

THE YEAR AHEAD

No one living in Malaya can complain that 1956 was a dull uneventful year. On 1st January, 1956 the Tunku sailed to London in quest for Merdeka. March, the Tunku returned to Malacca where he announced to a crowd of over 100,000 Malaysians mostly Malays who had come from all parts of Malaya that the Federation would get Merdeka by 31st August, 1957. Ever since then, all political leaders in the Federation have been marking time, waiting for August, 1957, before they settle their differences of views and policy with the present leadership of UMNO and the Alliance. And this is true of political leaders both in and out of the Alliance.

Compared to Singapore the Federation has had a quiet year. Over and above the usual "Emergency" news, the swift and firm flushout of the Chung Ling High School students was the only big local event, as against two riots in Singapore. On March 18th the Merdeka rally at Kallang Airport when the famous platform symbolically collapsed underneath David Marshall and sparked off the first. On October 24th, flush out of the Chinese High School and the Chung Cheng High School sparked off the second. But the failure of Singapore Merdeka talks in May did not spark off a riot, a tribute to the restraining influence of the leaders in Singapore.

But it was the world-shaking events in Egypt and Hungary that will go down in history as the great events of last year. The brutal Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt shocked and angered the whole non-European world. It was reminder of the perfidy and ruthlessness of the gun-boat policy of the imperialist powers of a bygone age. Fortunately for the peace of the world, the Americans refused to support Britain and France, but instead joined the rest of the world in condemning this blatant act of aggression. And finally it was a sheepish Anglo-French Army that pulled out of Port Said, jeered by the Egyptians and laughed at by every ex-colony in the world. Britain and France were no longer world powers and they found it out in Egypt. They paid a costly price to find out that there are bigger powers in the world, and that international gangsterism is not a sport which they can afford. It is difficult to rob a weaker man if he has strong friends prepared and able to give the robber a hiding. Not so very long ago, any dispute over the use of the Canal, would have been settled by Western gunboats sailing up the Canal. The Egyptian blocking of the Canal symbolised the end of the gunboat age for Britain and France.

But international law and order has not been established yet. The even more bloody and brutal armed suppression of Hungarian patriots by Russian Communist forces brought the anger and condemnation of the world on Russia. All the uncommitted nations in the Middle East and South East Asia, including neutralist India, called on the Russians to leave Hungary and let Hungarians settle their own

future. But it fell on deaf ears. There was no force to back the plea. America, the only atomic power in the world that could fight the Russians, was not prepared to go to war over Hungary. The armed strength of Russian Communism has triumphed in Hungary. But history may well mark this event as the turning point of Soviet Communism in the West and perhaps in the whole world. Never before has any single event in the Communist world split the Communist parties of Europe as Russia's cruel action in Hungary has done. And in Asia, neutral India friendly before more to Russia than America, is now more friendly to America. Nehru's visit to Eisenhower in Washington last month was his tribute to the just and moral stand of the Americans over Suez, and a rebuke to the unjust and immoral stand of the Russians over Hungary.

But whatever the course of the world events, it is only natural that we should be more concerned with the events that will more directly affect our lives. What will happen in the Federation and Singapore in the immediate future? 1957 marks a new period in the history of Malaya. Over a hundred years of British rule will be declared dead on 31st August, 1957. There will be festive ceremonies to mark Merdeka day. True British commercial and economic interests will still continue to make large profits out of Malaya. True British troops are still camped in Malaya. But political control and administration of Malaya will be in Malayan hands. And if at a later date a Government comes into power by constitutional and free elections

determined to alter the control of British investments on the economic life of the country, Britain will find it difficult to resist Malaya's claims to economic independence except by open use of her troops and a military re-occupation of the country. This will have grave international repercussions and may well be too costly a weapon for Britain to use. And as for British troops, if one day a Malayan Government comes into power pledged to remove British bases in Malaya, Britain may find it difficult to flout the wishes of an independent Malayan people and she may well have to go as quietly as she is going from her naval bases in Ceylon.

Despite the Defence treaty to be signed between Britain and the Federation, it would be a grave mistake to overlook the qualitative change in the political situation in the Federation. After Merdeka in August any armed revolt against the Government, will not be as it has been simply an armed revolt against British colonial domination. It will no longer be a nationalist struggle against imperialism.

The M.C.P. realises this and for that reason is anxious to stop the armed struggle.

But the Tunjku and his Government is determined that the Communists shall not be given the chance to "subvert" peacefully and win constitutionally. Hence the "Emergency" can be expected to go on. But it will be interesting to see the new lines of conflict of political forces in Malaya. In effect the battle will now be not a battle over the independence of Malaya, but over what kind of Malaya it will be. The masses of the people are not interested in political theory and ideology. They want

and have the right to expect a better life. They have supported the Tungku so far because they believe he can with Merdeka give them a better life. If his Government does not deliver the goods after Merdeka then the people will take away their support and give it to some other leadership, which they believe can produce results. The Tungku realises this. But to improve the standard of living of the people, the wealth of the country must be preserved for the country, increased, and distributed more equally amongst the people. But he is looking for an easier solution. He is in London seeking loan reported to be around \$1,000- million. With this money his Government expects to produce immediate results for the people. If he does, his Alliance will remain in power after the next elections. The people are waiting to see.

What of Singapore? The British, the Federation and the Singapore all know that Singapore cannot be independent by itself. If there was one military lesson from the October riots, it is that militarily Singapore can be contained and ruled by about only 3 battalion of troops. No armed revolt can succeed in Singapore. And there is one economic lesson from the last November budgets of the Federation and Singapore Governments, it is that no economic revolt against the policy of the Federation can succeed in Singapore. To stop the lowering of the income-tax allowance the Singapore Government had to go and plead for the Tungku's agreement. And the tariff on Singapore manufactured goods entering the Federation has caused alarm to Singapore manufacturers. There is even talk of the Singapore

Government paying a subsidy for the privilege of Singapore manufacturers continuing to sell to the Federation. And anyway Singapore buys its water from Johore. And those of us who are old enough will remember that the Japanese subdued Singapore within one week of cutting off the water supply.

What does all this mean? It means first that Britain can give Singapore internal self-government without much risk of losing her military and economic hold on the island as long as the Federation Government agrees with Britain. If the Federation Government disagrees with Britain then it is not only Singapore that will be lost. So we can expect the next Merdeka talks to reach agreement on full internal self-government.

Then what about the next elections? We can say without boasting that the course of the next elections depends more on what P.A.P. does than on any other political party. Ours is the party which the people have recognised as honest, steady and consistent. But we also realise that there are limits to the economic and social policy of an internally-self governing Singapore. That the first aim of any Singapore party that seeks the welfare of all Malaya must be the merger of Singapore and the Federation. That no party can rule Singapore and bring this about if it is opposed in Singapore by the 200,000 Malays in Singapore. That for the time being the Malays are organised in their own Malay parties. And that therefore for any party to have a

Malayan base it must have the co-operation and participation of the party which represents the Malays.

But of more immediate concern to our party is the significance of the Labour Front Coalition Government's purge of persons the Special Branch reported to the Government as subversive and Communist. Most significant is the Federation Government's open support of these arrests and detentions. It means that if any party which is led by "subversives" wins the elections and comes into power in Singapore it can expect hostile opposition from the Federation Government including economic sanctions. It must also expect military and constitutional sanctions from the British in Singapore itself.

It may seem logical to assume that the leaders of the party who have not been arrested have not been reported by the Special Branch to the Labour Front Coalition Government as subversive or Communist. But people who want to remain in power may not be concerned with whether their opponents who will defeat them are Communists or non-Communists. For this simple reason we will be foolish if we do not prepare ourselves for all contingencies.

The Party is not seeking power for itself or its leaders. Our object is to rally all non-communist anti-colonial forces to fight for independence and the

establishment of a just society where every Malayan will be given equal opportunities in life regardless of class, race, or religion, equal opportunities to contribute his best to society and a society which will provide him with just rewards for his contribution. We are prepared to co-operate and work together in a united front with all parties that share this aim. To that end we have called for a united front of all anti-colonial parties to fight British imperialism and get Merdeka. We have renewed the call. Our object for 1957 is clear and unequivocal. Get complete internal self-government. Get merger with the Federation or as near to it as possible. Co-operate with all groups that share this aim of an independent, democratic, non-Communist Malaya. 1957 will bring us closer to our goal.

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