AN OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE EMERGENCY IN MALAYA

1948 - 1954

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Australian National University, Canberra, by Henry John Coates.
I owe this work to two sources. To the Australian National University for granting me a Master of Arts Research Scholarship which allowed me to visit Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and the United Kingdom and to interview many of the key participants of the Malayan Emergency. And to the Australian Army for giving me a period of sabbatical leave during the first half of 1974, when the bulk of my writing was undertaken.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>A.O.C.</td>
<td>Air Officer Commanding</td>
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<td>A.P.I.</td>
<td>Angkatan Yang Insaf</td>
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<td>A.W.F.</td>
<td>Armed Work Force</td>
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<td>B.M.A.</td>
<td>British Military Administration</td>
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<td>C.E.P.</td>
<td>Captured Enemy Personnel</td>
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<td>C.O.</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
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<td>C-in-C</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief</td>
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<td>D of O</td>
<td>Director of Operations</td>
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<td>D.O.</td>
<td>District Officer</td>
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<td>D.W.E.C.</td>
<td>District War Executive Committee</td>
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<td>E.R.</td>
<td>Emergency Regulation(s)</td>
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<td>FARELF</td>
<td>Far East Land Forces</td>
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<td>F.T.U.</td>
<td>Federation of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>F.O.</td>
<td>Foreign Office</td>
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<td>G.L.U.</td>
<td>General Labour Union</td>
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<td>G.O.C.</td>
<td>General Officer Commanding</td>
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<td>G.S.O.</td>
<td>General Staff Officer</td>
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<td>H.E.</td>
<td>His Excellency (The British High Commissioner)</td>
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<td>H.Q.</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
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<td>K.M.T.</td>
<td>Kuomintang</td>
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<td>M.C.A.</td>
<td>Malayan Chinese Association</td>
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<td>Malayan Communist Party</td>
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<td>K.R.I.S.</td>
<td>Kesatuan Raayat Istemewa Semenanjong</td>
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<td>M.E.</td>
<td>Masses Executive</td>
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<td>Maj.Gen.</td>
<td>Major General</td>
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<td>M.I.O.</td>
<td>Military Intelligence Officer</td>
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<td>M.P.A.B.A.</td>
<td>Malayan People's Anti-British Army</td>
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<td>M.P.A.J.A.</td>
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<td>M.R.L.A.</td>
<td>Malayan Races Liberation Army</td>
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<td>P.E.T.A.</td>
<td>Ikatan Pembela Tanah Ayer</td>
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<td>P.M.C.J.A.</td>
<td>Pan Malayan Council of Joint Action</td>
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<td>P.M.F.T.U.</td>
<td>Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>S.E.A.C.</td>
<td>South East Asia Command</td>
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<td>S.E.P.</td>
<td>Surrendered Enemy Personnel</td>
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<td>S.F.T.U.</td>
<td>Singapore Federation of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>S.W.E.C.</td>
<td>State War Executive Committee</td>
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<td>U.M.N.O.</td>
<td>United Malay National Organisation</td>
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MALAY AND CHINESE WORDS USED IN TEXT

Angkatan Pemuda Yang Insaf (A.P.I.) - Youth Justice Force.
Kampong - Malay Village.
Kesatuan Raayat Istemewa Semenanjong (K.R.I.S.) - Special People’s Union of Peninsular Malaya.
Mentri Besar - State Prime Minister. The plural is Mentri Mentri Besar or Mentri\textsuperscript{2} Besar.
Min Yuen - People’s (or Masses) Organisation.
This thesis has been conceived neither as a military history of the Emergency in Malaya, nor as a politico-military study, but as an operational analysis; the difference is more than semantic.

In surveying the Emergency originally, it seemed to me that an orthodox military history in the nature of a campaign study might be a significant contribution to knowledge: I was quickly disabused of this notion for several reasons, one of which has already been expressed by another student of the subject:

"When I was put on to examining sources of material for an official history," wrote J.B.P. Robinson, "I looked first for documentation which would give me (and the Historian) a picture of the main thread of events - a framework, a backbone on which to hang side issues. I quickly found this approach to be a mistake; it was not only fruitless but actually misleading. The emergency is not a sequence of events in which a broad pattern of development can be traced. Even considered in operational terms alone, it is (in a physicist's language) a continuum of random occurrences. It is like one of those maddening jig-saw puzzles that do not have a picture, the random occurrences can be made to fit together geographically, but they do not build up a colour reproduction of a tidy battle scene."¹

In the course of the Emergency itself, not only is there an almost complete absence of the ebb and flow of battle which one associates with an orthodox military history - on no occasion for example did the casualties in a single action amount to more than a platoon on either side - but in the context of the real problems which had to be faced, a concentration of attention on the purely regimental and military, would have little more than antiquarian interest.

For the problems which this thesis seeks to examine are not merely (or even mainly) military in origin, but affected virtually every aspect of government. Before the Government of Malaya could begin to suppress the insurrection, it had to set its own house in order and integrate its efforts. To do this it had first to refurbish the forces at its disposal; intelligence services, police and armed forces. It is the interaction of this process with the actions of the insurgents themselves - which I have termed operational analysis - with which this thesis is mainly concerned. Moreover, it has in my opinion been given added significance by

¹ Robinson, J.B.P.; Transformation in Malaya, London 1956, p 118.
several comparative writings on the subject.

As the Emergency has receded into the distance of time, there has been a tendency to make British success in suppressing the insurrection much more blandiloquent and predictable than it actually was. Partly this has been an indirect result of the massive United States involvement in the Second Indo-China War, and the persistent search for comparative didactic models which accompanied it. This has led in turn to two further consequences: first, a remarkable historical amnesia in relation to the disarray which impeded initial British efforts; and second, a tendency to make the insurgent enemy in Malaya bigger than life size and thus a more worthy opponent in a campaign which extended tediously over more than twelve years. Thus, in relation to the first, a senior and recently retired Australian Army officer could write in a professional military journal that:

"The Special Branch (in Malaya) was well established and was able to expand as required."\(^2\)

In reality, there was no Special Branch in Malaya when the Emergency was declared, and the creation of one was a long, difficult and frustrating process. And, in relation to the second, Major General Richard Clutterbuck uses the Napoleonic hyperbole of the 'Big Battalions' when describing the insurgents' military forces at the height of the conflict in 1951:\(^3\) yet the Malayan Races Liberation Army numbered at the time less than 3,500 men spread over twelve loosely grouped 'regiments', not one of which had the offensive strength of more than two British infantry companies.

And again, Sir Robert Thompson in 1969, comparing the Emergency in Malaya with the conflict in Vietnam said;


"I myself and my colleagues on the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam, all remarked that we had found nothing new in Vietnam except in scale and intensity."4

Yet one of the most frequent statements made by Australian Army Officers who fought in both campaigns, was that the difference in scale and intensity between the two conflicts made all the difference in the world.

However, this thesis is in no sense a comparison with other insurrections, but within the framework of an operational analysis of the methods used by the government to defeat the Emergency in the years 1948-1954, it sets out to prove the following contentions:

a. If the Government of Malaya had acted more promptly and decisively in 1948, the Malayan Communist Party could have been neutralised at far less cost in lives and money than subsequent operations demanded;

b. Having failed to avoid large scale terrorism, and even allowing for the rigorous conditions of terrain and jungle under which operations were conducted, it was still the failure of the government to make a coherent plan which dogged counter-insurgent operations for the first few years and rendered a protracted campaign inevitable;

c. The failure of the M.C.P. to gain a lasting ascendancy over the Government of Malaya was due at least as much to the Party's faulty appreciation of its own strength as it was to the efficacy of British counter-measures; and finally,

d. That success was not achieved until the Government integrated its

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4 Thompson, Sir R.; No Exit From Vietnam, London, 1969 p 133. The tendency to make unreal or unreasonable comparisons between the Malayan Emergency and the Second Indo-China War has been seriously challenged in a number of works, notably: Osborne, M.E.; Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam: A Survey and a Comparison, New York, 1965; Fall, B.B.; The Two Vietnams, London, 1963. Especially pp 337-382; and Tilman, R.O.; The Non Lessons of the Malayan Emergency, Military Review Vol. 46, December 1966, pp 62-71. Dr. Osborne points out that in addition to the quantitative difference, there was also an immense qualitative difference between the abilities of the two groups of insurgents to conduct their terrorist campaigns. In Vietnam, during the period (1962), when the strategic hamlet program was in operation, the casualty rate was of the order of one hundred government and civilian casualties per day with some five hundred violent incidents per week. At the height of the Emergency in Malaya, the total annual casualties for military, police and civilians, including killed, wounded and missing was 2,215 of whom 1,020 were wounded; giving a daily casualty rate of less than seven per day. Osborne, M.E.; Op.Cit., p 53.
strategy by determined leadership and by what, under less extreme circumstances, would amount to arbitrary politico-military controls.

The period 1948-54 is significant because the Briggs Plan - which laid the foundations for the destruction of the insurgent organisation - was adopted and, after a protracted period of gestation which demonstrated grave weaknesses in the machinery of Government, was effectively consummated by General Templer who combined the dual appointments of High Commissioner and Director of Operations. When Templer left Malaya in May 1954, the back of the Emergency had been broken and Malaya was on the verge of self-government.
The Decision to Revolt

Immediately following the return of the Malayan Communist Party delegates from the two communist party conferences held in Calcutta in February 1948,\(^1\) the Fourth Plenary Meeting of the M.C.P. was held in Singapore from 17th-21st March 1948. This meeting which marked a turning point in the strategy of Malayan Communism, was dominated by the Australian Communist leader L.L. Sharkey, who attacked the previous M.C.P. policy, in particular the decision to dissolve the party's guerrilla force—the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army—after the Second World War. He also expounded the significance of the new international line which had evolved since Zhdanov's Cominform speech six months earlier, emphasising that it demanded a more aggressive policy from Asian communist parties.\(^2\)

The Plenum's directives were issued as three resolutions. The first concluded that as the British Labor Government had shown itself no less imperialist than its predecessors, the struggle for independence must take the form of a 'peoples' revolutionary war' which the M.C.P. was ready to lead. The second exhorted the party to abandon its former 'ostrich policy of surrenderism' and to prepare the masses for an uncompromising struggle for independence without regard to considerations of legality. The third stressed the need to restore discipline.\(^3\)

On 10th May at the Fifth Plenum, a twelve point 'Plan of Struggle' was accepted, which emphasised illegal work, urged that the Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and the various Federated Trade Unions consider themselves vehicles for anti-British propaganda and called for strikes to disrupt the economy. Open organisations were to be closed.

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\(^1\)The two conferences were: The Conference of Youth and Students of South East Asia Fighting for Freedom and Independence, which was sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the International Union of Students and which took place from 19th to 24th February 1948; and the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India from 28th February to 6th March 1948.

\(^2\)Basic Paper Vol. I Part 2, pp 43-44

\(^3\)General History, p 4. Loi Tek the Secretary General had defected on 4th March 1947.
except for a few to produce propaganda. The same meeting was informed that a new party program would be ready in three months.  

M.C.P. inspired violence began to mount until on 16th June the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent declared a State of Emergency in certain areas, extended on the following day to the whole of Malaya. How could such a situation have come about? How was it possible that a party which, not many years before had been Britain's ally against the Japanese, could so suddenly be transformed into a resolute and implacable enemy of British rule in Malaya, and opt for armed revolt to remove that rule? To answer such questions it is necessary to look briefly at the development of communism in Malaya.

The Malayan Communist Party

The most striking feature about the M.C.P. was that it was, and has always been predominantly Chinese. According to Malayan Government records, communism was first introduced into Malaya by a number of Indonesian revolutionaries. However, they reported little success among the Malays who were 'lazy and contented'; the chief hope, they considered, lay in working on the Singapore Chinese among whom two

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5 On 16th June, Gent declared a State of Emergency to exist in the Ipoh and Sungei Siput districts of Perak, and in the Kluang and Muar Police Circles of Johore. This was extended to the whole of Malaya on the following day. The Times, 17th and 18th June 1948. The Emergency was initially declared under the British Military Administration. (Essential Regulations) Proclamation. However, so that the powers conferred on the Government would not continue to rest on a military proclamation, an Emergency Regulations Bill repealing the pre-war legislation was passed through all its stages in the Legislative Council on 5th July. The M.C.P., its affiliated bodies the M.P.A.J.A. Ex-Service Comrades Association, the New Democratic Youth League and the Ikatan Pembela Tanah Ayer Malaya (A.P.I.) were declared illegal organisations on 23rd July 1948. M.C.P., Banditry, pp 2 and 14.
clans in particular, the Hakkas and Hailams appeared to be especially promising. In the peninsula the Malays, secure within the cohesive force of Islam, were well content with British rule and remained impervious to communist efforts to recruit them. Moreover, social divisiveness within both the Chinese and Indian communities of Malaya also retarded the growth of the movement. A major part of both these populations considered Malaya as only a transient home. Among the Chinese, the success of the Kuomintang and later the communists in China, in some cases served only to increase the stridency of their claims to be Chinese citizens first and not Malayans, and during the 1920s and 1930s the ratio of Chinese emigrants to immigrants remained about equal. Among the Indians, although some were able to find common ground with the Malays as Muslims the tenuousness of their loyalty to Malaya was also a divisive factor: their focus of loyalty was reserved for India and the Congress Party rather than Malaya.

Thus, despite its claim to represent all the races of Malaya, this problem proved to be a millstone round the neck of the M.C.P. which continued into the Emergency itself. As one party report stated:

"We understand the importance of racial work but we have not tried our best to revise the Indian party. We never thought of finding means of carrying out Malay racial work. This has been the cause of our being unable up to the present moment to mobilise the Indian labourers. This has given the British

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The importance of the Hailams in the early development of Communism in Malaya cannot be underestimated. As Onraet puts it, 'a curious phase of this early Left-Wing movement was its almost complete monopoly by the Hailam clan of Chinese. Whether this was deliberate or accidental is difficult to say. But what is certain is that no other set of men could have been so successfully secretive and persistent against organised opposition.' Onraet, pp 110-111. It should also be noted that much of the Hailam influence was directed through two groups: the 'Main School' group who were engaged in the organisation of trade union influence through the communist dominated General Labour Unions, and the 'Middle School' group who were engaged in recruiting communist youth. Many Hailams taught at night schools, which apart from disseminating general propaganda, also prepared students for the Whampoa Military Academy in China: Precis, Basic Paper; p 3. In 1954 as part of a socio-political study, Professor Lucien Pye interviewed some sixty Surrendered Enemy Personnel (S.E.P.s) in Malaya. Of this number slightly more than half were Hakkas, and of those who had been M.C.P. functionaries a disproportionately high number were Hailams. Thus, the special place of these groups in the communist movement in Malaya continued into the Emergency period. Pye, pp 120-121.
imperialists the opportunity to recruit special constables and auxiliary police from the backward Malays, of making them their agents, and of carrying out their policy of dividing the races."7

Nevertheless, the development and growth of the M.C.P. in the period prior to the Second World War although fitful, was also inexorable! Until 1927, it existed as the Malayan Revolutionary Committee of the Kuomintang but after the Communist-K.M.T. split in China it emerged somewhat shakily as the Nanyang (South Seas) Communist Party. A Nanyang General Labour Union to direct agitational activity in trade unions was also formed. In 1930, at a conference in Singapore, both the above parties were reconstructed more formally along national lines as the Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan General Labour Union. At the same time, in order to increase Comintern control of the communist movement in Malaya, the supervision of the M.C.P. and its subsidiaries was taken out of the hands of the Communist Party of China and entrusted to the Far Eastern Bureau of the Comintern in Shanghai. Nevertheless, the Chinese orientation of the M.C.P. was not so easily changed and although the party adopted the united front policy laid down by the Comintern at its Seventh Conference in 1935, and also accepted the Comintern's directive to agitate against British 'imperialism' after the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939, the M.C.P. called off its anti-British agitation as a result of fresh instructions from the China Communist Party (which had reached agreement with the K.M.T. in Chungking) a year before it would have done had it been completely aligned with Russian policy. By 1934, not only had branches of the party been established in all the states of the peninsula, but its membership including members of affiliated organisations had grown to 12,716.8

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7 S.T., 4th March 1949. During the Emergency, even Chinese insurgents who worked in the Racial Section of the organisation tried to minimise their contacts with Malays or Indians whom they usually referred to as 'blacks'. Pye; Op.Cit., p 208.

The Anti-Japanese Movement

At the time of the Japanese invasion the M.C.P. remained a minority party with limited popularity and although proficient in propaganda, sabotage and subversion it did not have a strong mass base. However, from the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931, the strong anti-Japanese sentiment which this engendered among Chinese offered the M.C.P. an excellent opportunity for increasing its popular appeal.

During the Emergency a surrendered communist Lam Swee wrote:

"In 1937, I was influenced by the surging waves of anti-Japanese patriotism. Young men all over Malaya joined in anti-Japanese work to save the country, and their enthusiasm was great. Like them I joined in the work with great earnestness. Many of these patriotic young men used to extol the brave and courageous spirit of the members of the communist party in their fight against the Japanese for the salvation of the country; and under the circumstances an impression was created in me regarding the Communist Party. I admired it as a gallant and heroic warrior ready to succour the weak."

When the Japanese attacked China in 1937, the party made further gains by combining with K.M.T. elements in a National Salvation Association which it quickly dominated and finally, when the Japanese invaded Malaya the M.C.P. offered all out co-operation with the British Government which, after a period of negotiation it accepted.

The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (M.P.A.J.A.)

The British trained selected members of the M.C.P. in guerrilla warfare techniques and in all, one hundred and sixty-five went through the ten day course. Although the fortunes of the M.P.A.J.A.

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9 Lam Swee; My Accusation, Kuala Lumpur, 1951, p 3.

10 Chapman, p 28. Commenting on the quality of men selected by the M.C.P., Chapman who was Deputy Commandant of 101st Special Training School stated: 'I was much impressed by the enthusiasm of these young Chinese, who were probably the best material we had ever had at the school.'
groups were in the early stages precarious, they survived and attracted many recruits. The ultimate effect was to produce a force of some 6,500 men. In 1943 their strength was augmented by direct assistance from South East Asia Command (S.E.A.C.) in the form of officers from Force 136. By an agreement signed on 31st December 1943, the M.C.P. undertook to follow the instructions of the allied Commander-in-Chief insofar as military operations were concerned. Post-war policy was not discussed; it was further agreed that the only action immediately possible was to keep anti-Japanese feeling alive, to foment labour trouble, and to carry out acts of sabotage, particularly against shipping. The British promised to send arms, ammunition and medical supplies. However, despite increased material co-operation, the M.C.P. never disclosed its full order of battle to the British liaison officers.

For many Chinese, the M.P.A.J.A. was the focus of their continuing struggle against Japan. For the M.C.P. itself this was the watershed in its political life. For the first time in the history of the party and its predecessors, the Nanyang Communist Party and the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Kuomintang, it had a military organisation.

But what did the M.P.A.J.A. achieve during the war? For a start it very prudently declined to become involved in set-piece operations against the Japanese, and while it was of some nuisance value in tying down numbers of their troops and was for this reason the target of occasional Japanese sweeps, its real value lay in its potential to be a harassing and pathfinder force during the intended British re-occupation of Malaya.

11 They were organised into seven independent 'Anti-Japanese Regiments', each of five patrols of 100 to 150 men capable of operating as irregulars. Despite the change in prefixes during the Emergency by which Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army (M.P.A.B.A.) and later Malayan Races Liberation Army (M.R.L.A.) replaced Anti—Japanese; each group continued to operate in the same area as its parent force had done during the Second World War, and drew its support - intelligence, supplies and recruits from the same source.

12 Donnison, p 380.

13 As one observer put it: 'They, the M.P.A.J.A. were known to have issued challenges to the Nippon Army to come out and fight..... But when Garrison Commanders took them seriously.......the "Communists" were nowhere to be seen.' Chin Kee Onn, p 110.
The official history of the M.P.A.J.A. states that it undertook some 340 individual operations against the Japanese of which it considered 200 major efforts. However, in a similar period during the Emergency (June 1948 to December 1951) the Government of Malaya recorded 13,585 terrorist actions of which 4,155 were major engagements, indicating that during this phase of its development it was far more interested in remaining a force in being, acquiring experience and nurturing its strength for the future rather than risking a serious reverse at the hands of the Japanese. A debacle such as the Batu Caves massacre on 1st September 1942, affected its guerrilla program for a long time afterwards. Moreover, while conducting a relatively lukewarm policy of opposition to the Japanese, the M.P.A.J.A. pursued an active traitor killing program within its own ranks. According to its own history 2,542 so called traitors were executed or murdered during this phase. Indeed, the Fifth Independent Force M.P.A.J.A., was set up specifically for this purpose.

However, the abiding legacies of the M.P.A.J.A.'s participation during the Second World War held important consequences for the party's future. First, it was enabled by its genuine popularity in some cases, and by its resort to violence in others, to build up a strong rural mass base, particularly among Chinese 'squatters' on the jungle fringes, their numbers swollen by flight from the Japanese. And, after the Japanese surrender, just as the M.P.A.J.A. Ex-Service Comrades Association maintained a skeletal structure and close liaison between the Central Executive Committee and the disbanded guerrillas, so the M.C.P. maintained a continuing presence among the squatters by recruitment from squatter families and through the parallel hierarchy of clandestine party committees and village cells. The M.P.A.J.A. had also learned to employ

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14 Central Military Committee, M.C.P., p 30.
16 At the Batu Caves (north of Kuala Lumpur) on 1st September 1942, a general conference of senior officials of the M.P.A.J.A. and the M.C.P. was betrayed to the Japanese by the Secretary General of the party, Loi Tek who was both a Japanese and a British agent. Basic Paper Vol.I Part 2, p 36. Since more than half the political commissars in the M.P.A.J.A. were killed at Batu Caves this resulted inter alia in the abandonment of the commissar system in the M.P.A.J.A.
the aboriginal tribes as an intelligence screen and provisioning agency against the Japanese, a tactic they were to use later. Second, a new military arm of the party had been built up and 'blooded', and whilst its success against the Japanese has been generously embellished by Communist historians, it had survived and was a significant military asset. Not only had it acquired direct experience of guerrilla fighting and operational conditions, it had become strongly imbued with Maoist thought, particularly the concept of protracted conflict. Ideological motivation was strengthened by rigorous daily timetables of political and military instruction interspersed with sessions of self criticism. Potential officers attended a course in Pahang where the instructors had themselves fought in the civil war in China.

Nevertheless, there were weaknesses. Despite the strict Central Committee control of ideology and politics, central control of operations was weak. Chapman found the guerrillas' means of physical communication grossly inefficient. During his year's stay with the Pahang group, they were in touch with the Selangor group on three occasions and through them with general headquarters, three or four times with the Negri Sembilan group to the South West, twice with Perak and once with the isolated guerrillas in East Pahang. The fragmentation of the peninsula by jungle and main range made the chances of sustained co-ordinated action remote, and the shortage of spare parts and batteries limited the use of wireless. Moreover, the operational freedom necessarily delegated to the independent force commander encouraged centrifugal tendencies. A commander would respond to Central Committee injunctions provided that he could be reached; the instructions were timely and militarily feasible which was not always the case; his control had not been impaired by security force action; and he remained loyal. However, even against the Japanese, treachery was a major concern of M.C.P. authority:

"The facility with which the Chinese, otherwise so single minded in their hatred of the Japanese could turn informer," wrote Chapman,"was a perpetual source of astonishment to me. In the year that I spent with this patrol, no less than six of its members were tried for treachery and summarily shot, and several others who had fled from the camp and turned informer were hunted down and despatched outside. Those who have a better understanding of the oriental mind tell me that among the uneducated Chinese, personal pique can reach such limits that a man will be quite prepared to
kill himself - let alone sell himself - if he thinks that it will cause sufficient harm to his rival.  

As almost the entire rank and file of the M.P.A.J.A., and later the M.P.A.B.A., and M.R.L.A., could be categorised as 'uneducated Chinese' this particular psychological trait was potentially exploitable. The surrender terms, including the massive scale of rewards offered by the government during the Emergency aimed straight at it with telling effect.

Little initiative was shown by commanders at the middle and lower level, and although guerrilla schools were set up on an independent force level, the junior officers remained the weakest link in the guerrilla hierarchy. The average soldier was hardy, disciplined and uncanny in his ability to detect the presence of an enemy, but most were illiterate, lacked initiative and were poor marksmen. Their fire discipline was poor and remained so during the Emergency when several camps were found because the insurgents were having firing practice in the jungle. They were also unpredictable and while their camp discipline including their conduct towards female guerrillas was strict, they were much given to loud noises:

"in the still jungle dawn", wrote Chapman, "the noise of their shouting could be heard from a great distance ..........This same

17 Chapman; Op.Cit., p 145. When he interviewed insurgents who had surrendered during the Emergency, Professor Pye considered that their eagerness to compromise, and even lead Security Force patrols against their former comrades, sprang from the completeness of their break with their former activities: 'Even when this meant killing people with whom they had lived and worked for any years, they were not troubled by the prospect, since their break with the party had been a personal one. They no longer had any ties with those in the party; they had to establish new ones with those in the government.'  


18 Chapman; Op.Cit., p 147; 'The control of guerrilla general Headquarters in spite of its geographical vagueness, was absolute and all-embracing .... Policy, discipline, routine, ethics and above all political ideology were entirely regulated from above ..... Within these limits group and patrol leaders had complete power within their commands but none outside, nor would they ever dare to take the initiative ..... Every detail had to be referred above and the answer, if it came at all, would take several months to receive.'

lack of common sense also permitted them to blow bugles loudly in the camps, a conspicuous martial noise which, like the booming of the siamang ape carries an immense distance in heavy jungle."^20

The Post War Period

Several factors combined to make the post-war Malayan social economic and political scene the most complex in South East Asia. For its part, the M.C.P. had to decide quickly what its strategy would be. After some violent and disorderly settling of scores between the Japanese surrender and the arrival of British forces and,^21 under the leadership of Secretary General Loi Tek, the party opted for a return to a moderate policy of united front and labour organisation similar to the pre-war Comintern line, rather than embark on armed struggle in the manner of the Vietminh and Indonesian revolutions.^22 Thus, when the British High Command called for the disbandment of the M.P.A.J.A., the order was obeyed. As each member of the M.P.A.J.A. was disarmed he received a mustering out bonus of M$350 and a bag of rice. In all some 6,800 men were demobilised; 5,497 weapons were returned, 4,765 having been issued.^23 An estimated twenty per cent of Force 136 air-drops were retained by the guerrillas, who also had the arms discarded by the British at the disaster at Slim River, together with those taken from the Japanese at the end of the war.


^21 There was a delay for more than a month between the Japanese surrender and the landing of British troops at Mor'b, during which a political and administrative vacuum existed which the M.C.P. was eager to fill. Bands of the M.P.A.J.A. converged on the smaller towns and villages, disarmed the police and in some areas established an administration with all the trappings of a totalitarian state. Donnison; Op.Cit., p 385. The M.P.A.J.A. also wreaked vengeance against persons accused of collaboration with the Japanese, many of whom were brought before People's Courts and in some cases executed. Particular attention was paid to Malay and Indian policemen accused by the guerrillas of treachery. These activities, which in some cases were reciprocated by the Malays, did much to accentuate inter-racial disharmony.


or from police posts.24

The M.C.P. immediately created a variety of front organisations.25 An M.P.A.J.A. Old Comrades' organisation was formed to maintain contact with former guerrillas, and the New Democratic Youth League was organised to attract Malaysians too young to have served during the war but anxious not to be left out of post-war developments. Even more formidably, in the labour field, the source of its pre-war strength, the M.C.P. quickly recovered its previous eminence. As early as January 1946 it called a general strike which paralysed the country for two days. However, despite its official recognition by the British Government, its efforts to move into the open political arena were largely curtailed by the B.M.A. As early as September 1945, the B.M.A. refused to recognise the legality of various 'People's Committees' set up after the Japanese surrender. On 14th February 1946, the B.M.A. preempted a mass demonstration planned to commemorate the fall of Singapore, and to humiliate the British authorities. The police raided the headquarters of the Singapore General Labour Union, the New Democratic Youth League and the M.C.P., and jailed various party leaders. This marked the last large scale militant action taken by the M.C.P. until April 1948.26

Nevertheless, by then it had become apparent that two rival nationalisms, Malay and Chinese were in full force in Malaya. Immediately prior to their surrender, the Japanese had promoted the formation of the Special Peoples' Union of Peninsular Malaya - generally referred to by its Malay acronym K.R.I.S. - to seek a pan-Malay independence in association with Indonesia. The movement subsequently inspired the

24 Basic Paper, Vol.I Part 2, p 28. Special Branch of the Malayan Police eventually estimated that as many as 4,000 guerrillas failed to surrender weapons. During interrogation by Singapore Special Branch in October 1946, Loi Tek stated that an estimated 2,400 assorted rifles, revolvers, tommy guns etc. were cached throughout Malaya.

25 A directive from the M.C.P.'s Central Committee issued in January 1945 called for a secret M.P.A.J.A. to be established of 'trusted party members, incognito, whose responsibility is to gather and hide arms.' Loi Tek stated that no such force existed but that 2,000 communist guerrillas could be mobilised if necessary. Ibid, pp 28-29.

establishment of the Malay Nationalist Party and numerous political fronts. On the other hand, Chinese nationalism, dominated by the M.C.P., was also forming a series of organisations, some having connections with left-wing Malay and Indian movements. Into the midst of this, the British Government tossed the proposals to form a Malayan Union.

The Malayan Union and the Rise of U.M.N.O.

During the war, a Malayan Planning Unit in London had conceived a plan for the re-organisation of the complex pre-war structure of Malaya into a Malayan Union and a Crown Colony of Singapore. The majority of the Chinese community would become citizens. The plans for the Union, published in January 1946, were bitterly resented by overwhelming, previously apolitical Malay public opinion, particularly because of provisions conferring citizenship on most Chinese, and the manner in which the assent of the rulers was obtained by Sir Harold MacMichael.27 This led to the establishment of the United Malay Nationalist Organisation (U.M.N.O.) under Dato Onn Bin Ja’afar, the Prime Minister of Johore in March 1946, which refused to cooperate with the Government, and boycotted its ceremonies including the installation of the first Governor. The opposition resulted eventually in the replacement of the Union by the Federation of Malaya in February 1948. For the purpose of this study two consequences deserve notice. First, the suspicion of the Malays as to British intentions was thoroughly aroused, causing partial but not irrevocable estrangement from British rule at a time when British authority was about to be challenged by the M.C.P. in the labour field and later in the jungle. Had the M.C.P. been mindful and capable of exploiting the situation, this could have had disastrous consequences for the subsequent counter-insurgent campaign which depended very heavily for its success on Malay support. Alternatively, it could have posed as the champion of enlightenment against 'reactionary' Malay opinion and perhaps in the process have built upon its previous connections with the British,

27 Warnings about the proposals being contemplated by the British Government had already been given in October 1945 by a previous Governor of the Straits Settlements, Sir Frank Swettenham who said: 'Who has asked for these changes and a Malay Union? Certainly it is not the Malays.' The Times, 29th October 1945. A further letter in The Times on 16th April 1946 by seventeen prominent ex-Malayan civil servants characterised the MacMichael agreement with the Sultans as 'an instrument for annexation.'
while undermining still further the position of its rival for Chinese support, the K.M.T. In the event it did neither. It contented itself with front activities within the Pan Malayan Council of Joint Action (P.M.C.J.A.) formed in late 1946 to campaign against the proposed Federation. However, when the M.C.P. sought to use this association to enforce a hartal on 20th October 1947, the moderates refused to become involved. Later, when it became clear that the British Government and the Malay rulers intended to proceed with Federation, the middle class supporters of the P.M.C.J.A. bowed to the inevitable. The coalition crumbled, leaving the M.C.P. once more isolated. However, at the same time as its political front was collapsing, the M.C.P. was succeeding very well in the labour field.

The Trade Union Movement

When the B.M.A. moved to counter the threat of communist control or organised labour by reinstituting the 1940 Trade Union Enactment, the M.C.P. adroitly circumvented the restriction by reorganising its General Labour Unions (G.L.U.'s) into the Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (P.M.F.T.U.) and the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions (S.F.T.U.) in February 1946. By the end of 1947 the P.M.F.T.U. controlled 214 out of a total of 277 registered unions in Malaya, and claimed that it controlled some 75% of the organised work force. And while it did win real benefits for some of its members, this was incidental to its main purpose which was to manipulate labour at the behest of the M.C.P. For this purpose it developed a highly effective method of centralising finance in its own hands. As all subscriptions went directly to the P.M.F.T.U. which then paid for the administrative costs of individual unions, the M.C.P. had a very tight control over the movement.

28 Brimmell, pp 207-208
However, both the P.M.F.T.U.'s expansion and the momentum of strike action now began noticeably to slow. For a start the recovery of the economy after the ravages of the war provided a less favourable climate for agitation; but more importantly at this high point in its success in the labour field, the internal organisation of the M.C.P. lay in ruins.

The Defection of Loi Tek

In March 1947, on the eve of a meeting called by the Central Committee to accuse its Secretary General Loi Tek of treacherous dealings with the Japanese during the occupation, he disappeared. His defection caused an immediate dislocation in the leadership and functioning of the party from which it took months to recover.

For some time Loi Tek's wartime collaboration with the Japanese had been suspected but not proven. At the meeting in question, the Deputy Secretary of the party Ch'in Peng was to have confronted Loi Tek with several general accusations which included his personal life and 'weak' leadership of the party. What was unknown to the Central Committee, was that Loi Tek was not only a Japanese agent during the war but also a British agent both before and after the war. Moreover, the general accusations of collaboration with the Japanese, did not include the knowledge that he had deliberately engineered the Batu Caves massacre of September 1942, which eliminated most of his rivals among the M.C.P.

32 Basic Paper, Vol.I Part 1, pp 29-30. Immediately after the war charges of collaboration with the Japanese were raised against Loi Tek but were disbelieved by the Central Committee, in part because they came from men who had themselves collaborated.

33 Ibid., for example, he maintained two families and engaged in private business in Singapore in addition to being Secretary General of the M.C.P.

34 He entered the M.C.P. in the mid-1930's as a police informant passed on from the French Sûreté in Saigon (he was Vietnamese) to the Singapore Special Branch, and worked his way into the upper levels of the M.C.P. hierarchy during 1936. Basic Paper, Vol.I Part 2, p 36.
hierarchy, and that he also gave information to the Japanese which led to the arrest of all major leaders in Singapore.35

As a British agent, he had ensured that the course of Malayan Communism remained moderate. It was he who, at the Eighth Plenum in January 1946, the first since 1941, presented the arguments for moderation which led to its being reaffirmed as party strategy.36 Whether he genuinely believed that the British Government would intercede on matters of political, social and economic reform on behalf of the Chinese in Malaya – which it did in the Malayan Union proposals – is another matter. However, from the Malayan Government's position, Loi Tek's place at the head of the potentially most revolutionary political group in the country was of considerable importance as it strove to put its house in order.37 Now, with Loi Tek gone it could only guess what the M.C.P. might do and, as will be examined in the next chapter, its intelligence was very faulty indeed.

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., pp 33-34. 'The colonial problem,' he told the plenum, 'can be resolved in two ways: liberation through a bloody revolutionary struggle (as in the case of Vietnam and Indonesia) or through the strength of a national united front.' Conditions in Malaya were not favourable for the first alternative, he argued; accordingly the party's tasks were 'to preserve a peaceful front, determinedly to protect world peace, to carry out the Charter of the United Nations, to annihilate the remnants of fascism, and to counter the imperialist policy of colonial exploitation.' Nothing was said specifically of independence as an immediate objective. Parts of Loi Tek's speech (in translation) are contained in Hanrahan; Op.Cit., pp 51-52
37 The investigations into Loi Tek's actions carried out by Ch'in Peng, were subsequently published by the party as the 'Statement of the Incident of Wright(Loi Tek)' dated 28th May 1948. In May 1947 Loi Tek was formally expelled from the party at the Ninth Plenum and Ch'in Peng named as his successor. A full report on the case was delayed more than a year, following Ch'in Peng's visit to China in 1947 in search of evidence of Loi Tek's past connections. Loi Tek was charged with embezzling M$350,000 from party funds as well as with pressing for policies, 'which could not be carried out,' thereby serving as 'a running dog and traitor of the revolution' Ibid.
The Decline of the Communist Dominated Trade Unions

The defection of Loi Tek and the breakdown in party leadership which followed, caused the M.C.P. to turn its attention inwards precisely at a critical moment for its trade union activities. The declining effectiveness of strike tactics, which was to have such important consequences in the first half of 1948, was already apparent. Whereas the number of man days lost in strikes had been for Singapore 1,173,000 and for the Malayan Union 713,000 during April 1946 - March 1947, the figures for April 1947 - March 1948 had declined to 205,000 and 512,000 respectively. Moreover, whereas in the socially disordered post-war atmosphere of 1945 and 1946, workers might have been prepared to revolt, by 1948 revolutionary fervour had abated even among some M.C.P. cadres. By now many Indian and Chinese labour leaders were actively discouraging militancy and with increasing success. There is evidence that the P.M.F.T.U. leaders had come to believe in the lawful worker struggle, or at least they wished to avoid hazarding their positions by unnecessarily provoking the authorities. It is now apparent that the timing of the strikes called after the Fourth Plenum in March 1948 (previously referred to) was faulty. While the S.F.T.U. could still call major strikes at short notice, the mainland federations had to undertake intensive preparatory work. In April 1948 for example, when strikes in Singapore were at their height, only 13,000 man days (involving less than one per cent of the labour force) were lost on the mainland. Then in May came the measure which the M.C.P. and the P.M.F.T.U. most feared. The Trade Unions (Amendment) Ordinance, effective on 12th June 1948, declared the F.T.U.s illegal. It restricted union offices (other than secretary) to persons with at least three years in the industry, barred office to persons convicted of extortion, intimidation and other similar crimes, and restricted labour federations to unions of similar occupations and industries. This last provision shortly thereafter forced the dissolution of the P.M.F.T.U.

38 Figures extrapolated from Malayan Union Department of Labour Annual Reports 1947, Table X and Singapore Labour Department Annual Report 1948, Table XIV.

39 Malayan Union Labour Department Monthly Reports 1948, Appendix A.

40 F.L.C.M.C.P. 1948, p B260
Since the fourth Plenum the M.C.P. had been sending key officials in danger of arrest into the jungle, but it had not anticipated the sudden passage of the ordinance. Now, P.M.F.T.U. officials vanished suddenly, often taking only immediate supplies of cash and equipment such as typewriters and printing machines. The effects were dramatic. Deserted by their most militant and able leaders and frightened by increasing arrests, workers returned quietly to work. By 25th June, the number of strikes had fallen from 28 at the beginning of the month to 8. By 15th June, the number of registered unions had declined from 331 to 162.

Failure of the M.C.P.'s Post-War Strategy

How can the M.C.P.'s post-war strategy be assessed? It had emerged from the war as one of the strongest communist parties in South East Asia. It had a strong mass base and its military strength cowed its political opponents. Its decision to disband the M.P.A.J.A. and adopt a moderate strategy is perhaps surprising, particularly when viewed against contemporary communist movements in Indonesia and Indo-China. However, to ascribe this solely to Loi Tek’s treachery (as the M.C.P. subsequently tried to do) is to exaggerate the case. Certainly, Loi Tek argued strongly for the adoption of a moderate line at the Eighth Plenum, but the moderate line continued for more than ten months after his defection and more than eighteen months after his leadership first came under review. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that a majority of leaders favoured this course, at least until the party received instructions to do otherwise. Loi Tek himself visited China twice in 1946 to seek guidance on strategy and, according to him, was directed to refrain from armed insurrection, rely on united front tactics and limit demands to self government so long as the British Labor Party was in office. The M.C.P. was also enjoined to look to the Communist Party of Great Britain for both aid and tactical guidance. Moreover, British Communist views of Malaya both during and after the war

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41 Waller, Interview.


43 Annual Report 1948, p 182.

44 Basic Paper Vol I Part 2, pp 31ff
support this contention. The British party stated that the M.C.P. should concentrate on social and economic reforms, and unification of the three communities before independence. It also reaffirmed self-government, not independence, as the objective in most of England's colonies including Malaya.  

The M.C.P.'s efforts to constitute an inter-racial front were never successful, partly because of the racial suspicion which it had inflamed by its arbitrary actions before the British reoccupation, and by its militant labour policy. In 1947, as its problems deepened, the defection of Loi Tek could hardly have occurred at a worse time. Even if nothing else, it virtually dictated that the party must eschew moderation and pursue an opposite course to purge itself of past errors and deviations. But how to do so when the morale of the party was low, when many who were by now used to the good life had no wish to re-enter the jungle, and when the party's international mentors advised otherwise?

At this point therefore, the injunctions of the Calcutta Conference fell gladly on their ears. Not only would armed revolt expunge past errors, it would also enable the party to recover lost ground. Furthermore, it would give the diehards from the guerrilla period the action they had been clamouring for. In this atmosphere the party prepared for action. That some states like Johore and Perak were better prepared for insurgency than others, reflected the fact that not all senior officials of the State Committees had been equally won over to the new line. Some like Lam Swee, were loath to forfeit the positions of power they had acquired in the trade union movement and were equally loath to forego the sort of work they liked doing. Others however, tired of long years of relative inactivity were anxious to start. Led by these more zealous units the M.C.P., as one observer put it, 'almost drifted into revolution,' rather than mounting a tightly coordinated offensive. It was one of

45 World News and Views; 12th December 1942, p 477. 29th September 1945, p 297. 9th February 1946, p 47.
these groups, a killer squad of the 5th Regiment, Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army (M.P.A.B.A.) which murdered three European planters at Sungei Siput on 16th June, provoking the Government to declare the Emergency. Ch'in Peng later admitted that this had been a mistake, since it aroused many British officials who until then had been rather complacent.48

Yet if the M.C.P. had lacked foresight, the Government had not displayed any greater perception. Once a state of emergency had been declared, the Malayan Police from 17th to 19th June launched a massive dragnet, Operation FRUSTRATION, and some 1,100 members of the M.C.P. and its front organisations were detained. But the hard core members of the party and of the old M.P.A.J.A. were already in the jungle, or now escaped to it.49 Indeed, the ease and openness with which some did so is astonishing. When the Emergency was declared, Yeung Kwo the Deputy Secretary General was in Penang. He was able to return by train to his home in Kuala Lumpur and then motor by car along the trunk road to a point in Selangor, where he walked to his prearranged headquarters in the jungle.50 However, in both its success and its failure, Operation FRUSTRATION was a remarkable portent of things to come.

48 Madoc, Interview.
49 Waller, Interview.
50 Miller, Jungle War, p 53.
CHAPTER II

THE BRITISH REACTION

Professor Seton-Watson has argued that the decisive political factors in the success or failure of revolutions have been the resistance or collapse of the state machinery and the international balance of power.¹ The cases of Russia, China, Indochina and Indonesia support his argument. In Malaya however the serious social and economic disorder of 1945 was quickly overcome, and when it was at its worst the M.C.P. was at its most moderate. The will of the regime, supported by the consciousness of what Malaya's dollar-earning capacity meant to the sterling area, remained firm, and the ambitious programme of political and social reforms devised during the war by the Malayan Planning Unit, despite the blunder of the Malayan Union, speedily abandoned, and the problems caused by M.C.P. activities, first in the unions and later in the jungle, were continued with so far as communal differences allowed throughout the Emergency, until the eventual attainment of independence. The Malays were hostile to the insurgency, the Indians indifferent, even the Chinese were divided, and virtually no help reached the insurgents from outside. One might say therefore that they were doomed.

There were however still certain weaknesses in the administration which deprived the government of the capacity either to forestall the outbreak, or to make an immediately effective riposte. The ideal prescription for a government faced with an insurgency has been well expressed by Professor Paret:

"During the early stages of an insurrection, while the level of violence is still low, it is relatively easy to prevent further deterioration by an energetic effort to educate public opinion, coupled with necessary reforms, with repression by the police, administration, and the courts, and by Army control of the danger zones. Prerequisites for effective action are an alert intelligence service and a government that recognises the gravity of the threat and is willing and able to meet it."²

¹ Seton-Watson, pp 332, 336.
² Paret, p 23.
Other writers would identify the crucial areas of government in various ways. Galula for example lists six principal areas, which can be further subdivided, while Thompson, although less specific, implies the same general attitude in his five principles upon which government action should be based; the Australian Army pamphlet *Counter Revolutionary Warfare* takes a similar approach. All three however agree with Paret that the intelligence service, the police, the armed forces, and comprehensive and timely planning form the basis of the government counter. Any government faced with a potential insurgency threat neglects these aspects at its peril. The Malayan Government's record in this regard will now be examined.

**Intelligence**

If a government is to be forewarned of a challenge to its authority it must have an effective intelligence service, especially if the country has an active communist party or an organisation modelled on it, maintaining a clandestine structure parallel with the legal party. Before the War, the M.C.P. was proscribed as an illegal society, until the Japanese invasion forced the British to seek its help. Any indication that it might subsequently be legalized was avoided, but at the end of the war, after the substantial disbandment of the M.P.A.J.A., the M.C.P. openly regarded itself as a legal party proclaiming a radical but not revolutionary platform. The Central Committee indeed remained underground, but two senior party members established themselves in the Party's offices at Kuala Lumpur, made speeches and attended functions alongside British

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3 Galula, pp 26-33.
4 Thompson, *Communist Insurgency*, pp 50-62.
5 *Counter Revolutionary Warfare*, pp 25-27.
6 As early as 1920 the Nineteen Basic Tasks of the Second Comintern Congress included, as No. 12, "In all countries even the freest, most 'legal' and most 'peaceful' - that is, where the class struggle is least acute - .... it is imperative for every communist party systematically to combine legal with illegal work, legal with illegal organisation .... This illegal work is particularly necessary in the army, the navy, and the police." Degas, p 122. The above tasks were endorsed by the M.C.P. in its constitution drawn up in March 1934. Hanrahan; *Op.Cit.*, p 94.
7 For an excellent analysis of the M.C.P.'s political programme at this time see Hanrahan; *Op.Cit.*, pp 51-5.
and Malayan dignitaries.

However the extent of the underground organisation was not known to the intelligence service. It was not aware for example of the large secret stocks of weapons and ammunition, nor, until long afterwards, of the Fourth Plenum and the radical change in policy which resulted. In effect, the government had no agency capable of detecting subversion in rural Malaya, or of operating within the clandestine organ of the M.C.P. The recently established Malayan Security Service (M.S.S.) was small, and operated only in the major centres of population. Special Branch of the Police Criminal Investigation Department did not yet exist. Consequently, although police officers in rural areas had already detected signs of increased communist militancy, their warnings were effectively ignored.

The ineffectiveness of an organisation like the M.S.S. had been foreseen in 1946 when Mr. Rene Onraet, Inspector General of Police, had been invited to examine the police situation. His report had urged the introduction and wide development of a pan-Malayan police intelligence organisation such as had been so valuable in 1940-42, but although the M.S.S. was established as a result of his report, his advice was only partially heeded. Although pan-Malayan it was hampered by the political separation of Singapore from the Malay States; moreover the direction and control of intelligence was now taken away from the Police which ceased to be a direct source of intelligence, while the M.S.S. was a mere

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8 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Ipoh and Seremban. The actual strength of the M.S.S. in June 1948 was 12 Gazetted Officers and 44 Inspectors. However, due to absences on leave and for other reasons its effective strength was 20. In contrast, by the end of 1953 the Special Branch had grown to 126 Gazetted Officers and 279 Inspectors. Put another way, by 1953, 20% of all Gazetted Officers in the Royal Malayan Police and 18% of Inspectors, were in the Special Branch. Annual Report 1953, p.232.

9 On 23rd June 1948, the Straits Times editorial entitled "Interpreting Terrorism" stated: "Six months ago junior Police Officers in out-stations in Perak were saying that there would be a big Communist showdown "somewhere about June", and that if the Communists had not been brought under control by then, the whole British regime in Malaya would be threatened. We are now into June, and we know that those junior police officers were right."

10 S.T., 18th September, 1950.

11 Ironically enough, an independent intelligence organisation similar to the M.S.S., known as the Political Intelligence Bureau had been absorbed into the police force in 1923. Ibid.
bureau, unable to confirm the raw intelligence which it collected.\textsuperscript{12} The results were of immense consequence.

On 9th April 1948, less than seven weeks before a state of emergency was declared throughout the Federation, the Director of the M.S.S. submitted a top-secret report to the High Commissioner which began: "There is no immediate threat to internal security in Malaya, although the position is potentially dangerous."\textsuperscript{13} While the report goes on to say that 'communism is the greatest single factor which is likely to aggravate the internal security of Malaya in the next five years', its attention was focussed on a 'powerful Indian-Communist section' and a 'Malay-Indonesian section'. The M.C.P. was virtually ignored.\textsuperscript{14} In the event, neither the Indian, Indonesian, nor pan-Malay wings posed any serious threat. Later, the report states again, 'The immediate threat to internal security is negligible.'\textsuperscript{15}

Two inferences can be drawn from this. First, the government's intelligence adviser was palpably unaware of the real forces at work within Malayan society and was preoccupied with pan-Malay nationalism rather than Chinese communism which was the real threat. In short, the M.S.S. was looking the wrong way.\textsuperscript{16} Second, by underestimating the threat from the M.C.P., it lulled the administration into a false sense of security. Consequently, when the M.C.P. began to step up its attacks and murders, the government's reactions were weak and indecisive. When

\textsuperscript{12} Used in this sense, 'bureau' means a collector and repository of information rather than an executive authority such as a Special Branch of the police.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Dalley Report}, p 1.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p 6.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p 14.

\textsuperscript{16} Mr. G.C. Madoc (later Director of Intelligence, Malaya) who preceded Dalley as Acting Director of the M.S.S. said that Dalley worked 'much more by personal intuition than by logic'. He also stated that as Acting Director of M.S.S. he was principally involved in watching for manifestations of militancy among Malay nationalist groups, in particular the Malay Nationalist Party (M.N.P.) formed at Ipoh in October 1945, and the extremist youth organisations, Angkatan Pemuda Yang Insaf (A.P.I.) and Ikatan Pembela Tanah Ayer (P.E.T.A.) Brimmell; Op.Cit., pp 200-201. These groups were proscribed by the Government on 23rd July 1948. Madoc also stated that neither he nor his officers were ever directed to bother about the M.C.P. and that only years later did he learn that Loi Tek had been a British agent. Madoc, Interview.
the magnitude of the threat became clearer, a large police Special Branch was established, in August 1948, but an efficient intelligence organisation takes years to develop, so that it was not really effective until 1952. Had Onraet's advice been fully implemented in 1946, the Emergency need never have occurred.

A second factor which exacerbated this uncertainty was the complexity of the governmental machinery. As the responsibility for permitting the insurrection to develop has been laid overwhelmingly at the feet of the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, it is necessary to examine the multiple strands of executive pressure which impinged upon him.

During the War he had headed the Malayan Planning Unit. Its plans had many admirable features: a simpler and more efficient governmental structure, a secure and substantial position in political life for the Chinese, an income tax, state welfare services, a progressive education policy, establishment of trades unions, a labour code, and employees' provident funds. All these Gent, as the first Governor of the new Malayan Union, intended to introduce himself.\(^17\) The collapse of the Union seriously compromised his position, and although he subsequently became High Commissioner for the Federation in February 1948, his more progressive policies, particularly in the trades union sector, were undermined by M.C.P. subversion, and later by terrorism. Moreover, his many good qualities did not include decisiveness in crisis.\(^18\)

As High Commissioner for the Federation, Gent answered to the British Government through the Colonial Office. The Governor of Singapore, Sir Franklin Gimson, was in the same position. However there was also in Singapore a third senior official, the Commissioner-General for South East Asia, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. His appointment had been created just before the Emergency began, replacing those of Governor-General Malaya, who did not govern, and Special Commissioner in South East Asia, an appointment


\(^{18}\) One observer states: 'In the first few months of 1948 there was a rising tide of resentment against the apparent disinclination of Sir Edward Gent .... to take stern action against the party (M.C.P.) and its leaders .... Gent was therefore faced with the kind of dilemma that occasionally faces a governor. If he acted too soon without evidence he would have been branded locally and throughout the world as an imperialist ogre. If he waited until he had evidence then he was bound to be too late - which was precisely what happened.' Miller, Menace, p77.
with limited executive powers which was an outgrowth of the wartime Special Minister for State Far East. However, in the wake of the new Cominform strategy for colonial areas the need for a regional coordinator seemed pressing. The two posts were amalgamated into the Commissioner-Generalship on 1st May 1948. The Commissioner-General became responsible for coordinating administration and policy in the Federation, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawack and Brunei. But, by the Federation of Malaya Agreement of February 1948, 'the prevention of any grave menace to the peace or tranquility of the Federation or any Malay State or Settlement comprised therein' was a clearly proclaimed responsibility of the High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya. These factors have an important bearing on the sequence of events which follows.

On 10th May 1948, MacDonald received a despatch from the Foreign Office which began:

"Reports from a number of sources make it clear that an important change in communist policy in South East Asia has taken place in the past few months..... The new policy is for Communist Parties in South East Asia to adopt the same general tactics as they have been employing since 1946 (sic) in Western Europe of doing everything possible to undermine and hamper the reconstruction and economic development of the whole area .... I should be grateful if, at posts where such action seems appropriate, the attention of the Governments concerned could be drawn to this development, ..... It may well be practicable to turn the situation created by these developments to our advantage since they underline the fact that it is Russian, rather than British imperialism which is the prime menace to the stability and prosperity of the countries of Asia."22

Gent, Gimson and the other executive heads in the region were all consulted by MacDonald concerning these matters, and while the text of Gent's reply to MacDonald is not known to the present writer, it is clear that they held opposite views about the state of security in Malaya. The Foreign Office despatch, after all, related to general Cominform policy; Gent's information from the M.S.S., which he can have had no reason to

19 S.T., 2nd May 1948.
20 An expert on the government and politics of the region has stated that: 'They (the British) were content to set up piecemeal, or ad hoc links, through the Commissioner-General for South East Asia.' Milne R.S. in Malaysia, A Survey, edited by Wang Gung Wu, London, 1964, p 334.
21 Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, p 12.
22 Foreign Office Despatch, 10th May 1948.
doubt as yet, would have suggested that in the specific local situation that policy would cause few difficulties.

Meanwhile Gimson, increasingly concerned by industrial violence in Singapore, sought independently to confirm the British Government's attitude through his own overlord the Colonial Office. In response, both Gent and Gimson were sent the following despatch:

"We fully appreciate your need for guidance in regard to measures which can be taken against communism.... The difficulty when it comes to proposing direct measures, such as declaring Communist organisations illegal or excluding persons, and particularly British subjects, who are known to be Communists, from admission, is the widely different circumstances or different colonial areas.... One has to set off the advantages of stern measures against their disadvantages, and it is not always easy to assess where the balance lies.... This does not mean that direct measures are necessarily ruled out in advance, still less that Governors are not at liberty to recommend measures however severe, which they feel to be essential for good government. It does mean, however, that the Secretary of State would have to consider such recommendations in the light not only of local factors, but also of the wider aspects referred to above and that he would wish to be consulted before action is authorised."23

Since Gent declared a state of emergency the day after this despatch was written and almost certainly before he had received it, it is unlikely that he did consult the Secretary of State. And since he was now under extreme pressure both within the Legislative Council, and from the Planting and Mining Associations, to take 'stern measures,' it is unlikely that such a woolly missive could have altered the surge of events which had by now gathered its own momentum. Thus while Gent, in the opinion of his most vehement critics, the planting and mining employers, had derelicted his duty by not acting more positively,24 the above evidence suggests that the British Government was more preoccupied with general imperial considerations than with the specific situation in Malaya, and the potential of the M.C.P. was largely underestimated by the Colonial Office as much as by the M.S.S. Indeed, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies attended the

23 Letter from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Singapore and High Commissioner for Malaya, dated 15th June 1948 pp 1-2.
24 For example on 11th June the Planting Association of Perak had sent Sir Edward Gent a telegram saying: 'Managers are appalled at the present general lawlessness. They are no longer able to maintain orderly routine on their estates. They demand that a state of emergency, martial law, or other appropriate action be instituted immediately. In our opinion the present deplorable conditions are entirely due to the weakness of civil government by its failure to implement police action and court judgements.' Miller, Menace, p 81.
inaugural meeting of the Federal Legislative Council in February 1948, when the list of murders directly attributable to communist violence was already impressive, he actually inquired 'Is there then a communist problem?' And, when the Commissioner-General, on 5th June 1948, stated that:

"The bestial campaign of communist agitators must be struck down, now that they are making a desperate effort to impose the rule of gun and knife, in plantations, mines and factories,"

the implication that the M.C.P. was the cause of the violence was queried by the British Government in terms amounting to a rebuke.

Whatever else may be said about this episode in British Colonial Government, it was not notable for its purposeful coordination of either executive or intelligence matters. The least that can be said in defence of Gent, is that he was mislead by his intelligence service. Moreover, if he had acted earlier against the M.C.P. - and both his temperament and political inclinations were against this - the British Government might well not have supported him.

Police

The inadequacy of the security service was merely one aspect of a disability affecting the Police Force as a whole. Battered and demoralized by the Japanese occupation, deprived of its European officers, it had cooperated with the Japanese to some degree, and was attacked by the M.P.A.J.A. as a 'Kempetai tool'. Whatever the justification for this, the consequences of the occupation were adverse. To make room for British prisoners, the gaols of Singapore had been cleared by releasing hardened

25 The number of murders and abductions in Malaya attributed to communist terrorism between 1st October 1945 and 30th June 1948 i.e. before the Emergency began was 298 (this excludes the interregnum before Malaya was reoccupied by British forces on the defeat of Japan). Of this figure, 107, over one-third occurred in the first six months of 1948 before the outbreak of the insurgency. Thompson, Communist Insurgency, pp 26-27.

26 S.T., 6th June 1948.

27 Telegram from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Commissioner-General, despatched 8th June 1948, received 14th June. In his reply which was despatched on 14th June MacDonald pointed out that his phrase 'must be struck down' referred to the suppression of violence, not of the Communist Party, which had been the substance of the initial query from the British Government.
criminals. Firearms were easy to obtain and a shocking record of brutal crime had demonstrated a general collapse of police efficiency:

"Returning British police officers found that they had to measure against the power of imperfectly controlled crime, the dregs of a Police Force; badly equipped, shabbily dressed, with no morale, and carrying its share of hatred and contempt which the Japanese system of secret police working through spies and informers had called down upon the whole force. There were few, if any, to take the place of the old personnel who had been trained in investigation; all standards of honesty were gone; the extortion practised by the police was frightful, and the whole force was so rotten with corruption as to require a special branch of the Criminal Investigation Department to attend to its own delinquency."

In this situation, the government's first responsibility was to revitalise the police and, where possible, to take other measures to cure lawlessness. Instead, it virtually refused to enforce the Banishment Ordinance by which criminals and undesirable aliens had been deported before the war, even though the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, and the C-in-C Allied Land Forces South East Asia, both represented in the strongest possible terms the potential threat to organised government inherent in a projected M.C.P. demonstration intended for March, Admiral Mountbatten refused to act by preventive arrest of the communist leaders and only reluctantly agreed to expel them.

28 Jones, p 169. The composition of the force was predominantly Malay. However, the majority of Gazetted Officers were British. Comparative figures for the years 1947 and 1952 are given below:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1952*</th>
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<td>Gazett-</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<td>Or- enants</td>
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<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian &amp; Pakistani</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>Eurasian &amp; Others</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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*The figures do not include Special Constables and civilian Asian staff.

"His reluctance," according to the British Official War Historian, "proceeded not only from his personal conviction of the advantages to be gained from a liberal approach, but from the knowledge that it was at that time a part of the British Government policy for the future of Malaya that the power to banish should not be used."\(^{29}\)

Admiral Mountbatten's motives are unquestioned, but Malayan officials with a far greater local experience than he remained convinced that this was not the way to confront subversion:

"Almost immediately," states Onraet, "danger signals were to be observed; organised crime, organised political agitation, and a host of opportunist criminals became progressively bolder and more numerous. The police force made little impression on what was no longer a crime but a flood whose monthly tides have topped for over two years the annual high water marks of pre-war years."\(^{30}\)

In 1948 little was known of the techniques of communist revolutionary warfare, but at least intuitively and from long acquaintance with similar problems, experienced police officers realised that the government's post-war liberal policies would founder unless instituted on a framework of properly restored law and order. It was apparent to them that the British Government had acted prematurely when it had decided that the former laws governing the activities of societies were to remain in abeyance. Great numbers of secret societies as well as the M.C.P. were allowed to proliferate. As these societies began to regain their grip on racketeering, black marketeering and extortion, general lawlessness increased and the communist party revelled in the chaos.

Moreover, in their attempts to deal with these problems there were, even among European officers, a number of factors which weakened morale. Responsibility for failures, and for wrong decisions taken is an occupational hazard for which any career professional within a hierarchical organisation has to be prepared. Yet even when compared with a parallel service such as the army, the qualities of leadership required of Police Officers at the more junior levels are in certain respects more exacting. The distinction has been made by Field Marshal Lord Harding:

"The big difference between the two services is that for the most part soldiers operate in groups under the direct personal leadership of their officers, whereas policemen work mainly as individuals out of sight of their officers, and often out of contact with them for long\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) Donnison; Op.Cit., p 391. The point here is that although the Government did eventually act, it did so with reluctance. And since the M.C.P. was at the time engaged in a cynical trial of strength with the Government, the latter did not exactly emerge with its authority enhanced.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\) S.T., 15th April 1947.
periods as well. For that reason alone command of police forces is the more difficult of the two. It is easier to inspire men to do their duty in the face of difficulty and danger when you are with them on the spot, than to do so at the end of a telephone line in an office miles away."\textsuperscript{31}

The strength of a rural police station in the first months of the Emergency was generally not more than seven. And, in a number of instances it was the police post in the isolated village which, by holding out against insurgent attacks, had to ensure that government control in up-country Malaya was maintained.

In the higher ranks, an additional factor promoting self-consciousness of the hazards of professional life was the fear of the 'axe'. Some normal redundancies, together with the emerging process of 'Malayanisation', gathered momentum as the Emergency went on. But in any case the world had entered a new era for the colonial policeman. As country after country encountered emerging nationalism or communist insurgency, the grave and heavy responsibilities bearing upon senior police officers compared with most other civil servants became manifest. The problem can best be illustrated by the following examples, where each of the officers concerned departed abruptly, and in some cases in a mysterious silence from his command during or after the events shown in each case:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Officer's Name</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Foulger</td>
<td>Hertzog</td>
<td>Deputy Inspector General (Designate)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Riots</td>
<td>Colonial Police Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>Hertzog</td>
<td>Commissioner, Singapore Police.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Riots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of Malaya</td>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>Commissioner, Federation of Malaya Police.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
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\textsuperscript{31} From an article by Field Marshal Lord Harding in the magazine of the Police College, Ryton-on-Dunsmore. Quoted in \textit{Police Gazette}, p 12.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Officer's Name</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Post</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Robins</td>
<td>E.O.K.A.</td>
<td>Commissioner, Cyprus Police</td>
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<td>Terrorism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Bibles</td>
<td>E.O.K.A.</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner, Cyprus Police.</td>
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<td>Terrorism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Lock</td>
<td>E.O.K.A.</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner, Cyprus Police.</td>
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<td>Terrorism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>O'Rourke</td>
<td>Mau-Mau</td>
<td>Commissioner, Kenya Police.</td>
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<td>Terrorism</td>
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</table>

In addition, a distinct cleavage existed among European officers between those who had been incarcerated in Japanese prisons and those who had escaped. Many of the latter had returned as members of Force 136 and the B.M.A., and after the Japanese surrender there were clear signs of enmity between the two groups. When late in 1948, a large number of ex-Palestine policemen arrived, including the new Commissioner, W.N. Gray, a further rift developed which a subsequent police investigation failed to heal. It was not until W.L.R. Carbonell, an old Malaya hand and a veteran of Changi became Commissioner in 1953, that domestic peace was really restored in the police force. Whatever justification existed for the claim by either group that favouritism in professional matters was sown the other, such bickering detracted from performance.

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32 Ibid., p 12. It is revealing to compare the Malayan experience with the situation which confronted the Commissioner of Police, Cyprus in August 1955: 'Mr. Robins, the Police Commissioner was at his wits end.... Coming from Tanganyika a few months before, he had been asked to turn a weak peacetime force, used to trailing after pickpockets and erring motorists, into a body capable of dealing with armed terrorism. Negligence, meanness, stagnation over the years had sapped the spirit of his men long before E.O.K.A. appeared. Every expenditure proposed by his predecessors was foredoomed. Even £175 for torches had been struck off: the police were expected to grope for criminals in the dark. Completely without radio, often without a telephone or transport, police stations were being raided one after another.... The Emergency had brought many hours of overtime without extra pay, and policemen at roadblocks often depended on sharing the soldiers food.' Foley, C.; Island in Revolt, London, 1962 p 36.

33 Interviews with Catling, Madoc and Waller.

34 Ibid.
Nor was morale enhanced by conditions of service. Before the Second World War police officers had been the servants of individual States and different conditions of training and service prevailed. An advantage of the reorganisation on a country wide basis after the war was that the force could now be more flexibly deployed, but in practice standardisation of methods necessarily takes time and, even when the Emergency broke out, redeploying a man from his traditional haunts to a higher priority area elsewhere was difficult.\textsuperscript{35} Moreover, even in 1965, after the Emergency had ended a Gazetted Officer was, on average still working fifty-four hours overtime a month without extra pay, and during the Emergency itself the situation was far worse.\textsuperscript{36}

By the time the Emergency was declared, although the police force was beginning to regain the ascendancy over crime, it was still 2,000 under strength and lamentably short of arms, radios, vehicles and even uniforms. By the time General Templer left Malaya in 1954, the Malayan Police, enormously expanded, reorganised, tested and confident, was one of the finest organisations of its type in the world. In June 1948 however, it was woefully ill-prepared for the task which awaited it.

**Armed Forces**

When the insurrection began, it was at once obvious that the under strength police force was incapable of controlling the situation. The armed forces were therefore placed in aid of the civil power and commenced operations almost immediately.\textsuperscript{37}

Anyone might have been forgiven for failing to foresee the length and difficulty of the Emergency in 1948, but in retrospect at least the optimism of some public statements does suggest a certain naivety. In a broadcast of 6th July 1948, the General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) Malaya, Major General Boucher said, 'I have had experience in fighting red terrorists in Greece and India, and I can tell you this is by far the easiest problem I have ever tackled.'\textsuperscript{38} And yet, twelve years later the

\textsuperscript{35} In a letter to the writer, Mr. W.N. Gray (Commissioner of Police 1948-51) stated that when he first arrived in Malaya in August 1948, he found he had to obtain the permission of the Sultan before posting a police officer from one state to another. He said that he soon put a stop to the practice.

\textsuperscript{36} Police Gazette, pp 21-29.

\textsuperscript{37} M.C.P., Terrorism, p 4.

\textsuperscript{38} S.T., 7th July 1948.
insurgent high command was still intact. Even allowing for the difficulty of tracking and destroying insurgents in large areas of primeval jungle, the performance of the army fell far short of the G.O.C.'s extravagant promises.

The main reason was that the army, like the intelligence organisation and the police, was not prepared for counter-insurgency operations. Although the army had a long and generally impressive record of counter-insurgency (for example in Upper Burma in 1886, in South Africa during the Boer War, and more recently in Greece and Palestine) the specialised professionalism required in anti-terrorist operations has seldom been an abiding skill in any army. Moreover, Malaya was a unique situation and even the best doctrine from other areas was seldom directly applicable. Most infantry battalions in Malaya formed part of a strategic reserve and internal security was not considered part of their task. There were no proper facilities for training until the Far East Land Forces Training Centre was established at Kota Tinggi in June 1949, and no common tactical doctrine emerged until the first ATOM Pamphlet (Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya) was published in 1952. Indeed, the forces available in 1948 had little local experience and in any case were undergoing reorganisation.

In addition to the two battalions of the Malay Regiment, the bulk of the troops in Malay were provided by the Brigade of Gurkhas who had six battalions dotted up and down the mainland and a seventh on Singapore Island. In many respects it was fortuitous that so many troops were available in Malaya at all. The Gurkha battalions were stationed there after the partition of India, apparently because there were no other suitable areas to which they could be sent. Apart from the 1st/6th, the 1st/7th and the 1st/10th Gurkha Rifles who had all come from Burma in January, the

39 Brooke, Interview.

40 The ATOM Pamphlet published under General Templer's supervision, has proved to be an enduring document. It set out in concise form the accumulated know-how of four years experience against the insurgents and included: descriptions of the terrain, climate, wild life and vegetation of Malaya; the origins and development of the M.C.P.; a resumé of Own Forces and methods including the Briggs Plan, Navy and R.A.F.; characteristics of operations, ambushes, patrolling; immediate action drills and jungle navigation. It was reprinted by successive Directors of Operations in 1954 and 1958 and has remained the basis of British Commonwealth doctrine ever since.
remaining battalions were in a state of convalescence having been drained of men and even of clothing in India. A project to reform the 17th Gurkha Division, complete with Gurkha arms and services added complications, for the 1st/7th Gurkhas were to form the artillery and had already begun to train for conversion; they now reverted to infantry. The only British unit on the mainland was the 26th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, which was at Tampin in Negri Sembilan helping in the conversion of the 1st/7th Gurkhas; they also took the field as infantry. In Singapore, two British battalions, 1st Battalion, The Devon Regiment, and 1st Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders, were also available, and on Penang Island was the Second Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Initially by companies, these battalions were deployed to the mainland.  

More troops were made available in July by Singapore District; in August, a battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers arrived from Hong Kong and in September, 2nd Guards Brigade from the United Kingdom. In short, the British Government served notice that it intended to fight for Malaya and as the Emergency Regulations were codified and severely applied, the campaign became ostensibly 'total'.

But it was not total in practice. Even after reinforcements arrived, the British infantry battalions in the Federation were all on Lower Establishment which meant that each had the equivalent of three rifle companies instead of four. The shortage of police meant that the army

41 By the end of July 1948 battalions were disposed as follows:

North Sub-District (H.Q. at Taiping)
- 1st/6th Gurkha Rifles, 2nd Battalion, Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

Central Sub-District (H.Q. at Seremban)
- 2nd/6th Gurkha Rifles, 1st/7th Gurkha Rifles, 1st Battalion, The Malay Regiment, 2nd Battalion, The Malay Regiment.

Johore Sub-District (remained under command H.Q. FARELF in Singapore)

42 In the early years of the Emergency the average battalion had about 600 officers and men. Thus, on 30th September 1949, 1st Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment numbered only 32 officers and 566 other ranks: by 31st March 1950 it had 33 and 650 respectively. In January-February 1951, battalions went on to 'War' or 'Higher Establishment' which gave them a further rifle company and put them at just over 800 on the average. See also relevant issues of Quarterly Historical Reports 1st Bn. The Suffolks (SECRET). At the Higher Establishment a full strength battalion would consist of 840 officers and men of whom 250 were administrative (Brooke, Interview.)
was also required to protect estates and mines, hence opportunities for taking offensive action were few. Moreover, the majority of British troops were National Servicemen, and few of the remainder had any experience of jungle fighting:

"I looked round at the men I had to lead in this arduous campaign," wrote one company commander, "They were so young and so incredibly innocent, boys of nineteen most of them.... Most of the older men had been with me in Greece.... but there were only a few of these.... The others were very young and I did not know them well for they had joined the unit at Port Said on the way out."  

A constant problem was the question of 'turn over', both of battalions and of the men within them. The normal tour of a battalion was three years. Of the eight hundred men, some four hundred were National Servicemen, and three hundred of the remainder might be Regulars on a three year engagement; the engagement of the remaining one hundred was usually longer. In a three year tour of duty all the National Servicemen and Regulars on a three year engagement would have been replaced at least once. A Commanding Officer might return home after his tour with about fifty of the men whom he had taken out three years before, and about two thousand would have passed through his hands during that time. Even the six battalions of Gurkhas included some 3,500 partially trained recruits who were used to guard estates and mines until sub-units of special constabulary could be formed. The proportion of recruits to seasoned soldiers within the Gurkha battalions was abnormally high; 'even rifles had hardly been issued when the Emergency began'. Like everyone else in Malaya the Gurkhas learnt the hard way. While it was in principle a gross misuse of troops to employ them in static tasks dotted around the countryside in sub-sections, in practice protection for the hard pressed rubber estate and mine managers could have been provided in no other way.

As the British Government committed its reserves from elsewhere, it was apparent that they were ill-conditioned for the conflict and many units showed signs of being hastily scratched together. As part of 2nd Guards Brigade, the 2nd Battalion Scots Guards were warned for duty in Malaya on Friday 13th August 1948, a day subsequently referred to by all affected as 'Black Friday'. The battalion, stationed at Chelsea Barracks,

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43 Campbell, pp 9-11.
45 Bredin, p 127.
was well under strength in both officers and other ranks. It had been heavily involved in London Duties for more than a year and had to be hurriedly built up to strength with men who had not completed even their basic training. 'Let it be freely admitted,' states an official account of the battalion's tour, 'that when the 2nd Battalion stepped ashore in Malaya, the standard of training of the majority was extremely low.' Because of the rapid turn-over referred to above, promotion within the battalion had to be equally rapid. It took about a year to create and perfect a series of standardised manoeuvres and drills for jungle fighting which were introduced throughout the battalion. Early in 1950 drafts of recruits from the United Kingdom began arriving at steady intervals and in fourteen successive courses each of three weeks duration a battalion training staff taught them about operations in Malaya; techniques for patrolling, action on contact, the laying of ambushes and other common procedures,

"As the Rifle Companies gradually filled up with these carefully trained men during 1950, so the operational efficiency of the Battalion may fairly be said to have improved, an improvement borne out by the ever greater percentage of kills to contacts as compared with the previous year." However, until the above skills had been mastered, which in the Scots Guards' experience had taken fifteen months, a battalion new in country amounted to little more than an impressively large number of names on a nominal roll.

Lack of intelligence was a constant problem. The intelligence organisation was so skeletal and disarticulated that it could not provide sufficiently accurate information to base successful operations on. Insurgents were killed by chance encounters and then only after hours and

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46 Scots Guards, p 22. By 1952 the procedure had changed and battalions warned for service in Malaya were given time to condition themselves for their task. The 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry was with the British Army of the Rhine when it was alerted for Malaya and began to train in the German pine forests. Company Commanders were flown out to Malaya to attend jungle warfare courses prior to the battalion's arrival. The soldiers, guided by their officers, underwent two months training at the Far East Training Centre at Kota Tinggi. Two years later (1954) the battalion again spent three months retraining to refurbish and sharpen its basic skills. Whitehead K.; History of the Somerset Light Infantry, London, 1961.

47 Scots Guards, p 23.

48 FARELF Intelligence Reviews (SECRET) for the years 1948-49 never spoke of individual insurgents and rarely mentioned units; they simply referred to 'bandits' and 'bandit gangs'. H.Q. Malaya District was no better informed.
hours of fruitless 'speculative' patrolling. An attempt to bridge the gap until army units could be trained, by using a specialised formation known as Ferret Force was not a lasting success. Ferret Force was far too small and ephemeral for the task and its leaders, mostly ex-officers of Force 136 were almost all Malayan Civil Servants and urgently needed in the administration.

As in the Burma campaign of the Second World War, so in Malaya operations suffered because so few could speak and read the local languages to any degree, let alone well enough to interrogate or to translate captured documents. Nor could the army obtain enough help from the police and civilian organisation, who were often equally lacking in detailed knowledge of the country and its people. Many ex-members of the Malayan Civil Service felt that the insurgents had obtained a firm hold on the rural areas only because government officials had neglected their duty, 'The sole trouble in Malaya,' said one, 'is that the administration's officers are out of touch with the people.... are not used to dealing with problems on the spot, and scarcely know either the country or the people.'

However, it is clear that Malaya's problems were not singular in nature but affected the whole machinery of government. With an intelligence bureau looking in the wrong direction, a police force in serious disrepair, and an army untrained in counter-insurgency tactics but expected to be instantly expert - while it already had a hard enough task raising the basic military skill of its large proportion of new recruits - it is scarcely surprising that the M.C.P. was allowed time to train and consolidate during the vital early stages when it was most vulnerable. But the most costly mistakes of all were made in the subsequent planning of the

49 Looking back on Operation SICKLE, in December 1948, the commander of a Gurkha battalion wrote: "Contrary to what one might expect, there was no information about anything in the area on the day the operation was due to start apart from the generally accepted fact that the haystack did contain a needle or two; then, to carry the simile a little further, the only thing to do was to disturb the hay and hope at least to get our fingers pricked." His final summation was: "There is no 'intelligence' worth the name.... Appendix C to Quarterly Historical Report, 1st Battalion, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, December 31st 1948 (SECRET).

50 The employment of Ferret Force is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

51 Royce S.C., Sunday Times, 21st June 1948.
anti-terrorist campaign and here, it was the government on the spot, and not the shadowy Colonial Office officials in London who were greatly to blame.

**Government Planning**

Despite these grave weaknesses, the Government, had it perceived them clearly, could have remedied them quickly and mounted a systematic counter-offensive while the M.C.P. was still struggling to overcome its own unpreparedness. Had this been done, the insurgency could have been torn up before it had firmly established the roots which were to nourish it for twelve arduous years. Instead, from June 1948 to April 1950, the Government moved from one ad hoc solution to the next, until finally a comprehensive plan - the Briggs Plan - was evolved and accepted. Even then it took the assassination of a High Commissioner, a revolution in British colonial policy, and two years of ruthless and dynamic leadership by General Templer, before the main pillars of insurgent strength were broken.

This is not to say that all operational planning undertaken by the government in the early period was futile. An enduring contribution to the containment of the Emergency and the protection of Britain's economic stake in Malaya was made in the first weeks by the Commissioner-General, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald. On 18th June he flew to Kuala Lumpur and in consultation with Gent, the G.O.C. Malaya, Major General Boucher and the Commissioner of Police, Mr. H.B. Langworthy, he insisted that installations vital to the 'life, economy and employment of the country', namely the estates and mines, had to be protected. It was as well that he did. Until he intervened, no common purpose had emerged in Kuala Lumpur. Gent was still not convinced that a major threat to the economy existed; Langworthy wanted merely to pursue malefactors by the normal means; Boucher prepared to use all available troops on jungle operations and to carry on training with the remainder. It was MacDonald, using the considerable prestige of his office, who also interceded with the C-in-C FARELF, Lieutenant-General Sir Neil Ritchie, to secure the reinforcements from Singapore and Hong Kong. Had this not been done, the insurgents might have come a good deal closer to their initial aim of weakening the Government's resources and making it possible to establish secure base areas. In turn, the employment of Special

52 Thompson, Interview.
Constables, Auxiliary Police and Kampong Guards helped to damp down the insurgency and protect the economy. Along the Thai border, a Frontier Force composed predominantly of Malays with local knowledge of jungle routes and smugglers' trails patrolled the area to prevent infiltration. To provide offensive air support for the troops on the ground, fighter aircraft were flown from Singapore to be stationed at Kuala Lumpur. At sea, the Royal Navy prevented the insurgents from being succoured from outside. National Registration in selected areas extended the Government's surveillance over the civilian population. Comprehensive Emergency Regulations were issued which were to grow into a bound volume of 150 pages by 1953, and covered every foreseeable situation varying from one regulation empowering the Mentri Besar of a state to direct that undergrowth abutting a main road which might facilitate an ambush, be removed by the owner of the land, to another empowering the government to take control of businesses whose profits were likely to go to 'bandit' funds.

However, for the first two years government policy had a curious binomial quality. On the one hand there was a tendency for affairs to be conducted on a 'business as usual' basis, with little sense of urgency, while on the other, the army in particular took to pursuing insurgents as if it was engaged on a larger scale partridge drive.

To take the second case first. Having underrated the enemy in his opening statements, General Boucher compounded the error by his concept of operations; in fact the general saw his strategy as a simple process of 'disinfection':

"I cannot give you details of my plans," he said in a public statement on 6th July 1948, "but I can give you an example of how they work.

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53 H.C.P., Terrorism, pp 2-18.
54 Emergency Regulations, E.R. 40 (4)c; and E.R. 41 pp 40 and 41. The point should be made however that the Malayan Government did not have a large corpus of Regulations already prepared at the outbreak of the Emergency. To quote Gurney: "In Palestine (where he had been Chief Secretary) the Emergency Regulations were continually being added to and tightened up, so that at the end it might almost have been said that the whole book of regulations could have been expressed in a simple provision empowering the High Commissioner to take any action he wished. If all these powers had been taken and exercised immediately at the beginning, perhaps the outcome might have been different. Similarly, in Malaya, the same process has developed and powers for the more drastic and indeed ruthless measures were not provided or exercised until six months after the outbreak." Despatch from the High Commissioner, Federation of Malaya to Secretary of State, 5th May 1949.
An area in upper Perak was neglected by troops and police for quite a time. The communists in that area became very bold. I moved across from Kota Bahru a company of the Malay Regiment and gave them their task in upper Perak. They went into action that night and the next day, and they obtained an extremely good bag. Now they are back in Kota Bahru."55

He had, in fact, perpetrated two cardinal errors of counter-insurgency practice which were to be repeated continually in the first two years. First, he was not inflicting permanent damage on the insurgents who quickly made good their losses and benefited from the military experience. Second, by deploying troops temporarily to a remote area instead of working outwards systematically from a firm base he was exposing government supporters in both the Kota Bahru area and upper Perak to reprisals from the insurgents once government forces withdrew. In similar spirit a number of large operations was carried out during this time and all yielded meagre results. One difficulty was to achieve surprise while using large numbers of troops. In Operation RAMILLIES held in the period 12th to 22nd April 1949, three battalions were used to 'sweep' an area to the west of the Cameron Highlands in Pahang. The official report of one of the battalions stated that:

"Surprise was NOT achieved and it never seemed likely that it would be. There is no evidence whatever of any leakage of information but the inevitable assembly of a considerable extra number of troops in the Cameron Highlands area before the operations must have made the bandits fairly alert even though, until the start they would not have known the direction of operations. Once the operation started there can have been little doubt as to what was happening; it is also clear that by using lightly equipped messengers already familiar with the routes, news of the movement of our own troops was always available to the bandits well ahead."56

Not only did this operation like others, fail to achieve any substantial gain, it had as one of its expressed intent ons the unusual object, 'To destroy, or at least disperse or move on any bandits encountered.'57

The latter part of this objective is significant because it was one of General Boucher's firm beliefs that the best thing to do to the insurgents was to drive them into the jungle. When General Briggs later conceived a plan for enticing the insurgents out of the jungle by strangling

55 S.T., 6th July 1948.
57 Ibid., p 3.
their supply lines, a stage was being reached where the Malayan public were more confused by operational policy than were the insurgents, and with some reason:

"We have, under Major General Sir Charles Boucher," said Che' Abdul Aziz a Malay member of the Legislative Council, "driven the bandits deep into the jungle; under another General Sir Harold Briggs we have tried with all our might to drive them out again."58

His criticism was justified, but this was not the only area in which government policy vacillated.

The importance of a Director of Operations - and the point is argued strongly in chapters IV and V - is now an article of the counter-insurgent's faith, but it took a long time in Malaya before it was established. In May 1949, when the Emergency was almost a year old, the High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney, forwarded a despatch to the Colonial Office in which he said, 'The Military Forces available to aid the civil power should be at the disposal of the Commissioner of Police and operate under his general direction.' He went on to assert that coordination in matters of operational policy could best be achieved in an informal atmosphere, 'Once a week I hold a conference attended by the G.O.C., the A.O.C., the Chief Secretary, and the Commissioner of Police. At this conference any question can be brought up without notice, no record is kept, but each member notes the action required of him.'59

This 'informal' approach contrasts sharply with the extremely formal and systematic procedure which developed later and it is important to consider the implication which this despatch conveyed. The High Commissioner clearly failed to realise how burdensome the duties of the Commissioner of Police were, and how ill-placed he was to supervise operations. The police force was undergoing a sevenfold expansion, and the work which this entailed for the Commissioner and his small staff left no time to coordinate operational policy effectively for all the Security Forces. Consequently, direction of the Emergency became a legatee of all the other demands on the Police Commissioner's time and virtually nothing

59 Gurney's Despatch No. 5, 30th May 1949.
was achieved. Moreover, if the High Commissioner had pressed strongly for a Director of Operations, then the whole complexion of the Emergency might have changed because by May 1949, the insurgents had retreated into deep jungle to reorganise and retrain. A systematic counter offensive at that time would probably have achieved far more than it did later.

A similar degree of unrealism was apparent at the time in other departments of government.

Taking a leaf from the communists' book, a committee entitled 'The Central Committee to Combat Communism,' met under the chairmanship of the Acting Chief Secretary of the Federation on 5th August 1948. It included representatives of the Departments of Labour, Chinese Affairs, Police, Attorney-general's, Public Relations and the Army. In the light of the grave and immediate problems confronting the Federation, the questions to which it addressed its attention were curiously untimely. One resolution concerned racial discrimination:

'The committee felt that the discrimination shown by many European Clubs in the country had a bad effect on inter racial feelings and provided a possible cause for political discontent, particularly amongst young Asian intellectuals.

It is recommended that an official approach should be made to club committees to seek their cooperation in relaxing their club rules and in giving active encouragement to the introduction of Asian guests as a general practice, or on specific nights.'

This, while men were fighting for their lives. Moreover, the 'business as usual' attitude in Malaya was reflected in Britain. It took four months, from 4th July 1948, when Sir Edward Gent was killed in an air-crash over London, before the new High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney was installed on 6th October. During this period the Acting Chief Secretary, Sir Alec Newboult was forced to acknowledge the acting nature of the government:

The result was that the army took the lead in planning at every level. As late as January 1949, Major General Boucher remarked that the police 'were taking their proper place in the higher direction and planning of operations' and he added his hope that this example might ultimately be followed at the lower levels. By implication, whatever deference might have been paid to the police as the civil authority nominally in control, the army was still guiding operations at all but the highest level. In August 1948 Gray had said that the police were not ready to take the lead - (Minutes of the CinC's Conference September 21st-22nd, 1948, CR/FAREL/5565/G(Ops), 28th September 1948 (SECRET) - - and in practice they never did. (Brooke/Waller, Interviews).

Carcosa Conference, 5th August 1948.
"You must remember that we are all acting," he stated at a press conference held in Kuala Lumpur. "An acting High Commissioner, .... an acting Chief Secretary, .... an acting Attorney General, .... an acting Commissioner of Police, .... and a chain reaction of acting appointments in the grades below these posts."\(^{62}\)

Even within the ambit of the generally efficacious Emergency Regulations themselves, there was a tendency to draft regulations without considering the realities of the situation. Thus, the regulation which provided severe penalties for, 'Any person who consorts with any other person whom he knows or has cause to believe to be a person who intends, or is about, to act or has acted in a manner prejudicial to public safety or the maintenance of public order,'\(^{63}\) while formally judicious, took little account of the more than 500,000 ignorant squatters, many of whom provided willing or unwilling support to the insurgents, but whose security the Government could not guarantee. Sir Robert Thompson, then a member of the Malayan Civil Service, has since stated in relation to the Second Indo-China War that:

"The dividing line must be drawn at the point at which the government is in a position to give the peasant a clear choice between supporting the government or supporting the insurgent .... When, however, an area is outside government control and the peasant is at the mercy of the insurgent, then he has no choice and the government has no right to be ruthless. There was a tendency in Vietnam to get this the wrong way round."\(^{64}\)

A similar criticism can be made of the Government of Malaya at this time. The Commander of Ferret Force Group 2, Mr. J.P. Hannah, an ex-Force 136 officer, found in August 1948, that in his area of operations there were upwards of 5,000 squatters, who had been subjected to continuous communist propaganda for more than six years, but had not seen any government official 'of any degree,' since 1941:

"One individual believed that the British had only re-occupied the 'bid' towns (e.g. Bidor) and had left outlying districts to be run by the M.C.P. as a reward for the M.C.P. having defeated Japan in 1945 and made that agreement with the British before they (the M.C.P.) allowed the British to return. This was given by the M.C.P. as the reason for the delay between the Cease-Fire of early August 1945, and the arrival of the British Forces in Perak about the 10th of September 1945."\(^{65}\)

\(^{62}\) S.T., 6th September 1948.
\(^{63}\) Emergency Regulations, p 5.
\(^{64}\) Thompson, Communist Insurgency, pp 146-147
\(^{65}\) Ferret Report, p 2.
The Government's misapprehension that the insurgents were being supported by an ascertainable number of misguided sympathisers who could be weaned away by threats or exhortations, also led to two dubious acts of policy in 1949 and early 1950. On 6th September 1949, the Government announced generous surrender terms which amounted in effect to an amnesty for all insurgents except those found guilty of murder. During the next four months some 116 insurgents surrendered. However, as might have been expected in the existing military situation, none of these was a hard core member and all could be classified as waverers. Moreover, the insurgent propaganda machine skilfully exploited the event through its vernacular news sheets as a credible example of government impotence.66

And, since members of the administration except the police seldom ventured near the squatter areas, the squatters believed the insurgents' claims that the government, in offering surrender terms, had done so out of weakness and fear.

Again, on 26th February 1950, the government launched an 'Anti-Bandit Month'. Some 350,000 people responded at the outset to appeals to help the police and administration to man road blocks, assist in screening operations, and generally provide auxiliary services. Psychologically, the purpose of the month was to encourage the population to 'declare' for the Government. On paper the results were mathematically impressive. In the Muar district of Johore some thirty-eight local associations, taking refuge in anonymity, called on the 'bandits' to stop their violence and to surrender.67

And, on 2nd April, when the 'Anti-Bandit Month' ended, the government proclaimed with obvious enthusiasm, that nearly half a million people had come forward to assist. But the new insurgent offensive which had commenced at the beginning of the year, had obviously taken no account of the 'Anti-Bandit Month'. As insurgent incidents rose in June 1950 to five times their 1949 level, and the murder of civilians (mainly Chinese) rose to over 100 a month, Sir Henry Gurney's statement in

66 For example, the insurgents were able to seize on a statement of Sir Henry Gurney's in support of the Government's surrender campaign that, 'the M.C.P. have achieved no success whatsoever....all those who are with the bandits....are looking for an opportunity to surrender themselves', and turned it to their own advantage as an example of the Government's lack of real knowledge of the insurgent organisation M.C.P., Propaganda, p 59. Waller, Interview.

67 M.C.P., Terrorism, p 86. The Government also secured the support of the Malayan Chinese Association which called on Chinese business groups throughout the country to support the 'Anti-Bandit Month'. Ibid., pp 82-85.
the Federal Legislative Council that the overwhelming response to the 'Anti-Bandit Month', 'had revealed the hollowness of the Communist claims', was matched only by the hollowness of the Government's claims to be vigorously prosecuting the Emergency.68

In short, what the Government had clearly failed to discern until the arrival of General Briggs, was that it was engaged in a competition in government. However maladroitly they had done so, the insurgents had set up a parallel hierarchy which was competing for the adherence of the people. Particularly in rural areas they were more than matching the Government's administration in demonstrable organs of control. And, however desultory their operations were, they could continue to do so until the government, by properly orchestrating its campaign, could actually control the population and provide it with security. As Sir Henry Gurney reminded the Colonial Office, 'Terrorism equipped with modern automatic weapons and political aspirations is a new development in the British Commonwealth'. 69 Certainly, within the lifetime of his own personal administration in Malaya, the answer to the problem was still being sought.

68 Ibid., p 91. There is strong evidence of a backlash from the 'Anti-Bandit Month'. First, because the new insurgent offensive had made conditions demonstrably worse than they had been before; Second, because of the naivety and inaccuracy of government propaganda; and Third, because many of the Chinese who had come out in support of the government were marked down and killed by M.C.P. assassination squads as a warning to others. Waller, Interview.

69 Gurney's Despatch No. 5, 30th May 1949, p 2.
CHAPTER III

THE INSURGENT ORGANISATION – DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE

Fortunately for the Government, its own disarray was more than matched by the problems which confronted the M.C.P.

The insurgency remained racially and politically confined because at no time could the M.C.P. enlist any significant Malay or Indian support. Despite the renaming of its guerrilla force, the Malayan Races Liberation Army (M.R.L.A.) in February 1949, 95% of the troops were Chinese; the remainder were mostly Malays. But the Malay regiment allegedly raised in Pahang – the 10th Regiment – was largely a propaganda device, and had vanished by the end of the year. After Special Branch became fully effective in 1952, the relatively small number of insurgents, and their inability to be reinforced from outside, permitted the government to develop a closed circuit strategy based on highly detailed dossiers and records. Nor was there ever more than a trickle of material support from outside, either across the Thai border or from the sea. Thus the M.C.P. was entirely dependent on the resources it had left from the war years and whatever it could capture.

Militarily, the insurgency also remained low-keyed because the insurgents never overcame the shortcomings apparent during the war, namely in leadership, communications, weapons and logistics. They suffered an immediate setback when their military commander Lau Y was killed on 16th July 1948.

1 General History, pp 4-6. This occurred on 1st February 1949. The Central Committee of the Party also issued its "Programme of the Malayan Peoples Democratic Republic" which was similar to its appeal in 1939 for an "All Malayan Races United Front". The Programme stressed: a. Democratic Centralism with a Central Peoples Council being invested with supreme authority.

b. A national structure based on the principles of the New Democracy which would be a "dictatorship of a coalition of the revolutionary classes of the various races".

c. Sovereignty of the Malayan Peoples Democratic Republic was to belong to "all the people of Maleya" but with the revolutionary classes holding the dictatorship.

2 The Malays were chiefly members of the proscribed left-wing organisations A.P.I. and P.E.T.A. There were some Indians and a number of Japanese deserters. Within the M.R.L.A., some 60% of its members had been with the M.P.A.J.A., but of those only 30% to 40% had been trained or had seen action during the Japanese occupation. Precis, Basic Paper Part IV, p 2.

3M.C.P., Terrorism, p 46.
But he was little more than a competent organiser and after him the remaining leadership was thin. As the Political Bureau itself noted:

"Our handicap lies in the fact that our armed forces were formed without a revolutionary cadre of regular army men.... None of our troops have received sufficient training before the outbreak of the struggle, nor have our commanders been graduated from any regular military academies." 

Certainly, there was no Mao or Ho. Eventually, with the experience born of many reverses, some local leaders developed a strategy for survival, but theirs was a strictly local dominance. The only man who commanded general respect, Ch'in Peng, proved that he was neither the theoretician nor the strategist which the situation demanded. The booklet The Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War published in December 1948, had been rationalised from Mao's experiences in a totally different strategic, geographical and political situation. Mao's base areas included large highly populated food producing regions in which the Communist Party by assiduous organisation had gained the adherence of the people. The M.C.P.'s proposed bases were in deep jungle, inhabited only by small bands of wandering Sakai. As the Politbureau itself said,

"We can withdraw to the jungle mountain ranges. But the masses do not live in these areas and we should not be able to carry out any development or political propaganda work."

Moreover, by concentrating on jungle bases, the insurgents virtually excommunicated themselves from the population, leaving an increasingly harrassed Min Yuen to step up its terrorism and intimidation to extort the necessary supplies and funds.

Communications remained an abiding problem. Throughout the Emergency the insurgents had to rely on jungle couriers. The organisation never possessed tactical or strategic radio stations capable of broadcasting from one state to another. Some letters were sent through the public mail

4 'Supplementary Views of the Central Political Bureau of the M.C.P. on Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War', cited in Hanrahan; Op.Cit., pp 119-120.
5 Ibid., pp 101-116.
6 Supplementary Views of the Central Political Bureau on Strategic Problems of the Malayan Revolutionary War, (Text in translation in Malaysian Government Archives), p 3.
7 The report by General Boucher (S.T., 6th July 1948) that two communist radio stations located in the jungle in north and south Malaya may have been 'their long range control' was subsequently found to be false. Precis, Basic Paper Part VII, p 1. These were merely 'receiver' sets for monitoring Radio Peking.
service and although the jungle courier system became highly developed it was cumbersome, slow and, since couriers were subject to ambush, unreliable.8

Acquisition of weapons was an even graver problem. The insurgents were forced to rely exclusively on small arms. The lack of heavy support weapons drastically limited their tactical operations; stand-off attacks by mortars and rockets were never used. The insurgents had no rockets and only two small mortars without ammunition.9 Even for small arms, the shortage of ammunition meant that insurgent attacks were seldom pressed home. Nor had they the necessary tactical knowledge or popular support to construct fortified camps and villages. For similar reasons mines, which created minor havoc during the Second Indo-China War, were used to harass the Security Forces on less than a dozen occasions in twelve years and mining was never developed as a technique. Thus, insurgent operations except in isolated cases, never progressed beyond ambushes and light skirmishing.

Logistics was the responsibility of the Min Yuen but it was soon apparent that it could not supply forces larger than a few hundred in any one area. This further caused the M.R.L.A. to decentralise its operations. Even before resettlement of the squatters in 1950-52, the provisioning of even moderately sized forces was unpredictable.

"Our greatest weakness," stated one report, "is that we have not sufficient strength to protect co-operative villagers. Therefore, our environment becomes more and more difficult, especially from the financial and provision supply aspects. We suffer from unreliable information, non-cooperation of the people and difficulty of movement."10

In effect the M.R.L.A. was more tied to its administrative tail than were the Security Forces with their aerial resupply, and eventually helicopters.

8 So cumbersome, that local leaders were mostly left to themselves to interpret broad guidelines rather than orders. The Politbureau simply laid down quotas of terrorist acts for a given period - so many rubber trees to be slashed, mines to be sabotaged etc. Madoc, Interview.

9 Precis, Basic Paper Part IV, pp 3-4.

The M.C.P.'s Early Strategy

It was soon obvious that the M.C.P. had been pitchforked into action by its leaders without essential preparation. In a booklet published on 5th July 1948, the Central Committee admitted that it possessed neither a central command nor a uniform system of organisation. However, an immediate short term policy was laid down, the main features of which were:
(a) the expansion of the army;
(b) the readjustment and expansion of the party organisation; and
(c) the organising and arming of the rural areas in support of the 'armed struggle'.

Long term military strategy was envisaged in three phases. Phase I was guerrilla warfare and terrorism to disrupt the economy and communications, and to kill government, police and K.M.T. officials. Phase II was to be the establishment of communist governments in 'liberated rural areas'. Phase III would see the joining up of 'liberated areas', the capture of towns and general revolt. At the end of July 1948, some three hundred insurgents tried to 'liberate' the towns of Gua Musang and Pulai in Kelantan. They ambushed a relief column but were driven out after five days. This marked their first and last serious attempt to capture and hold an area. By September, the insurgents realised that their haphazard mobilisation and narrowly conceived form of guerrilla warfare were getting them nowhere.

In either September or early October, the Central Executive Committee reviewed the directives of 5th and 25th July. A further meeting was held in December, as the result of which a strategic plan for the reorganisation and re-disposition of the insurgent organisation was prepared. The insurgent leadership believed the Phase I was now completed, and the party could advance to Phase II, the setting up of 'liberated areas'. Three were designated: (1) the Pahang - Kelantan border area; (2) the southern area of Selangor; and (3) the Kedah - Thailand border area.

In each, a base was to be established for 'mobile warfare'. Outside these areas the country was to be divided into three zones, each

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12 M.C.P., Terrorism, pp 46-47.
13 Precis, Basic Paper, p 5.
under a Regional Bureau of the Central Committee. Within each zone miniature mobile bases were to be set up, closely linked to and supported by the People's Movement (Min Yuen). Meanwhile, the M.P.A.B.A. was to concentrate on its Phase 1 activities (sic), to which were added the extermination of spies, intensified training and the acquisition of equipment, particularly arms and ammunition, by ambushing convoys and by attacking police and military posts. Initially, command of the troops was to be vested in the State Committees, but once deployment had been completed control was to be centred in independent Military Commands in the three main bases.

The plan fell far short of its grandiose aims. Only in the Betong salient area of the Malaya - Thailand border was a reasonably secure base established because the insurgents were on the Thai side, and until agreement had been reached with the Thai Government, they could not be pursued. A statement by the party in December 1948, attested to the difficulty which this strategy involved:

"Generally speaking, our army is at present still without a base. Although a number of rural districts are now under our Army's control, it has not yet succeeded in beating off enemy attacks on such rural areas. What our army has been able to do has been 'to retreat when the enemy advances and to advance when the enemy withdraws.' We are frequently forced to 'move off elsewhere' on our own account. This is because the rural districts in Malaya are both cut off and surrounded by a close network of public roads and railroads, enabling the enemy to launch a sudden attack at any time and place, thereby making such areas unstable and changeable."

Thus, at every stage of its 1948 campaign, the M.C.P. had failed. It failed to disrupt significantly the economy. Rubber and tin production was little affected during the critical months of May and June, and the port of Singapore was only partially and briefly affected by strikes. Although the program called for a stepping up of violent outbreaks in early June, they were badly organised. Instead of being closely coordinated and mutually reinforcing, the armed attacks were sporadic. With

14 Ibid., p 5.
15 Ibid., pp 5-7.
16 Hanrahan; Op.Cit., p 115
17 Rubber production on estates rose from 32,724 long tons dry weight in April to 33,294 tons in May and remained steady at 33,246 tons in June. Malayan Rubber Statistics Handbook 1948, Table 14. Tin production fell marginally from 84,195 piculs in May to 80,008 piculs in June but recovered quickly. Annual Report on the Mining Industry for 1948, Table IIa, p 13.
proper organisation it should have been possible to kill 300 scattered European planters and mine managers instead of the 3 who were killed on 16th June. Again, although the M.C.P. had made the interdiction of government communications a priority task, it was not until 15th September that a halfhearted attempt was made to blow up the Singapore - Kuala Lumpur railway. Indeed, for the first two years of the Emergency the production and distribution of both rubber and tin actually increased in spite of the attacks on their means of production and transportation.

The attempts to set up 'liberated areas' and then join them together, were ill-conceived and quite beyond the insurgent's capabilities. For all the talk of Regiments and Brigades, the terminology was deliberately imprecise and highly exaggerated. At no stage did an M.R.L.A. Regiment approach even a British battalion in terms of fighting strength and men actually carrying weapons, and the M.R.L.A.'s complete lack of support weapons made the disparity even greater.

M.C.P. Organisation

The M.C.P. organisation which had to grapple with these problems was based upon the orthodox Leninist 'cell' structure. Cells within similar industries and trades were co-ordinated by Branches. Above these, in ascending order came District and then State (or in Penang and Singapore, Town) Committees, and hardly distinct from it. Below the Central Committee were the Organisational Bureau, the Propaganda and Education Bureau, the Racial Bureau and the Labour and Trade Union Department. Within this

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18 HLC.P., Terrorism, p 49.
19 Production of tin, for example rose from 44,815 long tons (1948) to 54,910 (1949) and again to 57,537 (1950) Annual Report 1950, p 100.
20 For example, at the height of the Emergency in 1950/51 the posted strength of a British Infantry Battalion in Malaya was 800 men (approx.). In November 1951, two of the strongest and most active regiments of the M.R.L.A., 5th Regiment, operating in Central and South Perak and, 3rd Regiment, operating in North West Johore, consisted of 470 and 360 members (approx.). Military Intelligence Section FARELF Report, November 1951.
21 The first reasoned exposition of a revolutionary movement based on clandestine 'cells' is contained in the "Revolutionary Catechism" of Bakunin and Nechaev. It was later adapted by Lenin. In 1869, Nechaev's 'Society of the Axe' was founded on groups (cells) of five, 'each member of the group owing implicit obedience to a chief who, in turn, took his orders from a central committee'. Carr, E.H.; Michael Bakunin, London, 1937, p 383.
hierarchy, discipline was strengthened by procedures. First, the senior members or secretaries of the lower committees were members of the next higher committee. Second, although in theory State and Town Committees were to meet regularly to elect delegates to a Pan-Malayan Representatives Conference, which in turn was to elect a Secretary-General and a Central Committee, in practice this Conference had not been held since 1930, its place being taken by 'Enlarged Meetings of the Central Committee'.

The dictatorial system of filling appointments had been followed right down to Branch level, indeed, it was only at the level of Cells, which chose their own leaders, that genuine elections were held.

However, as the organisation grappled with the problems referred to above, further modifications became necessary, and after December 1948 the following structure finally emerged:

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22 At the height of the 'Emergency' 1950/51, there were about 50 M.C.P. Districts in Malaya and each had its committee. The next and lowest Committee was the Branch, of which there were about four to a District. Madoc, Interview.

23 For example, in May 1947 Loi Tek was formally expelled from the Party and Ch'in Peng named as his successor as Secretary-General at the Ninth Plenum which included members of the Politbureau and some, but not all of the State Secretaries. 'Statement of the Incident of Wright' dated 28th May 1948 (Text in translation in Malaysian Government archives).
CENTRAL COMMITTEE (11-15 members)

Secretary General

POLITICAL BUREAU (POLITBUREAU)
(two members plus Secretary General ex officio)

PROPAGANDA & EDUCATION BUREAU
(5-7 members) Responsible for:
- Emancipation Publications
- Min Sheng News Service
(for propaganda to the public), Secret Printing and Publications Office.

ORGANISATIONAL BUREAU
Responsible for:
- MPAJA Ex-Service Comrades' Association
- New Democratic Youth League (both illegal)

LABOUR & TRADE UNION DEPARTMENT
Responsible for:
- Party Corps within PMFTU Committee, Malay and Pan Malayan Federation of Rubber Workers' Unions, Pan Malayan Federation of Mine Workers' Associations (all now illegal). From 1952, work among labour was carried out at District level.

RACIAL BUREAU
Responsible for:
- Racial United Front

NORTH MALAYA BUREAU
(3 members)
- Responsible for:
  - KEDAH STATE COMMITTEE
  - PENANG TOWN COMMITTEE
  - PERAK STATE COMMITTEE
  (also included Province Wellesley)

CENTRAL MALAYA BUREAU
(4 members)
- Responsible for:
  - NEGBI SEMBILAN STATE COMMITTEE; SELANGOR STATE COMMITTEE;
  - JOINT COMMITTEE CONTROLLING UPPER/LOWER PAHANG
(including Trengganu);
  - and KELANTAN SPECIAL COMMITTEE

SOUTH MALAYA BUREAU
(2 members)
- Responsible for:
  - MALACCA SPECIAL COMMITTEE; NORTH JOHORE STATE COMMITTEE;
  - JOHORE STATE COMMITTEE;
  - and SINGAPORE TOWN COMMITTEE

MILITARY HIGH COMMAND*

M.R.L.A.

*Existed in name only. It was the title assumed by the Politbureau when issuing commands and directives to the insurgent armed forces.

FIGURE 1 - CENTRAL ORGANISATION OF THE M.C.P.
STATE COMMITTEE

State Secretary

SECRETARIAT
(if sufficient members existed)

PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT

ORGANISATIONAL DEPARTMENT

M.R.L.A. REGIMENT

DISTRICT COMMITTEE

MIN YUEN
(Masses or People's Movement)

AREA COMMITTEE

BRANCHES COMMITTEE

BRANCHES

CELLS

M.R.L.A. Company
(or independent platoon)

PLATOONS

SECTIONS

FIGURE 2 - STATE ORGANISATION
As noted in Figure 1, the Military High Command was merely the name adopted by the Politbureau when it issued orders or directives to the insurgent forces. Early in the Emergency an Armed Forces Department was established in every State or Regional Committee, comprising the Party Representative, the Commander, and the Vice-Commander. In practice, because of the lack of military expertise, members of State and Regional Committees were appointed and as many of them were men who had spent their lives in political work, they were reluctant to accept military appointments. Where sufficient executive talent was available, the Commander might also be given a Chief of Staff and a Chief of the Party Education Committee, responsible, under the direction of the Party Representative, for political and educational training.

After the Batu Caves massacre, as so many Political Commissars had been killed, the appointment had been abolished: it was now reinstated and the Party Representative at all levels became the most powerful appointment in the insurgent organisation. While the Commander and Vice-Commander were primarily responsible for operations, supplies and discipline, neither could issue an order or deliver a judgement without his prior concurrence. Further to ensure the preponderance of the party, he chaired a committee within each command to supervise political and educational matters.

In theory, each Armed Forces Department at State or Regional level was to control a Regiment or 'brigade' with lesser units built up as follows (Fig. 3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consisting of</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>7-13 men</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platoon</td>
<td>2-4 sections</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>2-4 platoons</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battalion</td>
<td>2-4 companies</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>2-4 battalions</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 The Military High Command never really recovered from the death of its head, Lau Yew (who had led the M.P.A.J.A. Contingent at the Victory march in London after World War II), who was killed in a clash with police near Kajang on 16th July 1948. At the time Lau Yew was planning an attack on Kajang which never took place. Waller, Interview.


26 Ibid., p 2.

27 Based on M.C.P., Notes.
Except for the Section, the above figures do not include a command element, but even within the widely divergent figures permitted, and accepting lavish increments for command and auxiliary elements, individual strengths attained by M.R.L.A. organisations seldom corresponded remotely with those intended. Battalions were never formed and the strengths of regiments varied widely (Fig. 4):

**FIGURE 4**

Central Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Regional Committee (Armed Forces Department)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Regiment Selangor (250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Regiment Negri Sembilan (210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Regiment North West Johore (360+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Regiment Johore (350)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Regiment Central and South Perak (430-470)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Regiment South Pahang (320+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Regiment N.E. and South Trengganu (160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Regiment Kedah Perlis, Penang, Province Wellesley, West Perak. (405)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Regiment Central Pahang (130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Regiment North Pahang (Generally ineffective but size not known)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Regiment North Perak and Kelantan (480+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Committee Malacca and North West Johore (180)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In similar fashion sub-units within a regiment varied from weak companies to relatively strong independent platoons. This was the case in both the 3rd Regiment (North West Johore), and the 5th Regiment (Central and South Perak), Figures 5 and 6: **FIGURE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Regiment M.R.L.A. (360+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.Q. 3rd Regiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Independent Platoon (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Platoon (H.Q. 3rd Regt. and 8th Independent Platoon operated as one unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Platoon (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Independent Platoon (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.Q. 4th Company (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

28 FARELF; Military Intelligence Section, November 1957
29 Ibid., pp 18-19.
In the examples quoted above, the H.Q. of the 3rd Regiment forsook its real effectiveness as a command group by electing to live and operate in an offensive role with one of its platoons. Similarly, the H.Q. of its 4th Company set orthodox hierarchical beliefs on their head by building itself up to a strength greater than that of either of its sub-units. In the 5th Regiment, the 16th and 17th Platoons fought as independent entities with only a tenuous link to the regimental headquarters in another part of the state. However, the M.R.L.A. seldom accepted these organisational deviations from choice. Unit strengths were determined by influences outside the Central Committee's control. Each group developed in almost exact relation to the strength of its popular base and following among the local community, and the effectiveness with which individual leaders attained this by pre-existing family and local ties, by terror, or by both.

This organisational and command weakness, combined with the unreliability of communication by courier, the unexpected strength of British resistance, and the difficulty of building up food stocks in advance, largely explain the M.C.P.'s chronic inability to co-ordinate attacks in strength. Even companies and independent platoons seldom combined for attacks or operated outside their own areas. This process of

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30 In practice, multi regimental attacks did not occur during the Emergency and an attack by a single regiment was a rarity.

Madoc, Interview.
decentralisation led to District Committees and District Organisations assuming an increasingly important role in the insurgent structure; even in some cases to the creation of new insurgent districts. It also led inevitably to two further developments. First, the ties between the District Organisation and the Masses Organisation (Min Yuen) in certain areas became so strong that the insurgents seemed impervious to disruption. Only when the Special Branch, Police and Army developed a combined technique based on food denial (described in Chapter VI), did the insurgency in such areas collapse. In a number of districts, particularly in Johore and Perak, this did not occur until 1958. The M.C.P.'s District Organisations were analogous to the compartments of a battleship's hull; it was possible for the insurgents to lose a number of them without causing the collapse of the State Organisation. However, the very robustness of such an operation, built up on a series of semi-independent entities, became a positive drawback when it wanted to take the offensive. Similarly, the reaction time of the insurgents was normally far below that of the Security Forces. Secondly, the M.C.P. was increasingly backing away from its Maoist strategy. It could not go forward to the next stage of the protracted war and when it tried to do so in 1951, it could not go back. As one writer has put it, the party had become 'the prisoner of terrorism'. The circumstances which permitted it to develop resilient district organisations also confined its activities to that level and, without strong external support, or a collapse of the Government's will, it was only a question of time before insurgent morale cracked.

The Min Yuen

As stated earlier, the strength of the insurgent organisation in any area depended directly on the strength and enterprise of the local Min Yuen.

The Min Yuen was originally intended to be an open front organisation to replace the M.C.P. controlled F.T.U.s and National

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Democratic Youth League. However, once Emergency Regulations were introduced, 'open' M.C.P. organisations were out of the question. The M.C.P. was also concerned that the expected 'mass uprising' of the rural population – particularly the squatters – did not take place. During the Japanese occupation, the M.P.A.J.A. had received spontaneous support from a wide diversity of groups, gradually unified into the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Union (M.P.A.J.U.); but post-war efforts to retain links with the local masses in an organisation similar to the M.P.A.J.A. Old Comrades' Association virtually collapsed when Soong Kwong, the 'open' representative of the M.P.A.J.U. was found guilty of extortion by a B.M.A. court and imprisoned. In certain squatter areas, the links which the M.P.A.J.U. had woven were maintained by continuing propaganda, but again such contacts were localised. These disparate groups were eventually incorporated into M.C.P. Districts. The net result was a number of agencies, known by a variety of names. Area Committee, Peasant's Union, Liberation League, Women's Union and Self Protection Corps – but similar in their general functions, including the collection of funds, supplies and intelligence, the dissemination of propaganda, and the provision of a reservoir of recruits for the party and the M.R.L.A.; all of which came to be known as 'Min Yuen' activity.

As government counter action developed, fewer and fewer inhabited areas remained sufficiently remote from the Security Forces to allow the easy establishment of Min Yuen organisations, in particular the Branches and Cells. However, their logistic functions had to be carried out or the M.R.L.A. could not continue. By force of circumstance, this responsibility fell on existing Branch and Cell members, who carried out Min Yuen duties in the name of an Area Committee, Peasant's Union or

32 It was intended that the leadership of the Min Yuen should be in the hands of a nucleus of Party members occupying most of the executive positions and through whom the M.C.P. would control the movement. The actual work was to be carried out by civilian workers recruited for the purpose. Precis, Basic Paper, Part V, p 1.

33 C.C. Too, Notes and Interviews.

34 Precis, Basic Paper, Part V, p 1. The term 'Min Yuen activity' was used initially by the M.C.P.
Women's Union, which often did not exist.  

Supplies and money collected by the Masses Executives (M.E.'s) were usually brought to a collecting point on the fringe of the jungle. In addition to weapons, ammunition and food, there was a continual demand for such items as medicines, torch batteries, kerosene, stationery, watches and clothing. The nature and extent of 'contributions' in money varied from district to district. In the Segamat M.C.P. district of Johore, with 72 insurgents and a Chinese population of 40,552, quarterly subscriptions amounted to M$61,000 (at the time about £7,117 stg.). Another Branch of 10 collected between M$2,000 and M$2,500 a month, mainly by demanding $1 a month from each Chinese rubber tapper for being allowed to tap, by a levy of 50 cents per acre from Chinese small holders, and by similar extortions from small Chinese businessmen. In the case of rubber, Chinese estate owners were forced frequently to hand over a fixed proportion of their output to the insurgents.

At district level all funds collected were handed to the District Committee which passed the sum laid down by the State Committee to any M.C.P. armed forces operating in the area. According to a resolution of the Perak State Committee dated September 1948, District Committees might not retain a balance of more than $3,000, nor incur any expenditure over

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35 As the difficulties of extorting support increased, the nomenclature of these various groups was standardised and from June 1949 onwards they were known as Self Protection Corps. When resettlement and food denial began to get thoroughly into its stride (from 1952 onwards) the Self Protection Corps was charged by the Party with the protection of the trusted Masses Executives (M.E.'s), who were card carrying members of the M.C.P. and actually collected the supplies from the villagers. In practice the members of the Self Protection Corps went to great lengths to protect the M.E.'s and conceal their identity. Thus the Self Protection Corps were a parallel organisation to the Government's Home Guard. They lived clandestinely among the villagers. In Yong Peng (Johore) for example they consisted mainly of young men and girls between 18 and 20 years old. Until 1953, they continued to report for military training once a week in a nearby patch of jungle. Thereafter, they were increasingly used to smuggle rice out of the village gates. Madoc, Interview and C.C. Too Notes.

36 M.E.'s collected supplies either as contributions in kind, or as money; they then purchased the necessary goods from a 'contractor', usually a local Chinese shopkeeper. Madoc, Interview.

§300 without the prior consent of the State Committee.38

Before June 1949, each District Committee had its own armed unit known usually as a Special Service or Killer Squad. On the declaration of the Emergency, the M.C.P. decided to expand its military forces, using these units as a framework. When they were finally unified as the M.R.L.A. they came under the control of the State Committees. Military support for District Committees was to be supplied by a detachment from the nearest M.R.L.A. formation. This compromise worked satisfactorily until December 1948 when the Politbureau decided to concentrate M.R.L.A. units into base areas. Thereafter, many District Committees found it difficult to obtain military support for civil activities. In June 1949 therefore, the M.C.P. placed armed units under their control to back up their collection work. The decision was implemented by different states according to local needs and the units themselves were variously named. In Negri Sembilan, they were called District Units and captured documents describe them as comprising all Party and Min Yuen executives from District Committee level downwards. These executives were armed, given para-military training, and divided into sections with the District Committees themselves forming District Unit Commands to carry out either Min Yuen or terrorist activity. Where there were not enough executives to form an armed unit, small detachments from the nearest formation were given to the District Committee. They ceased to belong to the M.R.L.A. and were used as Armed Work Forces (A.W.F.'s) in support of Min Yuen activity.39 Their composition was in all cases similar. They were organised into sections of ten men and women, under a section commander and a vice-commander. Sections lived as separate units in camps usually just inside the jungle fringe where they were in touch by jungle letter-box with the District Committee. Unlike the Self Protection Corps, they were liable to be transferred from area to area although in practice this was seldom done. They were at times ordered by

38 Precis, Basic Paper Part VIII, p 2. A Central Committee directive dated December 1948 laid down a scale of allowances for M.C.P. executives: Min Yuen Executives, messing allowance M$25 a month, sundry expenses M$10 a month; Couriers, messing allowance M$25 a month, sundry expenses M$12 a month; Women Executives, same as for Min Yuen, but an additional pre-natal allowance of M$150 on confinement. Family allowance was paid to executives whose families were in necessitous circumstances. In theory officers were paid the same as rank and file but were provided with such items as watches and fountain pens.

39 In 1951, it was estimated that the number of insurgents in A.W.F.'s was between 1,000 and 1,500. M.C.P. Notes, p 18.
the District Committee to concentrate for particular operations which were then carried out under the District Committee, or with an M.R.L.A. unit. Of these sub-units, the Self Protection Corps came nearest to the M.C.P.'s original idea of Min Yuen organisation. Certainly, until 1952 its responsibility was confined to the area in which its members lived, and it was not subject to transfer elsewhere. Its members lived at home, acting as insurgents as required. Later, when the Briggs Plan began to bite, the importance of these corps in providing protection for the collectors of supplies and money was increased.

In general the M.C.P. intended that the M.R.L.A. should attack the Security Forces and other major targets, the District Units and Armed Work Forces confining themselves to the elimination of traitors and to minor sabotage. In time, the M.C.P. found that it could not afford this distinction and the District Units and Armed Work Forces had to carry out similar tasks to those of the M.R.L.A.

As the Emergency progressed, the District Committee became the focus of both logistic and military activities. After 1952, the regiment and company headquarters ceased to exist, their functions being transferred to State and District Committees; the M.R.L.A. was reorganised into Independent Platoons. Since each District had several Branches to sustain it, it could survive to loss of all but one, then rebuild the rest. Until the government could destroy all its branches simultaneously, the District Committee could usually carry on, albeit in emasculated form.

40 "Traitor-killing" was not carried out by the M.E.'s for two reasons: First, it was absolutely vital to the support of the jungle organisation that the M.E.'s identity remained concealed; M.E.'s did not even know each other by sight, only by code names. As the Emergency Regulations were tightened the M.E.'s were responsible to collect every pound of rice, pair of boots, torch battery or bottle of drugs which went into the jungle, and if caught the penalty was death (E.R. 4c); Second, so tight did insurgent security become that each Branch Committee Member dealt with only one or two M.E.'s, and each M.E. dealt with only one or two members of the Self Protection Corps who in turn dealt only with a small cell. Many M.E.'s were not aware of their title in the M.C.P. hierarchy. For these reasons selective murders were usually carried out by an A.W.F. or independent platoon alerted for the purpose. The M.C.P. generally kept faith with their M.E.'s and called them into the jungle if they were likely to be blown, or alternatively looked after their families when they were captured. Waller/Madoc, Interviews.
The Quest For A Guerrilla Strategy

As stated earlier, the M.C.P.'s attempt to set up 'liberated areas' during the second half of 1948 was unsuccessful. Its further attempt to establish bases succeeded only in the Betong salient. The second concentration planned for the Kelantan-Pahang border soon proved impractical because of logistic difficulties and pressure from the Security Forces; during May and June 1949 it was completely dispersed. The third, planned for South Selangor, was never attempted; instead one was established with difficulty in the border region of South Pahang and Northern Negri Sembilan.41

Almost immediately however, the party confused its own forces with further changes. During January and February 1949 it issued its 'February Manifesto' which, as well as renaming its force the M.R.L.A., decreed that it would be organised as independent regiments as described previously (Fig. 4), and while these trained for future tasks, the Special Service Squads, which were to be absorbed into the regiments, would keep the Security Forces occupied.42

Not surprisingly the confusion, exacerbated by the slowness of communications, together with the very real problems which the reorganisation engendered, forced the M.C.P. into relative quiescence during most of 1949.43 The June Resolutions of 1949 therefore exhorted units to be more aggressive:

41 Precis, Basic Paper Part II, p 6. The real intention behind this plan was that two-thirds of the insurgents would move to the three base areas leaving one-third to distract the attention of the Security Forces during the retraining phase. The whole plan was confused, and due to the difficulty of communications, was only partially implemented. The M.P.A.B.A. comprised about 3,000. M.C.P., Notes p 14.

42 This was an almost exact reversion to the Group areas in which the M.P.A.J.A. had operated during the Second World War (Map. 3) and acknowledged the fact that the armed forces were dependent on their traditional suppliers among the local population. This period was to see the emergence of the A.W.F.'s who were given the task of retaining links with the masses and harassing the Security Forces. Precis, Basic Paper Part V, p 2.

43 At the same time the Central Committee admitted that the declaration of a state of emergency had caught them unawares: 'it was absolutely impossible to make all the necessary arrangements secretly in advance, before suddenly exploding into the open to set up the foundations of success.... Hence comrades should not grumble on this point'. C.C. Too, Notes, p 18.
"When in difficulties, take over the initiative and launch attacks against the enemy to raise the morale of the comrades and elevate the prestige of the party among the masses....the party must lead the masses actively and push them on to the struggle, a conservative or cowardly policy would lead to isolation of the Party from the masses."

Exhortation was of little avail however, until reorganisation and retraining were completed. By November, after almost twenty months of revolt, the Politbureau issued its Supplementary Opinions of the Central Politbureau On Strategic Problems In The Malayan Revolutionary War. The document stated that the previous analysis, in the Directives of December 1948, was correct and properly based on Mao's concepts, but needed elaboration. A year's fighting had demonstrated that the compactness of Malaya, together with its highly developed communications, was a marked asset to the government. As this had prevented the establishment of rural bases, more organisational work among the masses was necessary, requiring 'a strong force of relentless and daring Min Yuen cadres'. The jungle fringes were the best location for the Army to maintain contact with the populated regions. By keeping to the edge of the jungle however:

"Heavy concentration of our forces will put us in a disadvantageous position for withdrawal in the face of a large scale enemy assault. Because of this we must utilise the tactics of 'Relative Dispersion', to be adopted by all units in our army. The aim of these tactics is to enable our Army to concentrate and to disperse swiftly and smoothly."

Again, since Malaya was agriculturally backward, the Government forces must be expelled from the small towns and villages so that the Army could feed itself. The party also admitted that it had so far failed to solve the racial problem:

"The British have already created a totalitarian, complete, penetrating system of administration, from the Federal Government down to small towns and Malay kampongs. Malay feudal chieftains, from State Sultans down to Ketuas of Kampongs, are to all intents and purposes, lackeys paid and employed by the British imperialists. Hence in Malaya we have nothing like feudal provincialism to exploit."}

However, many of the advantages which it had claimed in December 1948 persisted: it had the support of the squatters; the international situation.

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44 Ibid., p 18.
46 Ibid., p 118.
was encouraging; Communist victory in China, and substantial achievements all over South East Asia. The struggle would indeed be long and bitter but the M.C.P. still had its powerful friends, from the U.S.S.R. and China to 'the democratic elements in the imperialist countries', and its successes had been commended by numerous international proletarian organisations.

The party therefore decided upon the following tactics: the June resolutions, which had already stressed the need to seize the initiative, would be carried out; temporary bases would be set up among the Min Yuen territories, from which spearheads would radiate into enemy areas to intermesh with other territories. ('This sort of tactic could lead to extremely fluid situations and a difficult period for the M.R.L.A., but it could be done.') Then the enemy would be driven from small towns and estates by tightening the encirclement, and further expanding the Min Yuen territories and the armed units. Eventually, 'Main Force Guerrilla Regiments' (or Brigades) could be formed and mobile warfare undertaken.48

Despite the rich accumulation of experience which the party had confidently quoted, the plan contained nothing new. Nevertheless, the initial onslaught, coinciding with the Government's 'Anti-Bandit Month', did alarm the Government as never before. Sporadic terrorism rose abruptly in early 1950 and continued to rise until June 1951. Moreover, insurgent strength increased commensurately.49 In 1950, the number of incidents (4,739), was almost twice the figure for the combined years 1948 and 1949 (2,716); in 1951 the number (6,082) was greater again.50

48 Strategically, this was a reversion to Stage One of Mao's classic theory of Protracted War (Selected Works, Vol. 11, pp 136-145). Initially, the insurgents were to engage in straightforward fighting at platoon and section strength, with the aim of damaging the economy, inflicting heavy casualties on the security forces, and capturing large stocks of weapons and ammunition. Stage Two was to begin when the M.R.L.A. was strong enough to overrun small Security Force outposts; this would be done in company strength. Stage Three would begin when the areas dominated in Phase Two were 'liberated' and joined up into a solid block of insurgent held territory; pitched battles with the Security Forces would finally decide the outcome.

49 In January 1949 insurgent strength was estimated to be 5,000, in January 1950 - 7,500 and a year later - 8,200. Ops Research Memo 1/57, p 14.

50 Appendix A.
Yet despite these increases and noticeable improvements in technique, there was no real increase in the scale of the attacks; nor did the insurgents display any greater ability to concentrate their forces in combined operations. At no time could they deploy more than 300 troops in a single operation, and in the whole of the Emergency they employed more than 200 on no more than a dozen occasions, one-third of them in 1948. The average number of insurgents taking part in operations during the first four years of the Emergency was approximately 50. An analysis of some 200 insurgent operations during this period disclosed the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>FIGURE 7</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Raids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Against rubber and tin estates</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Against police stations</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Road ambushes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Murder</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Robbery</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sabotage</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Grenades thrown</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skirmishes with Security Forces</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The revised strategic plan was clearly intended to progress to bigger and better operations. As the party admitted at the time, 'At present every one of our units is acting separately and independently, but the effort to find the solution to the problem in 'relative dispersion' by which forces would mass for an operation and then disperse before the Security Forces could retaliate was not successful. There were also other problems. Open dissent had already been voiced. And now, as the Government's programs, including the resettlement of squatters gathered momentum, the party's best means of supply and support could well be cut off.

51 Moreover, since these estimates were based on the reports of troops and police who were actually involved, they may be inflated. Knowing the poor state of insurgent communications and logistic support, it is almost certain that actions were only carried out by elements e.g. single companies or independent platoons at the most. Henniker, Interview.

52 Hanrahan; Op. Cit., pp 68-69
53 M.C.P., Supplementary Views, p 128.
Moreover, the Min Yuen was now having to use more terror and intimidation than before to obtain cooperation which was tending to alienate popular support. Members of the Min Yuen also complained that M.R.L.A. actions frequently drew the attention of the Security Forces to their areas thus making Min Yuen activities impossible: the local M.R.L.A. leaders in turn accused the Min Yuen of being tardy and cowardly and of consuming most of the food and pocketing most of the subscriptions.54

A further change in strategy was therefore needed. Indeed, the failures of 1948–49, had caused a potentially dangerous degree of internal dissension.

Internal Friction Within M.C.P. Ranks

Beginning in 1949, the autocratic conduct of the Central Committee became a target for criticism by the rank and file of the party.55 The latter demanded a meeting of leaders from the States and Settlements to prepare for a Pan-Malayan Congress which would elect a new Central Committee in accordance with the rules.

The members of the Central Committee were sufficiently alarmed to deputise several members to investigate the matter. The results of the investigation, and the Central Committee's comments, were issued in booklet form on 10th January 1950 under the title General Summary of the Central Politbureau in Reviewing the South Johore Incident of General Despondency and Attack upon Leadership.56 As a result, two senior members of the party, Lam Swee of the South Johore Regional Committee, and Lum Tatt a member of the Central Committee but in charge of the South Malayan Bureau, were criticised and stripped of their ranks. Lam Swee was also accused of having been an 'internal spy' before the start of the Emergency, when he had been secretary of the P.M.F.T.U. Lum Tatt was purged because of his failure to

54 Madoc and C.C. Too, Interviews.
55 The latter claimed that there was no 'democracy' in the Party, the Central Committee had not been elected into office, neither had there been any election for as long as they could remember. The 'rank and file' were disturbed that they were required to render 'absolute obedience' to a Central Committee whose members they did not know. Moreover, they held that while the Central Committee had purged Loi Tek, its members had not purged similar bourgeois influences among themselves. How therefore, could such a bourgeois Central Committee lead a proletarian party? C.C. Too, Notes.
A more serious challenge to the leadership and to the ideological basis of Central Committee strategy was posed by Siew Lau, a senior party official in the Johore-Malacca border area. He too criticized the way that members of the Central Committee had 'elected themselves'. As a leading theoretician he was especially critical of certain parts of the Program of the People's Democratic Republic. He contended that the party did not fully understand Mao's 'new democracy', which postulated equal distribution of land in the first instance to attract the support of the masses against the capitalists-feudalists. He stated that the Program stipulated that the large industries, which in Malaya meant rubber estates, would be nationalised as soon as the M.C.P. captured political power. How therefore, could the masses be induced to support the revolution which expropriated the rubber estates without giving them a share? Moreover, terrorism caused so much trouble to the masses as to alienate them. Such practices as robbing them of identity cards, burning buses, slashing rubber trees and indiscriminately shooting at trains should be stopped. Setbacks in Johore were attributable to wrong party leadership and lack of popular support. In short, the Central Committee was driving the party to its doom.

Siew Lau incorporated the above criticisms in a booklet entitled Keynote of the Malayan Revolution which he distributed among members in his area. Then in November 1949, without permission, he called a meeting of local insurgents where he emphasised that the armed struggle could not long be maintained, and that he was husbanding his strength waiting for an opportunity to set up a rival party. He advocated 'a policy line of retreat by dissolving the armed struggle, fading away the armed units, and hiding their arms to wait for a more propitious time', and urged the insurgents to get identity cards.

Siew Lau was called upon by the Central Committee to recant but refused to do so. In December 1950, he was deprived of his rank and membership of the party, and kept under surveillance. He wrote a final

57 Madoc, Interview
58 C.C. Too, Notes pp 16-17.
59 Ibid., pp 28-30.
booklet, *A Thesis on the Equal Distribution of Rubber Estates in the Malayan Land Revolution*, to prove in detail how well the agrarian economics of Mao's 'New Democracy' would apply in the 'Malayan Revolution', and how fundamentally current policy differed from it. He was finally liquidated in May 1951.60

A third heretic of consequence was Lau Siew of the Kedah-Penang Joint State Committee, who was indicted by the Central Committee in May 1951 on three charges: First, that like Lam Swee and Siew Lau he doubted the leadership of the Central Committee and the legality of Ch'in Peng's election to the Secretary-Generalship. Second, that before he had the authority to do so, he announced details of the Loi Tek incident in two District Committee meetings in early 1948 while the Central Committee was still trying to keep the matter secret. And finally, that he refused to undergo 'retrospection'. He was dismissed from the State Committee, deprived of his personal carbine, and reduced to assistant stencil-cutter in his State Committee's jungle printing press. Eventually, he surrendered to the government.61

Despite the heated dielectic which these incidents aroused, they are unlikely seriously to have affected the morale of the organisation or its efficiency; certainly not with any immediacy. Communications were so poor that even official instructions took a long time to reach the rank and file. Siew Lau's controversy was in any case highly esoteric. Moreover, the controversies themselves were prolonged: Siew Lau's for more than a year; while Lau Siew procrastinated for more than two and a half years before he surrendered. Nevertheless, the Central Committee was concerned at the number of surrenders (398 in 1949-50 as against 56 in 1948) and in the table cited below (Fig. 8), 'Dislike of Policy' was the most prominent reason given by S.E.P.'s in the years 1949-52:

60 Ibid., p 30. There is something noble but also medieval in the way Siew Lau was called upon to recant, refused to do so, and was finally executed. The M.C.P. denounced him in counter-charges as a deviationist who had, among other things, made the fatal error of categorising 'rubber-workers' as 'agricultural', and thereby deducing that they should have equal shares in the rubber estates. The M.C.P. held that rubber and tin must be regarded as industries which would be nationalised.

C.C. Too, Interview.

61 Ibid., pp 31-34.
FIGURE 8

Reasons For Surrendering As Cited by S.E.P.'s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Dislike of Policy (%)</th>
<th>Internal Friction (%)</th>
<th>Hopelessness (%)</th>
<th>Impulse (%)</th>
<th>Hunger (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-51</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Jun 1953</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-Dec 1953</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Mar 1954</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-Jun 1954</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-Sep 1954</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Dec 1954</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb 1955</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eventually, many of Siew Lau's ideas were to be incorporated in the Directives of October 1951, but by then Cominform strategy in South East Asia had been amended and the Central Committee could be seen to be loyal reacting. Almost by accident, the Government was able to profit from the M.C.P.'s embarrassment. When Lam Swee surrendered on 27th June 1950, and published his ideas in the pamphlet My Accusation, the party published a counterblast to try and discredit him. Subsequent evidence from S.E.P.s and captured documents showed that counter-propaganda against Lam Swee was so vehement and extensive that many insurgents, previously ignorant of the case, obtained copies of My Accusation to find out what Lam Swee had said. A number of his comrades in Pahang surrendered as a result.⁶³

⁶² In the opinion of the writer the figures cited should be accepted as portraying trends rather exact circumstances; but even with this qualification the differences are immense. It is particularly important to note the relative decrease in the figures for 'Dislike of policy' when compared with the increases for 'Hunger' and 'Impulse'. In my opinion 'Impulse' equals general disillusionment and lack of morale PLUS the greater ability of the Government through Templer's revised psychological warfare campaign to communicate with the insurgents. Figures based on Ops Research Mémo 6/55 pp 6-9

⁶³ C.C. Too, Interview.
But by now, a further change in strategy was needed. It appeared in the October Directives of 1951.64

The October 1951 Directives

These were in the form of two booklets; the Directives proper, and a publication entitled, Struggle For Greater Victory In The War.65 They begin with an explanation that the Central Committee had overcome 'rightest opportunism' in 1947, and continued to oppose the rightest trend by the June Resolutions of 1949. However, this had been carried too far, leading to 'leftist deviation', which had prevented a more 'successful development and accumulation of the Party's might'. For example, orders in December 1948 to concentrate forces and establish bases had made it necessary to rely entirely on the masses for food and its instructions that they should be 'led forward' by force had placed too heavy a burden upon them. Similarly, the policy to counter resettlement, announced in 1950, had further harmed and alienated the masses.66

In its June Resolutions of 1949, the Politbureau had accused itself of failing to distinguish 'the incorrigible big bourgeoisie' from the exploitable 'medium bourgeoisie', so that the latter, who should have been won over to the united front, were antagonised. Leftist deviation had also appeared in aggressive activities near towns where the enemy was strong. Activities in such areas should be confined to subversion and infiltration conducted by the masses organisations.

64 Brimmell's opinion is that it was extremely unlikely that the change in strategy was occasioned by instructions or advice from Peking. By this time (late 1951) the Thought of Mao Tse Tung had approximately equal standing with the Thought of Stalin. Again, it was in 1951 that the Vietnamese Communists dropped the facade of leading a purely nationalist insurrection, and performed the few adjustments necessary to align their revolutionary organisation with the Chinese norm. Brimmell; Op.Cit., pp 326-327. Whilst my own evidence can demonstrate that the N.C.P. received regular copies of the Cominform's Journal, and also monitored broadcasts from the New China News Agency, I cannot substantiate that external direction or instruction was the reason for the change.

65 An abridged version of the Directives proper is contained in Hanrahan; Op.Cit., pp 130-133.

66 The Directive went on to reprimand the party for the mistake of 'absolute emphasis upon the basic interests of the revolution and discarding the existing interests of the masses' - which is the same criticism Siew Lau had made two years before. C.C. Too, Notes.
In general, the rectification of errors was to be achieved by studying Mao's thought, and uniting theory with practice. More particularly, there were seven urgent tasks: (1) In masses work, the supreme criterion was to be 'whether the activities undertaken were supported and accepted by the broad sections of the masses'; (2) the armed struggle was to be developed and weapons were to be captured from the enemy, attacks being confined to platoon scale, with ambush as the main tactic; (3) vigilance against spies was to be improved; (4) the workers' and peasants' struggle was to be developed by means of illegal trade unions in rural areas and the infiltration of legal trade unions in urban areas; (5) the united front was to be expanded and 'the medium capitalists' were to be won over; (6) development work was to be conducted among 'the enemy and pseudo-elements', and attempts were to be made to infiltrate the Police, Home Guard, Malay Regiment, and Civil Service; and (7) procurement of 'material and food supplies' was to be put on a sound basis, in which regard the masses were still the main sources of supply, cultivation by the insurgents was to be stepped up to take over from the masses if necessary, and food dumps were to be extensively created.67

Finally, attacks upon the masses such as seizing identity cards, slashing rubber trees, burning religious buildings, sanitary trucks, Red Cross vehicles and ambulances were to cease.68

The Directives had a dual purpose. First, by invoking Mao's 'new democracy', and widening its class appeal, the party hoped to widen its mass base. Secondly, by ending indiscriminate terrorism and by turning to agriculture, the party hoped to lighten its pressure upon the masses, thus enabling them to view its political program more favourably.

The program involved increased scope for the Min Yuen, who were to infiltrate the 'bastions of capitalism in the towns'; the schools and labour unions. The 'big bourgeoisie', in areas where the party could take action, were ordered to improve their attitude towards their employees, but they were only to be assassinated if completely reactionary.69

67 Ibid., pp 24-26.
69 In particular, Chinese owners of mines, plantations and businesses who, because of both race and geography were more vulnerable.
A table of subscriptions to be paid by planters was to be prepared, and another for tin mines. Hence the party was not about to abandon intimidation and extortion, but merely to place it on a more regular basis. Similarly, policemen and soldiers surrendering in battle were to be spared unless they were traitors, British or Gurkha troops, senior civil servants or police officers. Members of the K.M.T. and the M.C.A. could be assassinated, but not members of U.M.N.O. or the Independence of Malaya Party, because these were popular with the Malays. Finally, the decision, 'whether a band should continue to fight or should withdraw for retraining and redeployment should depend on local conditions', and was left to the local commander.70

In addition to the October Directives, a further military operation order was also issued but was never recovered by the Government. But its general lines soon appeared from events. First, deep jungle bases were set up for reorganisation, retraining and cultivation. Secondly, the aborigines were mobilised to help grow food and to act as a human screen around these jungle bases. Thirdly, the large regular units were disbanded; henceforth the largest unit would be the independent platoon.71

It took from a year to eighteen months for the Directives to reach all units; in that period the total number of incidents dropped from 564 in October 1951, to 135 in October 1952, and to 99 in April 1953.72 By June 1953 the reorganisation had been completed and the party commenced to operate under the new directive. Almost immediately, dissension of an opposite sort began, as members who had joined to fight were now ordered to dig. At this point the activities of the insurgent organisation can best be considered by area, namely the Deep Jungle, the Jungle Fringe and the Open.

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70 C.C. Too, Notes.
71 Those members of the M.R.L.A. who were not included in independent platoons were absorbed into A.W.F.'s. Review 1954 and Intelligence Appreciation 1954.
72 Appendix 1. Other pertinent figures for the same months are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>October 1951</th>
<th>October 1952</th>
<th>April 1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Civilian Casualties</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Security Force Casualties</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Total Insurgent Casualties</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This figure includes S.E.P.'s
Activities in the Deep Jungle

Initially, the Politbureau had planned the establishment of three extensive jungle bases as follows: (1) three main base areas in the Perak, Kelantan and Thailand area, the South Perak, Kuala Lipis and Raub area, and the Tasek Bera area; (2) two bases for the Penang-Kedah and the Selangor State Secretariats; and (3) bases for other state and regional secretariats where possible.

These were not conceived as fixed camps but as safe areas, supplied by numerous small, well camouflaged agricultural plots. During 1952, Armed Work Forces were to establish the plots and thoroughly acquaint themselves with the areas so that they could guide the main forces entering the base areas in 1953. This aim however was not attained. For a start the bases could only become self supporting in root crops and padi: salt, cooking oil, clothes, digging equipment and funds still had to come from outside.73 Even cultivation failed in the long run due to the ravages of wild animals, and of aerial spraying. Detection of plots from the air was at first made easy by the Chinese penchant for planting in neat rows rather than higgledy-piggledy in the manner of the aborigines, but even when the insurgents did so and also found that defoliation could be countered by knocking off spray affected leaves, the aircraft just as readily directed ground patrols to the plots, which were then blown up or torn up and burned. How bleak life had become for the insurgents, can be seen by the following excerpts from a captured letter:

"9th. I went to see if any letters had come. While going along (to the jungle letter box), I spent time looking for traces of the enemy. I climbed up a hill and I saw footprints probably made by three persons who had been there two days ago. On close examination of the footprints I concluded that they were not made by the enemy. I received a letter and read it.

10th. Caught more than ten rats after breakfast. Thereafter I busied myself with washing utensils and making a sack. Two Auster planes flew past here probably making food drops to the fort nearby.

11th. Caught seven rats. Ate some of them for breakfast. Was out again at 10.30 a.m. to a jungle clearing where the Yee Ling camp stands. Having reached it, I then went to the masses' (aborigines) cultivated plot but I met nobody there. Spent 6½ hours on the journey.

73 This proved to be a task beyond the capacity of a single District Committee; in some cases two and three District Committees had to pool their resources to carry out a stocking programme, making themselves worthwhile targets for Security Force ambushes in the process. Intelligence Appreciation, 1954, p 4. This process is analysed in Chapter VI.
Spent 9½ hours on digging up and cooking tapioca. Retired for the night at 10 o'clock.74

By 1954, the only base that had appeared to make any progress was in the area of Tasek Bera. But as the Government's policy of winning over the aborigines through the establishment of Jungle Forts began to take effect, all the deep bases were quickly neutralised.75

Activities in the Jungle Fringe

It was from the jungle fringe that District Committees controlled the Branch Committees and their subordinate Cells, which in turn through Masses Executives controlled sympathisers. The District Committees also controlled the Armed Work Forces set up at Branch Committee level to provide for the party's protection among the masses (see Fig. 9):


75 This process is analysed in Chapter VI.
Central Committee dealt directly with Northern States*

**Negri Sembilan**
Pahang
Selangor

***Johore-Malacca Border***
North Johore
South Johore

**State or Regional Committees***

- **Jungle Fringe**
- **Branch Committee**

**District Committees**

- **Independent Platoon M.R.L.A. (30-100)**
- **Armed Work Force (AWF)****
- **Open**

**Masses Executives (M.E.'s)**

**Self Protection Corps**

**Little Devils Organisation**

Village and other supporters

****AWF's worked either under District and in support of Branch or directly for the Branch Committee.

A Branch might be responsible for some five to ten villages and labour lines (on rubber estates and tin mines) containing up to 10,000 people. Instructions to the Armed Work Forces insisted on aggressive military actions against minor military and para-military targets, but in practice many began to avoid such actions, alleging (perhaps with some reason) confusion about who should or should not be killed, and in general hiding behind the
complexities of the October Directives.\textsuperscript{76}

This inactivity not only weakened the M.C.P.'s control over the people, but also began to debilitate the organisation as fewer arms were captured and less supplies collected.\textsuperscript{77} Beginning in October 1952, the Central Committee was now forced to call for even greater military activity, and a modified return to terrorism. For example, the following directive was issued by the South Johore Regional Committee:

"According to the Directive issued by the State Secretariat on April 10th 1953, all the Commanders of Malayan Races Liberation Army units and Armed Work Forces have been instructed to pay more attention to military operations such as lightning assaults, disturbances, sabotage, etc., which were to be included in the working programme and to seize every opportunity to conduct these operations.

Six months have elapsed, and there is still quiet on the whole front, except a few minor operations including the cutting of telecommunications wire, burning of latex trucks, etc. On the contrary there is unfavourable news of attacks, encounters and ambushes. (i.e. by the Security Forces)....

What has obstructed most of all in military operations during this period is conservative thinking which controls the minds of some executives.... minor difficulties are regarded as unconquerable; they had no courage to tackle any problem, but endeavoured to avoid it and

\textsuperscript{76} For example, in the period from January to March 1954, incidents by degree of seriousness were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Seriousness</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involving preplanning, risk, and death or damage of more than Stg£100</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving risk and preplanning, but no death and less than Stg£100 damage</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving no risk or aggressiveness, but causing death or more than Stg£100 damage</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving no risk, aggressiveness, or death, nor more than Stg£100 damage</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum$</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{77} In an effort to counteract this tendency, operations were put on a quota basis, and each District and Branch was required to render returns on what had been achieved each month. Independent Platoons varied in strength from 30 to 100. After 1951, the A.W.F.'s had to be increasingly bolstered by enlisting members of the Self Protection Corps, and even where necessary by milking the strength of the Independent Platoons. M.E.s aimed to collect a basic 5lbs of rice per week for every insurgent in the jungle whom they were responsible for supporting. For 50 insurgents therefore, 250 lbs of rice had to be collected usually in large acid jars which were buried up to the neck and camouflaged. Jars were moved about every three months in case footprints made them too easy to detect. Madoc and Waller, Interviews.
were quite satisfied to be reconciled to the present situation."\textsuperscript{78}

The Directive went on to censure the District Organisations strongly for failing to use their Armed Work Forces in an aggressive role and for failing to give the necessary assistance to M.R.L.A. units.

\textbf{Activities in the Open}

The policy for work in the open was more complicated. In the rural areas, as stated above, it consisted of obtaining supplies, arms and ammunition, and where possible funds, intelligence, couriers and recruits, and the subversion of the Home Guard and the Special Constabulary, at least to ignore the party's activities.

The more ambitious urban program of the Directives, subsequently reaffirmed by an instruction from the Deputy Secretary-General in charge of urban work, was to build up an underground organisation to operate upon the general population through such legal bodies as trade unions, political parties, and teachers' associations. However, despite some minor success among teachers in independent Chinese schools and in organising 'Little Devil Squads' among school children to pass information about movements of the Security Forces and carry out minor auxiliary tasks, little progress was made in face of the vigilance of Special Branch.\textsuperscript{79}

The strategy of the Directives therefore, missed its aim of extending the mass base and obtaining greater room for political manoeuvre. The turn away from terrorism towards agriculture, and the lower place accorded to military activity in preference to political activity and

\textsuperscript{78} Government Press Statement, 20th April 1954, South Johore Regional Committee Directive: 'Main Duties of Our Present Work'.

\textsuperscript{79} The basic problem was that the experienced insurgents who might have undertaken such work were known to Special Branch and hence could not work in the open. Nevertheless the Party did make some progress in spreading propaganda in independent Chinese night schools whose curricula were still largely unsupervised. In this respect it is significant that Lt.Gen. Bower, Director of Operations in 1957 stated that 'supervision of the curriculum of independent schools was a vital prerequisite for preventing revolt in immature states.' \textit{Review 1948-57}, p 26. By 1954 the monthly average of civilians killed (8), and Security Forces killed (7) had been overtaken by deaths from road accidents in Malaya, 35 a month. \textit{Review 1954}, pp 3-4.
subversion, sapped the morale of the M.R.L.A. From 1952 onwards it was struggling merely to survive. Its high point had been passed in 1951; from then on the party found that recruits were insufficient to replace losses. By altering its strategy, it had lost the initiative. But the successive crises which had turned the M.C.P. away from large scale terrorism towards a situation where (by 1955), it offered to negotiate an end to the Emergency, stemmed in large part from the Government's own increasingly successful efforts to solve the problems which it faced. How it met and eventually defeated the challenge is the subject of the next two chapters.

80 Insurgent strengths on 1st January of each year was:
- 1949 - 5,000
- 1950 - 7,500
- 1951 - 8,200
- 1952 - 7,800
- 1953 - 6,200
- 1954 - 4,900
- 1955 - 3,345
- 1956 - 2,566

Ops Research Memo 1/57, p 14.
CHAPTER IV

THE ADVENT OF BRIGGS

Having failed to prevent the insurrection in June 1948, the Government was given a second opportunity to regain the initiative in 1949. However, despite a sizable increase in its own forces, it came no closer to finding a solution to the Emergency nor the machinery for implementing it.¹

From an average of over fifty insurgent inspired incidents per week in 1948 the number dropped steadily until in the first week of August 1949 only twelve were recorded. Moreover, these were 'jitter' attacks and the insurgents demonstrated a marked reluctance to attack targets which were guarded, or where surprise and numbers were not overwhelmingly in their favour.² Captured documents showed that the M.C.P. was aware of its own difficulties and was increasingly concerned about its declining ability to coerce the masses. 'The situation has changed', stated a directive issued in mid-1949, 'but we have not even slightly changed our methods'.³ But the government seemed content with its own handling of the Emergency and this complacency affected other sectors of the community. Thus, in its Annual Report for 1948 the government stated that 'The Communist inspired military campaign had been reduced to the proportions of squalid guerrilla depredations by increasingly demoralised bandits, fighting for their lives against increasingly well organised Security Forces',⁴ when it had no valid basis for such a claim. Not surprisingly, a significant element of the population, taking its cue from the government, regarded the Emergency as a temporary disturbance which the government and its Security Forces should be left to attend to.

¹ The Regular Police Force had increased from 9,000 (June 1948), to 12,767 (January 1949), plus 33,610 Special Constables. In the same period the Army had increased from 10 to 15 battalions of infantry plus an Armoured Car Regiment. Review 1948-57, Appendices B and C.

² M.C.P. Banditry, p 21.

³ M.C.P. Propaganda, p 3. This, in substance, was the tone of self-criticism made in the June 1951 Resolutions, which were referred to in the previous chapter.

Publicly, the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, and other prominent members of the Administration, deprecated 'this business as usual attitude which may lead to no business at all', and exhorted the general population to avoid any slackening of effort.\(^5\) But in his confidential correspondence with the British Government, and in his own behaviour, Gurney's restrained understatement, and his adherence to civil service good form, failed to convey a conviction of the gravity of the situation.

In certain respects Gurney remains an enigmatic figure; yet the doubt lies in his methods rather than in the type of man he was:

"Inherited position, natural ability and the impeccable background of Winchester, University College, Oxford, and the 60th Rifles had made Gurney in 1948, at the age of fifty, the perfect administrator," states C. Northcote Parkinson. "He was intelligent, courageous, well read and experienced, quick to grasp a problem and firm in making a decision."\(^6\)

But perhaps these very qualities may have led Gurney to believe that the insurrection could be overcome without resort to the urgent measures which later had to be taken. Certainly, this would seem so from some of his judgements. For example, in one despatch he quoted from an article about civil war in Greece, where brigandage had developed into guerrilla war and then into civil rebellion, in order to demonstrate that the elimination of 'brigandage' (which he equated with the Emergency) was not a military operation at all:

"It is a civil and political task, for which the primary responsibility rests with the police and the Ministry of the Interior, not with soldiers and the War Office. ... In 1945 (in Greece) this point was missed. Generals were put into the Ministry of the Interior to do civilians' jobs; soldiers instead of policemen organised the hybrid forces designed to restore order; and reconstruction never had a chance to begin."\(^7\)

Few would disagree that a State of Emergency is a civil and political task; but manifestly, Gurney was confusing ends with means. It was precisely because the police had failed to control the situation in Malaya that the Armed Services had to be called in at all. Now Gurney wanted them to be placed metaphorically out of sight by pretending that matters could be co-ordinated by his Police Commissioner, who in addition to wrestling with the enormous expansion of his own force, possessed neither the means nor the equipment to set up a proper coordinating headquarters, and had to borrow radio sets from the army before he could even begin to establish effective

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\(^5\) Gurney, Speeches, p 11.

\(^6\) Parkinson, pp 5-6.

\(^7\) Gurney's Despatch No. 5, 30th May 1949, p 6. The article itself was from The Spectator, 3rd September 1948.
communications within the Police.

Again, in referring to points of communal psychology Gurney stated that, 'If a situation requires drastic measures .... it is better to present it as serious and requiring all the help and cooperation that the civilian population can give rather than create the impression that the Government has the situation well in hand. He then went on somewhat confusingly in the same report to say that terms such as 'enemy', 'war', 'insurrection', insurgents', 'rebellion', etc., should be avoided in official statements on the grounds that the insurance cover provided by British companies for commercial enterprises in Malaya such as rubber planting and tin mining might be withdrawn; whereas his major problem, in official circles and elsewhere in Malaya, as seen from his many public statements on the subject, was that people were not viewing the Emergency seriously enough. Indeed, this official self deception which was later to bedevil the efforts of Sir Harold Briggs during his entire period as Director of Operations, permeated much of the bureaucracy in Malaya.

A false confidence was also evident in the Government's relationships with the Chinese community. By late 1949, the Communist forces in China had defeated the Nationalists, and British recognition of Communist China in January 1950 had a marked effect on the attitude of the Chinese in Malaya:

"On the one hand the bandits themselves were much encouraged and on the other there was a significant change in the attitude of a considerable section of the Chinese in the Federation, which became less ready to cooperate with the Government and more disposed to ensure themselves with the other side; for they feared that if they openly sided with the Government in Malaya their relatives or their property or both in China, would suffer at the hands of the Communist Government."

Yet, not two months before, the Chief Secretary had stated that the fight against Malaya's Communists 'would not be affected if the

8 Ibid., p 16.
9 For example, it was not until 1950 that the section dealing with the Emergency was elevated in status in the Federation of Malaya's Annual Report, from an obscure appendix, where it had languished in 1948 and 1949 to become Chapter 1. In other words, Gurney could not have it both ways. Either the Emergency was a phenomenon of serious proportions, in which case it deserved to be treated as such, or it was not.
10 M.C.P. Terrorism, p 19.
British Government recognised the new Chinese People's Government'.  
And, less than a month before, Gurney himself had declared, 'Nothing that may happen in China will weaken the determination of the people of this country to eliminate militant communism here, rather will their efforts be strengthened.'  
The failure by the Government to understand the feeling of insecurity, both immediate and potential, which was at the root of the dilemma confronting the uncommitted mass of the Chinese population meant that little common ground existed between the two groups and consequently, little confidence flourished until the Government showed that it intended to win.

Finally, when the tide of insurgency began to flood out of control early in 1950, the impetus for change came not from Gurney, but from the British Defence Coordination Committee, Far East in Singapore which, in giving its analysis of the situation, stated flatly that the present direction of the campaign was unsatisfactory and suggested that a civil coordinating officer, directly under the High Commissioner, be made responsible for prosecuting the campaign. The committee added that heavy reinforcements of troops and air power would not bring the needed improvement, unless paralleled by vigorous action on the civil side.

The Appointment of Briggs

In early 1950 the situation worsened dramatically. Although there had been a time in 1949 when it was even thought that a reduction in the number of troops in Malaya might be possible, events quickly dispelled this illusion. There were 221 incidents in February, an increase of eighty per cent over the average monthly figure of 1949. The number continued to rise until October, when the peak figure of 571 was recorded.  
There was also a change in the direction and magnitude of insurgent attacks. In 1949 few had required any initiative, courage or risk; effort had mainly been

11 Ibid., p 70.
12 Ibid., p 73.
13 Quarterly Historical Report. (Ops/SD) Branch, FARELF March 31, 1950 (SECRET)
14 M.C.P., Terrorism, p 19.
directed at sabotage on rubber estates and tin mines which could not be termed 'hard targets'. The new offensive was different. On 4th February, Simpang Tiga, a village in the Sitiawan area of Perak was burned down by an insurgent group and 1,000 of its inhabitants made homeless. On 22nd February, another group attacked and set fire to the police station at Bukit Kepong in Johore; thirteen constables, six Kampong Guards, two women and two children were killed and the weapons of the defenders were captured. The 'jitter' incidents of 1949 had given way to moderate sized but well coordinated attacks which puzzled both the Security Forces and the Government.

Sir Henry Gurney, thoroughly alarmed for probably the first time in his administration, departed radically from his previously expressed policy of reposing coordination of the Emergency in the hands of the Commissioner of Police and, on the advice of the British Defence Coordination Committee referred to above, asked the British Government to appoint a Director of Operations.

Yet here again, there was a cleavage between the intentions of the High Commissioner, and the strength of local interest; in particular the planters' 'lobby'. Gurney's predilection as always was for a civilian; the planters wanted a soldier on the active list. In Gurney's preference there were combined, the inborn suspicion which professional civil servants have for professional soldiers and more pressingly, the need to maintain the appearance of civil government under the still fragile Federation Agreement. The planters, who with vast numbers of Chinese, were in the front line of the Emergency, wanted to get things done and to see security established as quickly as possible. They saw the appointment of a soldier as the quickest means of achieving both. The British Government compromised and in March 1950 appointed a Lieutenant General on the retired list to the post in a civilian capacity. As Director of Operations, Malaya, he was to

15 Ibid., p 83.
16 Ibid., pp 85-86.
17 Certainly from as early as July 1948 the Planters and Miners had been calling for a 'Supremo' with wide powers to be given office in Malaya. An editorial in the Sunday Times 4th July 1948, concluded, 'Could General Sir William Slim, the victor of Burma, be the man to replace the reputedly unthroned Sir Edward Gent?'
18 In commenting on the appointment The Economist of 25th March 1950, noted that 'It is also satisfactory that London has admitted - much later than was necessary - the need to accept advice from the spot and to achieve decisive results by new methods.' However, despite the general accuracy of the report, neither The Economist nor any other publication was aware that part of the responsibility for procrastination lay with Gurney.
rank equal to the Chief Secretary, but have full powers of coordinating the Police, Naval, Military and Air Forces. These departments however retained the right of appeal to the High Commissioner in the case of the Police, and to their respective Commanders-in-Chief in the case of the Armed Forces. In this there lay a fundamental weakness which will be analysed later. Both the character of the man chosen to be the first Director of Operations, and the term itself, owed much to the judgement of Field Marshal Slim, who as Chief of the Imperial General Staff had visited Malaya in October 1949 and was now asked for his recommendation.

The man selected, Lieutenant General Sir Harold Rawdon Briggs, K.C.I.E., K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O. (ret.) had already concluded a distinguished career. Born in 1884, Briggs had graduated from Sandhurst into the Indian Army in 1914 and served throughout the First World War in France, Mesopotamia and Palestine. From 1940 to 1942 he had commanded 5th Indian Division in the Western Desert, Iraq and Burma. He had become General officer, Commander-in-Chief Burma Command in 1946 until he retired in 1947. Briggs' qualifications for the new post in Malaya may not have been unique, but they were distinguished by three important characteristics. First, he had acquired wide regimental experience in Asia and understood, at least in part, the minds and cultures of the Asian peoples with whom he was to deal. Second, he had fought a jungle campaign in Burma and was not unpractised in conducting operations in difficult terrain. Third, and most important of all, in the confused conditions of post war Burma he had already given clear indications that he had a broader view of his duties than merely administering the military machine by dissuading the Governor from suppressing the rising tide of nationalism in that country. On all three counts, Briggs had shown that he could be relied upon to act in a difficult situation with tact and wisdom. In Burma his 5th Indian Division had formed part of Slim's Fourteenth Army:

"It", (the 5th Indian Division) wrote Slim, "owed much to its commander, Major General Briggs, and like all good divisions - and bad ones - reflected its commander's personality. The war had found him in command of a battalion in this division; a battalion that in some extraordinary way was always where it was wanted, that always did what was wanted and was ready to go on doing it. So Briggs got a brigade. His brigade was just as steadily successful as his battalion had been. It went into the toughest spots, met the most difficult situations and came out again like its commander, still unperturbed and as quietly efficient as ever.

So, while others fell by the wayside Briggs got his division. I know of few commanders who made as many immediate and critical decisions on every step of the ladder of promotion and I know of none who made so few mistakes.\textsuperscript{20}

Arriving in Malaya on 3rd April 1950, Briggs made a rapid and extensive tour of the Federation and a week later gave Gurney his views. This was done in the modified form of a military 'Appreciation of the Situation' which was so significant for later operations as to warrant reproducing here in full.\textsuperscript{21} From this logical and comprehensive assemblage of factors, Briggs arrived at a plan for the elimination of the Communist Organisation and armed forces which he submitted to the British Defence Coordination Committee, Far East on 19th May 1950.\textsuperscript{22}

The Briggs Plan

The theme of the plan was clear. The Emergency was not a war in the classic sense, but a competition in government. Terrorism could be eradicated only by cutting away the props which the terrorists depended on within the population at large. This may have been dimly perceived before, but the real significance of the link between the M.C.P.'s armed forces and the Min Yuen had not.\textsuperscript{23} It was this link which had to be broken.

"The Min Yuen is able to exist and function in populated areas mainly because the population as a whole lacks confidence in the ability of the forces of law and order to protect them against gangster Communist extortion and terrorism. In consequence, information, which is essential if the Min Yuen and the bandits are to be eliminated, is quite inadequate."\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{21} Appendix C.

\textsuperscript{22} Briggs Report, p 6. Like most long-range operational prescriptions it reads more as a statement of intent rather than a plan. But even though modified, refined and amended over ten years, its essential content was the same in 1960 as it had been in 1950. Although classified SECRET its existence quickly became known through the press as the 'Briggs War Plan' (S.T., 12th June, 1950), and later simply as the 'Briggs Plan' (S.T., 6th August, 1950).

\textsuperscript{23} For example when Mr. Guy Madoc returned to take over the M.C.P. Desk within Special Branch in April 1950, he found that there was only a vague understanding among the staff at Federation Police H.Q. of the real significance of the Min Yuen. Madoc, Interview. Again, although the 1st Battalion, the Devon Regiment (referred to in Chapter II) had been in Malaya from the beginning of the Emergency, it knew nothing of the Min Yuen until early in 1950. Q.H.R., 1 Devons, 31st March, 1950.

\textsuperscript{24} Briggs Report, p 6.
Therefore security, and with it confidence and information, could only be restored and maintained by a coordinated series of measures which included the following:

"(a) by demonstrating Britain's firm intention to fulfill her obligations in defence of Malaya against both external attack and internal disorder;

(b) by extending effective administration and control of all populated areas which involves
   (i) A large measure of squatter resettlement into compact groups,
   (ii) A strengthening of the local administration,
   (iii) Provision of road communication in isolated populated areas,
   (iv) Setting up of Police Posts in these areas;

(c) by exploiting these measures with good propaganda, both constructive and destructive."²⁵

And whereas before Briggs arrival many of these measures had been proceeded with disparately and almost intuitively by the Government and the Security Forces, in future the basis of the Government's counter insurgent strategy was to be a deliberately implemented sequence of methodical action.

In a paper submitted to the newly established War Council, Briggs injected greater detail into his strategic and tactical intentions:

"Broadly, the intention is to clear the country, step by step, from South to North, by:

(a) dominating the populated areas and building up a feeling of complete security in them, with the object of obtaining a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources;

(b) breaking up the Min Yuen within the populated areas;

(c) thereby isolating the bandits from their food and information supply organisation in the populated areas;

(d) and finally, destroying the bandits by forcing them to attack us on our own ground."²⁶

Basically, the plan was to depend on a 'Framework' of security which was to be established simultaneously in all states and would remain even though other, more venturesome operations might be superimposed upon it. This basic matrix of security would then become the key to a "slow-squeeze" which would sever the links between the insurgents operating in the jungle or along its fringes, and their supporters in the populated areas.

²⁵ Ibid., p 6.
²⁶ Ibid., p 7.
To achieve these objects Briggs planned that in all states:

"(a) the Police Force will concentrate on fulfilling normal police functions, including the obtaining of intelligence, through its Special Branch organisation in all populated areas; (b) the Army will maintain in states in turn (sic) a framework of troops, deployed in close conjunction with the police, to cover those populated areas which the police cannot themselves adequately cover. This will entail the setting up of a series of strong points whereon patrols will be based; (c) the Administration will strengthen to the utmost extent possible their effective control of the populated areas by increasing, duplicating or trebling as necessary the number of District Officers and other executive officers "in the field" to ensure that all populated areas are effectively administered; by making access roads to isolated populated areas where necessary; by establishing Police Posts in all populated areas brought under control; and by stepping up to the maximum extent possible within the limits of the manpower available in all areas where they are needed, the provision of the normal social services that go with effective administration, e.g. schools, medical and other services."\(^\text{27}\)

Thus, 'Framework Operations' (the equivalent term applied in South Vietnam was 'Pacification') were designed to restore the normal processes of civil government. The technique depended on a number of interlocking factors: the judicious use of troops; the close cooperation of troops and police; accurate and timely intelligence above all from Special Branch, and finally, as an earnest of long term government aims, the revitalising of local government.\(^\text{28}\)

To give added momentum in certain areas, and to permit the conduct of operations which, although relatively opportunistic might result in a considerable success, 'Striking Forces' were also earmarked to be employed in 'Priority Areas'.\(^\text{29}\) In general, this meant that extra troops and resources were to be superimposed on the 'Framework' for operations within each state in turn. Having achieved their ask in one state they would then be moved to another further north. Moreover, it was envisaged by Briggs that the army forces available 'might be reduced by one, and later possibly by two brigades as the programme for clearing Malaya state by state from south

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p 7.

\(^{28}\) In practice 'Framework Operations' came to include all the arduous, unspectacular measures usually carried out by Administration, Army and Police acting in concert, which has since distinguished this type of conflict from any other; it includes such practices as the imposition of curfews, food denial, patrolling, ambush and so on.

\(^{29}\) Briggs Report, p 7.
The Striking Forces were to dominate the jungle up to about five hours' journey from potential 'bandit' supply areas. Continual ambushing and harrying of the insurgents was intended to make their organisation and its supporters either fight, disintegrate, or leave the area. Thus, when the Striking Forces left, insurgent strength and morale would be so reduced that other insurgents would be unable to re-infiltrate the region successfully.

From May to June 1950 the troops in the Federation previously assigned to areas on an ad hoc basis, were redeployed. Johore was designated a Priority Area on 1st June; Negri Sembilan would follow on 1st August. Thereafter, other areas were to be named Priority Areas at two monthly intervals.

Once operations began, three battalions were withdrawn for rest and retraining at any one time but in addition two Armoured Car Regiments were spread over the Federation for road patrols. On 1st June operations under the new plan commenced in Johore. Although no substantial results were expected for the first two months, by 21st July Briggs was able to state that:

"the new operations are so far encouraging .... Information has greatly increased .... some measure of the success of the overall plan can be gauged from the fact that since 1st June, fifty-two bandits have been killed, captured or have surrendered in Johore as against twenty-one in the previous two months".

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30 Ibid., p 11.
31 Ibid., p 8. In terms of movement 'five hours journey' equated to 1,000 - 6,000 yards in difficult terrain. In 1950-51, the insurgents had penetrated no further into the jungle than this.
32 By June the new deployments in the Federation were as follows:
   - Johore - six battalions
   - Negri Sembilan - four battalions
   - Pahang (concentrated in the Bentong, Mentakab and Triang areas only) - three battalions
   - Selangor - two battalions
   - Perak - a commando brigade
   - Pahang (the remainder) - two battalions
   - Kedah - one battalion
   - Kelantan - one battalion. Ibid., p 17.
33 Ibid., p 17.
Similarly agreeable statistics were quoted for other parts of the Federation.35

To give organisational effect to the plan, Briggs asked the High Commissioner to set up a Federal War Council with himself (Briggs) as chairman. The Committee met first on 14th April 1950 and was composed as follows:

- Director of Operations - Chairman
- Chief Secretary of the Federation
- G.O.C. Malaya
- A.O.C. Malaya
- Commissioner of Police
- Secretary for Defence
- Navy Liaison Officer, when required.

Procedure was made thoroughly systematic by the issue, in addition to the Emergency Regulations, of Director of Operations Directives. The first of these set up the Federal War Council, and the War Executive Committees.36 The second established Priority Areas and allocated tasks to the troops.37 The third included a number of matters ranging from the recruiting and arming of Auxiliary Police to the control of shops outside town border areas.38 In all, Briggs issued eighteen directives in twenty months. They were continually revised and added to by subsequent Directors of Operations.

In addition to the Federal War Council which at Federation level was ultimately responsible for the prosecution of the Emergency, State and District War Executive Committees, known as S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s - pronounced like living beings - were also established. Under the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948, Malaya had become a Federation of nine states, each with its Sultan, and two settlements, each with a Resident Commissioner. All of these were served by local governments including

35 Ibid.
Executive and State or Settlement Councils. The High Commissioner of the Federation was similarly served by an Executive and a Legislative Council with a Secretariat under a Chief Secretary to coordinate the States and Settlements. The Federal Government retained in its own hands decisions on finance, defence, external affairs, police and the judiciary. In addition, although Singapore was a separate Crown Colony with its own government and administration, there were many problems affecting defence, economics, immigration and manpower which needed coordination between the governments concerned; a coordination not made easier by the fact that the Singapore councils were predominantly Chinese, while those in the Federation were Malay. Realising that these separate political entities were slow and unsuited to deal with a State of Emergency, Briggs inaugurated the S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s to deal with all Emergency matters. Although some powers of a politically sensitive nature such as land titles for the Chinese were withheld from them, they became at each level, the basis for methodical action.

39 For example, the High Commissioner had to refer all draft legislation to the Rulers of the nine states before it was introduced into the Federal Council, and he had to consult them on changes in the organisation of the civil service and on immigration questions. The division of powers gave the Federal Government the decisive voice on finance, but power in many administrative areas remained with the States. This difference retarded the pace of Resettlement, which required both finance (Federal control), and land (State control). Coordination was not readily achieved. Some short cuts were introduced; when the Mentri Besar came to Kuala Lumpur to attend meetings of the Legislative Council they spent half a day under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary discussing matters of common concern. It was to circumvent this tedious process that Briggs introduced the War Executive Committees.

40 The joint conception embodied in War Executive Committees was to be followed at all levels, and in every possible sense. At State/Settlement level and at District level the composition was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.W.E.C.</th>
<th>D.W.E.C.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mentri Besar (or Resident Commissioner)</td>
<td>District Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Adviser</td>
<td>Officer Commanding Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Police Officer</td>
<td>District (O.C.P.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Army Commander</td>
<td>Army Commander (either Bn or Coy Commander)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer (Secretary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each committee appointed its own Chairman; either the Mentri Besar or British Adviser.</td>
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</tbody>
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Information Officers, Special Branch Officers, and later Home Guard and Military Intelligence Officers were added; initially they were co-opted as required. Briggs stressed that Joint Operations and Joint Intelligence Rooms were to be set up and jointly staffed by Police and Army without regard to rank: 'It is immaterial whether the local military commander is a Lieutenant-Colonel and the local Police Officer is a Sergeant or whether they are respectively a Major and a Superintendent; in each case they will establish a joint Headquarters and will work in the closest cooperation also with the local Administrative Officer'. Directive No. 2
As Director of Operations, Briggs had only a small executive staff which consisted of one Civil, one Army, one Police and one Intelligence Officer. However, as the Emergency Directives were formulated, it was found that new Emergency measures had to be issued and old ones overhauled. Thus, the Government constantly found itself forced to communicate its intentions to the local population and, largely for this reason, but also to institute a more effective propaganda campaign against the insurgents, it appointed a Head of the Emergency Services, who became a member of the Director of Operations Executive Staff in June 1950.

**Emergency Resettlement - Relocation and Regroupment**

Before reviewing the general progress of the Briggs Plan itself, there was one aspect of operational policy which required administrative reorganisation on a massive scale; this was the problem of the squatters. Squatting, the illegal occupation of vacant land, was a common form of Chinese land acquisition in pre-Emergency Malaya. Indeed, squatting had been endemic almost from the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants. Living outside the law, they did not look for justice outside their own tight social system, or at least, felt they could not expect it from a British or Malay dominated Government. The Government, for its part, knew of the existence of the squatters and recognised the potential administrative problems they posed but saw no urgency to pursue them: they were after all, largely out of sight and a useful, even a necessary source of foodstuffs and labour. The incidence of squatting, still almost entirely confined to Chinese, rose abruptly during the depression of 1931-34 and again during the Japanese occupation. The Japanese recognised the value of the Chinese

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41 Initially they were: Civil Officer; R.G.K. (later Sir Robert) Thompson, formerly Adviser Chinese Affairs Perak, Assistant Commissioner for Labour, Perak, Member of Ferret Force, Head of Political and Intelligence Section, Internal Security Department. Army Officer; Lieutenant Colonel J.K. Shepherd, war service in North Africa and Normandy, formerly G.S.O.1 (Ops) G.H.Q. FARELF. Police Officer; Mr. D.A. Weir, Acting Superintendent of Police, a member of DALFORCE, Officer Commanding Police District Kajang, Officer in Charge of C.I.D. Selangor, Intelligence Officer; Major R.W. Saunders, had been head of Political Intelligence Centre, Middle East.

42 The first temporary Head of the Emergency Information Service Mr. Alex Josey, was replaced by Mr. Carleton Green of the B.B.C. in September 1950. Josey's appointment was not confirmed, in his view because the liberal approach he intended to employ shocked his superiors. Josey, Comments.
squatters to the M.P.A.J.A. and in May 1944 started a drive against them all the way along the jungle edge from Grik to Kuala Kubu Bahru, a distance of 190 miles. Each morning for several days they put up spotting aircraft which flew low over the area between the main road and the jungle. At the same time a cordon of trucks full of Indians and Malays were placed every fifty yards along a section of road to shoot anyone attempting to break out. Then the cordon closed in and anyone attempting to escape into the jungle was shot. Frequently, the only result achieved was to drive the young able-bodied men, who were forewarned by the conspicuous Japanese preparations into the jungle to swell the ranks of the communist guerrillas. Even after the Japanese surrender many squatters did not move back to the towns, rubber estates and tin mines from which they had come, and by 1948 they may have numbered 500,000.

When the M.C.P. began its armed revolt, great numbers of them enrolled in the Min Yuen, acting against the British as they had against the Japanese as spies, food suppliers, money lenders and propagandists. Many were armed and while they worked as rubber tappers or tin miners by day, they were insurgents by night. The need to separate the squatters from the insurgents was clearly perceived and an unsuccessful attempt made to solve the problem.

Estimates vary widely. The Report of the Newboult Committee; February 1949 (usually referred to as the Squatter Committee) stated that 'their numbers may well amount to several hundred thousand' (S.T., 9th February 1949). The round figure most commonly found in literature is 500,000 (e.g. Miller H.; The Communist Menace in Malaya, London, 1954, Chapter X.) Briggs refers to 'some 500,000 squatters' (Briggs Report, p 1.) The British Operations Research Section, Far East, states that 432,000 squatters were resettled, while the Director of Operations Review, 1948-57 states that 'Over a period of about two years, 423,000 Chinese squatters were resettled in 410 New Villages at a cost of M$41 million (Review 1948-57, p 17). The figure given in Annual Report 1952 is 461,822. As the result of field work carried out by him in 1961-62 Kernial Singh Sandhu established that a total of 573,000 persons were transferred into New Villages between 1950 and the end of the Emergency. Of these 300,000 were squatters, the vast majority Chinese. The remaining 273,000 were legitimate occupiers of the land and were also predominantly Chinese. Sandhu K.S.; Emergency Resettlement in Malaya, Journal of Tropical Geography, Singapore, 1964, pp 164-165.

These were members of the Self Protection Corps, referred to in Chapter III. For example, a plan prepared by H.Q. Malaya District in September 1948 pointed out that the insurgents could not live off the jungle and had to obtain food from sympathisers. The plan pointed to the squatters as the real problem, and dismissed the deployment and patrolling of troops as mere palliatives. H.Q. Malaya District, Local Defence Committee Minutes, 2nd December 1948.
In Operation KUKRI, which took place in the Sungei Siput area on 15th October 1943, the town itself had been cordoned by troops and the inhabitants screened. Fourteen known insurgents had been apprehended and so many more detained that the screening operation had had to be temporarily suspended for lack of space in the detention camps. The squatters had been resettled but in an unprepared site, and of the ten thousand resettled, five hundred had promptly moved back when they found that there was no law against their doing so.47

In December 1948, a committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Sir Alec Newboult, was set up to examine the squatter problem. The committee's report was submitted in February 1949; its principal recommendations were: (a) Wherever possible, squatters should be settled in areas already occupied by them; (b) Where this was not possible, they should be resettled in an alternative suitable area; (c) Any squatters refusing settlement or resettlement should be repatriated; (d) Emergency measures to deal with the security problem of certain areas should be supported by administrative measures designed permanently to reestablish the authority of the government, and (e) Legal means should be introduced to provide for the evacuation of squatters by summary process.48

Under Emergency Regulation 17D introduced in January 1949, a total of sixteen operations were launched between then and October 1949 in various localities which resulted in the uprooting and detention of 6,343 persons.49 Just after Briggs arrived, the Government stated that up to 10th March 1950, 11,683 squatters who had been detained were now 'settled' i.e. in their original areas, 4,465 had been resettled in other locations, and 2,396 on estates and mines had been regrouped.50 But the methods used in these early attempts - as demonstrated by Operation KUKRI - were haphazard and inefficient and even Government statements concerning this early process are apologetic. There were seldom specific grounds for the removal and detention of these squatters and though some compensation was paid for the removal of property, and for livestock which had to be killed, it was meagre.

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47 Q.H.R., G(Ops/SD) Branch FARELF, 31st December 1948.
48 F.L.C.M.C.P., 1950/51, pp B90-91
49 M.C.P., Terrorism, p 16.
50 ibid., p 91.
and those resettled were deprived of their homes and means of livelihood until new crops could be grown. While it was more humane than the Japanese method, any relief the squatters may have felt at simply surviving was scarcely being turned into positive support. Moreover, the Government quickly realised that detention and deportation were of little use by themselves. To carry the policy to its logical conclusion would have meant the removal of practically the whole squatter population since almost everyone was a willing or unwilling helper of the insurgents. Second, as the Chinese ports were closed by the southward advance of the Chinese Communist armies from early 1949 onwards, there was no place to send deportees. Nor was there any significant improvement in the security situation as a result of resettlement. The majority of the people removed were women, children and old men, the younger men in most cases slipping through the cordon. Indeed, the latter may even have been induced by the process to become more willing and active supporters of the insurgents.

There was also a political problem. Much of the reason for procrastination prior to the arrival of Briggs was that the Malay rulers were not prepared to see land titles given to Chinese squatters, nor were they willing to have their taxes used to create resettlement areas with electric light, schools, clinics, police stations and other amenities which were all too often lacking in the Malay villages and Kampongs. However, unless title to land was given and unless resettled squatters were allowed to live in dignity, resettlement threatened to become a cure worse than the disease. The difficulty of resolving this basic conflict in attitudes had been sufficient to delay resettlement for several years.

The squatter question was given high priority by Briggs: "During the period (May 1950 - September 1950) certain problems were becoming more and more obvious. The first was that the problem of clearing communist banditry from Malaya was similar to that of eradicating malaria from a country. Flit guns and mosquito nets in the form of military and police, though giving some very local security

51 M.C.P., Banditry, p 28. In addition to those resettled during the years 1949-52, some 26,000 including 24,000 Chinese and 2,000 Indians and Indonesians were deported.


53 Patterson G.S.; Masai Settlement Area, Mimeograph Johore Bahru, 1950, p 6. Only 10 men aged between 24-40 out of a total of 171 males of all ages were among 326 squatters moved to Masai in 1949.
if continuously maintained, effected no permanent cure. Such a permanent cure entailed the closing of all the breeding areas. In this case the breeding areas of communists were the isolated squatter areas, the unsupervised labour on estates, especially small holders' and Chinese estates without managers.  

This pointed to a dual problem. It would not be enough merely to resettle the squatters; estate and mine labour must be regrouped and concentrated so that in turn the acquiescent could be protected, and the rebellious could be controlled or caught; the economy must also continue to function. If it ceased to do so, the problem of financing operations would become acute, and the value of Malaya to the British economy - for which operations were largely being undertaken - would be compromised. Secondly, these areas were going to require a comprehensive range of facilities if they were to become viable communities, including: (a) Protection; (b) Radio communications adequate for security purposes; (c) Resettlement long huts and other buildings; (d) A reception and administrative control organisation, and (e) Intelligence agents placed among them. And, to make the plan socially effective, administration would have to follow immediately on the domination of the security forces. This would include: frequent visits by District Officers and where possible agricultural officers; the establishment of police posts in new communities and the establishment of local schools in which Malay and the simple duties of a citizen could be taught along lines acceptable to the British; dispensaries would have to be established or arrangements made for visits by travelling ones; a measure of simple propaganda including mobile cinemas would have to be introduced, and finally, a degree of village responsibility in which permanent titles to land and arrangements for cooperative marketing might act as rewards, while stoppage of trade might act as a punishment.  

Briggs also noted that where these services could not immediately be introduced the intention was to be expressed with the proviso that the better behaved areas were to be given priority. And, so that possible communal strife would be defused at the outset, improvements and facilities were to be applied equally in the Malay kampongs and in the Chinese areas.  

55 Ibid., pp 11-12.  
56 Ibid., p 12.
Eventually an entire glossary of terms was created to describe the process loosely known as Resettlement, but in general it can be subdivided into two distinct processes: (1) Relocation, which involved the removal of dispersed rural dwellers whether squatters or legitimate settlers, to prepared fortified sites often remote from their existing homes. In some cases this involved concentration and absorption of dispersed families into an existing village; in others it involved the establishment of a completely new settlement; and (2) Regroupment or regrouping, which involved the concentration and protection of estate and mine labour either within the property or close to it, with the emphasis on providing security within easy access of the community's place of work.

Relocation was both complex and expensive, requiring a high degree of organisation. The choice of sites was governed by questions of economy, communications and security. The area chosen was preferably flat with open country around it so that the insurgents were denied a covered approach to the village. For similar reasons it was inadvisable to site the village close to dominating hills or surrounding features from which the insurgents could enfilade the area with fire. Since almost all the squatters conducted their own household agriculture it was preferable for the village to be sited on good agricultural land. While theoretically each site was chosen after a thorough examination of the soils, water potential, accessibility and employment opportunities, many of the earlier resettlement schemes were mounted hurriedly and suffered from inadequate organisation and prior reconnaissance. In order to make villages easily accessible to reinforcement in case of attack, some were sited astride main roads. But as the villages were fenced and entrances guarded they interrupted normal traffic. For this reason, later villages were sited adjacent to main roads rather than astride them. Notwithstanding this, the results of one study disclosed that of the more than 500 resettlement areas established between 1950 and 1960, only six were abandoned and resettled elsewhere, mainly on security grounds.57

57 Sandhu K.S., Op.Cit., p 167. The relocation of squatters was almost entirely completed by the end of 1952, after which date only a few new villages were created in Kedah. Eighty per cent of these relocations were in western Malaya nearly half of them in Perak and Johore. According to Sandhu's figures, of the total population of these areas 86% (493,000) were Chinese, 9% (52,000) were Malay, 4% (23,000) were Indian and 1% (5,000) were mixed Siamese, Javanese and Aborigines.
To prevent the process of removal from being interfered with by the insurgents and to deter young men from escaping in advance into the jungle, it was generally conducted as an operation of war.

"From the very first hint of this new weapon against them," stated a contemporary report, "the communists had directed propaganda and terror tactics against squatter communities. They did everything possible to wreck resettlement. Their propaganda frenziedly told the squatters that resettlement was a plot to overthrow the masses movement. Their political groups tried to form cells and even protection corps among squatters before they were moved so that their work could be continued inside the settlements. In some areas they formed secret dormitories on the fringes of the jungle and tried to persuade young men always to sleep in them at night so that if the community were moved suddenly (and in many districts dominated by the communists, surprise tactics by the government were essential) they would be left out."58

Thus the government planned the removal of the squatters in fine detail. Once the new site had been selected, huts were erected and the new village was guarded by the army. Then before first light on the day of removal the squatter area was surrounded by troops who then assisted the squatters to load their families and belongings onto trucks which transported them to the new area. All crops, gardens and buildings which could not be removed were destroyed, for which the squatters received compensation. In the latter stages when the resettlement procedure had become relatively streamlined, teams of social welfare workers, nurses and doctors arrived with the troops and every man, woman and child who was willing was medically examined and sent to hospital if suffering from any disease or illness.59

Although the kindness and compassion with which most of the troops carried out resettlement has been favourably commented on by a number of writers,60 the removal process was a thoroughly demoralising experience for the squatters.61 For these isolated folk whose previous contact with the civil administration was scant, the sudden appearance of foreign troops in overwhelming strength and obviously in a hurry to have the squatters secured in the new site by nightfall of the same day, did little to reassure their spirits, particularly those who were now entirely cut off from their

58 Miller, Menace, pp 149-150.
60 For example Miller, Jungle War, p 75.
61 Robinson, Transformation, p 93.
previous source of livelihood (and in some cases, solid profit) and were forced to start afresh in entirely alien surroundings. Nor can it be claimed that resettlement was always successful in severing the links between the insurgents and the squatters. Although the squatters were screened by the police (often using informers) during the resettlement process, the inadequacy both of police methods and of Special Branch information particularly during 1950 and early 1951 resulted in some cases in a complete insurgent Branch Organisation being permitted to move into resettlement areas along with the other squatters and provided the nucleus on which a strong insurgent support organisation was later formed.  

Yet despite such loopholes in the general process, the attempts by the insurgents to interfere with resettlement on any significant scale were a complete failure. Apart from harassing some villages with fire from nearby hills, and the penetration of some areas by insurgent food gathering parties, the inability of the insurgents to effectively disrupt the process demonstrated a lack of enterprise and exposed the logistical fragility of their organisation. One insurgent document captured in Johore stated:

"If the masses are unwilling to oppose resettlement they are to be intimidated, and any of the masses trying to take refuge in the jungle (i.e. with the insurgents) as a result of our agitation should be tactfully discouraged and induced to return to their houses owing to the shortage of food in the jungle."  

And, even though the defence of the resettlement areas was, in the initial stages, rudimentary to say the least, on no occasion during the Emergency was a resettlement area overrun and captured by an insurgent group.  

Although less spectacular as an example of social engineering, Regroupment was more complex than Relocation. There were some 1,500 places of employment which required this process and in all, a total of 650,000 persons are estimated to have been regrouped. Regroupment areas were

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62 Madoc, Interview.  
63 Miller, Menace, p 152.  
64 Madoc, Interview. Miller, Jungle War, p 76.  
65 Indians were the predominant group in estate regroupments forming 50%. The remainder were Chinese (25%), Malay (16%) and Javanese (5%). This was quite dissimilar to the structure of the relocation areas where the preponderant racial group was Chinese. However, in the tin-rich Kinta Valley of Perak the Chinese were the dominant group in the mining regroupment areas where they virtually monopolised the labour, and owned many of the smaller mines.
generally small compared with new villages and on the mines in particular the effects of regroupment were not so marked. In many areas men who were both miners and small farmers had already been relocated; this was especially the case with Chinese mines. Many of the European mine owners on the other hand relocated their labour within the mining sites. At times this involved little more than the wiring in of existing living quarters and the provision of a few guards. The cost of regroupment which was borne substantially by the estate and mining companies concerned was a source of friction between the estate and mine officials and the Government and continued to vex both Briggs and General Templer. Moreover, from January 1951, the problem became increasingly urgent as more and more squatter communities were relocated and the insurgents deprived of this channel of support, they increasingly turned their attention to labourers on estates and mines. Regrouping Committees which included representatives of the planting and mining employers interests were formed to try and solve the problem. In practice it was found difficult to frame a policy which would cover all situations. For example, to avoid closer regrouping many planters preferred to engage Auxiliary Police to patrol the dispersed labour lines at their own expense whereas others felt that the Government should pay all the expenses of regrouping including the hire of Auxiliary Police. Again, the Police, due to the expansion of its regular force, drew on the Special Constabulary (formed expressly to guard estates and mines) and in some areas considerably reduced the numbers of Special Constables to the concern of the mining and planting managers. To aggravate the problem, the employment of Regular Police and Auxiliary Police doing one job under different conditions of pay, was unacceptable to the Planting and Mining Associations because of the difficulties of maintaining morale among two groups of men who were equally likely to be shot at. Finally, a firm directive was issued on 26th January 1951 which empowered Mentri Mentri Besar and Resident Commissioners to order the owners or occupiers of land to erect or maintain the requisite buildings, wire enclosures and defensive arrangements on their land. In turn, the Government accepted responsibility for a proportion of the costs.66

A parallel security measure was the relocation of isolated Malay and Aborigine settlements. The relative immunity of the Malays from infiltration by the insurgents was recognised in the resettlement program, for only some forty Malay villages were resettled, while some that seemed

physically exposed were not.67 Most of the relocation of Malays involved little or no planning and entailed the concentration of dispersed kampong dwellers closer to main roads, usually to an area where police protection was available. Those moved were paid $100 compensation.68 While the Malay resettlement areas, unlike the Chinese and Indian areas were not wired in, they did not enjoy the social amenities which became characteristic of the Chinese New Villages in their final development. Moreover, for the reasons which caused their original areas to be occupied in the first place, the attraction to return once security improved was often strong and, since the end of the Emergency, almost all the relocated Malay kamponds have gone back to their former settlements.69

One experiment which was both strategically unwise and, in human terms an appalling disaster was the resettlement of the Aborigines. There were an estimated 55,000 Aborigines in Malaya in 1950, at least half of them in the interior and to a greater or lesser extent under the control of the insurgents, who increasingly, as resettlement took hold of the squatters relied on them for supplies and information. Although five relocation settlements are known to have been established, none was successful and all were ultimately abandoned. In addition to the problems which arose from the lack of an experienced civilian staff who could understand their

67 For example, a patrol of the Royal Scots Fusiliers was surprised to find a Malay village that had been untouched though it was deep within the jungle of North Malaya. The village had not been moved because its people had a record of resisting insurgent pressure and had killed several insurgents. 'Operation Kastor', Journal of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, July 1955.
69 It is difficult to be certain of the number of New Villages which have since been abandoned. In 1954, the Government appointed Mr. W.C.S. Corry to make a general survey of New Villages. He listed a total of 439 New Villages and classified them according to their degree of permanency. He considered that 69% were 'Supposedly permanent', 18% 'Intermediate', 3% 'Unclassified' and 10% 'Supposedly impermanent and likely to disappear with the Emergency'. However, during field-work in 1962, Sandhu found that 47% of the 'Supposedly Impermanent' New Villages (i.e. 25) still existed and were likely to remain. This would leave 410 villages remaining in existence. However, the Federation Government's Weekly Digest (usually referred to by its Malayan name, Sari Berita) of 31st May 1962, stated that 400 New Villages with a population of 306,000 were still in being as permanent settlements and, 'were integrated into the rural development programme'. One inhibiting factor which decided families and communities against returning to their former areas was cost. On average it cost M$300,000 to establish a New Village for 1,000 people. Report of the Committee on the Problems Resulting from Resettlement in Kluang, Kluang 1957, p 2.
primitive culture, many of the Aborigines themselves lost the will to live in alien conditions, and literally thousands died as a result.\textsuperscript{70}

Moreover, as deep jungle operations against the insurgents became an accepted practice, it was quickly realised that the former policy of resettling Aborigines had denuded whole areas of the interior, and in the process had created intelligence vacuums. Thereafter, every effort was made to return displaced groups to their original areas or at least to the vicinity of their hereditary locations. To encourage this, and to protect loyal groups of Aborigines from a reassertion of insurgent influence, a series of jungle 'forts' were established. Each was little more than an area hacked out of the jungle at which a Police Post of platoon strength (30 men) was established, and a light aircraft strip was built. By the end of 1955, eleven forts had been established and by encouraging trade and eventually (through the Federal Adviser, and State Protectors of Aborigines) by establishing a health and education programme, it was estimated that only 500-600 Aborigines still remained firmly on the side of the insurgents, and outside the Government's influence.\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{Consequences of Resettlement}

The social consequences of resettlement can only be adumbrated here, but it is not too much to state that the process substantially changed the human geography of Malaya. For census purposes, settlements with 1,000 inhabitants or more were classed as urban; between the census of 1947 and 1957, the number of urban centres increased from 163 to 400, largely as a result of resettlement. The Chinese urban population increased by 110\% in this period compared with a 62\% increase in the period 1931-1947.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} Madoc, Interview. I cannot find a published Government source to confirm the estimate of deaths among Aborigines due to Resettlement.

\textsuperscript{71} These Jungle Forts were: LEGAP, KEMAR and SELIM in Perak; DIXON, SHEAN, TELANOH, ISKANDAR and SINDERUT in Pahang; BROOKE and CHABAI in Kelantan; and LANGKAP in Negri Sembilan. Eventually a total of 14 were established. D of O Directive No. 37 issued on 1st February 1956.

\textsuperscript{72} Del Tufo, pp 44-48, Vlieland, pp 42-48, 1957 Census pp 1-11. The Malay urban population increased by 120\% between 1947-57, compared to only 7\% between 1931-47. However, while the increase in the Malay urban population was chiefly the result of a drift to the towns, the increase among the Chinese was primarily due to Resettlement.
Relocation in a number of cases disrupted peoples means of livelihood, and many were forced to change their occupations. A sample survey in Salak South New Village in Selangor carried out in 1953, showed that two-thirds of the settlers had been forced to abandon their former agricultural occupations.\footnote{Corry Report, p 12.} For the New Villages as a whole, the percentage of agriculturalists dropped from an estimated 60% in 1950 to 27% in 1952, while the proportion of wage earners in the rubber and tin industries rose from 25% to 55%.\footnote{Sandhu; Op.Cit., p 179.}

Overall, resettlement had an appreciable effect on the national economy. In the short term the production of food crops and rice fell, and rubber production also suffered; tin production was adversely affected and, had not prices of both rubber and tin been inflated as a result of the Korean War, Malaya might have faced immense budgetary problems in 1951-2 when national expense stemming from the programme was at its height. Against this there were advantages in both the short term and the long: the easier access of the communities to main roads, and the improved security, meant that better market and credit facilities could be made available, while amenities which the rural population had not previously enjoyed were now available in all New Villages. Moreover, the concentration of previously dispersed squatters into responsible social entities permitted the growth of political sophistication within the framework determined by the Government and led ultimately to a massive increase in Federal citizenship. The squatters, in short, were substantially integrated into the new Malaya envisaged by the British and the non-Communist Malayans, while the new Malaya envisaged by the M.C.P. was deprived, for the foreseeable future, of such social basis as it had.

However, for the purpose of this study, the most important consequence of resettlement was that it provided a means of clearing the battlefield. But while it permitted the essential links between the insurgents in the jungle, and their supporters among the previously decentralised squatters and unsupervised labourers to be defined and eventually cut by the Security Forces, its success as a technique did not really become apparent until Briggs himself had left Malaya and its slow progress was inseparable from an array of parallel problems which Briggs experienced as
Director of Operations

Progress Under the Briggs Plan

Despite the optimism of Briggs' earlier statement of 21st July 1950, the plan quickly encountered difficulties which required its extensive modification.

Operations in Johore rapidly fell behind schedule, and while this was partially due to the slow pace of Resettlement, it was principally a result of the unfortunate choice of Johore as the geographical starting point for the campaign. The general problem of insecurity in Johore was aggravated by certain factors: proximity to the predominantly Chinese city of Singapore from which financial support for the insurgents came; the concentrations of Chinese in the urban areas of the state and on the rubber plantations; the special place of Johore in Malayan history as one of the earliest seats of M.C.P. strength; and, the particular suitability of certain parts of the state for guerrilla warfare i.e. the coexistence of areas of thick jungle or swamp with rubber and palm oil estates. And, although the Government spoke enthusiastically of 'one hundred square miles of bandit territory around Yong Peng in South Johore being "blitzed in combined military, police and civil operations", this optimism proved unfounded, and until 1958, this area held out against overwhelming concentrations of troops and police. Without the Government admitting it publicly, the original Briggs conception of clearing the map from south to north was, from early in 1951, quietly abandoned.

Nevertheless Briggs had placed his greatest confidence in the methodical conception of a 'steady-squeeze' process to interdict the insurgents' supply lines and he gave this idea his closest attention. First, he reviewed the tactics being employed by the Security Forces, which showed that the concept of the 'framework' was not being adhered to. Some commanders claimed perversely that the dispersion of troops which this entailed was opposed to the principle of Concentration of Force: hence they abandoned their allotted areas for long periods in order to undertake large operations and 'sweeps' elsewhere. Meanwhile, the security of the areas left unguarded was being jeopardised. To overcome this Briggs issued a tactical directive which stressed the importance of maintaining the 'framework' and of operating in small controlled units:

74 S.T.; 6th August 1950. Templer, for example, invariably referred to the area as 'bloody Yong Peng'.

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"A strong section is a match for any bandit gang especially if it uses 'Sting and disappear' tactics," stated Briggs. "Seldom do more than the first few men get the chance of fire action. Moreover, such section patrols are more controllable, adaptable, less noisy and hence less vulnerable. They are thus more mobile and capable of surprise. Their task is similar to that of big-game hunters."75

The principles contained in this directive were put into effect on 15th November 1950 and Briggs was later able to quote favourable statistics to support his contention that sticking to the 'framework' was the fundamentally sound course; but he could not command the troops and police to do so. He could only direct his intentions through the G.O.C., Malaya and the Commissioner of Police, and the executive impotence of this arrangement retarded the real effectiveness of his office. Second, to commit the Chinese population to the active support of the Government he conceived a Home Guard scheme. Some Chinese on whom the ferocity of terrorism fell, desired to help in their own defence. On the other hand they were not prepared to volunteer to join the Security Forces and deny themselves the better wages they could earn elsewhere. Briggs felt that many would welcome being ordered to help, especially in a collective form. The Home Guard was introduced, by which each village and resettlement area was to form and train a Home Guard; and once the District Officer felt convinced of its loyalty, it was to be issued a proportion of shotguns. A Headman for each village and Home Guard was to be nominated under the supervision of the District Officer. Each house in the village was to have a Tenant-in-Chief who would be responsible to the Headman for reporting the names and movements of people in his area of the village. In large towns, armed and uniformed Auxiliary Police Companies were to be formed, as well as a Home Guard for registration of the population.76

While the scheme was, in the long term, to be hailed as a considerable success in practice it suffered many changes in a short period of time. For a start, there were insufficient shotguns even for the few advanced Home Guard units and the men were armed with batons instead. With the arrival of a Civil Defence Commissioner in preparation for possible external war, the Home Guard organisation was amalgamated with Civil Defence, 75 Tactical Directive No. 1, p 3.
76 D of O, Directive No. 11 issued 11th June 1951. Briggs and his advisers also discerned the distinct psychological possibilities in harnessing the deep-seated Chinese desire to acquire power and authority in a group situation. The hierarchical organisation of the Home Guard would permit this to be put to constructive use. This aspect of the Chinese 'mind' is excellently covered in Pye, p 277 et.seq.
and Coast-watching was added as a further responsibility. Later again, Kampong Guards which in 1949 had been formed in Malay villages and armed with shotguns were also included in the Civil Defence organisation. Although the Home Guards operated under the control of the local police, they were trained and administered by a separate organisation. This excision of the Home Guard from complete police control was a major cause of friction between Briggs and the Commissioner of Police, W.N. Gray, whose dissimilar temperaments and strongly held professional views eventually caused an irreparable breach between the two men.77

Thus, while the Home Guard scheme was imaginatively conceived, it was not until Briggs had left Malaya that it became really effective. Third, while Briggs was emphatic in stressing the need for an overhaul of the intelligence service, the response was slow. Briggs had made his initial representations to Gurney in April, and a study group later known as the Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee was organised in May. In August, a Director of Intelligence was appointed. Yet not until twelve months after that in later opinion, had an adequate number of officers been engaged for the Special Branch. Nevertheless, the Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee in a report submitted on 24th October 1950, stated that:

"in spite of more than two years of Government effort and increasing military and air support, the Communist potential has increased and the organisation is now able still further to increase its activities".78

Thus, after two years of continuing effort to combat a relatively low keyed insurrection and despite the efficacy of several measures introduced by him, the position in Malaya was clearly deteriorating. On 1st November 1950, Briggs reported to the Officer Administering the Government in the following terms:

"At the present rate of progress it is my considered opinion that the morale of the population will drop to a level below the danger point and further losses occur before the plan can take effect. Without the adoption of the gravest steps being taken both by His Majesty's

77 Catling, Waller and Madoc, Interviews.

78 Between June 1948 and October 1950 the Police Force had almost doubled (from 9,000 to 16,000); there were 43,000 Special Constables where there had been none in June 1948; and, the number of Infantry Battalions had increased from 10 to 19. But in the same period the monthly figure of major insurgent inspired incidents had increased from 82 (April 1950) to 201 (October 1950) while the casualties inflicted on the insurgents by the Security Forces decreased from 73 to 61, (Appendix B).
Government and the Federation Government, I cannot hold myself responsible for preventing this".79

That such a report had to be written at all, was a grave indictment of a situation which the Governments of both Malaya and the United Kingdom had been actively concerned with since June 1948. Yet not only had the M.C.P. survived, its strength had increased.

Briggs considered the situation so serious that, accompanied by the Secretary for Defence, he flew to London and in late November put his views to the Prime Minister in a series of conferences.80 His proposals were generally accepted, and included a whole range of civil, police and military measures.

Within the civilian sector there had always been an inordinate delay in the provision for finance for the War Council and State War Executive Committees. It was now accepted that lump-sum appropriations would be made, and the tiresome process of appropriating item by item would be abandoned. Again, much time was being lost by government departments in the preparation for and proceedings of Legislative Council meetings at a time when the services of officials were urgently needed in matters directly connected with the Emergency, e.g. Resettlement. For this reason Briggs argued, greater efforts should be made to recruit officials, especially Chinese speaking officials in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, and in the meantime the leave due to officials presently serving in the Federation should be curtailed.81 Moreover, to give greater official weight to the deliberations of the Federal War Council, he asked that less frequent meetings of the Legislative Council be held, and that future meetings of the War Council be chaired by the High Commissioner himself.

There was also the continuing problem of detainees. In May

80 Ibid., p 22. These conferences were also attended by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Chiefs of Staff, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and members of Cabinet. Gurney, who was on leave in England at the time also attended.
81 For example, the Commissioner of Police, whose force was undergoing an unprecedented expansion, was on vacation leave in the United Kingdom from 26th January to 16th July 1951, a period of almost six months. It was during his absence that the controversy regarding the lack of armoured vehicles for the police (referred to subsequently) broke in the Malayan and British press. Annual Report, 1951, p 199.
1950, there were 10,500 awaiting repatriation to China and the number was increasing by 350 per month. After 1949, the Chinese authorities had been reluctant to allow such people to land, but Briggs also concluded that the British Government's tardiness in recognizing the problem was an even greater stumbling block:

"Were the Chinese community which is the main breeding place of communism, aware that to aid the communists meant deportation from Malaya, an immediate improvement in the situation would result. This is the one great request of the Malay and loyal Chinese population."32

Due to the differing circumstances in relation to security which prevailed between Singapore and the Federation, immigration and visits of students to the former had continued. Since many of the students in Briggs words 'were already contaminated with communism', he asked that such immigration be restricted. He also asked that direction of manpower be introduced with the primary aim of providing Chinese recruits for the police and, most controversial of all, he called where necessary for the imposition of collective punishment on uncooperative towns and villages.83

For Briggs, another constant source of anxiety was the Police. So serious had the deterioration in the morale and efficiency of the Police Force become, that each succeeding month had seen a disproportionately high casualty rate as the result of successful insurgent ambushes. Considerable quantities of arms were lost by the police especially rifles and sub-machine guns.84 Much of this was due to rapid expansion and lack of essential training, but there were other reasons such as the mixing of Regular Police with Special Constables previously referred to and, more significantly, the controversial decision by the Commissioner of Police not to armour police

82 Ibid., p 43.

83 Ibid., p 21. In the event, direction of manpower was only partially effective. States were given the power to direct any single male person in the Federation between 18 and 24 to serve in the police force. The fact that this was not done simultaneously in all states led to an exodus from one state to another, to Singapore, and even to China. For example, between February and December 1951, 9,648 males of call-up age entered Singapore from the Federation to escape the draft. Annual Report 1951, p 211. Collective punishment is discussed in Chapter V.

84 Up until the time that Briggs left Malaya, the police continued to lose more weapons than were captured from the insurgents. For example, in 1951 the insurgents captured 184 more weapons than they lost. Government Press Statement, 3rd January 1952.
vehicles which were consequently highly vulnerable when ambushed. Each of these factors added its quota of friction within a force already disturbed by inter racial disharmony. As Briggs had pointed out shortly after his arrival:

"The Chinese have a repugnance of joining army or police forces; nor will they volunteer at rates of pay lower than they can get in civilian life, which are far greater than those earned by the Malays. It stands to reason that a Malay Police Force is greatly handicapped in attempting to police a Chinese population." 85

Moreover, Chinese of the right quality were not in Briggs' opinion being attracted even into the more highly paid detective branch of the police, where most of the 400 Chinese were of 'poor quality'. 86 This accumulation of problems meant among other things, that the formation of forty five Police Jungle Companies as a para-military force designed to release military units for Britain's strategic commitments elsewhere had to be restricted, and by September 1951 only ten were operating. Indeed, Briggs was so concerned with the demoralised condition of the Police Force that he reported in exasperation:

"the only really stable factors in this Malayan situation at present are the Army and the Royal Air Force and upon them the main burden of maintaining the Country's security depends." 87

And, lest it be thought that as a retired professional soldier, Briggs was being unduly partisan towards the armed services, the Commissioner of Police in a report of his own admitted that:

"Police and other intelligence services have so far failed to obtain the information which is vital to success.... The efficiency of the Police Force must be raised; and in particular that of Special Branch." 88

But the army too had its problems. Although it can be claimed that the armed services in the Federation were better oriented and prepared for the tempo of Emergency operations than were some other departments, it was not until November, 1950 that Briggs was able to prevail on the C-in-C FARELF - who was the overall commander of troops in the theatre - to waive the annual two months period of general training, which was an unnecessary distraction from the more exacting if less orthodox training and conditioning

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85 In October 1951, for example, there still remained a shortfall in police officers of 51, of police lieutenants 70, and of Asian Inspectors 182. Briggs Report, p 35.
86 Ibid., p 45.
87 Ibid., p 45.
required for countering the insurgents.\textsuperscript{89}

Similar problems existed in regard to the provision of equipment of all types. Although food control had been introduced in June 1951 in an endeavour to prevent supplies reaching the insurgents, it could only really become effective when the population was thoroughly controlled and its security guaranteed. Most resettlement areas were not surrounded by wire, and their perimeters could easily be penetrated at some point by insurgent gangs operating nearby. Briggs had continually drawn attention to the lack of barbed wire for resettlement areas, but when he left Malaya, of 2,156 tons of wire ordered several months before, less than half had arrived.\textsuperscript{90} Moreover, there were sufficient tactical radio sets to fit out only ten of the forty-five Police Jungle Companies; even green clothing for troops and police was in short supply. In general, the whole problem of providing equipment for operational needs, had not significantly improved since 1949 when one acute observer of the Emergency had written derisively of Britain's 'Half Cocked War in Malaya'.\textsuperscript{91}

The Departure of Briggs

When Briggs left Malaya on 1st December 1951,\textsuperscript{92} very few of the improvements called for above had been effected. In some areas the supply of matériel had improved, but the barbed wire and floodlighting sets for the resettlement areas had not arrived and there was a shortage of 341 Armoured Vehicles for the police. The shortage of key officials continued to hamper operations especially resettlement and the development of an effective Home Guard; in addition the efficiency of the Police Force remained uncertain. In Briggs' words:

\textsuperscript{89} Briggs Report, p 46.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p 55.
\textsuperscript{91} S.T., 31st December 1951.
\textsuperscript{92} At the request of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Briggs took up his appointment in Malaya on 3rd April 1950 for a suggested minimum period of one year. At the same time he placed a maximum period on his tenure of eighteen months. He later agreed to an extension to twenty months. Briggs Report, p 3. In the latter months of his tour Briggs' health had not been good (Gray, Comments). He died in retirement in Cyprus on 27th October 1952, less than a year after leaving Malaya.
"Our main efforts must now be directed at making the Police Force capable of being the spearhead of our attack, at committing the Chinese actively to our side and at intensifying all our efforts both administrative and military to maintain the morale of the people of Malaya by increased physical and social security and by successes against the Communist cells and armed gangs. By so doing we shall finally break the Communist morale."\(^{93}\)

Although neither Briggs, nor anyone else, was aware of it at the time, the combined effects of the Briggs Plan, and the M.C.P.'s own internal doctrinal problems, had launched the insurgent organisation on an irreversible slide towards destruction. But despite this, many of the enterprises which Briggs himself had striven to achieve as Director of Operations remained embryonic. It had taken almost seven months until November 1950, before the main elements of his plan had begun to be implemented. Almost a year later, 331,000 out of a total of 573,000 people had been resettled and 315 out of a total of 439 new villages had been established. But in addition to this backlog, the problem of regrouping labour had also to be faced and was at least as formidable an enterprise.

With deep satisfaction Briggs noted that where Resettlement had taken place over fifty per cent of 'bandit' casualties were the result of information obtained from the public, as against chance encounters on the jungle fringes.\(^{94}\) Captured documents also showed that not only was resettlement tending to strangle their normal food supply lines, but insurgent attempts to impede the process had been completely frustrated.\(^{95}\) However, in Johore, where the tempo of the Emergency could not be raised to the intensity which Briggs required, the incident rate after an initial drop rose again, and the hold which the insurgents retained over their supporters both willing and unwilling, appeared to be as strong as ever.

Before Briggs arrived, there had been little or no cohesion among the representatives of government, police and armed services and while formally at least he 'took the strings that were tugging in all directions and wove them into a rope of coordination and planned action',\(^{96}\) Briggs himself was well aware that the reality was less substantial, and that a higher degree of centralised control of the Emergency was essential. For

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\(^{93}\) Briggs Report, p 38.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p 27.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., p 42.

\(^{96}\) S.T., 2nd December 1951.
example, only in areas where abundant goodwill existed among its members, was the War Executive Committee System working effectively. Elsewhere it was frequently unresponsive, and in some cases downright farcical. In an attempt to intensify operations in Johore in May 1951, Briggs temporarily modified the War Executive Committee System by appointing two Brigadiers in that state to be Deputy Directors of Operations:

"In these areas," stated Briggs, "operational needs must take priority and quick decisions must be made and acted on, which necessitate that the Committee method of control must to some extent give way to unified command."97

In view of the plenary powers which were later entrusted to General Templer, it seems surprising that this solution was not applied sooner but its possibilities were not recognised at the time either by Gurney or by the British Government. In any case, Briggs lacked the administrative authority to make the expedient function effectively, and having been employed with limited success in this single instance, it was not persisted in.

To a considerable degree Briggs was a casualty of the tardy official recognition which Malaya's special problems were accorded by the British Government of the day; a backwater status which declined almost to strategic dereliction as Britain became increasingly involved with the problems of the Korean War. It is difficult to estimate how much greater Briggs' contribution might have been had Gurney asked for a Director of Operations two years earlier. As it was he was denied the real executive power which the nature of his office demanded.

After Gurney's murder, and less than two months before he himself left Malaya, Briggs wrote finally to the Officer Administering the Government on the subject of executive responsibility. His powers at that time were: (1) to coordinate the operations of the Services, the Police and - subject to the High Commissioner's directions - the Administration towards the Emergency; (2) to decide the general tactical policy, and (3) to plan new measures requiring the agreement of the War Council.98 In each case the professional head had the right of appeal and under no circumstances did Briggs possess powers over domestic issues within a force, even when they interfered with the effective prosecution of the Emergency. In the case of the Police Force in particular this became an onerous restriction:

97 Briggs Report, p 63.
98 Ibid., p 69.
"There are certain matters of Police policy, organisation and training," stated Briggs, "in which I consider a major change necessary and without which I can see little hope of improved efficiency in the Police as a whole. Discussion and written representations have had no effect so far and it raises the question of whether the Director of Operations can hold himself responsible unless such changes are made."\textsuperscript{99}

The solution which Briggs advocated was that the Director of Operations should be in the High Commissioner's complete confidence and have delegated to him executive powers over the Defence Branch, and all local forces including the police; in addition a combined planning staff should exist for Emergency as well as defence matters. Such proposals seem unexceptionable in retrospect, yet it was to require the vastly increased authority of Briggs' successor General Templer, before they were implemented really effectively.

\textsuperscript{99} Increased powers were granted belatedly to Briggs during the week before he left Malaya. This is discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V

THE IMPACT OF TEMPLER

A few minutes before 1 o'clock on the afternoon of 6th October 1951, Sir Henry Gurney was ambushed and killed as he motored up the road to Fraser's Hill, a hill resort sixty miles from Kuala Lumpur.

The ambush party, 38 men of an independent platoon of the M.R.L.A., led by Siu Mah, had been in position for almost two days before Gurney's Rolls Royce, preceded by an escort of five policemen in an unarmoured Land Rover, came into view. When the ambush was sprung, the Land Rover and its occupants were quickly put out of action. The insurgents then concentrated their fire on the Rolls Royce. It swung to a halt, its tyres burst by bullets. In the midst of the firing Sir Henry Gurney got out, closed the door, and calmly began to walk towards the high bank on which the ambush party was established; he was killed before he reached it. In the car, which had been penetrated many times, Lady Gurney, the High Commissioner's private secretary and the driver, remained unwounded. Gurney had diverted the fire onto himself to save the others.

Yet despite the nobility of his final action, Gurney's death was unnecessary, and it was accompanied by a succession of tragic ironies symptomatic of a losing cause. The ambush had been set up, not to kill Gurney—but to capture weapons and ammunition from a police convoy which regularly used this road. Gurney, moreover, disliked large escorts, and what he had, had been mismanaged. When the only armoured vehicle, a Scout Car, had stalled further down the road, he went on without it, and it was still 700 yards back when the ambush took place. Thus, the escort was sufficient only to attract attention not to be effective. Furthermore, the Royal West Kent Regiment, in whose operational area the ambush took place, had not been informed of Gurney's journey.

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1 Siu Mah had commanded the attack on Batu Arang, Malaya's only coal-mine, on 12th July 1948. S.T., 14th July 1948; and Madoc, Interview.
2 The road to Fraser's Hill was ambush prone and was officially classified 'Red' (dangerous). Police, Army and V.I.P.'s who had to use it were under orders to travel in convoy or under heavy escort. Miller, Jungle War, p 77.
3 Blaxland, Regiments, p 97.
At other times and in other places High Commissioners, like royalty, had been blown up or shot down, and although one statement asserted that this event 'sent a wave of shock through the country, jolting the people in the cities out of their apathy', its effect within Malaya itself was almost entirely negative. For a start it came after three years of consistent and public underestimation of the strength of the insurrection. And, seen in relation to contemporary events, and even allowing for the cautious respect in which Gurney was held by most communities, his death had more the characteristics of an incipient debacle rather than of an immediate disaster. Politically, it coincided with premonitions of racial strife. On 16th September, Dato Onn bin Ja' afar, President of the United Malay Nationalist Organisation (U.M.N.O.), had launched a new party, the Independence of Malaya Party (I.M.P.), on a basic platform of equality for all races. Although the party gained scant support in the ensuing months, the strength of Dato Onn's prestige threatened to cause a disastrous split among the Malays. Almost simultaneously, Dato Onn was himself deposed from the Presidency of his former party, and the new leadership, taking its stand on the basis of aggressive communalism, resurrected the old 1946 slogan, 'Malaya for the Malays'. Strategically, the Briggs Plan seemed to be in ruins. Many squatters had been resettled but seemed either indifferent to their own security or sullenly hostile. The Mawai Resettlement area in Johore, the first to be formally established, had to be abandoned on 19th October, because in its present situation it could not be defended. And then, on 22nd October, not 30 miles from the scene of Gurney's death, a platoon of the Royal West Kent Regiment lost sixteen men killed and as many wounded in the worst vehicle ambush of the Emergency.

4 Clutterbuck, Long War, p 79. In my opinion based on interviews with Madoc, C.C. Too and Waller this effect was evanescent. It is significant that in an editorial of 20th February 1952 the Straits Times noted: 'The murder of Sir Henry Gurney loosed against the communists an anger and a bitterness which could have been directed into effective assault. That opportunity was lost. The visit of the Secretary of State revived hope of immediate more vigorous direction of the war, but Mr. Oliver Lyttleton left Malaya in mid-December, and impatient weeks passed before General Templer's appointment was announced. It is plain that many of the decisions which must be taken, and which we have known for months must be taken, were left to await the new High Commissioner's arrival.'

5 Political Report October 1951, p 2.

6 S.T., 1st November 1951.

7 M.C.P., Terrorism, p 144.
At the end of November, Briggs left Malaya for retirement in Cyprus, broken in health and dissatisfied with the powers he had been given as Director of Operations. The Director of Intelligence, Sir William Jenkin resigned, the result of personal differences with the Commissioner of Police, Gray. Finally, in early January of the following year, Gray himself resigned.

One writer has contended that since the insurgent menace had already been broken by Briggs, this was the best of times. It was the worst of times. Or certainly it seemed so to Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the new Conservative Government, who arrived in Malaya on a tour of inspection on 2nd December 1951:

"I had never seen such a tangle as that presented by the Government of Malaya.... There was divided and often opposed control at the top. Civil affairs rested in the hands of the O.A.G. (Officer Administering the Government), military and para-military in those of Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs. The two authorities were apparently co-equal, neither could over-rule the other outside his own sphere. But what was each sphere? The frontiers between their responsibilities had not been clearly defined, indeed they were indefinable because no line could be drawn to show where politics, civil administration or police action, administration of justice and the like end, and where para-military or military operations begin. The civil administration moved at a leisurely peacetime pace .... The police itself was divided by a great schism between the Commissioner of Police and the Head of Special Branch. Intelligence was scanty and uncoordinated between the military and the civil authorities. Our weapons were not fitted to the task; there was a serious shortage of armoured or protected cars .... Collaboration between the Chinese in Malaya and the communists was widespread. Protection money was known to be paid, and some unmistakable signs could be seen. For example, no oil tankers or filling stations were attacked, not because the oil companies paid protection money, but because the drivers and agents were well paid and protected themselves".

At the end of his tour however, Lyttleton had decided what must be done and he marshalled his recommendations under six headings: The first was overall direction of forces military and civil. 'I was determined,' he

8 In fact revised powers were granted to Briggs and had been published in D of O Directive No. 18 issued on 27th November 1951, a few days before Briggs left Malaya. The crucial clause concerning his powers as D of O now stated: 'His Excellency the High Commissioner has now delegated to the Director of Operations his policy powers on Emergency matters which come within the sphere of the Defence Branch. This includes the Police and the Local (Armed) Forces.'


10 Lyttleton, Memoirs; pp 366-367.

11 The Times; 12th December 1951.
said, 'that there must be one man in charge of both military affairs and that he would have to be a general.... I judged that he must be supported by a civilian Deputy High Commissioner to take some of the political and administrative weight off his shoulders.' Next, reorganisation of the police force was urgent, and a much higher standard of training of the Special Constabulary. Third, education had to be widened: too many Malayans had only a vague idea of what they were fighting for; and education would help to win the war of ideas. Better protection for the resettlement areas needed to be achieved quickly, and the Home Guard to be put on a more solid footing. Finally, the best men must be recruited in England and Malaya for the Administration whose terms of service would be reviewed.

The Appointment of Templer

Lyttleton has never stated publicly why he considered a soldier was the only choice. But if one can be excused an example from French colonial history, he obviously needed a man like Gallieni or Lyautey - capable of controlling a whole politico-military situation in all its complexity; a man with a disregard for red tape and a will to attain one goal - effective action. After his recent trip to Malaya, he also wanted a man who would put a soldier's pragmatic optimism in place of the disillusionment and exasperation of his predecessor. But which soldier? Lyttleton's first choice was General Sir Brian Robertson, once Alexander's Chief of Staff in Italy, now C-in-C British Forces in the Middle East; but Robertson declined. Next was Field Marshal Slim, just completing his tour as C.I.G.S., but Slim considered that he was 'too old to go flipping around in an Auster aircraft in the trying climate of Malaya'. When, as chance would have it, Lyttleton reported to Prime Minister Churchill on the same day as Field Marshal Montgomery had been invited to lunch, there was immediate press speculation that Montgomery would be asked. The following day, the Colonial Secretary received a letter from the Field Marshal; it read:

Dear Lyttleton,

Malaya: we must have a plan.
Second, we must have a man. When we have a plan, and a man, we shall succeed.
Not otherwise.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Montgomery, Field Marshal.

12 Lyttleton; Op.Cit., p 373
13 Ibid., pp 379-380.
Lyttleton commented wryly, 'I may, perhaps without undue conceit, say that this had occurred to me'. But he appeared to be no closer to his goal, and in Malaya things were getting worse. Moreover, to add to Lyttleton's anxieties, the Commissioner-General for South East Asia, Mr. Malcolm Macdonald informed him that he could not be held responsible for the safety of Malaya if there was further delay in the appointment of a High Commissioner, and above all if a general was appointed, with all the implications of military dictatorship which that implied.

However, by 15th January 1952, Lyttleton's catharsis was over and he announced that General Sir Gerald Templer had been appointed High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya, with full responsibility for all military and police operations as well as civil affairs. Lyttleton emphasized the political as well as the military importance of the post and reaffirmed that the Government's aim was a united Malaya with self government.

Except to soldiers and ex-soldiers, Templer was not generally well known. Born in 1898, he was educated at Wellington and Sandhurst. In 1916 he was commissioned into the Royal Irish Fusiliers and served with them in Persia and Mesopotamia. He began to make his military reputation as a Company Commander during the Arab rebellions in Palestine, winning a D.S.O. in 1935, and a Bar to it in the following year. At the outbreak of World War II he was Deputy Director of Intelligence at Lord Gort's Headquarters. After Dunkirk he became Brigadier General Staff under General Montgomery, then commanding 12th Corps, and was thenceforward one of Montgomery's most fervent admirers. In 1942, at the age of 46, he became the youngest Corps Commander in the British Army, but relinquished that rank in order to command the 56th Infantry Division in Italy. It was this division which was largely responsible for holding the Anzio beachhead against such heavy odds that no

14 Ibid., p 379.
15 Ibid., p 380.
16 The Times; 16th January 1952. In my own interview with Templer he pointed out how strongly Sir Winston Churchill, the then Prime Minister felt about Malaya. Once before when he had been Prime Minister (in 1942) Malaya had been lost. Following that experience he had conferred abnormal powers upon Vice-Admiral Laycock as Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon. (see Woodburn-Kirby S. The War Against Japan Vol. II, London 1961 p 108). By appointing Templer to Malaya, Churchill was acting in the same tradition, the only difference being that Britain was now officially at peace.
less than five German divisions were identified opposite its position. He was then given command of the 6th Armoured Division. After the fall of Monte Cassino, he was injured when an army truck ran over a land-mine close to the jeep in which he was travelling. The looted contents of the truck fell on top of him; with a damaged spine and encased in plaster, Templer was evacuated to England. 'I was,' he said later, 'the only Major General to be hit by a grand piano.' After convalescing, he worked in the War Office, until becoming Director of Military Government, 21st Army Group, under Montgomery in Germany in 1945. In retrospect, he regarded this as invaluable experience for his work in Malaya. He also gave advanced warning of his firmness of purpose of sacking Dr. Conrad Adenauer, then Burgomaster of Cologne for inefficiency. In 1946 he returned to the War Office as Director of Military Intelligence, which he again found to be valuable experience for Malaya, and remained in that appointment until he became Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1948. He was made General Officer Commanding Eastern Command in 1950, and was still holding that appointment when he was suddenly called to Ottawa to see Prime Minister Churchill and told of his appointment to Malaya.

As Macdonald's misgivings had already anticipated, the appointment aroused controversy:

"The man who is gambling high in this situation is not so much General Templer as Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, the Colonial Secretary who appointed him. To place a soldier in supreme charge of such delicate and complex political problems as those of Malaya today is unprecedented in modern British colonial administration." In Malaya the Straits Times said it would have preferred a Civil appointment, and warned Templer that he would find morale difficult to restore after a long mishandling of the Emergency. But perhaps the most prescient comment, in view of the outcome, came not from a journalist but from a military historian, Captain Cyril Falls who had served in Malaya, and also under

18 Templer, Interview.
19 Ibid.
20 A published account of the meeting between Templer and Churchill at the residence of the Governor General of Canada, Lord Alexander, is contained in Alex: The Life of Field Marshal Alexander of Tunis by Nigel Nicolson London 1973 pp 301-302.
21 The Observer; 20th January 1952.
22 S.T., 16th January 1952.
Templer:

"There is no doubt about the energy or about the flair, or about the administrative ability," he said in relation to Templer, "He is determined, quick minded and wary. I believe he has a way of getting to the heart of his problems and he has a great capacity for business.... I am not suggesting for a moment that he is a paragon of all the virtues and I will make no prophecies about how he gets on. I will say only that if I, with such knowledge as I have of the senior officers of the British Army, had been looking for a man for the post of High Commissioner in its new form, I believe his name is the first on which my eye would have fallen".23

Templer's Methods

Templer's first reported statements in Malaya were not altogether auspicious. After saying that there was no clear cut solution to Malaya's special problems - as most people would have agreed - his second reported sentence that he was certain that with the support of the entire population, 'he could lick the Emergency in three months', while accurate enough, presupposed a condition which did not exist. However, in practically his next assertion he showed a clear appreciation of the fundamentals of the situation:

"The Emergency," he said, "will not be won by military means alone.... The most important men in government are the District Officers and the District Police Officers".24

This remark illustrates his crucial awareness of the duality of both his own situation and the struggle in which he was about to engage. He had been appointed as a soldier to have supreme command over civil and military powers in a time of crisis, and his temperament was for vigorous action. The situation had deteriorated further during the four months since Gurney's death. The delay in replacing him had added to uncertainties; the flow of intelligence was diminishing (after all, if the High Commissioner himself could not be protected, what chance was there for a Chinese rubber tapper in a raw New Village?); the March casualty figures were to show the lowest number of insurgents eliminated for a year (83), the worst Security Force casualties for five months (105) and comparably bad civilian casualties (81).25 All the apparent advantages lay in by-passing the entrenched constitutional powers of the nine states under what was, after all,

23 S.T., 4th February 1952.
24 S.T., 8th February 1952.
25 Appendix B.
a Federation made only yesterday, and replacing the carefully measured
tread of government and law with the impatient stamp of the military. Or at
least, in concentrating his attention on the trade he knew best. Some
critics indeed were to accuse him precisely of a dangerously military approach.

Like Briggs however he had grasped firmly that he was engaged
in a contest for government with the M.C.P. and that the war would be lost if
it were left to the soldiers and the police. Vast areas of the public had to
be won over to support the civil government, and a new political order,
viable in the long term, had to be established in a divided community. While
energising military operations therefore, he could not allow social and
political progress to languish or the military effort itself would come to
nothing. Within days of his arrival he issued a circular to government
officials which read:

"Any idea that the business of normal civil Government and the
business of the Emergency are two separate entities must be killed
for good and all. The two activities are completely and utterly
interrelated."

The fact that this statement came as a shock to government officials is
adequate comment on the way the Emergency was run before Templer. He then
gave executive expression to this policy by merging both the Federal War
Council and the Executive Council into one policy making body:

"I said a moment ago," he stated in his inaugural address to the Federal
Legislative Council, "that it was impossible to divorce the Emergency
element of Government from the normal peace-time process. We can have
only one policy making body in the Federation today."

Moreover, it is significant that in that same speech, he devoted the bulk of
his attention to matters of nation building, rather than purely to the
Emergency.

26 Government Circular No. 1, quoted in D o D Directive No. 22, issued
27th May 1952 p 108.

27 Templer found on his arrival in Malaya, that almost without exception, the
senior members of the Malayan Civil Service saw the difficulties in a new
idea before they detected its obvious possibilities. This pessimism
intruded into every aspect of administration. These negative attitudes
were personified in his view in the Chief Secretary Mr. Del Tufo whose
retirement was pending in any case. He would have been unlikely to last
under Templer. Templer, Interview.

28 S.T., 20th March 1952.

29 Ibid., Templer covered the following: War Council, Citizenship, Police,
Armed Forces, Health, Education, Land Tenure, Youth Movements, Information
Services, Local Government, Food Production, Finance, National Service
Bill.
A renovation of the means by which decisions were reached and implemented was long overdue, and had already been requested by Briggs. In order to make the chain of command responsibility completely clear, Templer issued an Emergency Directive which set out the duties of key members of government and of his own staff. This was essential for several reasons. First, Templer's Directive from the British Government laid down that he would 'assume complete operational command over all armed forces assigned to operations in the Federation', and that he would be empowered to issue operational orders to their commanders without reference to the Commanders-in-Chief, Far East.\(^{30}\) In other words, Briggs'-successor as Director of Operations General Lockhart, was now without a job. Templer's formal answer was to appoint Lockhart to be the Deputy Director of Operations (D.D.O.), (Fig. 10):

**FIGURE 10**

OUTLINE ORGANISATION OF THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS STAFF

(Based on DofO Directive No.22 issued 27th May 1952—Appendix D)

His Excellency the High Commissioner -
Director of Operations (D of O)

Deputy Director of Operations (D.D.O.)

Heads of Armed Services, Police and Home Guard.

Director of Intelligence (D of I)

Head of the Emergency Information Service

Planning Office (Army, Civil, and Police)

Coordination and Liaison Office.

Staff Officer - Civil Army

Staff Officer - Civil Police

Operations Research Office (Operational, Technical, Tactical and Scientific research)

Lockhart's real function was now to act as a Chief of Staff, to draw together the separate and detailed strands of Security Force action which had so often failed in the past, in many cases because officers were unaware of the way the machinery was meant to work, and even in what direction

\(^{30}\) Appendix D.
correspondence was meant to be channelled. Second, in addition to the responsibilities which were to be assumed by the D.D.O. and the other officers mentioned above, Templer laid down in detail the responsibilities of both the Secretary for Defence, and the Federal Chief Secretary which had never been published before. Indeed, the confusion which Briggs had reported had already been exemplified in the case of the Mawai Resettlement Area — previously referred to — where clearly, the real problem sprang from the tentative assumption of responsibility by separate Federal and State authorities. Templer solved this problem in characteristic fashion by making one official, the Chief Secretary, personally responsible for the coordination of all measures concerning the development and welfare of New Villages. Furthermore, to make sure that the concept of jointness was translated into practice, he concentrated his executive staffs into a new operational headquarters at Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur. The same group of buildings housed the D.D.O., the Secretary for Defence, the Federal Commissioner of Police, the Director of Intelligence and the staffs both operational and intelligence, of the Army, Navy and R.A.F. From this point onwards these staffs operated in all respects as a Joint Emergency Headquarters and the single service thinking which had stigmatized the previous period was abolished. Finally, while he was responsible for every aspect of Government, Templer’s intention was to spend little time in Kuala Lumpur, but to keep his judgement sharp and realistic by visiting the firing line: the New Villages, the police posts, the infantry battalions, the S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s. To achieve this he left much of the day to day administration to his two deputies, Sir Donald MacGillivray, the Deputy High Commissioner on the government side and General Lockhart on the military. And, although these two channels of executive responsibility gradually changed their composition and their titles as the country advanced through self government to independence, they retained essentially the same functions until the Emergency was over. Moreover, like Montgomery, Templer made great use of Liaison Staff Officers — all at the Major (GS011) level — with each representing the chief operational branches; Civil, Army and Police. These three officers like Templer himself,

31 When Lockhart left Malaya in early 1953 the appointment of D.D.O. was abolished and in its place was substituted the Principal Staff Officer to the Director of Operations which more accurately designated the nature of the appointment. Templer, Interview.
33 See ringed organisation, Figure 10.
travelled frequently, and when they visited operational areas, S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s, they did so as a team which mirrored exactly the composition of the War Executive Committees themselves. They were thus able to make decisions or accept action on the Director of Operations' behalf on any problem from resettlement and food denial to troop reinforcements and air support.

It was in his constant touring round his territory that Templer's restless energy was most publicly displayed. In his first year, roughly one tour a week, and he travelled as no other High Commissioner either before or since. When he was in Kota Bharu in July 1953, the Straits Times commented that he was on his 70th tour through the Federation and being escorted for the 42nd time by the 14/18th Royal Hussars. He visited each of the 439 New Villages at least once and most of them more than once. In a country where the higher executives in the central administration seldom ventured into the field and where, because of the generous leave provisions, only two-thirds of the British members of the Malayan Civil Service were present for duty at any given time, his 'visitations' became a legend. He himself probed - in army units where he spoke especially to platoon commanders, in districts where the leaders of communities were his targets, in estates where he exchanged views with planters. He made no promises he could not keep. He was ruthless with British civil servants and army officers who he considered had failed in their duties: they were sent back to England on the next boat or aircraft. He sent congratulatory telegrams to army units which had made notable 'kills', and 'rockets' to units which he considered were not pulling their weight. In all this, Templer was elevating the prosecution of the Emergency into an upper register of achievement. For too long in his opinion, events in Malaya had been allowed to drift; a fact which he had already detected before coming to Malaya from his vantage point as Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

On almost all his visits, Templer took with him his Military Assistant, Major David Lloyd-Owen, an experienced infantry officer with a brain as sharp as his own. It was Lloyd-Owen's special task to note verbal directives given on the spot and to check that the necessary action was taken locally or in Kuala Lumpur. After each tour, Templer invariably had questions which he wanted investigated by one or other government department. To ensure rapid action he had minutes typed entirely in red, on impressive red-embossed King's House stationery. The minute demanded a reply in a certain time. To
an experienced administrator, a stylised minute might seem unnecessary, but in Malaya as Lyttleton had noted, the languid pace of government business was one of the basic problems. As an example, Templer found that no common tactical doctrine existed in Malaya for troops and police, and seeing a need, acted. It is not possible to reproduce a facsimile of the 'Red Minute' which he wrote on the matter, but the text read as follows:

MINUTE BY H.E. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

1. As you know I am not entirely happy in my mind as to whether the best jungle tactics are practised both by army units and by the Police in this country.

2. As I understand the matter each Army unit arriving in the country is put through a course at the FTC (Federation Training Centre). In that school they are taught certain drills, but what those drills are I do not know and presumably there is no reason why I should. I realise that these drills must be adapted to local conditions in various parts of the country, but it does seem to me that there should be certain fixed principles which must be adhered to everywhere by all units. It also seems to me that the basic drills ought to be laid down in a printed pamphlet which is given to and absorbed by all officer and NCO re-inforcements to units in this country. Whether this is so or not I do not know.

3. Again, whether there is any system of sucking the brains of Commanding Officers of units who have had more experience and better success than others, such as 1st Suffolks, I do not know.

4. As regards the Police, I have been unable to find out what the system of battle drills is. Basically, I should have thought they should have been the same as the Army drills, though naturally some modifications will be necessary owing to variations in armaments etc.

5. I enclose a copy of the drills used by 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards and the drills produced for Jungle Companies. These are only two bits of paper on the subject that I have been able to get hold of.

6. The F.T.C. is, I think, under G.H.Q. FARELF. Is the teaching there directly influenced by G.O.C. MALAYA?

7. I would be grateful if after you have discussed it with General Urquhart you would let me know the form.

This particular 'Red Minute' was addressed to the D.D.O; it demanded an answer within 3 days, and got it. Templer sent the minute in May; by July, an operational and training booklet entitled 'The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya' had been prepared, and over 6,000 copies distributed to army and police units. Templer did not write the booklet, but his

34 Duplicate of original in my own possession.
35 ATOM, July 1952.
alertness had prompted its urgent publication. Under the Briggs Plan, units of army and police were moved from state to state to undertake Striking Force operations. When they did so they tapped in to the local framework of S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s for coordination and direction. This movement of units was constant, and it was vital that all groups were thoroughly conversant with each others practices. If they were not, they became not only a hazard to each other, but they were also likely to commit basic tactical errors. By laying down a systematic and uniform series of battle drills, not only were units already in Malaya able to function more efficiently, but also those which were continually arriving in the country could be made battle worthy more quickly and the agonising process of adjustment which, for example had afflicted the Scots Guards (Chapter II) was largely overcome. The green covered ATOM pamphlet, twice revised during the Emergency, became the tactical 'bible' for the Security Forces, and has remained the basis of British Commonwealth doctrine for counter revolutionary operations ever since.

Revitalizing the Briggs Plan

Shortly after his arrival Templer had endorsed the Briggs Plan as the operational prescription on which he intended to base his future plans and had reemphasised its main features. In theory, both the S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s had very wide powers. They ordered police and military operations, controlled food supplies, and set curfews. They also maintained liaison among local agencies of government, which meant that the civil administrator could restrain the Security Forces from any proposed action likely to cause more ill will among the people than casualties among the insurgents, while the Security Forces could point out to the civil authorities the military implications of proposed local regulations. But many S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s had become ineffective. For example, in a report of October 1951, Briggs had noted that there was duplication of effort by his own small staff and that of the Secretary for Defence, even though both were already overworked. Moreover, the several Armed Services and agencies were issuing separate and uncoordinated instructions to their representatives on the S.W.E.C.s, causing delay and confusion. The practice, both before and after Templer's arrival, has been described by Brigadier Henniker, who was the Army member of the Negri Sembilan S.W.E.C:

"We as a state committee would often send decisions for action to the lower, or District, Committees; but they, having got them would argue

36 This occurred, for example, in the case of the ambush of the Royal West Kents' convoy previously referred to.
They argued the toss for three reasons. First, it was not always practicable to do as they had been told by us. We might perhaps have told them to put two wire fences round a new village. When they came to try it they found the land was privately owned and planted with rubber. By acquiring it compulsorily they would bankrupt two or three small holders. So they sent the problem back to us to think again. Another reason for their non-compliance was that they resented interference by those whom they regarded (with some justification) as bungling bureaucrats in the stratosphere.

The final reason was that until General Templer's arrival, although the District Committee members were individually the subordinates of our State Committee, they felt no collective loyalty to us. From the nature of things it was clear to them that our decisions could not have been unanimous. The factors that had divided us divided them also. By each referring back to his own superior he could ensure delay before anything was done....the machinery was right enough, it was the spirit that was wrong. General Templer soon put that right".37

Templer's approach was both simple and pragmatic. Decisions, whether by himself, by his own staff acting in his name, or by any of the War Executive Committees to subordinates, were to be accepted as 'executive orders' to be acted on immediately, and not as a basis for further discussion. Where necessary Templer made available a member of his own staff to assist a S.W.E.C. that was in difficulties. But decisions had to be taken, and effective action had to follow. Like so many of Briggs' other imaginative measures, the War Executive Committees were made to function effectively by Templer.

Greater protection of the resettlement areas had been one of Briggs concerns and one of Lyttleton's six points for defeating the insurgents. In a directive published on 23rd May 1952, Templer outlined how this would be done.38 Previously the defences of most New Villages had been rudimentary. Now with better means including, chain link fences, electric generating plants, and the copious supplies of barbed wire and defence stores which had been denied to Briggs, Templer was able to consummate the programme. However, even when the defences had been improved and some of the social amenities such as electricity, schools and medical centres had been established, the development of many New Villages tended to stagnate. Templer found the solution in three measures: the establishment of elected Local Councils, the use of Operation GINGER; and the overhauling and arming of the Home Guard.

As part of Briggs' initial programme Village Committees had been elected, but they had no financial authority, and existed only to advise

the District Officer. By the Local Councils Ordinance of August 1952, new elections were held and the resultant Councils were established as statutory authorities. The Councils collected rates and licence fees and assisted by Government supplements, became the central government's agents for specific facilities such as dispensaries, schools and community halls. The first Village Councils under the new dispensation were elected in May 1952 and by May 1954, 209 Chinese New Villages had them. Templer in other words was establishing political consciousness at the 'grass roots' level, where it counted. Further to develop this consciousness the Government established the Civics Course. Between May 1952 and Templer's departure in 1954 over 130 were held. In each course, members of the different communities spent a week together, observing the process of government at first hand.

Operation GINGER was intended to apply administrative dynamite where it was most needed. Where a village showed signs of going 'bad', it was visited by a team comprised of army, police and administrative specialists (e.g. from the Departments of Labour, Social Welfare or Education) whose aim depended on what the specific problems were. A mobile dispensary van usually accompanied the team and a loudspeaker van provided suitable propaganda. The emphasis was on self-help. However, while Operation GINGER was a palliative, a more enduring contribution to local development and security was achieved by upgrading the Home Guard.


40 The Local Council Ordinance actually came into effect in August 1952. Templer's Speech, 18th March 1953. The rate at which Local Councils were established depended very much on the impetus which State Governments gave to them. Johore, one of the best states in this regard sent an officer to the U.K. for a three month course of training in electoral practice to prepare for this. But here, as with many economic matters Templer's programmes were inhibited by the more conservative State Rulers. Thompson, Interview.

41 They visited Government Departments in Kuala Lumpur, talked with senior civil servants, heard lectures and saw demonstrations of military power in the form of artillery shoots and aircraft fly passes. In 1953 alone, some 3,600 students attended Civics Courses. Of these students, 1,700 were Malays, 1,400 Chinese and 500 Indians. They included among others, 340 Indian labourers, 300 Malay headmen, 670 Village Councillors and more than 500 school teachers. Annual Report 1953, pp 317-318.

42 Templer referred to Operation GINGER as 'the swift and sudden application of administrative action in certain areas, applied either to bring a bad community to its senses or still further to encourage a good one.' Templer's Speech, 18th March 1953. It was essentially a movement to forge a further link in the chain of the Government's communication with the people.
When the question had been raised earlier, 'Could the Chinese population be trusted with arms?' both Briggs and Gray had replied initially with a qualified negative. Consequently, when the first Chinese Home Guards were recruited, their members were equipped with batons and blue and white arm-bands, and were employed as wardens. Little use was made of them for either defence or food control. In October 1951, a new concept was implemented. Operational readiness was to be achieved in three phases; in Phase 1, Home Guards would continue as they were; in Phase II, they would report to their local Police Stations for patrol duty and carry shotguns while so employed; finally in Phase III, once individual Home Guards had been thoroughly screened by the police, they were trusted to have shotguns in their homes for immediate action against infiltrators and for the defence of the sector of the village perimeter nearest their houses. After examining the progress of this scheme Templer, against strong opposition from the Malay sultans, decided that where they were ready to do so the Home Guard would take over village security from the police, and the more advanced would be formed into sub-units to operate in an aggressive role against the insurgents. Thus, the Home Guard was split into two groups. Static Guards had weapons for one-third of their strength and until they had reached Stage III, continued to be integrated with the police. The Operational Home Guard was divided into twelve man sections, similar to those of the infantry, for use where the Security Forces were few. All were volunteers; not liable for active service for more than seventy-two days in any year, nor for more than forty-eight consecutive hours at a time. In practice, they were frequently attached to army units for service in their home areas where their local knowledge was invaluable.

By 1954, 150 New Villages had become fully responsible for their own security. No weapons were lost to the insurgents, and they repelled every attack, eliminating twenty-one insurgents in the process. In the less advanced units, only three cases of treachery occurred, and these accounted for thirty of the forty-four weapons which the Home Guard lost in 1954.

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43 Madoc, Interview.


45 The process of upgrading the Home Guard was accelerated by further factors: (1) Templer placed it under an Inspector General, Major General E.B. de Fonblanque (ret); and (2) its shooting and general efficiency was assisted by the use of Army Training Teams which toured the country to instruct and train its members. Review 1954, p 23.
Templer's judgement was also vindicated by two other Chinese organisations: the Kinta Valley Home Guard; and the Special Operations Volunteer Force (S.O.V.F.). The Kinta Valley Home Guard was established in May 1952, as an entirely Chinese force for the protection of the local tin mines and dredges. While its operations were never spectacular, it was largely responsible for the greatly improved security in the area, and the rise in tin production. By May 1954, when Templer left, it had lost only nine weapons to the insurgents in two years.

The S.O.V.F. consisted of surrendered or captured insurgents (S.E.P.s and C.E.P.s) who had volunteered to serve against their former friends. By May 1954, some 300 of them had been formed into twelve platoons of 25 men, each commanded by a Police Lieutenant. Since being formed in July 1953, they had eliminated 12 insurgents, and had been particularly useful for intelligence purposes concerning the habits of the insurgents.46

Another area in which Templer wrought an instant revolution was in forming multi-racial units for the future Federation Army. When he arrived in Malaya, the indigenous forces consisted of five battalions (a sixth was soon to be raised) of the Malay Regiment, confined exclusively to ethnic Malays. Mindful of his Directive from the British Government, and in particular the opening sentence which stated that 'The policy of His Majesty's Government in Great Britain is that Malaya in due course should become a fully self-governing nation',47 Templer, on 17th November 1952, wrote to the Colonial Secretary;

"I am convinced that an essential pre-requisite to the grant of independence to Malaya is the formation of an adequate Malayan army to support the civil authority, and the foundations of that army cannot be laid too soon.... It must be a balanced force and it must be composed of men of all races who have made Malaya their home".48

He proposed that by the end of 1955, the indigenous forces would comprise nine battalions of the Malay Regiment, three battalions of the Federation Regiment, one Armoured Car Regiment (H.Q. and three squadrons), one Signal Squadron and one Squadron Field Engineers. With the exception of the Malay Regiment, all were to be open to British subjects and Federal citizens. To meet the initial capital costs, he asked the British Government for a grant-in-aid of £8 million (stg) to be spread over two years.

46 Templer, Press Conference 26th May 1954.
47 Appendix D.
48 Templer's Despatch of 17th November 1952.
Templer's initiative is notable for several reasons not least among them as confirmation of his own breadth of vision. But it is also noteworthy for the new respect which it evoked from Mr. Malcolm Macdonald who had earlier written with such foreboding to the Colonial Secretary about the dangers of appointing a professional soldier as High Commissioner. He wrote to Templer.

"Dear Gerald,

Whilst you were in England during your recent visit I read your despatch...concerning the expansion of the Federation Land Forces. If I may say so, this is an absolutely first-rate document making a comprehensive series of most valuable proposals. They are at least as valuable from the political as they are from the local military point of view.

If I as Commissioner-General...can do anything to support you on these proposals in London, you have only to let me know....

sd Malcolm Macdonald."49

Unfortunately, good intentions and sound policy were not able to overcome the basic and long-entrenched divisions between the communities of Malaya, exacerbated by the Chinese character of the insurgency. Recruiting for the new multi-racial Federation Regiment was slower than Templer had hoped and in the Legislative Council on 25th November 1953 he pointed out that of a total Other Rank strength of 434 only 74 were Chinese and it had therefore been necessary to turn down many promising Chinese candidates for commissions in order to preserve similar racial proportions to those existing in the ranks. However, by April 1954, the first company of the new Federation Regiment had deployed on operations. Moreover, in the same address Templer stated that although the Malayan Civil Service had for the first time been opened to non-Malay citizens the response had been equally disappointing and although five vacancies had been available, only two Chinese and three Indians had applied, of whom only three had the necessary qualifications.50

49Macdonald to Templer, 20th January 1953.

50Templer's Speech, 25th November 1953. When Templer left Malaya the composition of the Federation Regiment was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Officers</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
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<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>317</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>137</td>
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<td>Eurasian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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Templer, Press Conference, 26th May 1954.
Police, Intelligence, Information Services

Shortly after his arrival, Templer decided that three matters were to have 'absolute priority'. These were:

(a) the organisation and training of the Police Force, including the Special Constabulary;
(b) the improvement of the Intelligence Service; and
(c) the improvement and expansion of the Information Services.

The Police

As both Briggs and Lyttleton had found, the quality and leadership of the Police Force were neither uniform nor reassuring; there were several reasons for this. First, the expansion of the force had been over rapid. At the beginning of 1952 its strength stood at 26,154 regulars, 99,000 part time Auxiliary Police, and 39,870 Special Constables, and in addition it had the task of operational control of the Home Guard. But its head had not expanded with its body. Together with the shortage of officers referred to in the previous chapter, Federal Police Headquarters had not been expanded since Briggs arrived. In March 1952 under the new Commissioner, Colonel Young, its headquarters structure was overhauled. In place of the two Assistant Commissioners of Police (A.C.P.s) who had previously controlled multiple departments, all five departments were now placed under an A.C.P. Of particular importance, in view of the vastly increased scope of its activities, was the emancipation of Special Branch from the Criminal Investigation Department. Special Branch now became a separate department with its own funds.51 Second, in Templer's opinion, far too much emphasis had been placed on the para-military functions of the police to the detriment of public welfare and the place of the policeman as a servant of the community. It was urgently necessary to restore the constabulary image and to return to watch and ward duties. This process, which became more and more feasible as security improved, was crystallised in Operation SERVICE which was launched on 15th December 1952. It had immediate success, principally because the overwhelmingly Malay police force now saw itself as the friend rather than the enemy of the villagers. Moreover, the idea had a chain reaction, the Telephone Department in turn launched Operation COURTESY, and this was later followed by the Public Health Department, and the force of these

combined benefits had a visible effect on public morale.52

Even when changed economic circumstances made it necessary to retrench part of the Special Constabulary, Templer turned a potential embarrassment into a consummate success. The continuing cost of the Emergency was causing a heavy drain on Malay's finances. In 1953 this was aggravated by a dramatic fall in the price of both rubber and tin after the Korean armistice and by November Malaya faced a deficit of M$146 million.53 Templer's answer was not to cut social services (which a number of people expected him to do) but to reduce and rationalise the efforts of certain parts of the Security Forces. The Special Constabulary had been formed in the first months of the Emergency to protect estates and mines, and to provide bodyguards for managers. With the exception of the bodyguards, the overwhelming majority were employed in a static role which was uneconomical in manpower, expensive, and tactically unsound because the insurgents, having observed what their beats were, either avoided or killed them. Templer now proposed that the majority should be amalgamated into Area Security Units (A.S.U.s) of 20 men, who by patrolling and ambushing would carry the fight to the insurgents. They would operate close to their original estates, the area which each had to patrol would depend on how many incidents had occurred in that area in the past. This permitted the Special Constabulary to be reduced by more than 10,000. Eventually the A.S.U.s developed a keen offensive spirit and after some prodding by Templer became an effective force.54

The Intelligence Services

Some of the early efforts to organise an effective intelligence service have already been referred to. When Briggs left, the Special Branch of the C.I.D. had been built up to an adequate numerical strength. Again however, as in the case of the police, organisational problems remained. On 1st April 1952, Templer appointed a Director of Intelligence, Mr. J.H. Morton

52 Young's programme was impressive. He wrote personally to every member of the Police Force asking each man to 'do everything you can....to extend kindness and help to those in need'. By 1953 instances of service were being reported at the rate of 20,000 cases a month. Bartlett, p 81.


54 It is characteristic of Templer that he called a meeting of representatives of the Planting and Mining industries to tell them of his decision in person. Protection of Estates and Mines 1953, pp 1-6. Progressively, the Regular Police were also cut by 10%.
who had been in charge of M.I.5 in Singapore and charged him with overhauling the intelligence services. It should be remembered that a Director of Intelligence, Sir William Jenkin, had already been appointed during Briggs' time. But on his arrival, Jenkin found that he was responsible for coordinating intelligence only among police agencies, and that coordination on a Federal basis lay outside his jurisdiction. Thus, Jenkin was never able to be more than partially effective. At times this led to an extraordinary state of affairs. It was not unusual for a zealous Platoon Commander to visit up to half a dozen people - many of them local civilians - in order to obtain enough fragments of information for a patrol plan; a task which should have been done by Special Branch. But more frequently, military patrols up to the end of 1950 were based on simple logic, intuition and local knowledge of where the insurgents were likely to be found rather than from detailed information. Morton was now made directly responsible to Templer for the coordination and effective operation of all intelligence agencies. While the army continued to produce intelligence peculiarly its own i.e. visual reconnaissance from light aircraft, and patrolling and tracking. Special Branch alone could have secret agents, and became the principal recipient and recording agency for intelligence about the insurgents. At the same time, the internal workings of Special Branch were overhauled.

In 1948-49, it had been organised on purely ethnic lines. For example, separate 'desks' dealt with subversion among Chinese and among Malays. In August 1950, Jenkin had begun to reorganise it on semi-political lines, i.e. there was a desk in charge of 'Communism', further broken down into four sub-desks dealing with; External Communism, Banditry, Underground Communism and Other Manifestations of Communism. The 1952 reorganisation made this arrangement more sophisticated and functional: one desk dealt exclusively with the way the M.C.P. operated, another with its Military Organisation, a third and a fourth with subversion among Malays and Chinese respectively.55

Of itself however, this reorganisation would only have improved the Government's awareness of trends and of the M.C.P's order-of-battle. What was really required was an ability to produce intelligence in a form on which the army could base operations. The problem was solved by attaching to

55 Madoc, Interview.
Special Branch a number of Military Intelligence Officers (M.I.O.s) whose task was to collect operational intelligence as it was transmitted through Special Branch channels, process it into a form which army units could use, and get it to them rapidly enough for effective use. The improvement was great. In June 1951, the war diary of the 1st/7th Gurkha Rifles recorded only two items of intelligence interest but by October 1952, when the battalion was operating in a state where an M.I.O. was attached to the S.W.E.C, the number of 'exploitable' items had increased to sixty-five.

In a directive of 24th April 1952, Templer divided the insurgent organisation for surveillance purposes into two rings of armed potential: an inner ring, normally deep in the jungle, which included the State Party/Regimental Headquarters with its protective circle of M.R.L.A. forces, and, an outer ring, on the fringes of estates and populated areas which harboured the District and Branch Committees and the Min Yuen. Although penetration of the inner ring was the ultimate task of Special Branch it was realised that this could not be done in the short term. In the meantime, Special Branch was to concentrate on the outer ring. This policy was so successful that by 1954 most eliminations were based on Special Branch information, either by specific information given to patrols, or by the combined Army-Special Branch technique developed in food denial and Federal Priority Operations.

The Information Services

At the beginning of 1952, there was a whole series of separate departments engaged in communicating the Government's message to the people. They included the Department of Information, the Emergency Information Services, the Malayan Broadcasting Service, (a pan-Malayan department also covering Singapore) and the Malayan Film Unit.

To coordinate these services, Templer appointed Mr. A.D.C. Peterson, who had worked in the field of psychological warfare in Burma during World War II. Peterson's aims simply expressed were twofold: first, to detach the non-communist anticolonialists from the M.C.P. and convince them...

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56 D of O Directive No. 21, issued 24th April 1952. By the end of 1952 there were 30 such M.I.O.s working with the police.
57 Q.H.R; 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, December 1952.
58 Federal Operations and Federal Priority Operations are discussed in Chapter VI.
that the Federation of Malaya was worth fighting for; and second, to lower
the insurgent's will to fight and to convince him to defect.\textsuperscript{59} To achieve
the first aim Peterson had to have something concrete to sell; in almost every
aspect of government, this was supplied by Templer and by the enlightened
policy he was directed to pursue by the British Government. The elected Local
Councils have already been mentioned. At midnight on 14th September 1952,
Federal Citizenship, and with it of course the right to vote in Local, State
and eventually Federal elections was introduced.\textsuperscript{60}

Economic activities were no less impressive and provided
Peterson with a further line of attack. The Government was enabled to take
advantage of the fact that Resettlement had brought a hitherto unreachable
group of the population within range of effective communication, and the
after care of New Villages consolidated this progress. To protection was
added running water, electricity, clinics, schools, individual garden plots
and shops. Direct attacks were made on some of the oldest ills of Asian
society. Hours of work were regulated by the provision that all shops with a
staff (i.e. as distinct from self-owned and operated stalls) were to close
either on Friday or Sunday without loss of pay to the employees.\textsuperscript{61} Another
evil, usury, was attacked through the regulation of rates, terms and contracts.

The improvement in Malayan education was a further substantial
theme. The total number of students in the country increased from 263,400
in 1941 to 759,831 in 1953. The Government was able to claim, with
justification, that in addition to fighting the insurgents, it was also
fighting illiteracy, and was advancing Malaya's social progress against the
day when the country would be self-governing.\textsuperscript{62}

Thus, the Government under Templer was intent on establishing a
reputation for truth. In order to convince insurgents who defected that they
would be well treated and later rehabilitated within Malayan life it also
planned a multiple attack based on a first class knowledge of individual
insurgents and their habits. The Psychological Warfare Section which
directed this campaign also decided the best approach to use, and it was now

\textsuperscript{59} Templer, Interview.

\textsuperscript{60} Weekly News Summary, 19th September 1952. More than 600,000 Chinese were
given voting rights by this measure, in addition to those who had already
been enfranchised.

\textsuperscript{61} Weekly News Summary 28th September 1952.

\textsuperscript{62} Annual Report 1953, p 387.
in the fortunate position of having a number of S.E.P.s and C.E.P.s who thoroughly understood the minds of their former comrades. For a start, the rewards to members of the public for information leading to the capture or killing of insurgents were vastly increased. Under Briggs, the reward for bringing in the Secretary General of the M.C.P. had been M$80,000; it was now increased to M$250,000 and commensurate increases were announced for all other members of the M.C.P. However, while the old scale had been based purely on the rank of the insurgent, the new scale depended on the amount of personal risk called for, and the extent of cooperation by the insurgent who surrendered or was captured. For example, an insurgent would receive more if he personally led a Security Force patrol to attack his erstwhile camp or to a point for a successful ambush than if he merely pointed to spots on a map. The payment of huge rewards to insurgents for inducing the capture or death of their former comrades raised questions of ethics and morality in the minds of some people (particularly members of the British Communist Party and British Labor Party); the Government's reply was that it produced results. The Psychological Warfare experts were playing on the venality of the predominantly Chinese insurgents and directing this weakness towards the destruction of the M.C.P. itself. Immoral or not, it proved brilliantly successful in conditions of weakening insurgent morale. In the later years during 1957-58, it was on the hope of many an ex-insurgent to rehabilitate himself in a small business, by bringing in so many dollars worth of surrendered insurgents, that the mass surrenders of those years were based. The Psychological Warfare Section also perfected several techniques for communicating with the insurgents. Mass leaflet drops for example were so successful that the M.C.P. politbureau punished possession of a leaflet with death. The use of voice aircraft, which broadcast surrender terms and promises of safe conduct to areas of the jungle became so substantial that by 1954 Dakotas and Austers equipped with loud speakers were broadcasting to fifteen separate jungle areas per week. So successful was this combined leaflet and voice aircraft campaign that by that year, more insurgents surrendered than ever before, and more than half stated that their minds had

63 The best known of such men was Lam Swee who had defected in May 1950 but from 1952 onwards a number of lesser fry were continually employed within the Information Service. Osman China who defected in Pahang in December 1954 was found to be particularly valuable. Miller, Jungle War, pp 147-148.

64 Templer, Interview.

65 Brooke, Interview.
finally been made up by the Government's communication with them.66

Collective Punishment - Detention - White Areas

As will be examined in Chapter VI, the operational technique which finally 'dug out the roots' of the insurgent infrastructure was food denial, known in its final, highly intensive form as the Federal Priority Operation. However, while this technique was largely developed under Templer, it is doubtful whether it could have worked until the end of 1952, when Resettlement had been completed. Until complete penetration of the insurgent organisation had been achieved by Special Branch therefore, some means had to be found to provide the essential intelligence. Templer's approach, broadly speaking was to make selective use of the stick of collective punishment (on towns or areas with a bad Emergency record) while awarding where it was possible the carrot of the lifting of Emergency restrictions. Tanjong Malim had a bad record. Near the town had occurred fifteen murders, five successful ambushes, five unsuccessful, ten attacks on military and police patrols, seven strikes due to intimidation, numerous attacks on the town water pipeline; 6,000 rubber trees had been slashed, eight buses and lorries burned, several trains derailed. Worse, on only three occasions had anyone helped the Security Forces with information.57 Then, on 25th March 1952, twelve men including the district officer were killed and eight wounded in an ambush. Two days later Templer, newly arrived, went to Tanjong Malim. Having had three hundred local leaders assembled, he denounced them with a vehemence which was to become typical, but was at that stage new and startling in a High Commissioner. The mildest charge was cowardly silence:

"This is going to stop," declared Sir Gerald, "It does not amuse me to punish innocent people, but many of you are not innocent. You have information which you are too cowardly to give."

He then imposed a collective sentence: a strict 22 hour curfew, shops open for only two hours a day, no one to leave town, all schools closed, no bus services, reduced rice rations. As a final ignominy Tanjong Malim would cease to be the district capital.68

66 Review 1954, p 28. It should be pointed out that Psychological Warfare was originally included in the Director of Operations staff under the Head of the Emergency Information Service. However in March 1954 the Psychological Warfare Section was separated under that title, and made a separate department within the Director of Operations staff. It worked very closely with Special Branch of the Federal Police. C.C. Too, Interview.

67 S.T., 28th March 1952.

68 Ibid.
Ten days later the duration of Tanjong Malim's punishment was made to depend on the result of a questionnaire addressed to the head of each household, there, and at a nearby Malay village. The replies were placed in sealed boxes, travelled to Kuala Lumpur accompanied by representatives of the town and were opened by Templer in their presence. As a result, some thirty Chinese, mainly shopkeepers, were detained and a number of arrests were made. Then on 26th April men of the Suffolk Regiment, acting on information received, killed Long Pin, a local insurgent leader. In a relatively short time Tanjong Malim was secure, with an effective Home Guard.

What did Templer achieve by this? First, having arrived only seven weeks before the crucial incident, when morale was still suffering from the effects of Gurney's death and from the sense that so little had been achieved in so many years, he had demonstrated his authority and determination unforgottably. On his orders, the affair was given wide publicity, aimed at his own officials as much as at the rest of the country. Moreover, to ensure that his test case would not fail, a reorganisation of the local district boundary was carried out to allow Tanjong Malim's firmer administration, and the town itself received high priority defence stores to improve its security. Secondly, like Briggs, Templer understood that until villagers could answer insurgent demands by saying that if they complied they would be punished by the Government, they would not dare refuse. Further, that without increased security, the rule of law could not be established. Finally, the distribution of questionnaires, later standardised as Operation QUESTION, provided the Government with information previously virtually inaccessible. Once Special Branch became more effective, this technique became more or less redundant, but for a time it was very effective.

Templer imposed collective punishment on six other occasions. It was certainly the most dramatic and controversial of his Emergency measures, but it was not new. Indeed, Templer used both collective punishment

69 Parkinson; Op.Cit., p 25. Templer found Operation QUESTION to be so successful that in April 1952, he began to apply it to blocks of four and five villages simultaneously. It served a useful purpose until the expertise of Special Branch was established and there was no further need for it to be used. Templer and Madoc, Interviews.

70 Thompson, Interview.

71 Templer and Madoc, Interviews.
and detention much more moderately than his predecessor. During Gurney's rule, the town of Pusing had been fined M$40,000 for failure to cooperate, and quantitatively at least, collective punishment was not so drastic as Gurney's wholesale detentions in squatter areas under Regulation 17D. What made such expedients more effective under Templer was that they were applied concurrently with other efficacious measures in an improving situation and were mutually reinforcing. Templer had complete executive power and used it wisely. Despite the public outcry which his treatment of Tanjong Malim evoked in Britain, the British Government pronounced its full support.

However, if Templer's collective punishments can be characterised as ruthless, his designation of White Areas was statesmanlike. He began in Malacca on 5th September 1953. The insurgents there had been reduced from over two hundred to about fifty and in June the Resident Commissioner, Mr. G.E.C. Wisdon suggested that the proclamation of an area in which all Emergency Regulations had been lifted would constitute an important psychological carrot. There were risks that the insurgents would then infiltrate and cause the abandonment of the scheme, but the population would probably be so relieved by the lifting of the restrictions that they would denounce any insurgents who returned. Moreover, the offensive uses to which such results could be put by the Information Service were incalculable. In the event, it worked. When four insurgents tried to return they were immediately reported, and no area subsequently declared 'White' was ever forced to revert. When Templer left, 1,336,000 people were living in White Areas.

Templer's successor as Director of Operations, General Bourne, was

What was at least equally important was that Templer imposed these punishments in person and thus there was a direct link established between people and High Commissioner; in contrast to the impersonalism of Gurney. In August 1953 Templer placed the town of Broga under detention; on 5th August 1953 the 4,000 people of Sungei Pelek were given a last chance to disown communism; on 12th August 1953 a 22 hour house curfew was placed on the New Village of Pertang. However, by the end of 1953, the situation had improved to such an extent that Templer revoked both E.R.17D (permitting the detention and removal from the Federation of all inhabitants of particular areas); and E.R.17DA (imposition of collective punishment). S.T., 8th December 1953.

It should be stated here that Colonel Young, the Police Commissioner did not agree with the use of E.R.'s 17D and 17DA. He was at the time endeavouring to build up the confidence of the people in the police and this retarded it. Young, Interview.

able to join up a series of White Areas into a broad belt across the peninsula, which effectively cut the insurgent areas and their communications in two.

Templer's Powers

What is most striking about Templer's rule is the greater extent of his achievement in all fields than that of his post-war predecessors, which suggests that the apparently paradoxical measure of appointing a soldier to govern during a state of civil emergency, with the aim of hastening the return of civil government, may have application elsewhere. As Professor Parkinson says,

"The essential measures to reestablish order were so closely related to measures of political development, welfare, education and finance that the attempt to separate them could only be harmful or absurd. And, it was in the very essence of this amalgamation that the military aspect was made, and has ever since been kept, subordinate to the civil. An arrangement which only a statesman would choose, and only a soldier could enforce."75

This last sentence is highly significant because it would have been constitutionally possible for Gurney to have appointed himself Director of Operations. That he did not can be ascribed to two principal reasons. First, he did not recognise until too late that a Director of Operations was needed, much less one with full powers both military and civil. Second, and more important, he failed to realise that the times demanded someone who could be both a leader and a commander, rather than two separate lower keyed appointments of an administrator (himself), and a coordinator (Briggs).

The contention, that only a coordinator is required in such a situation, has indeed since been maintained by at least two writers and needs to be examined here because it calls into question the very fundamentals upon which Templer's appointment, unique at the time, was based.

First, Sir Robert Thompson, who served in Malaya and under Templer has stated:

"....the Director of Operations is not a commander. The normal chains of command both in the armed forces and in government departments should continue to operate in the ordinary way, with instructions being issued through the ordinary channels of command in accordance of the decisions of the National War Council and such further implementing directions as may be given by the Director of Operations. Second, ministries, military headquarters and government departments must do all the work for which they are responsible.... If the Director of Operations is not adamant

about this, he will end up running an entirely separate government, including the railways.\footnote{Thompson, \textit{Communist Insurgency}, pp 82-83.}

Second, Brigadier Frank Kitson in \textit{Low Intensity Operations}, reaffirms that the essential purpose of the Director of Operations is to coordinate rather than to command and follows Thompson at a respectful distance.\footnote{Kitson, \textit{Operations}, p 57.}

The main objection to these assertions is that this was attempted in the original powers given to Briggs, a man of great ability, and failed. And, as has been argued in the previous chapter, the principal reason was that the restricted authority to coordinate, and the administrative responsibility to give effect to that coordination, ran in separate channels. Moreover, it was quickly established that control by committee, established by the S.W.E.Cs and D.W.E.C.s only operated effectively at lower levels. At the summit one man, not a committee, needed to be able to enforce executive decisions. It was for this reason that Briggs' powers were belatedly extended and Templer chose to exercise the \textit{de facto} powers of the Director of Operations, rather than delegate them to his deputy.

Moreover, a situation where the Director of Operations in Thompson's words, 'will end up running an entirely separate government including the railways,' is not only highly exaggerated, but in the case of Templer has a whimsical twist, because in his earlier capacity as Military Governor of the British Zone of Germany, one of his first tasks had been the effective reestablishment of the railway service, which he did by delegating the task and then checking that it was done.\footnote{Templer, \textit{Interview}.} In Malaya, there was never any question of the Director of Operations Staff taking over civil functions which could be adequately handled by normal civil process; nor did they become immersed in unessential matters. But the breadth of Templer's powers ensured that an ineffectual individual, whether military or civilian could be - and frequently was - instantly replaced. Furthermore, the reduced powers given to Templer's successor as Director of Operations, are very apposite to this argument. When he left, security had improved so much that the dual appointment was now considered unnecessary. Besides, the time was rapidly approaching when power must be transferred to a civilian government of an independent Malaya. Accordingly, when Templer's Deputy High Commissioner, Sir Donald McGillivray, was appointed High Commissioner, General Bourne was appointed Director of Operations with powers similar to those finally granted to Briggs. Bourne in his turn was succeeded by General Bower,
who reviewing the Emergency in 1957, said:

"The Malayan Emergency was only directed at maximum efficiency from 1952 to 1954, when the posts of High Commissioner and Director of Operations were combined. Since then, the Director of Operations has retained command of all Security Forces, and has had power to direct certain civil measures. He has however, had very little say over civil appointments, and this has undoubtedly sapped much of the impetus from the Emergency, which depends largely on the ability and energy of the Chairmen of State and District War Executive Committees and on their permanence of tenure in these appointments. There have recently been frequent postings and replacements, not always by suitable men. This has sometimes been mitigated by good police or army members of the committees, but they cannot enforce civil measures, nor can they make up for weak or incompetent leadership."79

Templer's Achievement

Templer's Directive required him to restore law and order and assist Malaya towards self-government with a common form of citizenship, without sacrificing the customs and culture of any community, while assisting the Malays to play a full part in economic life.80 Two years was clearly too short to complete such a programme, and clearly one must not overestimate the contribution of one man. However Templer played a creditable part in the political and social development, which depended most on the decisions of others, and in the conduct of the Emergency, which is the focus of this study, where his personal freedom of action was greatest, and where he had inherited a good deal of muddle and not a little despair, he succeeded beyond anyone's expectation. Insurgent inspired incidents which averaged more than 500 a month when he arrived were less than 100 when he left and civilian casualties had fallen from 100 to less than 20.81 While partly the result of the M.C.P.s October 1951 Directives, the efforts by the Politbureau to lift its armed attacks and reassert its influence were wholly unsuccessful. Moreover, 

79 Review, 1948-57, p 26. Moreover, in his later book 'No Exit From Vietnam' Thompson recants his earlier view: 'For all the criticism levelled at the military (which in this case is his own) there is much to be said for a General being appointed as pro-consul, provided that this elevates him to a civilian and political position from which he can give directions to all heads of agencies including the Commanding General of the forces (this was General Templer's position in Malaya as High Commissioner and Director of Operations). The advantage of Generals in this role is that they understand politics as being the art of the practical and are not always looking for the impractical ideal. Nor do they like being controlled by events.' Thompson, No Exit, p 158.

80 Appendix D.

81 Appendix A.
despite the Security Forces reduced opportunities to inflict telling casualties compared with 1950/51, the rate of contact remained high and monthly eliminations fell only from 116 to 80. Above all, the insurgents were not replacing their losses, and during Templer's brief rule their strength had been reduced by more than half.82

To the steady success of Framework operations based on the Briggs Plan had been added the Federal Priority Operation based on intensive food denial. And while this technique was employed to 'dig up the roots' of the insurgent organisation in populated areas, the Deep Jungle Operations based on the versatility of the helicopter and the systematic construction of Jungle Forts to win over the aborigines reduced the insurgency to a remote nuisance.

New citizenship laws introduced by Templer in 1952 not only increased the number of Chinese and Indian citizens, but came when the introduction of elections to local and higher councils for the first time made the citizen an elector. In November 1952, Templer told the Legislative Council that the time had come for the states and the two colonies Penang and Malacca. To heighten political consciousness of the role of government, the Civics Courses were introduced.83 By 1953, public interest in political participation was evidenced when 78% of eligible voters (much higher than the London boroughs as Templer pointed out) turned out for the first town council election in Kota Bharu.84 Then on 27th April 1954, a Federation White Paper announced the creation of a revised Legislative Council, of 52 elected members and 46 appointed from various categories of public life. The first elections to the council were held in July 1955, and the Alliance Party (a combination of U.M.N.O., the Malayan Chinese Association and the Malayan Indian Council) took 79.6% of the vote.85 Moreover, Malay candidates of the Alliance Party were elected in predominantly Chinese constituencies and the obverse was true in some Malay dominated constituencies.

It was also possible now for Chinese and Indians to enter the Malayan Civil Service or the multi-racial units of the Federation Armed Forces. If few wished to do so, that was hardly Templer's fault. Templer's directive had stated *inter alia* that 'the Malays must be encouraged and

82 Ibid.
83 Already referred to p128 above.
84 Weekly New Summary, 4th July 1953,
85 Fifield, *Diplomacy*, p 40.
assisted to play a full part in the economic life of the country'. To some extent, the Kampongs had been left behind in the allotment of resources to New Village development, because as Templer put it in the Legislative Council, 'If a person has one arm broken and the other slightly bruised one deals with the broken arm first.' Increasingly, from 1952 onwards, the economic position of the Malays was improved through the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (R.I.D.A.). Water supply and electrical reticulation schemes were introduced into a large number of Kampongs. Major irrigation and drainage programmes were undertaken, and the extensive Perlis and North Kedah plains opened for rice growing. Cooperatives to reduce dependence on usury and to introduce many Malay communities to commerce and banking were introduced. R.I.D.A. also extended loans against crops and sponsored such enterprises as small rubber planting, fisheries, animal husbandry, road building, domestic water supply and community centres.

However, Templer was the first to admit that his achievements in pursuit of his Directive had fallen short of his hopes. As he stated in his final press conference before leaving Malaya:

"You can't force people into being a united nation by government order, any more than, having brought a horse to water, you can force it to drink."

Yet in the most extensive, and certainly the most vehement public criticism of Templer's rule in Malaya by the distinguished scholar Dr. Victor Purcell, even Templer's more generally accepted achievements are given scant recognition._________

85 Templer's speech, 18th March 1953, p 6.
87 To some degree, R.I.D.A., which had been set up in 1950 to enhance the economic position of the Malays, although well supported by Templer, was never as successful as was hoped. In his report on R.I.D.A. (Kuala Lumpur, Government Printing Office 1957) Mr. D.E.M. Fiennes criticised the three watertight compartments into which the rural community was divided: plantations; Chinese small holders; and Malay farmers. He said that almost every educated Malay went into government service, and virtually none into organising the development of the productive economy of the Malay people. For this reason R.I.D.A. achieved little success. Moreover, on the basis of contemporary evidence large scale usury may be an ineluctable problem. As one report puts it: 'Rural indebtedness is a basic social problem. There were 211 pawnshops operating in Western Malaysia last year, for example, charging interest rates of up to 60 per cent. The Economist, January 30, 1971, p xxix.
88 High Commissioner's Press Conference, 26th May 1954,
89 Purcell, V.P; Malaya: Communist or Free? London, 1954.
In attempting to categorise Purcell's charges against Templer, the enquirer is confronted by the widest possible range. However, for the purpose of this analysis, there are three that deserve examination. First, during his visit to Malaya in August - September 1952, Purcell likened Malaya under Templer to a vast 'armed camp' in which the dominance of the military was overpowering, and where affairs were conducted 'in an atmosphere of martial urgency',

"Everywhere there were the symbols of force - troops, barbed wire, helicopters, road blocks, and mobile police in their myriads. The essentially civilian atmosphere of pre-war Malaya had vanished and a fashionable barbarism was taking its place."90

Second, that Templer fostered prejudice against the Chinese and discriminated against them.91 And third, that Templer had been tardy in advancing Malaya towards self government.92

The first is little more than a statement of the obvious. Malaya had become an armed camp because this is the nature of such a State of Emergency, where bellicosity on the part of the counter-insurgent is both inevitable and essential. Moreover, Templer was successful against the insurgents, precisely because he created a 'muscular organisation' which was very proficiently destroying them. Had he not done so it is conceivable that the Emergency might still be going on. As for Templer's famous outbursts, they may perhaps have been excessive at times, but he often had cause and if it led to resentment (which it seldom did) it was nevertheless acceptable provided it was followed by renewed activity.93 For Templer it was essentially a means to an end. Insofar as his outbursts were directed at the Chinese, which frequently they were not, they helped project his

90 Ibid., p 231. Purcell was not resident in Malaya, but visited there as the guest of the Malayan Chinese Association.
91 Ibid., p 248 passim.
92 Ibid., p 259 passim
93 Nevertheless, in recounting the incidents involving the removal of the portrait of Dr. Sun Yat Sen (p 237) and Templer's exaggerated remarks to the former Minister of Agriculture Che Abdul Bin Ishak (p 238) Purcell's exaggerations suggest what was almost a caricature of each situation. Similarly, when Templer referred to the semi-novel 'Jungle Green' as 'authentic' he was not referring to the anti-Chinese sentiments expressed by some of the characters in it, but rather that the book conveyed a true picture of the life of the soldier and particularly the national serviceman in Malaya. High Commissioner's Press Conference; Op.Cit., p 2.
image as the personification of an overwhelming power which the M.C.P. could not hope to match. Timing mattered a lot and in this case, the example of Tanjong Malim was very timely indeed.

As to the charge of Templer's prejudice against the Chinese, he was if anything pro-Chinese in that he trusted them far in advance of his officials, as the arming of the Chinese Home Guard shows. If there was prejudice against the Chinese, Templer showed no signs of it himself. Moreover, had he been over-indulgent towards them, this would have been counter-productive in a plural society. What he could do within the realities of the situation he did. Purcell's specific charge that he stopped the Malayan Chinese Association's Lottery, and then rebuked them for discontinuing welfare work in the New Villages, the purpose for which Gurney had allowed it, is only part of the truth. Since its inception the M.C.A. had become increasingly involved in politics, and Templer found that lottery funds were being used for political purposes. Had he allowed the lottery to continue, he would have been very obviously discriminating against the Malay and Indian communities.

The third charge that Templer had been tardy in advancing Malaya towards self-government is a criticism of British colonial policy much more than of Templer. Furthermore, there is more prudence in one of Templer's key statements on this subject than Purcell cares to admit:

"It would be a tragedy," said Templer, "not only for Malaya but for the whole of South East Asia if the power were handed over so precipitately that the remarkable progress now being made in all directions was thrown out of gear, quite apart from the communal difficulties that might arise."

On this point the reader is again referred to the excellent exposition of M.C.P. psychology by Professor Lucien Pye who found that most of the S.E.P.s perceived the Government as being (before Templer) quite distant from them and therefore weak (pp 205-206). The S.E.P.s' esteem for authority suggests strongly that they were very respectful of strong, and even of arbitrary rule. Pye, p 274 passim.


Madoc, Interview.

Purcell, V.P.; Op.Cit., p 259 passim.

Ibid., p 259.
The communal difficulties which Malaya has experienced since emphasise the wisdom of this view.\textsuperscript{99} Above all, Templer had to balance the need to win over the Chinese, against the risks, already demonstrated over the Malayan Union, of alienating the Malays, who were both the mainstay of the Government position and the 'people of the land', for whom the British had undertaken an historic obligation. There was also the risk that too rapid an advance towards self-government, before the Emergency was substantially reduced, might have left the indigenous expertise in politics and administration a legacy with which it could not cope. As it was, Malaya was on the threshold of achieving a large measure of self-government when Templer left and if, as Purcell infers, the problem could have been simply solved, it is surely surprising that greater progress had not been made under Templer's predecessors.

Finally, Purcell's further assault on Templer:

"For a soldier or a policeman in danger of ambush to see things in any long term view is next to impossible.... He is bound to regard talk of relaxing the Emergency Regulations as a kind of treachery to himself."\textsuperscript{100}

This entirely ignores the following specific achievements of Templer: the creation of the White Areas; the scrapping of Emergency Regulations 17D and 17DA; the creation of the multi-racial units of the Federation Army; the arming of the Chinese Home Guard and the establishment of the Kinta Valley Home Guard; and the merger of the War Council with the Legislative Council, which increased civilian participation in the conduct of the Emergency at the expense of the military.

There is something of Templer's times in Malaya which resembles the tide in the affairs of men. His success was due partly to his being the right man at the right time and place. That Gurney's death also coincided fortuitously with a new Government at Westminster meant that the way was clear for Britain's policy to be unshackled from past failures. Templer was in a unique position. Not only could he profit from the mistakes of his predecessors, he also inherited in the Briggs Plan the recipe for success which manifestly required greater executive authority for success to be

\textsuperscript{99} The writer is here referring to the riots of May 1969 of which one writer gave as his opinion: 'The great tragedy of May 1969 was that the authorities gave protection to one racial group only and the rioters were suppressed on the basis of race.' Slimming J.; Malaya: Death of a Democracy, London, 1969, p 61.

\textsuperscript{100} Purcell, V.P.; Op.Cit., p 275.
consummated. The Plan had already exposed the fragility of an insurgent organisation in a complex society. Now Templer, with vastly increased means, was enabled to create an organisational steamroller for its greater destruction. He was also given every support by the British Government. In the same way that it reaffirmed its confidence in him after episodes like Tanjong Malim, it also gave him vast material support which Briggs had not had. By the end of 1952, more than 900 armoured vehicles had arrived for the Police, and the Army's flexibility was enhanced by troop carrying helicopters. The trickle of defensive stores became a flood. The comparison with Montgomery's position immediately before Alamein is irresistible, and with both men the relentless progress towards success became inexorable.

Above all Templer provided vigorous leadership when it was most needed. When he arrived, the Security Forces were toiling almost in despair: when he left the insurgents were battling to survive. Some eighteen months later still, Sir Donald McGillivray, Templer's successor as High Commissioner, was able to announce to the Legislative Council that the British Government no longer considered the Emergency a bar to self government.\textsuperscript{101} If, as Purcell was aware, victory depended on political advance, political advance also depended on success in the conduct of operations. And that was where the calibre of the individual leader counted most, for few men react more sensitively to the quality of their leaders than men whose profession requires them to risk their lives. The degree to which their morale was transformed has been aptly expressed by Brigadier Henniker:

"Why," demanded those on the ground, "do we never seem to win? We have suffered, we have worked, we have fought and endured. We have done all that has been asked of us and yet we go on continually being worsted. Why? .... The leaders gradually become exhausted and begin to have doubts. Glib critics pillory them as being out of date and working on the wrong lines.... Gradually and imperceptibly a feeling grows that the High Command is a failure.... What is the remedy? The answer is as old as the Odyssey itself. It is a Man.... Alexander and Montgomery were the men who brought back to the Desert Armies a spirit of victory. The contribution of these men lay not so much in what they did as what they were.... Here, then, in January 1952 was the need of the hour - a Man. And General Templer was that man."\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Commonwealth Survey, Vol. 2, No. 2.
\textsuperscript{102} Henniker, Red Shadow, p 27.
CHAPTER VI

THE CONDUCT OF COUNTER INSURGENT OPERATIONS

The operational complexity of the Emergency presents almost as great an intellectual challenge to the historian as it did a physical challenge to the men of the Security Forces.

Yet in the records of sustained conflict it remains a 'low intensity operation', with no identifiable or decisive battles.¹ No single clash cost either side more than a platoon in casualties. The most intensely fought encounter was caused by a mistake at the minor tactical level. In March 1950, a platoon of the Malay Regiment left its base at Pulai in Kelantan for a routine three day patrol. Returning, the commander broke an established rule and used the same route. The patrol was ambushed and lost seventeen killed and six wounded.² Similarly, on 22nd January 1950, an insurgent commander's decision to stay the night in his existing camp, after contact had already been made with the Security Forces during the day, cost the lives of twenty-two of his men.³

However, these actions were exceptional and an encounter in which the government side could claim half a dozen insurgents killed was a rarity. A battalion which, having completed its tour, had eliminated a hundred insurgents was feted by press and radio more than if it had been awarded a battle honour.

For despite the preponderance which the government side enjoyed in weaponry and economic resources, other factors made the campaign more equal. First, the country itself was a guerrilla's paradise. The operational area comprised the whole peninsula (slightly less than half the size of Italy) only one-fifth of which had been modified by the hand of man.


² Established from government records of the Emergency, particularly M.C.P., Terrorism and M.C.P., Banditry. According to Miller, who covered the Emergency for the Straits Times and is a reliable witness, the insurgents lost 29 in this action and possibly more. Miller, Jungle War pp 66-68. On this basis it was easily the largest single action of the campaign.

³ A further one was killed and 12 later reportedly died of wounds. Only one Gurkha among the Security Forces was killed. M.C.P., Terrorism, p 82.
most of it along the south and west coastline. (Maps 1 and 2). The peninsula has a backbone of jungle-covered mountains which rise to 7000 feet and from which fast rivers flow east and west. The remaining four-fifths is trackless evergreen forest and undergrowth. A hundred feet above the ground the trees completely shut out the sky, and from their branches hang curtains of vine and creeper which join the undergrowth to make a jungle so thick that a standing man is often invisible at twenty-five yards. Here, the main danger is becoming lost. Five yards from a track looks the same as five miles, and men have died two hundred yards from a main road. Patrols often went around in decreasing circles for days. The jungle also imposed other problems; fields of fire were poor, and the difficulties of command and control placed a premium on the initiative and training of the individual soldier and small unit leader seldom found in other campaigns. In Malaya, no site of economic or social significance is more than a few hours march from the jungle. Thus, whoever most effectively moves and fights in the jungle, controls Malaya. With more than 500,000 squatters acting as a screen between the insurgents and the government, and the Chinese population in general unassimilated with the rest of Malayan life, the otherwise great disparity between the insurgents and the government in regard to numbers and resources was reduced.

The Search for a Strategy

Given the government's unpreparedness in June 1948, even a well based plan could scarcely have been expected to fructify until the intelligence service, police and armed forces had been prepared and trained.

4 In particular Map 2 - Vegetation and Mining.

5 For operational purposes this four-fifths may be divided into:
(a) Rubber Plantations where, owing to the fixed pattern of the trees and the lack of undergrowth, visibility was often good up to several hundred yards and movement possible even at night.
(b) Primary Jungle where trees grow at a very high density and up 150 feet and more in height, but the undergrowth was not sufficiently dense to unduly impede movement.
(c) Secondary Jungle where the trees grow at a smaller density but a dense undergrowth of bushes, creeper and bamboo make movement very difficult.
(d) Swamp which occurs in parts of the coastal areas where a man could sink up to his waist and visibility was reduced to a few yards by trees and undergrowth.

Interspersed with the above are found belukar (low scrub and bushes), lallang (long grass) or cultivated land. There is plenty of game in the country including elephants, tigers and wild pig but frequently patrols would operate for some time without encountering anything more than lizards, monkeys and birds. ATOM, p 34.
But there was no such plan, and the first two years saw a succession of expedients, none of which enabled the government to seize back the initiative.

The original action of the Commissioner-General which put the estates and mines in a state of defence has already been mentioned. During the interregnum between Gent's departure on 29th June 1948, and Gurney's arrival on 6th October, the Officer Administering the Government, Sir Alec Newboult, was obliged to undertake measures which might not be retained by his successor. In the event, this is exactly what happened. Since the armed forces had been placed 'in aid of the civil power', Newboult looked to Boucher to plan and direct the fight: when Gurney arrived, he decided that the Commissioner of Police, Gray, would perform this function. But, as already mentioned, Gray, presiding over a vast expansion of his own force, had neither the time nor the organisational machinery to direct operations. Although he had been Commissioner of Police in Palestine when Gurney had been Chief Secretary, Gray was not a professional policeman. Moreover, while his military record in the Second World War had been impressive, he had acquired it as a relatively junior officer. Now he was meant to give directions to Boucher, a relatively senior officer, in a geographical situation where Boucher was experienced and he was not. Thus, the foundations for a true working relationship between the two men, and more particularly between their two services, was never laid and in the absence of firm control from the High Commissioner, no firm strategy emerged.

Moreover, in August 1948, Gray had made it clear that the police were not ready to take the lead, and in practice, until the force itself and in particular Special Branch had reached a higher stage of development in 1952, the police never did. This led to a situation where not

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6 S.T., 23rd June 1948. In a leading article entitled 'Interpreting Terrorism'.

7 Gray had ended the war as a Lieutenant Colonel, Royal Marines with a D.S.O. and M.C. He became Clerk of the Course at Newmarket Racecourse after leaving Malaya. Waller, Interview; and Gray, Correspondence.

8 Gray said of Gurney: 'I held a very high regard for his ability and integrity and his political wisdom, but I think he was perhaps not strong enough for the incredibly difficult situation with which he was confronted in Malaya - he was too nice'. Gray, Correspondence.

only were police and army units virtually fighting two separate but adjacent campaigns, but Major General Boucher, supported — at least tacitly — by the C-in-C FARELF, was guiding operations without appearing to do so. Already in the short time that he had been responsible for directing events, Boucher had seen the need for a force which could harry the insurgents until the general body of troops could be adequately trained; this force became known as Ferret Force.

Ferret Force consisted of a number of small units under officers, most of whom had served in Force 136 during the Second World War. The rank and file were for the most part Malays from the Malay Regiment and Gurkhas, with some British troops and trackers from Borneo. Each officer knew at least one Malayan language and had available men who could interpret Chinese, Malay or Tamil. In all, six groups of Ferrets were raised. Originally, it was intended that the force should operate inside the jungle but experience quickly demonstrated that the insurgents, who were then trying to organise themselves into properly formed bodies and depended on settlements for all their supplies, were seldom more than an hour’s march inside the jungle fringe.

The Ferret Groups had mixed success. Ferret Group 6 patrolled in the Ipoh area for seven weeks at the end of which it claimed to have killed two insurgents and probably a third. More importantly, it had

10 For example, during Operation SOCCER during September 1948, a battalion effort involving both sweeps and night ambushes, in an area of which about one-quarter was heavily inhabited by Chinese squatters. Yet the police officially knew nothing about it and took no part in it. The battalion later conceded that this had been an error and that the local knowledge of the police would have been invaluable. O.H.R.; 1st/2nd Gurkha Rifles, 30th September 1948.

11 M.C.P., Terrorism, p 5. Each group was divided into four patrols, normally of twelve other ranks together with interpreters and a tracker. When the troops in the patrol were Malays they worked under civilian officers; British or Gurkha troops worked under their own officers. A Ferret Group was usually about 80 strong. With each group were eight Liaison Officers who were used to interpret and gather information. The groups were given rapid and rudimentary training in small arms and basic techniques of patrolling in a ten day course run by the Malay Regiment at Port Dickson and were then sent on operations. Brooke, Interview.

12 It became general practice in most groups for three patrols to search different areas simultaneously, leaving one patrol to rest and guard the base. The usual length of a patrol was eight to twelve hours and individual patrols worked for three days out of four. Ferret Report, p 8.
captured two insurgents, a Gestetner machine used to print propaganda leaflets, some documents and a small quantity of weapons.13 Another group had come upon a number of 'bandits' collecting food in an abandoned squatter area. It wounded one insurgent who 'proceeded to tell all he knew with great enthusiasm, and as a result of the 2nd/2nd Gurkhas were able to discover two important camps and to chase a large body of bandits through the jungle for about a fortnight with several contacts.14 However, such successes were fleeting, 'The rest of the story,' states the report of Ferret Group 6, 'is one of incessant and gruelling patrol work with no positive results to show. Only once in a while could we carry out an operation as a group with a specific objective.'

Ferret Group 2 encountered similar problems:

"During the period under review (6-30th September 1948) Group 2 carried out 69 day patrols and 11 night patrols varying in duration from 3 hours to 12 hours. Insurgents were met on only nine occasions and unfortunately in very small parties. Two insurgents were wounded and later captured without arms, seven were captured while hiding in the vicinity of vacated camps, and one was wounded in a running fight but disappeared in a deep swamp and was presumed drowned."15

But despite the meagre results which this group could claim, its leader Hannah had important observations to make about the general performance of the Security Forces. He found for example, that in some areas the police had important information to give, but no systematic and reliable means of doing so:

"and since the Police through time, have built up the best intelligence network in Malaya, it would seem to me essential that a uniform system of filing and recording such information a is available, should be instituted throughout the Federation not only in a state or general headquarters but also in circle H.Q.s with which local military commanders are in close touch."16

Until the police could be freed from static defence duties however, and Special Branch had been fully developed, even better coordination was of limited value.

Thus, several lessons which had to be relearned again and again at such cost until finally embodied in the Briggs Plan, had already

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13 Their attention was drawn to one camp 'because of the bravado of the bandits in having firing practice in the jungle.' Ibid., p 9.
14 Ibid., p 11.
15 Ibid., p 18.
16 Ibid., pp 18-19.
been established by the Ferrets: the feasibility of using small aggressive patrols, the fundamental importance of close coordination with the police and the need to gain a lasting ascendancy over an area because, as the insurgents themselves admitted, they did not worry over much about large police-military sweeps as they 'come and go', but they disliked the Ferret Groups who 'go too far and stay too long.'

Some lessons so learned were not forgotten. The usefulness of small patrols including men with knowledge of the local area, and the local languages and customs, led to the establishment of the Police Jungle Squads, usually composed of some twenty Special Constables led by a European Police Lieutenant. Also out of the Ferret experience, a Civil Liaison Corps of interpreters and experienced locals who could be attached to army units was formed and gave good service until the idea was incorporated in the Briggs Plan.

But the assertion made by one writer that an intensification of the Ferret Force idea 'would have shortened the war' seems dubious in the light of the available evidence. First, one of the principal reasons for disbanding the force - which had virtually been completed by the end of 1948 - was that most of its leaders had been diverted from key jobs within the civil administration, from which they could be ill-spared, so that there was an elastic limit to the number of Ferret groups which could be raised. Second, an extension of the Ferret principle, especially before helicopters became more readily available, would have required an independent logistic organisation for an abnormally small and specialised force so widely dispersed as to be ineffectual except in a short term 'pathfinder' role. In other words, the same factors which caused Field Marshal Slim to question the value

17 Ibid., p 11.
18 By the end of 1949 there were 253 of these squads. A good account of the experiences of an officer who commanded several jungle squads is given in Moran J.W.; Spearhead in Malaya, London, 1959 and The Camp Across the River, London, 1961. They patrolled and operated in a similar manner to an infantry platoon.
19 M.C.P., Banditry, p 5.
20 O'Ballance, p 169.
21 For example, in September 1948 the Ferret Groups were deployed as follows: Group 1 - Sungei Siput (Perak); Group 2 - Tronoh (Perak); Group 3 - Triang (Johore); Group 4 - South Johore; Group 5 - resting; Group 6 - Port Dickson (Negri Sembilan). Ferret Report, p 2.
of élite units, namely that they drain more than their fair share of talent from other units and, by being trained, equipped and mentally adjusted for one kind of operation, do not give a worthwhile return for the resources which they absorb, an extension of Ferret Force would have been an aberration.\textsuperscript{22} There was nothing strikingly novel in Ferret tactics, which were basically aggressive infantry patrolling. What was needed was to raise standards of jungle craft so that all units in Malaya would be capable of sustained operations. The reports of Ferret Force show that much of their own patrolling was not particularly proficient, and as the Emergency developed their performance was surpassed by the better Malay, Commonwealth and British battalions in the Federation, and by the Jungle Squads and Federal Jungle Companies of the Malayan Police.

In addition to the value distilled from the Ferret experience there were false lessons which more prominently caught the headlines. On the basis of seven weeks' experience, Lt.Col. R.N. Broome, (ex Force 136), was rash enough to state:

"This apparently aimless patrolling throws a great strain on the men, and no troops can be expected to do it indefinitely at the pressure the Ferrets worked at. But it is this patrolling 'on spec' which brings results in the end."\textsuperscript{23}

Without realising it, Broome was both rationalising a necessity - because, as Ferret experience showed, it was rarely possible to obtain precise knowledge of insurgent movement - and pointing a crooked path to the future since, in his wake whole generations of troops and police engaged in speculative patrolling with greater or lesser success. And, in a further statement which supported admirably Boucher's own ideas of 'disinfection', Broome again stated that great advantage was to be gained by 'flooding' an area likely to contain insurgents. Broome went on to qualify this assertion by pointing out that such areas would only remain 'disinfected' provided that the Security Forces remained there. Unfortunately, because it reflected the penchant of many commanders for large scale operations - particularly those who had served in the Western Desert, or more recently on manoeuvres with the British Army of the Rhine - Broome's statement was accepted without its essential qualifications, and for a long time thereafter the concept of

\textsuperscript{22} Slim, pp 546-549. Slim's most trenchant comment about Special Forces is that,'Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units.'\textsuperscript{23} Ferret Report, p 11.
'flooding' an area with large bodies of troops enjoyed an unmerited and relatively unfruitful popularity.

But even without these examples from the Ferrets' experiences, both Boucher in Kuala Lumpur and Ritchie in Singapore had arrived at similar operational precepts. Boucher's intentions have already been referred to. In September 1948, General Ritchie compared the previous three months in Malaya with what he knew of Greece and China and told his senior officers that, in communist doctrine, guerrilla warfare unfolded in three phases: (1) Gaining control of small areas by terrorist methods; (2) Enlisting and impressing the natives into fighting units; and (3) Operating from these areas as firm bases. A defensive policy by the security forces would be fatal. No matter how meagre the information it was essential to adopt an offensive military policy. The enemy had to be continually harried and kept on the move to disrupt his training and to prevent his organising into large units.24

The spirit was admirable, and so little was known of the insurgents' organisation that there was little alternative. Moreover, the government could not have known yet that the M.C.P.'s intention to form large units was frustrated by its own command and logistic problems. Ritchie's general concept was therefore enthusiastically implemented and these tactics were persisted in long after the insurgents had learned to avoid 'sweeps' and 'thrusts'. In some cases, almost by default, they were replaced by small units patrolling and by embryonic measures of food denial which anticipated the methods introduced by Briggs and Templer. Finally, while no clear and comprehensive series links all these techniques into a common strand of development, they rapidly bifurcated into small and large scale operations. The large scale sweeps and cordons harnessed food-control as part of their essential fabric and, with Special Branch assistance, developed into Federal Operations and Federal Priority Operations which later tore up the roots of the insurgent organisation, district by district. At the lower end of the spectrum, patrolling, ambushing and attacks on insurgent camps which, after the introduction of the Briggs Plan became collectively known as 'Framework Operations' were the normal means by which a S.W.E.C. or D.W.E.C. conducted the Emergency in its area, and these relatively unspectacular operations continued to fulfill an important function until the end of the Emergency. *

LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS

Even as early as November 1948, the Operations Section at G.H.Q. FARELF had tersely established what was to remain true until the formal abandonment of large scale jungle sweeps in 1951: they often moved the enemy on temporarily, but seldom inflicted casualties. The troops knew this too. Writing in 1949, Major R.E.R. Robinson, a rifle company commander, stated bluntly that the bigger the operation, and the higher the level at which it was planned, the less its chance of success; the preparations were impossible to conceal, the troops were difficult to control in the jungle, the insurgents simply vanished.

These operations were usually of two types: the first consisted in cordoning an area thought to contain insurgents and then sending an independent force in to eliminate them; the second, in sweeping or driving the insurgents onto a line of ambushes. In the first three months of 1949 for example, North Malaya Sub District carried out thirteen major operations and had four in progress at its close. Operation NAWAB, typical of many, had a battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry attacking into an area thought to hold insurgents. The 1st/6th Gurkhas acted as cut-offs behind them, while several troops of the 4th Hussars together with the police set up ambushes to the south and west. NAWAB yielded one insurgent killed and fifty-nine arrests. Again, Operation LEO was conducted in Johore for ten days during October 1949. The twenty-four platoons involved operated in 74,000,000 square yards of jungle. Their orders were to sweep from a start line to an intermediate and then to a final line. The final line was arranged so that the troops converged into a series of ever-smaller boxes. Entry into each box was preceded by bombing and straffing. By then the insurgents should be penned into an area of six grid squares. One rifle company would then spend twenty four hours ferreting them out. The air strikes in the view of the Commanding Officer 1st/2nd Gurkhas, had alerted the insurgents and the troops were too thin on the ground to catch them. Afterwards, the results of LEO were entirely negative.

27 Weekly Intelligence Summary (INTSUM), November-December 1948.
Food Denial - Early Attempts

A more promising adaptation of large scale tactics to deny rice to the insurgents was attempted in Operation SNOW WHITE, launched in central Malaya during July and August 1949 because of growing fears that the Mentakab - Jelebu - Menchis area was falling under insurgent domination. Eight rifle companies with three batteries of artillerymen acting as infantry, as well as the police were used. It began with the compulsory sale to the government of all private rice stocks above a certain size. The police then blockaded the area to prevent more rice from coming in, and the troops were committed to the jungle to ambush the insurgents whom hunger should now force to move.

A great quantity of rice was collected, but otherwise SNOW WHITE was disappointing. As in other operations, many abandoned camps were destroyed and several insurgent units had apparently been forced to move, but only three insurgents had been eliminated. In the light of later experiences, the main reason for failure lay in the time allotted to SNOW WHITE. One month was too short to exhaust the food dumps which the insurgents had already established and could live on from eight to ten weeks. Only then would they have been forced to take real risks to re-open their food lines. 28

Even after the Briggs Plan had been introduced, the large scale operations, now known as Priority Operations still failed to achieve results commensurate with effort expended. In June and July 1951, three operations, GRASSHOPPER, WARBLER and SEDGE were designed - in conjunction with relocation, regrouping and food control - to smash the insurgent organisation in Johore, and were a combined effort on the part of the army, police and civil administration. The main object of GRASSHOPPER was the denial of the Johore-Malacca and Johore-Negri Sembilan border areas as a sanctuary and a source of food for insurgents escaping the pressure exerted by WARBLER in Johore. The difficulties experienced in this series of operations are best expressed by the regimental historian of 1st Battalion, The Green Howards:

"It was from every point of view a complex operation....It involved three state governments, those of Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore, and their respective Police Forces. In all, four police districts belonging to three Police Circles were directly involved, and four more circles cooperated or were engaged in some way or other. Added to this, two Brigade H.Q.s and troops of four battalions were involved. 29

29 Oldfield, p 62.
The operations were consequently conducted in three phases, lasting from 28th June to 26th July. In Phase 1, the area was saturated with troops. Areas for which troops could not be spared were bombed to drive the insurgents onto ambushes. In Phase 11, operational areas were redrawn and patrolling continued. In Phase III, emphasis was placed on setting ambushes where the rubber plantations and jungle met. But success continued to be elusive:

"Operationally, the results of 'Grasshopper' had been disappointing. No bandits were killed as a direct result of preplanned operations, and the expected influx of terrorists over the Johore boundary into Malacca had not materialised.... There had in fact been no noticeable alteration in the general lack of support received from the civilian population. Liaison between the military, Police and Civil Administration had been tested and found completely satisfactory at all levels, but the sober fact remained that the crippling blow that was to fell the enemy in the area was still to be administered."30

Development of the Federal Priority Operation

From frustrations like these however, emerged a solution. By 1952, officials directly connected with the Emergency had learned that success depended on three factors: (1) The plan had to include the denial of food and supplies to the insurgents as one of its basic ingredients; (2) Information provided by Special Branch which was progressively improving in quality, was a valuable and at times vital adjunct to information from other sources such as patrolling; and (3) The longer an operation concentrated in one area, the greater the accomplishment in kills and disruption of the insurgents' ties with the masses.31 Furthermore, the application of large scale effort was likely to remain unfruitful unless by chance the operational area included an entire insurgent district organisation together with all its branches. Before 1952, Special Branch knowledge of insurgent boundaries was incomplete. In consequence, even if an operation destroyed several branches, the insurgent district, with one branch intact, was capable of regrowth. But by 1952, Special Branch had established that the insurgent boundaries did not exactly coincide with those of either the Administration or the Police and as often as not the discrepancy occurred at a state boundary: here the question of 'clearance' became involved. (Map 3).

Briefly, the problem was that to avoid clashes with friendly forces, the troops and police in one state or district could not pursue

31 Interviews with Templer, Henniker, Madoc and Brooke.
insurgents across a state boundary without clearance from the S.W.E.C. in the adjoining state. Furthermore, many state boundaries followed natural barriers such as mountain ranges, which, because of their inaccessibility, were additionally likely to become safe havens for the insurgents. Tri-border areas were even more attractive to them.32

A solution to these problems emerged in rudimentary form from Operation HIVE which began on 25th August 1952, in the Seremban District of Negri Sembilan. At that time no one had achieved a notable success in a large scale operation, and General Briggs himself had gradually abandoned his faith in priority operations in favour of framework operations which relied on a steady but sure trickle of kills from patrolling and ambushing. In Operation HIVE, the Commander of 63 Gurkha Brigade, Brigadier M.C.A. Henniker attempted to eliminate both the insurgents and their infrastructure in the Seremban District.

The area of operations was about 25 miles square. To ensure that the insurgents did not have warning, Henniker decided on a deception plan, a mythical operation in a different part of the state.33 The basis of HIVE was the Special Branch's successful penetration of the insurgents' intelligence system in Seremban. Special Branch had gradually discovered that it was - with some notable exceptions - easier to 'turn', i.e. suborn a known member of the insurgent's organisation than to introduce an agent of their own. For HIVE, all known insurgent suppliers in the Seremban area were arrested to force the insurgents to hurriedly recruit new suppliers whom Special Branch could 'turn'. This process also depended on the

32 After the M.C.P.'s October 1951 Directives had ordered a general retirement into deep jungle bases, attempts to set up such bases were made in the following areas: the Kedah/Thailand border area, which offered the additional advantage of a privileged sanctuary in Thailand; the Perak/Kelantan/Thailand border area; the South Perak/Selangor/Pahang border area; the Tasek Bera area of the Negri Sembilan border; and the Ulu Langat swamp area of the South Selangor/Pahang border. Intelligence Appreciation, 1954 p 4.

33 Henniker spared no efforts to mislead them: "We ordered hundreds of maps, pinned them into a composite series of Bahau, and distributed them to those who would have needed them had the operation been a real one. We had maps made, showing all the likely food supply areas, and sent them out as well. We sent, in an unsealed envelope, a letter to the Managing Director of Malayan Railways asking for a special loading ramp to be built in the Bahau Railway Station. To ensure wide circulation of this letter amongst the clerical staff who would open it the letter was endorsed 'Top Secret', 'Personal and Confidential'. Next day, to make doubly sure that the letter had wide circulation, we sent another Top Secret letter (this time in a properly sealed envelope) asking the Managing Director to withdraw the previous one as quickly as possible." Henniker, Red Shadow, pp 134-135.
knowledge that since 1949 every insurgent district had built up stocks of food to guard against temporary disruption of the supplies normally collected by the Min Yuen. Henniker knew that such dumps existed in the Seremban area because his troops had located twenty-five in the previous three months and he estimated that there were others. Thus the operation had to last long enough for the insurgents to exhaust their dumps and be forced to rely on suppliers many of whom would be under Special Branch control.

The general intention was simple. An Outer Ring was defined and the area surrounded by troops who had been built up from a normal complement of three companies for framework operations to three battalions. Within the Outer Ring, the insurgents were to be hunted and destroyed by patrolling and tracking. Stage 1 involved the deployment of the whole of 2nd/7th Gurkhas and two squadrons of the Special Air Service Regiment on the Outer Ring, operating in deep jungle and supplied by air. Their tasks were twofold. First, they were to ambush all known tracks and animal pads using small ambush parties backed by a central reserve. Second, they were to conduct a slow and systematic search of the Outer Ring. Thus, in addition to preventing an insurgent exodus, they located and ambushed some tracks previously unknown. In Stage II, Special Branch were to find out from their informers which areas inside the Outer Ring actually held insurgents. In Stage III, all known suppliers were to be arrested, to disrupt the insurgents' normal system of supply, thus forcing them back on their dumps, and to obtain further information. This was followed by a pause, Stage IV, in which the troops of 2nd/7th Gurkhas were rotated to more promising areas while the insurgents consumed their stocks. In Stage V, mopping-up could begin as increasingly hungry and demoralised insurgents were forced out of the jungle to reestablish contact with the masses, so offering lucrative targets for ambush parties.

An important item in the plan was to prevent food getting out of Seremban town. Food check points were established by the police at every possible outlet, and the Home Guard patrolled other parts of the town boundary. There were many loopholes which could not be blocked, and others were only discovered later. All rice dealers at the same time were permitted to hold five per cent excess stock to make up for waste but in Henniker's words, 'This in itself would feed the eighty-six men of the opposition for a lifetime.'34 Moreover, since food was grown in the area, it travelled from

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34 Ibid., pp 136-137.
countryside to town market, from market to shops and thence perhaps to other villages, so that many possible leaks existed.

While the operation fell short of Henniker's hopes, it was more systematically successful and the technique showed greater promise of refinement, than any previous large scale operation. Intensive searching by patrols located six camps, three of them big enough for thirty to fifty men. At the same time all known suppliers were arrested, 107 of them including 50 Masses Executives. To avoid 'blowing' their cover, some of the informers already working for Special Branch were also arrested. As this necessarily dried up all sources of information, the 2nd/7th Gurkhas, who had been searching inside the Outer Ring were rested. At this point, as if to emphasise the folly of large scale operations, two insurgents were killed by troops of the Fijian Battalion outside the Outer Ring, but none had been eliminated within it. Then an insurgent courier entering the area was killed with a quantity of useful documents. Information poured in as informers reestablished contact. The patrols had located over a ton of food. In the first period lasting five weeks, only four insurgents had been killed and one captured: but in the second, of four weeks, the increased pressure from the systematic beleaguerment of one area began to tell and the total eliminations rose to twenty-five, over a quarter of the insurgents in the district.35

Operation HIVE was the first serious attempt at a relatively sustained operation and by any standards was highly successful. However, it had its shortcomings. For a start the blockade of food from outside was not completely successful. In addition to rice grown locally, Special Branch later found that food had been smuggled through check points in bicycle pumps and false bottoms of tins of pig swill.36 To further improve the check points, the Special Constables manning them were later reinforced by troops. The most important limitation was that two months was still not long enough to complete the destruction of the District Organisation. Those branches which were not destroyed (and at this stage Special Branch did not know precisely who comprised them) were sufficient to sustain the remaining organisation although it never again regained its former potency. Moreover, a factor which had before received general acknowledgement was now confirmed—namely, that the insurgents, even though under considerable pressure, did not leave the area to commence operations elsewhere. In Henniker's words:

36 Madoc, Interview.
"They frequented one particular area for two reasons. First, they had a Communist job to do there; to cultivate the masses, to procure food for their comrades, to protect a propaganda unit, or whatever it might be. The big men were permitted to move about from one area to another, just as generals move about their theatres of war. The rank and file were no more permitted to leave their general area than are regular troops allowed to quit the battlefield when it gets too hot for them. Secondly, they hesitated to leave because of their food lines. If they went into a strange area it would be risky establishing a new food line. They might be betrayed."37

The results of HIVE were subjected to the closest scrutiny by the Operations Research Branch of the Director of Operations - which had been set up by General Templer - and by Special Branch. At the same time a second operation, HAMMER, was launched along similar lines in Selangor. Several improvements were made and 44 insurgents eliminated, over half by surrenders. However, the District Organisation in the HAMMER area contained five branches of which only two were attacked, and although disrupted, they were not destroyed. The results reinforced the view that permanent damage could not be inflicted on an M.C.P. district unless the whole clandestine organisation was included in the area of the operation. The rebuilding process did occur in this district a few months after HAMMER.38 For its part, HIVE was forced to conclude prematurely because the troops were needed elsewhere. At this time, a heavy concentration of troops in one area could only be achieved by denuding others. The risk was accepted that in these areas terrorism would revive, as it frequently did. By 1953 however, the insurgents were fewer, and the more aggressive use of Special Constables in Area Security Units started by Templer, and the increasing effectiveness of the Home Guards, allowed greater flexibility in deploying battalions. This led to Federal Operations which were major food denial operations planned directly by Templer's staff and systematically introduced by him on 6th August 1953. Subsequently, in 1956 they became known as Federal Priority Operations, and although constantly refined, they were the ultimate large scale operation employed in Malaya.39

38 Madoc, Interview.
39 An excellent example of the sustained use of these operations to destroy the insurgent organisation in a State occurred in Pahang. Beginning in 1953 under Templer's stimulus, the Pahang SWEC launched a succession of contiguous and mutually reinforcing operations; IBEX, HAWK, AGILE, APOLLO and ROOSTER, which were so devastating that by the end of 1955 the Security Forces had destroyed the insurgent organisation in four-fifths of the state and the Government had been able to create the largest White Area in the Federation. Review 1955, p 2.
Both Federal and later Federal Priority Operations had three distinct phases.

Phase 1 was a preliminary period of not less than three months during which intelligence was built up about a particular insurgent area. Food suppliers were pinpointed, and the masses organisation was examined for potential agents. Where a potential agent was likely to be 'unwilling', the files of detainees or S.E.P.s who might have known him were searched to give Special Branch a key to turn him. Where necessary, any contacts used in the area previously were re-established, and the resistance of known food supplying communities was softened up.

In Phase II, the operation itself began with increased food control and Security Force pressure. Special Branch first selected the best killing-ground, usually where supplies were handed over to the insurgents, and any adjacent areas known to contain food dumps. These were usually near the supplier's place of work, sometimes on the edge of a village. In some cases Special Branch required the Security Forces to dominate the killing ground for a period to worry the suppliers and force some of them to become informers. This domination was best achieved by constant ambushing. Ambush parties usually moved into position during curfew, before the suppliers arrived for work and waited for contact to be made. Once Special Branch had enough informers the killing ground was left alone by the Security Forces until Special Branch had acquired precise information on which specific ambushes could be based. On this basis the concept of operations was then built up. While this killing area was being prepared, the remainder of the M.C.P. district was made untenable for the insurgents by Security Force activity.

Phase III included the exploitation of the insurgent's loss of morale and the increased flow of intelligence by ambushes, patrolling and attacks on camps. Food control was strictly maintained. As insurgents surrendered Special Branch interrogated them and then exploited them in the following order of priority:

a. An attempt was made to 'turn' the S.E.P. or C.E.P. back into the jungle in order to lead his comrades into an ambush.

b. As soon as possible he was photographed for leaflets which could be used by the Information Services in psychological warfare.

c. Subsequently, the S.E.P. might be used to lead the Security Forces to occupied camps, lead them to food dumps, or show the Security Forces routes
currently being used by the insurgents.\textsuperscript{40}

Even when the insurgents had tumbled to the dispositions of the Security Forces, they would still try to contact their Masses Executives because other food supply organisations in the district were frequently unable to support them. And, even when they had food dumps to fall back on, they still required intelligence. While the initial advantage in such an operation was provided by Special Branch, the Security Forces could consolidate this advantage by using the best troops available in ambushes based on good information, and by exploiting fully operational intelligence provided by Special Branch, including the maximum use of reliable S.E.P.s. The operation was followed as it had been preceded by the establishment of Special Branch Listening Posts in case the M.C.P. attempted to rebuild its organisation in the district.

**Deep Jungle Operations**

A separate but parallel large scale operation, used increasingly as the insurgents set up cultivated plots in the jungle after 1951, was the Deep Jungle Operation.

Although it was evident from the number of illegal gardens which appeared on aerial photographs, that an area might be under development as an insurgent base, the only confirmation was frequently to go in and find out. There were several reasons for this. By 1964, Special Branch had been able to penetrate the insurgent organisation by inserting agents of their own, by turning suspects about whom they had damning evidence, or by using S.E.P.s against their former comrades. However, these techniques could not be used half so effectively against insurgents in the deep jungle. In these areas lived many of the hierarchy with their bodyguards, in some cases as many as a platoon. They could be contacted only by jungle courier carefully selected from the most trusted party members. And, whereas by 1954 Special Branch had infiltrated the 'Open Route Couriers' who operated outside the jungle, they had not managed to insert even one agent into the organisation inside. Moreover, the insurgents had enlisted much of the aboriginal population as an intelligence screen. The government had launched a plan to win the support of the aborigines by operating from a network of Jungle Forts, but it would obviously take time and the longer the aborigines remained under

\textsuperscript{40} D of 0 Directive No. 28 issued 6th August 1953; and D of 0 Directive, The Coordination of Special Branch Planning with Security Force Operations, issued 20th June 1956, pp 2-6.
insurgent domination, the slower the subsequent process would be. For these reasons, and even though they had many of the hallmarks of the old fashioned 'sweeps', Deep Jungle operations were considered necessary.

Operation TERMITE was conducted from July to November 1954, east of Ipoh in Perak. Information from long-range patrols of 22 Special Air Service Squadron, a special forces unit developed from the Malayan Scouts, indicated that a considerable concentration of insurgents was living there with the aborigines, protected by a well organised screen of aboriginal informers and patrols. By their dispositions, the insurgents appeared to be confident that the Security Forces could not reach them. The Director of Operations decided to attack from the air, a decision unusual in a war which offered so few targets for aerial bombardment, and even less opportunity for paratroops. Selected targets were accurately bombed, after which three squadrons of 22 SAS Regiment were parachuted onto the target areas and suspected escape routes in the deep jungle. Once they had established blocks, the ground forces closed in. These consisted of elements of five infantry battalions supported by artillery, two platoons of the Police Field Force, one platoon of the Special Operations Volunteer force and eighty armed aborigines. The majority of the forces employed were supplied by air throughout the operation, and much troop-lifting and casualty evacuation was carried out by helicopter.

The immediate results were disappointing. Only fifteen insurgents were eliminated, and the aborigines whom the operation was intended to win over, were so frightened by the bombing that they could not be contacted for several days. Still, the long term results were more

42 Five types of Special Forces were used in Malaya during the Emergency. A FARELF commanders conference decided in April 1949 that paratroops were not worth the necessary overhead. However, in 1956 a Squadron of the Parachute Regiment did arrive in Malaya but was scarcely used in its specialised role. In April 1953, the Sarawak Rangers consisting of Iban (Sea Dyak) trackers was activated for the third time since 1846. The Malayan Scouts (later renamed as 22 Special Air Service Regiment) became operational in Malaya in January 1951. However, their original role, which was to operate in deep jungle, more than two days journey from the nearest motorable track, did not become effective until 1952. The SAS operated in small patrols usually of three men. They carried 17 days rations. The two other special forces; Ferret Force and the Special Operations Volunteer Force (SOVF) have already been referred to. Weekly News Summary, 13th March, 3rd April, 25th July 1953.

43 In order to 'rope down' from where they had landed in the top of the jungle canopy, the soldiers used Abseil gear which had originally been developed for fighting forest fires in North America.
inspiring. Patrolling in the area was continued into 1955 when a permanent Jungle Fort was established from which a platoon of the Police Field Force dominated the jungle for fifteen miles around.44

Moreover, after the initial attempt by the government to concentrate the aborigines in controllable areas had ended in such appalling disaster, its later enlightened attempts were far more successful. By the end of 1954 this policy, based on the establishment of the Jungle Forts, had led to a situation where of the 50,000 to 60,000 aborigines living in the jungle, most of whom at one time or other had supported the insurgents, only some 4,000 continued to do so.45

The ability of the aborigines to gather intelligence for the government, and provide the Security Forces with tactical information about the movement of the insurgents was so effective that groups of aborigines who had been resettled away from their traditional areas in 1951, were returned because these areas had in the meantime become intelligence vacuums. It was also found that properly led squads of aborigines were superior to other elements of the Security Forces when used against certain targets. Their jungle craft was better and they could carry out long patrols with a minimum of encumbrance. By 1956 a clear policy of employing them had emerged. In addition to Aborigine Auxiliary Police armed with shot guns, who assisted the garrisons of jungle forts as guides, offensive squads of properly trained and armed aborigines known as Police Aboriginal Guards were trained to hunt down M.C.P. couriers and cultivators.46 Eventually they were so successful that in the final years of the Emergency an aborigine force known as the Senoi Pra'ak (literally 'Fighting People'), numbering no more than three hundred, accounted for more insurgents than the rest of the Security Forces put together.47

Large Scale Operations - Final Summary

Thus the Malayan Emergency, like several other counter-insurgency campaigns, showed a surprising immunity from direct applications of large scale conventional military power. Until forces were employed

45 Review 1954, p 11.
47 Thompson, _Communist Insurgency_, p 153.
adroitly and on sound intelligence as in the Federal Priority Operations, few lasting successes were achieved. And even against this technique, the insurgents in several areas proved remarkably tenacious. Operation COBBLE in the Segamat District of Johore required 500 police and 1,200 soldiers over many months to root out 30 insurgents. And in the final Federal Priority Operation of the Emergency, Operation GINGER II in Perak, more than seven battalions of troops as well as reinforced police and Home Guards were concentrated for fifteen months against an estimated 170 insurgents.48

SMALL SCALE OPERATIONS

In an almost exactly inverse relationship to the growing disillusionment with large scale operations from late 1948 onwards, many battalion commanders sought a more profitable answer in patrolling and ambushing.

The lst/10th Gurkhas reported that after the first few months of the Emergency, having been left to their own devices, they had switched from jungle sweeps to small patrols operating offensively within very restricted areas, which they called saturation patrolling.49 Early in 1949, 1st Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment expressed a preference for small ten man patrols operating for several days at a time in widely separated sectors of jungle.50 And similarly, in February 1949 in Johore, when the Seaforth Highlanders were ordered to kill or capture all insurgents in an area, instead of plodding through it from one side to the other, they divided it into company sectors and ordered companies to establish a series of patrol bases within them from which to operate. Company Commanders in each sector were told to take every precaution to avoid being surprised by a superior force, and patrols working out far from the base were ordered to number not less than sixteen all ranks.51

As has already been argued, the large scale operation in Malaya had little success until food denial became its chief ingredient. Until then, the most successful battalions were frequently those left to fight in their own way. For example, whereas the Guards in particular had

48 Madoc, Interview.
49 Q.H.R., lst/10th Gurkha Rifles, 30th September 1948.
50 Q.H.R., lst Devons, 31st March 1949.
51 Q.H.R., lst Seaforths, 31st March 1949.
been employed on abortive sweeps, others were more fortunate. The 1st Battalion, The Green Howards arrived in August 1949. Until well into their second year the whole battalion was frequently employed on large scale operations, sometimes at brigade level. Later, their companies were given areas of responsibility and allowed to decide upon their own operations. Their platoons however, were still controlled by wireless from Battalion H.Q., and normally stayed in the jungle from four to ten days. In the final stage of development of their battalion tactics, Company Commanders ran their own operations and controlled their own platoons. This battalion was one of the most successful for several reasons: in the areas in which it operated, its officers and men established good relations with the local administration and police; the results of its operations were invariably submitted to close scrutiny afterwards; and maximum benefit was extracted from every opportunity to retrain. The battalion's success might have been greater still had it been permitted to remain in one area for a prolonged period, instead of participating periodically in frustrating sweeps. A more static period followed in Negri Sembilan, in which their score of kills and captures reached 16 by the end of their first fifteen months. A retraining period in Singapore was then followed by two more unfruitful months in Johore where they had insufficient time to get to know the area. A further fifteen months in one area at Tampin allowed them time to build up their liaison with the local administration and police and, as their success mounted, the trust which the local inhabitants had in them produced more and better information, on which more kills were based. They had killed or captured (not counting deserters) sixty-six insurgents. Their final two months before returning to England in October 1952 was spent in the Cameron Highlands, where their accumulated experience and practised professionalism assisted them to eliminate a further 20 insurgents. In all, they had eliminated 103 insurgents against their own losses of one officer and eight men killed in action and a
further eleven dead from other causes.\textsuperscript{52}

At the same time, changes in military technique were not enough. For these to be fully effective, intelligence had to be available from other sources. Until the latter half of 1952, when specific information from Special Branch allowed whole insurgent districts to be targeted in a manner which gave the initiative to the Security Forces, even moderately successful results from patrolling could seldom be guaranteed. Of 54 patrols sent out between February and March 1952 by the First Royal Marine Commando in Selangor, only 14 resulted in contacts which caused casualties to the insurgents, while 26th Gurkha Brigade in Johore sent out 58 patrols of which 17 caused casualties. In the same months however, the M.R.L.A. launched 45 incidents in Selangor and 312 in Johore, which were not intercepted.\textsuperscript{53}

The average size of patrols at this time over the whole Federation was 15. The size of the patrol was dictated as much by tradition as by anything else. A full strength platoon of one officer and thirty men could be neatly broken down into two patrols of fifteen commanded by the Platoon Commander (Lieutenant), and by the Platoon Second-in-Command (Sergeant), when both patrols were deployed simultaneously. Alternatively, a weak platoon could still provide one patrol of fifteen.\textsuperscript{54} Even out of

\textsuperscript{52} Compiled from Q.H.R.s for 1st Green Howards and from Oldfield. The most successful British battalion to serve in Malay during the Emergency, in terms of the number of insurgents it eliminated was 1st Battalion, The Suffolk Regiment. They arrived in Malaya in June 1949; when they departed in January 1953 the number of kills and captures achieved by them stood at 195, at a loss to themselves of 12 killed and 24 wounded. Their greater success appears to have stemmed from (1) Good leadership; (2) Greater stability, in that they spent most of their time in one area around Kajang; (3) They placed great emphasis on proficiency in small-arm shooting; and (4) The overwhelming number of their soldiers were from country and farm areas in Suffolk and were used to hunting. Q.H.R., 1st Suffolk.

\textsuperscript{53} INTSUM for this period.

\textsuperscript{54} However in several units the number of patrols deployed depended on the number of qualified and trusted patrol commanders available. One Company Commander in 1st/2nd Gurkha Rifles patrolled himself with one platoon leaving two platoons in base because he did not trust their commanders. Q.H.R., 1st/2nd Gurkha Rifles 30th June 1949. The time spent on a single patrol depended on such matters as alertness, sickness and fatigue. In the first months of the Emergency most jungle operations lasted three days or less. By March of 1949, the period was three to four weeks. A Company of 1st/6th Gurkha Rifles was in the jungle for 27 days up to July 1949. It became standard practice in some battalions for troops to spend 20 days on operations and 10 days in base. By 1960 one battalion preferred to work on a 10 day (Jungle), 5 day (Base) cycle. Q.H.R., 1st/3rd East Anglian 31st January 1960.
fifteen men, according to the statistics of the operational intelligence section, only four could bring effective fire to bear in any contact.\textsuperscript{55} There were positive advantages in the large patrol however. Until the advent of helicopters, a patrol which had received a casualty immediately required four men as a stretcher party, and in jungle they would have to be regularly relieved: in addition two scouts were always needed, and usually two Bren Light Machine Gun groups of two. If an occupied insurgent camp was located, the patrol could be divided into an Assault Party equal to the estimated number of insurgents, and a series of two-man Blocking Groups could still be despatched to ambush possible escape routes.

Unlike in Vietnam, where Viet Cong mining operations made movement along tracks hazardous, patrols seldom encountered mines and there was no case after 1949 where mines were used in an anti-personnel role. And so, not only were tracks invariably used for movement in preference to 'jungle bashing', which was slow, tiring and noisy, but techniques such as 'cross-graining' were employed to locate tracks used by the insurgents as resupply routes.

Once resettlement had been completed at the end of 1952 and food denial had become the basic operational concept, framework operations became a relatively measurable technique which did not greatly alter (except in the decreasing number of insurgents) until the end of the Emergency. Militarily, this was a low-keyed conflict against a fleeting enemy, with hundreds of hours onerously spent walking, wading, slithering and sliding, punctuated by brief moments of contact. Army and police patrols and ambushes all played similar roles, which harrassed the insurgents out of all proportion to the relatively small number of contacts made.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} Ops Research Memo No. 3, for July and August 1952, pp 1-3.

\textsuperscript{56} A further characteristic which battalions had to accept was the degree of dispersion compared with conventional pratice. Thus in 1954, the Battalion H.Q., Support Company and Headquarters Company of 1st Battalion, Queens Royal Regiment, were at Tampin, A and B Companies at Rompin, C Company at South Johol, while D Company was 50 miles away at Ayer Tekah. Journal of the Queen's Royal Regiment, November 1954, p 170.
FIGURE 13

Army Contacts By Types of Engagement 57
January 1954 - June 1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Jan-Jun 1954</th>
<th>Jul-Dec 1954</th>
<th>Jan-Jun 1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrols</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambushes</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks on insurgent</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase in the number of attacks on occupied locations - camps, gardens and bivouacs (Fig. 13) - resulted from a Director of Operations Directive, in the latter half of 1954, that troops were to be assigned to specific areas of jungle and were to employ 'company domination tactics', to eliminate specified independent insurgent platoons.58 In terms of the number of kills per contact these operations became most profitable, accounting for 1.05 kills per contact in the period January-June 1955, compared with 0.62 kills per contact in the same period, as the result of ambushes. From March 1953 to July 1954, 84.2% of preplanned attacks on camps, and 100% of those on bivouacs killed at least one insurgent.59

Against an enemy as easily alarmed and wary as the insurgents, minor mistakes and accidents frequently negated hours and days of painstaking work. During the first half of 1954, a Company of 1st Battalion The Queen's Regiment attempted to destroy an insurgent group known to be based on Mount Ophir near the Johore-Malacca border. An ambush was set on an unoccupied camp consisting of fifteen men, who for two days lay still, without talking, smoking or cooking and were then relieved by another fifteen. On the tenth day the insurgents returned to their camp. The sergeant in charge of the ambush had his carbine ready to fire the shot which would spring the ambush, when someone else in the party prematurely discharged his weapon. Every man then fired into the scrub, and although two insurgents were thought to be hit, none were subsequently found.60

57 Ops Research Memo No. 4/55
58 Review 1954, p 11.
59 The total number of attacks of both kinds was 156. Ops Research Memo, No. 8/54.
60 Q.H.R., 1st Queens, April-June 1954.
Overall, battalions scored about 20% more patrol contacts than they succeeded in springing ambushes. The average number of contacts was one per month. Information was important and helpful; it took a patrol twice as long to make a contact when it was not operating on information. In 1953, the Operations Research Section compared the effectiveness of patrols and ambushes based on information, with those which were not. It found that in 1952, the odds of achieving a contact on the strength of information were 1 in 10 for an ambush and 1 in 17 for a patrol, and that the absence of information reduced these odds to 1 in 33 and 1 in 88 respectively.61

About 35% of contacts were ambushes. The experience of all ambushes showed that it was twice as effective to cover the area within which contact was expected with a number of very small parties, as to place a large number of men on a single track. As regards the hour of day, 40% of all ambushes were sprung between 7 and 11 a.m., and 20% between 6 and 9 p.m. Seventy per cent were sprung within six hours of the ambush position being first occupied. By 1954, a soldier, on average, spent 1000 hours on patrol before making a contact, and the contact did not occur until he had spent four hours on the patrol on which the contact was made. Similarly, a soldier spent 300 hours in ambush before making a contact, and the contact did not occur until he had been in the ambush position for 24 hours.62 The range at which fire was opened was critical. Analyses of past ambushes showed that fire should not be opened at more than twenty yards by day, and less by night. Once a patrol made contact its chances of scoring a kill fell off sharply if fire was opened at more than 100 yards. Moreover, shooting from the hip was futile.63

The perseverance required in patrolling was no less than that required in ambushing. For three years the most successful of all British units, 1st Battalion The Suffolk Regiment, had waged a private campaign in the Kajang area against one of the most feared insurgents, Liew Kon Kim. The latter's one weakness was an addiction to womanising, and despite the wall of intimidation which he had built around himself, information given to Special Branch in July 1952 by one of his discards enabled the former to locate his base camp, somewhere in the Kuala Langat southern swamp. The water here was usually thigh deep, and the undergrowth and mangrove were so

61 Ops Research Memo 1/53
63 Ops Research Memo 1/53.
thick that visibility seldom exceeded ten yards and a distance of two miles was the maximum target for a day's march. The swamp measured 10 miles by 8.

In this, their final operation against Liew Kon Kim, the 1st Suffolk were assisted by two companies of another battalion, and together with police and Home Guards who were used to seal other exits from the swamp, they waded and floundered for three days and nights in search of him. Brief periods of rest were spent on improvised platforms, on mangrove roots, or else on islands where there was less water but always some. After four days unsuccessful searching the troops were regrouped and B Company of the Suffolks were redeployed by railway truck along a logging line and inserted in a different part of the swamp. They advanced on a frontage of nine patrols, and on the sixth day one patrol, after losing itself in a morass of bomb craters, finally caught up with Liew Kon Kim and killed him and his two escorts.64

The following breakdown of the total number of successful ambushes and patrol contacts, between May 1952 and the end of April 1953, also permits a comparative appraisal of the performance of the army, the police and the insurgents in this period, five years after the start of the Emergency.

64 Q.H.R., 1st Suffolk, July-September 1952.
FIGURE 14
The Performance of Army and Police in Ambush and Patrol
May 1952 - April 1953

May-Aug 1952  Sep-Dec 1952  Jan-Apr 1953

Police Patrols
Contacts  158  102  113
Kills  53  22  16
Captures  4  5  2
Kills & Captures per contact  .36  .26  .16

Army Patrols
Contacts  200  161  170
Kills  75  53  76
Captures  9  7  5
Kills & Captures per contact  .42  .37  .48

Police Ambushes
Sprung Ambushes  85  79  59
Kills  53  47  31
Captures  3  3  2
Kills & Captures per ambush  .65  .63  .56

Army Ambushes
Sprung Ambushes  109  135  95
Kills  77  100  83
Captures  6  2  4
Kills & Captures per ambush  .76  .75  .91

Moreover, the above figures which show a consistently higher comparative performance by the army than by the police, also demonstrate that it is not necessarily more advantageous to employ more police and fewer troops - as one writer has asserted - even though the latter are more expensive to train and equip.\(^{65}\) Quite apart from the strength and firepower of the insurgents, which in Malaya was easily matched even by lightly equipped Police Field Force units, the Malayan Police were themselves dependent on military training and techniques for the acquisition of the skills they needed in the jungle, and in many cases on the wartime experience of the British Police Lieutenants who led their Jungle Squads and Jungle Companies.

On the other hand, the insurgents' performance in the same period, was far inferior to that of either army or police and illustrates how successfully the Security Forces held the initiative.

\(^{65}\) Ops Research Memo No. 6/53, Tables 2, 11 and 13.
\(^{66}\) Thompson, Communist Insurgency, pp 108-109.
The Company Bases from which the Security Forces operated, were seldom attacked (and never overrun) by the insurgents. Police posts however, offered the insurgents a target for which there was nothing comparable on the insurgent side and attacks on them yielded 49, 13 and 8 killed in action in the three periods previously analysed.

Again, the cost in casualties to the Security Forces of their patrol contacts was very low when compared with the losses suffered by the insurgents in the same actions:

It is also significant to compare the results achieved by the different national groups during the height of the Emergency:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Groups</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji &amp; East African Battalions</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurkha Battalions</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay Battalions</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Battalions</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Average for all Battalions</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67 Ops Research Memo No. 6/53.
68 Ibid.
The opinion of successive Directors of Operations and Commanders was that the Fijian Battalion was the best to serve in the Emergency. The days of tribal war were not far behind the Fijians and their skill in fieldcraft and silent movement was of a high order. Their technique was to divide the battalion area into zones through which ranged patrols of varying sizes, and while most were small some were really formidable. The Fijians' senses were also extremely acute, and they could move through the jungle with great speed and silence. Moreover, their unvarying action on contact was to attack. The insurgents, not knowing how many were attacking, would turn and run. But the Fijians, who were superb trackers, keen shots, and of fine physique were more than capable of out-running the insurgents.

In comparing the above figures however, some allowance needs to be made for the difficulties under which the different groups operated. In a campaign in which junior leadership, initiative and relative experience counted heavily, groups like the Fijians who were volunteers, and mostly under regular army officers, were better placed than the British battalions in which the junior officers and soldiers were predominantly National Servicemen. Other forces too had their problems. In the period to 1954, the Malay Regiment had expanded from two battalions to seven, and with each increase the existing battalions had been milked of some of their more experienced officers and senior N.C.O.s in order to launch the newcomers.

While kills per contact gave one measure of a battalion's operational efficiency, a second can also be seen in the number of eliminations per battalion:

70 Interviews with Templer, Henniker and Brooke.

71 As the commander of the brigade in which the Fijian Battalion served put it, 'A Fijian with a Bren Gun can run faster than a Chinaman for his life.' Henniker, Interview.

72 Moreover, in the same period the Malay Regiment had to find a proportion of N.C.O.s for a battalion of the Federation Regiment, an Armoured Car Squadron, a Signal Squadron, and an expanded depot and training organisation. Review 1954, p 13.
FIGURE 18

The Average of Battalion Eliminations (1953-1954) by Racial Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Groups</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1954</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji and East African Battalions</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurkha Battalions</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay Battalions</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Battalions</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Average for all Battalions)</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the daily elimination of insurgents over the whole Federation seldom amounted to more than a dozen, there was a constant search at every level for better methods. Yet amidst all the experiments, it is surprising how few technical advances had a significant effect on tactical operations. An Infra-Red Alarm System, which was intended to give warning of movement along a track was found to be cumbersome and unreliable.\textsuperscript{74} A Sniperscope attached to the American M1 and M2 Carbines used by many of the troops to provide a means of observation and sighting at night was too heavy for prolonged use and insufficiently robust and reliable. However, a simple bracket which allowed a torch to be fitted to the barrel of a Bren Gun or a carbine, to focus a beam of light along the line of fire, improved accuracy against both static and moving targets and brought some success in night ambushes.\textsuperscript{75}

The insurgents, like the Mau Mau in Kenya, became so timid in their attempts to avoid contact with the Security Forces, that it became

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Similarly, a Forward Listening Area Device which could pick up the noise of men approaching an ambush position by means of small microphones placed out in four different directions and pass the resultant signal through an audio-amplifier to a listener wearing headphones who could then trigger an ambush, had limited success. Again, a Small Arms Detector which gave warning of the approach of anyone carrying a weapon, and a Patrol Sender Unit which provided one way radio communications between different patrols in different parts of the country, were found to be too specialised to be of real practical value. \textit{Ops Research Memo} No. 1/57, pp 28-29.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
increasingly difficult to find them. One of the most effective means of doing so was by employing Iban (Sea Dyak) trackers from Borneo, many of whom had been practising head-hunters. These were introduced early in the insurgency and had been used with great success but their numbers were limited. This presented a problem. Malay villagers do not normally frequent the jungle, and the Aborigines until relatively late in the campaign were inaccessible and difficult to handle. A Tracker Training Wing was therefore opened at the FARELF Training Centre, and after trials it was found possible to train British soldiers to be trackers. Instructional courses lasting two months were begun in 1954 and, provided they practised daily thereafter, the best soldiers trained in this way could become competent trackers.

Specially trained tracker dogs, employed with a specialist handler were also used and had mixed success. Much depended on the confidence which patrol commanders had in them, but in comparison with the Mau Mau uprising, where they were used with great success and patrols seldom went out without a dog, tracker dogs were never enthusiastically adopted in Malaya. The higher temperature and humidity of Malaya and the prevalence of pests such as leeches made them less dependable and accounts for much of the difference.

The basic small arms and light automatic weapons used by troops and police, changed only slightly during the course of the Emergency and, with minor exceptions, a clear pattern had been established by 1954. On patrols the most successful weapon was the United States M1 Carbine, while the Bren Light Machine Gun was universally rated as the best weapon in an ambush. Initially, the rifle most frequently carried in Malaya, the Number 5

76 Troops in Malaya searched for the following sign: (1) Change in the colour of the vegetation; (2) Unnatural formations in the vegetation; (3) Bruises, breaks and cuts in the vegetation; (4) Water on certain areas whereas the remainder is dry; (5) Mud or soil on grass or bushes; (6) Scars (or footprints) in bare or muddy ground; (7) Latex exuded from a bruised rubber root; (8) Disturbances in insect life. ATOM, p xx1-2. Operations Research also assisted in identifying the characteristics of insurgent camps. Ninety-eight per cent of them (over five years) were within two miles of habitations or gardens. They were likely to be within 50 to 100 yards of a stream large enough to show on a map scaled 1 inch to 1 mile. Almost all were located between 150 and 250 feet above sea level; the favourite location was on the spur of a mountain, which offered escape routes. The camps were clustered, with up to four or five in two or three adjoining grid squares, although they had all been built at different times. Individual camps were often under outstandingly tall and bushy topped trees. About 70% of the camps were placed so as to catch the morning sun. Ops Research Memo 3/53, pp 1-8.

77 Ops Research Memo 1/57.
Rifle, was handicapped because of the time spent in manual reloading, and was rapidly supplanted by the FN Self Loading Rifle when it became available in quantity in 1956. The Browning Automatic Shotgun (maximum range 75 yards), proved very effective in ambushes where hitting power and spread of shot were more important than range. But in this connection neither the Sten, Patchett, nor Owen group of sub-machine carbines were popular with the troops and were seldom carried. One reason was the unreliability of ammunition, which was mostly of 1945 vintage combined with the knowledge that if the weapon did not kill first time, the firer was unlikely to get a second chance. Both types of grenade in general use throughout the British Army at the time, the Number 36 (Fragmentation) Grenade, and the Number 80 (White Phosphorus) Grenade were used primarily in attacks on insurgent camps, either during the assault, or - in the case of the Number 36 Grenade - fired from the EY (Grenade Firing) Rifle to prevent escape.

While the Emergency remained throughout an infantry war, other arms of the service did play their own distinctive parts (Fig. 19):

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78 The importance of marksmanship training in Malaya was accentuated by the fact that at the Jungle Training Centre at Kota Tinggi only 1 out of 10 soldiers being trained in 1949 could hit a 'bandit' target at 30 yards. Minutes, Commanders Conference FARELF, 25th-26th April 1949. The order of usefulness of weapons in patrol contacts and ambushes in 1952, based on the number of times each had to be fired to produce a kill was as follows:

**For Patrols**

- M1 Carbine
- Bren Light Machine Gun
- Owen or Sten Rifle

**For Ambushes**

- Bren Light Machine Gun
- M1 Carbine
- Owen or Sten Rifle

(Opn Research Memo 1/53)
The Line Infantry battalions built up to a total of twenty-three during Templer's period of which three were usually resting and undergoing retraining in Singapore at any one time. By the end of 1954, operations in Perak and Johore had become so important that fourteen of the available battalions were deployed in the two states: a concentration which was only made possible by the greater capacity of the police to take over most of the routine patrolling in other areas. The Armoured Car Regiments were fully extended in providing convoy escorts throughout the Federation and occasionally undertook the task of mobile blocking points and check points during food denial operations. After the departure from Malaya of W.N. Gray, the former Police Commissioner, the policy of providing the Police Force with armoured vehicles became general and 970 were in use by the time Templer left Malaya.80

79 Review 1948-57, Annex B. From 1st September 1953 the command arrangements in the Federation were regularised to give greater efficiency. H.Q. 17th Gurkha Division became responsible for what had been South Malaya District (including Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johore); H.Q. 1st Federal Division became responsible for Kedah and Perak; and 1st Independent Infantry Brigade was responsible for Pahang Trengganu and Kelantan.

80 Blaxland, Regiments, p 103.
During the first three years little use was seen for artillery in its conventional role and 26 Field Regiment Royal Artillery, which was in the Federation in June 1948, was used as infantry. Not until Operation PURSUIT which attempted to surround the insurgent group responsible for murdering Sir Henry Gurney, was artillery employed in a sustained conventional sense. However, by 1954, because of increasing evidence from interrogations that artillery fire and bombing caused some drop in morale, more and more artillery was employed to provide harassing fire. For similar reasons, most battalions which until then used their integral Mortar Platoons in a normal patrolling role, now activated them and to increase the weight of fire which they could produce, their smaller 3 inch mortars were replaced by 4.2 inch, a weapon normally employed by the Artillery.

The Employment of the Navy

The contribution which the Navy could make to the Emergency was necessarily limited. But by patrolling the coast in association with the police it ensured that no weapons or military supplies reached the insurgents from outside. In 1952 for example, the navy had six Seaward Defence Vessels at sea for an average of 135 days engaged in coastal patrols. In the process, they checked more than 1,000 coastal craft without finding any evidence of smuggling. Occasionally, more spectacular operations were undertaken. During Operation PROSIAC in 1951, the first undertaken by the Malayan Scouts in deep jungle, the navy transported the group by sea and river from Port Dickson in Negri Sembilan, around the coast to Ulu Rompin in Pahang. In 1954, H.M.S. Defender sailed nine miles up the Johore River to shell targets in the Telok Sengat area and in the same year there were 39 bombardments of suspected insurgent camps by destroyers, frigates and minesweepers, and five air strikes from carriers operating off the coast. But this was harassing fire rather than precise bombardment and no known insurgents were eliminated by the bombardments themselves.

81 Ibid., p 98.
82 I have been unable to find any really convincing evidence that the amount of artillery used in Malaya should have been increased. By September 1957, 1,000,000 rounds of Field Artillery ammunition had been fired mainly of a harassing nature. Unlike South Vietnam, the insurgents in Malaya seldom stood and fought against organised opposition. Thus calls for fire in support of ground troops in contact were virtually non-existent. Review 1948-57.
83 No known supplies reached the insurgents from external sources. Templer and Madoc, Interviews.
Undoubtedly, the navy's greatest contribution was in helicopter support for troop lifting. At the beginning of 1953, 848 Naval Helicopter Squadron began operations using S55 Helicopters, each capable of carrying five fully equipped troops. Until then, because of the speed of the insurgent warning system based on the aborigines, the operations of the Security Forces in deep jungle had been relatively ineffective. By speeding up the movement of troops and patrols, and even by winching down explosives so that a helicopter landing zone could be prepared, the flexibility of the helicopter was transformed into a positive operational asset. In 1954, the Squadron flew 215,000 operational flying hours and lifted more than 10,000 troops, and while this was a minute figure compared with operations in the Second Indo-China War, it made a spectacular difference to the amount of time lost in Malaya in transferring troops from one area to another, and in the wear and tear on the troops themselves.

The ability of helicopters to operate out of small jungle clearings, and to provision army and police detachments and Jungle Forts caused Templer to make representation to the British Chiefs of Staff in February 1954, and by the end of the year the number of troop lifting helicopters had been increased from eight to twenty and in addition seventeen Light Helicopters were made available. From then on helicopters made a significant contribution to the Emergency.

The Use of the Air Force

From 1948, the pattern of counter-insurgent operations in the jungle depended on air supply, and this auxiliary use of air rather than offensive operations remained the R.A.F.'s predominant commitment.

An important feature of the Briggs Plan was the use of the Operations Rooms established by S.W.E.C.s and D.W.E.C.s. Here requests for air support were transmitted on a Ground/Air Net thus allowing the operations of the R.A.F. to be neatly dovetailed into the local plan. It was not uncommon for an R.A.F. Forward Air Controller to accompany an army patrol, and an R.A.F. officer was frequently present as a liaison officer for a

85 Templer, Interview.

86 As a D of O report stated: 'The whole pattern of anti-terrorist operations in the jungle is dependent upon the ability of the R.A.F. to drop supplies to troops in the jungle. Air supply therefore continues to be the most important role of the R.A.F. in the Emergency.' Review 1954 p 16.
major operation.\textsuperscript{87}

An army or police patrol normally carried five days supplies, but as operations were found to be more successful the longer the troops stayed in the jungle, a patrol normally took at least one air drop.\textsuperscript{88} Re-supply aircraft also carried a radio set which could be tuned to the frequency of the troops on the ground.

The relative importance of various types of aircraft and their degree of use can be seen from the following table of sorties undertaken by the R.A.F. during 1954:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF AIRCRAFT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SORTIES\textsuperscript{89}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anson</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auster</td>
<td>20194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastings</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Helicopters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragonflies</td>
<td>2512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycamores</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlwinds</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlwinds</td>
<td>4705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornets</td>
<td>905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincolns</td>
<td>1132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosquitoes</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meteors</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pembrokes</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneers</td>
<td>1688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitfires</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderlands</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valettas</td>
<td>3975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vampires</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39,248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The greatest number of sorties (Austers), was flown by army pilots on such tasks as the observation and direction of fire from guns, target marking for

\textsuperscript{87} Brooke, Interview.

\textsuperscript{88} Each patrol carried coloured marker panels for denoting the centre of a Dropping Zone (D.Z.) or helicopter Landing Zone (L.Z.). An inflatable coloured balloon which could be let up through the jungle canopy to denote the location of the patrol was also carried. Brooke, Interview.

\textsuperscript{89} The total number of sorties in 1954 (39,248), is much higher than in the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya (6,071) for the same period. However, in the Second Indo-China War a greater number of sorties than this was flown per month. Ops Research Memo 1/57 p 70.
for offensive air strikes, and most important of all reconnaissance which included the direction by wireless of army patrols on the ground. By reason of the intensive flying undertaken by them, the information obtained by Auster pilots formed the basis of some of the most successful Security Force operations.

By 1954, the Valetta had replaced the Dakota as the basic R.A.F. Transport aircraft. It was used chiefly for both supply and leaflet drops and, as deep jungle operations increased, for parachuting men of 22 Special Air Service Squadron into the jungle. An aircraft, which in a sense was even more spectacular than the helicopter made its appearance in 1954; this was the Prestwick Pioneer. Rated by the R.A.F. as a STOL (Short Take-Off and Landing) aircraft, it had an astonishing ability to operate out of the 150-250 yard long airstrips which were being located at each Jungle Fort. Each aircraft could carry four passengers or 800 lbs of cargo and by the end of 1954, three aircraft were operating in the country. They were used mainly for communication flying to the Jungle Forts including police garrison exchanges. Because the cost of maintaining them was one-tenth that of a helicopter, it was found to be more economical to hew strips out of the jungle rather than use helicopters for these tasks.

The dispersion of the insurgents in Malaya, the lack of specific information concerning their whereabouts, and the limitations of visual and photographic reconnaissance, all militated against the effective use of offensive air support. There were important exceptions where pin-point bombing was aimed at the specific elimination of a group of insurgents, but in two cases where this occurred, information of high quality was first acquired by ground patrols or by a clever Special Branch

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90 Ibid., pp 70-71. An Auster pilot was frequently required to 'home' a patrol onto an insurgent camp or illegal cultivation in the jungle.

91 Brooke, Interview.

92 In 1953, 54 million leaflets on general topics, and another 23 million addressed to specific individuals or groups were dropped into insurgent areas Annual Report, 1953. 'Voice' broadcasts because of the specialised equipment required, were undertaken by specific aircraft; normally 2 Austers and 3 Dakotas. Templer, Interview.

93 This was increased to 10 by 1955 when they carried 5,446 persons and 181 tons of freight. Review, 1955 p 13.
expedient.\footnote{The two occasions referred to were outside the time frame of this study. In 1956, Goh Peng Tuan, political commissar of the 5th Independent Platoon was eliminated when Lincoln bombers guided by a Ground Located radar, which had been previously sited on a nearby hill, bombed his camp in a Johore swamp. In May 1957, the same technique was used to eliminate Teng Foo-Lung, of the Negri Sembilan State Committee. Brooke, Interview. The first incident has been described thoroughly by Lt.Col. R.C.H. Miers, in \textit{Shoot to Kill}, London 1959, pp 56-72.}

\section*{Operation FIREDOG}

During 1952, the effectiveness or otherwise of air support in Malaya, was for the first time subjected to intensive statistical research, the objects of which were:

a. To assess the part played by air strike and air supply in operations;
b. To show where air support was proving most effective; and
c. To assess the most effective methods of air support.\footnote{Op. Firedog, p 1.}

The report which emerged collated and quantified a vast mass of data on air strikes and other aspects of air support which affected the efficiency of ground operations, and although its findings were related only to the year 1952, nevertheless they were important in supporting or demolishing some general conceptions which had already emerged.

In summary the conclusions were: First, that battalions varied considerably in their use of air support, but those which eliminated the most insurgents also made most use of it. Second, that battalions which were the least successful in eliminating insurgents, also used a disproportionately large amount of the available air strikes. And third, that on average, air support assisted in about 50\% of total eliminations of which strikes comprised 33\% and supply drops 17\%. Of the total number of strikes carried out, 36\% were successful in assisting in the elimination of one or more insurgents.\footnote{Ibid., pp 11-13.}

The phrase 'assisted in' is highly relevant in this context, as of course is the corporate definition of air support which includes both air supply (i.e. of rations, ammunition, and operationally urgent items of equipment parachuted to the troops); and air strikes (i.e. offensive air support by strafing, rocketting or bombing). The analysis established that
air strikes during which only strafing and rockets were used were the least successful form of support. It required 30 sorties by Vampire aircraft to 'assist in' the elimination of one insurgent. The analysis also established that although 'blockades' (i.e. pattern bombing to prevent insurgent movement), and 'softening up' (i.e. harassing attacks), appeared to be the most fruitful employment of offensive air support, the results achieved inside three days of the bombing taking place were negligible, and that it was in the follow-up by ground troops after three days that eliminations began to occur.\(^57\)

Nor did the elimination rate increase as the weight of bombs (i.e. bomb load multiplied by number of aircraft) increased, in fact the reverse was the case.\(^98\)

Thus, the results of Operation FIREDOG appeared to indicate—and this was subsequently confirmed in the present writer's case by interviews with two Directors of Operations\(^99\)—that in Malaya, as in both the First and Second Indo-China Wars, offensive air power was neither the match winner nor even the equaliser in breaking the insurgents' will to fight. In Malaya, the pursuit of even a minor tactical success was never achieved by stepping up either the bomb load or the number of sorties flown; it was achieved by precise information, and even then a number of factors including weather, timing and coordination with ground troops had to be favourable for success to be achieved. It was the auxiliary tasks undertaken by the Air Force in Malaya; supply and leaflet dropping, 'Voice' aircraft, casualty evacuation, and the provisioning of Jungle Forts by Pioneers and helicopters which were really fruitful.

\(^57\) Ibid., p 13.

\(^98\) Moreover, on the ground, the tactical situation was complicated by the fact that offensive air strikes, and also artillery and mortar fire were not permitted in areas of rubber because of the damage caused to the trees. The insurgents realised this and on the approach of a flare-dropping Auster, which usually preceded an air attack the insurgents were likely to take to the rubber. Attempts to convert this into a technique were both expensive and unsuccessful. Brooke, Interview.

\(^99\) Templer and Brooke, Interviews.
CONCLUSION

Within the framework of an operational analysis this thesis set out to prove four contentions, namely that:

a. If the Government of Malaya had acted more promptly and decisively in 1948, the M.C.P. could have been neutralised at far less cost in lives and money than subsequent operations demanded;

b. Having failed to avoid large scale terrorism, and even allowing for the harsh terrain, it was still the failure of the Government to make a coherent plan which rendered a protracted campaign inevitable;

c. The Malayan Communist Party's failure was due as much to the party's faulty appreciation of its own strength and the lack of an adequate strategy as to the efficiency of British counter-measures; and finally,

d. Success was not achieved until the Government integrated its own strategy by arbitrary controls.

In many respects the early period of the Emergency exemplified the best and worst aspects of British colonial government. Worst, because during the first five months of 1948, the clear signs of incipient insurrection were not taken seriously by the Government whose haphazard intelligence machinery had failed to discern either the direction or magnitude of the threat. In the same way neither the Police nor the Army were apprised of the situation or of their likely involvement in it. Consequently, the first two years saw a succession of expedients, none sufficient to gain the initiative. The measures taken were adequate only to contain the insurgents, never to defeat them. In an atmosphere of dangerously weak liberal reform, the M.C.P. was allowed to flourish unchecked. It had clearly announced its intention to set up a Communist Republic. As a well established subversive party with a clandestine political arm it was enabled to harness the nascent and largely uncontrolled trade union movement; and finally, to commit to armed revolt its own military force, previously equipped and subsidised by the British, and only partly disarmed. It was permitted to do so because the security services were understrength and ill-directed. The responsibility of the British Government, astonishingly unrepentant after the debacle of the Japanese invasion of 1941-42, has been indirectly admitted in an official report by at least one Director of Operations:

"A Police Special Branch must be maintained permanently in being in all territory under our control, and must be of adequate strength and quality to keep effective watch on subversion and on preparation for violence
and terrorism. Its strength must be increased as the threat increases. Whatever this may cost, it will avoid far greater cost and danger later. Similarly, every civil and military measure will be far cheaper and much more effective if carried out in time. This must clearly be balanced against the risk of causing a delicate and dangerous situation to explode, but in Malaya almost every measure could and should have been taken earlier than it was.¹

Although the British Military Administration in the confused aftermath of the Second World War had sought and received expert advice to the contrary, it chose nevertheless to set up an intelligence bureau, the Malayan Security Service, with reduced funds and inadequate staff and without systematic links with the police - the only agency capable of detecting subversion in the rural areas. In Singapore, the Commissioner-General, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald showed greater awareness of the threat than the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent. Whatever his other qualities, Gent, who had categorised the long list of politically inspired murders during the first five months of 1948 as 'a war of nerves by the forces of disorder', was unwilling or unable to recognise that a full scale revolt was imminent, and was not the man to lead the country at that time. But in Gent's defence, he was not alerted to the cause of rural insecurity by the M.S.S. report of April 1948. Neither was he encouraged to take prompt or pre-emptive action by the British Government. When at last, under extreme pressure from the planting and mining interests, he declared a state of emergency, the moment for effective action had passed.

From then until Templer's arrival the root of the problem was insecurity. As Sir Robert Thompson has said,

"What the peasant wants to know is: Does the Government mean to win the war? Because if not he will have to support the insurgent. The Government must show it is determined to win. Only in that way will it instil the confidence that it is going to win."²

This was the dilemma of the uncommitted Chinese. Until they were convinced of the government's certainty of purpose, and until their security could be guaranteed, they were virtually forced at the risk of their lives to 'sit on the fence'. Moreover, in contrast to the planters and miners who had powerful associations and lobbies in both Kuala Lumpur and London, the isolated tappers and squatters were completely vulnerable. They had little hope of protection against the threat of murder, abduction and looting of their food stocks, and in such circumstances overt support for a government

² Thompson, Communist Insurgency, p 146.
which could not protect them was a luxury they could not afford.

To protect them the government had first to concentrate them; this it was strangely slow to do. If the proposals of the Newboult Committee had been implemented in February 1949 instead of May 1950, insurgent support would have been severed at its source; because only gradually as the insurgent support organisation became more sophisticated, did its tentacles reach into virtually every layer of Chinese society in Malaya: certainly until the end of 1949 it depended predominantly on the squatters.

Persuasive testimony to the difficulty of rooting out even a small part of the insurgent infrastructure which had thus been permitted to develop can be seen from successive Federal Priority Operations which required overwhelming concentrations of troops, police and resources to be successful.

What did the M.C.P. achieve? Militarily, it had contained a force varying between five and twelve times its own strength and had sustained an incident rate which had not been reduced below 100 a month for five years. By which time the superiority of the Security Forces was 10 to 1. But, up to the time Malaya became independent in 1957, the insurgents had killed only 7 out of every 10,000 people and had wounded or abducted a further eight. For the M.C.P., as for Malaya itself, the results of the insurrection were sterile. In an economic sense, much of the revenue of the country had been diverted into fighting the insurrection, while politically, the barriers of suspicion which divided the races of the peninsula had been made more rigid, further diminishing the possibilities of a politically stable independent state, free of communal strife. Unable to overcome the muddle and confusion of its own strategic and racial problems, the M.C.P. had become a spent force by 1954.

On the government side, until the appointment of General Templer to be both High Commissioner and Director of Operations, there was a clearly discernible difference between the British Government's stated intention to remain in Malaya and complete the destruction of the insurgents, and its apparent will to do so. Even a far sighted administrator like Sir Henry Gurney had failed to see the need for a separate Director of Operations. Had he done so in 1949 when there was a lull in insurgent activity, the effort required to suppress the insurgency would have been far less.
Moreover, even when Sir Harold Briggs was appointed, his powers were so circumscribed that his talent and experience were seriously underemployed. Briggs was a realist. His report of 1st November 1950, in which he clearly indicated to the governments both in Malaya and the United Kingdom that 'without the gravest steps being taken' morale would drop dangerously and further losses occur before his plan took effect, was almost Wellingtonian in its cold, candid and unemotional good sense. Yet despite the obvious seriousness of the situation, and the need for a fundamental overhaul of both the operational machinery and the methods being used, it was Briggs himself, acting on his initiative and not Sir Henry Gurney (who was on leave in the United Kingdom at the time) who argued the case with the British Government. Even then, the urgency was only grudgingly acknowledged, and when Briggs was finally granted executive power over the Defence Branch, the Armed Services and the Police, it was already too late for him personally. And meanwhile, Sir Henry Gurney had been murdered.

His death was not of itself the catalyst for new lines of action. While political expediency alone demanded that it be met by an immediate and overwhelming response from the British Government, a successor was not named for several months and when General Lockhart arrived to succeed Sir Harold Briggs as Director of Operations, he was given no wider powers than Briggs had been. Indeed, the unnecessary and ironical nature of Gurney's death was a fitting epitaph to the muddled policy which the British Government had pursued since the end of the Second World War. After three years, not only were the insurgents undefeated, but in spite of considerable casualties their numerical strength was greater than it had been since early 1948. And even worse, for the people of Malaya it was impossible to see an end to the insurrection. True, the insurgents had been unable to proclaim even one liberated area; but it was not so much that they were likely to overthrow the government or capture towns, or even sizeable villages, as that they had held on. And with the crumbling of colonial empire, the immense consequences of the communists' victory in China and their dramatic intervention in the Korean War, the M.C.P. and its adherents might have been forgiven for thinking that time was on their side.

It was in this atmosphere of disillusionment, both in Malaya and the United Kingdom with the official handling of the Emergency that the incoming Conservative Government appointed Sir Gerald Templer, a soldier on the active list, to be both High Commissioner and Director of Operations,
with greater political power in a state of undeclared war than any British soldier since Cromwell.

Templer's impact was probably greater than that of any other British colonial official in the history of the peninsula. Simultaneously he re-geared the Briggs Plan which had shown signs of faltering and he provided the dynamic without which the integration of government, police and armed forces could not have been consolidated. He introduced new methods of police training and new jungle tactics. He began the reorganisation of the intelligence system and appointed the first real Director of Intelligence. He set in motion the psychological warfare campaign and through a revitalised police force he launched Operation SERVICE which had incalculable effects for the Malayan community. In essence, Templer injected a new spirit of urgency and by the astute and moderate use of power ensured the success of counter insurgent operations. When he left in May 1954, not only had the back of the Emergency been broken, but Malaya itself was on the verge of self-government.

This break with tradition represented the very best aspect of British colonial government because by the firmness of its action, the Government demonstrated to the people - and the insurgents - that it intended to win in Malaya. Thereafter, the Emergency became a large scale mopping-up operation and the counter insurgency machinery which existed at the end of the Emergency was little changed in essential techniques from what it had been in Templer's time.
### APPENDIX A

**EMERGENCY STATISTICS IN DETAIL FOR PERIOD 1948-1955**

(Back claim column denotes figures added and subtracted for which no definite month was given for that current year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
<th>Back Claim 1950</th>
<th>Total 1948</th>
<th>Total 1949</th>
<th>Total 48-49</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorists Killed</strong></td>
<td>374</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>993</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>1641</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorists Captured</strong></td>
<td>263</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorists Surrendered</strong></td>
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<td>251</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>147</td>
<td>454</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Eliminations</strong></td>
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<td>1207</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>93</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2842</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorists Wounded</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>1900</td>
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<td>104</td>
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<td><strong>Regular Police Killed</strong></td>
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<td>149</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Regular Police Wounded</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
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<td>327</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Special Constables Killed</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
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<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Constables Wounded</strong></td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
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Incidents

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| Minor | 289 288 274 221 269 225 189 164 139 90 10 94 | 2338 |
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Contacts

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1Review 1948-57, Appendix B.
### APPENDIX B

**EMERGENCY STATISTICS IN GENERAL FOR WHOLE PERIOD 1948-60**

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| **SECURITY FORCES ELIMINATED:** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Police | 89   | 164  | 314  | 380  | 207  | 58   | 53   | 47   | 25   | 5    | 3    | 1    | -    | 1346  |
| Soldiers | 60   | 65   | 79   | 124  | 56   | 34   | 34   | 32   | 22   | 6    | 7    | -    | -    | 519   |
| Total | 149  | 229  | 393  | 504  | 263  | 92   | 87   | 79   | 47   | 11   | 10   | 1    | -    | 1865  |

| **RATIO OF ELIMINATIONS - INSURGENTS SECURITY FORCES** | 4 | 5 | 2 1/2 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 44 | 68 | 115 | - | 5.7 |

| **CIVILIANS KILLED AND MISSING:** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Killed | 315  | 334  | 646  | 533  | 343  | 85   | 97   | 62   | 30   | 22   | 3    | 3    | -    | 2473  |
| Missing | 90   | 160  | 106  | 135  | 131  | 43   | 57   | 57   | 26   | 2    | -    | 3    | -    | 810   |
| Total | 405  | 494  | 752  | 668  | 474  | 128  | 154  | 119  | 56   | 24   | 3    | 6    | -    | 3283  |

| **TOTAL POLICE, SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS KILLED AND MISSING** | 554  | 723  | 1145 | 1172 | 737  | 220  | 241  | 198  | 103  | 35   | 13   | 7    | -    | 5148  |

| **WOUNDED:** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |
| Police | 119  | 170  | 321  | 454  | 278  | 53   | 89   | 60   | 32   | 11   | 6    | 8    | -    | 1601  |
| Soldiers | 92   | 77   | 175  | 237  | 123  | 64   | 65   | 43   | 47   | 22   | 13   | 1    | -    | 959   |
| Civilians | 149  | 200  | 409  | 356  | 158  | 15   | 31   | 24   | 36   | 7    | -    | -    | -    | 1385  |
| Total | 360  | 447  | 905  | 1047 | 559  | 132  | 185  | 127  | 115  | 40   | 19   | 9    | -    | 3945  |

1 Despatch No. 14 from High Commissioner For The United Kingdom to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Kuala Lumpur 5th November 1960 (Top Secret)
"My immediate aim on arrival at Kuala Lumpur on the 3rd April 1950, was to get as much information as I could from the authorities and from members of all communities, individuals and associations, to add to the excellent briefs I had received in England and Singapore. I made a rapid and extensive tour of the Federation partly for this purpose and partly to get a good view of the country and its characteristics.

By 10th April 1950, I was able to give His Excellency, Sir Henry Gurney, an impression of my views which were briefly as follows:

1. Our object was to eliminate the whole Communist organisation in Malaya before further measures could be initiated by Red China and to restore confidence in Malaya.

2. The morale of the Communists and the strength of their adherents increased in proportion to their successes, the influence of external events and their propaganda. Their fighting strength was decided by the number of weapons they possessed.

They relied for supplies, recruits and information on the Chinese population, particularly in squatter areas but also in the populated areas, in both of which they had their cells. These cells remained undetected and unscathed through denial of information. Chinese areas were widespread and close to the numerous objects of attack and most of them were outside the civil Administration which suffered through acute shortage of Chinese-speaking officers.

Communist propaganda, being more attractive and easier, was more effective than ours, which was weak. Many of our Press reports were inclined to help the Communist propaganda.

Though Communist communications were poor, their information locally was good. The jungle was ideal for ambushes and "snatch and grab" raids as it made surprise and a "get-away" easy. The Communists therefore had the initiative which had to be wrested from them.

1 Briggs Report, pp 3-5.
3. Successes against bandit gangs, though essential to security and morale, were in effect only a "tap on the knuckles". It is at this "heart" we must aim to eliminate the Communist cells among the Chinese population to whom we must give security and whom we must win over. By so doing and removing the bandits' sources of supply and information the task of the Security Forces would be simplified and the enemy forced to fight for these in areas under our control. Thus only can the initiative be wrested from the bandits.

4. Control of the Chinese population would entail bringing it within the Administration, a major task for the civil Government. It would mean taking officials from less important jobs, co-opting volunteers and "oiling the wheels" of the State Administrations. Speed in obtaining financial approval for Emergency tasks must be made possible.

It must be realised that the Chinese are here for good and such land as they occupy must carry promise of a permanent title subject to good behaviour. Such a measure would give a feeling of security to the Chinese squatters and knock away the main plank for Communist propaganda.

5. Security of the population and the elimination of the Communist cells must be the primary task of the Police. Unfortunately our Intelligence organisation is our "Achilles Heel" and inadequate for present conditions, when it should be our first line of attack.

Our information must come from the population or from deserters and, until we can instil confidence by successes and security among the population, our information will be worse than that of the Communists. We have not got an organisation capable of sifting and distributing important information quickly.

Police supervision and training has been inevitably weak owing to shortage of officers and its great expansion. Communications must be made sufficient to ensure perfect control.

6. The primary task of the Army must be to destroy the bandits and jungle penetration. They must also support the Police. The Air Force is particularly valuable for air supply of our forces and offensively against enemy morale. Owing to the invisibility of bandits in the jungle, killing is problematical only.
7. The need for the closest co-operation between the Administration, Police and Army requires joint headquarters at all levels.

8. Present operations proved, and the future size of the Administrative and Police tasks will confirm, that success everywhere at one time will not be possible. Furthermore, a real success somewhere is necessary to improve confidence and morale in Malaya. The fact that six battalions are arriving in Malaya should allow the strengthening of selected areas by troops without undue risk elsewhere. The Administrative and Police potential would not permit any strengthening beyond such selected areas. Tactically the Southern States should be selected for this combined intensified action.

The guiding principle governing such priority areas must be that the Administration and the Police must be left so strong that when these extra troops are removed a recrudescence of terrorists' activity can be prevented. The timing therefore, must depend on the Administrative and Police "build-up" which cannot be rapid.
APPENDIX D

DIRECTIVE ADDRESSED TO GENERAL TEMPLER BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES, PUBLISHED
7th FEBRUARY, 1952

The policy of H.M. Government in the United Kingdom is that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation. H.M. Government confidently hope that that nation will be within the British Commonwealth. In assisting the peoples of Malaya to achieve this object, you will at all times be guided by the declaration of policy expressed in the preamble of the Federation of Malaya Agreement and by the statement of the special responsibilities of the High Commissioner contained in Section 19 of that Agreement.

To achieve a United Malayan nation there must be a common form of citizenship for all who regard the Federation or any part of it as their real home and the object of their loyalty. It will be your duty to guide the peoples of Malaya towards the attainment of these objectives and to promote such political progress of the country as will, without prejudicing the campaign against the terrorists, further our democratic aims in Malaya.

The ideal of a united Malayan nation does not involve the sacrifice by any community of its traditional culture and customs, but before it can be fully realised the Malays must be encouraged and assisted to play a full part in the economic life of the country, so that the present uneven economic balance may be redressed. It will be your duty to foster this process to the best of your ability.

H.M. Government believe that the British have a mission to fulfil in the achievement of these objects and that even after self-government has been attained, the British in Malaya will have a worthy and continuing part to play in the life of the country.

Communist terrorism is retarding the political advancement and economic development of the country and the welfare of its peoples. Your primary task in Malaya must, therefore, be the restoration of law and order, so that this barrier to progress may be removed. Without victory and the state of law and order which it alone can bring, there can be no freedom.

1 The Times; 8th February 1952.
from fear, which is the first human liberty.

In furtherance of your task, not only will you fulfill the normal functions of High Commissioner, but you will assume complete operational command over all armed forces assigned to operations in the Federation and will be empowered to issue operational orders to their Commanders without reference to the Commanders-in-Chief, Far East. You should establish the closest consultation between yourself and the Commanders-in-Chief, Far East, in matters of common concern.

You may assure the Malayan peoples of all communities that they can count on the powerful and continuing assistance of H.M. Government not only in the immediate task of defeating the terrorists but in the longer term objective of forging a united Malayan nation. H.M. Government will not lay aside their responsibilities in Malaya until they are satisfied that Communist terrorism has been defeated and that the partnership of all communities, which alone can lead to true and stable government, has been firmly established.
A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Interviews and Private Papers


Clutterbuck, Maj.Gen. R.L. Served in Malay as a staff officer on Director of Operations' staff 1956-58. Has since written two books on the Malayan Emergency. Granted interview and gave access to private manuscripts.


Madoc, G.C. Was a member of Malayan Police prior to the Second World War and became Acting Director of the Malayan Security Service in 1947. In 1950 he became Assistant Superintendent Special Branch, and Director Special Branch in 1952. Was Director of Intelligence Malaya 1954-58. Granted several interviews which were recorded.


Thompson, Sir Robert. Served throughout the Emergency in the Malayan Civil Service. Was Staff Officer (Civil) to Sir Harold Briggs in 1950. Secretary for Defence 1959-61. Was Head of the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam.

C.C. Too. Became a member of the Emergency Information Service in 1951. Subsequently Director of Psychological Warfare. Granted several interviews and gave access to extensive private papers and notes including unpublished manuscripts of the Emergency.

Waller, P.B.G. Served as personal staff officer to the Commissioner of Police 1950-51. Later commanded Police Field Force units in Pahang. Granted several interviews and gave access to personal notes and unpublished manuscripts.


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<td>Communist Banditry in Malaya: Extracts from Speeches by the High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney, K.C.M.G., October 1948 to December 1949 (Malayan Government Publication)</td>
<td>Gurney, Speeches</td>
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<td>Communist Terrorism in Malaya: The Emergency June 1948 - June 1952 (Malayan Government Publication)</td>
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<td>Federation of Malaya: Department of Labour Annual Report 1948, 1949 and 1950, Kuala Lumpur</td>
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