

Michael D. Leigh, *The Evacuation of Civilians from Burma: Analysing the 1942 Colonial Disaster*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014; 304 pp.; ISBN 9781441140906

Michael Leigh's book examines the colonial effort to evacuate civilians during Burma's tumultuous collapse in the face of Japanese invasion. The Japanese attacked Burma by air from 23 December 1941, the land invasion commencing in force after the fall of Singapore on 16 February 1942. The Japanese forces would take three more months to reach the mountains separating Burma from India. Those who had the most to fear from Japanese occupation, including white metropolitans, Indians, Chinese, and Burmese officials and soldiers who remained loyal to the British, fled the colony, moving north by boat, train, automobile, plane, and on foot. Thousands died or disappeared in the process and many were simply abandoned to the enemy. The episode was truly dramatic, as evidenced by several well-chosen photographs presented throughout the volume.

Along with military advance, evacuation was an everyday part of the Second World War on both sides. Yet attention is often focused on the story of the troops and not on the millions of evacuees who moved in so many directions over the course of the war. This was a war of movement for everyone. While the Burmese evacuation has been the subject of numerous books by survivors, most of these have been Eurocentric, despite the fact that most evacuees were Indian (p. 12). Nevertheless, these accounts have not been the subject of substantial academic study, as scholarship has favoured mainly appraisals of the military side of the episode, the 'First Burma Campaign', and both the failures of command that led to tragedy and the bravery and initiatives that prevented the evacuation from being worse than it was. Burma, after all, was not the disaster Singapore was and in preserving the army to fight another day, the best comparisons at the time were with Dunkirk, an experience that some of the British commanders in Burma had undergone personally before being posted to Burma. New scholarship is tackling new dimensions of the episode; in addition to Leigh's volume, there is Philip Woods' study of journalists in Burma from 1941–3 (including both the First Burma Campaign and the 1942–3 Arakan Campaign), which was published in early 2017.

Leigh divides his study into an introduction, conclusion, and 10 chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of the evacuation experience. He examines the statistics of the campaign; the politics; the issue of the Indian population of Burma; the collapse of Rangoon; disease during the evacuation; the limitations of mass transportation; the evacuation of the secondary colonial centres of Mandalay, Yenangaung (Burma's oil centre), and Maymyo (Burma's main hill station, European enclave, and hot season colonial capital); the fiasco at Myitkyina, where civilians wound up trapped, denied air transport, and were forced ahead on foot; those who were left behind; and the actual costs of the denial programme put in place during the evacuation. Some of the main themes that emerge from the book are the influence of colonial politics on the evacuation effort and the relationship between government and commercial organizations in getting civilian evacuees out. Ultimately, numerous commercial firms chose to sacrifice themselves and incur devastating financial costs in favour of serving the greater good (p. 218).

Although early on the evacuation could be conducted partly by sea, the Japanese breakthrough into the Indian Ocean in mid-February 1942 and then the destruction and abandonment of Rangoon on 7 March meant that most of the evacuation had to take place overland. As the density of commercial activity was located in the far south, this meant that for many the evacuation meant an arduous journey across the entirety of the expansive colony. Existing transportation was not built to accommodate the volume of traffic placed on it, with military traffic moving south and civilian evacuees moving north. The road system was limited, there was one railway corridor to the far north, with branch lines that ran to the river and various points, fuel was in short supply, and there were already heavy demands placed on river shipping, including their use as hospital ships. Colonial officials and the military thus locked horns on who should get priority (p. 11). A joint effort between the colonial government and commercial firms to organize the movement of civilians, Leigh argues, made the most of a bad situation and was largely responsible for getting more people out of Burma than would otherwise have been possible. Even so, when the governor flew out of Myitkyina on 4 May 1942, Leigh asserts, the political implications of the defeat could not be avoided: colonial rule had effectively come to an end (p. 222).

One minor drawback of the volume is that Leigh succumbs to a common weakness of area studies literature – the effort to find parallel situations and to compare evacuation efforts is not made here. If it had, then the performance of the colonial evacuation officials would have been more easily gauged and peculiarities of the Burma situation might be more easily discernible. As a contribution to the field of Burma Studies, however, this is a fine volume and will make a useful addition to the library of any scholar interested in Burma's modern history. Leigh has done a fine job identifying archival materials and making use of the wide array of primary sources available. He also opens the door for other enquiries into this episode.

Michael W. Charney

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK

Jennifer M. Morris, *Origins of UNICEF, 1946–1953*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2015, ix + 163 pp.; £49.95 hbk; ISBN 9780739176245

In the last decade, studies of global governance have proliferated as historians have sought to historicize the antecedents of the contemporary global order. Recent attention also to social and economic subsidiary bodies – the apparent 'soft face' of the hard power of international intergovernmental organizations – have shown how the professional preoccupations of a cadre of experts and bureaucrats impacted upon the lives of ordinary men and women.¹ A connected and concurrent

¹ For example, P. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford 2013); S. Pedersen, *The Guardians, The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford 2015).