisoner, and always ruled by fear. And yet the man portrayed by Brackman, although connected with despicable men and events, is not despicable. The reader is moved to understanding, pity, and even a grudging sort of admiration for a figure who might easily

have been portrayed as nothing more than cruel, selfish, and empty-headed. Brackman's book has at least saved P'u Yi from that.

Briefly Noted

Islam and the Arab World edited by Bernard Lewis (Knopf; 360 pp.; \$35.00)

Under the general editorship of Bernard Lewis of Princeton University, a Long-term Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, thirteen noted authorities in Arab and Islamic studies write on the civilization of Islam. The brilliantly written text provides the reader with a thorough understanding of the effects of the great wave of Arab expansion that followed the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D. The story of the peoples and cultures that evolved with the Arabization and Islamization of a vast empire, with Eastern boundaries in China and Western boundaries in Spain, is presented in an exciting narrative. It covers the origin, history, and meaning of the Islamic faith, the cultural and social development of the cities that came under Islam, its arts and great scientific contributions. Special attention is given the golden age of Moorish Spain and the flowering Iranian civilization. Of particular interest is "Jewellers With Words," the chapter on the heritage of Islamic literature that describes the great influence the Koran had on literary thought and style. Although considered above human literature and inimitable, Arab writers were inspired to incorporate its moral principles into their writings, and philologists became active as they sought to explain the Holy Book's obscure passages and the prophetic traditions. The final chapter, "Islam Today," describes the clash with Christian Europe during the past two hundred years. The analysis of the far-reaching moral and intellectual crisis caused by

defeat in battle and the loss of land, and the subsequent search for reform and resurgence, gives a clearer perspective on the actions and attitudes of many Arab leaders today. Without doubt, *Islam and the Arab World* is one of the most comprehensive and beautiful surveys of Islamic history and culture available in a single volume (495 illustrations).

—Sandra Garcia

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Correspondence (from p. 2)

Isthmus, including Panama, and direct its energies toward constructive patterns. It will serve as a catalyst for the restoration of the national will of the United States and of its true status as a great power in the struggle for the defense of freedom and civilization.

The people of the United States have had enough ambiguity and sophistry in the conduct of their foreign affairs and are looking for clear thinking and resolute leadership in the highest echelons of our government....

Daniel J. Flood
House of Representatives
Congress of the United States

Martha Bennett Stiles Responds:

Let me begin to answer Congressman Flood by quoting, first, the *Webster's International Dictionary* (2nd edition) definition of "connive"; second, a 1966 history of Panama by a reputable and disinterested European; and third, "U.S. Policy Toward Panama, 1903-Present: Questions of Recognition and Diplomatic Relations and Instances of U.S. Intervention," a report prepared at the request of Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Jack B. Kubisch by Drs. Ronald D. Landa and Mary P. Chapman, Bureau of Public Affairs.

1. "Connive: 1. to feign ignorance or to be disregarding, now especially of something which duty calls on one to oppose;..."

2. From *Panama: 400 Years of Dreams and Cruelty* by David Howarth (p. 228): "Half a century before [i.e., before autumn, 1903], in 1846, the United States had made a treaty with New Grenada as Colombia was then called. Under the treaty, New Grenada guaranteed that the crossing of the isthmus would always be open to citizens of the United States, while the United States guaranteed New Grenada's sovereignty over Panama. Several times since then, the U.S. Navy had been sent to keep the peace when revolutions or civil disturbances threatened to interrupt the crossing. At this important moment, the United States was sure to exercise its accepted right again. The only question was, which side would the navy be on? On the face of it, the treaty obliged it to

help Colombia to maintain its sovereignty and suppress the revolution...."

3. *U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 70, No. 1817, April 22, 1974 (p. 434): "Nov. 3, 1903. Panamanians, with the aid of the chief lobbyist in Washington of a French canal company, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, revolted against the Colombian Government and declared Panama's independence. Several U.S. naval vessels, one of which arrived at Colón the day before, had been ordered to maintain 'free and uninterrupted transit' in the Isthmus and to prevent the landing of Colombian forces called upon to quell the insurrection."

Three days later the U.S. extended de facto recognition to the Government of Panama, and seven days after that President Theodore Roosevelt accepted Bunau-Varilla's credentials as Panama's first Minister to the U.S., thus granting de jure recognition to the new government. Two weeks after Panama's declaration of independence the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty granting the U.S. rights to construct a canal in Panama was signed in Washington. Wrote Secretary of State Hay to a senator he was urging to vote for ratification of this treaty: "...we shall have a treaty in the main very satisfactory, mostly advantageous to the United States, and we must confess, with what face we can muster, not so much advantageous to Panama.... You and I know too well how many points there are in this treaty to which a Panamanian patriot could object."

In answering critics of the speed with which the U.S. had recognized the new Government of Panama, Secretary Hay chose his words most carefully, denying, with perfect truth, that the U.S. had instigated the Panamanian revolt. This is the denial Congressman Flood has quoted. The question of connivance was scrupulously excluded from the Secretary's remarks.

Few Americans are aware that the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, so scandalously advantageous to the U.S. as to have made mischief between the U.S. and Panama from the hour it was ratified, came into being through trickery. Few Panamanians are aware that the trickster was not the U.S. The negotiator who wrote and rushed this treaty to disastrously premature ratification was the Frenchman Philippe Bunau-Varilla, who had managed to convince each side that he represented the other—that the