

New Villages in Malaya

(From Our Malaya Correspondent)

IN a recent court case reported in the Penang newspapers, a junior Malay policeman was charged with receiving a bribe from a Chinese in a new village. The Chinese came back after the gates were closed and the Malay guard, it was alleged, told him that if he gave this policeman \$10, he would let him through the gates even though it was after hours. The Chinese subsequently complained to the senior police official but the Malay guard was acquitted on the ground that there was no NCO in charge of the police post and the evidence was insufficient. Whether this charge is true or not, it serves to illustrate the sort of difficulties which those in new villages have to face. In a new village, the villagers always feel that at any moment their intimate private concerns may be thrown open to public gaze by some form of investigation in which they are not directly implicated. It is certainly true that in the early days of the resettlement of Chinese into villages surrounded by barbed wires and bright lights, the purpose was that of defence against the Communist terrorists. Feelings such as this were not to stand in the way of adequate defence measures. But that this aim in itself was not sufficient was early realised by the Government although the first comprehensive directive laying down Government policy was not issued until May 18, 1953 by which time the settlement policy in the Federation had crystallised and thoughts were being given to the next step.

GOVERNMENT DIRECTIVE

The directive was that a new village can be considered as properly settled when the situation is as follows:

1. The provision of at least a modicum of agricultural land preferably just outside the wire, though in any case close at hand, for the agricultural population of the village.
2. A reasonably adequate water supply.
3. A Village Committee, or preferably a Village Council, which functions reasonably well.
4. A reasonably friendly and co-operative feeling in the village towards the Government.
5. A school to accommodate at least the vast majority of the children and adequate teachers'

quarters.

6. A village community centre,
7. A reasonably nourishing Home Guard, ie, one that has at least reached stage 3 as defined in Director of Operations' Instructions No 9 dated August 14, 1952 with an adequate village defence scheme and proper arrangements for the security of arms and ammunition.
8. Long-term land titles covering house plots and agricultural holdings.
9. Efficient perimeter wire illuminated at night in the case of Priority A villages. In these latter cases, the inhabitants should be given a chance of having their own electric light in their houses at a fixed charge.
10. Beginnings of certain activities such as Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Red Cross, etc,
11. A reasonably friendly relationship between the police and the inhabitants.
12. A place or places of worship.
13. Trees along the main streets and round the *pondang* and school,
14. Roads of passable standard with side chains.
15. Reasonable conditions of sanitation and public health.

From this directive it can be seen that the Government was not ambitious but that its aims were fairly reasonable and possible of attainment. After all there are many villages in India which have not yet come up to this standard. But when one actually looks at the new villages themselves, one can see that, because the Government did not put these aims in the forefront at the beginning but allowed other factors to intervene, many of the new villages are bound to disappear as soon as Government pressure is relaxed.

Before going into some of these factors, it is necessary to remember that the territory of Malaya is so varied that what may apply in one district may not apply to the adjoining district. Malayan villages fall under four broad types.

SUBURBAN TYPE

Those villages which are close to large towns and where the inhabitants travel to work in the town every-

day. This is especially true of many of the new villages about Kuala Lumpur. In these villages there are a large number of professional people who were only too glad to move out of the overcrowded towns and take advantage of the loans on easy terms for building houses and of the community services. These new villages are already suburbs, there is no dearth of leadership and in most of them there are already no guards nor even home guards and they are becoming what in reality they are, city suburbs.

HOMOGENEOUS TYPE

Settlers who were united in occupation, religion and language before the emergency but who were made to live together for purposes of defence. One such village is in the Dindings, consisting of people all of whom came from the same part of Fukien late in the last century. This particular village has been burnt to the ground twice by the Communist terrorists but it still retains its unity and traditions. I do not pretend that all such villages will co-operate with the Government as this village has done, but the point is that whatever the village does, it will do it together and retain its identity. I should estimate that about 10 per cent of the rural new villages are of this type. Some of the tobacco villages of the Grik Valley are of this type also.

MIXED TYPE

Villages in which all the inhabitants undertake the same occupation but are otherwise divided among themselves, as they come from different districts and do not often speak the same language. In a small number of these new villages there are Indians and Malays who have been put behind the wire with the Chinese. The majority of the villages in the area south of Ipoh in the Kinta tin mining district are of this mixed type. Although most of the tin miners are Hakkas, tin's is not always the case and, of the villages I visited, there were few in which I could speak to all the inhabitants.

How NOT TO Do IT

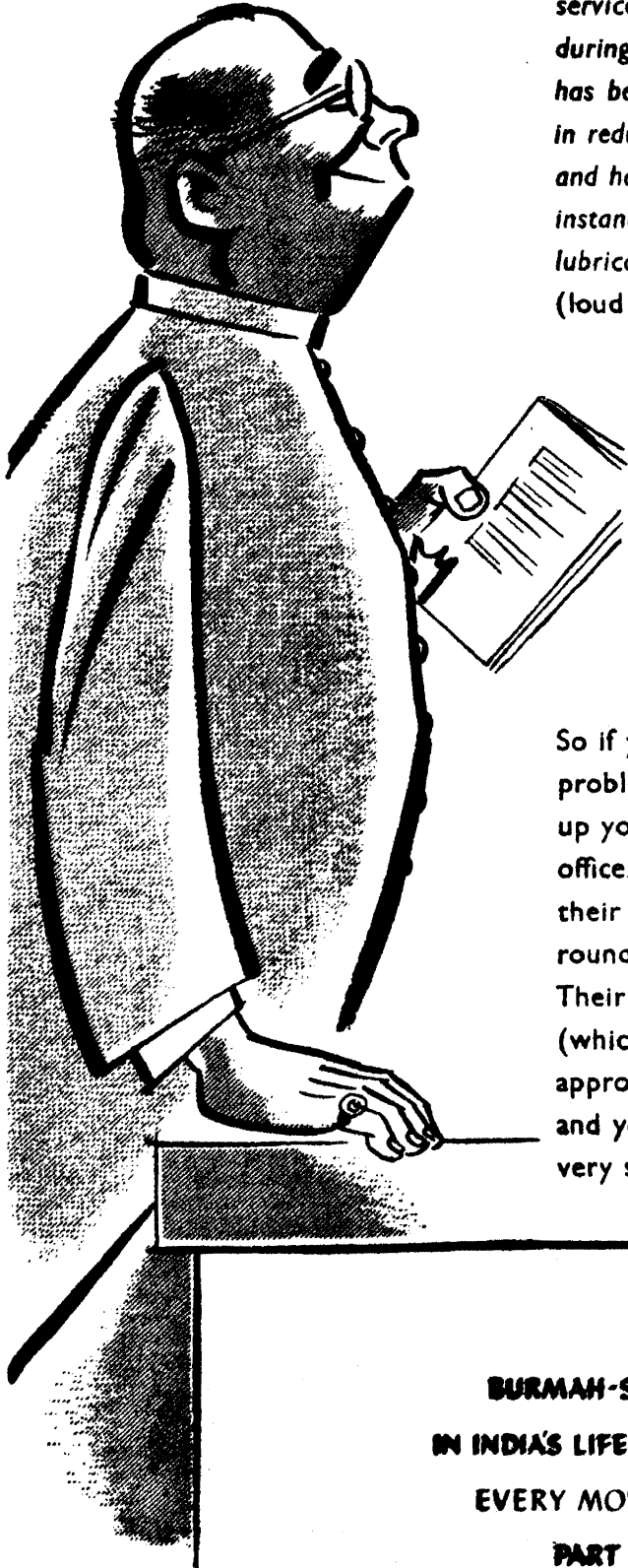
These areas provide a good example of the Government's failure to put first things first. The rules about settling Chinese in this area were that no villages could be built near the forests where the Communists could get at the villagers, no

"Gentlemen! we are all agreed..."

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