

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE
COLOMBO PLAN FOR CO-OPERATIVE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH
AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

What is the Colombo Plan?

The Cabinet Ministers representing Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, meeting in Colombo, Ceylon, in January, 1950, laid the groundwork for a comprehensive and co-operative attack on the problem of poverty and economic under-development in South and South-East Asia.

In this densely populated area of the world, crucial to peace, three-quarters of the population live in countries that are members of the Commonwealth. It was therefore appropriate that Commonwealth Governments should take the initiative. From a very early stage, however, it was hoped that non-Commonwealth countries in the area would join in this co-operative planning, and it was recognized that if the plans were to succeed, the active interest of non-Commonwealth countries outside the area would be necessary.

The Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-East Asia met at Sydney in May and decided specifically to invite non-Commonwealth countries in the area to become active participants in the Colombo Plan. The Governments of Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam, and the Government of Thailand, accordingly sent delegations to a joint meeting with the members of the Consultative Committee early in October, 1950; the Ambassadors in London of Burma and Indonesia attended this meeting as observers on behalf of their Governments.

The Commonwealth Committee met again in London in September and October when it prepared a report based on six-year programmes for economic development drawn up by India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya and British North Borneo. This report was published on November 28, 1950. It analyses in detail the economic problems of the countries concerned and presents careful estimates of what is needed in terms of trained manpower and capital to make these plans work.

The report shows that much can be done by the countries themselves by the extension of development programmes already actively in hand; but it shows also that the scale and pace of development depend to a very large degree on the amount of capital that can come in from abroad. The Commonwealth countries have already helped each other very considerably and are now examining the extent to which they can provide the requirements to carry out the Colombo Plan. But this is a world problem. The more the Colombo Plan can be put into a world context, the greater will be the chances of its success, and the greater will be its beneficial effect on world prosperity and peace.

The following pages give a digest of the report, consisting of verbatim quotations though very considerably condensed and appendices summarizing the development programmes of individual countries.