THE PROBLEM OF THE

New Villages

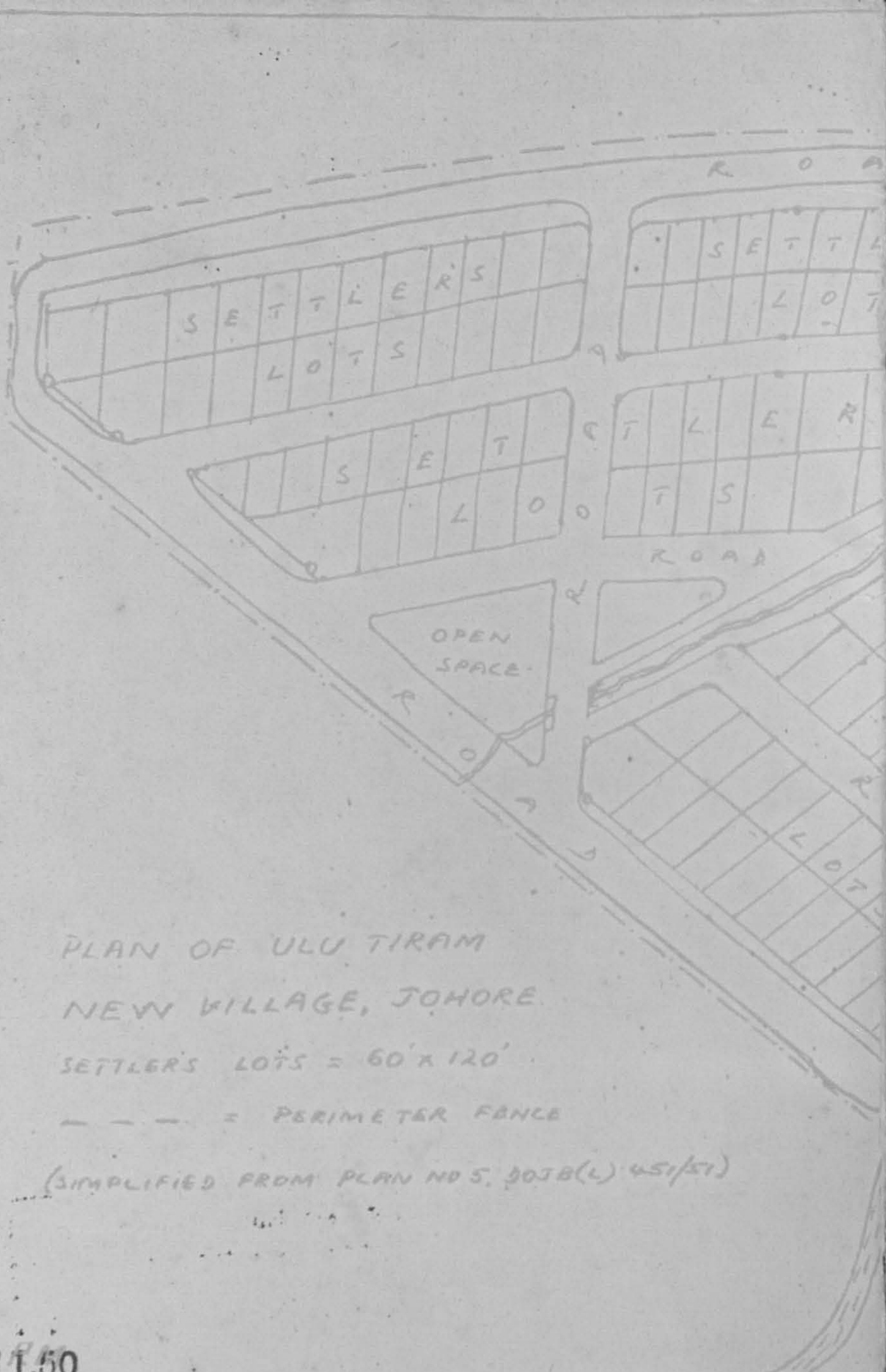
IN MALAYA

PAUL MARKANDAN

Problems of Malaya Series — No. 1

DONALD MOORE

SINGAPORE



PLAN OF ULU TIRAM

NEW VILLAGE, JOHORE.

SETTLER'S LOTS = 60' x 120'.

— — — = PERIMETER FENCE

(SIMPLIFIED FROM PLAN NO 5. JOJB(L) 451/51)

$1.50

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PAUL MARKANDAN

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PREFACE

In 1950 I was in Kuala Lumpur when the Resettlement Plan first took shape in the Ampang and Cheras areas. During that year, and in 1951, I watched the progress of the investigation.

During the middle of 1954 I returned to Malaya and spent three months touring the country, studying the progress that had been achieved. The emergency, social and educational problems and the New Villages were all included in my survey and many of the facts gathered about the New Villages appear in this essay. Some of my journalist colleagues may not entirely agree with some of the statements I have made in it, but I am sure that many of the Foreign Correspondents in Malaya will see that I have tried to present a picture of the New Villages in Malaya without any bias.

It is not possible to mention the names of the many people who have helped me in my tour of Malaya. But I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to them and to thank the numerous government officers, business men, teachers, students, fishermen and farmers in the villages old and new, who have placed their knowledge and experience at my service.

If my essay interests the reader in the future of the men and women in the New Villages of Malaya, then its purpose will have been achieved.

Singapore.
11th November, 1954.

Chapter 1

THE FACTS

Today a serious problem faces Malaya — a problem far more serious than the ending of the present Emergency. The problem, briefly, is one of winning the confidence of about 600,000 men and women, who were, until the outbreak of the Emergency, the squatters of Malaya, and of making them feel that they are an integral part of this country.

It is a problem largely of social and economic factors and to a lesser extent of political factors. It is one that cannot be by-passed or tackled with a short term view. Perhaps it would be logical to compare these men and women to the millions of displaced persons in Korea and Vietnam.

Wars focus attention on many things that are often ignored in time of peace. In peace we see only what is on the surface and in war we dig beneath the surface to get at the root of the upheaval. In this way the Emergency in Malaya has opened our eyes to many hitherto hidden facts — one of which is the squatter problem.

The squatter problem has been a Malayan problem for more than a century. In the past we have been able to ignore it. Only now that the circumstances of the Emergency have aggravated it has it been forced upon our attention. We are at last compelled to view it in its right perspective and to find a solution. We can rightfully ask if we would have had the communist menace upon us if this problem had been attended to earlier. If not this, then at least one can safely suggest that the present Emergency would not have continued for so long.

There are thousands of people in this country who avoid facts because facts are unpalatable to them. There are others who prefer to live a sheltered life of 'make-believe'; still many more, who, in spite of the seven years of fighting, are living in a state of complacency. To these men and women, the squatter problem is just another addition to the Malayan scene. To them, the squatter as he was — and the New Villager as he is today — is merely an individual to be tolerated, and one who has no right to live in this land, in view of his communist activities.

The squatter is, in fact, an unwanted citizen. Yet who is to be blamed for this situation? Have not these men and women a right to live and work in Malaya? Did they not come to this country across the rough China Sea in small boats, to found a new life for themselves and their children, like all the other immigrants to this country? Is it their fault that their children have not had the benefits of modern education, or of some form of social service? Why must these men and women be looked upon as interlopers in a foreign country, with contempt and hatred, because they are involved in the communist war?

In our desire to pin the blame for the Emergency on a group of people, we scanned the countryside and found these men and women living in tiny shacks on the fringe of the jungle amidst prosperous-looking vegetable plots, flower gardens and livestock farms — and found to our satisfaction the people who had been feeding the communists in the jungle. "Remove them from their environment and we will clear the country of communists" was the argument in favour of resettling them. We uprooted about 600,000 men and women and transplanted them to small plots of land, scarcely a fraction of the size of those they had before; enforced a curfew; surrounded them with a wire fence guarded by security forces, and we have still not succeeded in cutting off communist influence in the New Villages.

We have spent a colossal sum of money in the six hundred or so New Villages all over the country, and, when we sit back to survey the task that has been completed,

we wonder if it has been worth while. The New Villager remains eventually what he was — the squatter. All the amenities, such as community centres, the small village schools, the medical facilities and the introduction of local government, have not succeeded in changing his outlook. Externally, he is more subdued; he obeys the instructions of the government as long as they do not endanger his life, or that of any member of his family; he casts his vote in the village council elections and sends his small children to the village school when financial conditions permit him to do so. But a subdued villager is not always a contented person.

Human beings all over the world cherish freedom as their greatest treasure. The democracy we know and understand insists that an individual has the right to freedom of thought, speech, worship and action within the framework of a common law established for the good of the people. It further demands that the individual should be free from want. In these New Villages we put democracy at work by introducing village council elections, yet at the same time we deny these men and women the very principles on which democracy is based. Is it surprising, therefore, that we find many of them, particularly amongst the younger generation, succumbing to communist doctrine, which has always held some appeal to the peasant?

A person cannot be happy and contented in the environment in which the squatter is forced to live today, for he knows that he is an unwanted person, an outcast of the country in which he lives, and is considered a menace to the well-being of the country. He knows that he is closely watched by the forces of law and order, that his freedom is restricted by the Emergency Regulations, and he knows, in addition, that there is an unknown eye in his community studying his movements.

What is his future in this country? What about his children? What will be his position when the Emergency is over? The problem is vital and of supreme urgency to everyone in Malaya.

Chapter 2

THE PAST

During the last century, among the immigrants who came to settle in Malaya, were men and women from the farms of China. In that country they had been plagued constantly by famine and floods and an ever-increasing population. With their meagre belongings they found their way to many countries in South-East Asia to begin a new life, and Malaya received its share of these people.

Having been farmers for generations, and not knowing any other means of livelihood, they trekked to the fringe of the Malayan jungle, far away from the good and the evil that modern civilisation brings to its towns and cities, and settled down to cultivate the soil.

Soon tiny huts dotted the rural districts of the peninsula and around these huts appeared prosperous farms. With their hands and crude implements, unaided by any of the modern means of mechanised farming, these men and women cleared the virgin jungle, ploughed the soil and planted the seeds that were to sustain them in the years to come. Thus was born a new community — the squatter community.

Their children grew up in these surroundings without the benefits of education or health facilities. Their way of life was based on Chinese custom and tradition and they looked forward to the day when they could return to their native land to tell their friends and relations in their province of their success, thus in turn encouraging more settlers to come to Malaya.

Within their environment they were happy and contented. Having known the value of land, they put every

available square foot to good use. The area of land they cultivated depended on the numerical strength of each family. There was little interference from anyone outside their group and they flourished.

Their peaceful and happy existence was shattered by the Japanese. The Japanese army marched through the country, eating the squatters' produce, killing many who protested and raping their women. The aged squatters shed tears and pleaded; but the youths among them were imbued with hatred. Their hatred was directed at the conquerors and what they stood for — the slavery of the conquered.

Many of their youths, urged on by others from outside their community, went deeper into the jungle and with their weapons waged a guerilla war against the new rulers. In the jungle they were made to believe that they could be the liberators of the country and enjoy living conditions better than those of which they had ever dreamed.

The hard core of the guerilla movement, later known as Force 136, was made up of members of the Malayan Communist Party. The M.C.P. knew that, should the need for a militant movement arise in the years to come, when the Japanese had been defeated, they would be assured of food supplies through these young men, whose parents and relatives had prosperous farms on the jungle fringe. The M.C.P. had been in existence in the country since 1923, and there is no doubt that many of their members held the rank of Commissar, indoctrinated by men who had either been to Moscow for a number of years or were from that country and the communist movement in China.

Then the tide of war turned against the Japanese in 1943. Admiral Lord Mountbatten's command in South-East Asia, based at Kandy, parachuted large quantities of arms and ammunition into Malaya, followed by British officers to train the Force in readiness for the landing of Allied Forces in 1945.

While this activity was going on members of the Communist Party in the Force carried on the work of indoctrinating with Marxist theory the young, illiterate squatters who had joined them. There is little doubt that South-East Asia Command at that time realised this; but the immediate necessity was to win the war against the Japanese, and such considerations were of little moment compared with the urgent and vital task of building up a strong guerilla force in Malaya.

This is exactly what happened in Indo-China. Ho Chi Minh received considerable aid from the Allies to fight the Japanese in Indo-China, and he has since publicly admitted over the Vietminh radio that his patriotism was merely a cover for his actual aims, which have since come to a fruitful conclusion for him.

The young squatters in Malaya, indoctrinated as they were, found in the British rulers a new set of masters taking the place of the Japanese who had been vanquished. After having enjoyed a sense of authority during the war years in the jungle, they became reluctant to go back to farming. Evidence available points to the fact that many did, in the first place, return to their parents and relatives, possibly to await further instructions from the Party. Some of them went to the towns and became active in workers' unions, fermenting unrest.

When the M.C.P. was outlawed in 1948 these young squatters formed a part of the militant movement and once again returned to the jungle; this time to wage war against the British and thus, to their way of thinking, to 'liberate' the country. The parents and relatives of these young men viewed this new venture with mixed feelings, but since blood is thicker than water their support went to their youth.

In 1950 the late Sir Henry Gurney realised the importance of isolating the squatters from the communists in the jungle, and a Bill authorising the resettlement of these squatters was passed by the Legislative Council in

the same year. The reasons for the Bill were primarily as follows:

(a) To cut the communists off from food, money, information and any form of assistance from the squatters.

(b) To accord to the squatters greater protection from the influence of the communists.

It was not an undertaking to be taken lightly, for there was nothing to guide the men who were responsible for implementing the scheme. They had to learn through bitter and costly experience. The only factor that was in favour of the officers responsible for the planning of the New Villages was that funds were available from the increasing revenue during 1950–52 from rubber and tin.

To illustrate the method employed in one of the resettlement projects, here is the substance of a directive issued by a Resettlement Officer to a deputy in early 1951.

The task was to investigate the squatter groups in the area. The directive outlined in some detail the geographical layout of the area, approximate number of squatters and the dialects they spoke and their occupations. The total strength of the squatters was estimated at 8,000. The directive stated that the attitude of the people would not be unfriendly but nervous, and that before the Emergency the communists were strong in the area.

Subsequent investigation in the area revealed cases of malnutrition, destitution, tuberculosis, leprosy, skin disease, paralysis and crippled persons. The strength of the squatters was 26,000, spread over nine square miles. The clearing and surveying of the area took four months before the land was ready to receive the squatters.

One of the operations which followed began at 5.30 p.m. one evening when the whole area was cordoned off and every household was served with a curfew notice.

The people were warned that security forces surrounded the area. The following morning at six, the resettlement teams began at either end and worked towards the centre, visiting each house and explaining the purpose of resettlement. Each person was issued with an Emergency Order signed by the Mentri Besar ordering him to remove to the new area. The next morning, at the same time, labourers began pulling down the houses. The squatters, finding that there were no means of evading resettlement, joined in and pulled down their own houses. The demolition of the first group of houses took about three days, but the speed of demolition accelerated later. The squatters had to bundle the timbers, poles and roofing separately and mark each bundle with a number.

In the new area the squatters were placed in a transit camp with their personal possessions. Each squatter was then allocated a site for the erection of his new house. The new area allotted to him was approximately 40 feet by 100 feet. A week later the houses were erected by the squatters themselves. A central police barracks with a high tower was built on the highest central piece of land and a double fence enclosed the whole area.

While most New Villages were planned in detail, many were not built according to a plan. This was largely due to lack of time and trained staff to interpret the plans in view of the urgency of the situation. In many villages squatters were resettled without due regard to their occupational background or social conditions. It was simply a question of getting the squatter behind the fence and the position of the fence was not of great importance at that time. The result of this is apparent in the intensity of terrorist activity in various states like Johore, Pahang, and Perak. Quite a number of New Villages in these states have been the feeding grounds of the terrorists.

Chapter 3

THE NEW VILLAGE

The primary purpose for the resettling of the squatters was to sever the link between them and the communists in the jungle. Resettlement aimed at cutting off food supplies and information to the terrorists, notwithstanding the squatter reaction that would naturally follow. In this purpose, however, the scheme has failed in many New Villages, for food and information continue to go out through the two perimeter fences and the no-man's land in between. Is the squatter defying the law? Or is he, rather, the victim of the circumstances in which he finds himself?

It is obvious to the observer that in most of these New Villages the communists have set up cells. These cells are organised by party members known as Mass Executives, and the intensity of their activity varies. They are, for example, far more active in certain New Villages in Johore than in those in Selangor. The villagers are aware of this, but the majority do not know where the cell is located, or who is in it. It might be his neighbour or his friend in the Home Guard.

In these New Villages the squatter is to a large extent cut off from the land, except for the small plot near his house. Therefore he has to look for employment as a tapper in a rubber estate or as an odd job labourer. Each morning he leaves the village to earn his daily bread. In some villages he is searched at the gate; in others he is not, since there is no one to search him.

In the rubber estate he might meet a terrorist who threatens to kill him if he does not bring food. Valuing his life more than anything else, he carries out the instructions of the terrorist. If he is brave enough and has

been convinced of the benefits of democracy he might inform the authorities. But, while he has some measure of protection within the village, he has none outside it.

We constantly heap abuse on these men because they give aid to the communists. We tell them that communism is nothing short of slavery and that democracy stands for freedom. We try to make them understand that they can be the leaders of their own community and look after their own affairs through the village council. Yet we surround them with fences and restrict their movements.

How can the illiterate, uneducated settler in the New Village believe in democracy when he is denied the very things for which it stands? He is not trained to understand theoretical principles or to examine his problems form a long-term point of view. His life and the lives of his ancestors only allow him to believe what he sees. And what does he see?

He sees the suspicious policeman scrutinising his movements. He sees the perimeter fence. Government officials tell him about the benefits of elections and of his helping to build a village school. The abundant land on which he once worked is no longer within his reach and he has to work harder *for someone else* in order to buy the bare necessities that sustain him and his family. While it is true that some squatters before the Emergency found part-time employment on rubber estates and in tin mines they were never dependent upon such work as a sole source of income.

Under these conditions, in which the settler in the New Village lives, the chances of winning his confidence and making him realise his responsibilities as a villager towards his village and to the country are remote. All these settlers are not communist sympathisers, yet the innocent are punished along with the guilty. An entire village suffers for the crimes committed by a few. Can the illiterate settler understand this? All he knows is that he had no part in the offence committed and yet is punished for it.

He thinks about the collective punishment that is inflicted upon him, and finds a similarity between it and that meted out by the Japanese during the last World War. Although the Japanese during the occupation of Malaya committed unspeakable atrocities, the squatter sometimes has difficulty in finding any difference between the British and Japanese systems of justice as he has seen them administered.

When the resettlement of squatters was carried out surely it was the duty of those concerned in the scheme to place sufficient importance on planning and investigation to enable the settler to be granted some continuity in his life, and thus to help turn his suspicions into trust and confidence. Yet, even after some schemes were completed it became necessary to resettle the already resettled villagers in some other part of the country, thus, once again, breaking up their homes and disrupting their lives.

In our eagerness to end the Emergency we have treated the squatters as mere pawns in a chess game, moving them around as we pleased, to suit the whims and strategy of those in authority. Some New Villagers have been subjected to a twenty-four hour or twenty-three hour curfew, thus virtually starving them, and others have been collectively sent to a detention camp although it is true that this form of punishment has been used sparingly. The average settler does not know where and when the next punishment is going to fall.

The squatter in the New Village finds himself between two fires: on the one side are the security forces and on the other the communists. All the strenuous efforts made by the government to eliminate the fear of the terrorists among the villagers has not brought about the desired results. In some of the New Villages I visited I often found the gates wide open without any security guards. At night the entire perimeter fence is rarely guarded. There is very little to deter a number of communists from walking in through the main gate during the day, disguised as tappers, or crawling through the fence in some unguarded spot at night.

The difficulty of providing adequate security is due to the lack of personnel and finance. The New Villages are classified for security purposes into three stages. In the early stage the police are responsible for the security of the village. In the second, the Home Guard in the village share the responsibility; while in the last stage the village Home Guard are given the entire responsibility. While this method has worked in many villages it has failed in others. The failure is largely due to the fact that, for every brave and steady member of the Home Guard in the Chinese New Village, there is one who is often indifferent to his duties. This generally occurs in areas noted for terrorist activities.

What, then, is the purpose of resettlement? If we are unable to maintain security in these New Villages and completely to cut off all supplies from the communists, why carry out a half-hearted attempt? Admittedly the flow of such supplies has been reduced, but is that what we are aiming at? Much as we would like to think otherwise, it is apparent that the Briggs Plan of resettlement has not produced the desired results. We have not only indicated our incompetency to provide complete security to the settler in the New Village; but we have, in addition, induced within him a feeling of hostility towards the government and the country.

We have even made it easier for the communists to reach the settlers in their new surroundings. Here the squatters are closer together, living a communal life. The mass executives find it easier to propagate their doctrine in these close-knit communities. It is far easier for the communists to maintain their hold over the settler than it ever was over the squatters on the jungle fringe. Information passes more rapidly to the terrorists, and the members of the village cell find greater camouflage amongst the settlers. It is often difficult to differentiate between communist sympathisers and loyal settlers.

The amenities provided in the New Village are, perhaps of necessity, of appeal mainly to children and not to adults.

The village school, the playground and the community centre all cater for the needs of the very young. The adult settler is either too tired after his or her day's work to take part in any community life, or is indifferent. The members of the village council continue in their half-hearted way to carry out the internal administration of the village. They do their best to welcome visitors and officials, putting on their cleanest garments and broadest smiles, but beneath it all one detects the resentment they feel towards their surroundings and the people responsible for imposing these upon them.

Chapter 4

MALAY REGROUPING

Any study of New Villages must include the many Malay regrouping areas in the Federation, for the people in them form a fair proportion of the total rural population. Though they cannot be classified as squatters, being the indigenous population of the country with their own land, many of them are in a position not unlike that of the squatters, since it is the Emergency that has brought about their regrouping.

The Malays, however, were usually consulted before resettlement, and when resettlement was in full swing most of them refused to be resettled, and remained in their old homes. Their wishes were carefully considered by the Government, and only when immediate security measures warranted it were they regrouped.

Most of the Malay regroupings carried out after 1952 involved little planning and in some cases there was no planning at all. The District War Executive Committee would decide that people in a certain area must be regrouped closer to the main road or to police protection. The villagers would be informed accordingly, and would be given one hundred Malayan dollars as compensation. Then they would have to move.

The important difference between the Chinese New Village and the Malay Regrouping Area is that, while the former has two perimeter fences, the latter is usually not fenced in at all and has to rely for security on its Home Guards. On the other hand, the Malay Regrouping Area does not enjoy the same amenities as the Chinese village. Community centres, recreational grounds and good roads are rare in the regroupings carried out after 1953. This

has been mainly due to lack of finance in the latter stages of the Resettlement Plan. The problem of land is as acute in the Malay Regrouping Area as in the Chinese New Village.

A fact that was taken into consideration when the regrouping of Malay villages was carried out is that the opportunities for the communists to influence the Malay are markedly less than their opportunities to influence the Chinese. The Muslim religion is itself a strong defence against communism, and the Malays, being poorer than the Chinese, are less able to give the communists the economic assistance they require.

One of the many typical Malay regroupings is Paya Panjang at the ninth mile of the Muar–Panchor road. Close to it is Tangkak, which has been, until recently, a notorious communist hideout. These Malays were initially scattered over a wide area. They had adequate land for farming, smallholdings of rubber, and were content with their income from these sources.

They were then ordered to regroup themselves in the new area. No land was provided by the Government, either on which to build their houses, or to farm. The land on which they were obliged to settle was an abandoned rubber estate which belonged to a Chinese. The families involved sought the assistance of the Government and were given one hundred dollars each. The reconstruction of their houses alone cost each family between three to six hundred dollars.

The Government installed three stand-pipes to provide water to all the villagers. The people have no definite income, since they have lost their smallholdings of rubber. When I visited them I found some suffering from skin diseases, and almost all are eloquent in voicing their grievances.

The security of the village is in the hands of its Home Guard who carry out their task admirably. The

rural Malay has a deep sense of loyalty to his country and Ruler, and is rarely troubled by the terrorists. These facts have, however, been largely responsible for the indifferent manner in which the Malays have been treated.

They have been ignored to a large extent simply because their co-operation in the anti-communist war is assumed. That the Malays are prepared to defend their villages, and are capable of doing so, is taken for granted. To the minds of the officers concerned, the immediate necessity is to win over the Chinese, for it is the Chinese villager who is often found co-operating with the communists. Meanwhile the problems of the Malay villager and his family go by default.

This is, indeed, a short-sighted policy and must be remedied. The Malay villager must not be ignored because his allegiance to the Government is unchallenged, nor should the education of his children be neglected. When the Malay looks at the Chinese New Village and sees the disparity between the many amenities provided for Chinese children and those provided for his, he cannot help but become dissatisfied.

The confidence of the Malay villagers must not be allowed to decline, nor must their loyalty be taken for granted. They are entitled to amenities that are in no way inferior to those provided in the Chinese New Villages. Their rights must be respected and their children must grow up to believe that the Chinese are their friends, and not people who are usurping these rights. It would be of great benefit to Malaya if the Malays and the Chinese were distributed in common villages, thus avoiding communalism. This is not as impossible as the authorities sometimes would have us believe, since it has already been accomplished in the Ampang New Village and in Kampong Pandan, both in Selangor. Only in this way can the young learn to appreciate and understand each other and so pave the way for an integrated Malayan Nation.

Chapter 5

LAND REFORM

The economic insecurity of settlers in the New Villages is largely responsible for their indifference towards Government and the things that Government has provided for them. In their former houses some of the settlers were exceedingly prosperous. The more successful possessed many pigs, large poultry farms and prosperous gardens. The majority had available to them an unlimited acreage of arable, productive land. Some of the land that was close to the towns was held by them under Temporary Occupation Licences and the land in the remote areas was taken without hindrance by the squatters, according to their requirements.

In the New Villages, however, the settler is allotted a piece of land that rarely can hold more than his house and a few plots of vegetables. The New Villages have been kept to a minimum size to facilitate better security measures, and keep down the expenditure, and the settler has suffered as a consequence. Even in those villages where arable land is available immediately outside the perimeter fence the settler cannot expect more than three-quarters of an acre of land.

Rarely is the New Villager allowed to cultivate land that has not been fenced in and which does not have an efficient security system to prevent the communists from obtaining any of the produce. In the 'White Areas' the settler has greater freedom, but in most other parts agriculture is limited, not by a shortage of land but by the restrictions of the perimeter fence. The settler is thus compelled to work as a labourer or tapper on a rubber estate for wages, which, when compared with his former income, are disappointingly low.

Men and women who have relied for generations on the cultivation of land as a means of livelihood do not take kindly to measures that suddenly deprive them of these means and considerably reduce their income. They have no alternative but to accept these measures; to accept a wage that is often insufficient to allow them to pay the two or three dollars per month needed to send their children to the village school. What kind of citizens will these New Villages produce? Can anything but dissatisfaction, even hatred come out of them?

If we look to the north to Indo-China, we have an object lesson in what *can* happen. Perhaps it would be wise for us to consider the circumstances that led to the advent of communism in, say, Vietnam. Eighty per cent of Vietnam's population are peasants living off the land. Their welfare was neglected by the colonial power in Indo-China. Ho Chi Minh sent his trained men to infiltrate among the peasants. They pointed out to each peasant the abject poverty in which he lived and persuaded him — which was not difficult — that, through communism, the land could be his. Not only, they said, could he have his own land, but he could also have *more* land and be his own master. These tempting offers attracted the peasants to Ho Chi Minh, not because they believed in or understood communism, but because he appeared to have the answer to their problem, their land problem. Ho Chi Minh's power was, as a consequence, derived largely from the peasants, who have sustained him even since.

Though the squatters form only an eighth of the total Malayan population, their position is similar to that of the peasants who supported Ho Chi Minh. It would not be too much to say that the previous position of the squatters, and their unheeded plight since resettlement, have been largely responsible for the perpetuation of the Emergency to its seventh year. The appeal of the communist doctrine to the illiterate settler must urgently be recognised and immediate measures instituted to counteract it. Their plight has become the bait used by the mass executives to win the support of the New Villager. Unless action is soon

taken to remedy the situation it may well become irremediable.

In the Segamat district of Johore there is a New Village which has an unusual air of prosperity and I spent some hours talking to its people. Amongst them was the headmaster of the village Chinese school. He has been in the district for about twenty-five years and is a correspondent of a Singapore Chinese newspaper. After having listened to him for over an hour, I asked:

"When the Emergency is over, will the people continue to live in these villages, if no restrictions are imposed on them?"

The answer was an uncompromising "No."

According to this man, who is himself part of the New Village, the settlers would prefer to leave whatever amenities are provided for them and return to their old homes. This is only to be expected. In his old surroundings the villager will have more land, and that means more income, which in turn will provide him with greater security. Nothing that Government has provided for the settler so far can compare with the advantages the settler sees in returning to his old area. What, then, will be the future of the New Villages at the end of the Emergency? Will the tropical jungle reclaim the land and thus bring to naught all the efforts and wealth that has been expended on them?

Most of the New Villages are the result of inadequate planning coupled with a sense of urgency. Very little has been done to improve or remedy their shortcomings. In fact, until the arrival of General Sir Gerald Templer in Malaya, they were known as resettlement areas. The change of name, however, has not brought a change in the situation, for these villages remain what they were — resettlement areas.

If the New Villages of Malaya are to survive in the years to come, the settlers must have economic security.

They must be given land to carry out agriculture; cottage industries must be encouraged; their pig and poultry farms must be subsidised and encouraged to expand and the wage-earners must be assured of a fair wage. Their standard of living must be improved to a level where they would be ashamed to go back to their old surroundings and conditions of living.

Between three and four-fifths of the total area of Malaya remain uncultivated and overgrown with tropical jungle. There must be in this great area some land that can be cleared and put to profitable use for agriculture and farming. I have often been told that this would be impracticable, since it would entail even more expenditure on security to prevent the produce of the farms from falling into the hands of the terrorists. Even if there is an increased cost in this direction, it is well worth the expenditure. For this could be one of the major ways of winning the sincere support of the settlers, and of avoiding at the same time a serious problem when the Emergency is over.

Chapter 6

THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

In a country like Malaya, where different languages are spoken by different racial groups, the difficulty of finding a common language is inevitable. The educated community find a common medium of expression in English, and the others have to make themselves understood through their own language and, possibly, some Malay.

This problem becomes magnified in the New Villages, for the people living there have previously lived isolated lives, and the only language most of them understand is their own native dialect. They are proud of their language and of their own culture, and they do not try to hide their ignorance of other languages. To many of them a person who speaks to them in English, and needs an interpreter to explain what the tuan is saying, is a 'running dog of the government'. They appreciate the person who converses with them in their own dialect.

It must be borne in mind that not all these settlers, though Chinese, understand each other's dialects. Within a single village one may find Teochius, Kheks, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Hokkiens. Quite often all of these peoples are engaged in a similar occupation in the same village. Though they come under the general classification of Chinese, the spirit of the 'clan' is stronger.

Uniting them into an integrated village community, and making each individual, despite his dialect, a responsible member of the village can only be achieved through education. Further, a sense of unity with the rest of the country can be instilled in then only through education.

The present structure of the village school is hardly adequate for this purpose. The emphasis in these schools is still on Chinese, and, if any English or Malay is taught, the hours devoted to it are comparatively small, so that no genuine attempt is being made to remove the language barrier that divides the villagers from those outside it. Apart from this, the system of education as practised in these schools lays most emphasis on Chinese art, history and culture. The teachers, with the exception of a few younger people, are men and women who have been inculcated with Chinese patriotism. It follows that this primary allegiance to a foreign country is transmitted to the students.

The younger teachers, who have been educated in English schools in Malaya, find it extremely difficult to introduce a system of education which leads in any way to a Malayan outlook among the pupils. Whatever ideas they attempt to introduce are almost always defeated unless they conform to the conservative outlook of the older teachers.

These schools continue to turn out young men and women imbued with a sense of loyalty to China and a love of their own heritage and culture. The regard they show for the Federation flag that hangs in the school compound is shallow and not genuine. In addition, their surroundings, in their homes and in their village, help to perpetuate a totally Chinese outlook bearing little relation to Malaya. Even if they are taught English and Malay, as laid down in the National School Plan, they have little opportunity to practise these languages, since their villages are largely communal, and therefore largely Chinese. They are surrounded, both in school and out of it, by people of their own race.

The fact is that, wittingly or unwittingly, those responsible for the resettlement scheme have founded the villages on a communal basis. The Malays have been regrouped in separate areas from the Chinese in the New Villages. Only a few Indians are scattered among them. Living behind

the fence they have little opportunity to mix freely with the other races, so that the New Villager is not given a reasonable opportunity to discard his communalism and acquire a sense of Malayan nationalism.

The people of Malaya are constantly urged to discard their racial prejudices and to think of themselves as Malayans. They are told by their community leaders that they should not look upon themselves as Chinese, Malay, Indian, Ceylonese or Eurasian, but as Malayans, and that they should be proud of being Malayans, owing their allegiance only to this country. Yet in the New Villages they have been directly encouraged to lead communal lives. Are not these men and women entitled to be Malayans? Do they not have the same rights as those who live in the towns and in areas where different races can mingle with each other?

In the days before resettlement the squatters practised isolationism and today they are practising communalism. They have been provided with improved facilities to group themselves along communal lines. The many associations based on their clans bear eloquent testimony to this fact. It is therefore essential that the entire educational system of the New Villages be re-examined and brought into line with a unified system of Malayan education. This in itself cannot and will not defeat communalism, but at least it will help to inculcate in the youth of the villages a sense of attachment to Malaya. The young people in the New Villages are growing up in unnatural surroundings where, to their youthful perception, their freedom is restricted and their land is limited to that within the perimeter fence.

Beyond the fence they see large stretches of land, that could be put to good use, lying fallow. Except for occasional visits to the towns nearby they live a secluded life among their own community. Their desire to live like other young people in Malaya remains unsatisfied. As a result of all this, they nurse a feeling of resentment towards all outside their village. Is it any wonder, then, that their frustrated egos find an outlet in the communist doctrine,

and that many go into the jungles to join the ranks of the terrorists?

That the terrorists are recruiting from amongst these youths is clear. Facts reveal that in spite of the heavy losses suffered by the terrorists, their numbers are still around five to six thousand. Many of the surrendered communists have revealed that the majority of members comprising the militant strength of the M.C.P. are youths in their teens and early twenties. When, and if, they find that they have been misguided, they surrender themselves to the forces of law and order, or get killed before or during the process. There is considerable reason to suppose that other youths from the New Villages join the Armed Work Force, which is part of the terrorist organisation, maintaining liaison between the masses and the M.C.P. During the day they carry on their normal work as rubber tappers, farmers or labourers and at night they join forces with the MRLA (Malayan Races Liberation Army) Platoon in the area to carry out an operation. The AWF works in units of three to five persons.

The answer to this language problem in the New Villages will have to be the same as in any other school in Malaya. English or Malay will have to be the medium of instruction. National schools must be established and the existing village schools should be converted to national schools. Though this might arouse considerable opposition from various Chinese bodies which are much interested in preserving their own culture at all costs, the plan must be implemented without any exception. Though the villages have been established on communal lines, the schools should be non-communal. Students from neighbouring Malay regrouping areas could study together with the Chinese students in the same school. Teachers should be recruited from all races.

Should it not be possible to establish secondary schools in the villages, then facilities should be provided for intelligent students to continue their studies in the nearest secondary school. Discrimination of any kind must be

done away with and the New Villagers, both young and old, must be treated like other Malayans. They must be made to feel that they are an integral part of the Malayan community and that they have just as important a part to play in the future progress of Malaya as any other Malayan.

Isolating them racially, and allowing their children to be trained in a school that is essentially Chinese, is not going to help the New Villagers to understand the problems of the other races or to induce a sense of loyalty to Malaya. The language problem must be removed, and all the schools in the new villages must be nationalised without delay and administered under a national education policy.

Greater attention must be paid to the teaching staff in these schools, and Malayan trained teachers should gradually replace those others who still look to China as their country. Let the young people in these villages learn the value of democracy not only through theory but also in practice. Their confidence must be won, if Malaya is to be free of internal conflict in the future, for they are the future citizens of this country, who will be living in the outposts of Malaya.

Chapter 7

DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL OUTLOOK AND SENSE OF LOYALTY.

The men and women of Malaya hope that in the distant future, a Malayan nation will rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the trial and tribulation of the past. This nation will owe its loyalty solely to Malaya and shed the divided loyalty its different races have nursed in the past. This new nation will have to include every race found in the country today, irrespective of its culture, religion or ideology. The illiterate tapper; the fisherman and farmer; the clerk and the executive; the labourer and the civil servant; the poor and the wealthy; the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ceylonese, Eurasians and Europeans; all will have to subscribe to the new nation's constitution, and devote themselves to the social and economic advancement of their country and not consume their energies in a battle of racial creeds or ideologies.

This nation will have to include the settlers in the New Villages for there are too many of them to be ignored. In the days when China was under Nationalist rule, these men and women could return to China, knowing that they could come to Malaya when they wished. Now that China is communist they are allowed only a one-way ticket to China so that for the present at least, they are reluctant to return. They came as squatters and now, through force of circumstances, they will have to remain permanently in this country. They are constantly baffled by the diverse languages, customs, religions, and traditions of Malaya, and, although many may realise that some duty devolves on them to integrate themselves with the New Malaya, their untrained minds are unable to grapple with the problem without considerable help and encouragement from both the remainder of the population and Government.

Some of their more enlightened men are active in village committees and councils. Through these bodies they are learning to manage their own affairs. These men, however, form a very small percentage of their community and their activities appear to make little impression on the average settler. If their councillors or committee members can show them ways and means of earning a higher income, then they sit up and take notice; beyond that the average settler does not very much care what the committee does. All that the villager knows is that he has to pay rates to the council or committee in his village. He does not try to understand why he should pay these rates, but he can, at a moment's notice, alvance a number of reasons why he should not.

These are the people, who, in spite of their sometimes supreme indifference to the country in which they live, have to be absorbed and hammered into a component of a nation. These are the men and women whose confidence must be won, who *must* be inculcated with a national outlook and a sense of loyalty to Malaya, and not to any foreign country. These are the Malayans to whom the country owes a duty, not because they have in any large measure contributed to the betterment of Malaya, and have often retarded its progress, but because their goodwill and co-operation is *essential* in the future.

This is indeed a formidable task, but one that *can* be solved. No one can at once know all the answers; they can be found only through experience. But there are a number of things that can be done immediately.

Firstly there is the question of New Village security: security measures in the New Villages are inadequate, with the result that the settlers' fear of reprisals from communist terrorists, if they fail to act in accordance with their instructions, dominates their minds. This matter of security is of great urgency and must be dealt with at once. Secondly, there is the matter of propaganda. All concerned realise that there are 'sympathisers' cells in the New Villages, putting out Marxist propaganda, preying on the uneducated

minds of the settlers. Yet very little appears to be done to counteract this danger within the village. Once in a while a field unit of the Information Services puts on a series of Malayan Film Unit productions, and sometimes a live show, followed by ten to fifteen minute speeches in Chinese, Malay and Tamil. In many remote villages, some accessible only by river, I watched these shows and observed the reactions of the villagers. In practically every case they turned out almost to a man, dressed in their best clothes to watch and to listen, and left with much food for thought.

Audio and visual media are the best methods of reaching these illiterate people and in these field units lies the answer towards awakening or developing their loyalty to Malaya. But the visits of these field units are so infrequent that there is no apparent result. Each village, or at least each group of villages, must have a field unit assigned to it. More field officers of the Information Services and Chinese Affairs Department must live within the villages and operate cells to counteract the communist cells. There is nothing impossible in this. Why, then, is it not done?

Those councillors and officers who have been largely responsible for the curtailing of the field activities of the Information Services as a wastage of public money should accompany these field units on some of their treks to the New Villages, for then only will they realise the indispensable part the field units are playing in educating the New Villager to understand his position in Malaya.

After having been on several visits with the men who staff these units, in some instances to villages in areas noted for communist activity, I cannot but entertain for them the highest admiration. They are doing wonderful work even at the risk of their lives. Their task is not only essential, but needs to be expanded without delay.

If there must be a decrease in the expenditure of the Information Services, then by all means stop issuing the daily press releases which in many cases are not worth the

paper they are cyclostyled on, and prune the higher ranks of the Department among which will be found ample scope for legitimate retrenchment There are too many highly paid officers who are quite unable to understand the mind of the illiterate Asian. The field worker, however, must become a familiar sight in the New Villages, working to win the confidence of the people. The villagers must be able to look upon him as a friend and adviser.

The Social Services in the New Villages must be expanded to include even such things as unemployment benefits where the villager, through no fault of his own, has no other form of livelihood. Poor housing conditions must be remedied. Only these improvements, together with a unified system of Malayan education for the young, will help to develop in New Villages a sense of loyalty towards Malaya.

Chapter 8

THE FUTURE

In the previous seven chapters I have tried to present the different problems in the New Villages and, in some instances, to suggest possible ways of solving them. There is no doubt that the Government of the Federation of Malaya is aware of these problems. Why, then, do these problems remain unsolved?

Chiefly, it is a question of finance. According to figures available at the time of writing, forty-two per cent of the Federation's annual expenditure is absorbed by the Police and the Federation and Malay regiments. The actual cost of resettlement is not known as yet, and the cost of maintaining the New Villages is distributed through the District Officers concerned to the Village Council or Committee.

At the time of writing, the Federation Government faces a deficit of a little over two hundred and twenty million Straits dollars. This deficit will probably increase considerably in 1955. There is no doubt that if the New Villages are to be improved, additional expenditure will be required. Most of the administrative and District Officers with whom I discussed this subject pointed unanimously to the deficit and said that because of it there was very little that could be done.

Whatever the financial situation of the country, however, it is important that a genuine attempt be made to Malayanise the New Villages. We have recognised the fact that many of the settlers are still under the domination of the communist terrorists. They must be freed from this fear. Now that more White Areas are being declared, and the terrorists are being gradually forced into the

interior of the country, where they are constantly harrassed by air operations, more effort should be made to stop the leakage in the New Villages. The terrorists are still relying on many New Villages for their supply of food—as has been proved in New Villages in Negri Sembilan and Johore. If we are to deny the communists their supplies, we must eliminate the settlers' fear and win their confidence. It is vital, therefore, that the settlers be freed from communist influence if we are to see an early end to the present Emergency in Malaya.

While the villagers are in their villages, there is a certain amount of security for them, but, when they leave the villages for their places of employment, they come immediately under the domination of the terrorists. It will not be possible to extend the existing security measures to cover every villager at his work; but co-operative farms, in which these men and women can work, can be more easily guarded. For example, off the town of Kluang in Johore I saw about three thousand acres of arable land allocated to the government veterinary farm. Why should not more such farms be opened near the New Villages? On these farms, which can be run by the settlers on a collective basis, government agricultural officers can teach the settlers better methods of farming and cultivation.

Initially, perhaps, finance would be required to fence the land, provide mobile security patrols, and modern equipment. Within six months, the settlers will be able to make it an independent project, with the village council or committee acting as administrators of the farm.

We must justify the existence of the present perimeter fence in the New Villages by plugging all the loop-holes that still exist and making impossible the flow of supplies and information to the communist terrorists. The whole resettlement scheme falls to the ground as long as security is less than one hundred per cent. It is, of course, easier for the terrorist to watch two or three feet of the perimeter fence, through which he hopes to come in to collect the food from the dump, than for the security guard to watch

a mile or more of the fence. But mobile patrols, moving slowly, close to the perimeter fence, will be able to spot any attempt to break through.

Government agents should live in the villages and mix freely with the people, and if possible gain influence among them. These agents should organise cells to counteract the work of the communist cells. Propaganda must be defeated by propaganda.

The New Villages of Malaya can be an example of a gigantic co-operative development programme, aimed at the social and economic advancement of its settlers. It could be of great value to this country and its people. The villagers can be made into staunch defenders of democracy and a strong deterrent to any further attempts at communist infiltration. They and their children can be law-abiding citizens, owing allegiance only to Malaya. They can be absorbed into the Malayan nation and contribute towards its rural prosperity. On the other hand, if we do not want to be bothered with them, we might as well deport them all to China and forget that they ever existed.

The villagers are today poised on the brink of decision. On the one side they see militant communism, menacing in its demands, attractive in its promises; on the other, democracy, shackled by perimeter fences, inadequate in its provision of land and practising collective punishment. Which will they choose? The years to come will reveal the answer. But, for our good and for the future of Malaya, we must see that they choose democracy.

At a public speech in Singapore recently, Madam Vijayalakshimi Pandit, past President of the United Nations General Assembly, said. "Instead of fighting communism, let us try to make something out of democracy."

Let us try to prove the benefits of democracy to the New Villagers while we are fighting militant communism in

Malaya. Let us prove our sincerity and goodwill to these illiterate men and women by deeds as well as by words. Let us win their confidence by giving them our confidence. There is plenty of room in these New Villages for voluntary workers from neighbouring towns in the field of welfare and education. Why not respond to the urgent cry of the villagers? Their future is in our hands as well as theirs, and the responsibility for their failure or success rests on all of us.

HILLY REGION

SETTLER'S

LOTS

TO KOTA TINGGI

MAIN ROAD

POLICE STATION

COMMUNITY HALL

CHINESE SCHOOL

CHINESE TEMPLE

CHURCH

PIGGERY RESERVE

SUNGEI TIRAM