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## SWEET AND SOUR

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**REMEMBER** *Jenderam, in Selangor — the village upon which Security Forces swooped without warning, to detain all the inhabitants? They currently are being screened to sort out bandit helpers and sympathisers, with gratifying results. Some people have stupidly compared it to Lidice.*

Lidice was razed to the ground after all its inhabitants had been killed. Jenderam is soon to be razed to the ground, too, but its "clean" inhabitants are to be resettled. Its bandit fifth columnists will continue to live in relative comfort in detention. Meanwhile, the possessions of all are being guarded with care, and held accountable to the East cent.

This Column thinks that the Federation authorities deserve more kudos than they have had for their handling of the Jenderam question.

But the small village of Sungei Chaah, not far from Labis, in Johore, is a different kettle of fish. Unless the authorities can produce some convincing justification, they look like dropping a sizeable



void in the field of morale at Chaah.

For the village is threatened with part of the treatment Jenderam so richly earned, but for an entirely different reason.

Consider: Chaah lies along both sides of the Labis to Yongpeng road, and tots up to about 150 shop-houses. This means a population of around 1,000. This Column supposes. The village sprawls a bit—there was no reason why it shouldn't, before terrorism came.

The sprawl isn't terribly great, and anyway, Chaah has lived and traded that way for about 25 years.

It is loyal and reasonably public-spirited: it organised its own Auxiliary Police in March 1949, and it has a Home Guard force creditable for the size of the place.

Some while ago—long before the Emergency—the powers



that be decided to add a police station to the amenities of this upright and thriving village. After due procrastination, this the did. But for some imponderable reason the built a police post outside the village, a distance up the road. No doubt this suited the police and the villagers, who in normal times would both enjoy mutual advantages from such an arrangement.

Came the Emergency and its rather aloof police station continued to get along quite happily and efficiently. Adequate protection for terrorist attacks was provided by their own forces, the villagers felt, plus patrols from their detached, but quite handy, police neighbours.

Then came March 17, the middle of last month. A Resettlement Officer arrived at Chaah and dropped a bigger bombshell than any the bandits could devise.

The authorities had decided that Chaah must be brought under protection. The police station must be closer, so that trained help could be more readily available in the event of trouble. The village and police station must be fenced in, for greater security and the better control of movement.

Fair enough, BUT: instead of the police station being moved into the village, the 150-house village must move to the police



station! The villagers received official notice to dismantle their houses, and re-build their community on a site within the shadow of the police station.

## **JUSTICE**

Consternation and alarm swept over the placid life of Chaah. The villagers faced months of work and a high cost if the original plan was pushed through.

They have appealed to the authorities to reconsider to move the police station instead of the village. They have offered to re-build the police station themselves, on a suitable new site. They are willing to fence the area to meet security requirements. The local branch of the M.C.A. is fighting their case, and the final decision of the authorities is awaited.

To be fair to the authorities, it may be that some deep tactical consideration makes it essential for the 150 houses to move to the police station. If this is the case, nobody on the spot knows about it, or can understand it.

It is an axiom of law that not only must justice be done, but it must also appear to be done—which is a fine but very important distinction.

The authorities would do well to bear this in mind, in a slightly different sense: not only must their actions be rational, but they must also appear to be rational.

This Column suggests that Chaah's proposed move be reconsidered; and if somebody has taken a silly decision, revoke it without hesitation and move the police station.

they are given a simple and rational explanation for the apparent illogic of the existing plan.

If the authorities go all hands, and enforce their ruling without such an explanation—as their present powers doubtless enable them—the people of Chaah are liable to count the cost of protection a little high.

*(The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the NLB.)*



