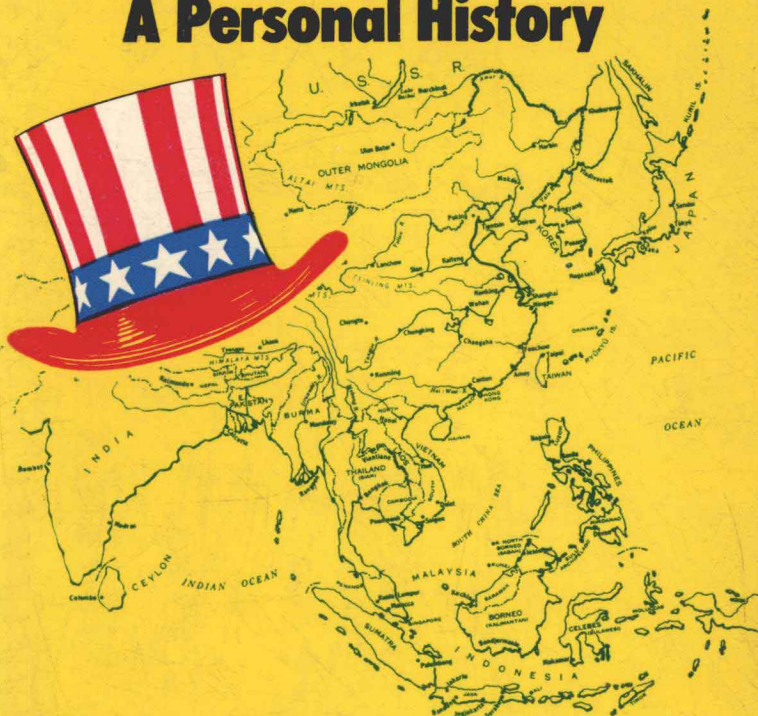


Keyes Beech

H-P
TUT BOOKS

NOT WITHOUT THE AMERICANS

A Personal History



**American Ambassadors Analyzed • Japan
a Future Ally? • Sony vs. G.E.; Matsushita
vs. I.B.M. • Will the World Belong to Asia?**

**アメリカ人が居なかったら?
今日のアジアは・・・**

カイズ・ビーチ 著

Keyes Beech

NOT
WITHOUT
THE
AMERICANS

A Personal History



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FOR WALTER, KIMO AND PAKI
WHO PAID A PRICE FOR THIS BOOK.

Books by Keyes Beech

TOKYO AND POINTS EAST

NOT WITHOUT THE AMERICANS

A Personal History

NOT
WITHOUT
THE
AMERICANS

this situation is not, unfortunately, Senator Fulbright. It is Mao Tse-tung's *On Protracted War*."

We have been accused of relying too much on military force when our real crime was not using that force selectively and effectively. "Weeding with a bulldozer," is the way a New Zealand friend described our Vietnam tactics.

We have been accused of laying waste to the land. But wherever we went we built far more than we destroyed. And how many people are aware of the "green revolution" that is sweeping Asia?

It, like our guns and airplanes, is a product of American technology. And its meaning is that millions of half-starved Asians should, for the first time in their history, no longer go hungry.

Finally, I find it ironic that my generation should be accused of not caring. We cared too much. That is why we fought in World War II, why we went into Korea, why we went into Vietnam. But then we grew older.

Keyes Beech
Saigon

back on Asia. That is a pity, because we got into the mess in Vietnam precisely because of our appalling ignorance of that part of the world.

We have been accused of many crimes, among them arrogance, when our real crime was an excess of humility or half-baked imperialism. We had the name but not the game. I do not share the hair-shirt complex nor, I hope, the arrogance of so many of America's liberal intellectuals. The clichés of the liberal left are as tedious as those of the far right.

If we had been truly arrogant we would not have vacillated between whole and half measures. In Vietnam, as elsewhere, we have been the victims of our own anti-colonial legacy. We were damned for supporting corrupt military dictatorships. But when we attempted to reform them we were damned for meddling in the affairs of sovereign nations. Often our sin was that we did not meddle enough.

A British critic has made the eminently sensible observation that "With all due deference to Senator Fulbright, it is possible to argue that the false starts of American policy in Asia and elsewhere have been at least as much due to the illusions of liberalism as the 'arrogance of power.'"

There were two fundamental flaws in liberal thinking on Asian policy. One was to underestimate, if not wholly ignore, the utter hostility and implacability of Asian Communism, often to the point of idiotically assuming a community of interest. The other was to assign to our enemies a measure of good will that never existed.

"In a sense," wrote Coral Bell, of the London School of Economics, "it is only after you have paid your adversary the compliment of understanding how serious and formidable is his determination to cut your throat—and how reasonable, from his own point of view—that you can settle to the reality of a long-continuing struggle, on which battlefields must be carefully chosen and strategies carefully judged. The best guide to

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book was begun in 1967 as a personal history of more than two decades in Asia. Almost from the outset I ran into trouble, and its name was Vietnam. The sheer enormity of the Vietnam crisis gave me the feeling that everything I wanted to say was suddenly irrelevant. And throughout the writing, Vietnam haunted every page. It was as though nothing else had happened in Asia during those twenty years.

I believed in our Vietnam commitment and, at the risk of being blackjacked in a dark alley by some of my liberal friends, I still do. I just wish we had not handled it so badly.

I also happen to believe, at the risk of being called a mindless optimist, that in the long run our decision to intervene will be proved right. I also believe that we will win. Perhaps this is because I prefer to win wars rather than lose them. And despite the cliché that nobody wins a war, I can assure you that it is far better to win than to lose.

This however is not a book about Vietnam but about Asia, of which Vietnam is only a tiny slice. I have lived in Asia for a long time, but time is no guarantee of wisdom. When I first went to Tokyo in 1947 I sat at the feet of the old Far Eastern hands, until I discovered the Asia they knew no longer existed.

Because of its subject, this can hardly be a welcome book. Mainly because of Vietnam, America seems ready to turn its

NOT
WITHOUT
THE
AMERICANS

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A LONG WAY FROM HOME

Twenty years are a long time in a man's life. They also are a long time to be away from home. If you stay away long enough, home becomes another place. And so it happened that Asia has become home to me.

Since Asia is a rather large place, perhaps I should be more specific. At various times I have lived in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Saigon. Like all cities, each has its advantages and disadvantages. Tokyo has everything, but it is too noisy and dirty. For creature comforts, Hong Kong is unsurpassed, but Hong Kong is culturally barren. Living there is something like living inside a cash register. Bangkok used to be pleasant enough, but it's getting to be too much like Los Angeles during the rush hour. Besides, Bangkok is too hot. Saigon was a lovely city until the war ruined it. So it goes.

On my infrequent visits to the United States I find that I am a stranger in my own country. This, of course, is not surprising. I know how to get things done in Saigon or Seoul, but I am a frightful amateur when it comes to getting things done in Chicago or New York. When I left America, people were still paying their hotel bills with cash, not credit cards.

It took me a dozen years to get over the feeling of being a transient in Asia. The turning point came when I built a house in Tokyo, which was my home for nearly twenty years. I no

longer live in that house, but the act of building it was a commitment of sorts. I never formally acknowledged the point, but I knew then that I was going to live in Asia for the rest of my life.

I have no illusions about being accepted as an Asian, even if there were such a person, which there is not. There are only Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Malays, Vietnamese, Thais and Indians, among whom little love is lost. Nor have I any desire to be one of them. Westerners who attempt to immerse themselves in an Asian culture in search of a new identity usually end up with a bad case of unrequited love.

I consider myself very much an American. I am unashamedly proud of my country and the role my countrymen have played in Asia. My roots are still in Giles County, Tennessee, where I was born and my mother is buried. Her name was Leona; she died when I was six.

I suspect that my Asian friends think I am a little odd for staying in Asia for all these years when I could live in so rich a country as the United States. One of them, I know, has speculated that there must be some dark chapter in my past which has condemned me to a life of exile.

If my Asian friends think I am odd for staying in Asia so long, so do my American friends. They keep wondering when I am going to come home and "settle down." Or perhaps they no longer wonder.

A lady in Akron, Ohio, outraged by something I wrote, once advised me that it was about time I came home and found out how Americans lived. Perhaps she had a point. I once stayed away from America for seven years. That was too long. I felt like Rip Van Winkle when I did go back.

My editors used to urge me to come home and assume a position of responsibility, i.e., become an editor, as if I were somehow being irresponsible in trying to interpret the affairs of more than a billion people. In a way, however, they were

right. I am a fugitive from an editor's chair. One reason I became a foreign correspondent was to escape being an editor.

I say "used to urge me" because they no longer do, nor have they for quite a few years. They too have given me up as an incorrigible, now middle-aged, Rover Boy who is always turning up in places with names like Bukittinggi, Yongdong-po or Ootacamund (known as Ooty for short) with stories about strange people with unpronounceable names.

Sometimes I am introduced as the dean of the Asian press corps. It is a dubious distinction. It can be a man's only distinction. I know some "deans" who know so much they have stopped writing anything. Instead they sit around bars boring their juniors with stories of the way things were. I suspect that I am sometimes guilty of that. Nothing is more tiresome than another man's war.

Some of my friends have accused me of being a war lover because I have attended so many wars. On the contrary, I am a peace-loving man and abhor violence—but if you see enough of it, and I have seen a great deal, you develop a protective veneer. Otherwise you would go out of your mind.

Besides, I cannot be held personally responsible for these wars. War has been part of the Asian scene for the past two decades—as it was for decades before that—and so I have gone to the wars. You may hope that they will go out of fashion, but you can't just ignore them.

I have also been charged with being a warmonger because I believed in the Vietnam war and still do. Even worse, I did not believe that Lyndon Johnson was a monster who for dark and devious reasons of his own wanted the war to continue. All my illiberal liberal friends who believe that can go to hell.

I have several times been accused of being a Communist because, among other things, I once wrote that "you can't eat freedom." On the other hand, I have been told, "Yankee go home," by Korean Communists, Japanese Communists, Chi-

nese Communists and Indonesian Communists. Indian Communists are too polite to tell you to go home. They are much more likely to invite you to tea for a friendly chat.

The curse of British colonialism weighs heavily upon the Indians.

To complete the cycle, there was a memorable encounter with a short, fat Frenchman in an Hanoi night club during the siege of Dienbienphu. The French despised us because they had lost their pride and were losing a war and knew it and knew that we knew it.

"Are you Americans?" the Frenchman asked politely as we were leaving the night club. My colleagues and I confessed that we were.

He drew himself up to his full height and took a deep breath. "Then 'Yankee go home,'" he hissed triumphantly.

Despite all these invitations to leave, I have stayed on year after year. Why? Certainly there are more comfortable, more civilized places, where the linen is cleaner and the water is more potable.

One reason I have stayed, I think, is that there is a job to be done. We have fought three wars in Asia in the past quarter century, yet our ignorance of this part of the world is still abysmal. If over the years I have managed to shed a little light on the subject, that is reward enough. I am more impressed by what I don't know about Asia than what I know. And yet I think I have learned a little, if only by osmosis. There is something to be said for seeing and smelling a place.

Too few academicians who specialize in Asian affairs have done this. Or if they have they have failed to communicate the sights, sounds and smells of Asia—the rich aroma of spices, sweat and dung in an Indian bazaar; the evocative clock-clock of wooden geta (sandals) on cobbled pavement in a Japanese village; the breath-taking majesty of the snowy Himalayas; the utter stillness of a Buddhist pagoda in upcountry Thailand; the

rib-cage poverty of the Indian masses, or the mouth-watering succulence of a Peking duck.

Foreign correspondents and the newspapers they work for are equally at fault. The correspondent is too busy keeping up with wars, revolutions and politics to communicate these things. Even if he were not, there would be little or no space in the newspapers for them. These things are not news, yet they are the essence of Asia.

Another reason I have stayed is that I am an incurable romantic. Even after all these years, Asia still fascinates me, for Asia is in constant ferment, the new colliding with the old in a never-ending cycle of change.

At dinner in Seoul a few years ago Abe Rosenthal of the *New York Times* and I listened with amused tolerance while a businesslike young colleague proclaimed that the age of the adventurer and the romantic in foreign journalism was over; that the age of the specialist had come.

He made it all sound like an academic research paper, or a nine-to-five job in New York or Washington. When he had finished, Abe and I said, in unison, something like, "Nuts!"

To be sure, styles have changed in foreign correspondence. The "big name" foreign correspondent is a thing of the past; the first person pronoun is no longer acceptable except under exceptional circumstances. But the foreign correspondent who has no sense of discovery, of adventure, of romance is not, in my view, much of a correspondent. He might as well stay home. These qualities are not incompatible with good reporting, and they make the game worthwhile.

These have been interesting years. The partition of the Indian subcontinent, China going Communist, Japan's amazing economic recovery, the cold war confrontations in Korea and Southeast Asia, the emergence of the colonial countries of South Asia—these have been the big, continuing stories of Asia during the past two decades.

But it is not cataclysmic events that stick in a man's memory so much as the small things and people that mark their happening.

I sometimes wonder whatever happened to Pao Cheng. He attached himself to me when I arrived in Peking in December 1947. At first I knew him only by his number, which was 132. It was not until later that I learned he had a name.

Pao had pulled a rickshaw for eighteen of his forty-two years. As a rickshaw boy he was one of Peking's elite, for he was a member of the tight little guild that served well-paying foreigners staying at the international Wagon-Lits hotel.

He was a good rickshaw boy. He was polite, courteous and knew the city's points of interest. His English was more than fair; he once startled me by saying, "nevertheless."

But this did not mean that Pao liked being a rickshaw boy. Nobody, he told me, was a rickshaw boy by choice. He knew it was undignified for one man to serve as a beast of burden for another. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek once told all of Peking's rickshaw boys just that in a speech.

The generalissimo did not say what Pao would do for a living if he did not pull a rickshaw.

There were several things that Pao would have liked to do. He wanted to be a waiter, a porter, a watchman, or perhaps work in a factory. But he was a man condemned to doing the work of an animal.

In a good week he earned \$600,000 Chinese, equal to \$3 U.S. Out of this he paid \$4000 per day for his rickshaw. At one time he owned his own rickshaw, but had to sell it to meet the high cost of living.

He paid \$150,000 a month for the one room in which he and his wife lived near the city walls (Pao never discussed his children). He paid \$6400 for a catty (one and two-tenths of a pound) of corn meal. But what made him bitter was that he