

### *The Squatter Problem in Malaya*

IN THE VIEW of the Singapore authorities, the squatter problem in Malaya arises not only because many squatters have been illegally occupying both State and alienated lands, but because some of the areas, owing to their isolation, may be used as supply sources for the Communist bands whom the police are trying to put down. It is desirable from the security point of view, the authorities believe, that such squatters should be removed to areas where they can be brought under administrative control and where law and order can be enforced effectively.

To accomplish this, new emergency regulations were adopted in the Federation of Malaya providing for the compulsory eviction and resettlement of squatters. The time in which squatters can be detained in the area to which they have been removed was extended in the regulations to two years. The regulations come into force when the ruler in council of any Malaya State, considering that it is in the public interest to act, directs that any person unlawfully occupying land shall leave the area.

An eviction order must be issued specifying the date by which the evicted person must leave. The date shall not be less than one month from the day of notification. The order must set out the place to which the evicted person must proceed. The person affected may apply to an authorized officer in the area for permission to change the place of resettlement to a place of his choice. Before granting this permission, the officer must be satisfied that the other place or area is suitable and that the person intends to go and remain there.

On the other hand, an evicted person and his dependents may elect to return to his country of origin, leaving the Federation. He may be released on bond, detained in custody or peremptorily expelled if he does not leave the Federation after electing to do so.

All this follows the recommendations of the Squatter Committee, and is worked out, in its controls and appeals and exemptions, in as neat a fashion as any administrative regulation. But it is purely an emergency solution of what is, at its base, not a local problem but a universal one.

Communities inevitably encounter problems of this sort when their land tenure systems serve to enrich without labor one class and to shut out from man's natural heritage another class. The land tenure system determines whether the land resources shall be distributed to those who are able to make effective use of them, and whether their unearned benefits will be distributed to the whole community or plundered by a few owners.