

Rotary Club, Bombay
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"Malaya: An Interlude"
by
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In speaking about Malaya - present conditions
neither
internal as well as external - it is/necessary nor possible
to give a story of the Federation right from the beginning
of the ^{16th} Century, which task has been ~~so~~ ably performed by
Mr. Pannikar in his "Asia and Western Dominance". That is
the first thought which occurs when one visits Malaya and
other countries of South East Asia - Western Dominance.

Mine was a short holiday visit of a month and
I cannot presume to speak with authority as Mr. Pannikar does
on the vast intricate and complicated problems of Malaya and
her neighbours. All that I can humbly submit are my personal
impressions through contacts with administrators, ministers,
permanent servicemen and the many people, men and women, whom
it was my good fortune to meet.

Prime Minister [^]
^{nehru}
in a speech about four or five
months back quite rightly said that so far we thought only
in terms of the West and it was time we turned our eyes to
the East. It is well worthwhile visiting the East.

Malaya has many problems. Its internal
problems are being tackled with great seriousness and
earnestness. But there is a feeling not necessarily pessi-
mistic, but of realism that the internal problems of Malaya
depend on the international situation that arises vis-a-vis
Indo-China, China and Indonesia.

I made great efforts to look into the minds, hearts and eyes of the people and what I saw has brought me back to India with a good bit of cheer and a feeling of optimism. This does not mean that everything is wonderfully bright and there are no problems waiting for solution. Quite the contrary, the situation is fairly grim and the future is uncertain ^{but} and the first stage of victory for Malaya and its government is that they are fully conscious of the difficulties and the uncertainty.

When I told Richard Crossman in July 1948, with particular reference to India gaining independence, through the magnanimous statesmanship of Mr. Attlee in full co-operation with Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, ^{That} England as she lost a big Empire ^{her} regained ~~its~~ soul, he said: "Not so fast. England has not regained her soul, but has started regaining it and it depends on our action in Malaya as to how far the soul is completely regained."

My first impression, Sir, which I want to share with you and the ^{have} Protarians gathered here today is that what the British ~~has~~ done in Malaya is a further proof ^{that} of the process of regaining the soul has worked very fast. I have returned to India perfectly convinced of the sincerity and the earnest mindedness of the British Government and the British people to liquidate their colonial government

in Malaya and to give self-government to Malaya as they ^{have} ~~was~~ done with India.

But the problems is not so easy as all that. As Justice Douglas points out in his "North From Malaya" there was a great political organisation of the Indian National Congress in India ready to take over the reins of government as the British quitted. Those conditions unfortunately do not prevail in Malaya today. There is no big political party with people behind it, immediately to take over. The political parties are fast developing and there is nothing to despair. It will be the business of the administrators in Malaya to keep the British government fully posted up with the developments of political and national consciousness of the people and ~~the~~ power has to be handed over to the people of Malaya as speedily as possible.

If I were to advise the British Government as a friend, in their own interests and in the interests of Malaya and in the interests of world peace, I would suggest, say, 1st January 1960 when the British should hand over all power and at the same time ~~to~~ agree to co-operate with Malaya as friends and equals in running the Government. This would be somewhat different from what ~~had~~ happened in India. But the internal conditions of Malaya and the problems of world peace require that whilst the colonial ^{should} power/cease, whilst racial snobbishness and false ideas of

superiority of the Whites over the coloured should completely disappear, there should be co-operation between the East and the West.

Sir Malcolm Macdonald, Commissioner General of Singapore and *Mac* Sir Donald Gullivray, the High Commissioner of Malaya, are men of great wisdom, tact, sincerity, ~~and~~ earnest-mindedness, experience and understanding. I had the pleasure of meeting them and I saw how clearly they understood the seriousness of the position of the British in Malaya. Sir Malcolm is one of the most keymen in the whole of the South East Asia problem and I have no doubt that these two great Englishmen would be able to help Malaya forward to self-government-

Sir Donald has just succeeded the Military Governor Sir Gerald Templar. I have not had enough time and opportunity to evaluate Templar's work. But I say this with confidence that Sir Donald will achieve much greater success than his predecessor.

One of the troubles in South East Asia and in the Far East Asia is that too much trust has been put on military leadership and the psychological warfare of the U.S. has suffered a big set back because of this over-emphasis of military leadership in political jobs and many of the mistakes made in South-East Asia and in the Far East ~~xx~~ are the results of this military leadership - ~~may be~~ in Tokyo, Saigon, *Seoul* *Kuala Lumpur* and Washington *D.C.*

Discussing the internal problems of Malaya the first problem that hits you straight in the eye is the communist programme of terrorism, ^{murders} sabotage and disruption. The communists are for the moment under control, but they exist and they will continue to exist so long as the jungle which ^{forms} four-fifths of Malaya exists. The problem of ~~the~~ communists in Malaya is not going to be settled through complete liquidation and its ups and downs do not depend upon the British or the Malaya people. It depends upon what happens in Indo-China and other places. The "jungle" gets instructions day after day from Peking and Moscow, Peking being nearer they will certainly take more advantage than what Moscow could do, though in many ways the communists in Malaya look for inspiration and orders from Moscow. Exaggerated reports which they get through Radio of the success of communists in other parts of South-East Asia affects adversely the sitters on the fence. They want to be on the side of success.

That is one great danger. There is no sympathy for France in her defeats in Indo-China, ^{even though the Communist victory would bring unpleasant repercussions.} My impression is that it is felt that the last seven years of French Colonial Rule in Indo-China is responsible for fanning the flames of communism in South-East Asia.

When I was reminded of Gen. Smuts' ^{was dead} statement which he made in 1943 that the soul of France ~~died~~ for ever I was told that the soul of France died many years

earlier on the battle field of Flanders in the First World War and that the corruption, ^{and alleged} pleasure hunting ^{west-end} ~~and~~ ~~immorality~~ of France have completed the process of her ~~downfall~~ ^{and} demoralisation. The sooner, therefore, it is felt, that France quits completely Asia the better would it be for the cold war tensions and the colour war to end.

Vis-a-vis the internal communist problem it is felt in Malaya that the only way to make Malaya self-governing independent political democracy is to avoid a third world war. I myself feel that there will not be a third world war now or in the immediate or distant future. But the opinion in Malaya seems to be that the ^{and Thailand} ~~world~~ ^{Third} war is inevitable and if, God forbid, the third world war does start, then it would not be possible either for Malaya or Thailand successfully to resist aggression even for a few days.

The second problem of Malaya is that the Federation is not yet a Nation. 80% of Singapore's population is Chinese, 45% of Malaya population is Chinese, 50% Malay, 700,000 are Indians in the total population of 7000,000. The Chinese have money, they have industry, they have multi-multi millionaires. They are not worried about political principles. They are energetic, they are educated, they are hard workers. The Malay have been kept ignorant and uneducated. There is a seamy side of ^{British} ~~the rule of the British~~ before the war to which

it is not helpful to make any reference.

I saw a vast contrast in demeanour and appearance between the older and younger Chinese. The older Chinese look ~~ed~~ hard, harsh and weather-beaten and ~~quite~~. The younger, those under 30, boys and girls, men and women, look bright, cheerful, intelligent, hopeful and full of joie-de-vivre. Their eyes are full of life and their faces are full of smiles ^{small} quite unlike the Chinese of older generation. The Malays are equally bright and intelligent.

At first I felt uncomfortable looking at the Malay girls. They always looked worried. Then I realised that their physiognomy with their high cheek bones made ~~a~~ ^{a foreigner} feel through the particular placements of their eyes that they carried a sad appearance. Soon these doubts vanished when I saw them smile and laugh.

In some way comparison between India and Malaya is unfavourable to our country. The standards of living and wages are higher in Malaya than in India. X

There is no problem of unemployment in Malaya. There is much more poverty and much too ^{much} unemployment in India.

One more point in favour of Malaya is that there is no class consciousness and snobbishness and snobbery as, ^{I regret to say} in India. We are far far away from a classless casteless society though politically through adult suffrage we are ^{and} a democracy. Whilst there is no political democracy

X The Infant mortality is higher in India than in Malaya: -90 per 1000 births in Malaya against 159 in Bombay.

in Malaya, yet it is to her credit that there is a full social democracy. Malaya is not yet one nation, but an aggregation of racial groups. To help in the process of creating one nation from these racial groups, the British Government are concentrating on education and on the Boy Scout Movement and on rural development. In India Templear has had a bad press because of his wholesale destruction *and* of villages and consequent uprooting of population, men women and children. But the Malayan British Information Service is at fault in that it has not been able to give us a true picture of the reconstructed village with all the amenities of present day social life including what I deem the first priority in India, good and adequate housing.

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The British Government in consultation with the Committee of Malays have recently put forward a scheme of an elected legislature to take the place of the present nominated legislative body. The reforms scheme proposed a legislative council consisting of 98 members, ~~of which~~ 46 ex-officio and nominated and 52 elected. The two political parties - The United Malaya National Organisation and the Malayan Chinese Association - (U.M.N.O. and M.C.A.) which are now working together considered that the smallness of the elected majority would prevent the formation of a stable government without dependence on the nominated bloc. When I was in Malaya there was talk of boycott and non-co-operation and there was feverish search for Gandhian

literature with a view to find ~~new~~ ways and means of following Gandhian political methods. Any quarrel within

would be disastrous, as it
the non-communist ranks like boycott and non-co-operation would help only one party in Malaya - the communists.

The High Commissioner has now agreed to appoint seven of his nominees to the Council in consultation with the majority party or coalition, that is to say, in reality now there will be 59 elected against 39 nominated and this suggestion has been accepted by the Alliance.

It is satisfactory to see that the Colonial Office has realised the folly of thrusting a constitution on the people of Malaya against their wishes. The UMNO ~~and~~ MCA Alliance has shown good sense in arriving at a compromise ensuring steady progress.

But the main problem of Malaya today is beyond its own control, viz., the international situation.

If a war ~~erupts~~ ^{breaks} in South-East Asia beyond Indo-China the first country to topple over would be Malaya and all thoughts of stability and progress would vanish into thin air. The war therefore has to be avoided and to achieve

this object all eyes in Malaya are on Nehru. Nehru is held with the highest respect in all official and non-official quarters. They admire his statesmanship,

Courage, his unselfishness, his efforts ^{to} ~~in~~ preventing a big world conflagration and they feel that his policy of neutralism of not joining any bloc is paying dividends. Today

Nehru holds a great key position in the world and his weight is thrown on the side of Peace. We in India have a particular obligation to our neighbours, our younger brothers, Burma, Ceylon and Malaya. There should be more exchange of people on both sides, more official and non-official visitors, better information services. Malaya should be kept informed of the progress that we in India are making. They derive inspiration from our plans and ~~from~~ our achievements. Pandit Nehru has quite rightly advised the Indians in Malaya to give all their loyalty and devotion to the country of their adoption. At present there is lack of exchange of information services, to mention only one point, one of the members of the Federation Government told me that they had heard so much about Tendulkar's 8 vols. on Gandhi, but not one set was available in Malaya. A high dignitary in Bangkok told me that peace in South-East Asia can only be restored with the co-operation of Nehru. Nehru's co-operation is available; ~~it is for the warring parties to make the best use of Nehru's advice.~~ Many years ago Lenin said that the way to Europe ^{lay} through Calcutta and Peking. ~~I believe~~ I am not wrong in suggesting that the way to peace in South-East Asia is through New Delhi and Nehru. The future of Malaya as a free and independent democracy is assured if Nehru succeeds in not only stopping the third world war, but also in helping to remove the ~~and~~ tension of the cold war.

*Incessant
quest*