

THIRD EYE EDITION

Towards the truth (Book Review)

Journalists have always been at a unique vantage point. But, with it comes great responsibility. Journalists, by the demands of their profession, have to be impartial witnesses to wars, uprisings, corruption and disasters. There have been innumerable instances of brave journalists being killed while covering conflict in the world's troubled hotspots. That is why Swedish-Austrian journalist Bertil Lintner's remarkable book *Land of Jade – A Journey from North East India through Northern Burma to China* is truly inspirational – not only for the brotherhood of scribes, but the layman as well. For here, Lintner, and his young Burmese wife, Hseng NOUNG and baby daughter cross the border between North East India's Nagaland and Burma (Myanmar), secretly infiltrating that unknown, enigmatic country sealed off from the world.

It is October 1985 and the couple are undertaking a terrible risk to discover for themselves what lies beyond. Once across the Indian border, Kachin guerillas escort the family through Northern Burma to the Sino Burmese border. This epic journey, full of unexpected dangers, hardships and survival under the most daunting circumstances, helped Lintner write about the ground realities of Burma, the life of the rebels in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in 1987 and his book *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma*, published in 1990. When he wrote this present book in 1989 in Danish, there were over 25,000 - 30,000 odd insurgents in Burma. Praising the discipline and fighting skills of the Burmese Army, he hoped that they would be able to channelise this force into a more honourable task than fighting against the country's own ethnic minorities.

Land of Jade is an indispensable read for anyone keen to have a deeper insight into the fluid geo-political realities of South East Asia. Through it we understand that the problems of the North East can only be tackled by placing them against a wider context of India's neighbouring countries. The Lintner couple's odyssey is also a heartwarming love story of a man and a woman who stand by each other when chasing an impossible dream. There is no arm-chair analysis here. Lintner, in fact, was the first Western journalist to enter Burma. In this 18 month, 2,275 kilometre expedition, he has revealed to us unforgettable vignettes of the ordinary people, caught up in the struggles between the government, the insurgents and the local opium lords. His take on Naga-Manipur insurgency is very relevant.

This book is the third South Asian English edition, published for the first time by Spectrum Publications. Krishan Kumar deserves our approbation for making this valuable work available to readers.

Land of Jade – A Journey from North East India through Northern Burma to China