

JANUARY 1958

1958 NEW YEAR MESSAGE

The old year was a sad one for the world - sad because it showed again that man's moral and intellectual capacity had not progressed fast enough to catch up with his technical ingenuity.

When the first Russian Sputnik spun in the sky in September last year, it symbolised a new scientific and technological era, man's conquest of nature. No one doubts that at the rate of progress in the last 50 years, the time will soon come when his mastery over nature would reach that point where the essentials and comforts of life for all could be secured, when the drudgery and hardship of the toiling mass of humanity could become as much a bygone age as the days when man hunted animals with stone axes and kept themselves warm and alive in caves.

But instead of bringing joy and jubilation to the whole world, this achievement brought fear and gloom to one half of the world. The Americans have made frantic efforts to put their own satellite, spurred on by fear of being conquered or destroyed by Russian manned satellites. Man may have conquered space, but he has not

learned to conquer his own primeval instincts and emotions which was necessary for his survival in the stone age, not in the space age.

Let us hope that reason will triumph over fear and hatred. If all peoples and their leaders work for solution of their differences through reasons, not emotion, 1958 may see progress towards more security and peace in the world.

1957 was also an historic year for Malaya. The Federation became a sovereign independent nation. Political merdeka was formally proclaimed on 31st August, 1957. Now begins fight for economic and social Merdeka. The Alliance led by U.M.N.O. has played a historic role in uniting all the different races in Malaya and achieving independence in a relatively short time. Now comes the more severe test. Can the Alliance led by U.M.N.O. lead the people in their fight for the economic and social fruits of Merdeka? That this is the more acute test, there can be no doubt. The Alliance defeats in one bye-election to the Legislative Council and in several of the Town Council elections is clear indication that they are having a harder time to get the people to rally behind their social, economic and educational programme.

One of the events worth noting is that in 1957 there were riots and demonstrations against the Government in the Federation instead of in Singapore as

in 1955 and 1956. The situation is slowly becoming clear even to the densest that the situation in Singapore and the Federation is one and the same situation. That the problem of nation building, of national education policy, national language is the same. That the problem of working a democratic system in the face of challenge by a militant Communist party in Malaya is the same in Singapore and the Federation, and that it is foolish to split the two territories and attempt piecemeal and separate solution to what is a single problem.

Malaya's most acute problem at present is communalism. The easiest emotions to arouse in any group of people are their one-ness in race, culture, language and religion. And it is a temptation too strong to resist for political adventurers to make an appeal to these emotions to win support. So we must hail the defeat of Dato Onn in the Batu Pahat by-elections, in a predominantly Malay area where he made the greatest call to communalism ever to the Malays. And we must cheer the victory of the P.A.P. Malay candidate, Inche Baharuddin bin Mohamed Ariff in the Crawford division of the Singapore City Council elections, where in a predominantly Chinese division in a predominantly Chinese City, he got the biggest majority of any candidate in the Singapore elections, in spite of the Chinese communal line taken by his opponents.

But there are still grave problems to be solved before we achieve complete national harmony and unity. Education policy, jobs policy, contract policy etc. all at present bedevilled by race preferences. But we must be patient and use our reason, not emotions, to work out a peaceful and sensible solution to our problems. They can be solved, and, with the one citizen one vote principle, the democratic system can work out the differing views and attitudes of our different races to reach a solution most acceptable to all. The dictatorship of any one party or group, be it on racial or ideological lines, cannot provide a solution to our problems and most likely will aggravate them. For the international differences and contradictions of a people cannot be resolved by the imposition of the view of one group of people over that of the other with the aid of Government authority. It can only be solved by discussion, debate, education the free competition of ideas between differing racial or political groups.

And so it is with regret that we note the passing of 1957 without an end to the shooting war in Malaya. The Alliance Government is very firm in its stand that the M.C.P. should surrender. The M.C.P. is holding out for some terms which would give them a chance in continuing their struggle for an eventually Communist Malaya on a Constitutional plane. And so the 2nd Baling talks did not come off. But it must come sooner or later. The M.C.P. realises more than any one else that continuance of the armed struggle by a predominantly Chinese force against an elected and

predominantly Malay Government of the people, can lead to a very dangerous situation between Malays and Chinese in the country. Let us hope that 1958 may see an end to this armed struggle. It is not just a question of face of the M.C.P. or of the Alliance Government. The racial harmony and solidarity of the people of Malaya depends on this.

So much for 1957 - the past. What of the future? What does 1958 hold for us in Malaya? It depends on what happens in Indonesia, in Singapore and in the Federation. Out of the chaotic situation in Indonesia many things may emerge. It is on the cards that the Indonesian Communist Party may take over control of Java in the confused prevailing situation. If that happens the Military State of Indonesia will break up with Anti-Communist Sumatra, and the Celebes breaking off on their own as they are already doing. All this will affect our trade and prosperity, particularly Singapore's. But even more damaging will be the complete collapse of the democratic system abused by a multiplicity of political parties and political opportunists. Out of such a collapse only a Military or Communist dictatorship can emerge. Both will have adverse effects on developments in Malaya.

But that is looking things at the worst. Probably some kind of compromise between all the political parties and forces will be reached and the State of Indonesia

goes on for the time being more or less in the way it has gone on for the past 12 years since the end of the World War II.

Events in Singapore will also decide the state of things to come. In the second half of 1958 Singapore's citizens will elect their Government to take over complete internal self government. The type of government that is formed will decide Singapore's relationship with the Federation and the chances of merger between the two territories. Nothing would be more sad than to see a repetition of the inept and unstable Government which emerged after the 1955 elections. But all indications are that the people want and will vote for a party which will give them an honest, hard-working, sincere and able Government which will work out the destiny of the people of Singapore in common with that of the people of Malaya.

But of what will happen in the Federation, only the Federation Government and the M.C.P. can decide the answer in 1958. How far the Federation Government can rally the people to its side by a dynamic economic and social policy is a question of guesswork. If the Alliance Government appreciates the importance of social and economic Merdeka for the people, the vital need to abolish exploitation not only of Malaysians by Europeans but also of Malaysians by Malaysians then the M.C.P. will find itself in a very difficult position in continuing a shooting war against a Government of the people working in the interests of the people.

But the decisive events in the Federation are scheduled to take place in 1959, next year. General elections under the new constitution are to be held and a new Government will be formed. It is not unlikely that some of the reactionary deadwood of the present Government may go, and the Alliance will be led by U.M.N.O. emerging as the Government but under a more enlightened and able group of leaders. That will make the solution of our basic problems in Singapore and the Federation more likely to found quickly.

With this new year let us all resolve to work towards a peaceful and reasonable solution of our basic problems. Emotions do not help. Hate and fear will only make matters worse. Reason and the calm exercise of reasoning are more likely to lead us to lasting solutions. Let us wish each other in Malaya peace and goodwill. Let us together wish the rest of the world peace and happiness for all nations all over the world.

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