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Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya

ROGER C. ARDITTI

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Acknowledgements

I have been brought up to believe that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well and this is likely to take sustained hard work. I am not sure if this book goes to prove or disapprove these sentiments, but I certainly hope it is the former. If nothing else, I can take some comfort in the fact that it has been a protracted effort to bring this work to fruition.

I returned to Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, as it was then, in 1992 after my time in the Royal Air Force was cut short. I was bereft of any long-term plans and decided to study for a master's degree in modern history to buy some time to think. While doing this I met Professor Anthony Stockwell. I would not dream to attempt to characterise Tony, perhaps only to say he is the academic I aspire to be. Tony introduced me to the Malayan Emergency and I was immediately gripped. I am still not sure why but suspect it might be due to the heady mix of politics and warfare, of the rapidly changing colonial context, and of characters under desperate pressure who managed to create the foundations of modern counterinsurgency theory.

I decided to follow-up my master's degree with a Ph.D., again under Tony's supervision, examining the origins of the counterinsurgency strategy in Malaya. However, I also had to get a job and so joined the Metropolitan Police. Unfortunately, a serious accident at work cut short my plans to complete my Ph.D. at Royal Holloway. However, after a number of years recuperating, I decided to test my recovery and enrolled in a master's degree in Intelligence and Security Studies

at Brunel University London. It was here that I met Professor Phillip Davies. Again, I would not attempt to characterise Phil but I do owe him an incalculable debt of gratitude. He encouraged me to look at the Emergency afresh, through the prism of intelligence and, with the help of Dr. Kristian Gustafson, we constructed a ruthless battleplan to study for a Ph.D. The thrill (or more probably the sense of relief) when Professor Richard Aldrich, my external examiner, announced some three and half years later that I had passed the viva remains indescribable. This book is the development of my Ph.D. thesis. I have had another two years to contemplate the management of intelligence during the Emergency, to conduct further archival research, and restructure the work significantly. I hope these changes have improved upon my original thesis. However, this work has been undertaken without Tony or Phil's guidance and I am fully responsible for any errors that may have inadvertently crept in.

However, while this work is my own, it would not have been possible for the support of many colleagues and friends over the years. I was highly fortunate to be taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level at Royal Holloway by Professors Nigel Saul, Sara Ansari, Penny Corfield, and Justin Champion. They were all equally inspiring—however, the memory of being admonished by Nigel for submitting an essay written with a ballpoint pen remains fresh and I have not used such an instrument since that day! The teaching team at the Brunel Centre for Intelligence Studies was much smaller than Royal Holloway but had an equal, if not greater, influence upon me. In addition to Phil and Kristian, I was again fortunate to be taught by Andrew Marrin. At Brunel, I also realised that I was not the only postgraduate student striving for a doctorate! Mo Mojothi, James Thomson, Neveen Abdulla, and Andrew Brunetti (and Dr. Seetha Davies and the Davies twins) formed a fantastic support network. More broadly, I met a young Rory Cormac who gave me much encouragement for which I remain grateful. It has been fantastic to see his career bloom. I also became friends with the late Chikara Hashimoto, who was particularly gracious in helping me get my first article published. It is desperately sad that we shall not see his potential fulfilled.

I have spent many, many, hours in various archives, primarily The National Archives at Kew. The service provided by the staff at The National Archives is consistently first-rate and without them, this work would not be possible. I have also had the pleasure of using a number of other archives, each with its own character—I have particularly fond

memories of drinking endless cups of tea while reading fascinating Operational Summaries in the Gurkha Museum in Winchester, of being amazed at the stereoscopic images at RAF Medeneham, and feeling very lucky to have gained access to the Intelligence Museum where I had a fabulous conversation with the staff on a number of topics (which I like to pretend I cannot tell you about!)

While an historian tends to spend the majority of their working life in an archive, in silence only punctured by stifled whoops of joy if a key document is discovered, in writing this I have realised it is very much a team effort. Central to this team were Matt Anstice, Mike Powter, Tom Northcott, Bernadette Turner and my brother Nicholas, each of whom have provided a unique but equally welcome form of encouragement! Since completing my Ph.D., Professor Robin Bryant has taken on the role of de facto academic mentor and if were not for his encouragement it is unlikely that I would have sent the email to Palgrave Macmillan which led to this book being published. Further, it would be entirely remiss not to recognise the support and advice provided by my editors, Maeve Sinnott and Molly Beck.

Most importantly, however, I must acknowledge the influence and support of my parents. My mother, Mary, has proofread every essay, dissertation and chapter I have ever written (often multiple times), despite regularly professing her dislike of history. Surely she must, by now, qualify for some form of postgraduate or long-service award? Finally, in my mind, the presence of my late father, Christopher, can be felt in each page of this work simply because he gave me a love of history and the determination to complete the job. I hope these are qualities I might be able to pass on to my three wonderful girls.

January 2019 Roger C. Arditti

Contents

Abbreviations

ACFE	Air Command Far East
ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
AHQ	Air Headquarters
ALFSEA	Allied Land Forces South East Asia
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
APIU	Air Photographic Interpretation Unit
APS	Axis Planning Staff
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police
BDCC (FE)	British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East)
BMA	British Military Administration
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEP	Captured Enemy Personnel; Combined Emergency Planners
CICB	Counter-Intelligence Combined Board
CICI	Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIGS	Chief of the British Imperial General Staff
CIS	Central Intelligence Staff
CIU	Central Interpretation Unit
CLC	Civil Liaison Corps
CO	Commanding Officer
CoS	Chiefs of Staff
CP	Commissioner of Police
CPA	Chief Political Advisor
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
CPO	Chief Police Officer

CSDIC	Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre
CT	Communist Terrorist
DALCO	Dalley's Company
DCM	District Committee Member
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO&I	Director of Military Operations and Intelligence
DOI	Director of Intelligence
DSO	Defence Security Officer
DWEC	District War Executive Committee
EIS	Economic Intelligence Section; Emergency Information Service
FARELF	Far East Land Forces
FEAF	Far East Air Force
FECB	Far East Combined Intelligence Bureau
FELF	Far East Land Forces
FIC	Federal Intelligence Committee
FMS	Federated Malay States
FOES	Future Operations Enemy Section
FSS	Field Security Service/Section
FWEC	Federal War Executive Committee
GLU	General Labour Union
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOS II (Int)	General Staff Officer II (Intelligence)
HD(S)E	Home Defence (Security) Executive
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
INA	Indian National Army
ISIC	Interservice Intelligence Committee
ISLD	Inter-Service Liaison Department
ISTD	Interservice Topographical Department
JAPIB	Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board
JAPIC	Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre
JIB	Joint Intelligence Bureau
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JID	Joint Intelligence Division
JIO	Joint Intelligence Organisation
JIS	Joint Intelligence Staff
JOC	Joint Operations Room
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
KMT	Kuomintang
LDC	Local Defence Committee
LIC	Local Intelligence Committee
LSO	Local Security Officer

MCA	Malayan Chinese Affairs
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MDU	Malayan Democratic Union
MEF	Middle East Force
MEIC	Middle East Intelligence Centre
MELF	Middle East Land Forces
MI5	The Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
MNLA	Malayan National Liberation Army
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MPABA	Malayan People's Anti-British Army
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
MSS	Malayan Security Service
NDYL	New Democratic Youth League
OC	Overseas Control
OCPD	Officer-in-Charge Police District
OPSUM	Operational Summary
OSPC	Officer Superintending Police Circle
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
Photint	Photographic Intelligence
PIAW	Political Intelligence Arab World
PIJ	Political Intelligence Journal
PMFTU	Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRO	Public Records Office
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
PWS	Psychological Warfare Section
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
SAC	Supreme Allied Commander
SACSEA	Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia
SAS	Special Air Service
SB	Special Branch
SC	Special Constable
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SEIO	State Emergency Information Officer
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel

SFTU	Singapore Federation of Trade Unions
SIFE	Security Intelligence Far East
SIME	Security Intelligence Middle East
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SLO	Security Liaison Officer
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOVF	Special Operations Volunteer Force
SRC	Situation Report Centre
SWEC	State/Settlement War Executive Committee

Dramatis Personae

Boucher, General Sir Charles (1898–1951), was born in 1898 and educated at Wellington College. He was appointed to the Indian Army in 1916, attached to the 2nd King Edwards VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, and served in Palestine and the North West Frontier. During the Second World War, Boucher commanded the 10th Indian Infantry Brigade in North Africa and the 17th Indian Infantry Brigade in Italy. He was appointed General Officer Commanding Malaya District in 1948. He retired in 1951, dying shortly after.

Bourne, General Geoffrey (1902–1982), was commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1923. Bourne served as a member of the Joint Planning Staff between 1939 and 1941. He was posted to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington in 1942. He then commanded the 152nd Field Regiment in Italy and was a member of the General Staff Airborne Corps fighting in Belgium. After a number of staff appointments, Bourne was appointed General Officer Commanding Malaya between 1954 and 1956. He retired from the Army in 1960.

Bower, General Sir Roger (1903–1990), was educated at Sandhurst, Bower was commissioned into the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in 1923. He served in India and Hong Kong in the interwar years. During the Second World War Bower took part in Operation Market

Garden. After the war, he served in Palestine and Germany. Bower served as General Officer Commanding and Director of Operations for Malaya between 1956 and 1958. He retired from the Army in 1960.

Briggs, General Sir Harold Rawdon (1894–1952), was born in Pipestone, Minnesota, USA in 1894. Briggs attended Sunburst and was subsequently attached to the 4th Bn King's Regiment, fighting in France in 1915. In the following year he transferred to the 31st Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army, seeing action in Mesopotamia and Palestine. In the interwar period he saw action on the North West Frontier. During the Second World War, Briggs saw action in Eritrea, North Africa and Burma, including the battle for Kohima. In April 1946 he was appointed General Officer Commanding, Burma before retiring from the Army when Burma obtained independence in 1948. He subsequently served in a civilian capacity as Director of Operations in Malaya between 1950 and 1952. He died in Limassol on 27 October 1952.

Chin Peng (1924–2013), was born in Sitiawan, Perak, Malaya in 1924. In 1937 he joined the Chinese Anti Enemy Backing Up Society and by early 1939 had discovered Communism. He was an active member of the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army during the Second World War and worked with Force 136. Following the departure of Lai Tak in 1947, Chin Peng became Secretary General of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and led it through the Emergency. He subsequently took refuge in the jungles of Thailand, remaining in exile until the MCP formally laid down its arms in 1989.

Dalley, Lt. Col. John (dates unknown), was a police officer in the Federated Malay States Police Force. Following the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese in December 1941, Dalley created a guerrilla network called Dalforce, which numbered some 4000 fighters. Dalforce was disbanded in 1942, following the British surrender. Dalley was subsequently captured and spent the rest of the war a captive of the Japanese. After liberation, Dalley returned to Malaya and was appointed Head of the Malayan Security Service (MSS). However, the MSS was disbanded in 1948 and Dalley played no further part in the Malayan Emergency.

Gent, Sir (Gerard) Edward James (1895–1948), was born in Kingston, Surrey in 1894. Enlisted with the Duke of Cornwall's Light

Infantry in August 1914 and served in Flanders and Italy, winning the MC and DSO. Gent then entered Colonial Office as an assistant principal. He spent much of the 1930s in the Far Eastern department and was its head from 1939 to 1942. In 1945 he was appointed as Governor of the Malaya Union, declaring a state of emergency in June 1948. Shortly after Gent was recalled to London for talks. The aircraft in which he was returning crashed on approach to Northolt airport on 4 July 1948, killing Gent and all other passengers and crew.

Gray, Col. Nicol (1908–1988), was educated at Trinity College and qualified as a chartered surveyor in 1939. He joined 2nd Battalion of the Royal Marine Brigade and served in North Africa and the Middle East. He landed in Normandy on D-Day, as second-in-command of 45 Commando. He fought through France and Low Countries to Germany. Between 1946 and 1948 he was Inspector General of Palestine Police. In 1948 he was appointed Commissioner the Federation of Malaya Police Service. Gray retired and returned to Britain in 1952.

Gurney, Sir Henry Lovell Goldsworthy (1998–1951), was born in Bude, Cornwall in 1898. He was commissioned in the King's Royal Rifle Corps in 1917 and was wounded shortly before the end of First World War. After attending Oxford, Gurney joined the Colonial Office, spending much time in East Africa in the 1930s and early 1940s, before being transferred to Gold Coast in 1944 as Colonial Secretary. In 1946 he transferred to Palestine, as Chief Secretary. In 1948 he was posted to the newly created Federation of Malaya, to replace Sir Edward Gent as High Commissioner. On 6 October 1951, when travelling from Kuala Lumpur to Fraser's Hill, he ambushed and murdered by Communist insurgents.

Hayter, Sir William Goodenough (1906–1995), was born on 1 August 1906 in Oxford, where he was subsequently educated. In 1930 he joined the Diplomatic Service and enjoyed postings to the League of Nations, Vienna, Moscow, and Shanghai. He was posted to Washington as the first secretary in December 1940. He returned to London in May 1944 and was promoted to Assistant Under-Secretary of State in February 1948. He was chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee between 1948 and 1949. Hayter was then posted to Paris and served as ambassador to Moscow between 1953 and 1957. After his posting to Moscow, Hayter accepted the wardenship of New College, Oxford. He died in Oxfordshire in 1995.

Jenkin, Sir William (dates unknown), served in the Indian Police Special Branch and the Indian Intelligence Bureau before being appointed as Advisor of the Special Branch/CID of the Malayan Police in June 1950. Shortly after he was appointed as Malaya's first Director of Intelligence, a post he held until October 1951.

Liddell, Guy (1892–1958), was born in London on 8 November 1892. He served with the Royal Horse Artillery during the First World War and won a MC. Joined Special Branch in 1919. In October 1931, Liddell joined the Security Service and was appointed Deputy Director of Counter-Espionage. He was promoted to Director of B Division in June 1940. After the war he came Deputy Director General, working to Sir Percy Sillitoe. He was tarnished by the defection of his friend Guy Burgess and retired from the Security Service in 1953.

Lyttelton, Sir Oliver (Viscount Chandos) (1893–1972), was born on 15 March 1893. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge, leaving university early to serve with the Grenadier Guards in France between 1915 and 1918. Lyttelton had a successful career with the British Metal Corporation in the interwar years. In 1942 he replaced Beaverbrook as Minister of Production in Churchill's war cabinet. After the Second World War, Lyttelton returned to commerce but retained a parliamentary seat. Upon the formation of Churchill's post-war government, he was invited to become Secretary of State for the Colonies, a post he held until 1954, when he was elevated to the House of Lords as Viscount Chandos. Lyttelton died in 1972.

MacDonald, Malcolm John (1901–1981), was born at Lossiemouth, Scotland, on 17 August 1901. In 1931 he was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Dominions Office. Between 1935 and 1940 he held various cabinet offices, including Secretary of State for the Colonies and Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. He served in Churchill's government as Minister of Health and then in 1941 he was appointed High Commissioner to Canada. In 1946 MacDonald was appointed Governor General, Far East Asia. In 1955 he was appointed High Commissioner to India. In 1963 he became Britain's last Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Kenya. MacDonald died in 1981.

MacGillivray, Sir Donald Charles (1906–1966), was born in Edinburgh on 22 September 1906. He attended Oxford University before

entering the Colonial Service in 1928. His first posting was as a District Officer in Tanganyika. In 1938 he went to Palestine, serving as Private Secretary to Sir Harold Macmillan, a District Officer, and Under-Secretary to the Palestine government. Between 1947 and 1952 he was Colonial Secretary in Jamaica. In 1952 MacGillivray was sent to Malaya, serving as deputy High Commissioner to Templer. He succeeded Templer in 1954, and was the Federation's last High Commissioner. He retired from the Colonial Service when Malaya gained independence in 1957.

Mountbatten, Louis, first Earl of Mountbatten of Burma (1900–1979), was born at Frogmore House, Windsor on 25 June 1900. He was educated at The Royal Naval Colleges, Osborne and Dartmouth, Mountbatten was appointed midshipman in July 1916. The interwar years were spent building his Naval career. In June 1939 he took command of the destroyer, *Kelly*. In 1942, Churchill appointed Mountbatten as Chief of Command Staff, during which time he oversaw the Dieppe operation of August 1942. In August 1943 he was appointed Supreme Commander, Southeast Asia. In September 1945 he received the formal surrender of the Japanese at Singapore. In December 1946 he was invited to become India's last viceroy. After independence, Mountbatten returned to Navy, becoming First Sea Lord in October 1954 and Chief of the Defence Staff in July 1959. Mountbatten retired from the Navy in 1965. He was murdered by the IRA in 1979 while fishing off the coast of County Sligo, Eire.

Petrie, Sir David (1879–1961), was born on 9 September 1879 at Inveravon, Banffshire. Petrie studied at Aberdeen University before entering the Indian Police Service in 1900. He investigated the bomb attack on the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi in December 1912 and was wounded in a gun battle with Sikh revolutionaries in 1914. Petrie was instrumental in creating the government of India's overseas intelligence network. He retired from India in 1936. On the outbreak of the Second World War, Petrie was commissioned into the Intelligence Corps and in November 1940 was recalled to London and asked to become Director General of MI5. Petrie retired in 1946.

Ritchie, General Sir Neil Methuen (1897–1983), was born in Essequibo, British Guiana on 29 July 1897. Ritchie attended Sandhurst and in 1914 was commissioned into the Black Watch, and saw service

in France and Mesopotamia during the First World War. In 1938 he took command of the 1st Bn King's Own Royal Regiment and served in Palestine. In 1939 he was appointed to the General Staff of 2nd Corps, commanded by Alan Brooke. In 1941 Richie was sent to North Africa, taking command of the Eighth Army until dismissed by Auchinleck the following year. He subsequently commanded 12th Corps through the campaign in North West Europe. In 1947 he was promoted to General and took the post of Commander-in-Chief Far East Land Forces. He was posted in 1950 to head of the British Army staff in the joint service mission to the USA. He retired to Canada in 1951.

Scrivener, Sir Patrick (1897–1966), was born in 1897. Scrivener became a career diplomat. Between 1941 and 1947 he was Head of Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office. Subsequently appointed Minister to Syria in 1947. Served as Deputy Commissioner General, South East Asia between 1948 and 1949 and chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East). Also served as ambassador to Switzerland between 1950 and 1953.

Sillitoe, Sir Percy Joseph (1888–1962), was born in Tulse Hill, London on 22 May 1888. In 1908 he became a trooper in the British South Africa police. He transferred to the Northern Rhodesia police in 1911. He took part in the campaign in German East Africa and was a political officer in Tanganyika from 1916–1922. He returned to the UK and became Chief Constable of Chesterfield, East Riding, and Sheffield successively. In 1931 he was appointed Chief Constable of Glasgow, a post he held for twelve years. In 1943 Sillitoe was appointed Chief Constable of Kent. He was appointed Director General of MI5 in May 1946. He retired from MI5 in 1953.

Templer, General Sir Gerald (1898–1979), was born in Colchester, Essex on 11 Sept 1898. He was commissioned into the Royal Irish Fusiliers and saw service in France during the First World War. Templer subsequently served in Persia, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine. In 1938, as a brevet Lieutenant Colonel, Templer became a GO2 in intelligence. He saw active service in France in 1940 and Italy in 1943 where he was wounded. In 1945 Templer was appointed Director of Civil Affairs and Military Government in Germany. In March 1946 he was appointed Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) and then in 1948 as Vice Chief

of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS). He served in Malaya as High Commissioner between 1952 and 1954. After Malaya, Templer became Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) and was appointed Field Marshal in 1956. Templer retired from the Army in 1958.

Young, Sir Arthur Edwin (1907–1979), was born on 15 February 1907 in Eastleigh, Hampshire. Young joined Portsmouth police in 1923 and by 1938 he was the Chief Constable of Leamington Spa. In 1941 he was appointed as Senior Assistant Chief Constable for Birmingham; in 1943 he was selected to establish a training school for police officers who would maintain law and order in liberated axis territories; ten weeks later he was Director of Public Safety in the allied government in Italy. After the war, Young served as Chief Constable of Hertfordshire; Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police; and Commissioner of the City of London Police. He was appointed as Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya police service between 1952 and 1954. He subsequently left Malaya to be Commissioner of the Kenyan police service in 1954. He then returned to the City of London police but went to Ireland in 1969 to implement the Hunt Report. Young died on 20 January 1979.

Timeline

December 1941	Japanese forces invade Malaya.
February 1942	Singapore surrenders to the Japanese.
January 1945	*The Intelligence Machine*, A report by Denis Capel-Dunn report released.
July 1945	Clement Attlee became Prime Minister.
August 1945	Japanese surrender.
September 1945	Start of the British Military Administration (BMA) in Malaya.
March 1946	Governor Sir Edward Gent arrived in Malaya.
April 1946	Malcolm MacDonald appointed Governor General, Southeast Asia. Start of the Malayan Union. Sir Edward Gent appointed Governor of the Malayan Union. Sir Franklin Gimson appointed Governor of Singapore. Creation of the British Defence Coordinating Committee/ Far East (BDCC/FE). Col. John Dalley appointed head of the reconstituted Malayan Security Service (MSS). Col. Cyril Dixon appointed head of the newly constituted Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). Sir Percy Sillitoe appointed Director General of the Security Service (MI5).
June 1946	Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS).
October 1946	Arthur Creech Jones appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies.
November 1946	Malcolm Johnston replaced Dixon as Head of SIFE.

1947	Creation of the Joint Intelligence Committee/Far East (JIC/FE).
April 1947	General Sir Neil Ritchie appointed Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces (FELF).
November 1947	*Review of Intelligence Organisations, 1947*, by Sir ACM Douglas Evill released.
February 1948	William Hayter appointed chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (London) [JIC (London)].
April 1948	Start of the Federation of Malaya.
June 1948	State of Emergency declared in Malaya. Mr. Langworthy, Commissioner of Police in Malaya resigns. General Ashton Wade, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya retires. General Charles Boucher appointed GOC Malaya.
July 1948	Sir Edward Gent dies in aircraft crash.
August 1948	Col W (Nicol) Gray arrives in Malaya as Commissioner of Police. Alec Kellar replaced Johnson (died in service) as H/SIFE.
October 1948	Colonial Office joins the JIC (London). Sir Henry Gurney installed as High Commissioner. Patrick Scrivener, chairman of the JIC (FE) visits London.
November 1948	Field Marshall William Slim appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS).
May 1949	Jack Morton replaces Kellar as H/SIFE.
July 1949	General Sir John Harding appointed C-in-C. Far East Land Forces (FELF).
1950	Patrick Reilly replaces William Hayter as chairman of the JIC (London).
February 1950	Jim Griffiths appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies, replacing Arthur Creech Jones.
March 1950	Sir Harold Briggs is appointed as Director of Operations in Malaya. General Boucher invalided home. General Roy Urquhart appointed GOC Malaya.
June 1950	Sir William Jenkin arrives in Malaya as intelligence advisor.
November 1950	Jenkin appointed Director of Intelligence.
September 1951	Jenkin retires.
October 1951	Sir Henry Gurney is murdered by Communist insurgents. Sir Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. Oliver Lyttelton replaces Jim Griffiths as Secretary of State for the Colonies.

	The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) issues the October Directives.
November 1951	Briggs retires, to be replaced by General Sir Robert Lockhart. Field Marshall Sir John Harding appointed CIGS.
c. January 1952	Sir Arthur Young is appointed Commissioner of Police, replacing Nicol Gray.
January 1952	General Sir Gerald Templer is appointed High Commissioner.
May 1952	Courtenay Young replaced Morton as H/SIFE.
June 1952	General Hugh Stockwell replaces Urquhart as GOC Malaya.
November 1952	Sir Franklin Gimson retires.
1953	Sir John Sinclair replaces Sir Stewart Menzies as Chief of the Security Service.
May 1954	Sir Donald MacGillivray succeeds Sir Gerald Templer as High Commissioner.
	General Sir Geoffrey Bourne becomes Director of Operations and GOC Malaya.
July 1954	Alan Lennox-Boyd appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies.
July 1955	Elections in Malaya held.
	Tunku Abdul Rahman appointed Chief Minister.
August 1955	R. Thistlewaite replaces Young as H/SIFE.
December 1955	Baling Peace Talks.
1956	General Sir Roger Bower replaces Bourne as Director of Operations.
August 1957	Malaya granted independence.
July 1960	State of Emergency in Malaya rescinded.
December 1989	A treaty is signed between the Communists, Thailand and Malaya.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Malayan Emergency was ostensibly just one of many efforts designed to retain one of Britain's far-flung colonial possessions in the aftermath of the Second World War. It might be seen as one of a number of post-war colonial policing campaigns, such as those in Palestine, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden, in which many lives and resources were expended but which were ultimately futile and marked Britain's withdrawal from those territories. Some might consider the Emergency simply as an artefact from a by-gone era, fought by two competing philosophies—colonialism and communism, both of which are now largely irrelevant. Moreover, all the key actors in the Emergency have since perished and one would be forgiven for thinking, some sixty years after its cessation, that the historical memory of Emergency would be fading rapidly.

And yet, the Emergency remains a subject of intense interest, not least because of the philosophical links between lesson derived from the counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya and the doctrine that drove much of the British and US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, the story of the Malayan government's campaign to defeat the threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) has its own integral historical value, not least in terms of decolonisation and the birth of an independent Malaya, the role of nationalism, communism, and Britain's subsequent position in the region. The Emergency is also an episode of

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history with dramatic twists of fate and unforeseen consequences worthy of a novel or screenplay. For instance, during the Second World War Britain had worked together with communist forces to wage a guerrilla campaign against the occupying Japanese forces. However, within three years, the two former allies would be fighting each other in bloody and protracted guerrilla war for the future of Malaya. Just days after declaring a state of emergency, High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent died in an aircraft returning to London for talks with the Colonial Office. Two years later, communist forces would go on to murder his successor, High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney. Plans for Malaya's independence were accelerated rapidly under the pressure of the Emergency and were realised in 1957—something Colonial Office planners would have thought unforeseeable at the end of the Second World War. Moreover, at this time there were still some 1830 insurgents at large, most still with the intent of subverting the new nation. Despite the end of the Emergency being declared in 1960, a hard-core rump held out in the deep jungle on the border with Thailand for some twenty-nine years, before surrendering in 1989.

The Emergency unfolded against a complex geo-political backdrop. At its most simple, indeed primal, level, were the mountains, jungles and rubber plantations which covered vast sways of the Federations 51,000 square miles, many of which were not yet mapped. Freddy Spencer Chapman memorably described the jungle as neutral. However, in the story of the Emergency, the jungles and rubber plantations take on a form relevance that they become actors in their own right. Living within these 51,000 square miles were a rich mix of ethnic Malay, Chinese, and Indians. Prior to the Second World War, they had lived in one of a collection of Malay States (under indirect rule) or Straits Settlements under the sovereignty of the British Crown. After the Second World War, the British tried to unify these states and give all residents, not just the Malays, equal rights and franchise. This proved highly divisive and under intense pressure from the native Malays the British were forced to end the Malayan Union experiment and introduce in April 1948 an alternative arrangement much more favourable to the Malays in the former of the Federation of Malaya. Thus, at the time of the declaration of a state of emergency, politically Malaya was a highly changed part of the Empire. To make matters worse, the Berlin airlift started in the month before the declaration of a state of emergency and the Chinese Communist Party was victorious in China in the following year, and the

growing fear of global communism is tangible in the documents written by British officials trying to understand what was happening in Malaya.

Within this context are the intense personal stories—men like Lt. Col. Frank Dalley, a man who led a resistance force against the Japanese during the Second World War, and who suffered horrendously as a prisoner of war, but who returned to Malaya to lead the Malayan Security Service (MSS); or Sir Percy Sillitoe who subverted the MSS more effectively than the communist insurgents ever could; or Police Commissioner Lt. Col. Nicol Gray and Director of Intelligence Sir William Jenkin who clashed so furiously that both men resigned their posts; or General Sir Harold Briggs who effectively worked himself to an early death creating his blueprints for counterinsurgency operations; or the sheer force of nature that was General Sir Gerald Templer. Moreover, the Emergency is the story of secret organisations, agents, double agents and at least one triple-agent. It is the story of the detention, deportation or forced relocation of thousands of Malaya's Chinese community and thousands of British and Commonwealth police officers and soldiers mounting cordons, patrolling, and setting ambushes across Malaya's rubber plantations, along the fringes and within the deep jungle, while their colleagues in the Royal Air Force (RAF) mounted thousands of photographic intelligence and strike sorties.

The Emergency was a highly violent affair: 1868 security force personnel, 2473 civilians and 6697 insurgents were killed between 1948 and 1960.[1] At the height of the campaign, the Malayan government had twenty-three battalions of troops, fifty thousand police officers and six squadrons of strike or bomber aircraft pitched against some three and half thousand insurgents.[2] Yet, by its nature, the Emergency was not a *war*. The military were acting in support of the civilian authorities and the police remained the lead agency responsible for the restoration of internal security. Although the armed wing of the MCP wore uniforms and were organised along military lines, their supply wing (the Min Yuen) and supporters within the Chinese squatter community and towns

[1] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London 1975), Appendix, pp. 507–508.

[2] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956 by the Director of Operations, Malaya; M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (London 1992), Annex L—Air Forces Order of Battle—Squadrons Available 1948–1960, p. 165.

did not; the communists employed what might now be called an "asymmetric" strategy. The Emergency was thus a struggle not necessarily for territory but the allegiance of Malaya's population. At a minimum, the MCP needed the active support of only a small proportion of Malaya's communities and the passive acquiescence of the majority to undermine the government. Conversely, the government needed to collect and assess a sufficient amount of information, from aerial photographs, captured documents and captured personnel but, ideally, from informers and agents, to identify, arrest or kill sufficient numbers of insurgents to halt their revolutionary momentum. Intelligence was thus central to the prosecution of the Emergency.

The Emergency has been studied from various angles and perspectives over the past eighty years, not least by imperial historians, military historians, Malayan nationalists, Cold War historians, counterinsurgency theorists, and decolonisation specialists, including a new sub-set of revisionists who focus upon the use of force. Despite the diverse range of commentators drawn to the Emergency, most accounts begin with failure of the intelligence services to forecast the communist insurgency. The historiography then begins to facture into two main interpretations. The first is espoused by authors such as Anthony Short, who produced the official history of the emergency—*The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, Richard Stubbs, Kumar Ramakrishna and Simon Smith.[3] They portray the Emergency as a struggle for effective governance waged between the Malayan authorities and the MCP. Their individual arguments are nuanced, particularly around the importance of the plan put in place by the Director of Operations, General Sir Harold Briggs, in 1950. However, there is strong commonality between these writers in their belief that counterinsurgency campaign had reached a nadir when Sir Henry Gurney was murdered in 1951. However, this act allowed the appointment of Sir Gerald Templer as his successor. They argue that Templer energised the counterinsurgency campaign and developed a policy of "hearts and minds" to complement population control

[3] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*; R. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (Singapore 1989); K. Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952–54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92; S. Smith, "General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence and Propaganda", *Intelligence and National Security*, 16: 3 (2001), pp. 60–78.

implemented by Briggs. They suggest it was this strategy that ultimately won the campaign against the insurgents.

The second broad interpretation of the Emergency is provided predominantly, but not exclusively, by Karl Hack in a series of articles written between 1999 and 2018.[4] Hack's argument focuses upon the theory that the MCP's "October 1951" Directives prove that coercion and population control had forced the MCP into scaling down their insurgency prior to the arrival of Sir Gerald Templer in 1952. As such, the Malayan government's counterinsurgency campaign "succeeded in 'screwing down' Communist supporters, rather more than wooing 'hearts and minds.'"[5] This was possible because Malaya's ethnic, social and political structures allowed the large-scale deportation and relocation of the Chinese squatter community. As result, the pivotal point in the Emergency, according to Hack's thesis, was not the arrival of Templer in 1952 but "the switch from poorly directed counter-terror and coercion in 1948–49, to tightly organised population control from 1950." He rejects "the traditional view that the leadership and policy changes of one British general (Templer) were both necessary and sufficient to transform the campaign." Instead, "the critical conditions [for counterinsurgency success] had existed before Templer and 'hearts and minds', and that in the most important policies there was, and was always likely to be, continuity not change around 1952."[6]

The concept of intelligence does not feature heavily within these broader interpretations of the Emergency. Both key schools of thought do, however, share the view that the declaration of a state of emergency was a function of the failure of the Malayan Security Service (MSS) to

[4] K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124–155; K. Hack, "Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents: British and Communist Narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the Dynamics of Intelligence Transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 211–241; K. Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99–101; K. Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383–414; K. Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-Insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5 (2012), pp. 671–699.

[5] Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999), p. 101.

[6] Ibid.

forecast the start of the communist insurgency.[7] From this point, the historiography again splits into two distinct sections. Woven into the arguments articulated by Karl Hack, and others such as Huw Bennett and David French, is the idea that the State's use of violence was the predominant factor in securing intelligence.[8] This policy led to the widespread destruction of villages by British troops, the forced deportation and resettlement of many thousands of Malaya's Chinese community, and even the indiscriminate murder of innocent villagers. Implicit in his hypothesis is that intelligence was not obtained by craft, guile or consent. It was beaten and forced from a vulnerable Chinese community.

Leon Comber and Georgina Sinclair take an alternative view.[9] They suggest that the Special Branch of the Malayan Police emerged from the debris of MSS, which was abolished shortly after the declaration of emergency, and rapidly became a model intelligence agency. By the early 1950s, Special Branch was able to map most of the communist forces ranged against it. Under the auspices of the Briggs Plan, it successfully targeted the Min Yuen, the communist supply network, which forced the MCP to change strategy dramatically. Later, from 1952, Special Branch switched its attention to targeting key MCP leaders. At each stage it worked in close cooperation with the military, via a committee structure implemented by General Sir Harold Briggs, the Federation's first Director of Operations. Thanks to the efforts of Special Branch, the back of the insurgency was supposedly broken by 1952. The centrality of an

[7]The act of declaring a state of emergency might have in fact forced the communists to start their insurgency earlier than they would have wished. See A. Stockwell, "'A Widespread and Long-Concocted Plot to Overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (September 1993), pp. 66–88; Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng—My Side of History* (Singapore 2003).

[8]For instance, see Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5 (2012), pp. 671–699; K. Hack, "'Devils That Suck the Blood of the Malayan People': The Case for Post-revisionist Analysis of Counter-Insurgency Violence", *War in History*, 25: 2, pp. 202–226; H. Bennett, "'A Very Salutary Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415–444; D. French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67* (Oxford 2011).

[9]L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008); G. Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': The Rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948–1955", *Intelligence and National Security*, 26: 4 (2011), pp. 465–467.

effective Special Branch to effective counterinsurgency operations was recognised not only during the Emergency in a series of reviews but subsequently by a series of theorists, including Sir Robert Thompson and General Sir Frank Kitson and Thomas Mockaitis.[10]

However, the manner in which the authorities collected, assessed and organised intelligence during the Emergency was broader, more complex and far less linear than either the explanations of Hack or Comber. For instance, the first key premise upon which all existing accounts are built is that declaration of Emergency reflected the failure of the MSS to forecast the communist insurgency. However, the MSS did provide clear strategic warning both of the intention and capability of the MCP to threaten Malaya's internal security. In fact, it was abolished not because of an intelligence failure but due to the interagency "turf" war that was being waged between Col. John Dalley, head of the MSS, and Sir Percy Sillitoe, the Director General of the Security Service (MI5). Special Branch did play a critical role in the Emergency but its impact has been overstated. Indeed, its fortunes were tied to the wider police force, which, until 1952, followed a paramilitary strategy entirely incompatible with the effective generation of exploitable intelligence. Although this strategy changed under General Sir Gerald Templer, the legacy remained. Indeed, the civilian agencies and role holders that were concerned with intelligence in Malaya—the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East), the Malayan Security Service, the police, the Security Service—were riven by inter and intra-organisational strife for long and critical periods of the Emergency. Indeed, as late as 1955, the Army's own analysis attributed the relative lack of success in hunting down the insurgent forces in the jungle to the limited operational human intelligence (humint) being provided by Special Branch.

The picture emerges not of an intelligence apparatus dominated by Special Branch, but one with many interdependent elements. Until the mid-1950s, the apparatus was out of balance—there was an abject lack of humint because the police had been forced to adopt a paramilitary strategy which was alienated Malaya's Chinese community. Further, Special Branch was significantly under-resourced—particularly in terms of

[10]R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency—Experience from Malaya and Vietnam* (1966); F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (1977); Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations—Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (1971); T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (London 1990).

Chinese speakers—and shackled to an organisational structure that placed equal weight to ordinary criminal intelligence. Given the dearth of good quality, timely, humint, the military almost by default had a far more prominent role in the intelligence campaign in Malaya than other commentators acknowledge. This ranged from almost instinctive ability to work in collegial manner with the police and civil administration, the creation of the "Ferret Force" and Jungle Training School, the coordinating work of the Joint Operations Room, and the photographic intelligence provided by the Royal Air Force. However, these efforts were unable to make up for the shortage of quality humint. This meant that the Army and Police were dependent upon crude measures such as deportation, detention and resettlement, to "force" a flow of intelligence. This provides an illusion of a preference for the use of force when in fact there was little alternative. This approach halted the insurgents' momentum but, when viewed from an intelligence perspective, were sub-optimal—freely given intelligence from informers and agents would have been much more valuable than captured documents and information provided by scared and coerced villagers. It was only when the police changed strategy to one more focused upon consent and service, that the intelligence apparatus achieved some equilibrium and work more effectively.

This amounts to a significant shift in the existing understanding of how the Malayan authorities collected, assessed, used and organised intelligence during the Emergency. Special Branch was but one component in a wider intelligence machine which had significant internal frictions and struggled to gain traction far deeper into the Emergency than previously thought. This raises some intriguing questions. Whereas others have asked what role Special Branch played in the Emergency, the more teasing questions are what role did Special Branch play within the broader intelligence apparatus and how did the authorities manage that apparatus to meet the demands of counterinsurgency? Moreover, why was the performance of that apparatus so polarised between the civilian components which often descended into bitter organisational in-fighting and the military elements which were able work, apparently seamlessly, in a joint manner? What happened to cause the civilian authorities to lose in three short years the legacy of effective interagency cooperation during the Second World War? How, if at all, did the Malayan government recover the situation?

This book attempts to address these questions. It is important to note that it is not a general history of the Emergency—it would be

near impossible to surpass Anthony Short's magisterial *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*. It will, however, provide a history of how Malayan and British officials managed intelligence during the campaign. Historians tend to be preoccupied, indeed, obsessed, with the concepts of time and causation.[11] This makes choosing a point of demarcation for any narrative or analysis problematic. However, this chapter of this book will start the analysis by establishing the organisational context in which the post-war Malayan intelligence apparatus developed. This context was shaped by Britain's experience during the Second World War, in particularly the development of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), the template provided by Middle East Command (MEAC) and the experiences of South East Asia Command (SEAC) during the Emergency. While the officials in London and the Middle East developed key organisational structures and principles to manage intelligence, their colleagues struggled to replicate this process in the Far East. As a result, British efforts to create intelligence structures suitable for post-war Malaya would be based on infirm foundations.

Chapter 2 examines how officials designed and created a new intelligence apparatus in the Far East. They adopted a layered approach. Special Branches were reconstituted in each of the local police forces in Britain's Far East territories with a remit to oversee political and security intelligence. The exception to this was in Malaya where it decided to reconstitute the Malayan Security Service (MSS), which was in existence briefly before the Japanese invasion. This decision appears to reflect the post-war desire to address Malaya's untidy, complicated, constitutional situation of Federated States, Unfederated States, and Settlements into one pan-Malaya body, under the auspices of the Malaya Union. This, in turn, would be served by one pan-Malaya Security Service. The Security Service formed the next level of the intelligence apparatus. It created a regional clearing house, named Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) at Phoenix Park, Singapore and was located adjacent to the MSS headquarters. In theory, it had intelligence officers posted in all British territories in the Far East. It also had a component of Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) officers, posted in foreign countries in the region. Finally, officials created a Joint Intelligence Committee to serve the Far East. This was a

[11] See, for instance, M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester 1952); E.H. Carr, *What Is History* (London 1961); J. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (Oxford 2002); G. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Oxford 1967); Evans, *In Defence of History* (London 1997).

high-level body with a remit to provide the JIC (London) with strategic assessments. The JIC (FE) was also charged with the "coordination of all intelligence activities within the region…and the exchange, discussion and appreciation of intelligence."[12]

Each element of Britain's post-war intelligence set-up in the Far East had a degree of organisational precedent, perhaps with the exception of the MSS. However, as Chapter 3, explores, both the JIC (FE) and SIFE failed to establish themselves and struggled with a lack of qualified staff and, more crucially, the lack of clearly defined remits. The MSS suffered from the same handicaps, but fatally, also incurred the wrath of Sir Percy Sillitoe, head of the Security Service. Sillitoe felt the MSS was set-up "unsound" and was intruding on SIFE's "turf." As a result, he started a campaign to undermine the MSS, eventually securing the decision by the Commissioner General to disband Malaya's intelligence organisation in the days before the declaration of the state of emergency.

The intelligence available to Malayan officials in the weeks and months before declaration of emergency is considered in Chapter 4. Most commentators suggest that the MSS failed to forecast the launch of the MCP's insurgency in June 1948. However, this is not wholly accurate. Despite undoubted operational difficulties, the MSS identified the MCP as a credible threat to Malaya's security as early as 1946. Crucially, so did military intelligence. Moreover, both the MSS and military intelligence highlighted throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, factors which indicated that the MCP's potential to destabilise the Federation was growing significantly, to the extent that it is difficult to understand why the violence of June 1948 came as a surprise to the Malayan authorities. It is true that the MSS did not predict the acts of murder that prompted the declaration of emergency simply because these were likely to have been spontaneous acts, but it did provide clear medium-term warning of both the intent and capability of the MSS to challenge the Malayan government. The intelligence failure was not one of adequate warning but of a willingness to listen against the white noise generated by Sillitoe's campaign to discredit the MSS and the myriad of other potential threats to Malaya's security.

The following chapter considers how the security forces collected and used intelligence during the Emergency. The military operated in

[12]CO 537/2653, Note by JIC Secretary entitled, *Composition and Functions of JIC (Far East)*, Appendix B, Draft JIC (FE) Charter, 5 January 1948.

support of the police but were largely hamstrung for the lack of accurate and timely operational intelligence. Different innovative tactics were employed right at the beginning of the Emergency, such as the creation of Ferret Force and Civil Liaison Corps (CLC), but ultimately the military struggled without a decent flow of actionable intelligence. As a result, particularly in the early years, they had to resort to large-scale, clumsy, tactics, such as cordon and sweep operations or speculative patrolling. As the Emergency developed, the authorities deported or resettled large numbers of disenfranchised Chinese "squatting" on the jungle fringes. This provided an opportunity to use emergency regulations to control food and to prevent communist supporters in the towns and villages supplying insurgents in the jungle. This was reinforced with some success by the widespread use of propaganda and Surrendered Enemy Personnel (SEPs). While the security forces were able to drive the insurgents deep into the jungle, and whittle down their numbers to a hard-core rump, they were never able to deliver a coup de'grace.

The fact that the emergency powers were invoked, rather than a state of martial law being declared, confirmed civil primacy in the efforts to restore law and order. As Chapter 6 explains, the Malaya Police was the core of the counterinsurgency efforts. Theoretically, the uniformed branch of the police should have been the eyes and ears of their Special Branch colleagues, working with and for the local community, identifying potential informants and agents. Special Branch was tasked to collate emergency intelligence and, in particular, develop human intelligence (humint). Special Branch's targets changed over the course of the Emergency, from MCP leaders and known sympathisers and the beginning, to the Min Yuen under General Briggs, and then back to penetrating the MCP under General Templer (while attempting to balance short-term operational expediency often demanded by military commanders with long-term intelligence gains). However, the theoretically symbiotic relationship between uniformed police and Special Branch was, in reality, aspirational for at least the first four years of the emergency, if not longer. This is because until 1952 the uniformed branch was a highly paramilitary force engaged in deportation, detention without trial, resettlement, cordon and search operations and even deep jungle patrols. Such a policing stance was hardly conducive to the generation of freely given humint. The strategy changed with the appointment of Col Arthur Young as Commissioner of Police, but it took time for his changes to take place. All the while, accurate and timely intelligence remained in short supply.

The collection, assessment and use of intelligence throughout the Emergency was critical to the Malayan government's counterinsurgency campaign. However, just as important was the creation of effective structures to analyse and disseminate reports, while coordinating the broader intelligence apparatus. Perhaps, alongside the paramilitary nature of the police force, it was the problems with the intelligence structures that hampered the government's efforts to restore law and order to Malaya. These problems can be traced back to the flawed structures that were built in haste in the after of the Second World War. In many respects, new, more effective structures, emerged organically as police officers and Army commanders set-up meetings in Districts and then at States and Settlements across Malaya from the being of the Emergency. Eventually these were formalised in the War Executive Committee structure but management of emergency intelligence a federal level remained deeply problematic until the separation of Special Branch from CID, the creation of the post of Director of Intelligence (DOI) and the establishment of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC).

Hence, the ability of the Malayan authorities to collect, assess, analyse and disseminate intelligence during the Emergency started on very infirm foundations. Moreover, there is no discernible, whiggish, pattern of linear development or improvement. Different elements, tactics and strategies flourished, while other declined, new components were created, assess and recreated. It was not until the latter stages, arguably around the time of Malayan independence in 1957, that all the key elements (particularly in terms of collection and the subsequent structures need to process and use that intelligence) matured to create one largely harmonious intelligence "machine." Often historians and counterinsurgency theorists look back at emergency and discern that either General Briggs or General Templer had somehow discovered a magic formula to defeat an insurgent campaign. However, at least in terms of the intelligence war, the story is as much about struggle, frustration, improvisation and building as much as obvious success. Perhaps this is where the true lessons of intelligence during the emergency can be found: not in post hoc principles or theories but in understanding the processes that the police officers, servicemen and officials had to experience before finally, after eight years or more, to arrive at an intelligence system that could be considered effective.

Some might still question the value of reviewing the management of intelligence in a conflict which ended nearly sixty years ago, and which

was contested by two competing philosophies—colonial government and communist—which are largely outdated, or which have morphed into new forms. The world has moved on. Malaysia is stable, democratic, sovereign nation in her own right, while Britain has retreated from empire with the attendant loss of impact in international affairs. Moreover, the threats have changed. Many of the wars of decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s were marked by insurgents attempting to use Marxist or Maoist principles of guerrilla warfare to overthrow the established order—strategies which were very similar to those employed by the MCP in Malaya. Now state actors are confronted with the diffuse, decentralised but networked threat posed by extremists fuelled by a perverted interpretation of Islam. Physical boarders and geographical constraints are less important than they were in the era in which the Emergency took place, and much of the current battlespace is both ideological and virtual. Further, with Russia's potential malign influence in the US presidential election of 2017, poisoning of emigres in the UK, and invasions of the Crimea and Ukraine, think-tanks and military planners are once again considering state-on-state conflict as the most pressing threat to western democracies.

However, a host of theorists have derived lessons or principles from studying the Malayan Emergency over the past seventy years and these have shaped the strategies employed by both the United Kingdom and United States during the counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. For instance, the current US counterinsurgency field manual clear draws heavily from classical counterinsurgency theory and British officers are still heavily schooled in the Malayan experience.[13] It is inevitable that these ideas are influencing current operations against Islamic State in Syria. The idea of "lessons" or "principles" implies a rigidity or direct applicability which might make it difficult conceptually to bridge the gap of seventy years, differing spaces and differing ideologies. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that a new company commander in Helmand or a senior member of planning staff in Kabul might have asked themselves similar questions to a new company commander in Sungai Siput and member of the Directors of Operations staff in Kuala Lumpur decades earlier: how do I know I am facing an insurgent threat?

[13] US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago 2007); British Army Field Manual, Volume 1, Part 10, Countering Insurgency. Accessed on 15 July 2015, via http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_11_09_Army_manual.pdf.

Who is my enemy? How can I differentiate between an insurgent and an innocent citizen? How can I improve the feeling of security without alienating the people I am trying to protect? What are my sources of intelligence? How can I increase the flow of intelligence? What is the best way to assess different forms of intelligence? How can I ensure the various organisations involved in the collection and assessment work in harmony? What structures do I have in place to ensure intelligence is managed effectively? How can I act on intelligence promptly but without causing collateral damage or providing my opposition a propaganda victory? Given that it appears Russia's concept of hybrid warfare embraces the use of non-state (or at least non-attributable) actors to ferment conditions of instability and violence, it may well be that understanding how the Malayan authorities tackled the insurgency threat caused by the MCP is just a valid today, and in the future, as it was in the 1950s.

A Note About Language

The interpretation of the past via contemporary concepts and language is a perennial challenge for historians. Although these issues pose fewer problems for scholars interested in the Emergency than, say, medieval or ancient historians, there are still difficult issues to confront. One of the most interesting is the way in which British documents refer to their communist foes. For instance, within British documents Chin Peng's party is consistently called the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). However, in his biography, Chin Peng used the term the Community Party of Malaya (CPM) which has subsequently been adopted by some commentators such as Leon Comber.[14] Undoubtedly this is due to the vagaries of translation, however it provides an indication of the complications which intelligence analysts encountered during the Emergency and which may still trip up historians.

The issue of language is complicated by the deliberate policies applied by the British and Malayan authorities to describe the communist forces. For instance, Phillip Deery has argued that although not a new appellation, the British authorities chose to label the communist insurgents in Malaya as "bandits." This was, he suggests, a deliberate attempt "to deny the legitimacy of the opponents." However, the "bandits" proved

[14] Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng—My Side of History.*

to be a tough opponent and within two years Colonial Office officials were beginning to question whether the term was underplaying the magnitude of the challenge posed by the communist forces. As a result in May 1952, the terminology was changed from "bandit" to "terrorist."[15] To avoid falling foul of prerogative terms, this thesis will use the word 'insurgent' rather than "bandit," "terrorist" or indeed "guerrilla," unless commenting upon or quoting direct primary source evidence.

Moreover, the self-describing nomenclatures used by the communist forces in Malaya varied considerably. The Malayan Communist Party's armed wing was based on the wartime resistance force called the Malaya People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Very quickly after the end of the Second World War, this force went back into the jungle and renamed itself the Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army (MPABA). Once the Emergency was declared, the communists' armed wing became known as the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). Subsequently, it became apparent that this term was a mistranslation of the Chinese for Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA).[16] Moreover, throughout the Emergency the communist's armed wing was supported the Min Yuen. There are, therefore, numerous terms to describe the various components of the MCP, and these terms changed over time and according to translation. Unfortunately, the barrage of acronyms continues when one considers the intelligence agencies in existence during the Emergency, not least the Security Service (MI5); the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6); the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC); Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). British Defence Coordinating Committee / Far East (BDCC/FE) and the Malayan Security Service (MSS). In harmony with stance outlined above, the discussion will employ the terms most frequently found in the documents. A significant caveat, however, is that the terms JIC (London) or the metropolitan JIC will be used to differentiate it from other regional JICs.

[15] P. Deery, "The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948–52", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 2 (June 2003), pp. 236–245. See also S. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds—British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944–1960* (London 1995), p. 85.

[16] K. Hack and C.C. Chin, "The Malaya Emergency", in C.C. Chin and K. Hack, eds., *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore 2004), pp. 3–5; J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002), pp. 61–63; Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 14.

CHAPTER 2

Status Quo Ante

There was, at the beginning of the Emergency, a three-tiered intelligence apparatus in place to oversee British interests in the Far East. The Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC [FE]) was created in 1946 and was tasked with coordinating and assessing intelligence in the region, both for the benefit of the various British administrations in the region and London. Also created in the same year was the Security Service's regional out-station called Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). The third layer of the intelligence apparatus was formed by the various local intelligence services which were answerable to each territory's governing body—in the case of Malaya it was the Malayan Security Service (MSS), which was re-established following the creation of the Malayan Union, also in 1946. Each of the three elements that formed the intelligence apparatus covering Malaya in the immediate post-war period was therefore newly constructed.

However, the concepts which underpinned the post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East were not new. In fact, they were based upon the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) which had developed in London during the Second World War and which policy makers developed in various iterations across the globe during the conflict, not least the Middle and Far East. The nomenclature "JIO" is used to describe the cluster of intelligence organisations, committees and boards concerned with the collection, assessment, and dissemination of

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_2

intelligence.[1] Regardless of regional variations, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) always formed the nucleus of this cluster. The original JIC evolved in London from the mid-1930s as a means of managing the inter-departmental intelligence requirements of the Chiefs of Staff. Through the course of the Second World War, it developed responsibility for producing assessments, coordinating intelligence requirements and considering "measures needed to improve the intelligence organisation of the country as a whole."[2] Orbiting this committee were various bodies such as the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB), the Joint Aerial Photographic Intelligence Committee (JAPIB), the Security Service (MI5), and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6). The constellation was not fixed: it varied from theatre to theatre; intelligence bodies were drawn into the JIO's gravitational pull, and others burnt up. The constant, however, was the JIC.

The concept and development of the metropolitan JIC has been well assessed by historians in recent years. Harry Hinsley first discussed the role of the JIC in London in his official history of intelligence during the Second World War.[3] In 2002, after the release of a large number of JIC files, Percy Cradock—himself a former JIC chairman—explored the relationship between the committee's estimates and Britain's foreign policy decisions.[4] Phillip Davies has examined the broader concept of a Joint Intelligence Organisation, with the JIC playing a central role, in his comparative analysis of organisational and political culture in the development of the intelligence communities in Britain and the United States.[5] Most recently, Michael Goodman has produced the official history of the Joint Intelligence Committee.[6] The amount of historical interest in the metropolitan JIO and, more specifically, the JIC, reflects the critical role it played during the Second World War and the foundations it provided for the UK's intelligence efforts throughout the Cold War to the present day.

[1] P. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in the Britain and the United States, Volume 2: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara 2012), p. 13.

[2] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16 March 1954.

[3] F. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, 5 Vols. (London 1979–1991).

[4] P. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy—How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World* (London 2002).

[5] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in the Britain and the United States*, 2 Vols.

[6] M. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1: From the Approach of the Second World War to the Suez Crisis* (Oxon 2014).

Perhaps less well known, however, is that the concept of the JIO, with the JIC at its heart, was exported across the world during the Second World War, including Cairo, Washington, West Africa, and Singapore.[7] The wartime JIOs in the Middle and Far East are of particular relevance to the study of the Malayan Emergency because they provided the conceptual and practical foundations upon which Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East was based. The origin of the JIO in the Middle East can be traced to the rather humble foundations provided by the office of the Security Service representative in Cairo, which became known in 1939 as Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME).[8] This quickly evolved into a sophisticated joint collection and assessment apparatus, incorporating the three military services, the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service, covering a significant portion of the Middle East from Tripolitania in the west, to Palestine, Syria and the Balkans in the north, and Persia and Iraq in the east. This operating area encompassed the twin strategic hubs of Egypt and Palestine, both of which had experienced considerable internal unrest before the Second World War and officials feared that nationalist forces, perhaps after prompting by Axis agents, would rise again. Hence, the SIME apparatus had from the beginning of its existence a focus both upon defence and security intelligence. In 1943, London instructed the Middle East Defence Committee to create a Joint Intelligence Committee (Middle East), subsuming the JIC (Algiers) which had been created to support the allied invasion of North Africa. This added an extra "top-tier" to the intelligence structures in the Middle East. The combination of SIME and the JIC (ME) proved a highly effective joint intelligence apparatus,

[7] For JIC (Washington), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC*, pp. 100–101. For JIC (Germany), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC*, pp. 278–279. For JIC (Middle East and West Africa), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC*, p. 112; P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London 2005), p. 193; R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939–58", *Intelligence and National Security*, 31: 3 (2016), p. 15; For JIC (FE), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC*, pp. 215–228; Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying*, p. 193; R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies—British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013), pp. 23–64.

[8] Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East", *Intelligence and National Security*, 31: 3 (2016), pp. 369–396; C. Hashimoto, "Fighting the Cold War or Post-Colonialism? Britain in the Middle East from 1945–58: Looking Through the Records of the British Security Service", *The International History Review*, 36: 1 (2014), pp. 19–44.

an analogue of which officials attempted to recreate in the Far East after the Second World War.

However, if the Middle East provided the vision for Britain's post-war intelligence structures in the Far East, Lord Louis Mountbatten's South East Asia Command (SEAC) provided the practical foundations upon which this vision would be based. Like the structures established to service the Middle East Command, SEAC's intelligence structures developed within its own operational microcosm and largely without metropolitan influence. Unlike the situation in the Middle East, however, only a very small proportion of SEAC's operating area (Ceylon and parts of Burma) was under British control and thus security intelligence was of little concern to Mountbatten and his intelligence staff. Indeed, SEAC's intelligence structures were a reflection of its primary task of defeating the Japanese military in the region and were centred around the Director of Intelligence, who chaired a JIC, and his two deputies, all three of whom were military men. The JIC (SEAC) was narrowly constituted, composed only of the heads of the intelligence staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief, the Chief Political officer and Head of the Economic Intelligence Section. Hence, when considering SEAC as foundation for Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East, there are two significant points of weakness: the omission of a fully established security intelligence apparatus and a limited interpretation of a JIC. These problems were to prove highly damaging for the Federation of Malaya's efforts to combat the activity of the Malayan Communist Party in the build-up to, and aftermath of, the declaration of emergency.

The Joint Intelligence Committee System

The JIC was (and remains) the bedrock of the British intelligence apparatus. Its origins can be traced to the realisation in the mid-1930s that Britain was facing a tangible threat from a resurgent Germany and the consequent acceptance of the need to devise a process to manage the growing intelligence demands across key streams of government.[9] The problem was compounded because individual government departments had expanded

[9] M. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 21: 1 (2007), pp. 40–41. See also Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, pp. 18–36.

and become more professional during the inter-war years but this process tended towards stove-piping and potential duplication.[10] In October 1935 the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO&I) highlighted the need for some form of central machinery to coordinate intelligence. The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) considered the issue and agreed in January 1936 to the formation of a new Interservice Intelligence Committee (ISIC). Later in year, the committee's functions were expanded to support the Joint Planning Committee, was renamed the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, and became answerable to the Chiefs of Staff.[11]

The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee comprised of the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence, the Head of MI 1 (War Office) and the Deputy Director of Intelligence, Air Ministry. It was thus entirely a military body, which lacked a drafting staff and was largely ignored by the Foreign Office.[12] As a result, in the pre-war period, "the JIC played little part in co-ordinating the available intelligence and still less in analysing its implications."[13] The limitations of the committee were highlighted during the Easter of 1939 when, as Christopher Andrew explains, "the Admiralty took seriously wholly unfounded intelligence reports of Luftwaffe plans to attack the Home Fleet in harbour, while the Foreign Office dismissed accurate warnings of the invasion of Albania…"[14] The problem was that there was no means of assessing intelligence, both military and political, swiftly. Thus, in April 1939, in a tacit recognition of the limitations of the committee and in response to demands of the Chiefs of Staff, the Minister for the Coordination of Defence established the Situation Report Centre (SRC), which was charged with "collating intelligence from abroad and of issuing daily situation reports."[15] This body was chaired by the Foreign Office and comprised of the Service Directors of Intelligence. The result was, as Phillip Davies identifies, that two nearly identical intelligence-coordinating bodies, the JIC and

[10] Ibid.

[11] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16 March 1954.

[12] C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London 2010), p. 208.

[13] F. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol. 1 (1979), p. 38.

[14] Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, p. 208.

[15] Ibid., p. 209

SRC, performed nearly identical tasks.[16] This situation was untenable and within two months of its creation the SRC, the senior body, recommended its amalgamation with the JIC.[17] This was agreed and took effect in July 1939, with the new body retaining the title of "Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee."[18] The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee took on responsibility for issuing daily summaries and weekly commentaries which had been previously issued by the SRC but also,

a. assessing and coordinating intelligence from abroad in order to ensure that any common action was based on reliable and coordinated information;
b. coordinating intelligence required by the Chiefs of staff or the Joint Planning staff; and
c. considering any measures needed to improve the intelligence organisation of the country as a whole.[19]

The JIC's third chairman, Brigadier Fredrick Beaumont-Nesbit realised that it was necessary for the committee to make the distinction between "military" intelligence and "political" intelligence. This was because the Services were able to provide intelligence about foreign military capability but not the intention to use it. As the official history of the JIC explains "in essence the problem, as the JIC Chairman saw it, was that although FO reporting was sent to the Services, they did not know how best to assess it."[20] The Chiefs of Staff subsequently agreed to Beaumont-Nesbit's suggestion that the Foreign Office should provide a representative to chair the JIC, primarily to address this issue but also to prevent some of the broader disputes between the three services at this time affect the work of the committee.

Thus, by the beginning of the Second World War the JIC's structure and key responsibilities had been set. However, it was an immature body. Kenneth Strong suggests, "even in 1940 no one seemed to understand

[16] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 94.

[17] Ibid.

[18] K. Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p. 113 (London 1970); M. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 21: 1 (2007), p. 46.

[19] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16 March 1954.

[20] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, p. 23.

its functions or have any ideas about the process by which it should perform its role."[21] Nevertheless, the JIC matured further under the unrelenting pressure of the war. Four factors were central in its development. First, in May 1940 the JIC agreed that the heads of the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service and Ministry of Economic Warfare's Intelligence Directorate should become full members. Thus, the committee broadened its focus to encompass a more diverse range of intelligence needs and expertise. Moreover, as the official history explains, "the introduction of MI5, SIS, and the Ministry of Economic Warfare as permanent members, also strengthened the Committee's position as the central co-ordinator for intelligence."[22] Second, through the iterations of the Future Operations Enemy Section (FOES), the Axis Planning Staff (APS), and finally the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS), the JIC gained its own dedicated drafting staff.[23] This professionalised the assessment process. Third, as Phillip Davies explains, during the war "the JIC really became the locus of national coordination. This was chiefly by default, and in this role the JIC really acted more as an independent arbiter and vehicle of binding mediation than overarching authority."[24] The result was that, over the course of the Second World War, the "JIC's… stature rose immeasurably."[25] Finally, under the JIC a number of interservice bodies "grew-up during the war, such as ISTD [Interservice Topographical Department], CSDIC [Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre], and CIU [Central Interpretation Unit]."[26] Hence, with the JIC as its centre of gravity, a Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) emerged.

Given that the JIC answered to the Chiefs of Staff and that its formative years were spent supporting the war against Germany, it might be

[21] Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p. 114.

[22] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, p. 84.

[23] Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p. 114; Goodman, "Learning to Walk", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 21: 1 (2007), p. 49.

[24] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 115. See also R. Aldrich, "Secret Intelligence for a Post-war World: Reshaping the British Intelligence Committee, 1944–51", in R. Aldrich, ed., *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War 1945–51* (Cambridge 1992), p. 16.

[25] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, p. 147.

[26] CAB 163/6, *The Intelligence Machine*—Report to the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 10 January 1945.

natural to conclude that the committee focused upon defence intelligence, at the potential expense of security intelligence. However, this was not the case. For instance, Michael Goodman explains that as early as May 1937 the Security Service referred the matter of foreign agents to the JIC "to allow a more senior committee to look into the subject…" The following month a Security Service report included a supporting Secret Intelligence Service intelligence report that "was distributed by the JIC as the optimum means of circulating its contents throughout the Service departments."[27] These examples are critical because they demonstrate the Security Service, which at the time these reports were considered was not a signing member of the committee, was able to "push" intelligence to the JIC, rather than wait for it to be "pulled."[28]

The relative position of security intelligence within the orbit of the JIC became a little more opaque in June 1940 following Neville Chamberlain's decision to establish the Home Defence (Security) Executive (HD(S)E), chaired by Lord Swinton.[29] John Curry explains that this decision was prompted by concerns that the Security Service was unable to tackle the perceived "fifth column" presence in the UK. As such, the Security Service came under the direction of the HD(S)E.[30] In turn, the Executive answered "to the Home Secretary on civilian matters, the Secretary of State for War on services ones."[31] This meant that the HD(S)E was more concerned with strategic policy rather than operational management of security intelligence, and "was effectively, a counterpart to the JIO concerned with domestic security…"[32] The JIC remained positioned, however, to consider security intelligence matters. Regardless of the creation of the HD(S)E, the Security Service remained charged with investigating counter-intelligence and security investigations within the UK and across her overseas possessions.[33] Moreover,

[27] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, pp. 49–50.

[28] For a discussion of 'push' and 'pull' intelligence dynamics see P. Davies, "SIS's Singapore Station and the Role of the Far East Controller", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (October 1999), pp. 105–129.

[29] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, pp. 101–102.

[30] J. Curry, *The Security Service, 1908–45* (Kew 1999), pp. 49, 46.

[31] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 101. See also Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying*, p. 147.

[32] See Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, pp. 101–102, 112.

[33] Curry, *The Security Service*, p. 7.

the Security Service had been since May 1940 a full member of the JIC, "though they signed those reports only that they had helped to write."[34] Furthermore, the post-war review of Britain's intelligence by Denis Capel-Dunn emphasised that the JIC had a responsibility to consider a broad range of intelligence, not least security intelligence. The first paragraph of Capel-Dunn's report, *The Intelligence Machine*, stated that "'intelligence' in the military sense, covers all kinds of information required for the conduct of war. By extension, it has come to cover security…" Moreover, "with the coming of total war, the meaning of warfare has been extended to cover a wide area, embracing such fields as those of economic warfare, political and psychological warfare and deception. Those responsible for these latter forms of warfare no less than those directing our main operations at sea, on land and in the air, require intelligence."[35] It was thus clear in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War that all forms of intelligence, not least security intelligence, remained firmly within the remit of the JIC system.

The JIC had, as Michael Goodman explains, "a good war, moving from a relatively obscure and distrusted position one of influence and respect."[36] As Capel-Dunn concluded, the JIC had evolved into "a forum of discussion of all matters of common 'intelligence' interest to its members, and thus into a kind of Board of Directors laying down inter-service intelligence and security policy at home and abroad."[37] A key indication of official confidence in the concept of a JIC was that it was gradually exported to different parts of the world under British influence. This started in 1943, when it was decided to create a JIC in Washington, which consequently prompted the United States to create its own equivalent organisation, the American Senior Joint Intelligence Committee.[38] A year later the decision was made to create a JIC (Middle East) to serve the Middle East Defence Committee. The JIC (ME) was chaired by Mr. C. E. Steel, a Foreign Office official, and included representatives of the Political Intelligence Centre (Middle East), the Ministry

[34] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16 March 1954.

[35] CAB 163/6, *The Intelligence Machine*—Report to the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 10 January 1945.

[36] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee*, p. 147.

[37] CAB 163/6, The Intelligence Machine—Report to the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 10 January 1945.

[38] Goodman, "Learning to Walk", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 21: 1 (2007), pp. 49–50.

of Economic Warfare, the Services and the head of Security Intelligence Middle East. It was charged with the "organisation, co-ordination and dissemination of all types of the intelligence produced within the Middle East Military Command."[39] In fact, the JIC (ME) was largely a "bolt-on" to an already sophisticated inter-agency intelligence apparatus in the region that developed largely in parallel with the metropolitan JIO. Ironically, the intelligence apparatus in the Middle East managed to combine defence and security intelligence in a much more cogent manner than the JIO in the UK or SEAC and proved to be model to which planners aspired to replicate in the post-war Far East.

Intelligence Management in the Middle East

The origins of the British intelligence apparatus in the Middle East can be found in the Middle East Intelligence Centre (MEIC), which was established in the Autumn of 1939 by GOC-in-C, General Archibald Wavell.[40] However, this body was focused upon military intelligence and lacked any remit for security intelligence. The outbreak of hostilities with the Axis powers brought into sharp relief this omission, particularly what was known at the time as Political Intelligence Arab World (PIAW)—what we might now describe as counter-subversion intelligence. The situation was made more complicated by the geopolitical context and the respective remits of the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service. Chikara Hashimoto explains that the Middle East "was virtually borderless from a security point of view and consisted for a diverse collection of crown colonies, protectorates, mandated territories, and neutral countries, where the provision for maintaining internal security different significantly."[41] The Security Service was responsible for security within the British colonial territories, but had no jurisdiction in much of the Middle East outside of the empire where operations against the Axis powers might take place—this was the preserve of the Secret Intelligence Service. As a conference held at the War Office on 1 November 1939 noted, "…there is at present no

[39] WO 204/8564, Charter for Joint Intelligence Committee (Middle East), March 1944.

[40] KV 4/305, DSO to London, 26 September 1939.

[41] C. Hashimoto, "Fighting the Cold War or Post-Colonialism?", *The International History Review*, 36: 1, p. 21.

coordinating authority competent to deal with German penetration in the Middle East. SIS organization provides information, but it is not authorized and has not got the means to take counter measures."[42] Moreover, as Brigadier Martin, the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence (DDMI), later explained, the MEIC was organised for conditions of peace but commenced working scarcely a fortnight before war broke out. Martin concluded that "that this organisation is unsuitable under conditions of war."[43]

As a result, within weeks of the creation of the MEIC, Sir Edmond Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), instructed Colonel Elphinstone, Director of Military Intelligence (DMI), to "examine and report on some kind of Security Bureau for the Middle East which would embrace the observation and neutralization of all enemy subversive activities." Both Elphinstone and Wavell felt that "considerable co-ordination already exists in the Middle East with regard to security," which centred around the office of the Defence Security Officer (DSO) in the Cairo (MI5's Middle East HQ), and that this should form the foundations for an expanded and reinforced security intelligence set-up in the Middle East.[44] Nevertheless, the, discussions between Elphinstone, Wavell and Colonel Maunsell (DSO Cairo) outlined a number of difficult issues, not least how to provide the GOC-in-C with suitable interservice intelligence; how to develop the counter-espionage capability in region (particularly outside of Imperial territory); how to secure Allied lines against subversion; and how to coordinate the wider security intelligence function.

Wavell proposed to the War Office that a security section be formed under MEIC, and that Maunsell should be made available by MI5 to coordinate this section, in addition to his core DSO duties. Wavell argued that the "section would strengthen and supplement existing security organisation with which it would work closely without in any way interfering with the present relations between MI5 and its local representative."[45] He acted with urgency. Without waiting for discussions with London, Wavell asked Maunsell to coordinate security work

[42] KV 4/305, Conference at War Office, 1 November 1939.

[43] Ibid., DDMI Minute to MI6 re Conference at WO re security in the Middle East, Undated.

[44] Ibid., GOC-in-C (ME) to London, 30 September 1939.

[45] Ibid., GOC-in-C (ME) to War Office, 27 September 1939.

in the Middle East via the new intelligence section. Maunsell provisionally agreed, pending MI5's approval. Wavell's proposals did not receive universal acceptance.[46] However, a compromise was reached quickly. The War Office suggested that the military, through the MEIC, would be retained in a coordinating role but they sanctioned the creation of a separate security intelligence section within GHQ Middle East. This section was formed upon the DSO Cairo office, under Maunsell who was seconded from MI5 to the GOC Middle East and who reported to the Director of Military Intelligence, Middle East. To get around the thorny issue of running agents in non-imperial territories in the region (i.e., those territories that normally would be the preserve of the SIS) it was arranged for an SIS officer to work as a GSOII under Maunsell. A third officer, Captain Sholto-Douglas, was provided by the War Office to coordinate security intelligence in the Middle East, other than in foreign countries.[47] The new security section was tasked:

a. To watch and report on the general effect in the Middle East of the activities of hostile agents whether of enemy nationality or working under enemy influence.
b. To ensure that adequate liaison is maintained with the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, the G.H.Q. India, as regards enemy agents working in Afghanistan, also North-West Frontier of India and Sinkiang.
c. To formulate plans for the organisation of Security Intelligence Services in the Middle East and for the improvement and coordination of the existing machinery.
d. To act as a coordinating centre for the various organisations referred to in paragraph (c) above and to coordinate measures to be taken to counteract the activities of enemy agents.
e. To produce a periodical report of hostile activities and progress made in counteraction for submission through the MEIC to the Joint Intelligence Committee of the War Cabinet, also drafts for inclusion in MEIC Intelligence Summaries and appreciations.[48]

[46] Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 31: 3 (2016), p. 373.

[47] KV 4/306, *Organisation of the Middle East Section (I.B.)*, 22 November 1939.

[48] Ibid., Appendix B, 22 November 1939.

Thus, within three months of the War Office's initial enquiries in September 1939, significant progress had been made. First, MEIC's remit had been refined. Second, Wavell created an overarching security intelligence section, charged with identifying and countering enemy espionage activities which was to become known as Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME). Third, the DSO's office had been given responsibility for PIAW, and in effect had become the controlling station for MI5 representatives throughout the region. In theory, MEIC represented the overarching, interservice, intelligence organisation covering both defence and security intelligence. SIFE sat under this umbrella, acting the security intelligence clearing house for the region. Finally, the DSO office in Cairo provided the focal point for the Security Service agents within colonial territories in the region. In practice, SIFE quickly overshadowed MEIC and quickly became the dominant body.[49]

SIFE was not, however, a truly joint organisation from its inception: it was staffed overwhelmingly by Army Officers and NCOs who ultimately answered to GHQ Middle East; even Maunsell who, at heart was an MI5 officer, was given a wartime commission. However, under the immense pressure of preparing Britain's Middle East territories for war, the military, MI5 and MI6 devised a practical formula without precedent—the Cairo DSO office became a de facto regional hub; MI5 officers in the region were specifically charged with obtaining and acting upon PIAW; and SIME was able to run agents both within and without imperial borders.[50] Maunsell was particularly adept at fostering practical, inter-agency relations. It will be recalled that SIME was conceived with an MI6 officer as a GSOII. However, this was not initially realised, perhaps because local circumstances did not warrant it. MI5's first review of SIME, which was conducted by T. A. Robinson between March–April 1942, noted the close liaison between SIME and the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD—SIS's regional cover name). This was attributed to the close friendship between the heads of the two departments and to the colocation of their offices.[51] This friendship was

[49] Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 31: 3 (2016), p. 375, fn. 21.

[50] Ibid., p. 373.

[51] KV 4/306, Appendix B, 22 November 1939.

tested, however—particularly when Maunsell discovered an MI6 agent had arrived in Cairo "with special instructions to co-ordinate counter espionage in what MI6 please to call their 'territories'." This was clearly a point of concern. Maunsell said that "it is of course quite ludicrous that there should be any 'territories' in the Middle East exclusive to MI6. All counties in the Middle East, including Turkey, form part of the Middle East operational area and counter espionage must, therefore, be controlled by SIME on behalf of the Commanders-in-Chief." However, after "a short discussion" with the MI6 agent, Maunsell reported to London that the situation would be resolved by the creation of a Special Section to reconcile and coordinate the interests and activities of ISLD and SIME, and included subsections for "'interrogations', 'double agents', and certain special aspects of counter espionage."[52] The head of the counter-espionage section of ISLD would run the Special Section, but the Special Section itself would form an integral part of SIME, and thus commanded by Maunsell. The Special Section would have two subsections; one managing Special agents and headed by an MI5 officer; the other officered by ISLD personnel responsible for managing material intercepted from enemy wireless communications, known as Intelligence Service Oliver Strachey (ISOS).[53] A central registry would service these subsections. Reflecting the close and collegial relationships between the key actors associated with SIME, it was agreed "that the decision as to whether any MI5 or SIS agent should be operated as a double agent and handed over to the Special Section should be made by Captain [unnamed ISLD officer], Lt. Col. Maunsell and Lt. Col. Dudley-Clarke."[54] Consequently, Maunsell informed London "we have therefore arrived at satisfactory position of having formed a joint MI5-MI6 organisation to deal with the matters above."[55]

SIME matured into a remarkable inter-service intelligence apparatus. T. A. Robinson noted that it operated across a vast area, "from the Western Desert in the West, to the borders of Persia and Afghanistan in the East;

[52] KV 4/307, DSO to London, 4 July 1942.

[53] Hashimoto, "Fighting the Cold War or Post-Colonialism?", *The International History Review*, 36: 1, p. 22.

[54] KV 4/234, Report on Visit to Egypt by Major T. A. Robertson, 20 March–17 April 1942.

[55] KV 4/307, Maunsell to Petrie, 4 July 1942.

from the Black Sea in the North, to the Gulf of Aden in the South." It was, he noted, "a formidable area."[56] Within that area, SIME had two key functions: civil security (which included intelligence on political, tribal and minority activities of a subversive character and subsequent executive action) and counter-intelligence (including the investigation, detection, penetration and prosecution by all means of enemy espionage, sabotage and propaganda organisations).[57] To fulfil these responsibilities there was a network of DSOs across the area, linked to SIME HQ in Cairo. SIFE also undertook communications intercept work, "Ports" security (including the issuing of passes and permits), and registry work. Moreover, the headquarters' staff liaised with Middle East Command (via head of MEIC, the three service directors of intelligence, and the DMI), and the head of SIME was "in constant touch with the Embassy over political matters."[58]

Points of tension, such as its initial allegiance to MEIC, the operational boundaries with ISLD, and its relationship with Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq (CICI) emerged, but were dealt with a very real sense of collegiality. For instance, referring to SIME's considerable disquiet at being shackled to MEIC, Maunsell later noted that they "just got on with our jobs," a task made easier for Maunsell because the head of MEIC was his best friend.[59] The common sense solutions at which the key actors arrived were groundbreaking, the integration of officers from the three services, MI5 and MI6 within SIME HQ, and the cross deployment of these officers across the region on functional rather than territorial lines being the most notable achievements. Furthermore, the creation of the JIC (ME) in 1943 added a degree of strategic oversight, in preparation for the post-war settlement in the region. It is not surprising therefore that officials looked to SIME for the inspiration when planning the post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Unfortunately, however, planners were forced to create this apparatus upon the far less effective foundations provided SEAC's intelligence structures.

[56] Ibid.

[57] KV 4/307, Charter: Security Intelligence Middle East, 21 January 1943.

[58] KV 4/234, Report on Visit to Egypt by Major T. A. Robertson, 20 March–17 April 1942.

[59] Imperial War Museum (IWM), 80/30/1, Brigadier R.J. Maunsell, *Security Intelligence in the Middle East 1914–34 and 1934–44*.

Intelligence in the Far East

Like that in the Middle East, the intelligence apparatus in the Far East developed in its own microcosm. Unlike SIME, which catered for both defence and security intelligence, the intelligence apparatus in the Far East was very much military-oriented and focused upon the allied effort to drive the Japanese from the region. The fact that the intelligence architecture in Far East evolved in a different manner from that in the Middle East or London is a reflection of the decision taken during the Quebec conference in August 1943 to appoint a Supreme Commander for Southeast Asia. The idea had been raised three months earlier. It was most vociferously championed by Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India, who considered General Archibald Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief, India, a "spent force." Winston Churchill considered the military situation in the region as particularly difficult. As Philip Ziegler explains, the British had been evicted from Burma in April 1942, the Indian Army was inadequately equipped, poorly trained and demoralised, and the RAF was in a similarly weak position. In addition, the intelligence apparatus in the region had largely disintegrated. Churchill bemoaned the fact that his commanders in the region seemed determined to "magnify the difficulties, to demand even larger forces and to prescribe far longer delays." He therefore championed the appointment "of a young, competent soldier, well trained in war, to become Supreme Commander and to re-examine the whole problem of the war on this front as to infuse vigour and authority into the operation."[60]

The appointment of Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander (SAC) was announced on 24 August 1943. Mountbatten was excited that it had fallen to him "to be the outward and visible symbol of the British Empire's intention to return to the attack in Asia." However, Mountbatten's task was enormous. His command included Burma, Ceylon, Siam, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, all of which other than Ceylon and small parts of Burma was in enemy hands. Moreover, Mountbatten's command not only encompassed British interests but also those of China, France and those of the United States. Indeed, Lieutenant General Joseph Stillwell, the American commander of the Chinese forces fighting in Burma, was appointed Mountbatten's deputy, a decision that reflected the not insignificant interests of the United

[60] P. Ziegler, *Mountbatten—The Official Biography* (1985), p. 219.

States in Southeast Asia. However, SEAC's senior command structure proved highly complicated, with the three Service Commanders-in-Chiefs working to multiple reporting lines. For instance, Admiral Somerville, Commander of the British Eastern Fleet, was "only under SEAC in matters concerning the security and support of land campaigns and amphibious operations. Otherwise, he was under Admiralty control."[61] Moreover, each of the service chiefs had their own planning staff, in addition to the SACESA HQ's War Staff and Combined Operations Sections. This inevitably led to friction between the different planning bodies.[62]

The provision and management of intelligence in such circumstances was particularly difficult. An initial briefing document which considered the potential intelligence structure for the Supreme Allied Command in South East Asia (SACSEA) noted that "in the new set-up the Supreme Commander, the Viceroy in his capacity as Minister of State, and the C. in C. India will all need to a greater or lesser extent, common intelligence and that they will all be considered in general intelligence policy." Although Mountbatten's task was to inject momentum into the allied campaign in the Far East, SEAC's intelligence provision would be, to some degree, tied to existing "static and semi static organisations such as CSDIC [Combined Services Detailed Intelligence Centre]" which were based in India. The problems of coordinating these interests were compounded by a "great shortage of skilled intelligence personnel with qualifications suitable for Far East Intelligence."[63]

Mountbatten's initial proposal was to build up the intelligence organisations at Delhi, during the time that his Headquarters were there, so that when SEAC moved to a new forward location as the war in the Far East progressed, "the necessary additional staffs would available to provide the organisations that he would require, and at the same time leave what was necessary at Delhi." However, Mountbatten also invited the JIC (London) to "prepare a paper for him, giving their proposals for the intelligence organisation for the South-East Asia Command."[64]

[61] E. Stewart, *British Intelligence and South East Asia Command, 1943–1946*, Unpublished MA Dissertation, Brunel University, September 2014.

[62] See Appendix A, *The Ballard of the CINC and SACs.*

[63] The India Office Library, L/WS/1/1274, Note on the intelligence layout for the supreme command in South East Asia.

[64] WO 203/5038, JIC (43), Minutes of the 44th Meeting, 31 August 1943.

The subsequent JIC report, which was produced in September 1943, emphasised that its proposals were consciously based upon "our own experience of the intelligence organisation centred in Whitehall as it has developed during the present war and also out of knowledge of the experience gained in the establishment of other inter-Service and inter-Allied intelligence organisations…" However, the JIC noted that the new allied command in the Far East would differ in "important respects from any of the existing models," that their recommendations were only "tentative," and that Mountbatten would have to make his own assessment of the existing intelligence organisations in Delhi and his future requirements when he arrived in India. The JIC report was indeed "tentative." It outlined the need for "the maintenance of separate operational intelligence sections by each Service," but the "integration on an inter-Service basis wherever possible of all other intelligence sections, each under one hand, who may belong to any Service." The committee also stressed the need for cooperation with the Americans. However, it did not provide any fully defined intelligence models for Mountbatten's consideration.[65]

Upon arrival in India, Mountbatten followed the JIC's advice and conducted a review of the existing intelligence machinery. In November 1943, he reported to the War Office that it was probable that SEAC HQ and 11 Army Group would require an intelligence staff of about 150 officers and 170 clerks, a third of whom should be Americans.[66] In January 1944, he proposed the Inter Service Topographical Department (India) should "be reorganised and transferred to SEAC."[67] If nothing else, Mountbatten was clearly doing all he could to ensure sufficient numbers of intelligence staff for his organisation. He advocated that a "senior officer should be appointed to the staff of the Supreme Commander charged with the general control and development of intelligence in both India and East Asia commands and, with it the provision of the necessary strategic and overall intelligence for the Supreme Commander, the Viceroy and the C-in-C India Command. He might be known as the Director of Intelligence [DOI]." It was proposed

[65] Ibid., "The Intelligence Organisation in South-East Asia Command", a report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 14 September 1943.

[66] Ibid., Air Ministry Special Cypher Section (for Cabinet Offices) from SACSEA, 13 November 1943.

[67] Ibid., 4 January 1944.

that the DOI would be supported by "a small interallied and interservice staff, including the heads of the Naval, Army and Air intelligence staffs. The latter with representatives of the civil organisations such as OSS [Office of Strategic Services], OWI [Office of War Information], SOE [Special Operations Executive], PWE [Political Warfare Executive] coupled when necessary should form a JIC to advise the D of I, prepare appreciations, etc." Moreover, a deputy DOI would oversee the "static" intelligence organisations based in India, and "meet the 'I' requirements of the Viceroy and the C in C India as far as purely Indian aspects are concerned."[68] The DOI would be responsible for taking "decisions on intelligence policy and approve draft appreciations in a 'D of I's Meeting.'" A Joint Intelligence staff (JIS) would be formed, consisting of "the senior Naval, military and Air Force staff officers (British and American) on the staff of the Director of Intelligence, a staff officer representing the Chief Political Advisor [CPA] and one from the US Army Forces… A representative of the EIS (Economic Intelligence Section) will be co-opted for the JIS as necessary."[69]

The eventual shape of the SACSEA intelligence machine was not dissimilar to the initial proposal: the DOI had responsibility,

a. For all joint and combined intelligence regarding the war against Japan.
b. For the organisation, coordination and supervision of all inter-Service and inter-Allied intelligence agencies and activities.
c. For communicating to the Heads of the Intelligence Staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief any policy or priorities laid down by the Supreme Allied Commander in connection with (a) and (b).[70]

There were two deputy directors of intelligence, known as DDI (A) and DDI (B). The former was responsible to the DOI for all operational

[68] L/WS/1/1274, Note on the intelligence layout for the supreme command in South East Asia. See also WO 203/5038, Proposed Intelligence Organisation South East Asia Command, by General Charles Lamplough, Director of Intelligence.

[69] WO 203/5038, headquarters, South East Asia Command, Secretary Plans, SAC (44), 38/1, 5 February 1944.

[70] Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College (London), The Papers of Major General Ronald Penney, JIC (45) 20, Annexed Pamphlet written by Penney entitled "Organisation of Intelligence, HQ SACSEA", 6 October 1945.

intelligence. This was a broad portfolio. A note by the JIC (London) explained that the DDI (A) had "under him the Navy, Army, Air and Economic Intelligence Sections and Intelligence Section (Operations). He is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Inter-Service Target Section, the Photographic Reconnaissance and Models Board and the Enemy Logistic Committee. He is also responsible for liaison with the Chief Political Advisor and the clandestine organisations through P Division, with Command Units and with Signal Intelligence. He is also Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Staff." The DDI (B) was responsible for "all counter-intelligence and counter-espionage, for censorship and for supervision of the Counter-Intelligence Co-ordination Board." He was also responsible for the Command Units and the Intelligence Division. Furthermore, the Director of Intelligence (India) acted as a Deputy Director of Intelligence to HQ SACSEA. The Heads of Section within the SACSEA intelligence machine had a dual responsibility, both to their own section and to the DOI.[71]

The breath of the SACSEA intelligence machine was significant. For instance, the two deputy directors of intelligence had responsibility for a total of fifteen different sections, for which there were two key means of coordination. The first was via the SACSEA Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which was chaired by the DOI and was composed of the "Heads of the intelligence staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief, the CPA, Head of the EIS, the DDI (A) and, when required, the DDI (B)." The primary function of the JIC was "to submit joint intelligence appreciations covering all aspects of the enemy situation to the Supreme Allied Commander and to keep under review the whole intelligence machinery of SEAC." Like other JIC models in operation throughout the empire during the Second World War, the SEAC JIC was supported by a JIS which was tasked to "keep the enemy situation in all its aspects under continuous review and, jointly, to submit appreciations on particular aspects to the Joint Intelligence Committee for consideration." It was also "required to keep constant touch with the JPS [Joint Planning Staff] and, on its own level, provide answers to specific questions of a joint intelligence nature."[72]

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid. See also WO 203/5606, a letter from Elser Dening, 1 October 1944. The DOI's meetings appear to have 'morphed' into a JIC SACSEA in June 1945. The reason for this change was to "emphasise the overall responsibility of all concerned in the production of joint intelligence for this headquarters". See WO 203/5038, Reorganisation of the Intelligence Division, SACESA, 22 June 1945.

The Priorities Division (P Division) provided the second means of coordinating intelligence within SEAC. This originated because Mountbatten was determined to keep some form of operational control over the myriad of different intelligence organisations operating within his area of command. He therefore issued a directive in December 1943 which stated that British and America "quasi-military" and irregular forces within SEAC would not operate without his authority. Nor would any secret services would operate into Southeast Asia from other areas without his authority. Importantly, Mountbatten insisted that no operations could take place without clearance by Priorities ("P") Division.[73] Thus, while the JIC (SEAC) maintained a strategic oversight of intelligence matters in the region, P Division was charged with refereeing the various and often-conflicting demands of the various intelligence agencies in South East agencies. Reflecting SEAC's Anglo-American nature, P Division was chaired by a Royal Navy officer, Captain G. A. Garnons-Williams, who was supported by an OSS officer, Lt. Commander Edmond Taylor, who acted as his deputy. Although P Division met as a committee, Richard Aldrich suggests that the key decisions were made by Garnons-Williams outside of this structure, "after innumerable liaison meetings with other sections of SEAC."[74]

Whereas the co-location of the key intelligence agencies in the Middle East encouraged cooperation, the more siloed nature of the component parts of SEAC's intelligence apparatus fostered competition. This was largely because "SIS and SOE in Asia were in continual competition for scarce air transport to allow the insertion of their agents and also to re-supply them."[75] While there were clear, if unconventional lines of demarcation between SIS and MI5 in the Middle East, those between SIS and SOE in Asia were, at best, blurred. Indeed, Phillip Davies has noted that "separating the direction of clandestine paramilitary action from covert HUMINT [human intelligence] collection being conducted in the same theatre was bound to create an assortment of overlaps and rivalries."[76] Moreover, as the war progressed, General William Slim,

[73] R. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge 2000), pp. 179–180.

[74] Ibid., p. 182.

[75] R. Aldrich, "Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia During the Second World War", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (1998), p. 193.

[76] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 113.

commander of the 14th Army, pushed SIS into providing tactical intelligence, a role for which it was not prepared. This seems particularly perverse when one considers that the SOE had the more extensive network of agents capable of providing political and tactical intelligence. Against this background, P Division struggled to contain the centrifugal forces that threatened to fracture SEAC's intelligence apparatus and, perhaps only did so, due to the efforts of Garnons-Williams.[77]

The one, relatively small, exception to this prevailing dynamic appears to be the Counter-Intelligence Combined Board (CICB). This was established in April 1945 with responsibility for "collecting, collating and evaluating information from all sources within South-East Asia and from appropriate agencies in other theatres of war on the Japanese Intelligence Services and all subversive, sabotage or espionage organisations operating on behalf of the Japanese or against the Allied Forces within South-East Asia and for assessing their degree of danger."[78] The CICB was, according to Richard Aldrich, "a very diverse body with staff from MI5, SIS Section V (counter-intelligence), OSS X-2 and SEAC Intelligence Division's own counter-intelligence staff."[79] The CICB does offer a tantalising glimpse of the kind of "joint" intelligence that was possible and went on to provide the foundations for its post-war successor, Security Intelligence Far East. However, the CICB was strangely dislocated from the mainstream SEAC intelligence apparatus. For instance, it answered to the Deputy Director of Intelligence (B) and was not represented, directly or indirectly on the JIC (SEAC).[80] This is indicative of the relative lack of importance placed upon security intelligence by SEAC. Moreover, it was in existence for less than a year before it was subsumed by SIFE.[81] It is, therefore, at best a curious outlier.

[77] Aldrich, "Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (1998), p. 217.

[78] Kings College London (KCL), the papers of Major-General Ronald Penney, JIC (45) 280, Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, Organisation of Intelligence HQ SACSEA, 6 October 1945.

[79] Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, p. 370. Aldrich notes that, among other responsibilities, the CICB tasked Intelligence Assault Units—see HS 1/329 and WO 203/5050. See also WO 203/5038, 'Control and Organisation of the Security Service in Overseas Theatres', HQ SACESA to Secretary, C of S Committee, 2 January 1946.

[80] KCL, the papers of Major-General Ronald Penney, JIC (45) 280, Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, Organisation of Intelligence HQ SACSEA, 6 October 1945.

[81] Guy Liddell's diary (KV 4/470) suggests that SIFE was already in place by January 1946, with the JIC (London) recommending the establishment of staff on 20 February 1946.

Conclusion

The three key intelligence models operating within the empire at the end of the Second World War all influenced the evolution of the post-war intelligence structures in the Far East. Perhaps the most significant common denominator between the three models was the use of a joint intelligence committee, as a mechanism to coordinate and manage intelligence assessments. However, the implementation of the JIC concept and the evolution of supporting structures differed significantly.

The most obvious difference is in relation to how the JICs in London, the Middle East and Far East approached security intelligence. The metropolitan JIC has rightly been characterised as an overtly military body. However, it was always chaired by a member of the Foreign Office and included representatives of the civilian intelligence agencies. Despite the complication provided by the creation of the HD(S)E, the JIC (FE) retain the ability to consider security intelligence matters. In contrast, JIC (SEAC) was an unadulterated military body—it was chaired by the Director of Intelligence and ultimately answerable to the Supreme Commander. While the Chief Political Advisor provided a token civilian presence on the JIC, neither the Security Service, The Secret Intelligence Service (under the regional guise of the Inter-Service Liaison Department) nor the Specialist Operation Executive were represented. Thus, the focus of the JIC (SEAC) was upon the coordination intelligence for the war effort against the Japanese.

The contrast between the Middle and Far East is, arguably, even greater. Although SIME was nominally a military body, it was based upon a nucleus of Security Service officers, albeit it with wartime commissions, to which service intelligence officers and representatives of the Secret Intelligence Service were attached to form a cohesive joint collation and tasking centre. While the collation function was confined to SIME's headquarters in Egypt, it had both overt and covert intelligence officers drawn from the services, MI5 and MI6, distributed throughout its area of operations. Moreover, the JIC (ME), which was chaired by a Foreign Office official and answerable to the Middle East Defence Committee, was far more akin to the metropolitan model than its namesake that operated within SEAC. Arguably SIME provided the definitive regional model for the collection and appreciation of defence and security intelligence.

In contrast, the intelligence structures serving SEAC were far more stovepiped—each intelligence agency, including the OSS, worked predominantly autonomously, being drawn together only via P Division for practical tasking and coordination. P Division struggled to contain centrifugal forces that constantly threatened SEAC's intelligence structures. The functional contrast between SIME and SEAC's wartime experiences illustrates the poor foundations for Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Put simply, there was little recent institutional knowledge or legacy of managing security intelligence (as opposed to defence intelligence), or running an effective JIC as constituted on metropolitan lines.

The origins of intelligence failure in Malaya were therefore rooted in the infirm foundations provided by SEAC. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, officials did plan to address these problems in three ways. First, they decided to reform the SEAC JIC. Second, officials attempted to recreate an analogue of SIME in the Far East. Third, the re-establishment of local police forces in British territories in the region (and, in Malaya's case, creation of the Malayan Security Service) would provide the "boots on the ground" to gathering intelligence for SIME and the JIC (FE) to assess. However, as will be seen, each element of Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in Far East, in relation to Malaya, failed virtually simultaneously. The consequences for the Federation of Malaya were significant: warnings provided by the MSS went unheard; the Security Service failed to meet the expectations of its metropolitan masters; the JIC (FE) neither anticipated the start of the communist insurgency or its impact upon Britain's strategic interests in the region. Nor did it subsequently provide strategic direction to Malaya's fractured intelligence apparatus.

CHAPTER 3

Creating a New Intelligence Apparatus in the Far East

The situation must have looked bleak to the British soldiers, sailors and airman returning to reclaim Malaya after the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945. The country had endured significant deprivations and brutality under Japanese occupation and the new British Military Administration (BMA) faced a herculean task to restore security and effective governance. Upon arrival, they were confronted by the immediate problem of significant food shortages. Moreover, disease, particularly cholera and beriberi, was widespread and the population centres were over-crowded with the displaced and homeless. Getting help to those who needed it the most was near impossible because much of the region's infrastructure was in ruins, not least Singapore's docks and Malaya's railway network. To make matters worse, Malaya's tin mines and rubber plantations, so vital for the country's economic rehabilitation, were in a state of total disrepair, and there was a chronic lack of electricity.[1] No wonder, then, that one civil engineer returning to Singapore in 1945 noted that "when we arrived, everything had stopped. There was no money, no public transport, no Post Office services, no newspapers, no trade, no courts of justice, and to all intents and purposes no protection."[2]

[1] C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars—The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London 2008), p. 101.

[2] Ibid.

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya,* Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_3

In the absence of effective governance, law and order collapsed. The level of "banditry" and kidnappings, in particular, grew to epidemic proportions. The disintegration of internal security was partly fuelled by communal tensions. The majority, but by no means all, of Malaya's wartime guerrilla fighters (in the form of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army [MPAJA]) heralded from the Chinese community. Hence, Malaya's Chinese community particularly suffered from the attentions of the Kempetei, Japan's secret police.[3] In contrast, large sections of the Malay community remained passive, or, indeed, collaborated with the Japanese. In the aftermath of the Japanese surrender in 1945, the oppressed took their revenge and there was "a wave of murderous reprisals against the Japanese and against civilian collaborators and informers."[4]

To make matters worse, Britain's prestige in the region had never been worse—the fall of Singapore had shattered any myth of racial or technological superiority. Moreover, the use of nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war in the Far East to an abrupt and unexpected halt. While this prevented the inevitable horrors of invading the Japanese mainland, Japan's rapid subsequent surrender forestalled Operation Zipper—Britain's plan to recapture Malaya and Singapore. Thus, the British were denied the opportunity to reassert their dominance—it was a flat victory. To make matters worse, the newly arrived BMA were forced to use Japanese troops to help maintain a semblance of order until sufficient British forces had built up.

These immediate, acute, problems played out against growing hopes in Malaya for self-government, if not full independence. Some Malay nationalists began agitating for the incorporation of Malaya into some form of "Greater Indonesia" and, in preparation for a potential future armed struggle with the British, formed paramilitary groups which trained in remote jungle areas. The rapid end of the war forced

[3] L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008), p. 27. See also L. Comber, "Traitor of All Traitors—Secret Agent Extraordinaire: Lai Tek, Secretary General, Communist Party of Malaya (1939–1947)", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 83: 1 (December 2010), pp. 1–25; Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaya, Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya* (Singapore 2012), pp. 83–101.

[4] R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006), p. 495.

the communists in Malaya to consider whether they should do the same. Initial discussions were held within the party about the prospect of seizing power before the British could organise the reoccupation of the country. However, Lai Teck (Chairman of the MCP, and British double agent), decided to "adopt the legal form of struggle, that the Party would welcome back the British, and press for concessions from the British government, in recognition for wartime services, especially the anti-Japanese war alliance between the Party's MPAJA and the British."[5] Despite this decision, the communists decided to "hedge their bets" by creating an "open" army, with another "closed" army to be kept in hiding as insurance in case the legal struggle did not create sufficient revolutionary momentum.

Within this context, the need for the British to establish an effective intelligence apparatus in the region was paramount. This intelligence apparatus would need to function on several different levels. Malaya's law and order situation required a local agency that could reach into country's communities to provide criminal intelligence. The most obvious model for this, and the one used throughout the empire, was provided by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the local police force. Given that a large proportion of Malaya's law and order problems were driven, or at least masked, by a high degree of political motivation, the provision of security intelligence was also vital. Similarly, a Special Branch of the CID provided an obvious model. However, the Security Service also had a clear mandate to oversee security intelligence across Britain's territories in the Far East, not only for benefit of regional governments but also their metropolitan masters in London. Somehow this interest needed to be incorporated into the post-war intelligence apparatus in the region. A further dimension to any post-war intelligence apparatus was defence intelligence, particularly in relation to potential threats posed by China to Hong Kong and Indonesia to Sawawak, Borneo, Singapore and Malaya. This aspect was further complicated because officials were concerned about the prospect of paramilitary groups (which were believed to have direct links to China and Indonesia) operating in the shadows of Malaya's rubber plantations, tin mines and jungles. Finally, there was a need for some form of coordinating body or mechanism to ensure that the various elements of the intelligence

[5] C.C. Chin and K. Hack, eds., *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore 2004), p. 100.

apparatus operated in harmony. The scale of the challenge was both enormous and pressing.

The Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)

The foundations of the British post-war intelligence set-up in the Far East were based, at least initially, upon the legacy of the South-East Asia Command's (SEAC) wartime intelligence apparatus. The situation was far from ideal, however. As noted in the previous chapter, SEAC's intelligence apparatus was very much concentrated on the defence intelligence necessary to fight the Japanese military forces in the region. Conversely, SEAC had little need for security intelligence. Consequently, the foundations upon which the BMA officials could recreate an intelligence apparatus fit for the post-war situation in the Far East were, at best, infirm. The task was further complicated by questions of governance. In contrast to the rigid, hierarchical, military, nature of SEAC, the immediate post-war settlement for British interests in the Far East was notably diffuse. This reflected the re-establishment of various administrations across the Far East. Hence, as a paper by the Joint Planning Staff noted, "at the end of the Japanese War the Supreme Allied Commander was the only co-ordinating authority in all matters but with the resumption of civil authority on a peace-time basis in the various countries of the area, the Supreme Allied Commander is progressively and as quickly as possible, passing his responsibilities in regard to civil matters to other authorities."[6] This meant by mid-1946 the "machinery available for coordination" was centred upon the Governor General, Malaya, The Special Commissioner, and the Supreme Allied Commander. The future intelligence architecture in the region was further complicated by the creation of the Security Service's regional network called Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), the Secret Intelligence Service's Far East Controlling Station, and Malayan Security Service (MSS).[7] There was, therefore, a need to create a new coordination structure to reflect Britain's changing presence in the region to coordinate the various

[6]WO 203/6236, Survey of Co-ordination Within the Territories of South East Asia, 18 July 1946.

[7]P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore Station and the Role of the Far East Controller: Secret Intelligence Structure and the Process in Post-war Colonial Administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 105–129.

intelligence bodies and ensure "the most effective Intelligence service to the Commanders and Civil authorities there, and to our intelligence organisation as a whole."[8]

To address this issue, Lord Louis Mountbatten recommended that a Defence Committee be created, an idea that was subsequently developed in a broader paper that advocated the creation of zones of strategic responsibility for the Commonwealth as a whole. This paper explained that "the machinery for co-ordinating military and civil requirements in each zone should take the form of a defence committee consisting of the representatives of the civil administrations and military authorities within the zone."[9] Consequently, the Defence Committee in South East Asia was established in June 1946, and subsequently became known as the British Defence Coordinating Committee (Far East) (BDCC [FE]). It had a narrow composition, consisting only of the Commissioner-General, Malcolm MacDonald, who was the chair, the Special Commissioner, Lord Killearn, and Mountbatten, whose place on the committee was filled, after the abolition of SEAC, by the Commanders-in-Chief. The committee was designed to act "as a forum for the discussion and coordination of all current and future defence activities… to furnish co-ordinate advice and recommendations on local matters to London and through London to other Commonwealth Governments, [and] preparing strategic studies against a background provided by London."[10] It will be noted that these responsibilities implied a significant intelligence component but, crucially for future events in Malaya, the committee focused solely on matters of defence and preparation for a future conventional war against communist forces in the region—the prospect of irregular warfare passed the BDCC (FE) by.

The BDCC (FE) was thus a regional, high-level, military body and there remained the question of how defence and security intelligence would be assessed and coordinated. This had been the subject of debate for a number of years. For instance, two competing proposals

[8]L/WS/1/734, JIC (46) 105, Organisation of Intelligence in South East Asia—Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 9 December 1946.

[9]Ibid., JP (47) 68 CoS, Joint Planning Staff—British Defence Committee in South East Asia, 26 July 1946.

[10]DO 35/2272, CoS (48) 221, British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Far East and British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Middle East—Revised Terms of Reference, 22 December 1948.

were entertained by the JIC (London) during a conference on the coordination of Far East intelligence, held in Whitehall in September 1944. The first idea was to establish a body based on the pre-war Far East Combined Intelligence Bureau (FECB). This would function like a regional clearing house, where intelligence was received, assessed and disseminated on an inter-service basis. However, a major concern was that such a body would operate in isolation from London. The alternative was to create a facsimile of the metropolitan JIC.[11] Under this model, the committee (comprised of heads of intelligence for the three services, and representatives from the Foreign Office, the Security Service, Secret Intelligence Service, and the Joint Intelligence Bureau) would sit to consider specific intelligence requirements and serve the Commanders-in-Chief and JIC (London) equally. Each service or agency would receive, assess and disseminate intelligence independently, meeting via the JIC drafting staff and in the committee to create joint intelligence assessments. The conference, however, failed to come to any conclusions and the issue continued to be debated as planners considered what structures should replace those under the auspices of SEAC.

To complement the BDCC (FE), Mountbatten instructed the staffs of the Governor General, Malaya, The Special Commissioner and the Supreme Allied Commander to "work as a team intelligence and planning, and in directing executive action in all matters of common interest."[12] In relation to intelligence, this manifest itself in the creation of a Central Intelligence Staff (CIS), under the Commander of SEAC's Director of Intelligence, General Ronald Penny. This model was similar to the FECB proposal. During the negotiations that followed the decision to abolish SEAC, Penney argued strongly to retain the CIS, for the following reasons:

a. A nucleus of central Inter-Service Intelligence Staff would thus be proved capable of rapid extension when war is imminent.
b. Manpower would be saved because all information from foreign countries (other than information on foreign armed forces) would

[11]CAB 81/125, Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, Conference on Co-ordination of Intelligence in the Far East, Minutes of Meeting held between 8 September and 14 September 1944.

[12]WO 203/6236, Survey of Co-ordination Within the Territories of South East Asia, 18 July 1946.

be collated and presented by one inter-Service Staff instead of by three separate Headquarters (as it would be under the JIC system).

c. Answers to ad hoc questions put by the Governor General, the Special Commissioner or the Commanders-in-Chief Committee would be more quickly forthcoming from an inter-Service Staff centrally located, than from a JIC whose members are inevitably scattered.

d. The necessary close liaison between the Heads of SIFE, Signal Intelligence and Service Intelligence is best conducted through a Director of Intelligence than through three Heads of Intelligence at three separate Headquarters.[13]

It is understandable that Penney advocated the retention of a CIS, rather than the JIC model. After all, officials in London were still struggling to decide how they could retain the best elements of the wartime intelligence structures, while meeting demands for economy and adapting to the rapidly emerging Cold War threat. The retention of a tried and tested concept, and one which could serve as a nucleus for war expansion and to serve a Supreme Command in a future conflict, appears eminently sensible when officials were so concerned about the intentions of the Chinese Communist Party towards Hong Kong.[14] Moreover, at this time Britain's post-war political structures in the region were still embryonic. Nor was it clear how the roles and responsibilities of the Governor General and Special Commissioner would develop, nor what intelligence demands they would have.[15]

Lord Killearn, Malcolm MacDonald and the Commanders-in-Chief approved this proposal and in October 1946 a revised directive was issued to the Central Intelligence Staff. The Director of Intelligence continued to have a broad portfolio of responsibilities: he was answerable both to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee and the British Defence Committee in South East Asia as a whole, and its members individually. He was also "to ensure the closest possible liaison is maintained between the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore, and all other British and

[13]WO 203/6236, DOI—Future Intelligence Organisation in South East Asia, 17 August 1946.

[14]L/WS/1/174, Cabinet Offices to SEAC, December 1946.

[15]Davies, *Machinery of Spying*, p. 192; Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, pp. 216 and 279.

Commonwealth Intelligence Organisations in South East Asia and the Far East"; he was responsible also for keeping the JIC (London) and JIB (London) "informed on all matters of interest to them arising in South East Asia."[16]

Somewhat confusingly, although Penney had argued successfully against a JIC *system* in favour of the CIS model, he retained the permanent chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee (Singapore). This committee was charged with submitting joint intelligence appreciations to the BDCC (FE) and to keep under review a broader intelligence apparatus. However, just as the JIC (SEAC) was fundamentally a military committee, focused upon issues of intelligence generated from the prosecution of the war against Japan, this first post-war iteration of the JIC in the Far East was heavily defence-orientated. For instance, its directive stated that the aspects of intelligence which were of primary concern to the CIS were: "a) the study of the internal situation in foreign countries which could possibly affect the defence or security of this theatre; b) the assessment of over-all readiness and capacity for war of potential enemies; c) the appreciation of the military intentions and strategic plans of foreign countries; d) the study of economic and political situations in foreign countries and the assessment of their influence on world trade and relationships."[17] Perhaps unsurprisingly considering the wartime origins of the CIS, security intelligence is notable for its absence in the directive.

However, while decisions were being taken in Singapore to continue and develop the concept of the CIS, a more wholesale review of how intelligence should be managed was in progress some eight thousand miles away in Whitehall. The JIC (London) considered but dismissed the idea of continuing some form of CIS, preferring instead to export a model based on their own image. As noted in the previous chapter, this was not without precedent. Thus, the JIC (London) explained to SEAC that the Joint Intelligence Committee/Joint Intelligence staff system had a proven track record in war and peace, was economical in manpower and avoided the "duplication of work, which appear inevitable in the case where a Central Intelligence Staff exists in addition to the Service Intelligence Staffs." Pre-empting concerns about how the intelligence needs of the Governor General and Special Commissioner's offices might

[16] L/WS/1/174, Directive to the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore.

[17] Ibid.

be met, the JIC (London) suggested that "the necessary Colonial Office and Foreign Office representatives are included on the Joint Intelligence Committee for the purposes of political intelligence, and the necessary full-time Colonial Office and Foreign Office representatives can be made available for the Joint Intelligence Staff."[18]

Reflecting the lack of direct instruction from London, the JIC (FE) was created in 1947 but without a formal charter. Christine Warburton, the secretary to the JIC (FE), later noted that this caused general uncertainty as to the structure of the committee.[19] This was addressed later in the year when JIC (London) requested their Far East franchise adapt a charter based on that already agreed with the JIC (Middle East). Subsequently the JIC (FE) defined its function as "to provide a medium for:

a. The co-ordination of all intelligence activities within [an area coterminous with the British Defence Coordinating Committee, Far East];
b. The exchange, discussion and appreciation of intelligence."[20]

The self-defined responsibilities for the JIC (FE) included the provision of advice to the BDCC (FE) on all matters of intelligence and counter-intelligence policy, organisation and coordination; and providing both the BDCC (FE) and JIC (London) with intelligence reports and appreciations. It was to be chaired by the Deputy Special Commissioner in South East Asia and included the intelligence chiefs for the three services, the Head of SIFE, the head of SIS (FE), a representative from the Joint Intelligence Bureau (Singapore) and the Australian Commissioner in Malaya, by invitation, as an observer.[21]

The provision of warning both to London and local authorities of the rise in violence which led to the declaration of emergency (and that went onto pose a direct threat both to the Federation of Malaya and British strategic interests in the region) was well within orbit of the JIC (FE). As discussed in the previous chapter, the JICs in London and

[18] L/WS/1/734, Cabinet Office to SEAC, 9 December 1946.

[19] CO 537/2653, Note by JIC Secretary entitled, "Composition and Functions of JIC (Far East)", Appendix A, JIC (FE) to JIC (London), 17 January 1948.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

the Middle East both had Security Service representation for a number of years—in the case of JIC (London) since 1941 and from the inception of JIC (Middle East) in 1943. Given that the Security Service had the clearly defined remit of tackling, among other things, subversion, the JICs in London and the Middle East provided a precedent for the inclusion of security intelligence within the heart of the JIC system.[22] Indeed, both the head of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) and the Malayan Security Service (MSS) were members of the JIC (FE). Hence, the committee had not only the wartime precedent to draw upon, it had the regional intelligence security experts within its midst. Moreover, the 1945 Capel-Dunn Report emphasised the need for JICs to assess all types of intelligence, rather than just military intelligence.[23] London expressly asked the JIC (FE) to use the remit already adopted by its counterpart in the Middle East, which stated the committee would direct "the organisation, co-ordination and dissemination of all types of intelligence produced within the Middle East Military Command."[24] Subsequently, the JIC (FE)'s charter confirmed that it had responsibility, among other things, "to coordinate all intelligence and security intelligence activities, and to allocate priorities….[and] furnish the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East), and Commanders-in-Chief Committee (Far East), or individual Commanders-in-Chief, with joint intelligence reports and appreciations."[25] It is interesting to note that the JIC (FE)'s charter specially included the term "security intelligence" before the JIC (London)'s charter was amended to include the same term in 1948.[26] And yet, as will be seen, the JIC (FE) singularly failed to discharge this aspect of its responsibility in relation to Malaya.

[22]C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm* (London 2010), pp. 129–130; P. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in the Britain and the United States, Vol. 2: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara 2012), p. 21.

[23]CAB 163/3, "The Intelligence Machine", Report to the Joint Intelligence-Committee, 10 January 1945; See Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, p. 123.

[24]WO 204/8564, Joint Intelligence Committee Middle East, Charter, March 1944.

[25]CO 537/2653, JIC (48) 10, Review of the Intelligence Organisation in the Far East—Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee: Annex—Draft Charter for the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East), 15 June 1948.

[26]Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, Vol. 2, pp. 142–143.

The Security Service in the Far East

Thus, by early 1947 Britain had moved from the wartime model of Combined Intelligence Staff, answerable to a Director of Intelligence, to a Joint Intelligence Committee. This committee was created to mirror its metropolitan namesake and was charged with overseeing Britain's intelligence apparatus in the Far East. A significant element in this apparatus was provided by the Security Service, in the form of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). This was a regional clearing house based in Singapore, which was served by Security Service officers, known as Defence Security Officers (DSOs), based in Britain's various territories across the region. SIFE should have formed a critical conduit between security intelligence "on the ground," the JIC (FE) and the Security Service in London. However, SIFE, not unlike the JIC (FE), was established in very short order in the context of rapidly changing political and security context. Good relationships with the various regional governments and clear lines of demarcation with the local police and security services were vital for this system to work effectively. However, as will be seen, SIFE struggled in both aspects from its inception. This was to have significant consequences for Malaya.

Much of SIFE's problems, particularly in relation to Malaya, can be traced to its difficult gestation. The origins of SIFE can be traced to the creation in late 1940 of the Far Eastern Security Section (FESS) which was established in Singapore "to collect, co-ordinate and pass to the authorities concerned reports of anti-British activities in the area covered by the Pacific Naval Intelligence Organisation."[27] However, the events of early 1942 in the Far East effectively destroyed the immediate need to focus upon security intelligence—it was the allies who were acting as subversives and insurgents against the occupying Japanese forces, rather than the other way around. This meant that, as was discussed in the previous chapter, at the end of the Second World War SEAC lacked an operationally mature intelligence security apparatus, akin to that in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the period between the fall of Singapore and restoration of the British presence in Malaya in 1945 witnessed a significant amount of soul-searching in London about the nature and shape of the eventual post-war security intelligence apparatus in the Far

[27]FO 371/24715, Telegram from the Foreign Office to Various UK Territories in the Middle East, dated January 1941.

East. Even before Singapore fell in February 1942, Brigadier Harker, A/Director General of MI5, realised the importance of planning how best to create the Security Service's post-war network in the Far East.[28] The pre-war "link" system had been based on personal contact between his predecessor, Sir Vernon Kell, and the governors of the Colonies who acted as "correspondents." However, many of Kell's original contacts had moved or retired, and successors had not been "recruited." Hence by 1941, the "link" system was in a state of disrepair. As a result, Harker suggested that the Security Service develop a direct working relationship with the colonial police as the first point of contact, rather than the governors.[29]

The Security Service's Overseas Control (OC) also recognised the need for change.[30] A 1943 report stated that "once we have won the war, we have still got to win the Peace, and in my opinion the Security Service, particularly overseas, will play a very large part in this latter phase." The unnamed but prescient author realised that the pre-war system of having key figures within the colonial government to act as "links" for MI5 was ineffective. Instead, the author suggested professionalising the Service's overseas representation, by abandoning the "pre-war policy of employing officers with private means on low salaries" in favour of making the "Security Service… a career to which the right type of man will be attracted by the terms of service, as well as the interest of the work." The report posited that despite inevitable post-war austerity, it would be possible to maintain Security Service officers, known as Defence Security Officers (DSOs), in fortress areas (Gibraltar, Malta and Singapore) and any vulnerable areas (such as Egypt), supplemented in all other colonies and Dominions with "an active correspondent or Link who is known personally to us."[31]

[28] Brigadier Oswald 'Jasper' Hawker replaced Sir Vernon Kell as Director of the Security Service in June 1940. He was replaced by Sir David Petrie in 1941 but stayed on as the Deputy Director General.

[29] See KV 4/442, a note by A.S. Jelf, 13 November 1940 and an unsigned letter by Harker, 21 January 1941.

[30] KV 4/18. In July 1941, the Security Service decided to raise the status of Section A. 5, which dealt with Overseas Administration, to that of a section responsible directly to the Director of A Division.

[31] KV 4/442, Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8 June 1943 on the Development and Future Needs of Overseas Control.

A further paper by Overseas Control in 1943 expanded upon some of these ideas, and repeated the conviction that the pre-war arrangements, "which were governed largely by finance were most unsatisfactory." The report stressed that each Defence Security Office, required "at least one DSO and Assistant DSO, rather than being comprised of temporary assistants being recruited from local regiments, who, in most cases, left as soon as they were of value." Instead, the Security Service should recruit "men of the world, attracted by reasonable terms and conditions," who would work on four or five year postings across the empire, broken by a sojourn of a year's posting in London. Finally, OC suggested "within the next 12 months we should endeavour to place trained DSOs and A/DSOs if they are not there already, in all our potential post-war stations." While officers could be considered for places such as Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar and Jamaica, the author of the report somewhat laconically noted, "Singapore can wait."[32]

Geoffrey Denham, the Secret Intelligence Service's Far East controller, developed the idea of Britain's overseas post-war intelligence organisation.[33] One can first see the idea of a series of regional out-stations being articulated in correspondence between Denham and Sir David Petrie (who succeeded Harker as Director General of the Security Service in April 1941), written at the end of 1943. Denham suggested that if "we have to 'police the world' after war, the first point of consideration is where our 'pools' should be situated. London is naturally the headquarters of the Organisation, but various centres all over the Empire must be selected as the correct places where Intelligence can be collated and disseminated to connected Branches." Denham proposed regional centres in Accra, Cairo, Johannesburg, Singapore, Melbourne, Jamaica and Ottawa.[34] However, his report was not accepted uncritically. An unsigned minute to the Deputy Director General (DDG) took exception

[32] Ibid., untitled report by O.C., dated 25 October 1943.

[33] Geoffrey Denham was a businessman with interests in Java. In May 1941, he was despatched to Singapore to conduct a review of SIS organisation in the Far East and subsequently became the first SIS regional director. See R. Aldrich, "Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia During the Second World War", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (1998), p. 188; P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (2004), p. 130; P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore Station and the Role of the Far East Controller", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), p. 113.

[34] KV 4/442, Denham to Petrie, 22 December 1943.

both to Denham's presumption that Great Britain would be policing the post-war world and his suggestion that DSOs should be posted to the Dominions.[35]

Nevertheless, Denham's report proved pivotal in the philosophical origins of SIFE, particularly in relation to the future role of the Security Service in tackling post-war colonial subversion. For instance, it helped shape the approach of Petrie to Sir George Gater, Permanent Under Secretary for the Colonies, on the subject.[36] The Director General said that "it is reasonable to suppose that for a few years after the war our DSOs and link will not need to spend much time and energy on counter-espionage, and it seems probable that one of their main uses might be to investigate subversive tendencies, some of which may be cloaked by political movements." While Petrie acknowledged that some of these movements might be of purely local interest, "others may have world wide ramifications, and it will therefore be necessary for the Security Service to keep adequate record of all such movements and to take active interest in advising our DSOs and links on all matters of mutual interest." Petrie also said that there "was a possibility that some form of federation may take place in these areas which might necessitate the formation of a Security Intelligence Bureau either directly under, or working in close consultation with the Security Service on the lines of SIME [Security Intelligence Middle East] in Egypt and the Middle East."[37]

However, three difficult issues arose during the wartime planning. Despite the best efforts of Petrie and Gater, these issues remained largely unresolved, plaguing the organisation for which they were planning. The first was constitutional. Gater recognised that the end of the war was likely to accelerate the progress of the colonies towards self-government. However, by 1944, this was proving a source of difficulty in Ceylon, where the police service was under the administrative and financial control of ministers and Gater predicted that similar difficulties were likely in the near future in such places as Malta and Jamaica. There was, therefore, a need to find a mechanism to ensure Security Service officers posted to the post-war colonies remained directly under the control

[35] Ibid., Draft Minute to the DDG, undated.

[36] Sir David Petrie was Director General of the Security Service from 1941 to 1946.

[37] KV 4/442, Petrie to Gater, 17 February 1944. See also Note of Lord Swinton's discussion with Sir George Cater, 1 August 1944. See also Extract from personal letter to the Director-General from Lt. Col. G.J. Jenkins, DSO Egypt, dated 22 September 1944.

of London.[38] The position of the Dominions was a further complication. Denham "felt strongly that in order to establish a proper Security Service throughout the Empire, the Dominions should come into the scheme."[39] However, the Colonial Office was less convinced—Gater informed Petrie that he was "doubtful whether the problems which will exist in peace time are sufficiently great to justify the appointment of a whole time liaison officer to any of our Dominions."[40] Moreover, the Dominions Office moved quickly to distance the Dominions from such planning.[41] It was therefore agreed that the Dominions would not feature in future "link" planning, but that the "already excellent liaison" would be "strengthened by a more frequent interchange of visits between Security Service representatives and representatives of the Security organisations in the Dominions concerned."[42]

The second issue was the operational context in which any potentially refashioned Security Service presence in the colonies would function. Initially Overseas Control envisaged a system in which the DSO's would be supported by a dedicated colonial police officer whose primary focus would be internal security and who would report directly to the Commissioner of Police or Head of CID. In this way, the DSO could focus entirely on the needs of the Security Service while the police officer could concentrate on the specific local needs of his colony. Moreover, this system had the advantage that the police officer could take over the files and card indices in the event that the DSO was removed from the territory after the war due to any cost-saving measures.[43] Petrie realised that whatever form the Service's post-war presence would take, it would be reliant upon the Colonial Police. He therefore suggested to Gater that the Colonial Office should review "at an early date the facilities which Colonial Police Forces have at present for carrying out of general local security duties." He acknowledged that "this is entirely a Colonial Office matter, but since our own efficiency is so dependent on

[38] Ibid., Gater to Petrie, 17 July 1944.

[39] Ibid., A report by Mr. Denham entitled, "Post-war MI5 Organisation", 22 December 1943.

[40] Ibid., Draft Minute to the DDG, undated.

[41] Ibid., Sir John Stephenson to Petrie, 22 March 1944.

[42] Ibid., Draft Letter from Petrie to Stephenson, 13 February 1946.

[43] Ibid., Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8 June 1943 on the Development and Future Needs of Overseas Control.

the Police, it seems essential that we should raise the point."[44] While this point was raised, it was not resolved. This proved to have profound implications for SIFE throughout much of its existence.

The third problem, that of finance, also hung heavily over the planning for the Security Services post-war overseas structure. The 1943 Overseas Control report noted that "there is no doubt that finance will preclude having a large number of DSOs and we shall therefore require to have really first class material."[45] Petrie admitted to Gater in February 1944 that "there are a great many imponderable factors, not least being the amount of money made available. The only thing one can say, with almost complete certainty, is that it is bound to be very material reduced."[46] This raised the thorny problem of how to pay for MI5's post-war overseas presence. Vernon Kell's "links" system operated on good-will. However, wartime planners recognised that this was not sustainable—intelligence was an increasingly expensive commodity that demanded more than good-will. Yet, the Security Service did not have funds to supply the future "links" and the Colonial office was not in the position to supply secret funds.[47] In a rather confused minute on the subject, Petrie acknowledged his dislike of the "proposal that we should get mixed up in the administration of any funds other than those from SS [Security Service] sources." However, he agreed, "if a 'link' requires funds for expenditure which is primarily in our interest, we should supply them."[48] Clearly conscious of the inevitable post-war struggle with the Treasury, Petrie moved to secure a united front with the Colonial Office.[49] As a result, Gater said he "had no hesitation in giving you the assurance for which you ask …we attach importance to the continuance of the DSO system and are ready to support any application that you may make to the Treasury for the necessary funds to maintain it."[50]

[44] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 17 February 1944.

[45] Ibid., Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8 June 1943 on the Development and Future Needs of Overseas Control.

[46] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 17 February 1944.

[47] Ibid., Minute 88, OC to DG, dated 16 December 1944.

[48] Ibid., Minute 93, DA to DDG, dated 21 December 1944; Minute 94 from DDG to DG, dated 21 December 1944; Minute 95 from DG to DDG, dated 22 December 1944.

[49] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 22 June 1944.

[50] Ibid., Gater to Petrie, 17 July 1944.

By 1944 the Security Service had concluded that the pre-war concept of "Links" was redundant and was determined to develop a more structured, professional system. To "provide a centre where all intelligence concerning espionage, sabotage and other subversive and illicit activities is pooled," Petrie realised that he needed to cover the Empire "effectively with a series of out-stations." Due to the potential expense, he did not suggest having Security Service officers in all of the Colonies and "in any case, we do not want to plant our officers in places where there is no need for them." Instead, he proposed to "'wire' the whole Imperial area in such a way that we can 'plug in' just when and where we want to." Petrie made a distinction between the fortresses (Gibraltar, Malta, Singapore, Hong King and Egypt) and the Colonies. He grouped the latter into four groups: West Indies (Jamaica and Trinidad); East Africa (Kenya and the Rhodesias); West Africa (Accra) and, potentially, Ceylon. One DSO, supported by an assistant and a small office staff, would cover each of these territories. Moreover, Petrie asserted that it was "desirable to set-up at least two regional centres in the way of clearing houses for information, so that only the refined product from Security Intelligence Reports would come through them to Headquarters." He proposed that the Security Service offices at Cairo and Singapore should perform this function.[51] Hence, the seed of the concept of SIFE was sown.

The issue of the Security Service's overseas representation was not developed further until the end of the Second World War when, as Petrie explained to Gater, "the business of examining the post-war requirements of this organisation has naturally assumed more immediate importance…" Petrie consulted with the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), and it was confirmed that the Security Service would assume responsibility for security intelligence in both the Middle East and the Far East. Post-war reorganisation in the Middle East was a relatively straightforward affair—the Security Service took over from the military the direction and control of Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME), which was, in fact, "a war-time expansion on a large scale for the discharge of the functions that formerly pertained to our Defence Security Officer in Egypt."[52] In the Far East, however, the issue was less clear.

[51] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 2 June 1944.

[52] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 20 April 1946. See also R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939–58", *Intelligence and National Security*, 31: 3 (2016), pp. 369–396.

Ostensibly there was no equivalent to SIME in the Far East during the Second World War, certainly not in name. There was, however, recent precedent for inter-organisational co-operation in security intelligence in the region. At the outbreak of war, Captain Wylie (RN), established the FECB. This was a tri-service organisation, drawing information from "Military and Air intelligence; SIS [Secret Intelligence Service]; French Intelligence Service; Defence Security Officers; Diplomatic and Consular Officers; Information from Naval sources which is obtained from the whole area embraced by PNIO." The Far Eastern Security Section (FESS) was located within the FECB and was responsible for establishing "a comprehensive picture of the persons and organisations working against British security in the Far East and to convey this picture to the various organisations who are in a position to make use of it."[53]

While the FECB disappeared in the wake of the Japanese invasion of Singapore, in 1945 SEAC formed the Counter-Intelligence Combined Board (CICB) to perform a similar function.[54] This was a joint intelligence organisation, run by Colonel C. E. Dixon and Courtenay Young, who oversaw a staff of intelligence officers drawn from MI5, SIS, OSS Office of Strategic Services [OSS] and SEAC.[55] As discussed in the previous chapter, the CICB "made a specialised study of the Japanese Intelligence Services and was responsible for collecting, collating, and disseminating information in this field." To support this, CICB "had teams of Counter-Intelligence specialists attached to formations and composed of members of MI5, SIS and selected Army officers."[56]

However, the end of the war against Japan also signalled the end of CICB. Mountbatten subsequently suggested, "the South East Asia theatre security organisation might well be modelled on that approved for

[53]FO 371/24715, The Far Eastern Combined Intelligence Bureau, a report by J. Godfrey, Director of Naval Intelligence, 30 March 1940.

[54]R. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan* (Cambridge 2000), p. 370. Aldrich notes that, amongst other responsibilities, the CICB tasked Intelligence Assault Units—see HS 1/329 and WO 203/5050.

[55]Courtenay Young had distinguished career in the Security Service, not least as the first SLO with ASIO, H/SIFE, and the head of 'B' Section.

[56]WO 203/5038, "Control and Organization of the Security Service in Overseas Theatres", HQ SACSEA to Secretary, C of S Committee, 2 January 1946.

the Middle East."[57] This was in harmony with Petrie's thoughts on the subject and it was decided to use the CICB as the basis of a much broader civil organisation which would act as Britain's regional security intelligence hub, run by the Security Service, to be known as Security Intelligence Far East. While SIFE was to be commanded by a Security Service officer (reflecting SIME post-war shift from military to civilian control), Petrie envisaged it to be a "joint" unit, comprising not just of Security Service officers, but staff drawn from the three services and with potential representation from the Australian Security Service and the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India.[58] SIFE was thus "stood-up" in early 1946, and included four staff officers drawn from Allied Land Forces South East Asia (ALFSEA), two Royal Navy officers, two Royal Air Force officers, and a still classified number of MI5 and MI6 officers. Dixon, former head of CICB, was retained to lead the new unit.

The Origins of the Malayan Security Service

The third layer of the regional security intelligence apparatus was formed by the various police forces among Britain's territories in the region. At the end of the Second World War, most of the British territories re-established their colonial police forces, each with a Special Branch charged with forestalling politically inspired violence. In theory, each of these Special Branches should have passed intelligence to the DSO allocated to their region or territory, in addition to their own headquarters for local distribution. The DSO would, in turn, pass this intelligence to SIFE HQ in Singapore for assessment and further to distribution (perhaps back to originating unit for further development, to other governments in the region, to the JIC (FE), or the Security Service in Whitehall). The one anomaly in this model proved to be in Malaya, where instead of re-establishing a Special Branch at the end of the Second World War, officials decided to stand-up their own Security Service.

The idea of a Pan-Malaya organisation with responsibility for security intelligence was not a new one. Towards the end of the First World War, a Political Intelligence Bureau (PIB) was set-up in Singapore. This

[57] Ibid.

[58] KV 4/442, Petrie to Gater, 20 February 1946.

dealt nearly exclusively with political intelligence and had no connections with the police. In May 1920, an Intelligence Bureau was also established by the Federated Malaya States (FMS) Police. Unlike its counterpart in Singapore, the Federated States Intelligence Bureau had a responsibility for both political and criminal intelligence. The idea developed some momentum and intelligence branches were started in Perak and Selangor, under the Director, FMS Police Intelligence Bureau. It appears, however, that the lines of demarcation between criminal and police intelligence blurred and it was not until the mid-1930s that the Intelligence Bureau began to focus on the threat of communist activity in the Federated Malaya Straits. In contrast, the Straits Settlements had an orthodox Special Branch Department. Also, the Political Intelligence Bureau in Singapore was replaced by a Special Branch. As John Dalley (director of Malayan Security Service between 1946–1948) later explained to Sir Ralph Hone (Secretary General in the Commissioner General's office), that the great draw back "to all this was that there was no co-ordination between the Intelligence Bureau in the F.M.S and Special Branch in the Straits Settlements, and at the same time there was no organised coverage of the 4 Unfederated States."[59] There was clearly the need to address the problem of coordinating the intelligence requirements of the unwieldy collection of Straits Settlements, Federated and Unfederated Malay States. Thus, in September 1939, Arthur Dickinson, the Inspector General of the Straits Settlements Police created the Malayan Security Service (MSS) with responsibility for political and security intelligence across the entire Malayan peninsula and Singapore.[60] The MSS was established as a non-executive "co-coordinating" body and was separate from the Police.

The MSS was reconstituted afresh after the war with Japan, but it also subsumed "organisations previously known as the Special Branch, Singapore, C.I.B (Political) Kuala Lumpur and the office of the civil Security Officer, Malaya."[61] The MSS was established with a Pan-Malaya

[59] Rhodes House Library, MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13 July 1948.

[60] Ibid. See also CO 537/2647, Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17 December 1947. See also the introduction to the first Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, 01/46 (30 April 1946), MSS Ind. Ocn. S251. These documents cast doubt on Comber's assertion, which is echoed by Sinclair, that the MSS was formed before the Second World War.

[61] Introduction to the first Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, 01/46 (30 April 1946), MSS Ind. Ocn. S251.

headquarters, in Singapore, which would collect and collate all security intelligence emanating from MSS branches throughout the Peninsula. The MSS was staffed by gazetted officers, inspectors and detectives, seconded from the Malayan Union Police and Singapore Police. These officers were supported by "office staff, including translators, confidential stenographers, clerks, photographers, and telephone operators, appointed permanently to MSS." However, it was clear that the MSS would not be part of the Criminal Investigation Branch (CID) of either the Malayan or Singapore Police.[62] The Chief Secretary to the Malayan Union, explained to the Commissioner of Police that the functions of the "Intelligence Bureau [aka the MSS]… would be purely the collection of security intelligence from Malayan Union and Singapore Government sources, from neighbouring territories, from Service sources and elsewhere, its sifting and subsequent distribution."[63] Moreover, "the MSS would have no executive functions whatever. If it was decided, for example, that a raid was required, the actual raid would have to be carried out by the Police of the territory concerned, although an officer from the Bureau could accompany the Police during the raid."[64] It is not surprising, therefore, that Antony Short has described the MSS as being "designed as a sort of super intelligence organisation," which shared key organisational characteristics with its metropolitan equivalent, MI5.[65]

The MSS started work officially on 1 April 1946, like SIFE, without a defined remit. It's Acting Director, L. F Knight, took the opportunity of explaining in the organisation's first Political Intelligence Journal (PIJ), released on 30 April, that "at present temporarily on a pan-Malayan basis, pending a final decision by the two Malayan governments, the MSS organisation is responsible for civil security intelligence throughout the country." He further explained that the MSS Headquarters would be "in Singapore, with sub-headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and branches in Singapore, Selangor (to include Negri Sembilan, Perak South and Pahang), Penang (to include Province Wellesley, Kedah, Perlis and Perak North), Johore (including Malacca) and Kelantan (to include

[62] FCO 141/14360, MSS Charter, c. 16 October 1946.

[63] For instance, see ibid., MSS Draft Charter, 27 August 1946; also, Minutes of Meeting Between Malayan Police and SIFE on 2 September 1946; MSS Charter, c. 16 October 1946.

[64] Ibid., MSS Charter, c. 16 October 1946.

[65] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London 1975), p. 80.

Trengganu).” However, due to the lack of staff, at the time the MSS was releasing its first reports, it was “operating on a skeleton framework.”[66] Indeed, as will be seen, staffing was to prove a very significant problem for the MSS throughout its short existence.

The first PIJ gives a fascinating insight into the organisation’s perceptions of the security situation in Malaya at that time. The six pages of densely-typed foolscap are divided into two sections. The first provides a “General Summary” and immediately mentions “Communist activities.” Knight reported that these were “considerably sobered by the actual expulsion on the first day of the new Government [the Malayan Union] of 10 leaders of the General Labour Union and other Unions have been for most of the month confined to reorganisation, to the mobilisation of Civic Rights associations and to protests against the enforcement of the Sedition and Banishment Ordinances and in particular against the conviction of Chu Kau, a Johore Anti-Japanese Army leader sentenced to death for murder.” Although Knight stated that “no signs of External Direction of the Malayan Communist Party have come to notice…” he qualified this by asserting that there was “intimate” interest in the People’s Congress in Nanking. Moreover, there was concern that the communists were regrouping, identifying new recruits to replace those who had been imprisoned or banished, and resorting to “less scrupulous methods than ever of obtaining funds.” The first PIJ also discussed, albeit in significantly less depth, the Kuomintang and China Democratic League, Sino-Malay tension and potential impact of political developments in Indonesia and India upon Malaya.[67]

The second half of the Journal was devoted to reactions to the creation of the Malayan Union, which came into being on 1 April 1946. This was an entirely new construct, designed to bring together the Federated and Unfederated States and Settlements under one constitution, under which citizenship did not depend upon racial heritage or birthplace. However, this caused significant discord.[68] Malays were concerned not only about other races, particularly the Chinese and Indians gaining Malayan citizenship but the apparent diminution of the Sultans’ powers. The PIJ identified Data Onn bin Jaafar, the leader of the United

[66]MSS Ind. Ocn. S251, Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, 01/46 (30 April 1946).

[67]Ibid.

[68]A. Lau, *The 83-Controversy, 1942–1948* (Oxford 1991).

Malay National Organisation (UMNO), as being the key opposition figure. Moreover, "agents" of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) were "touring the country and stirring up uneasiness towards the Union and ill-feeling against the Chinese and encouraging the invulnerability cult ('Parang Panjang), which they say will protect devotees if serious trouble eventuates." However, there was anxiety that opposition might reach beyond the Malay community. Knight reported "while the Malays who will be primarily affected by the proposals, have been the most vociferous in their condemnation, comment and criticism have also been widespread among all nationalities and all classes both in Malaya and overseas."[69]

The first PIJ is noteworthy for a number of reasons. The first is that the threat from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and communist-controlled or affiliated unions were the first subjects to be discussed, indicating that they were of primary concern. The second is that the MSS identified numerous other viable threats, including Malay nationalism, Sino-Malay rivalry, and the influence of Indonesia and Indian politics. The third is that from the very beginning of the Union, there was very deep concern about impact upon Malaya's communities and, indeed, its potential longevity. Perhaps most interesting is that Knight uses on a number of occasions the phrase "the spell of expectancy in the country in still unbroken." The impression given is of a country riven by racial, political and cultural division, beset by labour unrest and criminality, and subject to avaricious gazes from China and Indonesia. It hints at the presence of underground, subversive organisations and acknowledges the government's desperation, as signalled by the use of "Sedition and Banishment Orders." Malaya in April 1946 must have been a febrile and exotic environment—a daunting and potentially overwhelming but perhaps an exciting place for a Malayan Security Service officer.

Conclusion

In the eight months between the surrender of the Japanese on 2 September 1945 and the creation of the Malayan Union on 1 April 1946, Britain's intelligence apparatus in the Far East in general, and Malaya specifically, had changed dramatically. In effect, a series of

[69]MSS Ind. Ocn. S251, Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, 01/46 (30 April 1946).

concentric rings had been established. At its centre, at least in terms of Malaya, was the MSS—a pan Malayan intelligence organisation which reflected Britain's wider plans for a pan Malaya constitution, as embodied in the Malayan Union. In the other British territories in the region, the local Special Branches took on the equivalent role for providing security intelligence. The next level of intelligence apparatus was provided by the Security Service, in the form of SIFE. This was an organisation designed to collect, assess, and disseminate security intelligence across the region. In theory, just as the MSS had officers in the States and Settlements reporting back to the headquarters in Singapore, the Security Service had its staff based in British territories across the Far East who were tasked to collect (primarily but not exclusively from local authorities) and disseminate intelligence back to SIFE HQ. Finally, and the least resolved, was strategic coordination and assessment function provided initially by the Central Intelligence Staff and then the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East).

In many respects, the security intelligence apparatus constructed in the Far East at the of the Second World War had merit. Officials moved quickly from the entirely military focus of SEAC's wartime intelligence apparatus to a more balanced system, in which security intelligence had a prominent role. The approach also provided a mechanism for intelligence to flow within, and between, each circle, as demonstrated by the fact that the Director of MSS and Head of SIFE were represented on the JIC (FE) and collocated at Phoenix Park, Singapore. Indeed, both SIFE and the JIC (FE) had direct lines of communication to London. Hence, Britain's regional security intelligence machine was not flawed by design. However, as will be discussed in the next chapters, points of significant stress quickly emerged and within two years the apparatus reached a critical point of failure.

CHAPTER 4

Organisational Conflict

Britain had moved swiftly to recast its post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East—the Malayan Security Service (MSS) had been reformed, Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) had been created using the same template that had been highly effective in the Middle East, and the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) had been established, again using a formula that had proved successful in other parts of the empire. Reflecting both the reoccupation of their territories and the changed relationship between local people and the colonial power, at first blush the new apparatus appeared structurally and conceptually sound, if immature. Clearly, this new apparatus needed a period of stability to "bed-in," not least for the head of SIFE and the director of the MSS to establish common working practices so that their respective organisations would complement each other rather than compete for resources, influence and prestige. The new system also required leadership, primarily from JIC (FE), which had a responsibility to oversee the whole of Britain's intelligence apparatus in the region, but also from the Security Service and Colonial Office in London, and the Governor General in Singapore.

However, against the background of Malay and Indonesian nationalism, increasingly violent and widespread labour disputes, and concerns about the growth of international communism, the embryonic intelligence apparatus never got a period of stability. Nor did it get any form of leadership during

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
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the crucial formative period prior to the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya. Despite being co-located at Phoenix Park, Singapore, John Dalley, the director of the MSS, and C. E. Dixon, the head of the SIFE, were unable to identify significant lines of demarcation or establish any form of mutually supportive working practices between their two organisations. This was exacerbated significantly by the influence of Sir Percy Sillitoe, Director General of the Security Service, who worked in the wings to undermine the concept of the MSS, which he believed was "set-up sound."[1] Ironically, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)—the one body with the remit to referee this contest simply failed to act in any meaningful way.

The Malayan Security Service

As discussed in the previous chapter, the MSS was established in its post-war guise in April 1946. At this time the organisation's director, Lt. Col. John Dalley, was in London. Dalley had been a member of the pre-war Federated Malay States' Police Force. At the outbreak of hostilities with Japan he assembled Dalley's Company (Dalco, also known as Dalforce) which was an irregular, all volunteer, guerrilla force, which comprised of Chinese civilian irregulars. When Singapore fell, a significant element of Dalforce retreated into the jungle and merged with the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA).[2] However, Dalley was captured and suffered as a prisoner of war for a number of years.[3] After the end of the Second World War, Dalley returned to Britain to recuperate. Hence, he was not in Malaya when the MSS was re-formed. While in London, Dalley did, however, engage in debate with the Security Services about the future relationship between his organisation and SIFE. As will be discussed, this debate was to have significant consequences for the MSS, Malaya and Dalley personally.

[1] R. Arditti and P. Davies, "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292–316.

[2] At the end of the War, the MPAJA reformed itself into the Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA). See L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008), p. 48, fn. 23; D. Mackay, *The Domino that Stood—The Malayan Emergency, 1948–60* (London 1997), p. 31; M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (London 2007), pp. 17, 27–28.

[3] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 31; Comber's text actually reads "Dalley … who had considerate [sic] intelligence experience…".

Dalley, and his deputy, Mr L. F. Knight, had to contend with a number of immediate practical problems, not least a significant shortage of staff. For instance, in March 1947, Dalley wrote to Governor Sir Edward Gent explaining that the MSS was short of thirteen European Officers—over half of his full-time establishment. As a result, he said that "I wish to state now, that M.S.S. is unable to perform its [sic] duties under these conditions. No matter how willing their service, no matter how hard they work, the officers now in the M.S.S. are unable to cover all the ground that needs to be covered."[4] Dalley was so concerned about the lack of qualified staff, that he asked the two Commissioners of Police in Malaya "to supply suitable staff for Malaya Security Service from their strength to bring M.S.S up to establishment. This requirement was never fully acceded to…" Similarly, he explained to Sir Ralph Hone (Secretary General in the Commissioner General's office) that "repeated requests have been made for suitable rates of pay, but even today a translator in the M.S.S., - who handles very secret documents and has available to him information of a highly secret nature - is paid less than a translator in the Chinese Secretariat where, at most, they handle confidential information."[5] Dalley's frustration at not having sufficient and well-remunerated staff is clear. However, the situation did not get better. For instance, in the weeks prior to the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya in June 1948, the MSS was short of four Local Security Officers (LSOs), fourteen assistant LSOs, fourteen enquiry staff and five translators.[6] This staffing gap resulted in no permanent MSS presence in Trengganu and Kelantan. Moreover, only one LSO could speak Chinese—clearly a huge obstacle, as this was the primary language of nearly forty per cent of the population of Malaya.[7]

A further practical problem was the lack of executive powers. Like MI5, its metropolitan cousin, the MSS depended upon the police service for powers of search and arrest. The MSS did pass "much detailed information to various authorities in Malaya, including the Police, most of which recommended action." However, Dalley felt it "unfortunate that in many cases no action was taken that in a large measure has led to

[4] FCO 141/17012, Dalley to Gent, 21 March 1947.

[5] MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13 July 1948.

[6] Ibid., Dalley Quotes Figures for Actual vs. Approved Establishment for 1 May 1946. Comber provides similar figures for 1948, see Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 32.

[7] Ibid., p. 34.

the present situation of Malaya." He further stated, "much of this information has been wasted by no action or no proper action being taken in so many cases." He illustrated this claim by making reference to the failure of the police either to heed the MSS's warning to guard the village of Jerantut against the attention of communist bandits, to make coordinated searches of subversive organisations, or arrest their leaders. Despite being the primary intelligence body in Malaya, Dalley bemoaned the fact "there has been and there still is, no machinery whereby the M.S.S. can co-ordinate action. All that M.S.S. can do at the moment is to recommend action."[8]

The Police should have been both "a prolific source of information" and executive arm for the MSS.[9] However, Malaya was in a near-anarchic state and it is not surprising that the Police struggled to support the MSS. The Fortnightly Reports from HQ Malaya for 1946–1947, paint, in the words of one official, "a grim picture." For instance, the cost of rice had risen from $1.50 per month before the war to $20 in 1946. Also, serious crime was at alarming levels—for instance, there were 78 recorded murders and 109 "gang robberies" in January 1946 alone and this pattern was repeated nearly every month in 1946 and 1947.[10] Furthermore, throughout this period, industrial unrest caused the Police great concern, as did deterioration in Sino-Malay relations, links between Malay Nationalist Party and Indonesian nationalists, and activities of Chinese KMT gangs.[11] Little wonder, then, that Dalley stated that because the Police "have been so absorbed in the investigation of criminal activities the amount of information received…has been negligible."[12]

Irrespective of these pressures, it was in fact highly unlikely that the police could do much to help the MSS due to their own parlous situation. The European contingent of the Police force had been decimated by war and internment, and those who survived were in ill-health and low spirits. "Old Malayan hands" mistrusted the newcomers arriving

[8] Ibid., See also C. Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald—Bringing an End to Empire* (1995), pp. 293–294.

[9] Ibid.

[10] CO 537/1581, Minute by Mr. Morgan, 28 March 1946.

[11] See ibid., CO 537/1582 and CO 537/2140 for the HQ Malaya Command Weekly Intelligence Reviews (February 1946–July 1946).

[12] MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13 July 1948.

from other parts of the empire. The normally steadfast Indian element of the Police force suffered similar deprivations by the Japanese and some had been wooed by the anti-British Indian National Army.[13] In addition, many Malay constables were tainted by wartime collaboration with the Japanese and were subject to post-war reprisals by the predominantly communist Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA).[14] As a result, there were very few skilled officers to tackle such problems. For instance, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in the state of Perak was staffed with only two detectives, one Malay and one Chinese.[15] Even if the Police were free from their primary responsibility to maintain law and order to concentrate fully upon supporting the MSS tackling subversion, engagement with the Chinese community, which constituted 38% of Malaya's population, was near impossible.[16] A primary reason for this that the Police suffered a similar lack of Chinese speakers as the MSS: just 2.5% of the 9000 strong Police were Chinese and only twelve British Police officers could speak a Chinese dialect. Moreover, the legacy of the Kempetai meant that the idea of agents and intelligence was tainted, particularly for the Chinese community.[17] Hence, while the concept of the MSS depended upon the Police both for the use of executive powers and as a conduit for information, in practice the Malayan Police struggled to fulfil their core responsibility to maintain law and order and were in no position to offer the MSS the level of support Dalley required.

[13]A. Stockwell, "Policing During the Malayan Emergency, 1948–60: Communism, Communalism and Decolonisation", in D. Anderson and D. Killingray, eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics Nationalism, and the Police, 1917–65* (Manchester 1992), pp. 108–109.

[14]L. Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945–48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18: 3 (2003), p. 131.

[15]A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection* (London 1975), p. 80. This problem was exacerbated by the use of at least four regional dialects amongst the various Chinese sub-ethnic groups in Southeast Asia including Southern Min or 'Amoy' Hokkienese, Cantonese, Teochew and, less commonly at the time, Guoyeu or Mandarin.

[16]J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife—Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago 2002), p. 60.

[17]K. Hack, "Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents: British and Communist Narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the Dynamics of Intelligence Transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), p. 213; see also Comber, "The Malayan Security Service", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18: 3 (2003), p. 133.

The picture that emerges is one of an embryonic intelligence service which struggled in a number of different levels, not least the lack of staff (both in absolute terms, and in specialist areas, such as translating). This would inevitably hinder its operational capacity and Dalley's claim to the High Commissioner of Malaya in March 1947 that the MSS could not provide adequate coverage across the territory is understandable. Nor could Dalley turn to the police for support—both Malayan and Singapore police were suffering equally difficult staffing problems and neither Commissioner could release people to MSS, as originally intended. Moreover, both forces were preoccupied tackling immediate threats, such as banditry and ordinary criminality to focus on the more esoteric problems of political subversion. Nor, as will be discussed, could the MSS enlist the support of the Security Service, in the form of SIFE. Indeed, despite significant areas of mutual interest, the relationship between the MSS and the Security Service was soon to prove highly destructive.

The Security Service

Like the MSS, SIFE—the Security Service's regional clearing house—was beset with problems from the outset. For instance, within weeks of its creation, Dixon, the head of SIFE, fell out with Sir Percy Sillitoe, his metropolitan master. This appears to stem from Dixon's complaint that SIFE's dependence on the Army for accommodation, transport and logistical support was compromising security.[18] Sillitoe felt it necessary to remind Dixon that "SIFE and its DSOs constitute an overt Inter-Service Intelligence Organisation and will be in a similar position to the Intelligence Bureau India which is quite openly recognised as a department of the Government. The existence of an organisation called SIFE must naturally become generally known in view of the numerous Service and civilian contacts its members will have to make."[19] It seems quite remarkable that the head of the Security Service had to remind his theatre head that SIFE was not a covert organisation. Within months Malcolm Johnson, formerly of the Delhi Intelligence Bureau, replaced Dixon as H/SIFE.[20] While it seems that the recruitment of Johnson was

[18] KV 4/421, Dixon to Sillitoe, 29 July 1946.

[19] Ibid., Sillitoe to Dixon, 12 August 1946.

[20] Ibid., Dick White (MI5) to Bates (Colonial Office), 13 August 1946.

not connected with Dixon's confusion about SIFE's security status, it is clear that SIFE did not have an auspicious beginning.

Johnson soon found fault with the intelligence environment in which SIFE was operating. In particular, he felt that various local police and intelligence forces upon which SIFE depended, including the MSS, were not providing SIFE with sufficient information. As a result, Johnson explained to Sillitoe that "when the local intelligence organisations were [sic] insufficient to cover any particular aspects of Security Intelligence to the extent required, it will be the duty of SIFE to supplement those resources with its own."[21] The Director General actively supported Johnson's recommendations and began the process of transforming SIFE from primarily functioning as a collating and assessment organ to an operational headquarters for intelligence collection.[22] Hence, in November 1947, Security Service agents in Burma, Singapore, Malaya, and Hong Kong were tasked to start collecting "basic intelligence data… in respect of organisations which are operating clandestinely."[23] This move placed SIFE in potential conflict with the regional governments, the Commissioner General and Colonial Office, and most significantly, as will be discussed, with the MSS. However, it is important to recognise that it was with not just the MSS that SIFE would clash. For instance, Johnson's successor, Alec Kellar was to enjoy fractious relations with the Commissioner General and the Commissioner of Police in Hong Kong (whom the H/SIFE suggested was "the touchiest of mortals"), due to SIFE's criticism of his force's inability to undertake "the total commitment of secret postal censorship." Relations were even worse with Sir Franklin Gimson, the Governor of Singapore. Kellar reported to Sillitoe that he had, "quite frankly, the poorest opinion of Gimson who, apart from his muddle-headedness, is behaving in an entirely partisan way."[24]

[21] KV 4/421, SLO Singapore to DG, 17 February 1947.

[22] Sillitoe also envisaged SIFE and the DSOs having a broader "intangible" but "essential function" of providing a means of inciting the local security authorities to do their job efficiently, akin to an inspectorate, KV 4/422, Assessment of the value of S.I.F.E and D.S.O Points in the Far East.

[23] Ibid., SIFE to DSO Singapore, Malaya Union, Hong Kong, and SLO Burma, 25 November 1947.

[24] KV 4/423, Kellar to MacDonald, 19 December 1948.

There was clearly a tension in the balance between metropolitan, regional and local intelligence requirements and expectation about what each element of intelligence apparatus could deliver. A large element of this was driven by ambiguity in the term "security intelligence." The Security Service defined the term, in relation to SIFE, as "intelligence relating to those individuals and organisations that might have been engaged in espionage or subversion in the various British territories in the Far East."[25] However, the problems with its regional partners prompted Security Service officials to review the definition of the three key functions for SIFE: Security Intelligence; Counter Espionage and Preventative Security. The latter two terms were relatively simple, but the former proved both contentious and ambiguous.[26]

Security intelligence was central to SIFE's role. Indeed, it was this aspect of SIFE's work which ensured the organisation had a continued responsibility to the officials in Malaya attempting to combat the threat from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). However, Sillitoe sought to disaggregate the concepts of security and political intelligence. The reason why he chose to do this is not easy to understand, particularly when there can be such a fine level of distinction between political intelligence (for instance, relating to the ideological development of MCP) and security intelligence (for instance, information which indicated that the MCP aspired to overthrow the colonial regime in Malaya). Potentially Sillitoe's attempt to distinguish between security and political intelligence may have been a ploy to allow his scant resources in the Far East to focus upon the wider threat posed by international Communism but this explanation is largely undermined by the regular criticism made by SIFE that the MSS was failing to share local intelligence with them. Sillitoe appears to have wanted it both ways—to be provided with intelligence by local police or intelligence agencies but not to have any responsibility for this intelligence unless it related to the security of the United Kingdom (rather than individual territories in the region). This was clearly in conflict with SIFE's core responsibilities.[27]

[25] KV 4/421, Charter for Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 6 August 1946.

[26] KV 4/422, Winterborn to DSO Hong King, Singapore, Malayan Union and Burma, 12 January 1948. Winterborn was Acting H/SIFE.

[27] Ibid.

In theory, the establishment of SIFE provided the Security Services with a regional clearing house, focused upon security intelligence. This specifically included threats to internal security across Britain's territories in the region. In many respects, SIFE's set-up and remit was not unlike its highly successful counterpart in the Middle East.[28] However, as will be seen, in one respect SIFE was flawed. That was because, despite its aspiration to be a collection agency, in reality, it was dependent upon local actors, predominantly but not exclusively local police forces across the region, to provide its DSO's with intelligence. Unfortunately, the relationship between SIFE and the various regional governments proved to be, at best, difficult. In the case of Malaya, it was to prove disastrous.

The Relationship Between SIFE and MSS

The origins of the divisive relationship between SIFE and MSS can found in their overlapping remits, but this was exacerbated significantly by Sir Percy Sillitoe's desire to secure regional hegemony for intelligence apparatus in the Far East. As discussed in the previous chapter, both the MSS and SIFE were officially "stood up" on 1 April 1946, the latter with a Pan-Malaya remit for security intelligence and the former with a much broader regional responsibility. However, within weeks of both organisations coming into formal existence, concern was being expressed about adequate lines of demarcation. For instance, on 11 July 1946 Colonial Office explained to the Governor of Malaya that "Security Authorities [The Security Service] here have expressed concern lest proposals are being formulated with adequate consultation with SIFE and DSOs and have expressed hopes that any proposals put forward will be related to and co-ordinated with the functions of existing Security Organisation in the Far East [SIFE]." They added that the Security Service was planning to "reinforce" SIFE with extra staff and that "it would materially assist them if you could indicate when you will be in a position to submit your proposals." This clearly suggests that the Colonial Office and Security Service were waiting for the government of Malaya to provide them with more detail about the remit of the MSS.[29]

[28] KV 4/421, Memorandum of Instruction for Colonel C.E. Dixon, Head of Security Intelligence Far East, 6 August 1946.

[29] FCO 141/14360 Paskin to Gent, 11 July 1946.

A few days later, Malcom MacDonald, Governor General of South East Asia, wrote to Gimson, the Governor of Singapore, referring to a conference held on the 9th May in which "certain decisions were taken regarding future organisation of the Malayan Security Service and that Commissioners of Police were instructed to formulate a scheme on the lines laid down by the two Governors." MacDonald went on to say that "in arriving at your conclusions on the 9th May [to support the MSS], I am not clear as to what extent prior consultation was held with the head of SIFE and the Director of Intelligence at SACSEA [Supreme Allied Command, South East Asia] Headquarters." McDonald noted he had not received a copy of SIFE's charter or the directions issued to its two DSOs and he questioned "how directions for the Local Security Services [the MSS] under your control can be formulated without these documents." He added that "it seems to me that in a matter of this sort we need the best advice available and that any security organisation that is set up is properly dovetailed into other security organisations which might exist."[30] On 23 July, the Colonial Office informed Gent that "copies I.F.E. [SIFE] Charter and Memorandum Instructions for DIXON will be despatched to you by air mail as soon as possible. As these show function of I.F.E. in detail it is suggested that you should defer submission of any proposals for Pan Malayan Intelligence Bureau [MSS] until you have had an opportunity of seeing these papers."[31] In fact, the Colonial Office was too late—news that the MSS had already been set up had simply not yet reached London. Similarly, SIFE had been established without its remit being circulated to the Governor General. This did not bode well.

Moreover, MacDonald's note caused a degree of umbrage. Gent acknowledged the need for "any final decisions regarding the future organisation of the MSS should be made after consultation with the representatives of other Security Organisations working in the area." However, he felt that whatever "security organisation we are going to have, trained staff will be necessary, and I think we shall have to go ahead with obtaining financial provision and recruiting at least a proportion of the Asiatic Inspectors that we know we shall need. I think we can safely

[30] Ibid., Gimson to MacDonald, 24 July 1946.

[31] Ibid., Sec of State to Governor Malayan Union, 23 July 1946.

do this without prejudicing any scheme of organisation which may be decided on in the future." He also argued that it was "vital for the MSS to be a purely civil organisation under the control of the Civil governments, and not of SIFE or any of the Security organisations."[32]

Further disquiet was caused at Governors' Conference held in Malacca in August 1946, when the issue of the MSS was discussed. Alexander Newboult, the Chief Secretary of the Malayan government, suggested that the two Commissioners of Police, the Director of the MSS, and the DSO (for Malaya) should be directed to "meet at once to set up a regular consultative machinery." In response to this instruction, the Commissioner of Singapore Police retorted "it is a great pity that professional police advice is not sought in this country, as it is elsewhere, before issuing instructions to senior Police Officers regarding cooperation among themselves." He added "the closest cooperation exists between Mr Haines, Acting Commissioner of Police Malayan Union, Mr Knight, Acting Director of MSS, and myself, and the Defence Security Officer has his office almost next door to that of Mr Knight, and there is the closest liaison."[33] Events were soon to show that this was optimistic at best.

The first draft document to articulate the organisation, staffing and duties of the MSS was circulated in August 1946 (i.e, some four months after it was formally "stood-up"). The document stated the main functions of the MSS were:

a. To collect and collate information on subversive organisations and personalities in Malaya and Singapore.
b. To advise, so far as they are able, the two Governments [Malaya and Singapore] as to the extent to which Internal Security is threatened by infiltration from such organisation.
c. To keep the two Governments informed of the trends of public opinion, particularly in the political field.
d. To control aliens.

[32] Ibid., Gent to MacDonald, 25 July 1947. Ibid., Extract from draft minutes of the Governors' Conference held at Malacca on 1st and 2nd August 1946.

[33] Ibid., Commissioner of Police, Singapore to Colonial Secretary, Singapore, 13 August 1946.

e. To maintain a close liaison with other security intelligence organisations, using the DSOs as their link.
f. To supervise the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.[34]

At the same time, Sir Percy Sillitoe issued SIFE's Charter.[35] This stipulated that SIFE's primary responsibility was "the collection, collation and dissemination to interested and appropriative Service and Civil Departments of all Security Intelligence affecting British territories in the Far East.[36] More specifically, Sillitoe indicated that SIFE should provide "interested and appropriate departments with information and advice upon the following subjects:

a. Any foreign Intelligence Service whose activities are directed against British territory in the Far East or inimical to British interests or security.
b. Any political or subversive movement, whether indigenous or foreign, which is a danger or potential danger to British security.
c. Arrangements for the detection of illicit signals and other clandestine means of communication.
d. Coordination of Security policy relating to Travel Control of arms and explosives, the protection of vital installations and the prevention of sabotage.
e. Information from SIFE records which assist the DSOs or appropriate bodies in checking the credentials and back history of doubtful aliens, residents and visitors."

Critically, the charters gave both organisations a responsibility to tackle subversion—for the MSS this was limited to in Malaya, while SIFE had a regional responsibility. The initial reaction from the Acting Director of the MSS to the Charter for SIFE was "fairly strong" because he considered "that a normal reading would inevitably lead to the understanding that a separate (and rival) organisation was about to be set up, and the MSS was to be by-passed." Moreover, he admitted, "a first reading…

[34]Ibid., Malayan Security Service Proposed Establishment, by L. Knight, A/Director MSS, 27 August 1946.

[35]Liddell's diary suggests that SIFE was already in place by January 1946, with the JIC (London) recommending the establishment of staff on 20 February 1946, See KV4/467.

[36]KV 4/421, Charter for Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 6 August 1946.

gave me the impression of a sort of a Gestapo organisation" whose DSOs would encounter such "antagonism in certain specialist departments that he would be seriously handicapped in carrying out his duties." However, Knight discussed the documents "point-by-point" with H/SIFE and came to a better understanding of how the two organisations would coexist.[37] It was subsequently agreed that "SIFE could function adequately in Malaya according to its charter if the MSS were suitably organised." As a result, initial proposals for the CID to be expanded to take on political security were dropped and the MSS responsibility was limited to internal security.[38] While the discussions effectively removed the Police from security intelligence, it remained unclear how SIFE and MSS intended to work "as one".

Whether SIFE chose to keep representatives (Defence Security Officers) "on the ground" depended on the territory in question.[39] If SIFE chose to do so, the primary task of its DSOs was to work with the local Police and security organisations, acting as liaison officers. In relation to Malaya, this liaison should have been easier because both the SIFE and MSS had their headquarters in Singapore.[40] Indeed, the Governor General's office stated that there was no reason, "given good-will and a spirit of co-operation," why the SIFE and MSS should not work harmoniously."[41] Nonetheless, there was an obvious potential for overlap, between local and regional intelligence organisations. This was

[37]FCO 141/14360, L. Knight, *Commentary on Instructions to DSO Malayan Union*, 27 August 1946.

[38]Ibid., Commissioner of Police (Singapore) to Colonial Secretary, Singapore, 6 September 1946. It is possible that key actors thought that SIFE would be responsible to the Defence Committee and MSS to the governors, and thus be clearly separate organisations. See Extract from Minutes of Governors General's conference held at Singapore on 25 September 1946.

[39]MI5 representatives holding military status were designated Defence Security Officers and typically based with armed service commands; civilian representatives were Security Liaison Officers (SLOs). See, e.g. WO 208/4696, "Reorganisation of MO and MI," DMO&I 307a.

[40]Comber, a former Malayan Police Special Branch officer, states that SIFE did not run agents in Malaya. See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60*, p. 96. This is contrary to the briefing note to MacDonald which clearly states that "there are Defence Security Officers under him [Major Winterborn] in Singapore and the Malayan Union." There also appears a difference of terminology. Comber states that MSS state representatives were termed Local Security Officers, whereas Short uses the term Security Liaison Officer.

[41]CO 537/2647, a note for discussion with Sir P. Sillitoe, undated, c. January 1948.

highlighted in a letter written in August 1946 by Courtenay Young about SIFE's links with the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6) in the region. Young suggested that the "only way in which the D.S.O can justify his position as 'security adviser to the Governor' is to be able to present the large picture of subversion, and SIFE should be the source of this through MI6." Rather presciently Young warned that "for the DSO to set up an agent network in competition to M.S.S. would only end in tears."[42]

Similarly, the lack of clarity of purpose was clearly a question of frustration and concern to Dalley as much as anyone else. In March 1947 he wrote to Gent, stating "we must have a properly devised machine…we do not yet possess that."[43] Indeed, Dalley prophetically argued that:

> Up to present, only a small part of Security has been touched. We are still at the stage when we are only scratching the surface. In my opinion, the situation is urgent. We do not begin with the shooting of guns. There is a period of psychological and ideological preparation. That period has begun and we are unprepared for it. We do not even know what advance has been made; we do not even know the direction of the attacks. We can see it and its results all around us, but we have no real knowledge of it, and can have no real knowledge of it until we have an efficient and fully staffed Security Service. I would also like to point out that the Malayan Security [Service] is not, and cannot be isolated; it must be a part of and fit into the bigger frame-work of Empire security. If the M.S.S. falls, then a gap is left in that bigger frame-work, and a gap in one of its most important and vulnerable areas.

Although the majority of this tension was manifest at Phoenix Park, Singapore, the influence of Sir Percy Sillitoe some 6700 miles away in London was quite evident. A first indication of the view from the highest levels of the Security Service is given as early as November 1946, even before Dalley had returned to Malaya, when Guy Liddell, Deputy Director General, concluded that the "Malayan Security is usurping the functions of SIFE."[44] A year later this same concern prompted Sillitoe to write to the Colonial Office. He alleged that Dalley had claimed "he

[42] KV 4/421, Extract of a letter from Lt. Co. Young (SIFE), 19 August 1948.

[43] FCO 141/17012, Dalley to Gent, 21 March 1947.

[44] KV 4/470, Diary of Guy Liddell (D/DG MI5), November 1946.

was, and is, in a position to run agents into Siam and the Netherlands East Indies, and he also maintains liaison with representatives of foreign intelligence organisations in Singapore, as for example the Dutch and Americans."[45] Sillitoe acknowledged the potential of being seen to "interfere in what is obviously primarily a matter for the Colonial Office, and local Governments concerned." Nevertheless, he continued to suggest that the root of the problems were due to "the curious position of the Malayan Security Service", its "unsound set-up," "and from a lack of any clear definition as to the division or work between them and SIFE and of their intelligence functions."[46] Within a month, Sillitoe reinforced his complaint. He claimed that in addition to running agents in foreign territories, "the S.I.F.E., through the DSCO [sic] is not receiving from the M.S.S. the information about internal subversive activities in the Malayan Union and Singapore which it has a right to expect." Moreover, there were reports of "serious friction between the head of S.I.F.E (Major Winterborn) and the head of M.S.S. (Mr Dalley)." As a result, Sillitoe offered to stop in Malaya, on his way to Australia, to look into the matter.[47]

A meeting subsequently held at Government House on 20 March 1948 involving MacDonald, Gimson, Sillitoe, Winterborn and Dalley (notably by his absence was Patrick Strivener, chair of the JIC). During this meeting Winterborn was asked to give his views as to why cooperation between SIFE and the MSS was lacking. He said "…too many minor incidents were occurring. These were not necessarily due to lack of operation—they might be due to lack of staff, lack of appreciation of SIFE's functions, or through failure to adhere to charters." He went on to provide a number of instances of when intelligence of potential value to SIFE had not been passed on to his organisation or had been but with

[45] CO 537/2647, Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17 December 1947.

[46] Ibid., Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17 December 1947.

[47] Grimson offers an interesting counterpoint. He welcomed Sillitoe's visit to discuss the relations between the MSS and SIFE. He informed the Colonial Office that "I have too been worried about these relations, as I fear that there is a tendency on part of the U.K. Security Service stationed in Singapore to fail to appreciate the knowledge which our Security Service has of local conditions and the ability of this Service to view any data at their disposal against an oriental background." See CO 537/2647, Gimson to Lloyd, 3 February 1948. For more about the relationship between Dalley and Sillitoe, see Arditti and Davies "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292–316.

a significant delay. These included the failure to notify that an "American Journalist of great Security value had passed through Singapore and that it was not 12 days after he had left that he [Winterborn] had heard of it"; a further incident when there was a delay of three months to receive a report from the American Liaison Officer "on the activities of one BUCHAN"; and when MSS had failed to pass on an intercepted letter which appeared to confirm that a target had in fact been communicating with the Siamese Embassy in London." Winterborn went on to mention a letter written by Mr Morris, Deputy Director of MSS, which "indicated a refusal to hand over intercepted letters to or from external addresses." Finally, he complained that the MSS refused to share their draft Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journals. This teased a broader complaint—"he thought Colonel Dalley did not fully appreciate SIFE's functions, which were of a wider character than those of the M.S.S. If M.S.S consider it necessary to go outside of Malaya for reports and information, he thought they could at least consult with SIFE before publishing their reports."[48]

Dalley defended his organisation by suggesting that the problems regarding intercepted letters was simply due to insufficient staff (at the time the MSS had three translators out of an establishment of eleven) rather than a lack of good-will, and that the lack of consultation with SIFE before circulating the fortnightly Political Intelligence Journals was the product of the need to produce timely intelligence reports. Furthermore, he acknowledged his organisation looked outside of Malaya (therefore straying into SIFE's remit). This was because "the breadth of his own knowledge derived from pre-war experience of intelligence work necessitated a wide perspective for his security field. He emphasised that he found it impossible to give the two Government's a proper picture of the security position within their own territories without going outside for background reports from any country in the Far East."[49]

Despite the significant tension within the intelligence apparatus, these problems do not appear to be insurmountable. As MacDonald said, "If the heads of the two organisations could thrash out the reasons for the ill feeling, they should themselves be able to arrive at a

[48] FCO 141/ 15436, Notes of a meeting held at Government House on 20 March 1948.

[49] Ibid., See also Dalley to Gent, 15 April 1948.

satisfactory solution…cooperation should be the keynote of both services." However, the situation was not merely one of more dialogue, more frequent consultation or more effective cooperation. This was because the issue had become infected with personal animosity. For instance, at the very beginning of the meeting held on 20 March, Sillitoe demanded, and received, from Dalley a full apology for previously suggesting that he "was only a policeman from Glasgow, without any security experience." Later in the meeting Dalley suggested that MacDonald "had said to the wife of one his subordinate officers that he would get Dalley out of the country within a month." Needless to say, MacDonald denied making such a remark (and subsequently proved to be a staunch ally of Dalley.) Finally, Sillitoe, without prompting, informed Dalley that "neither himself nor any members of his organisation had opposed" Colonel Dalley's membership of the JIC (FE) which at that time was under review. Events were to prove that Sillitoe was not telling the truth in relation to this. Ostensibly both Sillitoe and Dalley reaffirmed their commitment not to let personal jealousies "stand in the way of the country's security." However, Guy Liddell's diary's makes it clear that Sillitoe had already determined to "concentrate on getting the organisational set-up changed, namely, the division of the M.S.S. into two Special Branches, one for the Singapore Police and other for the Malayan Police."[50] MacDonald concluded the meeting by saying "we are living on the edge of the volcano and that a first-class intelligence system was indispensable to our security."[51] Perhaps squabbling on the edge of a volcano might have been a more appropriate metaphor.

Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)

The JIC (FE)'s silence in this dispute is all too apparent. Despite taking eighteen months for the JIC (FE) to have a defined charter, there was a clear expectation that it would coordinate intelligence and counter-intelligence activities in the region; after all, this was a key principle of the JIC "template," one which was subsequently confirmed as a key tenet of the JIC (FE)'s self-defined charter. Yet in the context of the single biggest challenge to confront the JIC (FE)—that is Malaya's descent into a

[50]KV 4/470, Diary of Guy Liddell (D/DG MI5), 30 January 1948.

[51]FCO 141/ 15436, Notes of a meeting held at Government House on 20 March 1948.

state of insurgency—it singly failed to coordinate, supervise or oversee intelligence within the region.

Guy Liddell's diary again provides a useful indication at metropolitan frustration with the situation in the Far East in general and in relation to the JIC (FE) specially: his entry for the 23 May 1947 states that the secretaries and chairman of JICs abroad should experience how the JIC (London) operated; on 4 June 1947 he notes the "untidy" and "wooly" state of JIC (FE); and on 5 December he informed the JIC (London) about the "somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs in the JIC (FE).[52] An internal SIFE document highlighted a number of structural concerns about the JIC (FE). For instance, it was felt to be too "bulky"—Alec Kellar, the head of SIFE, noted that the geographical area which fell under the remit of the BDCC (FE) had been broadened and he questioned how the governors of Malaya and Singapore, H/MSS or the Australian representative of the JIC/FE could be "in a position to contribute anything useful on the conditions in China." Kellar also argued that the "top heavy" nature of the JIC/FE made it difficult to discuss matters of a top-secret nature.[53] Moreover, Sillitoe questioned whether the head of the MSS should have a permanent position on the JIC (FE). Dean Acheson wrote, on behalf of Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner General, to Sillitoe in April 1948. He explained that the composition of the JIC (FE) had been discussed while MacDonald was in London for talks (when Sillitoe was visiting Australia). He outlined the case for streamlining the JIC (FE), but noted that while MacDonald "appreciates the logic of this argument he did not feel that in practice it should prevail in relation to the Director of the Malaya Security Service." This was because MacDonald believed that "security considerations in Malaya were of such general importance to defence arrangements in the region as a whole that the Director of the Malayan Security Service ought to be a full member of the Committee."[54]

Sillitoe's response to MacDonald's rebuttal was swift. It took the form of a summary of the JIC (FE) history. He noted that as originally constituted "it had not only the intelligence representatives of the three

[52] CO 537/2653, Sillitoe to Acheson, 7 May 1948.

[53] KV 4/422, Kellar to Sillitoe, 18 August 1948.

[54] CO 537/2653, Acheson to Sillitoe, 28 April 1948. The realisation that local issues might adversely impact Britain's wide strategic interests in the region was not new. See WO 203/6236, Directive of the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore, 26 October 1946.

Services, the JIB, the Governor General and the Special Commissioner, but also the Director of Malayan Security Service and certain other officials in Singapore." The members of the JIC (FE) had little experience of the JIC system "and occasionally appeared to desire to bring with their Charter, subjects which could not strictly speaking be regarded as matters of concern to a Joint Intelligence Committee." Moreover, the JIC/FE, argued Sillitoe, concentrated almost entirely upon matters of purely local Malayan concern. Indeed, he considered it "illogical that the Director of the Malayan Security Service, who can only be concerned with a small position of the territories covered by the JIC (FE), should be a full member of a JIC whose area of responsibility extends from Burma to Japan."[55] It is interesting to note that Sillitoe deliberately made the point that the issue of MSS representation was not one instigated by the Security Service. George Seel, the first Colonial Office representative on the JIC (London), reviewed Sillitoe's argument and conceded that he made rather a strong case. Consequently, Seel advised MacDonald that he was unlikely to get the support of the JIC (London) and that his best tactic might be to seek their approval to resolve the matter locally.[56] Seel's views may have been influenced by Hayter who sided strongly with Sillitoe, suggesting that the inclusion of the H/MSS in the revised charter for the JIC (FE) would "tend to divert the attention of the Committee away from its main purpose of considering strategic matters towards parochial affairs."[57] JIC (London) agreed for the issue to be decided locally and, despite MacDonald's support for Dalley, the military component of the JIC (FE) could not be persuaded of the need to accommodate the H/MSS on a permanent basis.[58] MacDonald was out manoeuvred.

While Hayter and MacDonald were trading points on the future direction and shape of the JIC (FE), and Sillitoe and Dalley were swopping blows over the position of the MSS in the regional intelligence apparatus, Malaya was descending rapidly into violence. This led the government of Malaya to declare a state of emergency on 17 June 1948.

[55] Ibid., Sillitoe to Acheson, 7 May 1948.

[56] Ibid., Seel to MacDonald, 19 May 1948.

[57] Ibid, JIC (48) 49th Meeting, extract from minutes, dated 11 June 1948.

[58] Ibid., COD (48)85, *Intelligence Organisation in the Far East*, Annex—JIC/FE, 'Composition of Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)', 12 June 1948.

Rory Cormac suggests that, "a striking feature of the declaration was that violence took the government by surprise."[59] Certainly, the JIC (FE) failed to warn of Malaya's descent into violence and the potential impact upon Britain's strategic interests in the region. In the aftermath of the declaration of Emergency, Hayter defended the JIC (FE), blaming "the poor intelligence organisation of the Malayan Police."[60] It now seems that this is a weak argument. As will be discussed in the next chapter, both the Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journals (PIJs) produced by the MSS and the Intelligence Reviews produced by General Headquarters (GHQ), Malaya Command, exposed as early as 1946 that the MCP's intended to overthrow the government in Malaya. Moreover, they also demonstrated the growing capability of the MCP to turn their aspirations into reality.[61] The distribution list of the PIJ show that, among others, the High Commissioner of Malaya, Governor of Singapore, the Governor General, Colonial Secretary of Singapore and Chief Secretary of Malaya, the Defence Security Officer (Singapore), the three Services intelligence chiefs, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, and the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB), Singapore, representative all received these reports. Moreover, Dalley sat on the JIC (FE), as did his SIFE counterpart. The issue was not a lack of intelligence but that the JIC (FE) was not listening.

In the absence of clear documentary evidence or oral testimony from JIC (FE) members it is difficult to attribute with any degree of certainty why the committee failed to realise or act upon the growing threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party. Some commentators have criticised the style in which the MSS reports were written. They were undoubtedly both detailed and wide-ranging. At times they were verbose and tackle multiple potential threats to the Malayan administration.[62] But to imply that the members of the JIC (FE) might have been unwilling, deterred or unable to appreciate the MSS reports because of the style in which they were written is to do them a disservice. That said, Dalley was clearly a polarising character: Sillitoe and SIFE, on one hand, appeared to have

[59] R. Cormac, *Confront the Colonies—British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013), p. 30.

[60] Ibid., p. 33.

[61] Arditti and Davies "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292–316.

[62] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948–60*, pp. 82–83.

demonised him; MacDonald and Gimson on the other considered him as an intelligence expert worthy of a place within the regional intelligence machine long after the decision to disband the MSS had been taken. The views of the other members of the JIC (FE) are not known, but it is plausible that the committee was as split by Dalley just as much as the wider executive. Certainly, we know that SIFE considered itself as the only organisation that could "provide the Defence Committee or the JIC (FE) or any other authority, with coordinated advice and information on Security or Counter Espionage matters."[63] If the JIC (FE) believed this argument, they would naturally place less weight on the MSS. Moreover, the on-going debates about the JIC (FE)'s charter and composition must have been both unsettling and distracting—indeed, perhaps the obvious questions are that if it could not regulate and manage itself, how could the JIC (FE) either pay full attention to the implications of deteriorating security in Malaya or coordinate intelligence across the region?

Conclusion

The British intelligence apparatus in the Far East was in a parlous state in the period between the return of British forces to Malaya in August 1945 and the declaration of a state of emergency in the summer of 1948. The initial concept was to have, in effect, concentric rings of cover: at a local level this would be provided by the police or, in Malaya's case, the MSS; security intelligence across the region was within the remit of SIFE (while the services' intelligence capacity oversaw more orthodox defence intelligence, and MI6 oversaw foreign intelligence in the region). These organisations should have had a symbiotic relationship with JIC—they should have supported the JIC's drafting staff and came together as one within the committee itself to provide strategic intelligence assessment, while the committee had a responsibility to coordinate and manage the apparatus as a whole. The reality on the eve of the declaration of emergency in Malaya was very different.

Rather than being collaborative, indeed mutually supportive, the intelligence organisation was fractured. The most obvious issue was the deep division between SIFE and MSS. This was the result of a perfect storm—the lack of resources, personal rivalries, and the lack of effective

[63] KV 4/422, Assessment of the Value of SIFE and the DSO Points in the Far East, Undated, believed to be c. January 1948.

leadership either at local, regional or metropolitan levels, all of which were played out against the backdrop of an ever-worsening security context in Malaya. Given their respective abject lack of staff, it is remarkable that SIFE and MSS could not develop more mutually supportive working practices. For instance, rather than devote resources to secure intelligence about threats to Malaya emanating from foreign countries, it would make sense for the MSS to enlist the support of either SIFE or MI6. Dalley explained to Gimson that he did indeed "obtain information from a variety sources from areas covered by M.I.6, all of which is passed on to M.I.6. This is possible because of our close personal liaison with M.I.6." He stated that he obtained information from the Hong Kong Police because he maintained "personal direct liaison." Indeed, Dalley talks about "handing over a high-grade agent to M.I.6 to work in Siam." All this sounds very personal—Dalley trusted MI6 but not SIFE. Given the level of back-briefing being conducted by Sillitoe this lack of trust is, perhaps, understandable. The consequences, however, were very significant. Put simply, the British intelligence apparatus in the Far East was both ill-prepared and ill-equipped to tackle the existential challenge posed by the Malayan Communist Party to the Federation of Malaya.

CHAPTER 5

Intelligence Prior to the Declaration of Emergency

Against the background of bickering and back-briefing between Lt. Col. John Dalley, Sir Percy Sillitoe and Malcolm MacDonald, and the attempts to clarify and define the remits of the various constituent parts of Britain's intelligence apparatus in the Far East, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was working to undermine the Malayan government. Intelligence officials in the region gamely attempted to understand the various influences and threats that were shaping events in Malaya's towns and villages, despite the organisational chaos that surrounded them. The surviving records of their toil are incomplete. This is particularly true in relation to the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) and Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). However, the few surviving assessments produced by both organisations indicate their focus was regional and strategic, rather than Malaya-centric. Fortunately, however, intelligence assessments produced by the Malayan Security Service (MSS) remain available for consideration. These took the form of a "Political Intelligence Journal," produced fortnightly from the reconstitution of the organisation in April 1946 until its dissolution in July 1948. Also available are the Fortnightly Intelligence Reviews produced from August 1945 onwards, initially by the British Military Administration (BMA) and then the General Headquarters (GHQ), Malaya Command.[1]

[1]The British Military Administration was in existence from the return of the British to Malaya in August 1945 until the creation of the Malayan Union in April 1946.

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_5

The structure of the Political Intelligence Journal (PIJ) reflected the multiple potential threats ranged against Malaya. Each issue was divided into two sections: the first provided a brief summary of the general situation; the second providing a more detailed discussion "of various subjects and organisations which appear to be of interest."[2] The first section invariably featured comment about Malay nationalism, potential Indonesian expansion, Sino-Malay relations, Communism, the Kuomintang, Union / Labour affairs, and Indian politics. The subject of the second section of the Journals depended upon what was topical and, during 1946, not every issue provided a second section. Topics that were covered included reactions to the introduction of the Malayan Union, Labour Day, the Malayan General Labour Union, political parties of China, Youth Movements, Invulnerability Cults, the Angkatan Pemuda Yang Insaaf (API lit. Youth Justice Group, a Malay leftist organisation), and Indonesian nationalist movements. GHQ's Fortnightly Intelligence Reviews adopted a similar but expanded format: section one of the review provided a general overview; section two took the form of a more detailed review of the internal situation in Malaya (generally using headings such as Malay Affairs, Communism, Labour and Law and Order); section three considered military security; and section four discussed events in neighbouring countries (particularly India, Burma, Indonesia, Hong Kong and French Indo-China). The Political Intelligence Journals and Fortnightly Intelligence Reviews appear to have been produced independently: there is little evidence of duplication or cross-referencing and they were not published concurrently. As would be expected, neither publication lists sources. However, it appears that the MSS product was based on some agent reporting (for instance, of speeches made at closed political meetings), open source information (particularly newspapers), propaganda documents (such as leaflets and posters distributed by the communists), seized documents, and mail intercepts. It is harder to discern sources within the GHQ reports. However, the impression given is that, in addition to normal open source material, a proportion of the information comes from military intelligence officers "on the ground."

[2] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 1/46.

The assessments provided by MSS and the military form a rich stream of material for historians trying to understand the forces the led to the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya. And yet commentary focuses almost exclusively the upon the reports of the MSS and not the military. Prior to the declaration of a state of emergency, officials, with the exception of Sir Percy Sillitoe, appear to have placed significant weight on the intelligence products produced the MSS. For instance, Colonial Office officials thought the PIJs were "of great value", "which contained a vast amount of the most valuable information."[3] Mr. J. B. Williams, a Colonial Office official, commented that "Colonel Dalley is obviously a bit of genius in his way and his reports are probably an almost essential adjunct to government in Malaya today."[4] Indeed, both Sir Franklin Gimson, governor of Singapore, and Malcolm MacDonald proved steadfast supporters of Dalley in the face of fierce criticism from Sillitoe.[5] However, it is interesting to note the change in tone in the Colonial Office minutes accompanying the PIJs received in London. In mid-June, a month after calling Dalley a "genius" and suggesting that the MSS reports were invaluable to the Malayan government, Williams noted "I have no wish to be over-critical of the Malayan Security Service, but I think it is right to draw attention to this rather remarkable lack of foresight shown on the present Report, since a defect in Intelligence (in the technical sense) seems to be of the great weaknesses in Malaya today."[6] Historians have since adopted a similar critical view. Anthony Short, author of perhaps the definitive account of the Malayan Emergency, condemns Dalley's apparent preoccupation with Malay nationalism and Indonesia, rather than the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). He is highly critical of the intelligence reports produced by the MSS suggesting that Dalley "hedged his bets" and presided over an organisation which made "lurid forecasts," one of which contained "the most astonishing series of errors from what was an intelligence rather than a clairvoyant organisation."[7] Similarly, Leon Comber

[3] CO 537/3751, Minute by Mr. Morris, 6 May 1948.

[4] Ibid., minutes by Mr. Williams, 11 May 1948.

[5] See R. Arditti and P. Davies, "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292–316.

[6] CO 537/3751, minutes by Mr. Williams, 22 June 1948.

[7] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection* (London 1975), pp. 82–83.

highlights what he considers is the apparent inadequacy of the fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, the information in which he considered to be "diffuse and spread over a wide range of topics, without necessarily singling out the CPM [Communist Party of Malaya] as the main target."[8] Given the controversy that surrounds the MSS, it curious that commentators have not considered the assessments contained in the Political Intelligence Journals alongside the intelligence assessments provided by GHQ's Intelligence Reviews, if no other reason than they provide the opportunity to compare the analysis of a Malaya's primary, civil, intelligence organisation against that provided by the military.

This chapter will address this by assessing the intelligence assessments provided both by the MSS and GHQ in the period from the return of the British to Malaya in August 1945 and the declaration of emergency in June 1948. More specifically, it will consider how both the MSS and the military assessed the intent of the MCP to threaten Malaya and its capability to do so, over this time period. The reports created by the MSS and the military show them having to contend with multiple potential threats and this clearly made their assessments more complicated. Nevertheless, the reports from both the MSS and GHQ make it very clear that from the earliest days of the post-war civilian government in Malaya intelligence officials and the military intelligence officers alike were deeply concerned about both intention and capability of the MCP to provide a credible existential threat to the country. This is supported by the significant level of joint of operations between the police and the Army against "bandit" gangs and communist forces not just in the weeks before the declaration of emergency but right from the restoration of civil rule in Malaya in April 1946, albeit with a growing intensity until the declaration of emergency. In many respects, counterinsurgency operations had already started long before the enabling of emergency regulations.

A state of emergency was declared in June 1948 not because the MSS was in receipt of specific intelligence that the MCP was about to launch a campaign of insurgency. Nor was it declared because of the broader warnings provided by the MSS. It was declared because the violence which had been endemic in Malaya from the time of the Japanese

[8] L. Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945–48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18: 3 (2003), pp. 128–153; L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008).

surrender appeared to be escalating out of control, spreading from the local communities to the expatriates who had hitherto been immune to acts of terror. However, it would be difficult to consider the murders of the planters on the 16 June, which provided the catalyst for the government to declare a state of emergency, as a failure of intelligence for these appear to have been local, spontaneous, acts which even surprised Chin Pen, the chairman of the MCP, and caused the acceleration of his plans to start a campaign of the insurgency.[9] Nevertheless, both the MSS and GHQ had been providing regular and clear warning to officials in Malayan and London of the potential threat posed by the MCP. If there was a failure, it was less one of forecasting than of listening.

The MCP's Intent to Subvert Malaya, C. 1945–1947

The Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore on 8 December 1941 had the strange effect of creating a temporary alliance between the MCP and the British authorities. Hence, on the 18 December 1941, Lai Tek, the MCP's chairman, met with Freddy Spencer Chapman, a British army officer, and John Davis, a Special Branch officer. Together they agreed that the MCP would raise, and the British train, resistance groups, which would be left behind enemy lines to operate as a guerrilla force. Initially, it was planned that each "stay-behind" party would be led by a British officer but the speed of the Japanese advance meant that this was not possible. Chapman's 101 Special Training School (STS) trained four stay-behind parties, which from March 1942 were known by the MCP as the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Independent Regiments of the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA).[10] Although each regiment had a large degree of autonomy, the MCP's Central Military Committee acted as the supreme command for the MPAJA. The small number of British soldiers who joined the initial stay-behind parties,

[9]See Chin and Hack, eds., *Dialogues with Chin Peng*: New Light on *the Malayan Communist Party*; Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng—My Side of History* (Singapore 2003), pp. 195–223; K. Hack, "The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40: 3 (2009), pp. 471–496; P. Derry, "Malaya 1948: Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9: 1 (2007), pp. 29–54; A. Stockwell, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 16: 3 (2006), pp. 279–297; Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, pp. 82–83.

[10]Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya, Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya* (Singapore 2012), pp. 59–61.

were gradually joined by Force 136 officers, who first infiltrated Malaya from Ceylon in May 1943. On 1 January 1944 Lai Tek and Chin Peng met with John Davis, Spencer Chapman and other Force 136 officers. They agreed that, in return for arms, money, training and supplies, the MPAJA would cooperate with the British Army during the war with Japan and in any subsequent period of military occupation. No questions of post-war policy were discussed.[11]

The Japanese surrender posed the MCP a considerable dilemma. It was their avowed policy to establish the Malayan Democratic Republic and there was considerable pressure within the Party to continue the struggle, shifting attention from the Japanese to the British. Indeed, MPAJA forces in Johore argued that they should kill the Force 136 officers attached to the MPAJA across Malaya and seize power before the British had a chance to reassert their control of the country. Other voices within the MPAJA considered seriously offers by Japanese soldiers to join forces against the British. Two British officers who had fought in the jungles with the communist forces against the Japanese had differing views about what the Party might do. John Davis (who signed the original agreement with Lai Tek in December 1941) thought that the MCP were "not planning armed disorders in the country but intend to press their arms by political methods."[12] In contrast, as a result of his work running agents while working for the Inter-services Liaison Department (ISLD), Boris Hembry believed "it was plain that, as soon as possible after the surrender of the Japanese, the Communists intended to oust the British and seize control of Malaya."[13] Similarly, Ralph Hone, the Chief Civil Affair Officer (CCAO) designate came to a similar conclusion. He feared that "the communists in the jungle at the time of the Japanese surrender had every intention of taking over control in Malaya."[14]

However, Lai Tek, insisted that the Party take a moderate course. Hence on 27 August 1945, the MCP announced that it would cooperate with the British government, while demanding reforms, and working to establish a democratic Malaya.[15] Lai Tek may have justified his decision

[11] Ibid., p. 60; F. Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral* (Singapore 2009), p. 10.

[12] M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (Stroud 2007), p. 127.

[13] B. Hembry, *Malaya Spymaster* (Singapore 2011), p. 265.

[14] Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya*, p. 163.

[15] Ibid., p. 99; Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng*, pp. 119–121.

to the Party by arguing it did not have a sufficiently broad power base, particularly within the Malay community, to seize power.[16] However, it appears that his true motives for taking such a decision were far more self-centred. Not only had Lai Tek been a British agent prior to the fall Malaya but he subsequently switched sides and offered his services to the occupying Japanese forces. After the end of the war, he was deeply concerned that the returning British would realise that he had acted on behalf of the Kampeitai, and therefore worked to ensure that his value to them as chairman of the MCP would mitigate any desire for justice for his actions (which included arranging an Japanese ambush which killed 92 influential members of the MCP's Central Executive Committee, state party officials and MPAJA officers at the Batu Caves in August 1942). Being able to moderate and control MCP policy would clearly be attractive to British officials, regardless of his wartime coloration with the Japanese.[17]

The fact that Lai Tek was once again an agent for the British would have been a closely guarded secret. As such, there is no indication that his position influenced the British intelligence assessments at the time. Indeed, military intelligence were issuing warnings about the threat posed by the MCP from the earliest days of the establishment of the British Military Authority (BMA) in Malaya. For instance, in October 1945 the 14th Army reported to Allied Land Forces South East Asia (ALFSEA) that "SOONG KONG AJU [Anti-Japanese Union] leader attended local celebration. Speeches intimated that British non-acceptance of MCP 8 point programme would mean withdrawal into jungle of armed communist forces."[18] Two months later it was reported that "the red flag of Soviet Russia files over the newly acquired premises of the Penang Branch of the MCP which is located within a hundred yards of the BMA (British Military Authority) Regional Headquarters."[19] Indeed, there was a real concern that the MCP was positioning itself to challenge the British. For instance, the BMA monthly report for January 1946 stated that,

[16] Cheah, *Red Star over Malaya*, p. 99.

[17] Ibid., pp. 97, 149, and 249.

[18] CO 203/4497, 14 Army to ALFSEA, 12 October 1945.

[19] CO 537/1572, BMA Monthly Report, No. 4—December 1945.

> There was increasing evidence during the month of a determined campaign by the MCP, waged through the GLU [General Labour Union] and other organisations controlled by the Party, to cause embarrassment to the administration. Every move was designed to stir up hatred and contempt for the BMA and it became clear that an attempt was being made to subvert established law and order. Propaganda to this end was based on political considerations, and economic factors were relegated to the background.[20]

Of further concern to the authorities were repeated reports of links between the MCP and other communists abroad. For instance, in September 1946, the MSS reported "that five important members of CCP [Chinese Communist Party] … each with a definitive mission, had entered Malaya under disguise as UNRRA [United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration]."[21] Intelligence officials were also aware that members of the MCP also periodically left Malaya to attend international events, such as R. Balan, Abdul Rashid bib Maideen, and Wu Tian Wang, who attended the Empire Communist Conference in early 1947 and who, upon their return, embarked on speaking tours across the country.[22] Moreover, there were occasional reports of MCP members attending communist training camps in other countries, and there was a fear that Siam might prove a hub of revolution communism in the region.[23] Furthermore, mail intercepts showed that MCP was in regular contact with communist parties across the world, including China, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, India, and Australia.[24]

However, there was uncertainty about how the MCP might attempt to achieve its aims. In January 1946 the BMA concluded that the MCP had determined "for at present at any rate, to avoid any open conflict with the authorities, and to pursue its objects in what may be termed a constitutional manner."[25] GHQ came to similar conclusions the following month, suggesting the MCP "does not intend to achieve its ends by violent and immediate action…it can be expected that the Party will

[20] Ibid., No. 5—January 1946.

[21] Ibid., 4/47—31 March 1947.

[22] Ibid., 5/47—15 April 1947.

[23] Ibid., 16/47—30 September 1947.

[24] Ibid., 13/47—15 August 1947. See also 02/48—15 January 1948; 05/48—15 March 1948; 06/48—31 March 1948.

[25] Ibid., BMA Monthly Report, No. 6—February 1946.

agitate for a democratic government based on a wide franchise."[26] The MSS, which was reconstituted in April 1946, arrived at similar conclusions. In its third Political Intelligence Journal, issued at the end of May, the MSS referred to a "high grade secret report" dated February 1946 (most probably originating from Lai Tek). The MSS suggested that the MCP would attempt to "embarrass the government with strikes at every opportunity in order that they could claim the credit, in the eyes of the masses, for the better times which they knew were bound to come." The Party could then force the government into providing a wider franchise, which they would stand a good chance of success in any future elections.[27] The MSS concluded that "the policy of the Malayan Communist Party is definitely anti-British and its ultimate aim is to overthrow the Government of Malaya…the first stage is to control the Labour Unions and through them to gain control of the masses. To a very great extent the MCP already control the Labour Unions.[28] This assessment was later supported by the translation of a captured MCP Central Committee documented entitled *Decision of Central for a Working Plan*, dated August 1946. This stated that "the chief aim in the present racial emancipation of Malaya is therefore, to preserve and gain time, to conserve and increase the strength of the Party, and to work hand in hand with the people until the right moment arrives to accomplish the revolutionary mission."[29] The conclusion that the MCP was playing the "long game" was repeated in various assessments made throughout the following year. For instance, the MSS noted in June 1947 that:

> The MCP aim is at first an independent Malaya as a British Dominion. When this has been achieved complete independence will be the next objective. The Party realises that it must work slowly and develop an organisation of a truly Malayan nature embracing all races and classes. The MCP's approach to the MNP [Malay Nationalist Party], MDU [Malayan Democratic Union], PMCJA [Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action] is part of this policy. The MCP realises that it must move carefully and slowly…[30]

[26] CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 17, 23 February 1946.

[27] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 3/46, 31 May 1946.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 11/46—30 September 1946.

[30] Ibid., 9/47—15 June 1947.

Similarly, GHQ's Fortnightly Intelligence Review for 12 August 1947 restated the belief that the MCP was following a strategy of "consolidation." It explained that "the last known instruction from their leaders was that members should assess the reaction of both the public and government to the party. It may, therefore, be assumed that the next move of the party will be in accordance with the answers received from members."[31] GHQ believed that this theory of a "period of consolidation" was "confirmed by recent reports from SEGAMAT and LABIS, where it is reported that a body of Communist extremists is waiting for an opportunity for active operations against the Government in the indefinite future."[32] Further evidence of the Party's broader intent was provided repeatedly by the MSS in relation to the reporting of various meetings run by the MCP or its affiliates. For instance, In September the MSS reported that "the use of the Russian flag is becoming more noticeable. A branch of the MPAJA Ex Comrades Association include in their observance of the 1st Sept incident bowing to the Russian flag and the MPAJA flag."[33] Similarly, in October 1947, the MSS commented on the Pan-Malayan New Democratic Youth League Conference held in Singapore during which "songs entitled WE ARE THE OPPRESSED RACES, STRUGGLE FOR NEW DEMOCRACY, THE RED FLAG etc., and short plays were performed indicating the opposition of the peoples to the British Constitutional Proposals."[34]

There could be little doubt among anyone reading either the MSS or GHQ intelligence reports produced in 1946 and 1947 that the MCP wished to establish a communist government in Malaya. The MCP was in regular correspondence with other communist parties across the world, sent delegates to international communist conferences, flew the hammer and sickle from their buildings and sang the Internationale at end of party meetings. Numerous intelligence assessments (at least until Lai Tak's disappearance) suggested that the communists wished to follow a constitutional path to change. This should not be mistaken for a law-abiding path—intelligence officials were acutely aware that the communists were determined to exploit existing grievances and manufacture

[31]WO 268/550, HQ Malaya Command, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 63, 13 August 1947.

[32]Ibid.

[33]S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 15/47, 15 September 1947.

[34]Ibid., 19/47—15 November 1947.

new ones to stimulate a revolutionary momentum. Indeed, as will be seen, both the MSS and GHQ produced on a regular basis evidence that showed the MCP could use umbrella covert organisations to stimulate labour unrest, that it had a covert Party infrastructure, and a "shadow," battle-hardened, guerrilla army waiting the call to arms.

The Capability of the MCP, C. 1945–1947

Initially, the Malayan authorities thought that the MCP's capacity to follow or stimulate a traditional "Soviet" prescription for revolution would be restricted by the population's limited appetite for radical change and, in any case, this would diminish as the economy improved. Hence, in March 1946, GHQ reported that the "the influence of the CP in Malaya continues to wane and there is further evidence that the MCP, the GLU and other communist associations are losing their grip on the public. The latter, with the gradual improvement in economic conditions and increased law and order, are gaining confidence and realise there is nothing to be gained by joining the anti-Government slogan-shouting associations."[35] In the following month, the military thought that the MCP was "rapidly losing influence and popularity throughout the country." GHQ suggested that "the reasons for this are many, but the chief one is the improved economic conditions of the country. It has always been appreciated that as the cost of living is stabilised so will the political and labour agitation decrease."[36]

Further, both GHQ and the MSS regularly concluded that the poor state of the Party's finances would hamper their ability to stimulate a revolution, at least in the short-term. The MCP's financial problems were first commented in March 1946 when GHQ's Weekly Intelligence Review noted that the "SELANGOR State Committee of the CP are running short of funds and there is no doubt that their expenditure on relief for strikers, wages to active members and the printing of pamphlets must be heavy, while their income from extortion and intimidation has recently considerably decreased."[37] This forced the MCP into both legitimate and criminal means of raising funds. Legitimate means included writing to other left-wing organisations for support. For instance, the

[35] CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 21, 23 March 1946.

[36] Ibid., Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 22, 2 April 1946.

[37] CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 20, 16 March 1946.

MSS reported in July 1947 that a "secret appeal has been sent out by MCP headquarters requesting "sympathetic contributions" from the various leftist organisations, as the party is experiencing great financial difficulties. Penang FTU [Federated Trade Union] and NDYL [New Democratic Youth League] leaders have already commenced soliciting contributions from their members, and the MPAJA have issued pamphlets calling for funds."[38] Later in the same month, the MSS reported that the MCP's Central Committee had issued a secret instruction to all branches in Malaya and Singapore to hold a special contribution week. Subsequently, the MSS received reports "that in Singapore the NDYL collections alone collected from the public amounted to over two thousand two hundred dollars." Another report stated that collections were made by the MPAJA Ex-Services Association, Singapore, whose members made house-to-house collections from shopkeepers in the Serganoon Road area in dominations of $1, $2, and $5." Further, funds collected in the whole of Perak during year from concerts and meetings totalling $7200 were given to Liew Chin Siang, the MCP Central Committee representative.[39] In addition, in November, "during the Happy World event (part of the International Youth Week celebrations), the NDYL and the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Alliance [*sic*] gave speeches eulogising the past achievements of the MCP and collected a sum of $2576 for their funds."[40] However, the MCP also resorted to violence, intimidation and extortion both to secure funds, and to undermine the confidence in the government. A good example of this was given by the MSS in its report of the 30 June 1947. It stated that

> on 19th June the Chinese wife of a Eurasian, F.G.H. Parry was asked to contribute money to the MCP. She gave $2 'to avoid trouble' and obtained a receipt No. 25885 on which was printed 'Perak State Committee of the MCP'. Neither Parry nor his wife will make an official report to the Police, as they consider their lives would be in danger. This is most significant in view of the fact that Parry is a member of the Malayan Democratic Union and Council of Joint Action and is well-known to all the prominent members of the MCP.[41]

[38] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 11/47, 15 July 1947.

[39] Ibid., 12/47—31 July 1947.

[40] Ibid., 19/47—15 November 1947.

[41] Ibid., 10/47—30 June 1947.

In reality, however, neither the Party's funds nor the fluctuations of the economy seemed tp limit its ability to exploit existing labour dispute or generate new ones. Every fortnightly report issued both by the MSS and GHQ between 1945 and 1948 contained lengthy lists of strikes, both in Malaya and Singapore, effecting heavy industry, vital infrastructure such as docks, railways, and coal mines, and the vital, dollar-earning, rubber plantations and tin mines. Furthermore, there were early indications, which were repeated at regular intervals until the declaration of emergency in both the assessments of the MSS and GHQ, that the MCP was manipulating events of the ground to stimulate unrest among labour. For instance, GHQ noted in April 1946 that it had received three reports alleging MCP or GLU interference with rubber estate labours in Johore:

> Firstly, certain articles essential for rubber tapping were recently stolen from an estate at BEKOH, 20 miles SW of SEGAMET, and the estate owner considers that the robbery was probably carried out by GLU agents in order to cause discontent among the workers by the resultant stoppage of work; secondly, it is reported that GLU agents have unsuccessfully been attempting to bring about a strike at DUNLOP SAGIL Estate 15 miles South of SEGAMAT; and thirdly, the RENHAM branch of the MCP is said to be exerting pressure on the local estate labourers to induce them to subscribe to party funds.[42]

While there was an acknowledgement that the strikes that took place in the summer of 1946 were based on the genuine economic difficulties which the country was experiencing, the MSS noted that the GLU was making every effort to exploit the situation. To illustrate this, Dalley stated "an officer of the Labour Office states that the majority of the letters to employers have been typed on the same machine and signed by the Chairman of the Pan-Malayan GLU. In most cases, local genuine labour unions are ignored by the GLU, who dictate the demands of the workers direct to the employers."[43] The situation was particularly acute during the summer of 1946, a time of restricted rice rations among the workers on the rubber estates. GHQ noted the influence of "labour agitators," "ex-INA [Indian National Army] element," and

[42]CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 24, 16 April 1946.

[43]S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 6/46, 15 July 1946.

"New Democratic Youth League." Over three thousand labours were reported to be on strike in Sugei Siput alone in August 1946 and such strikes on rubber plantations across the country were reported virtually every month until the declaration of emergency.[44]

There were periods of less intense strike activity, particularly when the government enforced the registration of unions in the autumn of 1946. GHQ thought that because a union would not "be recognised if its objects are political or if any of its members are not themselves workers… they are taking good care to avoid any clash with the government which might wreck their chances of recognition."[45] This did not last long, however. In January 1947, GHQ reported a:

> recrudescence of Communist activity in MALAYA after a period of comparative inactivity, which has lasted nearly five months. The two strikes which they are running in BATU ARANG and SINGAPORE do not involve a large number of men, but both are in the nature of a trial of strength with the Administration. The strike at the coalfields vitally effects the economic and transportation system of MALAYA, and the workers' demands are at least partly 'political', not economic, in that they demand the release of a union leader, who was lawfully arrested for striking a police sergeant.[46]

In early February 1947, the MSS warned that the MCP was "organised sufficiently well to exploit every grievance, imaginary or otherwise, of every section of the public throughout Malaya and to give them an anti-Government bias. If the power of the Party continues to increase at the present rate, it will very soon, through the Federations of Trades Unions, and through its influence over nationalist and other organisations be able to paralyse commerce and machinery of Government throughout Malaya."[47] Further warnings were issued. For instance in September 1947, GHQ said that " it should also be noted that the Communist-controlled unions have seized this period of unsettlement amongst Government workers to make demands for wage increases for both rubber and mining employees; the danger of a strike in the

[44] CO 537/1582, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 38, 23 August 1946.

[45] Ibid., Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 39, 7 September 1946.

[46] CO 537/2140, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 49, 27 January 1947.

[47] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 02/47, 28 February 1947.

industries at the same time as in the essential services can therefore not be ignored, and the next few weeks will be a testing time for the administration."[48] Presciently, GHQ further warned that "economic discontent, increased political activity and agitation, and a state of lawlessness are ideal conditions for the MCP to put into force the plans which they have been preparing, but which are not likely to be implemented before the end of the year."[49]

The MCPs ability to stimulate unrest was enhanced by its use of other organisations, particularly labour unions, youth groups and other left-wing organisations. For instance, the MSS commented in October 1947 how the "communists have infiltrated and penetrated into labour unions. We have seen how they guide the activities of liberal and progressive organisations such as the Malayan Democratic Union [MDU] and the New Democratic Youth League [NDYL]. We can see how all these associations support current Russian policy and we have seen and we shall soon have further evidence of how the Communist Parties [sic] and their satellite associations subvert to their own purpose legitimate national aspirations."[50] The MSS provided in the following PIJ a detailed assessment of the NDYL conference held in Singapore. The MSS argued that there was "ample evidence here of Communist Party control and Communist Party direction of its activities. It is through this organisation that open communication is maintained with other youth organisations in Soviet-dominated territory. It is also interesting to note the extent of the NDYL activities. They claim to have established liaison with over 30 nations and 52 youth organisations throughout the world, with exchange of correspondence and literature."[51] The MSS reviewed the MCP's links with organisations at the beginning of January 1948. Dalley reported that:

> A close study of the activities of known communist agents, the organisations which they control, and their manoeuvrings, indicates renewed efforts to gain control of all organised labour in Malaya by infiltrating into the disrupting trade unions not yet under the control of the Communist

[48] WO 268/550, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 66, 26 September 1947.

[49] Ibid.

[50] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 17/47, 15 October 1947.

[51] Ibid.

> Party. In many cases they have been successful and the indications are that through these methods and by implied intimidation, they will gain sufficient control to be in a position to disrupt and the economy of the whole of Malaya. There are indications that an effort will be made through these Communist Party-controlled labour unions to create labour unrest throughout Malaya during this coming year.[52]

While the party worked overtly to capitalise upon the problems caused by the poor economy, the Malayan Union experiment and general post-war dislocation, to stimulate a general "democratic" groundswell of anti-colonial feeling among the people, intelligence officials were aware that it was also building a covert, "shadow," organisation. In the GHQ reported in April 1946 that the MCP had decided "to keep a small but unimportant section of the party above ground, but to carry on the main work underground by means of secret committees."[53] GHQ believed this was partly due to financial reasons, but also to escape the Expulsion of Aliens Proclamation which meant their high profile, non-Malayan, members of the Party were potentially liable to deportation. GHQ stated that the result of this policy would "mean that the party is still kept in the public eye but that its real power will be unknown. It will mean a decrease in expenses because the party headquarters in the open would be smaller and all but the most important branches would probably close down. Propaganda might well be cut down. The known leaders would be unimportant men and it would not be serious if they were expelled from Malaya."[54] GHQ concluded that this decision meant the MCP could virtually go "underground" but continue to agitate for the communist cause. Throughout 1946 and into 1947 MCP branches closed down across Malaya, and yet both the MSS and GHQ noted continued evidence of party members collecting funds, indicating that the Party was not shutting down but evolving a covert presence. For instance, in September 1946, GHQ reported evidence of subversive Chinese communist activity in Central Johore and South Perak. In Johore, the communists were believed to be extorting funds from shopkeepers in villages of Jementah and Batu Annam while in South Perak there was "a report, supported by strong circumstantial evidence, of a communist

[52] CO 537/3751, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 02/48, 15 January 1948.

[53] CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 22, 2 April 1946.

[54] Ibid.

encampment and propaganda school near Permantang Tambak.[55] In the same month MSS reported "information graded B1 has been received, to the effect that the MCP, through the MPAJA, is establishing a Malayan-wide network of agents among motor-car drivers, with the object of obtaining general information regarding personalities and habits of employers. Membership is made attractive to drivers by the offer of shares in the proceeds of robberies, and resort has been made to intimidation of drivers who refuse to join the organisation."[56]

Potentially the most significant dimension to the threat posed by the MCP was the continued existence of the MPAJA, complete with many of the arms the British supplied during the war. After the Japanese surrender, the BMA ordered that the MPAJA to stand-down and invited representatives, including Ching Peng (its future chairman and insurgent leader), to a victory celebration in London. Upon its disbandment, former members established the Ex-Services Comrades Association, which created a semi-legitimate façade to hide a guerrilla army awaiting to fight for Malayan independence once again. As early as December 1945 the BMA noted that "the underlying theme of speeches made at the opening ceremonies of these Associations was to the effect that now that Malaya has been freed from Japanese tyranny in battle, members must continue as civilians to struggle for independence and self-government."[57] Colonel Itu (otherwise known as Liew Wai Choong) was a prominent member of the Ex-Services Comrades Association and it was widely reported that during 1946 that he was making radical speeches. For instance, the Weekly Intelligence Review of August 1946 noted that Itu spoke at "a secret meeting in Bidor of the NDYC and planned to reorganise the MPAJA on an anti-British footing to work underground in a manner similar to its resistance activities during Japanese occupation. He claimed to be able to complete his plans within two months."[58] The intelligence reports show evidence of continued and regular radical speeches made by Itu and others, plus tangible evidence of Ex-Services Comrades agitating labour, and mounting violent demonstrations. MPAJA members instigated many acts of political and communal

[55] CO 537/1582, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 39, 7 September 1946.

[56] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 11/46, 30 September 1946.

[57] CO 537/1572, BMA Monthly Report, No. 4—December 1945.

[58] S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal-No. 8/46, 15 August 1946.

violence, particularly against those the communists believed had collaborated with the Japanese during the war. The authorities did attempt to arrest and bring to trial those responsible, such as Lai Kam. However, during his trial in October 1946 for a double murder, the MSS reported that the court was filled with MPAJA men and the witnesses were terrified, and the prosecution collapsed.[59] Moreover, in the same month, the Weekly Intelligence Review noted that "members of the MPAJA in Pahang have approached various padi planters and gardeners in the outlying areas of the Bentong district, to ensure that should the MPAJA again take up arms, this time against the British, a ready supply of food would be available in exchange for protection.[60] Moreover, throughout 1946 and 1947, the intelligence reports reference both the discovery of MPAJA arms dumps which had not been returned to the authorities and to squads of ex-MPAJA members drilling, often in uniform.

Moreover, a number of groups of ex-MPAJA men remained in existence and engaged in "banditry." Typical of the reports was the Weekly Intelligence Review of 24 May 1946 which stated that:

> Reports from the PERAK Valley tend to show that besides the bandit gangs affected by negotiations there is also a 'communist band' operating in the same area. Previous rumours of a clash between the two have now been circumstantially confirmed and reports on the 'communist camp' North of the river state that it holds 300 men (more probably 50–80), and consists of huts with zinc roofs, bunkers, sand-bagged emplacements and trenches. Training is alleged to be under the direction of six Japanese.[61]

The authorities struggled to understand the high-levels of violent crime in country but, in broad terms, there were four groups to which different bandit gangs might be linked: KMT, MCP, Ang Bun Hoay (described as a secret society, akin to a Triad crime group), or independents. Often gangs of different affiliations attacked each other, and violence between KMT and MPAJA gangs was particularly prevalent in Northern Malaya and into Siam (Thailand), both for ideological motives and simple greed. On occasions, these groups actually cooperated. The British authorities never fell into the trap of thinking that the violent crime that was

[59] Ibid., 13/46—31 October 1946.

[60] Ibid., 12/46—15 October 1946.

[61] CO 537/1581, Weekly Intelligence Review-No. 29, 24 May 1946.

endemic across Malaya between 1945–8 had simple causes (or solutions) and concern about KMT and AHB gangs was expressed as frequently as that about MPAJA gangs, if not more. Moreover, it is critical to understand that the intelligence officials in Malaya were also concerned about a multitude of other credible threats including Malay nationalism, potentially aggravated by Indonesian expansionist desires, and Indian nationalism which had the potential to inflame large sections of both the labour force and the security forces. There was, therefore, considerable "white noise" for intelligence officials to identify and tune out. Nevertheless, there was an accurate awareness within the reports of both GHQ and the MSS that behind the MCP's overt presence, was a shadow, subversive, structure, backed by a considerable number of battle-hardened and well-armed guerrillas across the country.

By the end of 1947, GHQ and the MSS had been reporting on the MCP every two weeks for over two years. As has been discussed, a number of themes stand out very clearly from their assessments. The MCP's intent to replace the colonial government with a regime based on their own image was not on dispute. Intelligence assessments suggested the MCP's strategy was not necessarily to achieve this directly by force of arms but to generate sufficient revolutionary momentum that the Malayan government would be swept away by a mass uprising of the people. However, the detailed knowledge about the Party's financial status, which is likely to have come directly from Lai Tak, plus the hope that the economy would pick up, may have lulled officials into a false sense of security for a period of time in early 1947 about likelihood of the MCP triggering a Soviet-style revolution of the masses. Nevertheless, it was also very clear that both GHQ and MSS was reporting the widespread use of umbrella organisations, that the MCP party structure had largely gone "underground," and continued existence of the MPAJA guerrilla army, complete with most of its weapons. Trouble was coming, it was simply a question of when.

Intelligence Reporting in the Months Prior to the Declaration of Emergency

The conventional wisdom is that the start of the communist insurgency caught the Malayan authorities by surprise. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces (C-in-C FELF), General Sir Neil Ritchie, recalled that it was not until the evening of 22 June 1948 that he was informed

"by the civil authorities of the conditions of unrest existing in Malaya." Ritchie had "just returned from a brief visit to the UK where I had told the then CIGS [Chief of the Imperial General Staff] that in my view Malaya could be regarded as the one relatively stable area in an otherwise disturbed South East Asia." According to Ritchie, the Commander-in-Chief Far East Air Force (C-in-C FEAF) had also expressed the same view to the Chiefs of Staff (CoS) and "the GOC Malaya District was equally in the dark regarding the internal situation."[62] However, it is worth reconsidering what exactly the MSS was reporting in the months prior to the declaration of emergency.

On 30 April 1948, the MSS reported a continued intensification of activities by the MCP and its satellite organisations, and forecast that the communists would resort to unlawful and underground activities. There were already reports of stabbings and use of hand grenades.[63] The MSS commented on the 15 May 1948 that,

> Further evidence of the implementation of the CP's intentions is supplied by the burning of the Bin Seng Rubber Milling Factory on the night before the workers intended to report for duty. Another case of arson took place in one of the sawmills in Singapore in April. A pamphlet called 'VOICE OF THE WORKERS', believed to be published by the MCP, carried a long article on the Bin Seng labour dispute, with a sub-headline 'Abandon lawful means'. There are indications that the CP may now do as they did last year – turn their attention to Indian labour on rubber estates and incite them to strikes and riots.[64]

Dalley used the next edition of the Political Journal to survey MCP activity following Britain's return to Malaya after the Japanese surrender in 1945. He asserted that the MCP "as long ago as 1946 had planned a revolution in Malaya; that the plan included making full use of their control of trade unions, youth organisations and women's associations that they intended to gaining control of the Malay Nationalist Party and Malayan Democratic Union."[65] He noted a rise in communist violence

[62]WO 106/5448, General Sir N. Ritchie, Report on Operations in Malaya, June 1948–July 1949.

[63]CO 537/3751, 08/48—30 April 1948.

[64]Ibid., 09/48—15 May 1948.

[65]CO 537/3752, 10/48—31 May 1948.

in the first months of 1948, and that the "working off of old scores against KMT supporters, or against witnesses in previous criminal cases has been the immediate objective of crimes of violence." Furthermore, "other acts, such as arson and resistance to the police, have been aimed at the authorities and employers in general. The working off of old scores would be the natural opening to a general campaign. In other cases, the "extermination of labour robbers" (to quote the words of their official public resolutions) has been the objective."[66] Dalley also referred to a recently captured MCP propaganda document which discussed the role of squatters in Sungei Supit, praising their efforts to resist government officials trying "to drive them from the land." Dalley was concerned that the document declared that "squatters fed the MPAJA during the war and that squatters had been ordered by the CP to increase their food production in order to prepare for events which they declare to be imminent."[67] Dalley then considered why the MCP's propaganda continued to state that war was imminent. He concluded that because the propaganda was reserved for "their members and their dupes," it must indicate that the MCP was preparing for a "critical period."[68] This was supported by documents and intelligence from agents that suggested the upswing in violence was "only the beginning." More specifically, information from five different sources which stated that,

> the MCP had, ordered mobilisation of 'Workers Protection Corps' similar to that exposed in Singapore in April, and Mobile Corps which are undergoing short training periods before going into action as from June 5th. Police in Perak have interrupted the lifting of an arms dump, the contents of which are said to have been intended for this Corps. A newly built transit camp used by armed Communists has been discovered in South Kedah. Information has been received that Yong Lam, a leader in the MPAJA is about to take over command of armed Communists. YONG LAM has disappeared from his usual haunt.[69]

Dalley also considered whether all this activity was merely a local trial of strength or a wider plan instigated by either the Soviet Union or China but failed to come to a clear judgement. He said that "mention has been

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

made of the external links of the CP in Malaya, and there is no reason to suppose that the activities of the Party cannot be part of a world-wide plan as opposed to a local tactical plan." He did, however, quite clearly state that regardless of whether the campaign was locally or externally directed, "there are indications now of a frontal attack in Malaya."[70]

The MSS Journal for 15 June 1948 (i.e. for the period up to the day before the murder of the planters which prompted the declaration of emergency) was even more specific. Dalley noted that the nineteen cases of murder and attempted murder and three cases of arson in the first two weeks of the month were the "more sensational events in the present Communist campaign to undermine the morale and disrupt the life of the country in the Federation of Malaya."[71] Dalley stated he had evidence that the MCP was behind the campaign and also further evidence of mobilisation of ex-MPAJA men and others for operations in the jungle. Further, the NDYL headquarters in Ipoh had instructed its members to "scatter" to leave only "one of two men in position maintain an appearance of 'business as usual'."[72] Dalley then provided an assessment of the situation. In effect, he described a pattern of events which had already taken place, or which he thought would take place in the near future, which we might now describe as the pattern of a classic insurgency: the instigation of labour unrest using strong propaganda and intimidatory methods; selective assassinations of rivals, managerial staff of plantations and mines and government officials; arsons and sabotage. He also suggested (albeit, with hindsight incorrectly) that the insurgents would instigate Sino-Malaya clashes to embarrass the government further and to spread the security forces. He predicted that once a state of anarchy had been achieved, the communist forces would cut communications links, raid small towns and villages, and then set up liberated areas. He concluded by stating, "although all the information in our possession is not always specific in detail, this information, when taken in conjunction with the events which have taken place over the last two or three months, must indicate that there is a very critical period ahead of us."[73] Whether one looks at the MSS reporting in the weeks immediately before the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya or undertakes a

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 11/48—15 June 1948.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

longer survey of the intelligence assessments by both the military from the reoccupation of Malaya in 1945 and MSS from it reconstitution in April 1946, it is very difficult to consider how anyone could be surprised at the turn of events in June 1948.

The Declaration of a State of Emergency

While intelligence officials were trying to understand the nature of the threat posed by the MCP, events on the ground developed rapidly. Indeed, there is clear evidence that the Army, working in conjunction with the Police and the Royal Air Force, were already engaged in "anti bandit" operations *before* the declaration of Emergency. The Quarterly Historical Report of North Malaya Sub District explains that British and Malay units were engaged on "internal security" duties, undertaking "intensive day and night patrolling", in April, May and June 1948. For instance, between 23 April and 25 May 1948 troops of the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, plus local Police officers, took part in Operation *Haystack*, with the intention of "breaking the bandit organisation known to operating…in the area." Four "enemy camps" were identified but the "bandits were not on any occasion brought to battle due to:

i. their distinct reluctance,
ii. their superior knowledge and mobility in the jungle,
iii. their excellent warning system.[74]

Similarly, on the night of 25–26 May in the Kehah / Perlis area, the 1/6 Gurkha Rifles launched Operation *Pathan*, its "first operational role against what is now known as the insurgent movement in Malaya." *Pathan* was created at the behest of the Chief Police Officer (CPO) in Kedah and Perlis who "required an attack by troops on the bandit camp reported at MR 638193 (approx.) map 2 ¼." Subsequently, the CPO requested "a backing of troops to assist the Police in searching squatter camp North of Kg CHAROK BUNTING…" The operation was under the overall command of the Officer Command 1/6 GR but was jointly planned with the CPO. Moreover, two Police officers and a number of

[74]WO 268/584, Quarterly Historical Report of North Malaya Sub District, Quarter 1 April–30 June 1948, Appendix C, Report on Op Haystack, 23 April–25 May 1948.

Chinese detectives accompanied the troops on the raid. The Northern Sub District subsequently reported "two platoons 1/6 GR with Police attacked at dawn 26 May to find that the camp had been vacated a possible two days previously. Abundant material evidence was found which established the fact that parties of armed men had been in occupation over a period of time and that the controlling organisation was Communist. The camp was destroyed, while a party of Police searched nearby squatter areas and made several arrests."[75] *Haystack* and *Pathan* were but two of a number of operations undertaken by the Army against communist "bandits" prior to the declaration of Emergency. They are important for two reasons. First, in terms of chronology of the campaign, they show troops engaged in internal security operations against gangs months prior to the formal declaration of Emergency. This casts further doubt on the theory that the rise of communist-inspired violence in the late spring of 1948 came as a surprise to the Federation. Second, *Haystack and Pathan* indicates that, acting on intelligence, the Police were in a position to call in military support to create and execute a joint operation—the basis of joint counterinsurgency operations were in place prior to the declaration of a state of emergency.

A note by Mr. J. Miller, the British Adviser in Perak provides a fascinating glimpse into how the Emergency evolved, at a local level, in response to local evidence, and relationship between the Police and civilian authorities.[76] On 1 June 1948 the Chief Police Officer (CPO), Perak informed Mr. Miller that a representative of the planters in Sungei Siput had expressed concerns about unrest among their workers and requested Police protection. The representative was Boris Hembry who, in his autobiography, provided an account remarkably similar to Miller's. Hembry also notes that he ran a de facto network of informers to gain advance warning of labour unrest, which was very likely passed back to the MSS because Hembry and Dalley were close friends.[77] Certainly, the area appeared volatile: Police had already recently raided the premises of the Federation of Estate Worker's Union, Sungei Siput and the Rubber Worker's Union, Chemor. Moreover, there were strikes on the

[75] Ibid., HQ Malaya District, Report on Operation "Pathan", 28 May 1948.

[76] WO 268/584, Note by British Adviser, Perak—Movement of Military to SUNGEI SIPUT at the request of Police in general support of law and order, 2 June 1948.

[77] Hembry, *Malaya Spymaster*, pp. 308–322.

Kamuning and Sungei Krudda Estates, and a further one was threatened on the Lee Hin Estate.[78] The CPO explained that there were insufficient Police officers to provide adequate protection and recommended enlisting military support. Coincidently, Dalley was visiting Miller at the time and confirmed that the planters' concerns were valid. Miller visited the "Mentri Besar" [sic—First Minister], who had already signed a warrant for the arrest of a chief MCP activist, Mr. Balan, and agreed to the use of the Army to protect the rubber plantations in the area.[79] Miller reported, "the Mentri further suggested that with every contingent of Military patrol in troubled areas there should, if possible, be a member of the Police Force to effect arrests." As a result, "it was decided on behalf of the State Government to give the recommendation the fullest support."[80]

However, the deployment of the Army across plantations in Sungei Siput (as well as other areas of Malaya) had limited impact. On the 16 June three European planters—Arthur Walker, John Allison and Ian Christie—were murdered by members of the MCP on the Elphil and Phin Soon Estates in Perak. One European mining superintendent, twelve Asian managers and a foreman had also been murdered in the previous month.[81] Police were able to ascertain from witnesses that the murders of the Europeans on the 16 June were committed by a gang of twelve Chinese men armed with Sten guns and that the attacks, in general, displayed "certain common characteristics, viz. They are the work of gangs of well-armed gun men moving from scene to scene; they are confined to villages and isolated bungalows in remote country areas; and they are directed against the managerial staff of estates, leaders of KMT

[78]In the first half of June there were 19 murders and attempted murders, 3 arsons, and armed attacks on isolated police stations in Pahang, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Johore, as well as Perak. See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 36.

[79]The modern spelling of First Minister in Jawi is 'Menteri'. However, the documents consistently use the spelling 'Mentri'. The contemporary spelling will be adopted for this discussion. Similarly, the modern spelling of the location where emergency powers were declared is 'Sungai Siput'. However, the documents consistently use the spelling 'Sungei Siput. Again, the latter, older, spelling will be used.

[80]WO 268/584, Note by British Adviser, Perak—Movement of Military to SUNGEI SIPUT at the request of Police in general support of law and order, 2 June 1948.

[81]C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars—The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London 2008), p. 426.

parties, and witnesses in intimidation cases."[82] The clamour for action from the expatriate community was fierce and the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, had little choice but to declare a state of emergency in Perak and in parts of Johore, and quickly extended this across the whole of the Federation.

Conclusion

The MSS did not forecast the murders of Arthur Walker, John Allison and Ian Christie on 16 June 1948. Ever since, contemporaries and historians alike have chastised Dalley for not doing so. This is unfair for two reasons. First, as can be seen above, both GHQ and the MSS had been providing warning for over two years about both the threat and capability of the MCP to provide an existential threat to Malaya. Granted that this warning suffered from the lack of high-grade human sources within the Party, particularly after the loss of Lai Tak. The warning may have been diluted by the multitude of other potential threats to Malaya. Arguably the form of the reports, as intelligence reviews, might not have been the most effective. Nevertheless, the warnings were given. The second reason that it might be unfair to blame Dalley or the MSS for not forecasting the insurgency was that it is highly unlikely that the wave of violence the prompted the declaration of emergency was, in fact, the start of a planned, orchestrated, insurgency. Indeed, since the publication of Chin Peng's memoirs in 2003 the consensus is that the MCP's Central Committee did not trigger the murders in June that prompted the declaration of Emergency.[83] Hence, even if Dalley had reliable, high-placed, sources with MCP's politburo to replace Lai Tak, he would be unable to forecast the events of June 1948.

The warnings provided by the MSS in the three months prior to the declaration of emergency were, in fact, stark. Moreover, both the

[82] CO 537/2638, Fortnightly Review of Communism in the Colonies, 18 June 1948.

[83] A contrary view is that murders were the logical outcome of the May 1948 Central Executive Committee to intimidate and kill 'scabs'. However, there appears a dislocation of a quantum nature between an order of this kind, effectively aimed against native labour, and the murder of the ex-patriot *British* planters.

MSS and Malaya Command had provided clear and regular warnings about the broad intention of the MCP to threaten Malaya for at least two years prior to the declaration of emergency. The assessments of the MCP's intent lack an element of granularity simply because the party's strategy developed over time from pursuing an open, constitutional, struggle, to adopting a covert, violent, insurgency. Both the MSS and Malaya Command were able to identify a number of practical problems which beset the MCP during 1946–7, not least the lack of funds and concern about the extent of their control over all sections of Malaya's labour force. Nevertheless, both the MSS and Malaya Command were also able to identify that MCP was working through other "cover" organisations; that they had links to other communist parties across the globe; that large sections of the Party had gone "underground" and had established a "shadow" organisation; and that it was backed by a large, armed, and experienced guerrilla army which was simply awaiting the call to arms. To use a modern term, the MCP, as portrayed by both the MSS and Malaya Command represented a "clear and present" danger to the Federation. Further, as the security situation deteriorated at the beginning of 1948, Dalley rightly stated on a number of occasions that events were reaching a climax and that a trail of strength awaited the Malaya authorities.

There were two problems, however. However, the first was the white noise generated by the multitude of other potential threats to Malaya. That said, none were being reported in the same sense of potential urgency and momentum as that posed by the MCP. The second, and most critical factor, as discussed in the previous chapter, was that Dalley's personal stock, and therefore that of his organisation, had been eroded by Sir Percy Sillitoe to such an extent that the warnings lacked credibility. Regardless of the support shown in particular by MacDonald and Hone, the swell of opinion in official circles, which had been whipped-up by Sillitoe, meant that the MSS could not survive. Sillitoe's machination's, in particular relating to apparent structural problems with the MSS, had already taken effect among metropolitan officials prior to the declaration of emergency, and combined with a local sense of urgency to address rapidly deteriorating security situation. A little less than a month after the declaration of Emergency, Sir Alec Newboult persuaded MacDonald to accept the need to reallocate responsibility for intelligence from the MSS

to the Malayan and Singapore Police Special Branches, a proposal which was accepted on 13 July 1948.[84] This meant that Gent's successor, Sir Henry Gurney, had to establish a Special Branch of the Malayan Police afresh, and while the Federation was under attack. In the meantime, the Army and uniformed branch of the Police had to "hold the ring."

[84]CO 537/2647, Minutes of the Governor General's Conference, 13 July 1948. Sir Alec Newboult was Chief Secretary in the Federation of Malaya's administration. He was Officer Administrating the Government (OAG) in the interregnum between High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent's death on 4 July 1948 and the arrival of Sir Henry Gurney on 13 September 1948.

CHAPTER 6

Paramilitary Intelligence

Eight days after declaring a state of emergency in Malaya, High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent was recalled by Arthur Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for Colonies, for talks in London. Gent left Singapore on the night of 28 June 1948, two days after receiving the telegram from Creech Jones. On the afternoon of 4 July, Gent's aircraft collided with another as it prepared to land at RAF Northolt, London. All on board both aircraft perished.[1] Gent's death left Malaya in the hands of the ailing acting High Commissioner, Sir Alexander Newboult, until a replacement could be appointed. Like Gent, Newboult and Malcom MacDonald, the Commissioner General for South East Asia, faced a clamour for action from the expatriate community. In response, the two men built upon Gent's declaration of state of emergency by the rounding up of known communists and using roadblocks, patrols and static guards on vulnerable locations. This was largely for show however, simply because officials were not clear about the nature of the threat posed by the MCP. Despite reports of the MSS and military intelligence over the previous 35 months, the conflict between the latter and SIFE served to generate uncertainty. Now officials questioned whether the rise in violence witnessed in the spring and early summer of 1948 was simple banditry, albeit on a large-scale, and therefore fundamentally policing

[1] C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars—The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (2008), p. 429.

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_6

problem? Perhaps it was a more organised attempted at overthrowing the newly restored British administration in Malaya which required a military response? Worse still, could the violence be a symptom of a broader, worldwide attempt to establish communist hegemony?

In fact, the authorities soon concluded that not only was the violence a manifestation of an organised insurgency and asserted (incorrectly) that this violence was being directed by international communist forces. Within a month of the declaration of the emergency, Dalley reported that the Federation faced a "grandiose scheme for a three-phase campaign of intimidation, attacks on Police posts and ending with a general strike, a march on Singapore and the declaration of a Malayan Republic on 3 August." He advised the government that the communists had ready a force of the 600 armed saboteurs in the Federation's towns and cities with 3000–4000 armed guerrillas formed into company-sized units in the jungle.[2] MacDonald believed "that though itself not a recruiting agent for the guerrilla forces…" the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was the "mainspring of the recent trouble and was directing the nerve centre of the whole subversive movement…attacking the authority of the government."[3] Moreover, the Communism Review for the fortnight ending 17 July stated that "intelligence reports trace the overseas direction back to Belgrade."[4] Two weeks later a Political Review claimed that "definite evidence now exists of contact with the Chinese Communist Party and some 30 emissaries from the party are known to have come to Malaya to assist in the organisation and direction of the bandit campaign…a recent revival of activity and an improvement in standard of military direction in Selangor tends to confirm a report that this is where they have gone."[5]

Despite these assessments, the Malayan government's response to the violence that seemed to be breaking out all over the country was fundamentally civil in nature—martial law was not declared, and police had primacy for the restoration of law and order. That said, the military—both Army and Royal Air Force—were widely used in support of the police. The scale was vast. On average over the course of the Emergency there

[2] CO 537/2638, Fortnightly Review of Communism in the Colonies, 2 July 1948.

[3] Ibid., Fortnightly Review of Communism in the Colonies, 17 July 1948.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., Political Review for the Week Ending 23–31 July 1948.

were 20 infantry battalions conducting emergency operations at any one time. This figure does not include armoured car regiments, artillery batteries or Special Air Service battalions. They supported the regular police and Special Constabulary, the vast majority of whom were armed and conducted road blocks, ambushes and jungle patrols just like their military colleagues. Moreover, the RAF used strike fighters and heavy bombers to pound suspected insurgent positions. In many respects civil primacy was a facade, barely concealing a viciously contested guerrilla war.

Initially the Army and the uniformed branch of the police acted in unison to tackle the overt manifestations of the insurgency by using emergency powers to arrest known or suspected communists and to impose control via curfews, road blocks and searches. Quickly, however, they exhausted their intelligence relating to known suspects and had to rely on more speculative actions such as cordon and sweep operations. The paramilitary forces were largely 'end-users' of intelligence. Ideally this would be high-quality human intelligence (humint) provided by Special Branch and perhaps Secret Intelligence Far East (SIFE). However, this type of information was not forthcoming, particularly in the first half of the Emergency. Therefore, the paramilitary forces had to try different ways of generating intelligence to help identify and arrest or kill their foes. This effort grew organically, from operational requirements, rather than being a product of some overarching counterinsurgency strategy. Food control and population control provided the means to arrest the communist's revolutionary momentum but did not break the back of the insurgency. Indeed, at the time of Malaya's independence from Britain in 1957, there remained some 2000 insurgents roaming the jungles. The fundamental problem was that the Army and the uniformed-branch of the Police depended upon Special Branch to provide high-quality humint and, for at least the first half of the Emergency, this was not forthcoming.

The Initial Plan to Restore Law and Order

By 26 June 1948 the Malayan authorities had devised a plan to restore order to the Federation, which was followed until the appointment of General Sir Harold Briggs as Director of Operations in 1950. MacDonald explained to Creech Jones that the authorities in Malaya had constructed a two-phase plan to tackle the insurgent threat. The objective during phase one was "to restore law and order in the

settled areas of the territory and to maintain the economic life of the country and to restore morale." During the first phase troops would "undertake offensive operations to round up gangsters and to oppose force with force." The security forces would establish "road blocks and traffic controls, mount periodical sweeps as a result of a murder or robberies committed or upon information received as to the whereabouts of wanted persons, and widespread searches for arms and other incriminating evidence." These operations were underpinned by the provision of static guards for "police stations, power stations, prisons, warehouses, factories, docks, harbours and other vital posts." These were to be maintained primarily, but not exclusively, by the rapidly expanding Special Constabulary. The aim of the first phase would "be to apprehend or liquidate the enemy force and, in so far as this does not succeed, completely drive them [into] the jungle."[6] The second phase of the Federation's plan would "comprise the operations necessary to liquidate the guerrilla bands whose headquarters are in the jungle. This will involve the destruction of their camps, cutting off food supplies, and uncovering dumps of arms and equipment. These operations will be primarily military in nature in which, however, the police will participate."[7]

At first glance the authorities appeared to have a reasonable number of personnel to implement these plans. For instance, in 1948 there were roughly 9000 police officers in post, a number which rose rapidly to over 67,025 by 1952.[8] Also, at the beginning of the Emergency there were ten battalions of infantry available to help restore law and order. Each infantry battalion in Malaya had about seven hundred men, of which roughly four hundred would be available to be put into the field. As such General Aston Wade, General Officer Commanding (GOC), Malaya, had approximately four thousand soldiers, perhaps less if one takes into account the chronic shortages in the battalions in Malaya in 1948, to support the police.[9] Further, there were roughly 9000 RAF personnel

[6] DEFE 11/32, Commissioner General, South East Asia, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 June 1948.

[7] Ibid.

[8] AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Malaya, *Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957*, September 1957.

[9] R. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War—The Emergency in Malaya, 1948–60* (London, MA 1966), p. 43; J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002), p. 63. Sunderland has a higher estimate: he suggests there were some 7784 fighting troops and

with Air Command Southeast Asia (ACSEA), supporting some 100 operational aircraft in the region.[10] Therefore at the beginning of the emergency, the government had approximately 26,000 police and military personnel to identify and detain or kill some 3000–5000 members of the communist's guerrilla army (known initially as the Malaya Peoples' Anti British Army—MPABA; and then as the Malayan Races Liberation Army) which operated predominantly in the jungle, and unknown number of supporters (known as the Min Yuen) within squatter areas and towns.[11]

Visual Reconnaissance

While the police and military set about arresting known communist sympathisers, guarding infrastructure and asserting their presence by mounting road blocks, senior RAF officers considered how they might support the Federation resist the attentions of the communist insurgents. The need for the RAF to support the ground forces was recognised as early as the 28 June 1948 when Headquarters Air Command Far East, issued Operation Instruction No. 2/48, which outlined the role of the RAF:

a. To assist the Army and Police in the course of their Operations.
b. To restore morale in isolated areas by flying over such areas.
c. To reconnoitre the northern frontier and the northern areas of the east and west coast, the object being to amass information to enable the security forces to reduce, and eventually stop, infiltration and illegal immigration by the insurgents into Malaya.[12]

In fact, the situation deteriorated so quickly towards the end of June that on the verbal instructions of C-in-C Air Command Far East, Sir Marshall

5660 administrative troops in Malaya in Malaya. Either way, Wade did not have a surfeit of troops. See R. Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948–1960* (Rand 1964), pp. 24–25.

[10] J. Corum and W. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars—Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (London 2003), p. 179.

[11] DEFE 11/33—A paper on the dimensions and nature of the security problems confronting the government of the Federation of Malaya, 16 September 1948.

[12] Ibid., and AIR 24/1924, AHQ Malaya, Operational Order No. 24/48, 30 June 1948.

Sir Hugh Lloyd, Air Headquarters issued Operational No. 22/48 before receipt of Operational Instruction No. 2/48. A further order issued on the 30 June 1948 explained that "the internal security situation in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore…is now such that Military assistance must be given to the Civil Authorities to restore law and order and Public confidence." The order stated that "the main limitation today in restoring law and order is the lack of information, this being withheld by the local population because of the inability of the police to give security, and as a result, informers are murdered."[13] The RAF was enlisted to support the broader plan to restore law and order in two ways. First, by using the RAF Regiment to support the police and army to protect security and protection, and hopefully release the army from static roles.[14] Second, aircraft were "to concentrate on reconnaissance and to make every effort to obtain information over the whole of Malaya that might help security forces locate enemy hide-outs and likely concentration points. It was hoped that this might lead in a number of cases to offensive air action and would compel the enemy to split up into small gangs and so simplify the task of the military and police."[15]

RAF operations in relation to intelligence at the beginning of the Emergency focused on visual observation and airstrikes (i.e. the prosecution of the actionable intelligence). Initially the only air reconnaissance assets in the Far East was Air Observation Platform (AOP) Flight (No. 1914), based in Singapore. No. 1914 Flight was initially placed under the operational control of Army Headquarters at Fort Canning, Singapore and then AHQ Malaya. However, within weeks of the declaration of Emergency, the demand for its Auster light aircraft outstripped supply and the Army were asked to provide sufficient aircraft to transform No. 1914 Flight back into No. 656 Air Observation Squadron. Although this presented significant logistic difficulties, this allowed each brigade area to be allocated its own flight of five or six Austers to provide regular visual reconnaissance, "in particular, the routine and systematic searching for terrorist camps and other signs of their presence in order to

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] AIR 23/8435, Report on the Royal Air Force Operations in Malaya, June 1948–March 1949.

remedy the general lack of information about their whereabouts that was the biggest single drawback to Security Force operations."[16]

Visual reconnaissance was a distinctively "low tech" method of generating intelligence—it simply involved pilots in light aircraft flying low and slow over the jungle to spot any sign of insurgent activity. Once found, the Auster fleet would mark targets by using smoke which would draw tactical strike aircraft or ground forces to the area.[17] Despite its seemingly simple methodology, the operational summaries clearly show that it could be effective. For instance, the report for the 11 January 1949 stated that "a captured insurgent was flown with a police officer over an area in Perak in an Auster. As a result, an air strike was called in via a Contact Car. The Auster remained on station to guide a three Beaufighters and four Spitfires onto the target. A combined force of Army and police officers subsequently found a camp suitable for over one hundred insurgents, two of whom were found dead. Eight other insurgents were believed to have escaped; three of whom were thought to be wounded."[18] This entry is notable for a number of reasons: that both an insurgent and Police officer were brought into an operational aircraft; that the Auster was able to locate the camp; that it was able to call in an airstrike. Moreover, it was not a unique operation.[19] However, tactics had to change as the Emergency developed. In particular, increasing caution on behalf of the insurgents and the growing effectiveness of food denial campaigns by the ground forces meant that pilots had to refine their terms of search from insurgent camps or formations on the

[16]M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (London 1992), p. 127; Austers were regularly supplemented in this role by Dakota transport aircraft from No. 110 Squadron. See, for instance, AIR 24/1917, Operational Summary for September 1948.

[17]AIR 20/8928, Director of Operations, Malaya: Reconnaissance of Cultivated Areas, Appendix A (Spraying Food Crops with Poison from the Air).

[18]AIR 25/1925, OPSUM, 11 January 1949. The scale of the visual reconnaissance effort was remarkable—in 1955 it was the equivalent to keeping five Austers permanently over the jungle throughout the hours of daylight on every day of the year. See K. Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *RUSI*, 102: 607 (1957), p. 380.

[19]R. Arditti, "The View from Above: How the Royal Air Force Provided a Strategic Vision for Operational Intelligence During the Malayan Emergency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), p. 770.

fringes of the jungle at the beginning of the Emergency to areas of cultivation, cooking fires or waterholes in deeper jungle.[20]

Aircraft, particularly the brigade Auster fleet and RAF Dakotas, were also used to develop the situational awareness of ground forces. For instance, the maps available to ground forces at the beginning of the Emergency were poor and ground-to-ground communication via the No. 38 radio sets was problematic. As such, "sections frequently lost their bearings in thick country, and an Auster was invaluable for either telling them where to go next, or, alternatively, where they were now."[21] They could also act as an airborne relay station which allowed, for instance, different sections involved in a pre-planned ambush to have effective communications. For instance, following an insurgent attack, a strong force of 2nd/6th Gurkhas and Police, under the command of Lt. Col. N. Shaw [hence nomenclature, Shawforce], was sent to the relief of Gua Musang. Once there, Shaw felt the Gua Musang road offered excellent opportunities for ambush and requested that Spitfires remain permanently on station. This proved impractical but it was arranged for Spitfires to remain on readiness at Kuala Lumpur and relays of Dakotas to fly above the area as "Flying Tentacles." Subsequently "ground forces requested air support from the Dakota by 'R/T' and the Dakota called the aircraft forward from Kuala Lumpur by W/T. On arrival over the ground forces the Spitfires came under the control of the Air Contact Team, which was with the ground forces, and were directed on target." The RAF reported that Col Shaw "spoke very highly of the efficiency of the system and the accuracy of the attack."[22] This level of "joint" action at such an early stage of the Emergency is even more remarkable when contrasted with the shambolic and fractured nature of the relationship between the Malayan Security Service (MSS) and Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), and the in-fighting which beset the Police.

There was a limited, however, to these kinds of operations. This was because the insurgents soon realised that they could not operate in large formations. Instead they had to use Malaya's wild expanses, jungle

[20] J. Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle* (Stroud 2007), p. 88.

[21] G. Warner, *From Auster to Apache—The History of 656 Squadron RAF / AAC 1942–2012* (Barnsley 2012), p. 70.

[22] AIR 23/8435, Report on the Royal Air Force Operations in Malaya, June 1948–March 1949, 9 May 1949, as quoted in Arditti, "The View from Above", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), p. 770.

fringes and the rubber plantations areas, blending into the jungle or the local Chinese populations. The scale of the task confronting the security forces was enormous. For example, at the beginning of the Emergency, the 5th Company of the 4th Independent Army (MPABA) had been identified as active within Yong Peng area of the state of Johore. The Malayan authorities at their disposal in Johore a squadron of the RAF Regiment, three companies of Seaforth Highlanders, three platoons of Ghurkhas, and a reserve of 100 men.[23] These forces had to find and engage their opponents within an area that comprised of 7300 square miles and a population of 730,000 people.[24] Even when supported with Austers, it is little wonder that the security forces were soon engulfed by vast tracts of swap, jungle, rubber plantations and mountains, "looking for a very vicious needle in a very unpleasant haystack."[25] Intelligence would prove to be the holy grail in this campaign.

Intelligence on the Ground

After an initial flurry of activity when Police, with Army support, arrested known Trade Unionists, communist activists and targeted the armed bands of up-to-three hundred insurgents that were roaming the countryside, intelligence began to "dry-up." As a result, the security forces were quickly forced to rely static roadblocks, speculative cordon and search operations of villages or squatter areas, or sending troops into the jungle in an effort to flush the insurgents out. Frustrated by the lack of progress in the first months of the emergency, a number of planters and civil servants, many of whom were ex-Force 136 members, considered how best to identify and neutralise the MCP forces.[26] John Davis, Richard Broome, Noel Alexander, and Robert Thompson advocated creating an irregular force, modelled on Force 136, "to break down the bandit's feeling of ownership of the jungle by ferreting them out from their

[23]A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London 1975), p. 114.

[24]Ibid.

[25]CO 537/4751, Draft Broadcast by Major General Kirkman, Chief of Staff FARLEF, April 1949.

[26]M. Sheenan, *Our Man in Malaya* (2007); F. Chapman, *The Jungle Is Neutral* (Singapore 2015); Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng—My Side of History* (Singapore 2007); Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaya—Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941–46* (Singapore 2017).

cover." Davis believed the Ferret Force would be "the best and perhaps only method of coping with Communist terrorists once they get into the jungle."[27] Their discussions coincided with the authorities realising the need for some form of specialist or irregular counterinsurgency force, because "the value of large and elaborate sweeps is doubtful."[28]

Both General Neil Ritchie (GOC Far East Land Forces) and General Charles Boucher (who replaced Wade as GOC Malaya), saw the need for such force—indeed, the former claimed the initial idea for the force was his, while Robert Thompson subsequently attributed the genesis of the force to the latter.[29] Either way, the decision to create a "special jungle guerrilla force" was made by Boucher in July 1948. The force consisted initially of four Ferret Groups, each consisting of eight men, half of whom were civilians on three-month contracts.[30] MacDonald, explained in a radio broadcast that "for jungle warfare against guerrilla bands, squads of jungle fighters are necessary. These will be formed and trained, partly from existing troops and partly from volunteer newcomers who are familiar with the wild forest paths along which many pursuits and engagements will take place."[31] The first two groups started operations at the end of July. The force consisted of British, Malay and Gurkha units led by their own officers, but commanded by ex-members of Force 136. By September five groups, each comprising of sixty men plus interpreters, guides and two hundred Dyak trackers flown in from Sarawak, had been established.[32]

While the work of the Ferret Force was thought to be a "considerable success," one of its officers noted with some frustration the difficulty in sharing intelligence among the different organisations involved with the counterinsurgency effort. He noted, "…information which the Army

[27] Sheenan, *Our Man in Malaya*, p. 156.

[28] T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945–1952: A Special Type of Warfare* (Oxon 2001), p. 102.

[29] Ibid., p. 90. See also R. Thompson, *Make for the Hills* (London 1989) p. 88; A. Hoe and E. Morris, *Re-enter the SAS—The Special Air Service and the Malayan Emergency* (London 1994), pp. 41–45.

[30] Ibid., p. 91.

[31] AIR 20/8876, Commissioner General South East Asia to Foreign Office, text of the Commissioner General's broadcast, 7 July 1948.

[32] WO 268/647, RHQ The Malay Regiment Quarterly Historical Report for Period Ending, 30 December 48.

had was not always at the disposal of the Police and Vice Versa, while information which the District Officers and Penghulus [Headman] had was not passed to anybody. This was even more vicious in the case of the planters, many of whom have excellent and reliable sources of information not available to the Military or Police."[33] To help mitigate this problem, the authorities sanctioned the creation of Civil Liaison Corps (CLC), which consisted of a European Officer, Chinese and Malay interpreters and sometimes a tracker. The purpose of the formation of the Corps "was to assist units operating against the bandits in:

a. Gaining information. By gaining a close contact with the inhabitants of the country, i.e. local Government officials, Police, Planters, Miners and the squatters themselves.
b. Having available advisers on local conditions and on government policy.
c. Having a means of breaking down the barriers of different languages.[34]

The Ferret Force quickly won acceptance among the regular Army. For instance, Lt. Col. Woods of the 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles, operating in Sungei Siput in October 1948, noted that "the Ferrets have in fact achieved more than I anticipated and have made a great many contacts and have cleared several bandit camps including one HQ. Camp with its printing presses etc."[35] It is perhaps therefore understandable that John Davis was left fuming at the decision to disband the Ferret Force at the end of 1948. He later said that "the end was almost indecently hastened by our jack-in the-box little general [Ritchie], who got over-excited about us in the beginning and then decided to write us off after only six weeks because we had not won his war for him."[36] Davies's attitude is understandable, not least because the Ferret Force appeared to unearth

[33] Ibid., RHQ The Malay Regiment Quarterly Historical Report for Period Ending, 31 December 48.

[34] Ibid.

[35] The Gurkha Museum (TGM), Winchester, Regimental Records, 2nd Battalion, Documents of Historical Interest, Malaya, 1947–1949, Summary of Situation in Sungei Siput on 28 October 1948.

[36] Sheenan, *Our Man in Malaya*, p. 161.

valuable intelligence about the insurgents.[37] However, the decision to terminate the Ferret Force experiment should not be viewed as a product of Boucher and Ritchie's disinclination to develop intelligence-led operations. Both men were concerned about the development of "private armies" but, more pertinently, the Ferret Force was never going to be a viable long-term option to tackle the scale of the problem presented by the MRLA.[38] Instead, Boucher wanted the lessons and ethos of the Ferret Force to be inculcated to all front-line units. Indeed, he stated, "all coys [companies] will be regarded as ferrets."[39] To achieve this, he ordered Colonel Walker, the Ferret Force's training officer, to establish the Far Eastern Land Force Training Centre (FTC).[40] This was therefore a measure designed to institutionalise and embedded the lessons learnt from the former Force 136/Ferret Force into the wider Army.[41]

Although primarily a consumer of intelligence, the Army in Malaya did have a small, dedicated, intelligence-gathering capability which has been hitherto largely unknown. Upon the reoccupation of Malaya, the Intelligence Corps established the Field Security Service (Malaya Command). This was commanded by Major Peter Leefe (GSO II) and comprised of eight Security Sections, each with small number of NCOs—for instance, the detachment at Ipoh consisted of a Captain and sixteen others, including six interpreters.[42] The initial task of the Field Security Service (FSS) was to round up suspected war criminals on the "black" and "grey" lists which had been prepared in New Delhi well before the invasion, as well as to intern the members of the India National Army (INA) which had been formed by the Japanese during the Second World War.[43] However, an unpublished history written

[37] Hoe and Morris, *Re-enter the SAS*, p. 41.

[38] WO 106/5884, Report on Operations in Malaya by General Neil Ritchie, June 1948–July 1948.

[39] WO 268/582, Minutes of a COMDs Conference held at HQ Johore Sub District on 12 January 1949.

[40] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 69. For more on Walker see, T. Pocock, *Fighting General—The Public and Private Campaigns of General Sir Walter Walker* (London 1973).

[41] WO 216/116, Half Yearly Training Reports; WO 263/10, Minutes of Part 1 of the Commander's-in-Chief Commanders' Conference, 25 April 1949.

[42] Intelligence Corp Museum, Acc. No. 576/2—Notes on the Intelligence Corps in South East Asia, undated, believed to be mid-1953.

[43] Ibid.

by the Intelligence Corps suggests that in May 1946 the FSS turned its attention from investigating war crimes to "internal problems of Communism and secret society activity." Unfortunately, the history does not provide much detail but does state that locally employed interpreters "were utilised extensively in war crime investigations, working long hours and often interrogating Japanese prisoners of war themselves. Later, they were also used to report the results of Communist meetings, which were at this time held openly as the Communist Party was legally recognised." The history suggests that the FSS gave indications as early as June 1946 of an armed MCP movement in Johore but "apparently the civilian authorities were either unwilling to take to take any action, or not interested, and nothing further was heard of the matter."[44] The similarities with the unheeded warnings provided by the MSS and GHQ, as discussed in the previous chapter, are clear. Little further is known about the work of FSS, particularly between 1948 and 1953, but it does appear that in the first five years of the Emergency the FSS were not attached to the various battalions of line posted to Malaya and worked independently.

Despite the efforts of the Ferret Force, the Civil Liaison Corps and Intelligence Corps, the task of generating timely, actionable, intelligence particularly in the first years of the Emergency proved highly challenging. A part of the problem was the difficulty balancing the need to protect the general population, particularly in and around Malaya's vulnerable tin mines and rubber plantations but also the squatter areas, from the attentions of the insurgents. As Ritchie explained, unless local, semi-static, protection was provided "vulnerable points are insecure, all sense of personal security among the Civilian population is lacking… furthermore, willingness on part of the unprotected civilians to provide information and intelligence ceases, and without this, the task of the security forces is reduced to conditions akin to searching for a needle in a haystack."[45] And yet an inability to go on the offensive would allow the insurgents to operate largely at will, further eroding confidence. On balance, Ritchie favoured the offensive but acknowledged that

[44]Ibid., Acc. No. 882—A History of the Intelligence Corps in Malaya 1945–70.

[45]WO 106/5884, General Sir Neil Ritchie, "Report on Operations in Malaya: June 1948 to July 1949", 6 September 1949.

without security intelligence, the efforts of the security forces would be fruitless.[46]

Two forms different types of offensive action were employed in the first half of the Emergency. As a report written in the 1960s by the Rand Corporation for the United States government explained, "the first was to surround an area thought to contain guerrillas and then send a task force to kill any guerrillas within it. The second was to drive the guerrillas on to a prearranged line of ambushes."[47] These sorts of operations, which generally involved multiple battalions, supported by strike aircraft, were often based on flimsy information and therefore paid limited dividends for a significant expenditure of resources. As one company commander explained, "the bigger the operation…and the higher the level at which it was planned, the less its chance of success, the build-up and the preparations were impossible to conceal, it was difficult to control the troops in the jungle and the guerrillas simply vanished."[48] When decent quality information was received, it was difficult to develop or action. For instance, in February 1949, the 2nd Gurkha Rifles launched Operation Gargoyle as result of information that a "Bandit HQ Camp was located exactly on the junction of the S. Kerbau and the S.Kuah." However, the area covered by the operation was "unsurveyed and information of a tactical or topographical nature was difficult to obtain." Further, the after-action report stated that

> this difficulty was further increased due to the very real necessity for security. As a result nearly all the information obtained before the operation turned out to be very inaccurate. It seems that personal first hand knowledge of deep jungle areas is limited to ex Force 136 officers who operated in those particular areas and it seems that second hand information from other officers (very willingly given) is so inaccurate that it is not worth listening to.[49]

[46] H. Bennett, "'A Very Salutary Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32: 3, p. 436.

[47] R. Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya 1947–60* (Rand 1964), p. 127.

[48] Ibid., p. 133.

[49] TGM, Regimental Records, 2/2 GR, Documents of Historical Interest, Malaya, 1947–9, Report on Operation Gargolye, by 2/2nd GRs, 7 February 1949.

Operations such as these were not isolated incidents. For instance, HQ Malaya District's intelligence review for the first half of 1949 indicates that five out six major operations against MRLA units reported largely "disappointing results," when the insurgents "withdrew" and that "little contact was made."[50] As result MacDonald explained that after a year of fighting, the authorities' knowledge "of the men forming the enemy high command, their identity, location, organisation and intentions, together with their orders of battle remains far from satisfactory."[51] Furthermore, Harding informed the British Defence Coordinating Committee (Far East) (BDCC (FE)) "as far as the conduct of offensive anti-bandit operations is concerned, our greatest weakness is the lack of early and accurate information of the enemy strength, disposition, and his intentions."[52] At the centre of this, problem was that the main form of intelligence at least until the early 1950s did not derive from informers or agents but captured documents.[53] These may have provided some useful indicators about the communist's ideological struggle but not the sort of direct, timely and actionable information necessary for the security forces to mount effective operations against either the MRLA on the jungle fringes or their supporters in the squatter areas. Hence, when Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), visited Malaya in 1949 and found that "… a band having been located in an area, a military force proceeds to beat through a wide expanse of jungle and locate the band. Contact is usually made with one or two individual bandits acting as outposts but the main body is able to evacuate its camp and disperse to rally again in some pre-arranged area many miles away.

[50]WO 208/4104, HQ Malaya District, Intelligence Review, 1 July–31 December 1949. Only Operation Constellation, which was aimed against the MRLA's 3rd Regiment in North West Johore and in Malacca, was deemed a success, with thirty-two insurgents killed, twenty-three captured and fifteen surrendered.

[51]Ibid., MacDonald to Creech Jones, 20 April 1949.

[52]DEFE 11/35, Sec (50) 7, Appendix to Annex, British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Far East, The Military situation in Malaya on 29 April 1950, an appreciation by C-in-C, FARELF.

[53]For instance, see WO 208/4104. See also K. Hack, "Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents: British and Communist Narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the Dynamics of Intelligence Transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), pp. 211–241.

The Army then laboriously repeats the process."[54] No wonder the results of the security force actions were poor.

As the Army and Police forces slogged through the jungles, the RAF continued to gather aerial intelligence from above. In addition to the visual surveillance of the 656 Air Observation Squadron, a staggering number of photographic reconnaissance sorties were flown in the first half of the Emergency. By 1950 the RAF had nine Mosquitoes, five Spitfires and one Anson dedicated to gathering photint to produce more accurate maps for the ground troops. An RAF review of Emergency operations explained that "that the value of air photography as an essential supplement to the inadequate maps of the country has been fully appreciated by the ground forces since the very beginning of the Malayan Campaign. Over the greater part of Malaya the only maps available are reprints of pre-war issues….[and] are virtually useless to patrols working in the jungle." This was because "…rivers are frequently found to have changed their courses, many of the smaller features are either grossly misplaced or entirely omitted, and there still remains areas, notably in Tregganu and South Pahang, which appear quite simply on the map as 'Unexplored'."[55] As a result in the first three years of the Emergency, the RAF in conjunction with Army Photographic Interpretation Unit at Kuala Lumpur produced maps covering 4000 square miles of Perak and Kelantan. This activity became increasingly important as the insurgents changed strategy and moved deeper into the jungle. Photographic "mosaics" also provide a useful source of intelligence. The Land/Air Quarterly News Letters gave a number of examples of how photographic reconnaissance supported Emergency operations. For instance, it reported in December 1952 that "from a side-facing oblique photograph of a built-up area an informer recognised a particular house. The operation mounted as a result of this recognition captured an important CT."[56]

[54]CO 537/4374, A note by CIGS to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1949. See also TGM, 2/2 GRs, Report on Operations Ramilies, Blenheim and Rusa, 26 June 1949.

[55]AIR 23/8435, Report on the Royal Air Force Operations in Malaya, April 1949–December 1950, by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Frank Mellersh, 8 January 1951.

[56]DEFE 4/39, General Headquarters Far East Land Forces, Land/Air Warfare Quarterly Liaison Letter, No. 6, July–December 1952. For more about photint in the Emergency see, Arditti, "The View from Above", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), pp. 762–786.

However useful aerial intelligence was to the prosecution of the Emergency, the authorities could not escape the fact that the campaign would be won or lost on securing sufficient amounts of good quality, timely, humint. And in this respect the Police were the weak link in the intelligence cycle. As Gurney explained to Jim Griffiths, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in April 1951, the "troops rely on the police for practically all their information…" and yet the police force in this period was largely dysfunctional: it was under-strength; lacked Chinese speakers; riven by internal conflict.[57] Most importantly Police were the primary enforcers of draconian Emergency legislation, including the power to arrest on suspicion and detention without trial for fourteen days; the power for a Chief Police Officer to authorise the destruction of any suspect building or structure; the power of deportation; and the power to nominate "special areas" in which the security forces could arrest, using lethal force if necessary, anyone who failed to stop and submit to search when called to do.[58] Indeed, the Police effectively acted as a paramilitary force, working almost indistinguishably from the Army.

The practical consequence of this was that few Chinese felt sufficiently brave to defy insurgent intimation or sufficiently loyal to the Malayan authorities to provide timely and accurate intelligence. A memorandum by the Colonial Office written in April 1949 stated that "it has been clear from the start that the key to the defeat of the communists depends largely on gaining the confidence and whole-hearted cooperation of the Chinese community. The failure of that community to support Government has meant that the bandits have been provided with harbour, money, and information, while Government measures have been criticised and resented, and vital information withheld."[59] Similarly, the Cabinet Malaya Committee noted "more and better information is needed, particularly from the Chinese community, and this information can be obtained only if the Chinese have confidence in

[57] CO 537/4751, Gurney to Griffiths, 11 April 1951; A. Stockwell, "Policing During the Malayan Emergency, 1948–60: Communism, Communalism, and Decolonisation", in D. Anderson and D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police* (Manchester 1992), pp. 105–126.

[58] Bennett, "A Very Salutary Effect", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32: 3 (2009).

[59] CO 537/4741, Memorandum by the Colonial Office on the Security Situation in the Federation of Malaya, April 1949.

the Administration."[60] The Secretary of State for the Colonies considered how to address this in a perceptive memorandum written in July 1950. He noted that the reluctance for the Chinese to provide information was a result of "the most brutal intimidation by the compatriots in the communist ranks" which had at that point in the Emergency resulted in seven hundred deaths with that community. He noted that "we shall not get the full active cooperation of the Chinese (even though the vast majority of them are not in sympathy with the communist ideology) until we are in a position to offer the people security and protection against the bandits and the conviction that, if they throw in their lot with the forces of law and order, they will be incorporated as full members of the body politic."[61] This, then, was the intelligence dilemma: how to instil a sense of security, confidence, and ultimately cooperation within the Chinese community without alienating them. To paraphrase a quote from the future conflict in South East Asia, the problem was how to save the village without destroying it.

Intelligence and Squatters

The large numbers of ungoverned Chinese on the jungle fringes—the so-called squatters—was at the heart of the Malayan government's problems. As Anthony Short explains, "in Perak, and no doubt in other states, there was in 1948 an administrative no man's land, which, under the influence of Communism, threatened to become a vast sprawling state within a state extending over huge areas of what were once Forest Reserves, Malay Reservations, Mining or Agricultural land and considerable areas of privately owned estates, particularly European, which were felled during the Occupation."[62] Without effective government, the squatters were "easy prey for Communist intimidation, and became his [the insurgent's] chief source of both supplies and recruits."[63]

[60] CAB 104/263, Cabinet Malaya Committee, minutes of a meeting held on 19 April 1950.

[61] CAB 21/1681, Cabinet Malaya Committee, Malaya—General Background, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 July 1950.

[62] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, p. 174.

[63] WO 106/5884, Report on Operations in Malaya by General Neil Ritchie, June 1948–July 1948. See also, CO 537/4374, A note on the visit of the CIGS to South East Asia, November 1949.

Even prior to the declaration of Emergency, the MSS highlighted vulnerability of these areas and recommended that squatters who provided insurgents with sustenance should be relocated.[64] Similarly, instructions for the Civil Liaison Officers issued in late 1948 noted that "there is no doubt that squatter areas are the main source of supply of the bandits and the key to their extermination is the denial of the use of these areas to them."[65] Moreover, without effective government, the squatters simply would not identify with, or show any loyalty to, the Federation. Nor would they provide intelligence against the insurgents.

Thus, in 1949 the government-appointed Squatter Committee recommended that:

a. That wherever possible squatters should be settled in the areas already occupied by them;
b. That where settlement in existing areas was not possible, an alternative suitable area should be made available for resettlement;
c. That, if the squatter should refuse settlement or resettlement on the terms offered, he should be liable to compulsory repatriation;
d. That emergency measures to deal with the security problem of certain areas should be supported by administrative measures designed permanently to re-establish the authority of government;
e. That legal means should be introduced to provide for the eviction of squatters by summary process.[66]

Gurney realised that not only did the administration have to break the link between the squatters and the MRLA, but that any benefits of resettlement would be temporary "if we do not at once show the potentially loyal squatters what we can offer them in the way of a peaceful livelihood, free from intimidation." As a result, he placed pressure on the State governments to accelerate resettlement operations and use the provisions in Emergency regulations for banishment.[67]

[64] Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS*, p. 80.

[65] WO 268/647, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Civil Liaison Corps, *Action Against Squatter Areas.*

[66] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, p. 186.

[67] CO 537/4751, Minute by the High Commissioner, 31 May 1949. See also, Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 482; T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (London 1990), pp. 114–115; Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, pp. 175, 185–186.

Pronouncements by HQ Malaya District in the first eighteen months of the campaign about the impact of resettlement under security operations proved to be prescient. For instance, the Weekly Intelligence Review for the week ending 13 January 1949 stated "food is now the prime factor in the campaign, and the denial of it to the bandits, by removal of squatters and other means, becomes the main task. It is of interest to note that, just as the supply of rice was the main factor in the internal situation before the insurrection, and is the most powerful anti-Communist weapon, so the lack of it will drive the bandits out of battle."[68] As farsighted as this statement was, it would not be for at least further two years that security forces would see the first tangible signs of operational benefit as a result of population control. This was due to three key reasons. First, the success of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ended the agreement to accept her citizens deported from Malaya. Second, contrary to Ritchie's wishes, there was no little or no resources available to bring effective government to the squatter area, whether in situ or resettlement camps. The result was that the Chinese who were re-settled were transported to areas entirely unsuited for habitation, with little running water or other amenities. Third, neither the military nor the Federal government had any powers to compel state governments to undertake a coordinated programme of resettlement.[69]

It was the need to coordinate emergency operations, not least resettlement, that led the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, to suggest in 1950 the appointment of "one officer to plan, coordinate and generally direct the anti-bandit operations of the police and fighting services." He argued that not "it is not feasible for the Commissioner of Police to plan, coordinate and direct all such operations except at the expense of his functions as head of the police force. Nor is there any civil officer other than myself in a position to give directions to the GOC and the AOC."[70] As a result Sir Harold Briggs was appointed as Director of Operations and, remarkably, only six weeks elapsed between Gurney first raising the idea with the Colonial Office to Briggs arriving in Kuala Lumpur.

[68]WO 208/4104, HQ Malaya District Weekly Intelligence Review No. 11, for Week Ending 13 January 1949.

[69]Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, p. 181.

[70]CO 537/5994, Gurney to Creech Jones, 23 February 1950.

The Briggs Plan

Briggs subsequently presented his plan "for the elimination of the Communist organisation and armed forces in Malaya" to BDCC(FE) on 24th May 1950. The plan was based on the premise that the MRLA relied "very largely for food, money, information and propaganda on the Min Yuen (literally "People's Organisation") in the populated areas including towns and villages as well as uncontrolled squatter areas, unsupervised Chinese estates and small holdings, estate labour lines and timber kongsis [companies]." Thus, he posited that to end the Emergency the authorities would need to destroy both the Min Yuen and MRLA— the first task being "primarily the responsibility of the civil authorities and second of the Services, mainly the Army."[71] The Briggs Plan had four key components. He intended 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 with 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."

To achieve this Briggs planned that in all States the Police would be focused on "fulfilling normal Police functions including the obtaining of intelligence through its Special Branch organisation in all populated areas." The Army would maintain in each State a "framework" of troops to support the Police. This would, he explained, "entail the setting up of a series of strong points whereon patrols will be based." The Army would superimpose a further strike force upon this framework, on a state-by-state basis, to dominate the tracks on which the bandits rely to make contact with their information and supply organisation, thus forcing the bandits either to fight, disintegrate or to leave the area."[72]

[71] AIR 20/7777, The Briggs Plan, p. 6.

[72] Ibid. See also CAB 104/263, Cabinet Malaya Committee, *Future Anti Policy in Malaya*—A Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 May 1950. The concept of framework operations in Malaya, was not in fact a new idea. See CO 537/3688,

Briggs acknowledged many challenges in his initial appreciation of security, not least that the intelligence organisation in Malaya was his "Achilles Heel," and was "inadequate for present conditions, when it should be our first line of attack." While initial operations were planned to start in Johore in June 1950, followed by intensive operations commencing in Negri Sembilan in August, he stated that it would not be practical to forecast by which dates the various States and Settlements would be cleared. This was because of the need to reform the civil apparatus, such as the police and the local civilian administrations, and the rate at which the government could generate intelligence by engendering a sense of security and confidence among the population.[73]

Nevertheless, the Malaya authorities highlighted signs for optimism from the beginning of June 1951. A combined appreciation by Gurney and Briggs noted in a counterinsurgency campaign, "where pitched battles between organised armies do not occur and where success depends on the morale of and the help given by the population and the breaking of communist morale and organisation, one is left to judge the situation by a combination of varying factors." Both men placed "the greatest weight" upon the number of communist surrenders and "assistance forthcoming from the Chinese population as a result of their coming 'off the fence.'" They reported to London that communist surrenders increased between March and May 1951 compared to previous three months by 180% and the number of insurgent causalities had increased by 42%. Yet the report did not highlight that the total number of insurgent surrenders in this period was only sixty-seven (out of a total force estimated to be 4000).[74]

Indeed, there were repeated grumblings of discontent in London about the apparently slow progress of the Briggs Plan in 1951, particularly from the Ministry of Defence.[75] However, General Sir John

Local Defence Committee, Federation of Malaya, A paper on the strategic and tactical measures required to deal with the internal security problem in the Federation of Malaya, dated 16 September 1948.

[73]AIR 20/7777, The Briggs Plan, pp. 4, 10.

[74]CAB 21/2884, Cabinet Malaya Committee, Combined Appreciation of the Emergency Situation by the High Commissioner and the Director of Operations, 4 June 1951; Extract from the minutes of COS (51) 107th Meeting held on 29 June 1951.

[75]CAB 21/2884, Summary of a meeting held at 10 Downing Street, 26 February 1951; PREM 8 1406 II, Secretary of State for Defence to the Prime Minister, 28 April 1951;

Harding vigorously defended the plan. As he suggested to the Prime Minister in a meeting held at the House of Commons in March 1951, there was "some misconception" among metropolitan officials about the "original intention of the plan" which had prejudiced their judgement. Harding acknowledged the disappointment "over the slow progress of the Briggs Plan, and particularly over the fact that Johore had not yet been completely cleared of bandits." He explained that the progress of military operations was closely tied up with that of the resettlement programme, the establishment of police posts, and the improvement of communications. As this [civilian] programme was achieved in each State, it was hoped that it would become possible to hold down bandit activities there with the framework troops only, leaving the mobile units to proceed to another State…the Briggs Plan could not be said to have failed merely because incidents were still occurring in Johore. Johore was a particularly difficult State to control: it contained a very large proportion of the squatters in the whole of Malaya, who had to be resettled… military success depended on the progress of the resettlement of squatters, and this work had been considerably held by lack of manpower.[76]

The constant rear-guard action against metropolitan criticism left both Briggs and Gurney frustrated and tired to the point of exhaustion. One of the last documents written by Gurney clearly illustrates his belief that progress against the MCP was being delayed not by military issues but the Chinese community's apathy. The High Commissioner argued that despite consultation with leading members of the Chinese community, the government's attempts to recruit ten thousand Chinese for service in the police, which was clearly a vital pre-requisite for success in the counterinsurgency campaign, was met with "a cry for exemptions," the exodus "of 6000 Chinese men to Singapore and several other thousand to China." Showing the signs of strain, the High Commissioner added "the British Government will not be prepared to go on protecting people who are completely unwilling to do anything to help themselves."[77]

CAB 21/2884, Shinwell to Brownjohn, 3 May 1951; PREM 8/1406 II, Secretary of State for Defence to the Prime Minister, 9 August 1951.

[76]PREM 8/1406 Part II, Minutes of a meeting held in the Prime Minister's room, House of Commons, 12 March 1951.

[77]CO 1022/148, *Gurney*'s Political Will, a note by Gurney expressing his frustration with the Chinese community.

Shortly after Gurney was murdered by the MRLA and the government's fortunes appeared to reach a new low.

Operational Refinement

Lt Gen Sir Gerald Templer was appointed to replace both Gurney as High Commissioner and Briggs (who retired in the autumn of 1951) as Director of Operations. Much has been written about whether his arrival in Malaya in October 1952 ensured the continuity of the Briggs Plan or whether it marked a radical change of policy.[78] In terms of how the military and paramilitary forces sought to obtain, assess, analyse and use intelligence in the prosecution of the counterinsurgency campaign, his tenure can be characterised by significant strategic continuity, with operational refinement (particularly in relation to food control) and tactical innovation (for instance, in long-range jungle patrolling and helicopter support). Granted, as will be seen in the next chapter, Special Branch turned their attention to targeting the leadership of the MCP—so-called Operation Profit targets. However, the bulk of security force activity remained focused upon framework operations, using both big unit sweeps and more targeted, increasingly sophisticated, food denial techniques.

One innovation—the creation of the Operational Research Section (ORS)—left a legacy that demonstrates how critical intelligence was to the counterinsurgency campaign conducted under the leadership of Templer. The ORS was a product of the belief held by General Roy Urquhart (GOC Malaya) "that the easiest and quickest way of increasing our successes against the bandits is to increase the ratio of kills per contact."[79] As a result, the ORS was created "to analyse incidents and contacts and contacts and extract from them not only statistics and patterns,

[78] R. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948–60* (Singapore 1989). K. Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952–54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92; S. Smith, "General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence and Propaganda", *Intelligence and National Security*, 16: 3 (2001), pp. 60–78.

[79] B. Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame—Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (2011), p. 198.

but lessons to be applied in future operations, large or small."[80] The work of the ORS was driven by the introduction of a debriefing form, which Templer directed every patrol to use.[81] The ORS would then assess the results in various themed studies which are as useful for the historian as the Director of Operations. For instance, when considering the role of the Army under Templer, most historical assessments simply review headline statistics, food denial operations, or the development of long-range jungle patrols. The studies by the ORS provide an entirely different perspective. For instance, the ORS conducted numerous studies into the combat effectiveness of the Army and concluded that the majority of the Army's efforts between 1952 and 1954 (the period when most historians suggest the tide of the Emergency had already been turned) were unproductive either in terms of "contacts" or "eliminations" when operations were not "intelligence-led." For instance, the Research Section undertook an analysis of patrolling between May and August 1952. It found that the Army had launched "700 'intelligence-led' patrols during this period, of which only 41 [5.85%] made contact with the enemy." However, in the same time period the Army sent out 1853 speculative patrols, of which just 51 [or 2.75%]—made contact with the enemy. The "kill-rate" was reflected in these figures: when patrols were intelligence-led, the security forces killed on average 0.65 per patrol, compared with 0.39 for speculative patrols.[82] The ORS conclusion was blunt:

> The ambush on no information, as a matter of routine is a waste of time and can but dull the alertness of those who take part. Time would be better spent on ensuring that the ambush on information was sprung with success.[83]

[80]Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 96; J. Cloake, *Templer—Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985), p. 242.

[81]WO 291/1723, Operational Research Section Malaya, Memorandum No. 3, Operational Analysis for July and August 1952.

[82]WO 291/1725, ORS Malaya, Memorandum No. 5/52—*Patrolling in the Malayan Emergency*. The report also highlighted the need to improve 'jungle craft' and marksmanship.

[83]WO 291/1724, ORS Malaya, Memorandum No. 5/52—*Ambushes*, November 1952.

The resettlement efforts begun by Briggs and continued by Templer were the key to increasing the generation of intelligence. This was because they were designed to exploit the reliance of the insurgents upon the squatters and generate intelligence opportunities to allow security forces to identify and bring into contact the insurgents as they came out of the deep jungle to secure food. Once resettlement had progressed sufficiently far, the authorities were able to implement food denial measures such the rationing of rice, the declaration of Food Restricted Areas and the control of the movement of restricted articles placed further pressure on the insurgents to leave the confines of the jungle enter areas where they would be vulnerable to ambush.[84] Analysis by the ORS confirmed the effectiveness of the strategy. It concluded, "the most prolific killing grounds have been at the supply points between the population centres and the jungle edge."[85]

Operation Hammer, which ran between October 1952 and April 1953, was a typical food denial operation. It originated after the security forces obtained detailed intelligence on the communist organisation in Selangor from an insurgent killed during an ambush in July. Subsequently the authorities planned "a long-term operation combing civil administrative measures with a concentration of Police and Army." The object of the operation was:

a. To disrupt the terrorist supply organisation in KUALA LANGAT Forest Reserve (North) area of SELANGOR, and to prevent food, especially rice, reaching them.
b. To prevent the terrorists from re-establishing their supply organisation and so force them to surrender or to fight for their food.

The first phase of the plan involved the removal of surplus rice and arrests of all known or suspected food suppliers. As a result, "the worst New Villages, Kampongs and labour lines…were subjected in turn to Special Branch screening; collection of surplus food by Food Control Teams; explanations to the local population by Information Service Teams of the need for increased restrictions and instructions on cooperation." The second phase called for the security forces "preventing the

[84]AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Review of Emergency in Malaya, June 1948–August 1957.

[85]WO 291/1724, ORS Malaya, Memorandum No. 4/52—*Ambushes*, Appendix A.

insurgents from re-establishing their supply organisation and killing or capturing any terrorist in the area." The authorities used various joint methods to achieve this, including restricting movements and carrying of food supplies, convoying civilian vehicles carrying restricted articles, frequent road checks and surprise checks by Food Control Teams. These activities were supplemented bombardment of "selected areas in the jungle, day and night, to harass the enemy." This included air strikes by the RAF and coastal bombardment by the Royal Navy. The results of this extensive, seven-month long, operation were mixed. The security forces killed seventeen terrorists during the course of the operation and induced a further twenty-four insurgents decided to surrender. The post-operation report noted "full use was made of these surrenders, the CTs being sent back into the jungle to persuade their former colleagues to give themselves up, or to lead them in Security Force ambushes. The [Emergency] Information Services also utilised them to demonstrate the failure of the Communists and the good treatment meted out to those who surrendered."[86]

Indeed, the use of propaganda proved critical in the emergency. For instance, the Land/Air Warfare Liaison Letter for July–December 1952 noted, "as the lot of the CTs in the jungle deteriorates, there is an increasing demand for psychological warfare so that they may be induced to give up the struggle and betray their leaders." Hence, the Emergency Information Services (EIS) experimented with ways of achieving this, and there was a widespread use of leaflet drops from aircraft. It was reported that in November 1952, "nearly every surrendered CT in the past month has carried one of these leaflets and the severe penalties imposed by the communist leaders for reading them shows that they are, in fact, a potent weapon in this type of warfare."[87] A less obvious method of supporting security forces on the ground was by using aircraft fitted with loudspeakers to broadcast selected messages to insurgents believed to be located in the area.[88] The effectiveness of these operations often depended on good initial intelligence, which would enable the EIS to

[86] Liddell Hart Archives, Papers of General Stockwell, *Operation Hammer*. See also WO 216/874, Director of Operations' Directive, February 1955; Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, pp. 98–99; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, pp. 116–117; R. Clutterbuck, *The Emergency in Malaya, 1948–60* (1966), pp. 116–121.

[87] DEFE 4/39, Land/Air Warfare Liaison Letter No. 6, July–December 1952.

[88] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 115.

tailor the messages appropriately. Hence, during the first trial of voice aircraft in southern and western Selangor, the EIS broadcast that Liew Lon Kim had been shot dead by security forces and that any insurgent wishing to surrender would be well treated. Within days "District Committee Member Wei Keiong gave himself up and on 9 November, he broadcast to the same areas that he had surrendered and urged others to give up. Six days later, Ah Yoke and Ah Fong, both surrendered."[89] By 1954 the process had been refined to ensure the authorities could "exploit" the psychological moment caused by a security force success "on the ground" or specific intelligence: the State Emergency Information Officer signalled their request for voice aircraft to the Joint Operations Centre at Kuala Lumpur, where it was received by the Voice Aircraft Committee (VAC). This committee consisted of a Police officer and two members of the Psychological Warfare Section (PWS—the Operations Division of Information Services had been hived off to the Director of Operation's Staff in March 1954 and renamed the PWS), and was responsible for preparing suitable messages and liaison with the RAF.[90]

To avoid operations such as *Hammer*, the insurgents moved deeper into the jungle where they could enlist the support of Malaya's aboriginal people. Anthony Short has explained how "quite a number of the MCP had been known to the aborigines since pre-war days as itinerant traders, *jetlutong* tappers and like; and close relationships had been established during the Japanese occupation when, by a policy of fitful but indiscriminate slaughter, the Japanese had succeeded in terrifying aborigines and cementing their friendship with the guerrillas."[91] To address this problem, in 1953 Templer reorganised the Department of Aborigines, giving it responsibility for the administration, education, welfare, medical facilities and conduct of psychological warfare."[92] Eleven deep-jungle forts were established to provide medical facilities and training to the aborigines. The forts also formed the basis of an intelligence network using aborigines enrolled as auxiliary police and were based by 22 SAS as a springboard long-range patrols in the jungle.[93]

[89] K. Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948–58* (London 2001), p. 158.

[90] Ibid., p. 188.

[91] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, p. 447.

[92] Ibid., p. 450.

[93] AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Review of Emergency in Malaya, June 1948–August 1957. See also Hoe and Morris, *Re-enter the SAS*, pp. 163–176.

Surrendered Enemy Personal

There was a dramatic rise in Surrender Enemy Personal (SEPs) as the resettlement programme matured and food denial operations began to take hold. In 1952 the number of insurgents surrendering to the security forces rose 27% compared the previous year. It rose again by a further 44% in 1953, when 372 insurgents surrendered. The ORS reviewed data gathered from the 432 surrenders that took place from the beginning of the emergency until 28 February 1955. Their analysis identified that between 1948 and 1951 no Surrendered Enemy Personal (SEP) reported that food shortage was a factor to induce their surrender. During 1952, however, 26% of SEPs indicated that shortage of food was an important factor in decision to surrender—by 1954, this rose to over 35%.[94] Clearly, food control operations, however morally dubious they might seem, were critical to the counterinsurgency campaign.

The government considered many avenues to encourage surrenders but ruled out a policy of land for information and waited until 1955 to offer an amnesty.[95] Prior to the official amnesty in 1955, the authorities provided "a guarantee that insurgents who surrendered voluntarily would not be charged with the capital offence of bearing arms provided that they have no blood on their hands." They also provided guarantees that the SEPs would be treated well, and anyone who brought "two or more his comrades will be rewarded at the rate of $500 per companion. Under normal circumstances he will also receive an identity card and will be quickly returned to civilian life."[96] This policy was reinforced by the use of SEPs to "encourage others to follow their example. Surrendered terrorists have been encouraged to explain, through both written and spoken word, what has happened to them since they surrendered and what treatment their comrades can, therefore, expect to receive if they surrender."[97]

[94]WO 291/1792, Operational Research Section (Psychological Warfare), Memorandum No. 6/55, *A Review of Recent Trends in Surrender Behaviour*, by F. H. Lakin.

[95]For rewards see CO 1022/41. See also CO 1030/22, Rewards to be Paid for the Recovery of Arms—Ammunition and Explosives, released to the press on 1 September 1952.

[96]CO 1030/22, Memorandum by the Secretary for Defence—Surrender Policy, 13 August 1952.

[97]CO 1022/49, Templer to Lyttelton, 12 May 1952.

Surrender rates were a useful measure of the effectiveness of the government's counterinsurgency strategy. SEPs not only reduced the net number of enemy forces in the jungle but offered significant intelligence advantages to target their former comrades. Furthermore, surrendered insurgents demonstrated a surprising willingness to go back into the jungle to assist the security forces in locating their former colleagues.[98] Indeed, by 30 April 1953 there were 474 former insurgents who were "fully employed operationally on an individual basis while only some 51 former terrorists remained in Police custody in virtual idleness." As a result, it was decided to formalise this practice of sending "turned" insurgents back into the jungle by creating the Special Operational Volunteer Force (SOVF). Once "properly constituted and fully publicised," the government felt that such a force would not only provide a tactical advantage but also "one of the most potent propaganda weapons yet forged by Government and one which it would be extremely difficult for the Communist to counter." Furthermore, it was thought that the existence of the Force would be of considerable value in inducing further surrenders of terrorists, many of whom were known to have become disillusioned with Communism and anxious to surrender."[99] However, apogee of surrenders occurred in 1953, when 372 insurgents handed themselves into the authorities—from then on the numbers diminished (211 in 1954; 249 in 1955; 134 in 1956).[100]

Rather than breaking the MCP, the pattern of operations undertaken by the Army under General Templer and his successors indicates that a vast amount of resources and effort was expended for a diminishing return. For instance, in 1953, twenty-one infantry regiments (plus supporting Signals, Engineers and Royal Artillery units) were deployed in Malaya, of which eighteen were engaged in counterinsurgency

[98] J. Morgan, a former Lieutenant in a Police Jungle Company provides an interesting first-hand account of turning a captured insurgent in the field. See J. Morgan, *Spearhead in Malaya* (1959), pp. 78–94.

[99] CO 1022/50, Extract from F.M. Saw 995, Defence and Security, Special Operational Volunteer Force, 17 June 1953.

[100] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956 by the Director of Operations, Malaya, Appendix B.

operations at any one time.[101] The jungle was also pounded regularly by Lincolns bombers of the Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force. Even more firepower was deployed via the Royal Artillery and, on occasion, the Royal Navy. Indeed, between 1952 and 1954 "large-scale and more or less conventional military operations were going on all over Malaya" simply because there was insufficient, detailed, timely, operational intelligence.[102] Indeed, the communists devised methods to work around the food denial operations and the MRLA learnt how to "avoid contact with the security forces except under conditions of their own choosing."[103] This, according to Bourne, "combined with the natural difficulties of the terrain, completely preclude anything but slow and painstaking methods in which superior strength and firepower can rarely be used to advantage."[104] In the latter half of the emergency, the Army continued to attempt to develop new and innovative tactics to track down the insurgents in the jungle. This included long-range jungle patrolling supported by helicopter resupply, the use of the Special Air Squadron, and partnering with the Orang Asli. Fundamentally, however, the military's effectiveness was a function of intelligence. The main sources of intelligence remained captured documents, photint, and increasingly overtime information from captured or surrendered insurgents. Intelligence from agents remained negligible, however. Hence, at period of the Emergency when most commentators suggest that the back of the Emergency had been broken, over a four-month period "58,000 ambush party hours (say ½ million-man hours) have been spent in ambushes on no information and have only achieved 15 kills."[105] Food control isolated the Min Yuen from the MRLA and broader counter-insurgent effort had effect in removing the less committed insurgents.

[101] Liddell Hart Archives, Papers of General Stockwell, *Vade Mecum—The Army in the Cold War (Malaya)*.

[102] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, pp. 365–367.

[103] WO 208/319, Director of Operations, Malaya. Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954.

[104] Ibid.

[105] WO 291/1724, ORS Malaya, Memorandum No. 4/52—*Ambushes*, Appendix A.

What was left was the rump of hard-core extremists whom it was "becoming increasingly difficult to find and kill…"[106]

Conclusion

The emergency was a political event, one in which violence was a symptom and not a cause. The military always acted on behalf of the civilian authorities, even if the line between the work of an infantry company and police jungle company was largely blurred beyond distinction. The security forces' use and understanding of intelligence during a counterinsurgency campaign developed beyond recognition from the first faltering steps in 1948 and was largely, but not exclusively, focused upon the use of emergency regulations and food control measures. A large part of progress was attributed to the "success of the SF [Security Forces] in killing CTs and in protecting the public." This was because it was believed that "success breeds information and information breeds more success."[107] However, in 1957 when Malaya gained independence, there remained some 1830 insurgents stubbornly at large, potentially biding their time for British forces to leave Malaya before started a renewed insurgent campaign. Arguably this was an intelligence failure: despite vast number of cordons, patrols, ambushes, visual operations flights, and photographic intelligence sorties, conducted over nine years of the emergency, not to mention the broad array of social reform (not least Malaya's independence), the security forces still could not find, detailed or kill this large rump of hardened insurgents. Gradually, however, the numbers of bandits shrunk and instead of returning to areas they had previously occupied, the hard-core rump, retreated to the deep jungle. The key to emergency operations was suitable volumes of timely and accurate intelligence, most notably humint. This was firmly the preserve of the police, particularly Special Branch, and was to prove the Federation's Achilles' Heel for the duration of the Emergency. To understand why sufficient quantities of good quality humint proved so elusive, one must examine the role of the Federation of Malaya's police and, in particular, the relationship between its uniformed contingent and Special Branch.

[106] AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Review of Emergency in Malaya, June 1948–August 1957.

[107] Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

Policing and Human Intelligence

Lt. Col. William Nicol Gray was a formidable soldier. He was first awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his leadership of 46 (Royal Marine) Commando in March 1945 when it captured the first bridgehead over the River Rhine. The citation for his award states "Gray never allowed the impetus to slacken dispute every enemy opposition…" Gray was later awarded a bar to his DSO for his role in operations in North West Europe. After the Second World War, Gray left the Royal Marines to become Inspector General of Police in Palestine, where he led his paramilitary force in a fierce counterinsurgency operation against the Irgun and Stern gangs.[1] Given the desperate state of Malaya at the declaration of emergency in 1948, it is perhaps not surprising that a man Gray's calibre was appointed as Col. Langworthy's successor as Commissioner of the Federation's Police.

Gray arrived in Kuala Lumpur in August 1948, accompanied by forty hand-picked former Palestine policemen. His appointment was a sign of intent—the Malayan authorities were going to stamp out the communist insurgency. The Federation's Local Defence Committee (LDC) reported that the immediate task for the Police was "to protect the public against bandits…[and] to operate against bandits, either by purely police methods with a view to bring them to justice or by police or police and armed

[1] S. Hurst, *Colonel Gray and the Armoured Cars: The Malayan Police 1948–1952*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Working Paper 119.

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_7

forces operations."[2] As a result, the police adopted a highly paramilitary stance, characterised by the enforcement of emergency regulations (such as the enforcement of curfews, deportation, the cordon and search of villages, the burning of huts and the resettlement of the population), mounting ambushes on the jungle fringes and even sending Police Jungle Squads on long-range patrols of the deep jungle.

However, the police also had a responsibility to obtain "all possible information relating to bandits and their activities." The newly created Special Branch of the Malayan Police, which was also under Gray's command, was charged with developing intelligence to aid the restoration of law and order, a principle confirmed by numerous subsequent reviews throughout the emergency.[3] Theoretically, Special Branch would focus on gathering human intelligence (humint)—that is information from captured personnel, agents and informers. The Army and uniformed police colleagues might also identify potential sources of humint which would be passed to Special Branch for assessment and development. More broadly, all sources of humint would be assessed and analysed by Special Branch officers before being tasked to operational units such as uniformed police officers, the Army, and the Royal Air force in an effort to capture or kill the insurgents. This was a challenging endeavour for the newly formed Special Branch, particularly as the legacy from the Malayan Security Service was limited. Indeed, not only did Gray have to build the Special Branch from afresh, but the Branch had to build largely from afresh a network of informers and agents.

People may give information for many reasons, perhaps out of fear, to serve personal grudges, or for reward, but the best quality humint tends comes from those offer it because they think it is the right thing to do.[4] The Malayan government recognised from the beginning of the Emergency that the key to obtaining this form of intelligence was by engendering "confidence among the civilian population to such an

[2] CO 537/3688, Local Defence Committee, Federation of Malaya, 16 September 1948.

[3] Also see, CO 537/4374, A Note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir William Slim) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 1949; CO 537/5440, Report of the Police Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr. W.C. Johnson), December 1949; CO 547/5427, Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950; AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, Director of Operations, September 1957.

[4] CO 537/3688, Local Defence Committee, Federation of Malaya, 16 September 1948.

extent that adequate information may be forthcoming from them and that they refuse to harbour bandits."[5] The initial hope was that by acting with strength, primarily via the uniformed branch of the police and the military enforcing emergency regulations and conducting paramilitary patrols, the besieged communities would recognise that they would be best served by supporting the incumbent government, or at least not actively support the insurgents. However, for many years, the actions of the uniformed branch of police worked in opposition rather than in harmony with Special Branch. The police's paramilitary stance may have prevented the insurgents develop a revolutionary momentum, but it also alienated the ordinary citizens of Malaya who simply wanted to live life free from fear of retribution from backing the wrong side. As will be seen, the widespread use of emergency ordinances allowing the arbitrary imposition of curfews, cordons, food rationing, and the destruction of villages simply meant that the ordinary Chinese citizen of Malaya was likely to fear the government as much as the insurgents, particularly but not exclusively in the first six critical years of the Emergency. In such circumstances, why would they be willing to provide humint? Without this precious commodity, the efforts of the security forces would, at best, be inefficient and, at worst, be frustrated and thereby giving rise to increasingly crude and counter-productive uses of force.

Colonial Policing

At the beginning of the Emergency, Malaya's police had to tackle two potentially conflicting demands: the need to tackle the immediate threat to the Federation's security and secure intelligence. As Anthony Short explains, there were three elements to Police's initial plan to restore law and order: "first, the establishment and maintenance of viable police stations in order to dispute territory with guerrillas and their local supporters. Second to adapt its normal peacetime role so as to provide a major striking force. Third, to train the vastly expanded numbers of the regular and ancillary police."[6] This shift towards a paramilitary stance was not a significant departure from previous precedent—indeed, colonial police forces traditionally had a paramilitary function, providing the first line of

[5] Ibid.

[6] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London 1975), p. 131.

defence both to internal and external threats. The uniformed branch of police was therefore the "dominant" partner in the effort to restore security. Although under the same organisational umbrella, Special Branch had a separate and district role to their uniformed colleagues. While latter was responsible for enforcing law and order, and creating a sense of confidence, Special Branch, with its dedicated source handlers and analysts were at the tip of the intelligence "spear."[7]

The declaration of a state of emergency marked a conscious decision not to declare martial law but instead to consider the situation primarily as one of criminality for which the police had primacy. Sir Henry Gurney provided perhaps the strongest confirmation of the centrality of the police to the government's counterinsurgency efforts in his highly influential fifth secret despatch, of May 1949. This despatch was written following a request made in previous October by the Overseas Defence Committee (ODC) for the Federation to capture some its experiences over the previous year so that other colonies could prepare themselves for potentially similar outbreaks of communist-inspired violence.[8] Gurney noted in this despatch the "obvious reluctance on the part of any civil authority, particularly one nurtured in the British tradition, to administer drastic remedies." Moreover, he argued against the use of martial law because he maintained that "the withdrawal of the civil power and the substitution of military control represent the first victory for the terrorists." As such, Gurney believed that the government's "principal instrument" in combating terrorism was the police. He argued "when this attack comes from within, aimed at the destruction of economic resources, the organisation of strikes and the paralysis of the civil power, and accompanied by the ruthless and bitter phenomena of Communist revolution, the Police Force is the first and vital means of defence."[9] The subsequent Colonial Office guidance to colonial governors which was based upon Gurney's despatch was unambiguous. It said "the Communist threat, especially in its early stages of development, is

[7]G. Sinclair, *At the End of the Line—Policing and Imperial Endgame 1945–80* (Manchester 2006), p. 2; CO 537 5449, Review of Police and Security Forces, by W. Johnson (Police Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies).

[8]WO 21/2193, Note—Preparation by the Malayan Government of a Paper Setting Out Experience Gained in Malayan Operations as Affecting Internal Security Arrangements, 7 February 1949.

[9]WO 21/2193, Federation of Malaya, Dispatch No. 5 (Secret), 30 May 1949.

best dealt with by the police rather than the armed forces. The whole structure of Government and the activities all departments within that structure may depend for their adequate functioning and even for their existence, upon the efficiency and strength of the police."[10]

Given the desperate need to identify the ring-leaders of the insurgency, the abolition of the Malayan Security Service in the summer of 1948 seems rash. After all, the MSS had been warning about the communist threat since its reconstitution some two years earlier. However, the decision to replace it with a Special Branch of the Federation's police service was by no means without precedent. Indeed, prior to the creation of the MSS in 1939, there was a Special Branch covering the Straits Settlements (but not the four Unfederated Straits Settlements, nor the Federated Malay States which were supported by Political Intelligence Bureau).[11] There was also a broader historical precedent. As Georgina Sinclair has explained, the model of policing adapted by each colony in the empire tended to vary according to the local conditions of each territory. However, there were two dominating influences. The first was the English policing model, which was a reflection of the creation of the Metropolitan police and emphasised minimum force, discretion and accountability to the Home Secretary. The second and more dominant influence was the semi-military model provided by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). The Irish model had a focus upon "measuring the pulse of the local community and gathering intelligence" which was the preserve of the Special Branch.[12] The latter model pre-dominated in the colonies, not least because training for colonial police forces was conducted exclusively until 1932 by the RIC, and its successor the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), at the depot at Newtownland. Moreover, many Irish officers went on to join colonial police forces. Indeed, "many Irish-trained members of the Indian police made their way to other colonial constabularies throughout the empire, bringing with them their Irish influences."[13] Thus, the decision in the aftermath of the abolition of the Malayan Security Service to create a Special Branch of the Federation of

[10]WO 21/2193, Overseas Defense Committee, Guidance to Colonial Governors on Preservation of Internal Security, Note by Colonial Office.

[11]Rhodes House Library, MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, Memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13 July 1948.

[12]Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, p. 18.

[13]Ibid.

Malaya's police service can be seen as a move away from the innovative but ultimately unsuccessful experiment of the MSS to a more conventional system of intelligence gathering within a policing model.

The Relationship Between the Uniformed and Special Branches

While there was precedent to create a Special Branch, the new organisation had little direct organisational inheritance upon which to draw—not only did the Second World War decimate the Police, but also prior to the creation of the Malayan Union in 1946 there was no single pan-Malaya force.[14] Moreover, it had to confront some significant organisational problems. For instance, like the MSS, Special Branch had very few staff: in June 1948 the Special Branch had only thirteen gazetted officers (just over 5% of the total number in the force); forty-four Asian inspectors (19% of the total number in the force); and while there was an establishment of 693 detectives working in Special Branch and CID, the actual number employed in both departments was only 132. Thus, Special Branch's "footprint," compared to the 10,900 uniformed Police officers, was very small.[15] Indeed, according to Jack Morton (Director of Intelligence 1952–1954) at the beginning of the Emergency, "on the ground there was virtually nothing to collect intelligence. Facilities for translation, interrogation and agent running did not exist."[16] While the authorities made concerted efforts to improve Special Branch's establishment, particularly in relation to native Chinese officers and Chinese speakers, the task confronting the organisation was enormous and these efforts took years to have a positive impact upon operational efficiency.

To compound the situation, Special Branch had significant structural problems which hampered its ability to receive, assess and disseminate what little information was being collected by the Uniform Branch and its own officers. Within a year of its creation in 1948, observers were highlighting flaws in the organisation of Special Branch's headquarters. While creation of specific "desks" demarcated by race may have appeared

[14] Rhodes House Library, The Dalley Papers, Dalley to Hone, 13 July 1948.

[15] L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60*—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency (2008), p. 60.

[16] KV 4/408, Lecture Notes by J. Morton entitled "The Problems We Faced in Malaya and How They Were Solved", July 1954.

logical given Malaya's three distinct racial communities, the threat posed by the MCP cut across these areas. Hence, Eric Leighton, the Defence Security Officer (DSO) for Malaya, reported, "there are possibly no less than three officers responsible for the collation of Communist activities, one for the Chinese section, another for the Indian section and a third for the Malay section."[17] Further problems were highlighted by a Metropolitan Police Special Branch officer, Francis Covey, who was seconded to Malaya to advise on setting up an effective registry system. He was particularly concerned about the practical implications of the decision to harness political and criminal intelligence together. Covey explained that "where the senior C.I.D. officer is the Special Branch officer, then he has to be diverted from all the important task of directing his staff in its work of collecting vital information about communist and other subversive activities, to supervising work of criminal detectives often reporting trivial criminal matters."[18] Moreover, as Morton later reported "Special Branch at this time did not extend beyond the capitals of the Malay States and Settlements…the intelligence apparatus in the States and Settlements was part of the CID pursing its own parochial course." It was, he said, a period "of considerable muddle and ineptitude."[19]

Perhaps the most significant problem, however, was that Special Branch relied upon its uniformed colleagues to develop links within the Chinese community. The reliance of Special Branch upon the uniformed Police was confirmed in a number of reviews of policing which took place after the declaration of Emergency.[20] For instance, as a result of troubles in Malaya and in the Gold Coast in 1948, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, advised Colonial governments either to establish or strengthen their Special Branches.[21] Creech Jones also appointed William Johnson, a former Inspector of the Colonies, as

[17] KV 4/424, Leighton to Morton, 28 April 1949.

[18] CO 537/4322, Report by Francis Covey to Commissioner of Police Malaya, July 1949.

[19] KV 4/408, The Co-ordination of Intelligence in the Malayan Emergency.

[20] See CO 537/5440, Report of the Police Advisor to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, December 1949.

[21] For a wide debate within the Colonial Office about the role of Special Branches and the military in colonial disorder, see CO 537/6403-6.

Colonial Police Advisor.[22] In relation to intelligence, Johnson subsequently reported that "although the general purpose of such [Special] Branches is fairly well known, I doubt whether it is realised that, quite apart from their establishment and the allocation of trained Staff, in order to provide an efficient service of accurate information it is essential to use the "eyes and ears" of the whole Police Force."[23]

However, the Federation's Police Service was very poorly placed either to develop a consensual relationship with the Chinese community or, in turn, support their Special Branch colleagues. The primary reason for this was the paramilitary strategy adopted by Gray, and the associated rapid expansion of Police numbers need to provide static guards, enforce emergency legislation and to undertake jungle patrols. While arguably necessary to prevent the communists developing more momentum, Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), who visited Malaya in 1949, identified two key consequences of this rapid expansion. First, he noted that the influx of ex-Palestine Police officers had caused significant friction with the rump of the pre-war Malayan Police. Not only did this impact overall efficiency but, more importantly, the Police greatly lacked local knowledge about the communities they were attempting to protect. Second, he emphasised that the lack of Chinese and Chinese-speaking Police (and district) officers severely hampered the ability to gather and analyse intelligence. For instance, he said that "roughly half the population is Chinese and yet a civil official who can speak Chinese is extremely rare, and there are no uniformed Chinese Constables." Moreover, "senior British civil and Police officials have little knowledge of the Chinese, and most of the sub-ordinate District Officers, who should be entrusted with the detailed local administration, are Malays who not only dislike the Chinese and are disliked by them, but are in some cases extremely nervous of entering squatter areas." Although efforts were being made to spread the government's administrative presence by "setting up Police stations in areas where they have never existed before," because "the whole of the Police are Malays this merely means that a small party of alien Police are dumped

[22]CO 537/2770, Terms of Reference for the Police Advisor to the Secretary of States for the Colonies.

[23]CO 537/5440, Report of the Police Advisor to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, December 1949; CO 547 5427, Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950; CO 1030/168, Muller to High Commissioner Federation of Malaya, 5 July 1955.

down in populations strange and often hostile to them."[24] Jack Morton later explained the demographic issue more succinctly. He stated "in its composition, it [the police] was predominantly Malaya: by contrast the security problem was essentially Chinese."[25] By simply not reflecting the communities they were supposed to protect, at least for the critical first half of the emergency, if not longer, the Federation's Police service embodied the very reason why its officers were struggling to obtain humint.

Enforcement of Emergency Regulations

The lack of presence and identification with the host population was not the only reason the police struggled to gain intelligence about the insurgents from Malaya's Chinese community. Perhaps the most important was the role they asked to perform, specially the enforcement of emergency regulations. These were focused upon the detention and deportation of known communist sympathisers, the forcible resettlement of squatters and more general control of the population through measures such as curfews and the restriction of movement. These regulations were both draconian and indiscriminate, and served only to enhance the Chinese community's sense of alienation from the Malayan authorities.

The initial use of emergency regulations was focused upon known communist sympathisers within Trades Unions.[26] As Creech Jones explained to his Cabinet colleagues on 1st July 1948, there was "no concrete evidence that the Malayan Communist Party is directly responsible for the present lawlessness," but the government believed that "extreme political factions and certain Trade Unions have been infiltrated by Communists." Besides acts of overt violence, the government felt particularly concerned about the number of people believed not "to

[24] CO 537/4374, Report by Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 15 November 1949.

[25] KV 4/408, The Situation in Malaya—Lecture Notes, undated.

[26] Indeed, the government had been using legal methods to address the perceived communist threat in the Trades Unions, before the declaration of emergency and there is a theory that this action actually precipitated the rise in violence that led the government to invoke emergency regulations. See A. Stockwell, "'A Widespread and Long-Concocted Plot to Overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (September 1993), pp. 66–88.

engage in violence themselves but who foster and direct these activities by various methods."[27] The authorities were convinced that the dramatic increase in rural violence, in which managerial staff appeared to be the primary target, was directly attributable to such people acting under the cover of either the MCP or the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU) and its associated organisations. A Foreign Office brief explained that the PMFTU "was so designed that individual unions and members could be dominated by its executive committee. It was created from the top by a few Communist agitators and did not grow from the bottom by the federation of normal trade unions, and threatens to stifle many growing democratic constitutional unions." The government thus decided that the first action necessary to restore order to the Federation was the introduction of a "temporary amendment of trade unions legislation to limit trade union officers to persons associated with the trade or industry concerned and to confine federations of trade unions to bona fide industrial organisations in the particular trade or callings."[28]

Furthermore, High Commissioner Gent wrote to Creech Jones, "urging most strongly that in order to put down the wave of violence… and to satisfy public opinion that government possess power to do so, you should give me by most immediate telegram discretion to invoke powers of banishment and detention without stipulation [that] inquires [should go] before a Supreme Court Judge."[29] Creech Jones initially agreed to Gent's request but subsequently felt it necessary to clarify his thoughts in a letter written to MacDonald four days later. He insisted that a number of safeguards, including the stipulation that each case be reviewed by a judge, be incorporated into the detention and banishment legislation "…for the use of deportation power without these safeguards has been severely criticised in other colonies and the announcement of its extension now in Malaya would certainly be attacked…" Moreover, he maintained that it was "most important and indeed essential that when these measures (which we have all accepted only with the greatest of reluctance) are promulgated it should be made clear that the banishment law

[27] PREM 8/1406/1, CP (48) 171, The Situation in Malaya, a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 July 1948.

[28] DEFE 11/32, Extract from a Telegram from the Foreign Office to All His Majesties' Representatives, 19 June 1948.

[29] CO 717/167, Gent to Creech Jones, 15 June 1948.

will not be used against any persons who are Federal citizens."[30] Even at this early stage in the Emergency the Secretary of State recognised that it was "a matter of really first-class importance that Straits born Chinese should be given no grounds whatsoever for thinking that they are regarded as less firmly accepted as a loyal community of Malaya than others. I am sure you will agree that the continued loyalty of these people is a factor of the utmost importance to us."[31]

At the same time, it was clear both to metropolitan and colonial officials that further powers were required to deal with Federal citizens who were inciting or taking part in the violence. Creech Jones explained to MacDonald on 15 June explaining his views. He said that "although I have naturally had great reluctance in considering anything resembling the war-time provision for detention, I am driven to conclude that deportation alone will not be effective." Thus, he suggested that the High Commissioner "consider enacting an Emergency Powers Bill, which would empower him to proclaim a state of emergency and thereafter detain persons falling in the categories set out above." A White Paper on detention in Malaya written later in the Emergency recognised that the nature of the MCP's threat meant that the authorities were unable to identify or prosecute the insurgents and their supporters, and suggested that precedent for internment could be found in an examination of conventional war, when many governments had found it necessary to isolate "aliens" from the host community. Moreover, the paper claimed that in many ways the situation in Malaya, in which the enemy was living among the civilian population, presented a greater case than conventional war for detention. The Malayan government therefore argued that it was,

> essential to have powers to put under restraint, not as a matter of punishment but as a matter of precaution, those who on any ground are regarded as likely to assist the internal enemy in overthrowing the constitution of the State…a person is detained not because he has committed an offence but because there are reasonable grounds to suppose that if he is not detained he will be likely to assist the enemies of society and imperil the safety of the State.[32]

[30] Ibid., Creech Jones to MacDonald, 19 June 1948.

[31] Ibid.

[32] CO 1022/132, A White Paper on Detention and Deportation (F. M. SAV 645), 11 April 1953.

Nonetheless, Creech Jones insisted that cases brought under the auspices of this legislation should be subject to safeguards, including review by "a supreme court judge, that the period of detention should be for a maximum for two years, that the period of detention of individuals should not be terminated merely by reason of the ending of the state of emergency, that there should be provision for the periodic review of the cases of each individual under detention, and that detention should be without prejudice to criminal proceedings being taken against the detained person during or after the period of detention."[33]

Of particular concern was that the squatters—disenfranchised Chinese labourers who lived on jungle fringes, often adjacent or near to Malaya's tin mines or rubber plantations—were enabling the insurgent activity. The view was that, "the majority of squatters are feeding the enemy and are often sheltering and covering him as well." As such, "we must deal with them…Government has no alternative but to deport them to their country of origin as undesirables. If several areas are cleared of squatters in this way, with sufficient attendant publicity, it should have a considerable effect on the remainder."[34] The police were ordered to build up cases against 'areas' (as opposed to people) that were "clearly implicated in bandit activities". Once such a case was built, there would be two options:

a. Where there is a strong case against the area and the numbers involved do not make the problem to great, all the inhabitants of that area are to be deported. All huts, buildings and cultivations to be destroyed, in order to prevent bandits or neighbouring squatters areas making use of them. This form of action will, undoubtedly, have a very salutatory effect upon their neighbours and all who hear of it.
b. Where there is reasonably strong evidence not quite warranting mass deportation or where the numbers affected would constitute an administrative impossibility, the squatters should be rounded up

[33]CO 717/167, Creech Jones to MacDonald, 12 June 1948.

[34]CO 717/173/3, CISS 4, Week Ending, 5 August 1948, quoted by H. Bennett, "'A Very Salutary Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32: 3, p. 429.

> and held in a temporary cage in the neighbourhood for national registration or screening.[35]

This was therefore sanctioned for the destruction of villages and wholesale detention and deportation of inhabitants. Unsurprisingly, the impact upon Malaya's Chinese community was very significant.[36] Within three weeks of the declaration of emergency, the Chief Secretary had issued 892 orders permitting detention without trial, mainly previously identified members of the MCP.[37] Four years later, when Oliver Lyttelton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited Malaya, it was estimated that some 6000 people were being detained without trial.[38] Over the course of the emergency, a total 33,992 detention orders were issued, 12,190 people were deported and a further 2717 repatriated at their own request.[39] Furthermore, emergency regulations affected ordinary citizens, particularly the Chinese, on a near daily basis. Some 13,603 people were arrested after screening in the first year of the Emergency alone. Very many more were released after suffering the indignity of being searched and questioned. For instance, in Kuala Lumpur 1000

[35] Ibid.

[36] This element of the emergency has been well commented upon. See, for instance, C. Hale, *Massacre in Malaya—Exposing Britain's My Lai* (London 2013); K. Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-Insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5 (2012), pp. 671–699; K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124–155; K. Hack, "Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents: British and Communist Narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the Dynamics of Intelligence Transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4, pp. 211–241; K. Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99–101; A. Short, "Letter from Short", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31: 2 (September 2000); K. Hack, "British and Communist Crises in Malaya: A Response to Anthony Short", 31: 2 (September 2000). For a further restatement of the Hack thesis, see K. Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383–414; D. French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67* (Oxford 2011).

[37] Bennett, "A Very Salutary Effect", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 417, 436.

[38] Stockwell, "Policing During the Malayan Emergency", in Anderson and Killingray, eds., *Policing and Decolonisation*, p. 113.

[39] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1955.

people were screened in late October, 4000 more between 19 and 25 November, and further 600 in late November 1948.[40] This happened across Malaya for a large part of the emergency. The breadth of the emergency regulations was also important. Hence, over an eight-week period the government passed a series of emergency regulations, legalising various acts such as providing the military with police powers; allowing arrest on suspicion and detention without trial for up to 14 days; allowing the officer in charge of police district to destroy a suspect building or structure; the authorisation of "special areas" in which security forces could arrest anyone who failed to stop and submit to a search and the authorisation of lethal weapons to effect the arrest; and finally the authorisation of the use of reasonable force (including lethal force) to arrest suspects.[41] Ultimately, the High Commissioner had the power to:

> make any regulations whatsoever which he considers desirable in the public interest and to prescribe penalties, including the death penalty, which may be imposed for any offence against any such regulation…the High Commissioner has the widest possible powers; he may create new offences…he may modify 'the existing procedure' in civil or criminal cases, and the law itself which regulates evidence, proof, and civil and criminal liability…the principal regulations cover almost every aspect of the fight against terrorism.[42]

The police were at the forefront of enforcing the emergency regulations—not least detention, deportation and the resettlement of 423,000 squatters into 410 New Villages.[43] Little wonder that the boundaries between the Federation's police force and the military forces sent to aid it became blurred to the point of no distinction. Little wonder too that innocent people became intimately caught up in state-sponsored violence, whether that be individual stop and searches, the cordoning and

[40] Bennett, "A Very Salutary Effect", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 417, 438.

[41] Ibid.

[42] DEFE 11/35, Cabinet Malaya Committee, Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 April 1950.

[43] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1955. Karl Hack suggests 330,000 people were resettled. See Hack, "Corpses, Prisoners of War and Captured Documents", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), p. 216.

search of entire villages, detention and banishment, the control of food, and occasionally, and the extra-judicial killings that took place at Batang Kali in December 1948.[44] This was a near-impossible environment for Special Branch to cultivate informers who were willing to risk their lives, and the lives of their family to give information about the insurgents, who were often their own countrymen, friends or relatives, to a regime that could only have appeared hostile and repressive.

Recognition of Failure

The police were caught in a vicious circle for the first four years of the emergency. They lacked sufficient intelligence either to arrest the ring-leaders of the insurgency or those running the supply networks, or to allow the military to target the MRLA squads operating on the jungle fringes. As a result, they adopted a paramilitary stance, in an effort to reimpose control, and either intimidate the Chinese population into providing intelligence or "bludgeoning" intelligence from the community via cordon and search operations, mass detention and resettlement operations. The implications for the successful resolution of the emergency had first been noted by Sir William Slim, the Chief of Imperial General Staff, in 1949.[45] He maintained that "the suppression of the Communist bandits is much more a matter for civil than military action." In particular, he highlighted that "very considerable portions [of the country] have not since the war, and in some cases before it, been under effective administration." Most of these portions, he explained, had been settled by disenfranchised Chinese. He bemoaned that "roughly half the population of Malaya is Chinese and yet a civil official who can speak Chinese is extremely rare, and there are no uniformed Chinese constables." Slim acknowledged that the Malayan authorities recognised the need to build up an administration in the Chinese areas but:

> It is extremely difficult to produce anything effective because the senior British civil and Police officials have little knowledge of the Chinese, and most of the sub-ordinate District Officers….are Malays who not

[44]See Hale, *Massacre in Malaya*; Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5 (2012), pp. 671–699.

[45]CO 537/4374, Report by Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 15 November 1949.

> only disliked the Chinese and are disliked by them, but are in some cases extremely nervous of entering squatters areas. An attempt is being made to gain administrative control by setting up Police stations in areas where they have never existed before, but as the whole of the Police are Malays this merely means that a small party of alien Police are dumped down in a population strange and often hostile to them.[46]

Slim's highly accurate and farsighted observations highlight why neither Special Branch nor the broader police service were able to generate humint—they were physically, culturally and politically alienated from the community they needed to befriend.

Coinciding with Slim's visit, the Malayan government asked Creech Jones to send a delegation "to investigate the present and long-term problems of the Federation of Malaya Police Force and to advise the Government of the Federation thereon."[47] The subsequent Policing Mission was led by Sir Alexander Maxwell, a former Permanent Under-Secretary at Home Office, and supported by Major Ferguson, Chief Constable of Kent Police and Mr R. Jackson from the Metropolitan Police.[48] The Mission's subsequent report emphasised the tension between the rapid expansion of the Police to meet the immediate security threat and the long-term impact upon normal policing duties. It noted, "so much manpower is required for jungle operations that beats are undermanned and many of the normal functions of the force cannot be carried out satisfactorily." Moreover, while necessary, jungle operations fostered a frame of mind entirely at odd with the Policeman's primary role of "gaining and keeping the trust and cooperation of the public."[49] Without trust and confidence of the public, the Police would not be able to collect information effectively for Special Branch to develop. The report noted the importance of "ordinary police work" and subsequent dangers of allowing this work to decline. It argued that "when there is a decline in police efficiency, there is corresponding decline in public confidence in the police: and people who have little confidence in the police are less likely to withhold food and money from the bandits and less likely to give the police information which would

[46] CO 537/4374, CIGS to Sec of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1949.

[47] CO 537/5427, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.

[48] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 116.

[49] CO 537/5427, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.

be helpful for anti-bandit operations."[50] Gray himself reflected in 1950 that "although the progress made in numbers could perhaps not have been accelerated greatly, progress in police efficiency has not been adequate to keep abreast of the pressure of events."[51] Unfortunately for the government of Malaya, there was ample evidence that this vicious circle was already hampering their counterinsurgency efforts. For instance, an Australian Mission commanded by General Bridgeford, which toured Malaya in August 1950, reported to Harding, "the police, particularly on the intelligence side, were NOT functioning satisfactorily."[52] Moreover, it would take many years to reverse.

The Policing Mission recommended the appointment of "some senior police officer with special experience of Intelligence work…to act as technical adviser to the [Criminal Investigation] Department for a limited period.[53] Consequently Sir William Jenkin, a former officer of the Indian Special Branch, was appointed as an advisor to the Commissioner of Police. However, Jenkin had seen enough after five months. He gave Stafford Foster Sutton, Acting Chief Secretary, notice of his resignation on 10 November 1950, stating that it was beyond his "power to effect improvement in Malayan Police Intelligence so quickly as deemed necessary."[54] Furthermore, this coincided with the offer of resignation given by Gray to Gurney, relating to the former's umbrage at what he considered the High Commissioner's interference with his right to run the Police Service as he saw fit. In particular, Gurney's insistence that the post of Senior Assistance Commissioner CID was filled by an officer of pre-war Malayan experience caused Gray considerable concern.[55] There was, therefore, a very real prospect that the intelligence apparatus would have to contend without a Commissioner of Police or advisor for intelligence, and that the CID (including Special Branch) would be run by

[50] Ibid.

[51] CO 537/5993, Gray to Carcosa, 21 October 1950.

[52] CAB 21/1682, Report on the Visit of the Australian Military Mission to Malaya, July–August 1950.

[53] CO 537/5427, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.

[54] CO 537/5973, Jenkin to Foster Sutton, 10 November 1950.

[55] Ibid., see Gray to Carcosa, 21 October 1950 and a briefing noted prepared by Briggs, 25 October 1950.

an officer whom Gray felt unfit to discharge those responsibilities and Jenkin considered disloyal.[56]

To advert this possibility Briggs suggested that Jenkin be posted as Deputy Commissioner CID. However, this mutated over the course of November 1950 to a proposal that Jenkins be offered a two-year contract as Director of Intelligence (DOI) "with direct access to you [the High Commissioner] on Intelligence, and with executive control over the CID and Special Branch."[57] The final charter for the Director of Intelligence reflected the difficulties officials had in differentiating between political and security intelligence and criminality, within the broader context of the insurgency. Hence, the DOI would be "generally responsible to Government for the supply of political and security intelligence." The DOI would also "act as an Advisor to Government on Security matters and shall reinforce physical security measures with intelligence precautionary [sic] measures when deemed necessary."[58] The fundamental problem was that officials considered the CID as "the machinery of Government for the collection of Criminal Statistics, the investigation of Crime, as well as for the collection of intelligence." It was therefore not readily apparent whether the CID should answer to the DOI or Commissioner of Police. To work around this problem, the DOI was required to "exercise control in collaboration and consultation with the Commissioner of Police and with regard to the requirements of the Commissioner of Police, who is responsible to Government for law and order in the Federation." Thus, the DOI appeared to be an equal partner with the Commissioner of Police. However, the DOI could exercise control over CIDs across the Federation in "respect of political and security matters…from time to time, in order to promote efficiency and also collaboration between Criminal Investigation Departments of the Federation." Thus, Jenkin had responsibilities that he could only discharge via the CID apparatus, which remained an integral part of Gray's Police force. He did not have executive authority over the CID but was able to control it "from time to time."[59] Moreover, while he had a responsibility to work in collaboration with Gray, he could always

[56] Hurst, *Colonel Gray and the Armoured Cars*, Working Paper 119.

[57] CO 537/5973, Foster Sutton to Gurney, 17 November 1950.

[58] CO 537/7260, Charter for the Director of Intelligence.

[59] Ibid.

appeal to the High Commissioner. This placed both Jenkin and Gray in a near impossible position. The appointment simply serves to highlight the structural tensions that beset the Federation's intelligence apparatus in the first half of the Emergency.

Nevertheless, Jenkin accepted the appointment and oversaw a number of important operational initiatives designed to improve the management of intelligence, including attempting to increase the number of Chinese in the Police and Special Branch, improving the overall strength of the CID and Special Branch, bringing detention camps within Special Branch's remit and the establishment of Special Branch interrogation units at all Police contingent headquarters.[60] However, he remained convinced that the intelligence apparatus in its existing form was flawed. Like Dalley before him, he felt emergency intelligence should be overseen by an independent organisation, responsible directly to the Federal Government. Thus, while Gray was on leave in the UK between April and October 1951, Jenkin audaciously amalgamated Special Branch and CID, creating the Police Intelligence Bureau, with the intention of focusing all the combined CID/SB efforts into emergency intelligence and leaving all non-Emergency criminal matters to the uniformed branch of Police.[61] This was because Jenkin believed that for a Police Service to be efficient, it "had to penetrate deep into the public social structure and, if it lacks public respect, cooperation and trust, it suffers from a handicap which is most crippling." He recognised that the paramilitary stance adopted by the Police Service was hampering not only its "primary duty of looking after the people" but also its specialist, emergency, responsibilities. Thus,

> by putting some of the responsibility [for investigations] on to the Uniformed Police, where it rightly belongs, it will help them to closer profitable contact with the people. This should result in the better enforcement of law and order and better information coming in, which will be beneficial to important interests. It will also result in the Specialised [sic] Branch being relieved of routine and matters which are not pertinent to

[60] See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police, 1945–60*, pp. 135–145; KV 4/408, Lecture notes by Morton, July 1954.

[61] Ibid., Memorandum to All Chief Police Officer, All Contingent Intelligence Officers, and Circle Intelligence Representatives from Robinson (Acting Commissioner of Police), 18 May 1951.

> particular issues and so enable them to give more time and attention to the bigger things that count more.[62]

While these aims were laudable, Gurney argued that it did not necessitate the abolition of the whole CID. and Special Branch. Also Jenkin's proposal for direct access to the High Commissioner was fraught with danger—Gurney was not prepared for Jenkin to by-pass the Commissioner of Police.[63] Furthermore, Gurney was also concerned that "the establishment of a separate Intelligence Bureau would create suspicions that the UK was trying to build-up an organ of the British Intelligence Service working for other agencies other than the government and people of Malaya."[64] Upon his return to Malaya, Gray was outraged and secured the agreement of Gurney and Briggs to abort the changes Jenkin was attempting to implement.[65] Despite the conceptual benefits of Jenkin's abortive plans, the episode took a high toll: Gray and Jenkin (who was said to be close to a breakdown) resigned from their respective posts, throwing the intelligence system into further disarray.[66]

Reconstructing Malayan Police Service

1951 marked a real nadir for the Malayan government. Not only did Gray and Jenkin resign, but Briggs retired, and Gurney was murdered. However, Sir Gerald Templer was subsequently appointed as both High

[62] Ibid., Jenkin to Gray, 9 August 1951.

[63] Ibid., Notes of a meeting with the Acting Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Police, and the Director of Intelligence on 1 September 1951, made on behalf of Gurney. The High Commissioner's Letter to Gray on 3 September 1951 shows how the intelligence executive was fractured due to personality. Whilst Gray had a reputation of being hard to get on with, Gurney's letter suggests the same about Jenkin.

[64] Ibid., Minute by Lloyd for Jim Griffiths, 25 September 1951.

[65] Erroneously, Grob-Fitzgibbon suggests states that Jenkin served as Briggs' director of intelligence and "so integral, in fact, did his position become that in May 1951 Briggs completely separated the special and branch and CID from the regular police." See B. Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame—Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke 2011), p. 155. For Gurney's views, see CO 537/7260, Gurney to Higham, 3 September 1951.

[66] Ibid., Gurney to Lloyd, 3 September 1951. The debacle of Jenkin's appointment as DOI can hardly be described as heralding the rise of the Special Branch, as Leon Comber suggests. See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60*, pp. 131–146.

Commissioner and Director of Operations and approached his new responsibilities with characteristic energy and determination.[67] Structural reform to Malaya's strategic intelligence apparatus was paramount, even if a level of ambiguity about the respective functions of the Director of Intelligence, Commissioner of Police (and the Federal Intelligence Committee, which will be discussed in the next chapter) were to remain. However, as a cabinet paper noted, "it would be foolish to expect any profound improvement [in the intelligence apparatus] even with an increased and more efficient CID until the basic Police training of all ranks of the regular, uniformed Police is proved. It is mainly on the uniformed Police that CID counter-measures must be based. Without the firm base of a Police Force in close touch with the people, penetration of enemy organisations becomes most difficult."[68] Thus, it was fortunate that Templer's efforts to redefine the higher echelons of the Federation's intelligence apparatus were supported by a broad and ambitious programme of Police reform. This programme had its roots in the visit to Malaya by Lyttelton that took place during the interregnum between Gurney's death and appointment of Templer. Lyttelton's subsequent report stated that "urgent and drastic action" was required in relation to the policing of the Emergency. In particular Lyttelton was concerned that "the organisation of the police is in utter disorder and even the Regular Force is inefficient."[69] He therefore proposed to replace Gray, whom he considered "a gallant officer but without the necessary grasp of organisation in these exceptional circumstances," with Colonel Arthur Young, the then Commissioner of the City of London Police.[70]

[67] See J. Cloake, *Templer—Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985); K. Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952–54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92.

[68] Ibid., Cabinet Paper, Appendix IX—Intelligence Services and Related Counter-Measures, C (51) 59, 12 December 1951.

[69] CAB 129/48, Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 December 1951. See also MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 2/3, a Report by Colonel Muller to Hugh Fraser, 22 December 1951. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, claimed to have secured the resignation of Gray, whom he claimed to be "gallant officer but not a professional policeman." See O. Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London 1962), p. 374.

[70] Ibid., Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 December 1951.

Young arrived in Malaya on 17 February 1952, ten days after Templer.[71] He found that the Police had "a very strong military slant on it. This slant is very firmly established now and even some of the old Malay officers have become so used to it that they appear not to notice it. It is very noticeable to me, and I think, to other whole-time policemen who have come recently." He reported back to the Colonial Office that seventy per cent of Special Constables had not received any training and that "there can be no doubt an enormous amount of corruption is taking place when so many untrained men receiving practically no supervision have been let loose on the public armed with most arbitrary emergency regulations." Young was unambiguous about the impact of having a rapidly expanded, paramilitary Police force as the lead agency in the counterinsurgency campaign. He stated "the value of this force as a Police Force in whom members of the public have confidence and will cooperate must be practically negligible outside the main towns. It has even been said, I believe, that the public are more afraid of the police than they are of the bandits. They are certainly giving the bandits more tangible cooperation."[72] Young considered the task before him as being no less than the re-construction of the Police force.[73] This was clearly a daunting challenge, not least the need to effect cultural change. Young acknowledged that "police headquarters, and for that matter all the gazetted officers, will have to be 'converted' to the foregoing idea of establishing a normal non-military police force." He "found the above suggestions were not acceptable at Police headquarters, and new ideas will either have to be put over or forced over."[74]

Hence, over the next two years, Young unleashed a raft of reforms, including improved training of the auxiliary Police; a significant reduction in the total strength of the force; the promotion of "local officers"; and initiatives like "Operation Service" and the declaration of "white areas" (in which emergency regulations were lifted) designed to show

[71] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60*, p. 173.

[72] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, An appreciation of the Basic Situation by the Commissioner, March 1952.

[73] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, p. 354. See also Stockwell, "Policing During the Malayan Emergency", in Anderson and Killingray, eds., *Policing and Decolonisation*, pp. 105–126.

[74] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Young to Hugh Fraser, 22 December 1951.

Malaya's communities that the policing style had indeed changed.[75] Moreover, Young recognised the need to reorganise Police headquarters which was to have important implications for the management of intelligence. He felt that Gray had not developed a suitable headquarters staff, resulting in his predecessor being overwhelmed in "day to day administrative problems and a gap between Headquarters and Chief Police Officers." Moreover, he recognised that it was clearly necessary that Special Branch "should have the undivided attention of a Senior Assistant Commissioner at Headquarters."[76] In practical terms, "Special Branch was the poorer relation of the larger bodies, i.e. CID."[77] Young therefore created a new post of Deputy Commissioner (field), added three additional posts of Senior Assistant Commissioner (SAC), and upgraded all Chief Police Officers to this rank. Crucially for the management of intelligence, this allowed the Commissioner to disentangle CID from Special Branch by creating two separate departments ("D" and "E" respectively), the latter being commanded by Senior Assistant Commissioner Guy Madoc.[78]

This decision to divorce the Special Branch from CID was not one rooted in simple administrative efficiency.[79] Indeed, it reflected the incongruence of having emergency intelligence (which was considered, to use a modern phrase, an "all-of-government" concept) located within one narrow and "siloed" aspect of policing. The conceptual origins of this crucial decision can therefore be linked to Dalley's advocacy of the need for the post MSS intelligence structures to be independent from the Police, and Jenkin's doomed efforts to recast Special Branch as its own entity. Young's decision to give Special Branch operational

[75] Ibid., Young to Templer, 3 and 5 February 1953. See also K. Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948–58* (London 2001), pp. 174–175.

[76] Ibid., A Review of Development in 1952, undated.

[77] KV 4/408, "The Situation in Malaya—Lecture Notes", by Morton, undated.

[78] Young's decision caused some concern in London, to the extent that Colonial Office officials sought a meeting with Morton, who was on home leave prior to taking up his new position as DOI. Higham noted somewhat sceptically that the proposals were similar to those of Jenkin which Gray and Gurney so vigorously opposed in the previous year but did nothing to dissuade Young from implementing the plan. See CO 1022/51, Minute by Higham, 21 June 1952.

[79] Hack. "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 2 (Summer 1999), p. 130, fn. 5 and 54.

autonomy (albeit within the wider confines of Police force) marked the practical realisation of his predecessors' ideas. Young had thus finally resolved the problem of where the *concept* of intelligence would "sit" within the Federation's broader administrative apparatus. As a result, four years into the Emergency, Special Branch was finally given the organisational space to develop according to operational needs.

Young also changed Special Branch's organisational objectives. Even prior to his arrival in Malaya, he considered his immediate priority upon taking command was "to develop and extend the Special Branch in order to ensure adequate strength at all levels with a clear directive—(1) to produce information which the Military require in time for effective action; (2) to penetrate the Malayan Communist Party."[80] The second aspect of the Commissioner's plan marked a significant departure from the focus under Jenkin and Gray upon the *Min Yuen*—Young was aiming at the heart of the MCP. This was not a reaction to the assassination of Gurney but a reflection of the growing concern that "the Communists might give up their uniformed arm and try Palestine tactics [i.e. terrorism]."[81] This concern was based upon the fact that the intelligence network relied at this point of the Emergency almost entirely upon information supplied by captured documents, and surrendered or captured enemy personnel (SEP/CEP) who, after their initial operational exploitation, became "blown" or "dead" as sources of information.[82] Thus, if the MCP were to disband the MRLA and revert to fomenting labour unrest and isolated terrorist tactics, the government would be deprived of the vast majority of intelligence sources.[83] As a result Templer's *Directive 21* outlined the urgent need to penetrate the MCP with "live" agents and to "ensure that these agents are not compromised either by indiscreet or premature action, particularly for low-level bandit kills and quick rewards."[84]

Young realised Special Branch's twin objectives required different approaches. In relation to "tactical information which would permit the

[80]MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Advanced Appreciation, undated.

[81]CO 1022/51, A Minute by Mr. Jerrom, 19 June 1952.

[82]Ibid., Director of Operations, Directive No. 21—S.B. Intelligence Targets, 24 April 1952.

[83]Ibid., A Minute by Mr. Jerrom, 19 June 1952.

[84]Ibid., Director of Operations, Directive No. 21—S.B. Intelligence Targets, 24 April 1952.

security forces to eliminate armed Communists," the Commissioner welcomed the posting of Military Intelligence Officers (MIOs) into Special Branch. However, the task of penetrating the MCP was considered a specialist one, focused upon the SAC and his planning staff at Headquarters. To support this, Young created a planning room in the Inner Keep at Bluff Road. This was supported by teams of specialist field officers "to exploit the very considerable quality of information, which cannot be handled by the collectors of information on the ground." Young concluded a review of developments in his first year as Commissioner by stating,

> there has been a re-orientation of policy within the Special Branch throughout the year, directed towards ensuring that intelligence available to Government remains 'alive' whatever may be the results of the efforts of Security Forces to suppress the 'shooting war'. While it is appreciated that Special Branch does have a duty to perform in the provision of day to day tactical intelligence, that must take second place to the penetration of the Party at all levels, both on a long and a short term basis.[85]

However, Young's efforts began to bear fruit much later in the Emergency than previous commentators suggest—certainly later than 1951 as the 'incrementalists' imply or 1952 as the advocates for the 'stalemate' theory argue.[86] As one officer who joined Malayan Police in 1952 later recalled, "notionally we were police, but we were really a paramilitary organisation. We didn't have anything really to do with normal police work, we weren't concerned with burglaries and people riding bicycles without lights and that sort of stuff."[87] But without doing "that sort of stuff," the Police were missing the opportunity to engage with the ordinary Chinese who might have the potential to be an informer. Indeed, three years later, in 1955, Inspector General of the Colonial Police W. A. Muller reviewed the state of policing in Malaya. He concluded that while the police force was working smoothly, it still lacked

[85] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Part I (A Review of Development in 1952) and Part II (A Summary of Plans for 1953).

[86] For instance, Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99–101; Ramakrishna, "Transmogrifying Malaya", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92.

[87] Imperial War Museum, Acc. 10120—Interview with Peter Maule Ffinch.

Chinese speakers and remained bias towards paramilitary operations rather than civil policing.[88]

The lag between policing reform and operational impact is also reflected in the broader metrics of the Emergency. For instance, at the end of 1954 the Director of Operations, General Geoffrey Bourne, reported that the absolute number of incidents and causalities continued to fall from the 1951/1952 peak. However, there were still 4000 insurgents in Malaya's jungles who were "able to emerge from the jungle regularly, at points of their own choosing, to create an incident or to collect supplies, when they think they can do so without great risk." Furthermore, he said "penetration of the Malayan Communist Party at high level is difficult…" Bourne did qualify this statement by saying "The Special Branch keeps well abreast of Malayan Communist Party policy intentions and organisations at all levels."[89] In reality, however, without well-placed and willing informants, Special Branch at this time continued to rely on captured documents, and captured/surrendered enemy personnel for this information. The following year, Bourne reported to Field Marshall Sir John Harding, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), that "statistics by no means show the whole picture, but it so happens that at the moment they do conform the thoughts which I have had recently, namely that things have gone rather better on the shooting side than I had been expecting." He attributed the primary reason for this success to be the increasing cooperation of the Chinese population.[90] However, the supply of "adequate intelligence" remained critical and Special Branch was ordered to redouble efforts.[91] By 1956, the estimated communist strength had halved, as had the number of major terrorist-generated incidents, compared to the previous year. The new Director of Operations, General Roger Bower, explained, "a high proportion of the casualties inflicted on the terrorists stem from action taken by the Security Forces on information received from intelligence sources."[92] The following year—the year

[88] Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda*, p. 171.

[89] WO 208/3219, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954, by the Director of Operations, 10 January 1955.

[90] WO 216/885, Bourne to Harding, 3 June 1955.

[91] WO 216/874, Director of Operations' Directive, February 1955.

[92] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956, by the Director of Operations, January 1957.

Malaya achieved independence from Britain—Bower stated that "the police intelligence system (Special Branch) has not only charted nearly every member of the enemy Army, but has brought about the great majority of contacts resulting in eliminations."[93] It thus took some five years for Templer and Young's reforms to come to fruition, so that the uniformed police, Special Branch and the strategic coordinating apparatus were working in harmony with the local, regional and theatre-level intelligence machinery. It was only at this point in the Emergency that the "model" Malayan intelligence apparatus evolved into its most mature and effective form, as will discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Of all the potential streams of intelligence available to the security forces during the Emergency, humint—that is information from agents, informers and the ordinary citizen—was the most critical. That is not to downplay the importance of battlefield intelligence (such as captured documents, uniforms, and equipment) gathered by troops on the ground or visual observation and photographic intelligence obtained by the Royal Air Force. However, these forms of intelligence often lacked the immediacy and relevance of information given by people. Humint has differing degrees of utility—that obtained from a coerced and scared squatter who was being forcibly resettled was unlikely to be of the same value in reliability as an agent or an informer. However, the most valuable form of humint is that provided by a citizen, freely, and of their volition because they have decided actively to support the government against the insurgents. The government declared a state of emergency without a network of agents with access to the MCP and when large sections of the Chinese population were already disenfranchised from, and disinclined towards, the newly created Federation of Malaya. The Chinese population was already a hard target to penetrate and the pool of potential humint was limited. As a result, the police and security forces were forced to rely on crude measures to uncover the insurgents. This proved counter-productive in the medium-term—the Chinese squatter simply had no incentive to support the government by providing information. The police were at the centre of the government's

[93]AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1955.

counterinsurgency campaign from the beginning to end of the emergency. However, it was only following significant police reform—particularly the shift away from paramilitary policing, and the unshackling of Special Branch from the CID—that the police were able to start generating and using intelligence effectively. However, what was also critical to the intelligence effort was the creation of effective structures to support the collation, assessment and dissemination of the information gathered by the security services. Indeed, as will be seen, it proved just as long to create effective intelligence structures as it did to move the police away from its default paramilitary stance.

CHAPTER 8

Organising Intelligence

Numerous streams of intelligence became available to the Malayan authorities over the course of the Emergency. The Army captured documents, uniforms, and enemy personnel; they also gathered human intelligence (humint) from those people caught in their cordon and search operations or deep jungle patrols, or when they acted in support of resettlement or food denial operations. The Royal Air Force and Army Air Corps gathered intelligence via their visual and photographic reconnaissance sorties. The police gathered humint from their everyday interactions with ordinary Malayans, but particularly from members of the Chinese community, while Special Branch focused on identifying potential agents and informers, not least from Surrendered Enemy Personnel (SEP). However, the concept of intelligence refers not only to the type or source of information (battlefield intelligence, captured documents, human intelligence, photographic intelligence etc), or the activities necessary to collect that information. Indeed, intelligence also refers to the process of assessing, analysing, and perhaps most importantly organising the information obtained from the various collection disciplines.[1]

[1]Sherman Kent called for the development of body of literature to help define the concept of intelligence in 1955. Some thirty years later, Walter Laqueur demoaned the fact that 'all attempts to develop ambitious theories of intelligence have failed.' In 2002 Michael Warner, attempted to synthesise previous definitions, with some success. However, the 'War on Terror' has added stimulus to the debate, particularly in the United States. Consensus remains aloof. See also S. Farson, "Schools of Thought: National Perceptions

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_8

In fact, the bureaucracy that supports the intelligence processes is critical. Counterinsurgency operations in Malaya would only work effectively if the various strands of intelligence and those people responsible for gathering, assessing, and exploiting it were 'networked' and interacting effectively.

Initial Intelligence Coordination

The first practical steps to create an intelligence apparatus capable of managing the demands of restoring law and order can be traced to the decision by the RAF to co-locate its Advanced HQ with the Army's HQ Malaya Command in Kuala Lumpur in the first few days of the emergency. Air Vice Marshall Sanderson realised that the effective control neither of the rear or forward elements of the RAF in Malaya and Singapore could be exercised by the main Air Headquarters (AHQ) at Changi. He therefore decided to establish the Advanced AHQ at Kuala Lumpur.[2] Importantly, however, the RAF chose to locate the Advanced AHQ not at RAF Kuala Lumpur but in the city, co-located with Army Headquarters, Malaya District. The co-location of both the Army and RAF headquarters in Kuala Lumpur allowed the creation of the Land/Air Operations room. Group Captain Slater subsequently explained to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) that this "was located in the main Air Headquarters immediately alongside Headquarters Malaya Command, where the AOC and the GOC had adjoining offices, close to their respective staffs." As a result, "controllers were able to refer any controversial decisions or major allocations of air effort to the two commanders or their principal staff officers without

of Intelligence", *Conflict Quarterly* 9: 2 (Spring 1989), p. 52; P. Davies, "Ideas of Intelligence: Divergent National Concepts and Institutions", *Harvard International Review*, XXIV: 3 (Fall 2002); Lord Butler, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London 2004).

[2]AIR 24/1917, Operations Record Book, AHQ Malaya, July 1948. Initially, those squadrons based in Singapore, but which supported ground forces in southern Malaya remained under the control of the rear AHQ, matching the Army's division of command. However, this was rectified in November 1949 when the control of the Jahore Sub-District was passed from GOC Singapore District to GOC Malaya District, thus enabling AHQ to have operational control over all aircraft operating against the insurgents. See AIR 23/8435, Report on the RAF Operations in Malaya, April 1949–December 1950 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 8 January 1951).

delay."[3] Initially, however, the staffing of the intelligence component of the Land/Air Operations Room was a significant concern. Due to the scaling down of the Air Command Far East (ACFE) after the war with Japan, there was a desperate shortage of trained intelligence officers at the start of the Emergency. Hence, an intelligence officer was 'borrowed' from HQ ACFE and a number of general duties officers were drafted in to act as Squadron or Station intelligence officers. These officers were supported by the appointment of an Army Major as Air Liaison Officer.[4] However, it was not until September that five dedicated Intelligence Officers arrived in Kuala Lumpur to bolster AHQ intelligence capacity.[5] Despite these initial troubles, the AHQ's intelligence cell was fully operational by the autumn of 1948 and went on to form a key element of the joint operations and intelligence centre set-up at Army HQ.[6] This was the critical first step in building a structure to coordinate intelligence during the Emergency.[7]

This initial, almost instinctive, level of operational interservice cooperation was underpinned by existing doctrine and therefore replicated on a much broader, strategic, level between the military and civilian authorities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this was because Emergency operations to restore law and order were underpinned by the principle of primacy of the civilian authorities. Therefore, the

[3] K. Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, 102: 607 (1957), p. 38; R. Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947–60* (Rand 1964), p. 225. That said, even later in the Emergency, informal lines of communication and command developed, where local ground commanders would simply ring direct a squadron for assistance in pre-planned operations—with many thanks to the staff of The Military Intelligence Museum, Chicksands.

[4] AIR 24/1917, Operations Record Book, AHQ Malaya, July 1948.

[5] AIR 23/8435, Report on the RAF Operations in Malaya, 27 June 1948–31 March 1949 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 9 May 1949). The difficulties in establishing a new intelligence cell within AHQ led this report to suggest "whatever the strictures of man-power economy may be, it is an ill-conceived economy to do without any intelligence staff in an Air Headquarters."

[6] M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948–1960* (London 1992), pp. 34–35. This is very much at odds with the assertions made by Donald Mackay. See D. Mackay, *The Domino That Stood—The Malayan Emergency 1948–60* (London 1997), p. 37.

[7] R. C. Arditti, "The View from Above: How the Royal Air Force Provided Strategic Vision for Operational Intelligence During the Malayan Emergency", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), pp. 764–789.

military acted in support of the civil power. This was emphasised by Sir Henry Gurney in his *5th (Secret) Despatch* in May 1949. He stated that "the manner in which troops are employed is, of course, a matter for the military commander, but there should be no difference of opinion that the general power of direction of the operations in which police and troops are engaged belongs to the Commissioner of Police." He continued to explain that "this relationship extends to Superintendents of Police vis-à-vis subordinate military commanders operating in their districts. It is of great importance that police and military officers, down to the lowest levels, should work in the closest touch."[8] Gurney's thoughts largely mirrored the military doctrine embodied in *Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power*, which stated that "close co-operation and between the military and police is of first importance; mutual understanding and confidence must be established." As such, military commanders were encouraged to hold daily conferences with the District Superintendents of Police, a suitable representative of the CID, and the District Commissioner. Such conferences, it argued, "will go a long way to ensure that Commander's information is up-to-date and tallies with other sources, it also will keep the civil government in close touch with military thought and activities."[9] It is therefore not surprising that that individual military units at State and District level throughout Malaya formed close links, often via operational committees, with their Police counter-parts at the earliest stages of the Emergency. Hence, General Neil Ritchie reported in September 1949 that "local Defence Committees" had been "created on the level of all military Sub-Districts and in some cases on unit level as well." Ritchie noted that "in addition to the appropriate official civilian and Service members, senior unofficial civilians have been co-opted from the local rubber and / or tin mining communities." This is an important statement for it shows that the military and police were trying to involve the local ex-pats (no doubt including members of the Ferret Force) to help develop their intelligence picture.[10] However, while the police, Army,

[8]DEFE 11/33, Gurney's *5th (Secret) Despatch*, 30 May 1949. See WO 21/2193, Note—theories about the functions of Colonial Police and their relations with troops in dealing with disturbances, J. C. Morgan, 27 January 1950.

[9]WO 21/2193, *Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power* (War Office 1949), p. 10.

[10]WO 106/5884, Report on Operations in Malaya by General Sir Neil Ritchie, June 1948–July 1949.

RAF and civilian authorities were putting in place the foundations for effective operational cooperation, officials struggled to the same at a strategic, theatre-level.

Strategic Intelligence Cooperation

On the 24th June 1948 Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner General Far East Asia, set up a Local Defence Committee to provide oversight of the Emergency.[11] However, tension quickly arouse about the strategic coordination of intelligence. As will be recalled from Chapter 3, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East)'s remit offered a mechanism both of providing strategic intelligence assessment (for instance, considering whether the insurgency was in fact being directed by external forces) and providing a means to coordinate the local intelligence apparatus.[12] The JIC (FE) therefore had at the minimum a theoretical role to play in the management of intelligence during the Emergency. However, the committee had to contend with a wealth of problems, including the lack of a full-time chairman and draft staff, and the lack of intelligence reaching them from sources within the various territories in the region. Unsurprisingly, JIC (London) in turn complained about the service being provided by the counterparts in the Far East. For instance, in August 1948 the Director of Naval Intelligence received minutes of five JIC (FE) meetings held between 1st July and 3rd August. Having read them, he felt that the "the lack of an adequate intelligence organisation at Kuala Lumpur should be brought to the attention of the JIC with a view of all possible action being taken to remedy this state of affairs."[13] In the following month, Patrick Scrivener, chairman of the JIC (FE) took the opportunity afforded by a visit to London to propose to the CoS that each British territory in the Far East should create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC).[14] The proposed committees would be local facsimiles of the regional JIC and thus not have any executive powers. As such, they would be charged,

[11] T. Jones, Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945–1952—A Special Type of Warfare (Oxon 2001), p. 84.

[12] CO 537/2653, Note by JIC Secretary entitled, *Composition and Functions of JIC (Far East)*, Appendix A, JIC (FE) to JIC (London), 17 January 1948.

[13] CO 537/2653, DNI to JIC Secretary, 23 August 1948.

[14] CAB 159/4, JIC Minutes, JIC (48) 103rd Meeting, 22 September 1948.

a. To advise the Local Defence Committee on all matters of policy and organisation concerning intelligence and security intelligence;
b. To coordinate all intelligence and security activities within the area of responsibility;
c. To furnish the Local Defence Committee (or individual members of the Local Defence Committee on request) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) with joint intelligence reports and appreciations.[15]

The JIC (FE)'s proposal for the creation of a LIC overlapped with a wider review of the 'local organisation for defence' in the colonies. This included a request by Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for local administrations to consider creating Local Intelligence Committees.[16] The British Defence Coordinating Council (Far East) (BDCC (FE)) discussed the matter in August 1948. Sir Alexander Grantham, governor of Hong Kong, informed his colleagues on the BDCC (FE) that his territory had set-up a LIC in 1946 but it did not work well and was allowed to lapse. He expressed strong resistance to the idea of resurrecting the idea, arguing that "the setting up of a committee might impose a delay without any practical compensating advantage." As such he thought the idea "unnecessary, and it might be positively harmful." MacDonald attempted to reassure Grantham by suggesting "it could be laid down that it was no function of the local intelligence committee to edit the reports from the Special Branch, or to produce information on its own, but simply be responsible for producing joint comments and appreciations on the information available." In contrast to Grantham, Sir Franklin Gimson, governor of Singapore, informed the BDCC (FE) that the LIC in his colony was flourishing. He "found a joint intelligence committee essential for maintaining liaison and pooling information, and was sure that it was necessary in times of quiet so that it could function as soon as an Emergency arose." Perhaps because Sir Alexander Newbolt was only administering the interregnum in Malaya between the death of Sir Edward Gent and arrival of his replacement by Sir Henry Gurney, he expressed only limited opinions on

[15] CAB 176/19, BDCC (FE) to CoS, 18 August 1948.

[16] CO 537/4306, Extract from Minutes of 10th Meeting of S'pore [sic], Local Defence Committee held on 7 September 1948.

the idea.[17] This was a missed opportunity to create a body that could offer strategic intelligence appreciations in relation to the Emergency, as well as providing the potential ability to, influence, if not actually, coordinate the intelligence structures necessary to restore law and order to Malaya.

The idea lay dormant until Sir Henry Gurney referred to LICs in his *5th (Secret) Despatch*, a year later. Gurney resisted strongly London's calls to create a LIC.[18] He justified this position by arguing that a fixed committee "may appeal to the tidy mind, but is not so useful in practice as a flexible system of conferences and the appointment of a correspondent whom the Joint Intelligence Committee can approach when they need a paper or information."[19] At the heart of the debate were two fundamental issues: how the Federation (and every other colonial territory in the region) collected and collated political and security intelligence, and how the JIC could be "enabled to carry out its key task by being given proper backing by Colonial territories." Gurney argued that Special Branch should collect and collate "all sources of civil intelligence." If the Special Branch was working effectively, there was no need for a LIC.[20] Moreover, the Colonial Office felt that the JIC (FE) was unsuitable "for the handling of certain political intelligence matters."[21] Indeed, Gurney noted that the "Joint Intelligence Committee contains no representative of the Governments or Police Forces of the Colonial Territories in its area." As a result, security concerns could not be adequately monitored by the JIC (FE). The High Commissioner was also concerned that a LIC "would naturally be subordinate to the Local Defence Committee which may include unofficial representation", and thus pose a threat to security.[22]

In the subsequent discussion, the JIC (London) noted that Gurney appeared to misunderstand the position of LIC within the wider intelligence machinery: rather than answering to the Local Defence Council,

[17] CO 537/2653, Extract from Minutes of 11th Meeting of the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East), 7 August 1948.

[18] See CO 537/4306, Gimson to Creech Jones, 7 October 1948.

[19] DEFE 11/33, Despatch No. 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30 May 1949.

[20] WO 21/2193, note to file, folio 24, unsigned.

[21] Ibid., Guidance to Colonial Governors on Preservations of International Security, note by Colonial Office, August 1949.

[22] DEFE 11/33, Despatch No. 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30 May 1949.

a LIC should, they posited, work alongside the JIC (FE), "two bodies maintaining a close correspondence and an exchange of information with each other."[23] The JIC (FE) argued that the advantages of creating a LIC far outweighed any disadvantages, in particular:

a. The Governor of a Colony receives reliable information from a permanent body who are constantly assessing intelligence and are also able to obtain advice on any particular subject experts, and
b. By exchanging intelligence with a JIC, the LIC is able to keep the Governor informed on matters outside the immediate purview of his particular colony, and the JIC is able to keep the commanders-in-chief and BDCCs, where they exist, advised when necessary on matters affecting the individual colony.[24]

The real benefit of a LIC in the context of the Malayan Emergency would have been as a local focal point for all key actors within the intelligence machine, a forum for coordination and discussion of all forms of intelligence in relation to defence and security issues. There were never more perfect conditions to justify the creation of LIC and yet neither the JIC (London), JIC (Far East), nor the BDCC (FE), were able to influence the Colonial Office sufficiently to overcome the objections of the High Commissioner. Therefore, for the first six years of the counterinsurgency operations in Malaya there was no formal body with a remit to coordinate emergency intelligence at a Federal level.

Ironically, the only element of the strategic intelligence apparatus that was in place for the duration of the Emergency was closely linked to the JIC (FE) but had a much more specialised focus. This was the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre (Far East) (JAPIC (FE)), which was created in 1948 with the responsibility for managing the production of photographic intelligence (photint) in the region. The directive enabling the creation of JAPIC (FE) explained that it would be "a joint service unit comprising an RAF element and an Army element, and also with Naval representation as and when required." The three service "elements, although having separate establishments, will normally work together as an integrated organisation in order that the greatest

[23]CAB 159/6, JIC (49), Minutes of the 93rd Meeting, 16 September 1949.

[24]WO 21/2193, notes associated with the draft memorandum of commentary on Despatch No. 5, dated 30 May 1949.

efficiency may be obtained by the most economical use of the resources available." More specifically, JAPIC (FE) was charged with:

I. Compilation and maintenance of a Print Library and an Intelligence Library.
II. Production and maintenance of cover maps and traces.
III. Plotting new cover.
IV. Preparation of interpretation reports.
V. Advice on all aspects of air photographic intelligence.
VI. Production of such papers and manuals as may be required on photographic interpretation in tropic countries.
VII. Training in reading and interpretation of aerial photography as may be required by the Services.
VIII. To provide interpreters and draughtsmen for operations, training and instruction as required by GHQ FARELF [General Headquarters Far East Land Forces] and FEAF [Far East Air Force], for photographic interpretation.[25]

JAPIC (FE)'s position within Malaya's broader intelligence structures was complicated.[26] The secretary of the JAPIC (FE) later explained that policy "is controlled by the Joint Intelligence Committee, through the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (Far East) (JAPIB (FE)), which is itself a sub-committee of the JIC (FE)."[27] The Board was chaired by the Chief Intelligence Officer, Far East Air Force and had representatives of the Chief Staff Officer (Intelligence) Far East Station, Colonel (Intelligence) GHQ, Far East Land Forces, and the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB).[28] The Board was responsible to the JIC (FE) for "ensuring that requests from the three Services and the JIB Representative for air photographic intelligence material for whatever purpose it may be required are met as far possible from resources,

[25] AIR 20/8917, Headquarters, Far East Air Force to Officer Commanding, Air Photographic Intelligence Unit (FE), 11 February 1952, Appendix A 'Directive to JAPIC (FE)', dated 1 June 1948.

[26] Arditti, "The View from Above", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), pp. 764–789.

[27] AIR 20/8917, Organisation of Joint Air Photographic Interpretation Centre (Far East), undated.

[28] Ibid., Directive from the Joint Intelligence Committee Defining the Composition and Responsibilities of the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (FE) JAPIB(FE), 15 September 1952.

or where new cover is required to recommend priority." JAPIB (FE) was therefore authorised to "receive, via HQ FEAF, all demands for air photographic intelligence material from Service agencies in the Far East, to assess their relative priorities and to take appropriate action to ensure their fulfilment [via JAPIC (FE)]."[29]

JAPIC (FE)'s original directive stipulated that "all demands for photographic intelligence will be submitted to HQ FEAF for consideration by the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (FE)."[30] In reality, however, much demand for photint originated from HQ Malaya, via the Army Photographic Intelligence Unit (Far East) APIU (FE). If approved, the APIU (FE) the would send the request to JAPIB. In turn, JAPIB would allocate a 'job number' and send the request to the JAPIC (FE), with an indication of priority. As an APIU (FE) memorandum explained, from that point in the process, "the whole question of the production of prints, mosaics and interpretation is therefore now a JAPIC responsibility."[31] As will be seen officials in Malaya struggled for much of the Emergency to create an effective mechanism to coordinate counterinsurgency intelligence. The JAPIC (FE) stands as the only example of a strategic intelligence body that remained, intact and unchanged, throughout the campaign.

Formalising Operational Intelligence Coordination

If the strategic coordination of intelligence was limited in the first six years of the Emergency, the appointment of Sir Harold Briggs as Director of Operations in Malaya in 1950 heralded the start of the process of ensuring the structures at an operational level were working effectively. Briggs was concerned to ensure "the closest possible coordination and liaison between the Fighting Services, the Police and the Civil Administration." Thus, in his first directive, issued on 16 April 1950, the Director of Operations instructed that officials would set up "State and Settlement War Executive Committees and combined operational headquarters at all levels."[32]

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., Headquarters, FEAF to OC, APIU (FE), 11 February 1952, Appendix A 'Directive to JAPIC (FE)', dated 1 June 1948.

[31] Ibid., APIU (FE) to All APIU (FE) Officers, Reorganisation, APIU—JAPIC, 12 September 1952.

[32] AIR 20/7777, The Briggs Plan, p. 12.

The importance of joint working was emphasised by Briggs in *Directive No. 2* (May 1950), in which he said "it is essential that there should be the closest possible coordination and liaison between the Fighting Services, the Police and Civil Administration." This, therefore, recognised and enhanced the status of the committees initially created at District level at the beginning of the Emergency (as directed by *Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power*), and created parallel structures at State and Settlement level. These became known as the District and State or Settlement War Executive Committees (D/SWECs). Moreover, Briggs decided to extend the principle established in Land/Air Operations room to all States and Settlements across Malaya. He mandated that "the tactical headquarters of the senior Army commander in each State or Settlement will be sited close to the headquarters of the Chief Police Officers and a joint operations / intelligence room will be maintained." The operations room included senior officers of the Police and military, a member of special branch, and one officer (either Police or military) acted as an ad hoc G-3.[33] To avoid confusion, the original *Federal-level* Land/Air Operations room became known as the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), which was thus supported at State and District level by Joint Operations Rooms.

Consequently, a Brigade Headquarters was normally located at each Contingent Police Headquarters in a State or Settlement capital. The Brigade Commander was operationally responsible to the SWEC, which was chaired by a senior member of the local civilian administration. Similarly, Battalion Headquarters were co-located with the Police Circle Headquarters at the administrative Centre of a Civil District, with the Battalion Commander operationally responsible to, and member of, the DWEC. Finally, Company Headquarters was generally co-located with Police District Headquarters.[34] Briggs was doggedly egalitarian in relation to the staffing of the operations rooms—he stated, "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 closet co-operation also with the local administrative officer."[35]

[33] R. Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948–1960* (Rand 1964), p. 45.

[34] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1957.

[35] CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya—Directive No. 2, 12 May 1950.

Briggs was also determined to link the DWECs with the civilian population. In June 1950 he issued *Directive No. 6*, which acknowledged that "little had been done to set up district committees through which representatives of the people themselves, of all communities, can bring their Emergency problems and suggestions before the authorities concerned and discuss them together, with a feeling that they have a share in the responsibility for what is being done." Interestingly, Briggs specifically stated that "members of the public desire to have channels of communications other than the Police in these matters and to feel that they can be trusted with some responsibility." Given that the police were charged with security intelligence from the community, this is both a damning statement and also a reflection of the consequence of the para-military strategy the police were forced to follow. To by-pass the seemingly difficult relationship between citizens and the Police, Briggs ordered that DWECs appoint District Advisory Committees. As well as recruiting their own Home Guards, registering inhabitants of every home, assisting in propaganda, Briggs stated that the task of these committees should be

> to organise receipt of all intelligence which they can procedure [sic] through their own sources and to pass it on to the police on their levels with whom, it is important, they should maintain the closest co-operation.[36]

Regardless of this far-sighted operational fusion of intelligence personnel and structures at an operational level, there were on-going problems in linking intelligence with tactical options, not least air power. In particular, there was a potential structural tension in the command and control regime: ground operations were devolved down to State/Settlement and District level, while air operations had to remain centralised in the Air Headquarters.[37] Briggs attempted to address this in his *Emergency Directive No. 2*. He called for the "closest possible coordination and liaison between the Royal Air Force and ground forces…" which would be exercised via "a Joint/Operations/Air/Intelligence room" which had been established at HQ Malaya District, alongside the Advanced Air Headquarters

[36] CAB 134/497, Director of Operations Malaya, Directive No. 6, Co-operation of the Civil Population in Emergency Measures and the Responsibility of the Administration to Secure It, 22 June 1950.

[37] Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *RUSI*, 102: 607 (1957), p. 386.

Malaya.[38] All requests for air support, other than airstrikes, would be made through the Joint Army/Air Ops Staff, Headquarters Malaya District, through normal police or military channels. Requests for airstrikes, however, would be made to the Joint Army/Air Ops Staff via the fastest means available, whether that be via military, police or civil channels. However, before an airstrike was approved, Headquarters Malaya District, would seek clearance from Police Headquarters which was "the final authority in this matter." Further, *Directive No. 2* stated that efforts should also be made "to obtain the agreement of the District Officer and / or Forestry Officer or other Government officials on the ground before making requests for offensive air support." However, when reliable information was obtained locating a worthwhile target, "the request for the air strike will be made… and the District Officer informed as soon as possible afterwards."[39]

The RAF was tasked to support colleagues on the ground by using offensive airpower in two ways. The first was in conjunction with ground force operations, "killing or injuring bandits; driving bandits in a given direction; [or] slowing up bandit progress in any given direction." The second was by operating independently, "dealing with bandits reported in areas where no security forces are free to operate; destroying reported hide-outs and cultivation areas; [or] demonstrations of strength, usually merely by flying over territory where trouble threatens."[40] However, the use of airpower against insurgents courted controversy, particularly in relation to the increasing use of medium and heavy bombers against the jungle fringes.[41] A review of the use of airpower stated that "every precaution which is practicable has been taken to reduce to a minimum risk of accidental injury to law abiding citizens and their property." However, the risk of destruction of valuable rubber crops or the injury of death of non-combatants could not be entirely eliminated because:

a. Maps are not always 100% accurate.
b. Civil records of residents are not always complete or accurate.

[38] CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya—Directive No. 2, 12 May 1950. It is interesting to note that the nomenclature for the Joint Operations Room/Land Air Room had not been resolved.

[39] Ibid.

[40] AIR 23/8437, Offensive Operations of the Role Air Force in the Malayan Bandit War, c. November 1950.

[41] For internal debate within RAF, see AIR 8/1629.

c. People ordered to move from an area may not have obeyed, or may have returned illicitly.
d. In jungle areas it is physically impossible in many areas to ensure that all lawful inhabitants are removed or their positions marked so as to be visible from the air.
e. An attempt to comb the area for lawful inhabitants would make any air strike unnecessary since the bandits would also have left.
f. There is always the possibility of human error by the aircrew.[42]

The fundamental problem was the lack of timely, actionable intelligence, that would allow the effective use of air power. Information from informers—normally captured or surrendered insurgents—proved hard to obtain and often even harder to translate into actionable, timely, intelligence that could support the effective use of airpower.[43] Air Vice Marshall Mellersh explained that "information regarding enemy camps and concentrations is given by agents and by captured and surrendered terrorists who are usually unintelligent and who are unable to read a map or an air photograph. They even have great difficulty in giving a reasonably accurate description of the country or distances involved."[44] There was also "a tendency to overgrade the reliability of information received from informers but, since they were the main source of target intelligence, there was little alternative. When attempts were made to verify such information by investigation on the ground the terrorists were frequently forewarned of an impending air attack and rapidly dispersed from the target area."[45] Consequently, neither Army nor the Police were likely to be able to provide the RAF a viable target "which can be pin pointed to within 4 to 6 squares of a map or 24 hrs in time.[46] As a result, the majority of air strike targets that were offered to the RAF were *area* targets.[47] Perhaps

[42] AIR 23/8437, Offensive Operations of the Role Air Force in the Malayan Bandit War, c. November 1950.

[43] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 53.

[44] F. Mellersh, "The Campaign Against the Terrorists in Malaya", *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, 96: 583 (1951), p. 410. See also CO 24/8347, Memorandum on the Value of Air Strikes by Aircraft of the Royal Air Force in the Malayan Campaign, 8 December 1950.

[45] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 53.

[46] AIR 23/8437, a note on a meeting held at Air Headquarters Malaya to discuss Air/Army co-operation in the Anti-Bandit Campaign, 9 August 1950.

[47] Ibid., Offensive Operations of the Role Air Force in the Malayan Bandit War, c. November 1950.

understandably, a review of the use of airpower stated that "it cannot be too strongly stressed that the bandit war is being fought on the minimum of intelligence facilities and that the advantages in that respect are with the bandits."[48]

The Malayan authorities took two steps to address this problem. First, it was decided to embed RAF intelligence officers within State/Settlement Police headquarters in an effort to "get raw intelligence and be altogether closer to the bandit war."[49] There were three key reasons to do this. First, "intelligence inevitably comes slowly; it must be fetched if it is to be fresh." Second, "police and Army in the field, regardless of the many instructions that are issued, are never quite sure when or how to call for air." Third, RAF intelligence officers, if deployed within State/Settlement headquarters "could get hot intelligence and knowing what the air can do, could see in such intelligence, opportunities for air action, which a layman would inevitably miss."[50] Consequently, RAF intelligence officers were attached to the SWEC and DWEC Joint Operations Rooms, which were "manned by the military and police on a 24 hr basis to bring together and display relevant intelligence and operational data."[51] In addition, it was not uncommon for these officers to go on patrol with the ground officers they were supporting.[52] These officers would "channel all bids for air support from the Army, the police, and the civil administration through the Land / Air Operations Room, which functioned as the controlling agency for all day-to-day operations throughout the Emergency."[53]

The second step to address the concerns about the use of airpower was to change the tasking process. In the case of pre-planned offensive air support, the Army or Police commander initiating the request would inform Advanced AHQ Operations Room and the local Police. The latter would consult with the DWEC and ensure that:

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., SASO to AOC, 3 November 1950.

[50] Ibid., Prior to this, Air Headquarters would, if possible, make an RAF officer available to War Executive Committees which required advice or assistance in planning an operation involving the use of offensive airpower. See CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya—Directive No. 2, 12 May 1950.

[51] R. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organisation of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Rand 1972), p. 28.

[52] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 53.

[53] Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *RUSI*, 102: 607 (1957), p. 386.

a. No innocent person, lawful habitation or property liable to damage is in the target area.
b. Any innocent person, lawful habitation or property inside the target area or within 1500 yards of it, which the air attack must avoid, is described in the Air Support Demand.
c. Arrangements are made if necessary to remove from the target area any innocent persons known or believed to be in the target area within 1500 yards from it.[54]

Following consultation with the DWEC, the Chief of Police would recommend whether or not to approve a pre-planned air strike. However, the Director of Operations made it clear that air attacks within 1500 yards of innocent persons, lawful habitation or property would only be prosecuted in "exceptional circumstances." In the event of the Police recommending a strike, the Advanced AHQ had final "responsibility for accepting or refusing the target and in the event of acceptance, for issuing orders to the Air Forces involved to avoid those innocent persons and lawful property."[55] Whilst these rules of engagement and the quite sophisticated fusion of RAF, Army, Police and Civil staff at District, State/Settlement and Federal levels served to maximise the available information, fundamentally the use airpower, like the use of ground troops, was hamstrung by lack of accurate, relevance and timely intelligence, particularly humint.[56]

Changes at the Top

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that following the report of the Policing Mission in 1950 the Malayan authorities decided to create the post of Director of Intelligence (DOI) both to run Special Branch and coordinate emergency intelligence. The first DOI, William Jenkin, made some important changes to how Special Branch operated but struggled with to fulfil his responsibilities to coordinate intelligence and subsequently resigned in 1951. To make matters worse, also in that year the Commissioner of Police, Nicol Gray, resigned, the Director of Operations, Sir Harold Briggs,

[54] AIR 20/8928, D/Ops, Instruction No. 14, Offensive Air Support, November 1952.

[55] Ibid.

[56] AIR 20/8347, Note to a meeting held at Air Headquarters Malaya to discuss Air/Army Co-operation in the Anti-Bandit Campaign, 9 August 1950.

retired, and the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, was murdered during an insurgent ambush whilst travelling through Fraser's Hill, Pahang.

The new High Commissioner, Sir Gerald Templer arrived in Malaya in February 1952, inheriting an intelligence system that was also in significant disarray: the policing strategy tended to alienate, rather than court, the Chinese population,[57] the government's use of propaganda was limited and the public were reluctant to provide information to the Police.[58] Special Branch, in particular, was struggling to meet it responsibilities. As Sir Oliver Lyttelton, noted, "the police… 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."[59] Moreover, the Police and military often had conflicting intelligence requirements, the former wanted to target the *Min Yuen* support organisation while the latter wanted tactical intelligence.[60] Fundamentally, however, the Special Branch still had a very limited knowledge about the insurgents. For instance, in May 1952 the new head of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), Courtenay Young, sent Sir Percy Sillitoe (Director General of MI5) a damning assessment of Special Branch's understanding of the MCP. He stated that while there was good information about the organisation and senior personalities of the MCP, "little is available on its tactical deployment and intentions; its intelligence and sabotage organisations; its external links and communications. There is no counter-espionage information and, so far as is known, no long-term or high-level penetration of the MCP."[61]

The need to "get a grip of intelligence"[62] was clearly recognised by Templer who, prior to his departure for Malaya, had decided his

[57] See A. Stockwell, "Policing During the Malayan Emergency, 1948–60: Communism, Communalism, and Decolonisation", in Anderson and Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917–65* (Manchester 1992), pp. 108–126; G. Sinclair, *At the End of the Line—Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame, 1945–80* (Manchester 2006), p. 4.

[58] See K. Ramakishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952–54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92.

[59] O. Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London 1962), p. 366.

[60] KV 4/408, undated lecture notes by Morton entitled, "The Coordination of Intelligence in the Malayan Emergency."

[61] KV 4/424, H/SIFE to DG Security Service, draft review of security intelligence in the Far East, 21 May 1952.

[62] J. Cloake, *Templer—Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985), p. 228.

priorities would be to "a) coordinate intelligence under one person; b) reorganise and retrain the police; c) ensure that the government information services told the people what the government was doing."[63] The centrality of intelligence to Templer's plans was made public upon his arrival in Malaya; he informed *The Straits Times* that "the Emergency will be won by our intelligence system."[64] He acted quickly. Within a month the High Commissioner wrote to Lyttelton stating bluntly that there was "urgent need for a director to be responsible for the coordination and evaluation of intelligence from all sources."[65] However, Templer did not want simply to recruit another former Special Branch officer to replace Jenkin. Indeed, his vision for the new Director of Intelligence differed from that of his predecessors in a number of ways. One of the most obvious was the type of person he wanted to fill the role. Initially, he asked for Dick White, an MI5 officer, to become his Director of Intelligence.[66] When White declined the offer, Templer turned to Jack Morton who had recently retired as H/SIFE. Templer's preference for MI5 officers, rather than former Special Branch men, reflected the increasing desire to 'professionalise' intelligence within the Federation but also on-going concerns about potential regional dimensions of the Emergency.

Templer's vision for the post of DOI also differed from that of his predecessors in terms of concept and location within the Malayan executive. His first inclination was that the DOI should "have executive responsiblity for the control of all intelligence services, both military and Service, within the area of responsibility."[67] This would have potentially remedied one of the conundrums that plagued Jenkin and Dalley before him, both of whom had complained bitterly about having the responsibility of coordinating intelligence but not the power. However, having discussed the idea with Colonel Arthur Young (who replaced Gray as Commissioner of Police in Malaya) and Sillitoe, Templer reconsidered. He appears to have been dissuaded by concerns that the DOI

[63] L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008), p. 178.

[64] Cloake, *Templer—Tiger of Malaya*, p. 227.

[65] CO 1022/51, Templer to Lyttelton, 13 February 1952.

[66] Ibid. See also T. Bowyer, *The Perfect English Spy* (London 1995), p. 136; Cloake, *Templer—Tiger of Malaya*, p. 228.

[67] CO 1022/51, Meeting with General Sir Gerald Templer, 31 January 1952 (JIC 289/52).

would labour under the significant administrative burden of having executive authority over the various intelligence agencies contributing to the Emergency (including Police, Special Branch, Navy, Army, Air Intelligence) and also the potential division of responsibility, as witnessed when Jenkin became answerable to both the Police Commissioner and the High Commissioner.[68]

Templer withdrew plans to give the DOI executive responsibility for intelligence, but the revised proposals did little to remove the risks of blurred and divided lines of responsibility. For instance, he proposed that the DOI would be on the staff of the Deputy Director of Operations but "in any important case where his advice was not taken he would be able to represent his views to [the] High Commissioner direct." Despite the DOI's lack of executive powers, Templer also expected the role holder to "be responsible for coordinating activities of the above agencies or any other which exist today or which may be organised in the future." Moreover, the new DOI would "be completely responsible for collation and evaluation of all the intelligence available and for its presentation to those concerned in the proper form."[69] Morton would, therefore, have all the responsibility for managing Emergency intelligence but, like Dalley and Jenkin before him, would lack any authority to ensure this responsibility was discharged effectively. The revised terms of reference for the DOI were thus a dangerous 'fudge' rather than an effective structural solution to the difficulties of coordinating Emergency intelligence.

Unsurprisingly, Templer's request caused some concern within London—it was clearly not lost on officials that Templer was in danger of recreating an intelligence model based on the same infirm foundations which proved so divisive to his predecessors. A minute by a Colonial Office official, Mr. Jerrom, noted that although the new Director would not be formally in executive command of any of the various intelligence agencies, his advisory powers and the right of direct daily access to General Templer would in fact give him de facto executive powers if, in Templer's words, "he is a man I can completely rely on." Jerrom felt this was "a long step backwards towards Sir William Jenkin's ideas." However, it is notable how quickly Jerrom tempered his concerns. He concluded that "so long as General Templer is in command in Malaya we need not expect any more Gray–Jenkin affairs…I do not see that

[68] Ibid., Luke to Reilly, 29 January 1952.

[69] Ibid., Templer to Lyttelton, 13 February 1952.

we need raise the usual functional arguments."[70] Clearly the force of Templer's personality impacted the Colonial Office as much as those closer to him in Malaya.

Templer did acknowledge some problems in his proposal for the post of DOI. He thus suggested that, instead of having executive authority, the DOI should have "a more general authority over intelligence, which should be exercised through the chairmanship of a fully representative intelligence committee."[71] The precursor to this was the creation in June 1951 of the Joint Intelligence Liaison Committee. This was chaired by the Director of Operations, with the DOI as a deputy, and supported with a 'working staff' provided by the police and operations room staff.[72] The departure from Malaya of both Briggs and Morton shortly after its creation deprived the Joint Intelligence Liaison Committee of its two key members. However, Rob Lockhart, who succeeded Briggs as Director of Operations, set about reviewing the administrative apparatus which supported his post. He made two key changes. The first was to create a Combined Emergency Planning Staff (CEPS) charged with planning associated with:

a. Security Forces operations of a long-term nature and which entail the coordination of effort of two or more States/Settlements.
b. Problems which mainly affect the Civil Administration in the prosecution of the Emergency…[73]

The second change was the abolition in March 1952 of the Joint Intelligence Liaison Committee in favour of a Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC) supported by the Combined Intelligence Staff (CIS).[74] The paper prepared by GOC Malaya which introduced the concept of the FIC (which was initially called a Joint Intelligence

[70] Ibid., Extract from Mr. Jerrom's Minute to Mr. Higham, 16 May 1952.

[71] Ibid., Luke to Reilly, 29 January 1952; also Meeting with General Sir Gerald Templer, 31 January 1952 (JIC 289/52).

[72] AIR 20/8925, Appendix C, to Agenda dated 24 December 1951, Suggested procedures for the submission, consideration and action of plans by the Director of Operations.

[73] Ibid., Director of Operations, Malaya, Instruction No. 4, 10 January 1952.

[74] This was a non-executive body, consisting of three permanent members (Secretary of the FIC, and one member from the Special Branch and an officer from Malaya H.Q) charged with preparing briefs for either the Director of Operations Committee or the Director of intelligence.

Committee), stated that "it cannot be emphasised too often that in the campaign being fought in Malaya by the Combined Government, Police and Military forces almost every matter of policy has an intelligence aspect." As such, the intelligence organisation "must be so constituted that it can give proper consideration to any intelligence problem and can, in addition, put forward its recommendations with the weight that is merited."[75] The major difference between the Joint Intelligence Liaison Committee and the FIC was the latter was now chaired by the DOI and had full-time staff. In addition to the DOI, the FIC included the head of Special Branch, the Security Liaison Officer, representatives of the three military intelligence organisations, the Police, the head of Information Services and both the Secretary for Chinese Affairs and Commissioner for Labour. The charter for the Committee outlined its four key responsibilities:

i. To consider Emergency Intelligence matters and to make recommendations to the Director of Operations Committee through the Deputy Director of Operations.
ii. To consider matters of Intelligence policy within the Federation of Malaya and to make recommendations to the appropriate authority.
iii. To prepare papers on Intelligence matters as required by the Director of Operations.
iv. To comment on papers which have an intelligence aspect before submission to the Director of Operations Committee.[76]

However, this remit also caused significant concern within Whitehall—it was simply not clear what authority the committee would exercise, if any. Upon reading the charter, Anthony Gann presumed that any recommendations made by the FIC that were accepted by the Deputy Director of Operations would be embodied in an appropriate directive issued by the High Commissioner, but the line of executive authority

[75]AIR 20/8925, Appendix D, to Agenda dated 24 December 1951, Intelligence Organisation—Federation of Malaya, paper prepared by GOC Malaya.

[76]CO 1022/51, Charter for the Federation Intelligence Committee and Combined Intelligence Staff, 11 June 1952. The Charter is not dissimilar to that proposed for Local Intelligence Committees but lacked the latter's provision to coordinate intelligence, presumably because this was the function of the DOI. For the LIC charter, see CAB 176/19, BDCC (FE) to CoS, 18 August 1948.

was ambiguous. There was further ambiguity about the committee's ability to make recommendations on policy matters to the appropriate authority. For instance, Gann questioned whether the FIC could make recommendations direct to Special Branch. He went on to postulate that the "important point is that it [the FIC] will not direct Emergency Intelligence and nor will its Chairman, the Director of Intelligence. It is to be essentially a coordinating body on which the representatives of suppliers and users of intelligence decide the policies they would like to see adopted."[77] However, Jerrom was not convinced. He minuted that "there is still the doubt just how far the Director of Intelligence in pursuit of his 'coordinating' function will influence the S.B. and how far the S.B. will be directly controlled by the Commissioner of Police." He concluded rather weakly, "we can only await developments."[78]

Further Operational Refinement

Templer also reviewed how the S/DWEC system was operating. There was some concern that the size of district committees, in particular, had become excessive. For instance, Lt. Col. Walter Walker (1/6th Gurkha Rifles) explained that "heads of departments produce for discussion matters of minor policy which merely waste valuable time…sessions last from 4-7 hours which is absurd." The key officers in the War Executive Committees were the District Officer, Chief Police Office, and Senior Army Officer. They formed a natural triumvirate. However, there was no "no clear method of ironing out differences of opinion between police and military and obviously these must at times occur." There was particular concern that the "police must let the Army know full details of all info available…and not hold back 'plum' information. Conversely military patrol reports must be frank and true…unfounded claims by the military of kills and wounded are always finally laid bare by later SEP or captured docs, and only cause lack of confidence amongst their police."[79]

[77] Ibid., Minute by Gann, 19 June 1952.

[78] Ibid., Minute by Jerrom, 19 June 1952.

[79] Liddell Hart Collection, Stockwell Papers, Kings College London, a letter from Walker to Graham, 12 July 1952.

As a result, General Sir Robert Lockhart, D/Director of Operations, created a specific course to help members of DWEC operate effectively. Interestingly, this course was entirely Army-led.[80] The objective of the course was:

a. to practice DWECs in joint planning;
b. to study all aspects of the Emergency with a direct or indirect effect on operational planning by DWECs;
c. to exchange views of the various problems that have confronted DWECs in various parts of the country so that local experience gained can be shared throughout the Federation;
d. to analyse the relationship between Civil, Police and Military so that the maximum effect may be obtained in planning and execution of measures necessary to defeat the enemy;
e. to study some of the different types of operations with which DWECs have to deal.[81]

To achieve this, members of the DWECs received lectures on the organisation and characteristics of the MCP and MRLA; the intelligence organisation (particularly Special Branch organisation, methods, sources and exploitation of information, and the difference between political and operational information); the organisation of the Police Force (its functions and problems); and the machinery of command for operational planning (particularly the relationship between the District Officer, Police and Military, and the organisation and functions of the Joint Operations Room and its relationship with Special Branch). There were further lectures on the Home Guard, Air and Naval support and the Army. Each course also had to complete a number of syndicate exercises. For instance, Exercise 'Co-operation' tested the delegates in how they would tackle a theoretical area in which the "general situation vis-à-vis the enemy is unsatisfactory." This required them to consider special measures to control timber workers in the area, to study in detail

[80]Following the death of Sir Edward Gurney and retirement of General Sir Harold Briggs at the end of 1951, Sir General Sir Gerald Templer became both High Commissioner and Director of Operations. General Sir Robert Lockhart was thus appointed as Templer's Deputy Director of Operations.

[81]Liddell Hart Collection, Stockwell Papers, Director of Operations, Courses for Members of DWECs, 1 August 1952.

measures to make food control effective, how to create effective propaganda measures, and how to respond to a major incident.[82]

A letter from Walker gives a good indication of how the Police and Army conducted joint operations in the District of Kuala Kangsar in mid 1952. Walker's letter is particularly important because it gives a detailed description of how a DWEC functioned during one of the most busy periods of the emergency. He explains the DWEC would have one planning meeting per week to decide what operations should take place in the next seven days, for instance, should efforts be concentrated against a known MRLA presence in the area, or "send pls [platoons] / jungle squads into all areas to try and regain contact with other MRLA gangs." Alternatively, the DWEC might consider planning a food control operation, night ambushes or road checks? The DWEC might also think about targeting the Min Yen. Finally they will tackle issues such as "if we turn all our weight on one area what will be the enemy's reaction—which way will he go for food? How can we make this more difficult for him? Are there woodcutters in the area? Should be leave them working, as a bluff, or put on a curfew?" Walker goes on describe the roles of the three 'personalities' on the DWEC. The District Officer was "not responsible for law and order but for implementing vigorously all Emergency Regs to assist the Security forces." This included resettlement and regrouping, issuing Food Restriction Orders, propaganda and clearance of belukar [undergrowth and secondary forest].[83] The Police were primary responsible for the maintenance of law and order. As part of that they would conduct operations on the fringe of the jungle (such as security patrols, or ambushing sources of food supply), the enforcement of emergency regulations (such as food checks, mobile road blocks, and curfews). They would also provide "operational information, intelligence and local knowledge to the military commander."[84] The military's role was twofold: "a) Contact and Destroy the MRLA b) Contact and Destroy the Min Yuen." Walker expressed a degree of pragmatism in assigning priorities. He stated that the "the decision of priority for these two tasks has never been reached firmly", hence the forces in his District effectively followed the available intelligence—"we follow the enemy relentlessly

[82] Ibid.

[83] Walker stated in his report "as I am a tactful bloke, you will notice that I have purposely omitted Sultans and Mentri Besars!"

[84] Liddell Hart Collection, a letter from Walker to Graham, 12 July 1952.

fairly deep into the jungle, and while we are out police jungle squads are employed in cutting the enemy off from his sources of food supply. The enemy must be harassed, attacked and pursued ruthlessly, relentlessly and remorselessly."[85]

Clearly using Walker's experience as a benchmark, General Lockhart went on to explain in a lecture delivered as part of a training course for DWEC members that

> the best results will be achieved when a Joint Operations Room is established, where both the Policeman and Soldier combine their resources for planning and control of Operations. This Operations Room must be the focal point of all communications, and must be adequately staffed, so that all operational information concerning the enemy and our own Security Forces is pictorially recorded and kept up to day…there must be the closest liaison with Special Branch, so that both information from the Security Forces and to Security Forces, is accurate and speedily exchanged.

Walker's letter shows these ideas were translated into practical action in his DWEC at Kuala Kangsar. He explained that "physical liaison takes place regularly at 0900hrs each day, and thereafter as required. We are in direct comm [communication] with the pol sta [police station] by phone and an officer goes down at once at any time of day, if and whenever required. My IO [intelligence officer] or Tac Adjt [tactical adjutant] spends more time with the police than he does with me. There is a joint ops room at police HQ and if one had sufficient officers there might be an offr [officer] employed full time at the joint ops room. However, we manage very well by frequent visits throughout the day."[86] Such liaison was critical if those involved in the restoration of law and order where to 'know the enemy'. Walker believed that

> "the Administration, Army offrs [officers] from COs [Commanding Officers] downwards, and the Police from OSPCs [Officer Superintending Police Circle] downwards must 'know; their enemy by name, unit and regt—their strength, arms etc. The battle must be brought on to a personal issues and each coy [Company] given its public enemy No.1. Bandit

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., Walker to Graham, 12 July 1952. For a description of the Sungei Siput Joint Operations Room in 1958 see, Yuen Yuet Leng, *Nation Before Self—And Values That Do Not Die* (Kuala Lumpur 2008), p. 127.

photographs must be on display side by side with the enemy order of battle."[87] It would be, however, at least another four years, before all the intelligence elements had 'matured' sufficiently to allow the majority of DWECs across Malaya to be in receipt in that level of detail about the insurgents in the villages in their district and the surrounding areas.

The 'Mature' Intelligence Model

There was no 'mature' intelligence model, or perhaps it might be more accurate to say that Malayan officals would not have recognised such concept. The intelligence apparatus the served the prosecution of the Emergency simply evolved overtime. Of course, some evolved quicker than others (such as the committee structure) and other elements faded away (such as SIFE) or never became fully got involved (such as the JIC/FE). However, the system outlined by the Director of Operations in his review of the Emergency at the end of 1956 shows how far the authorities in Malaya had developed their intelligence structures and methods from the very difficult days at the beginning of the Emergency.[88] Indeed, with the advantage of some sixty years, it possible to discern that by this point of the Emergency the various component parts necessary for collecting, assessing and using intelligence in counter-insurgency in Malaya reached maturity.

At the head of the Federation's intelligence apparatus was the Emergency Operations Council, which was chaired by the Minister for Internal Defence and Security. Other members included the Director of Operations; the Air Officer Commanding, RAF Malaya; the Secretary for Internal Defence and Security; the General Officer Commanding of the Army; the Commissioner of Police and the Ministers of Finance, Education and Labour.[89] As a subsequent review explained, the Director of Operations was "responsible to the Council for the day-to-day conduction of Emergency operations, and retained operational command of all SF [Security Forces] allotted to them."[90] The Emergency Operations

[87] Ibid., A letter from Walker to Graham, 12th July 1952.

[88] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956, Director of Operations, Malaya.

[89] Ibid.

[90] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency in Malaya, June 1948–August 1957, Director of Operations, Malaya.

Council was supported by the Director of Operations Working Party. This was chaired by the Director of Operations and included the Principal Staff Officer as the deputy chair, the AOC Malaya, the GOC Malaya, the Naval Liaison Office, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Intelligence, the Director of Information Services, the Inspector General of the Home Guard and the Secretary for Internal Defence and Security.[91]

The Director of Intelligence 'doubled hatted' as head of Special Branch and head of Malaya's intelligence apparatus. His role was to coordinate the activities of all the intelligence agencies, and oversee the collation, evaluation and dissemination of intelligence, and advise the Director of Operations on all intelligence related to the counterinsurgency campaign. The DOI chaired the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC), which contained representatives of the Police, Armed Services, Department of Information, Secretariat for Chinese Affairs, the Labour Department and Security Intelligence Far East. The committee's task was to exchange information and, while did not make policy, it did make recommendations. In many ways the FIC resembled the original concept for a Local Intelligence Committee first proposed by the JIC (FE) in the 1948. The FIC was supported by the Combined Intelligence Staff (CIS) which consisted of representatives of the Civil Service, Police, Army and RAF. The primary role of the CIS was to support the DOI by collating information and produce appreciations.

Thus, the Director of Operations Working Party, the Director of Intelligence and Federal Intelligence Committee formed the main elements of the apparatus to coordinate intelligence at a strategic or theatre-level. The SWEC structure sat 'beneath' this strategic hub. The composition of the SWECs remained stable from 1950 onwards, and included the Mentri Besar or Resident Commissioner, a British Advisor, Chief Police Officer, Senior Military Command, State Finance Officer, Secretary for Chinese Affairs, State Home Guard Officer, Selected Community Leaders and Executive Secretary. The SWECs in turn

[91]WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956, Director of Operations, Malaya. The two committees were formed in Spring 1956 after the old Director of Operations Committee had been dissolved. This was a result of constitutional talks held in London earlier that year which decided that the responsibility for Internal Defence and Security would be passed to the Alliance government, in preparation of Malaya's planned independence the following year.

oversaw the District War Executive Committees, which were comprised of the District Officer, Administrative Office, local military commander, District Home Guard Officer and community leaders.

Each DWEC/SWEC had various operations sub-groups, normally including one focused on intelligence. There was therefore effectively an intelligence structure which shadowed the DWEC/SWEC structure, in the form of the intelligence sub-committees that fed into the Federal Intelligence Committee and the Director of Operations Working Party. Also paralleling the DWEC/SWEC structure were the Joint Operations Rooms, as described above, which fed into the Federal Joint Operations Room. Special Branch officers in DWEC/SWEC structure would forward details of "any plan they may prepare, to Federal Level before they place them in front of their SWEC Op. Sub-Committee as a recommendation." This enabled Special Branch to deconflict and ensure that operations supported long-term policy, such as Templer's Directive 21 which called for the targeting of the MCP leadership (called Profit Targets). This also ensured that "all SB intelligence data is available at Federal HQ for collation and sifting at it is from this other material that targets of the Profit type are recognised and selected."[92]

While many different government agencies provided streams of emergency intelligence, Special Branch retained overall primacy. For the majority of the emergency, Special Branch had four 'desks' which focused upon, Indian and Misc. political matters; Malay political matters; Chinese political matters; and Communism. The latter desk was sub-divided into the following subjects: external Communism, underground Communist, 'Banditry', other manifestations of Communism and the MRLA order of battle. These desks were supported by two or three case officers, a hold centre and a training school.[93] Moreover, Military Intelligence Officers were embedded with Special Branch units at all levels and were responsible for "the collection of operational intelligence, its processing and passing on to the Army."[94] Thus Special Branch and military intelligence were able support *laterally* the DWECs and SWECs but also directly reported into the FIC.

[92]Ibid., Principal Staff Officer to Director of Operations, Future of Profit Planning Committee and Intelligence Staff, 14 July 1953.

[93]Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, p. 189.

[94]AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency in Malaya, June 1948–August 1957, Director of Operations, Malaya.

The result of eight years of evolution was quite considerable. Intelligence was embedded *vertically* in the Emergency command structures from the Emergency Operations Council, the Director of Operations Working Group and the S/DWEC structures. Of particular note is way that officials subtly changed the Federal level structures to take into account *Malayanisation*. Intelligence was also embedded functionally via the Federal Intelligence Committee and the Joint Operations Rooms attached the S/DWEC structures. Moreover, whole Special Branch had primacy for intelligence, there high-level of inter-agency cooperation at all levels. Arguably, this complicated but effective structure for managing emergency intelligence resulted from the decision of Air Vice Marshall Sanderson's decision to co-located his AHQ alongside the Army in Kuala Lumpur Town, rather than the airfield, and for Sir Henry Gurney's insistence on civil primacy in emergency operations.

Conclusion

The collection of information is, at best, inefficient without an appropriate means to assess, coordinate and disseminate a finished product. The structures in place in Malaya at the beginning of the Emergency were singular unsuited to do this. Both the JIC (FE) and SIFE were relatively 'immature' bodies that struggled to define or understand their remits, and to cope with a lack of staff. The MSS had to cope with similar problems and was in a sharp and terminal decline as a result of its 'turf war' with Sir Percy Sillitoe. Its replacement, the Special Branch of the Malayan Police Service, was subsequently born into the maelstrom of the communist insurgency and had to develop rapidly. Indeed, it took the broader Malayan intelligence apparatus, with Special Branch at its heart, some nine years to mature fully and stabilise. Progress was spasmodic—different elements matured at different rates. For instance, structures to support inter-service co-operation between the Army and RAF were created early in the Emergency and remained largely uncharged throughout the campaign. In contrast, both uniformed policing, Special Branch and the post of Director of Intelligence had a much longer, more difficult, process to adjust to the demands of counterinsurgency operations. Nor did the shape of the intelligence apparatus remain intact—a number of the intelligence agencies in place at the beginning of the emergency faded away or evolved into different orbits. Hence, the Malayan Security Service was abolished, and both Security Intelligence Far East and the

Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) played little part in the emergency. Other elements were created specifically to help manage emergency intelligence, particularly the post of Director of Intelligence and the Federal Intelligence Committee. Also of note were the elements that were not created, specifically a Local Intelligence Committee. The evolution of the intelligence apparatus was also a reactionary process. There were numerous reviews which affected the shape of the intelligence structures, particularly that of the Policing Mission. Further, alternations in process and structure were made as a reaction to changes in the MCP's strategy, hence the focus on the Min Yuen by Briggs, and then change to targeting MCP hierarchy under Templer. Further 'Malayanisation' in preparation of *Merdeka* in 1957 forced further modifications to the strategic intelligence structures.

As discussed in the introduction, historians are often fascinated with breaking down their period of study into convenient periods. There is good reason for this—periodisation serves as a useful device to create intricate narratives or complex analysis. The Malayan Emergency has not escaped this form of attention: various historians have defined periods of 'terror' and 'counter-terror', of 'stick and carrot', 'incrementalism', and 'hearts and minds'. Generally, these periods tend to align with the initial, pre-Briggs, period and/or the tenure of Harold Briggs as Director operations, or perhaps the period when Sir Henry Gurney (roughly equated to a counter-terror); and further period of 'hearts and minds' under Sir Gerald Templer.[95] However, this survey of the development of Malaya's intelligence structures defies the convenient and *post hoc* periodisation that have proved useful to other historians. The Emergency intelligence structures evolved organically and as a result of many different influences. Granted some important changes were driven by the arrival of new actors—notably Briggs and Templer, but many were not. Perhaps the only form of periodisation that might be useful for this analysis is the pre-emergency intelligence model and the 'mature' model that served

[95] See, for example, K. Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999) and his numerous other works; K. Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952–54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79–92; S. Smith, "General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence and Propaganda", *Intelligence and National Security*, 16: 3 (2001), pp. 60–78.

Malaya without change from 1957 to 1960. Within the span of the Emergency, the intelligence structures morphed in an organic way and for reasons that cannot be simply attributed to arbitrary or convenient points of time. Perhaps the key question, however, is not whether intelligence during the Emergency can be linked broader historical analysis of the emergency or whether the 'mature' intelligence owed more to Briggs or Templer, but what legacy the experience of managing intelligence in Malaya had on subsequent counterinsurgency.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

The intelligence apparatus that evolved during the Malayan Emergency was not a single-dimensional entity focused solely or even predominantly upon Special Branch. Nor did it the apparatus evolve in a whiggish manner. On the contrary, it was a broad, constantly evolving phenomenon, responding both to internal frictions and external stimuli. It took the best part of seven years to reach a degree of structural maturity, largely because of the infirm foundations laid in the aftermath of the abolition of South East Asia Command (SEAC) in 1945. The transition from an intelligence apparatus in the region focused solely upon defeating the Japanese to a diffuse civilian model design to meet Britain's diverse post-war intelligence needs proved highly problematic. Consequently, the civilian agencies in Malaya (the uninformed and Special branches of the Federation of Malaya's Police, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) and the Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE)) were beset with problems relating to remits and resourcing. While the interests of the JIC (FE) and SIFE evolved away from the counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya, the police struggled to generate timely and high-quality intelligence until the latter years of the Emergency. The military were not, as other commentators have suggested, wedded to the

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16695-3_9

tactics of "counter-terror".[1] In fact, the military attempted to move to what would now be termed "intelligence-led", small-unit, operations at the very beginning of the Emergency, However, the efforts of the security forces for the bulk of the Emergency were frustrated because of a limited flow of intelligence from their civilian colleagues. This led to the reliance on crude and indiscriminate methods to isolate, identify and neutralise the insurgents. Consequently, the security forces were able to contain and reduce but not effectively mitigate the threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) until the mass surrenders of 1958. As such, it is difficult to conclude that the Emergency can provide the basis of an exemplary paradigm for managing intelligence during a counterinsurgency campaign as advocated, for instance, by Sir Robert Thompson.[2]

Most previous assessments of the Emergency recognise the importance of intelligence during the counterinsurgency campaign, a contention which this discussion supports.[3] However, none of the existing assessments, including Leon Comber's history of the Special Branch or Anthony Short's official history of the Emergency, consider (or indeed purport to consider) intelligence in the broader sense, that is across the spectrum of agencies that had a stake in the collection, assessment or prosecution of intelligence, or how intelligence was "managed" on a intra or interagency basis. This has critical implications for the understanding of the Emergency, not only as an episode of significant historic interest but, as will be discussed below, as a campaign upon which much of the United Kingdom and United States of America's current counterinsurgency doctrine is based.

Nearly all previous accounts start their discussion of the Emergency with events in 1948. However, the contest between the Malayan

[1] H. Bennett, "'A Very Salutary Effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415–444; D. French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67* (Oxford 2011); K. Hack, 'Everyone Lived in Fear: Malaya and the British Way of Counter-Insurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5 (2012), pp. 671–699.

[2] R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency—Experience from Malaya and Vietnam* (1966).

[3] See, for instance, A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London 1975), p. 502; R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006), p. 494; F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977), p. 286; R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency—Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London 1966), p. 84; H. Miller, *Jungle War in Malaya*, fn. 90, p. 90; B. Stewart, "Winning in Malaya: An Intelligence Success story", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 267–283.

government and the MCP started when the British returned to Malaya in 1945. Indeed, it was from this point that the military and then, shortly after, the MSS began to provide clear warning of the MCP's intention and capability to undermine the Malaya government. The declaration of a state of emergency merely signalled the government's inability to forestall the communists using normal, peacetime, statutory instruments. Using previously unpublished material, this discussion has shown that what has previously been perceived as simply an intelligence failure by the MSS in 1948 was, in fact, a much broader, systematic, failure, of Britain's post-war intelligence structures in the region. Indeed, the MSS was the junior member of a triumvirate, in conjunction with the SIFE and JIC (FE), that had a collective responsibility to safeguard Malaya's security. However, the triumvirate was riddled with weak remits, competing agendas and inter-organisational disputes, the origins of which can be traced directly to the flawed foundations provided by South East Asia Command's intelligence apparatus.

The roles played by both SIFE and the JIC(FE) during the Emergency is one which has not previously been told. This is partly due to limited sources—the Security Service's SIFE papers have only recently de-declassified and very few JIC (FE) papers are available in The National Archive. That said, there is very little cross-fertilisation of documents originating from SIFE and the JIC (FE) in the documents of other departments. This tends to suggest that neither body played a significant role in the Emergency and it is this that makes them a source of interest. This discussion has shown that SIFE very clearly had a responsibility in relation to security intelligence in Far East, not least Malaya, and it was within the JIC (FE)'s remit both to provide pertinent intelligence assessments and coordinate the intelligence apparatus in the region. However, both bodies were set-up in haste. The result, particularly in relation to SIFE, was interagency competition, conflict and a failure to meet core responsibilities. This contributed significantly to the collapse of the civilian agencies within the Malayan intelligence machine at the beginning of the Emergency.

Special Branch is at the centre of the discussion about intelligence during the Emergency in the existing literature.[4] However, Special

[4] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*; L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–60—The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008); G. Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': The Rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948–1955", *Intelligence and National Security*, 26: 4 (2011), pp. 465–467.

Branch was but one, albeit critical, element of a much broader intelligence apparatus that, until now, has yet to be explored in detail. The apparatus included the JIC (FE), SIFE, the MSS, the Army, the Royal Air Force, and the mainstream Police *as well* as Special Branch. Nor was it the model intelligence agency that the current historiography suggests. On the contrary, it was largely ineffective, partly because of the administrative shackles that tied it to the mainstream CID for a large part of the campaign but, more importantly, because of its dependency on the wider Police Service. Special Branch lacked a viable presence within the Chinese community, the chronic lack of Chinese-speaking officers being a particular problem. It therefore relied upon the wider Police Service, not least the uniformed branch, to secure the trust of the Chinese community, gather raw intelligence and identify informants. Hence, intelligence was just as much an overt function, particularly of the uniformed branch, as it was a covert function as represented by Special Branch. However, until 1952, the uniformed branch was a paramilitary force, wedded to a strategy that alienated the community it needed to befriend. Even when this strategy changed, it would take more than leaflet drops and the staged-managed "Operation Service" to convince members of the Chinese community to take the significant personal risk of providing information about the insurgents to the Police.

While Special Branch was the lead agency in Malaya, it simply failed to provide the leadership necessary to ensure the various intelligence organisations in Malaya operated as one coordinated apparatus rather than a collection of individual entities. Sir William Jenkin was initially brought to Malaya to help improve the way in which Special Branch was operating as a collection agency. He quickly assessed the situation as impossible and tendered his resignation. He was, however, persuaded to stay on, in the guise as Malaya's first Director of Intelligence (DOI). Contrary to Leon Comber's assertions,[5] this was a development which marked not Special Branch's coming of age but its inability to manage itself, let alone the rest of the intelligence apparatus in Malaya. Unfortunately, Jenkin's initial assessment proved correct and he was unable to function within the already dysfunctional core executive of the Malayan government. Indeed, he left the post with the Police and Special Branch in turmoil. It was not until the creation of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC)

[5] See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*, Chapter 5 entitled "The Rise of Special Branch (1950–52): Sir William Jenkin", pp. 131–146.

and the appointment of Jack Morton, former H/SIFE, as the new DOI that Malaya's intelligence apparatus gained the strategic leadership it so desperately required. Civil-military co-operation was critical during the Emergency but, in relation to intelligence, this co-operation was generated by the second Director of Intelligence and the FIC, not Special Branch.

A further point of departure from the existing understanding of the Emergency relates to the role of the military within the broader intelligence apparatus. Rather than being subordinate to the Police, simply an end-user of the intelligence provided by Special Branch, the military for the majority of the Emergency provided the structures that held together Malaya intelligence apparatus while the civilian intelligence agencies first disintegrated and were then reconstructed. This was due to their ability to work in a joint manner. The Army demonstrated instinctive ability to develop collaborative, local-level, intelligence structures and worked with the Police on "anti-bandit operations" even before the formal declaration of Emergency. Indeed, the Army did attempt to develop more efficient methods of counterinsurgency operations from the very beginning of the Emergency, for instance via the Ferret Force and Jungle Training School. Further, through rare access to the Intelligence Corps archives, this discussion has shown that the Field Security Sections had an important intelligence-gathering role in Emergency.[6] Perhaps more surprising is the amount of the examples of the RAF working effectively and innovatively with other agencies from the earliest days of the Emergency, including taking informants in light aircraft to identify insurgent locations, using transport aircraft as airborne communication posts, and deploying intelligence officers into the field. Furthermore, the discussion has shown how the RAF and Army worked effectively together from 1948 throughout the Emergency to coordinate the collection, assessment and distribution of photographic reconnaissance.

The initial, intelligence-led, efforts by the security forces to restore law and order to Malaya during the first months of the Emergency took two forms. The first was the widespread round-up and detention of known communist sympathisers. The second was the use of Army to

[6]The archivists at The Military History Museum provided the author access to the Intelligence Corps archives and also the Medmenham Collection. I was able to speak with two officers who had served in Malaya during the Emergency, one with JAPIC (FE), the other as young subaltern. I am very grateful for their time, insights and hospitality.

target the insurgent gangs roaming the country. This activity prevented the MPAJA units linking up and creating "liberated areas". Quickly, however, the streams of intelligence largely dried up and the security forces were forced to rely on blunt measures to continue to hamper the MPAJA's freedom of manoeuvre and stimulate leads that might allow more focused operations. The use of emergency regulations was bedrock of this, particularly the destruction of property; detention (of both individuals and groups) without trial; deportation; and the ability to use deadly force to detain people providing a warning was first given. This work has deliberately sought to avoid making morale judgements about the use of force during the insurgency—there is already large volume of works which have chosen to take this approach.[7] However, from the perspective of securing intelligence—the focus of this work—it must be stressed these types of measures served a clear but ultimately limited purpose.

Emergency regulations provided the means to create an element of physical space between the insurgents and their supporters. However, resettlement was not a panacea. There were, without doubt, insurgents within New Villages, intermingling with the population, but to interact with the fighters in the jungles they had to leave the villages. This created the opportunity for the security forces to follow, reconnoitre and ambush. This was further enhanced via the control of food which made the insurgents reliant upon their supporters in the New Villages. Moreover, resettlement provided space for the development of psychological warfare operations, designed to convince insurgents and their supporters to take advantage of surrendering to government forces. However useful to the government's efforts to identify, detain or engage the insurgents, the use of emergency regulations only went so far. The key reason was that while they generated tactical intelligence opportunities, their use, particularly in the first half of the Emergency, was far more likely to deter ordinary members of the Chinese community to provide intelligence of their own free will than encourage it. It is for this reason that large number of insurgents remained at large, even at the time of Malayan's independence in 1957.

[7] K. Hack, "'Devils that Suck the Blood of the Malaya People': The Case for Post-revisionist Analysis of Counter-Insurgency Violence", *War in History*, 25: 2 (2018), pp. 202–226; French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67*.

More broadly, it was the efforts of the military that brought time for the civilian agencies, particularly Special Branch and the wider Police organisation to adjust to the demands of counterinsurgency. Granted, biographies and operational debriefs indicate the widespread dissatisfaction within the military about the quality of intelligence being provided by the civilian agencies for the majority of the Emergency. However, the fact that key elements of the apparatus were unstable for large periods of the Emergency only increased the Federation's dependence upon the other more stable parts, and made the production of timely and accurate intelligence, from whatever source or agency, that much more valuable to the counter-insurgents. Indeed, the intelligence that did reach the security forces and that which they were able to self-generate through speculative patrols, cordon-search, food denial, and resettlement, undoubtedly contributed to the frustration of the MCP's efforts to overthrow the Malayan government. However, the security forces struggled to deliver a coup d'grace to the MCP and were ultimately frustrated by the lack of source-led intelligence being provided by Special Branch. Population control did lead to food denial operations, but this proved to be affected by the law of diminishing returns and big unit operations persisted deep into the Emergency, well past Templer's tenure as High Commissioner.

This amounts to a radically different assessment of intelligence during the Emergency. Using a broad range of sources, many of which had not been previously published, it has suggested that the previous consensus that the intelligence war in Malaya was won by the linear development of Special Branch into a model intelligence agency is incorrect. Special Branch was, in fact, for large periods of the Emergency ineffective. It suffered from the lack of Chinese speakers and the administrative handicap of being tied to the CID. However, its biggest problem was a dependency upon the uniformed branch (to use J. P. Brodeur's term—low policing) to win the trust of the Chinese community and identify willing informants.[8] As such it struggled to generate sufficient humint to allow the security forces to render the insurgents a fatal blow. The other civilian intelligence agencies in Malaya also struggled to play a meaningful role in the campaign against the communist insurgents: the MSS, for all its faults, did actually provide clear and consistent warning but was

[8] J-P Brodeur, "High Policing and Low Policing: Remarks About the Policing of Political Activities", *Social Problems,* 30: 5 (June 1983), pp. 507–520.

subverted by the Security Service; SIFE could not fill the void following the abolition of the MSS; and the JIC (FE) was simply too immature and distracted with defence intelligence to contribute to the Emergency. This then left the military. Fortunately for the Malayan government, both the Army and the Royal Air Force were able to hold the wider intelligence apparatus together, securing vital time for the Police to change to move from a paramilitary to a more consensual strategy in 1952; for the creation of a FIC and appointment of Morton as DOI; the acceleration of the pace of decolonisation; and the maturing of the psychological warfare programme. The intelligence model in place in Malaya in 1957 was mature and sophisticated. However, the process of creating this model was far more organisationally complicated, non-linear and arduous, than previous commentators allow. While counter-factuals are often of limited value, it is thought-provoking to consider what would have happened in Malaya if both the military and civilian wings of the intelligence apparatus were working more effectively and in harmony much earlier in campaign: it is unlikely that the Emergency would have lasted for such a long time or that so many resources would have been diverted to Malaya; the pace of decolonisation was unlikely to have been so rapid; indeed, if the warnings of the MSS had been heeded and acted upon, perhaps a state of emergency might never have been declared in Malaya.

Relationship to Current Counterinsurgency Theory

The implications of this correction to the understanding about the management of intelligence in Malaya maybe significant because current counterinsurgency theory has its roots in lessons derived from the Emergency. As noted above and in the introduction to this discussion, it is widely accepted that intelligence is vital to contemporary counterinsurgency. Moreover, it is widely accepted that Malaya is a preeminent example of a successful counterinsurgency campaign, the resonances of which are still evident in current military doctrine. Given the perceived impact that Malaya makes upon current doctrine, it would therefore be logical to conclude that an accurate understanding of the Malayan experience of managing intelligence would be at the heart of current counterinsurgency doctrine.

There are two fundamental problems with this logic, however. The first, as already has been demonstrated, is that the historical record concerning intelligence during the Emergency has required wholesale correction. This suggests that current doctrine is based upon infirm

foundations. Second, current counterinsurgency doctrine actually pays scant attention to the problem of managing intelligence within such a campaign. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to consider fully the validity of contemporary British counterinsurgency doctrine, it is hoped that reassessment of the historical record presented above, in conjunction with a brief assessment of the implications for doctrine, may encourage other scholars to do so.

The Briggs Plan is arguably the seminal work in defining post-war counterinsurgency theory.[9] It will be recalled that General Sir Harold Briggs, in his capacity as Director of Intelligence, planned to dominate the populated areas to build up a feeling of security; to break-up thin-surgents' physical links with the Chinese community, depriving them of supplies and information; and force them to attack in unfavourable situations. In aftermath of the Emergency, Robert Thompson, an Army officer on the staff both of Briggs and General Sir Gerald Templer, wrote a counterinsurgency manual based on his experiences in Malaya.[10] *Defeating Communist Insurgency* proved to be an enduring work and continues to inform the counterinsurgency doctrine of the Britain and the United States. Thompson outlined five key principles for defeating an insurgency: that the government must have a clear political aim; that it must function in accordance with the law; that it must have a plan; that it must give priority to defeating political subversion; and that a government must secure its base area first.[11] General Sir Frank Kitson, who served in the emergencies in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus, developed similar ideas.[12] He stressed the need for good coordinating machinery;

[9] A number of commentators trace the origins of Britain's counter-insurgency theory back to General Callwell's *Small Wars* (1898) and Charles Gywnn's *Imperial Policing* (1934). For a broader discussion of Britain's counterinsurgency theory see A. Alderson, "Britain", in T. Rid and T. Keaney, eds., *Understanding Counterinsurgency—Doctrine, Operations and Challenges* (Oxon 2010), pp. 28–45; D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency—Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 246–268; I. Beckett, "The Historiography of Insurgency", in R. Rich and I. Duyvesteyn, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, pp. 23–31.

[10] R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency—Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London 1966).

[11] Ibid., pp. 50–62.

[12] F. Kitson, *Gangs and Counter-Gangs* (London 1960); Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations—Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London 1971); Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977).

the creation of a political atmosphere within which measures taken by the government will be well received; that the campaign must be conducted within the law; and that there must be an effective intelligence organisation. Thomas Mockaitis further developed this strand of counterinsurgency theory in a broad survey of British experience of small wars between 1919 and 1960.[13] He concluded success in these campaigns was based upon the use of minimum force, the winning of hearts and minds, and civil-military co-operation. Taken together, these works form the bedrock of classic counterinsurgency theory.

Classic counterinsurgency theory, in particular the example of Malaya, proved highly significant in the rewriting in 2007 of the US Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine as embodied in FM 3-24.[14] One of the key authors of FM 3-24 was John Nagl, whose PhD thesis explored a comparison of British experiences in Malaya with those of the United States in Vietnam and was later published as the influential *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*.[15] It is therefore not surprising that FM 3-24, which provided the conceptual foundations for General David Paetraeus' surge in Iraq and his subsequent revision of the campaign in Afghanistan, is fundamentally a restatement of classic counterinsurgency theory, with a particular focus on "hearts and minds."[16] The influence of Malaya on FM 3-24 is clear throughout. For instance, the manual states, "at its core, COIN [counterinsurgency] is a struggle for the population's support." This is a statement that could easily have been made by Briggs, Templer, Thompson, or Kitson. Despite being an operational manual, the authors even felt it important to include a two-page case study on role of policing during the Emergency.[17] The conceptual link is even more explicit when one considers two statements which sum up the British view of the value of intelligence in counterinsurgency operations

[13] T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (London 1990).

[14] US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual.*

[15] J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002).

[16] See T. Ricks, *The Gamble* (London 2009); P. Broadwell, *All In—The Education of David Petraeus* (London 2012); F. Kaplan, *The Insurgents* (New York 2013).

[17] Gian Gentile, an ardent critic of FM 3-24, argues that Malaya formed the "historical bedrock" upon which contemporary counter-insurgency doctrine is based. See G. Gentile, *Wrong Turn—America's Deadly Embrace of Counter-Insurgency* (New York 2013), pp. 12, 25, and 36.

in the 1950s, and the view of the United States Army in 2007. The first is from the Briggs Plan, which states:

> SECURITY breeds CONFIDENCE, confidence produces INFORMATION, better information leads to Security Force SUCCESSES, which again lead to better SECURITY.

The current US Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency manual states:

> effective intelligence drives effective operations. Effective operations produce information, which generates more intelligence. Similarly, ineffective or inaccurate intelligence produces ineffective operations, which produce the opposite results.[18]

Although these two statements were written by officers from two different countries, confronting two foes with two very different ideologies, operating in contrasting geo-political terrains, and separated by at least sixty years, they could have been written by the same person. Although less publicised and therefore less discussed, the current British counterinsurgency doctrine is also resolutely "population-centric" and clearly has the same ideological heritage as its American counterpart.[19]

Many commentators argue that classic counterinsurgency theory continues to remain relevant in the contemporary, post-Iraq and Afghanistan context. For instance, Warren Chin suggests the "British experience in Iraq demonstrates that failure was not due to an obsolete doctrine but happened because the British never implemented a proper counterinsurgency strategy."[20] Similarly Ian Rigden has concluded that "the whole of Great Britain's colonial and post-colonial counterinsurgency experience is relevant and yields 16 premises that, taken together, constitute a theory that outlines how success can be pursued and when success may no

[18] US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago 2007). See AIR 20/7777, The Briggs Plan for the original quotation. See also Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 89.

[19] *British Army Field Manual*, Vol. 1, Part 10, Countering Insurgency. Accessed on 15 July 2015, via http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_11_09_Army_manual.pdf.

[20] W. Chin, "Why Did It All Go Wrong—Reassessing British Counterinsurgency in Iraq", *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Winter 2008), p. 133.

longer be possible when countering an insurgency."[21] Moreover, David Ucko has posited that Malaya continues to offer "a useful and valuable case study in the successful practical implementation of time tested counterinsurgency principles."[22] Although FM 3-24 is being revised at the time of writing, classical counterinsurgency theory, and thus Malaya, remains at the centre of both current British and American doctrine.

However, perhaps unsurprisingly given the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, others have questioned the validity of classical counterinsurgency theory. In particular, the recent raft of revisionist accounts of Britain's conduct during her wars of decolonisation, prompted by the court cases brought against the government by the relatives of those killed by the Scots Guards at Batang Kali in Malaya and by former Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya, sit uncomfortably with the principles articulated by Robert Thompson, Frank Kitson and Thomas Mockaitis.[23] This implies that the real character of the Emergency was one of "counter-terror" rather than "hearts and minds", something which classical counter-insurgent theorists, not least the authors of FM 3-24, have subsequently chosen to ignore. Indeed, Robert Egnell has suggested, "the dominant narrative of British counterinsurgency experience has…been criticised as empirically weak and subjective over the last few years."[24]

A number of contemporary counter-insurgents, most notably Gian Gentile, have joined revisionist academics in questioning the validity of the lessons drawn from the Emergency. This appears to have orginated, at least in part, in the reaction against Brigadier Aylwin-Foster's fierce critique of the United States management of the "Phase IV" of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, in which he re-emphasised the traditional British theory of counterinsurgency, much of which was drawn from the

[21] I. Rigden, *The British Approach to Counter-Insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges,* Strategic Research Project—US Army War College, Abstract. See also D. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story", *Defence Studies,* 10: 1–2 (March–June 2010), pp. 13–39.

[22] Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency", *Defence Studies*, 10: 1–2 (March–June 2010), p. 36.

[23] See, for instance, French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67*; Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5, pp. 671–699; Bennet, "A Very Salutary Effect", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415–444.

[24] R. Egnell, "Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan: What Now for British counter-Insurgency," *International Affairs*, 87: 2 (2011), p. 300.

Malayan campaign.[25] Unfortunately, fortune was soon to reveal that the British performance in Basra also appeared not to encompass the lessons from previous counterinsurgency campaigns (although, of course, there is an argument which suggests that neither Basra nor Helmand were orthodox insurgencies). This appears, however, not to have deflected staff officers from clinging on to past glories. Indeed, as Frank Ledwidge states, "no visitor to military headquarters in Iraq or, especially, Afghanistan could miss the almost compulsory mentions in presentations to guests (and indeed serving soldiers) of this jungle war, along time ago, far away and in the most different environment imaginable."[26] Indeed, some commentators have suggested that the circumstances in Malaya were so unique—in particular, that the MCP did not have external support, that the British were able to use selective but highly coercive measures, and ultimately, were forced to grant independence to neuter the communist cause—that the Emergency should never have been used as a model upon which doctrine could be based.[27]

Others have argued that the contemporary threat is so different from the post-war colonial emergencies as to make the British counterinsurgency experience in Malaya largely irrelevant. The influential theorist, David Kilcullen, is the key protagonist of this argument. He maintains that contemporary insurgents "may not be seeking to overthrow the state, may have no coherent strategy or may pursue a faith-based approach difficult to counter with traditional methods. There may be numerous competing insurgencies in one theatre, meaning that the counterinsurgency must control the overall environment rather than defeat a specific enemy."[28] Thus, Kilcullen argues, "that not only is classical COIN not the new dominant paradigm for Western intervention, but that it *should not be*…"[29]

Hence, at the time of writing, the current position is that counterinsurgency doctrine for both Britain and the United States remains

[25] N. Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations", *Military Review*, November–December 2005.

[26] F. Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars* (London 2011), p. 154.

[27] Ibid., p. 159; See also, Rigden, *The British Approach to Counter-Insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges,* p. 10; Gentile, *Wrong Turn,* pp. 37–39.

[28] D. Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency Redux", *Survival*, 48: 4 (2006), pp. 111–130.

[29] D. Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency—The State of a Controversial Art," in Rich and Duyvesteyn, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, p. 128.

founded, in large part, upon the experiences of the Malayan Emergency. While a number of commentators consider this doctrine as fundamentally sound, it has attracted significant criticism from two camps. The first suggests that the Malayan people were repressed and coerced into submission, and that concept of "hearts and minds" was artificial construct, hence the current doctrine is unsound. The second argues the experiences of the colonial government in Malaya some sixty years ago bare little resemblance to contemporary security challenges.

While these criticisms have merit, the fundamental problem with classical and neo-classical counterinsurgency theory, as by-product of the Emergency, relates to the abject lack of detailed consideration of intelligence. For all the rhetoric about the importance of intelligence to counterinsurgency, the key doctrinal publications based on the Emergency consider the issue with a surprising lack of rigour. Somewhat ironically, this can be traced back to the Briggs Plan, the bedrock upon which classical and neo-classical counterinsurgency is based. It will be recalled that the plan called for the creation of a "feeling complete security in the populated areas" in order to secure "a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources." The Police, via Special Branch would develop this information. The other aspects of the plan were discussed in more considerable detail, with paragraphs dedicated to the provision of additional District Officers, increasing the Police, Police wireless communications the creation of a Federal War Council, road-making, repatriation, propaganda, resettlement, and finance. However, the development of intelligence (either in relation to collection, analysis or organisation) simply was not subject to similar elucidation.[30] Similarly, virtually every subsequent major review of Emergency, including Lyttelton's 1951 report and successive end of year reports give the issue of intelligence scant consideration.[31] Typical is General Bower's review of the Emergency written in 1957, in which the discussion of intelligence is

[30]AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya, from April 1950 to November 1951, by Sir Harold Briggs.

[31]See CAB 129/48, c (51) 26, The Situation in Malaya: A Cabinet Memorandum by Lyttelton, dated 20 November 1951; WO 216/806, Sir Rob Lockhart (Director of Operations) to Sir William Slim (CIGS), 14 January 1952; WO 208/3219, Director of Operations, Malaya, "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954"; WO 216/885, Bourne to Harding, 3 June 1955; WO 208/5356, Director of Operations, Malaya, 'Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956'.

limited to four small paragraphs (out of a total of 126). The first two paragraphs give a broad outline of the intelligence apparatus, as it was in 1957. The second two paragraphs suggest that Special Branch was performing admirably but that government must continue to post "really good men to Special Branch." In a document partly designed to identify lessons for future counterinsurgency campaigns, it seems almost negligent to distill the development of Malayan intelligence machine over the course of nine years into this shallow evaluation.[32]

This is a pattern that continues in subsequent, post Emergency, assessments of intelligence during the campaign. For instance, the collection, assessment or exploitation of intelligence does not even feature as one of Thompson's five principles of counterinsurgency.[33] The concept does, admittedly, constitute a small chapter in *Defeating Communist Insurgency* in which he highlights a number of points. Thompson first explains the need for an intelligence agency to identify and tackle a threat at the subversive stage, which is generally the precursor to a more developed campaign of insurgency. This is relatively self-evident—the longer a threat has time to mature, the harder it will be to tackle. However, Thompson does not consider *how* an intelligence agency could set about this task. He then argues that "ideally there should be just one organisation responsible for all security intelligence within the country." Thompson suggests that this organisation should be Special Branch. Clearly referring to the inter-organisational feud between the MSS and SIFE between 1946 and 1948, he says, "if there is more than one, it is almost impossible to define the respective responsibilities of each organisation or to devise any means of coordinating activities." However, this is problematic for two reasons. First, in nearly all cases there is going to be more than one intelligence organisation, conceivable at least three-service intelligence organisations plus the Police. Second, in the case of Malaya, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the proposed Local Intelligence Committee, the post of Director of Intelligence, and the Federal Intelligence Committee all proved potentially viable models for the coordination intelligence—the problem was that the systems were immature and, until the second iteration of the DOI under Jack Morton, in concert with the FIC, they were implemented poorly.

[32]AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Malaya, *Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957*, September 1957.

[33]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, pp. 50–62.

The final key point made by Thompson was that "the intelligence organisation, however good, must still limit its targets and not disperse its effort too widely."[34] This, really, is also self-evident. It is hard not to conclude that Thompson's consideration of intelligence, based on the Malayan experience, is cursory.

However, Kitson's gives the concept even less attention—just over two pages in *A Bunch of Five*. Nevertheless, he raises a really important question of how an intelligence agency can adjust to the demands of an incipient or fully developed insurgency. He says that:

> The problem about establishing the sort organisation needed is that in normal times the requirement can best be met by a small, highly centralised and highly secure system which produces a relatively small amount of precise top-level information, whereas once an insurgent organisation builds up, the operational requirement is for a mass of lower level information which must of necessity be less reliable.[35]

Frank Kitson notes that this is a particularly difficult issue, not least because "expansion, decentralisation and contact with the outside world in the form of junior military commanders all bring in their train the possibility for the odd indiscretion."[36] This is certainly a risk that the revisionist historians such as David French, Huw Bennett, and Karl Hack believe was realised in Malaya.[37] Moreover, an influx of military officers into an existing civilian intelligence organisation could jeopardise a country's constitutional status quo. Frustratingly, Kitson does not provide any remedies to these problems. He concludes, somewhat meekly, "somehow the government has to ensure the essential risks are accepted and necessary action is taken."[38] It is unfortunate that Kitson does not explore this issue at greater length.

Similarly, the discussion of intelligence within FM 3–24 is limited largely to operational considerations, such as pre-deployment intelligence planning, how to define the threat, and understanding different streams

[34] Ibid., pp. 84–89.

[35] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, p. 287.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Bennett, "A Very Salutary Effect", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3, pp. 415–444; French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency 1945–67* (Oxford 2011); Hack, "Everyone Lived in Fear", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4–5, pp. 671–699.

[38] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, p. 288.

of intelligence available to a commander. The manual does suggest that intelligence collaboration is important to "organise the collection and analysis actions of various units and organisations into a coherent, mutually supportive intelligence effort."[39] And yet, the manual offers no advice or guidance on how to ensure this is done effectively. Richard Schultz and Andrea Dew for The New York Times highlighted this problem in a review of an early draft of FM 3-24. They noted that:

> The Pentagon manual rightly insists that 'intelligence drives operations' and that 'without good intelligence, a counter-insurgent is like a blind boxer.' Yet the document provides no organizational blueprint for collecting such intelligence…the British and Israeli's have blueprints for successful intelligence architecture. This is a key counterinsurgency tool that must be included in the final version of the Pentagon's counterinsurgency manual.[40]

This review is interesting for two reasons. First, it notes the deficiency in FM 3-24 in relation to intelligence. The manual "rightly focuses heavily upon understanding the cultural, religious, and social sensitivities of a host population, about the need to map potential threats, the relative merits of human versus technical forms of intelligence gathering."[41] However, there is no discussion of how officials can adapt and develop intelligence agencies to meet the demands of particular situation, how to prioritise different intelligence requirements or harmonise the different organisations which will form an intelligence apparatus. Second, and perhaps even more notable, the reviewers, suggest that Britain (and Israel) have the "blueprints for successful intelligence architecture." It is not clear to what blueprint the reviewers refer—certainly neither Briggs, Thompson, Kitson, or Mockaitis offer anything like a set of plans to create a intelligence apparatus suitable for a counterinsurgency campaign. Indeed, while many commentators claim to understand the Malayan Emergency, classical and neo-classical counterinsurgency doctrine neither reflects accurately the manner in which intelligence apparatus evolved in that campaign nor provides robust "lessons", "principles" or "blue prints" for future counterinsurgents.

[39] US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 132.

[40] R. Schultz and A. Dew, "Counterinsurgency, by the Book", *The New York Times,* 7 August 2006.

[41] Ibid.

The Mythical Blue Print for Intelligence?

While the primary aim of this thesis is not to provide another set of principles for counterinsurgency, it is possible to draw some inferences about the organisation and management of an intelligence apparatus in such a campaign, based upon this revised account of the experience in Malaya.

Indicator and Warnings

It is self-evident that intelligence is the key commodity in a counterinsurgency campaign—without it the security forces will be unable to identify those intending to carry out acts of subversion or insurgency and prevent, detain or eliminate them.[42] However, as Frank Kitson suggests, it is vital to gather that intelligence as early as possible in the insurgent campaign, not least because this will often presage a government response by months, if not years. For instance, the state of emergency in Malaya was declared only when the MCP's campaign of violence had escalated to unmanageable proportions. As has been discussed, contrary to the orthodox understanding that informed Thompson et al., the MSS, despite its imperfections, provided consistent warnings of the threat posed by the MCP to the security of the Federation at least eighteen months prior to the declaration of Emergency. And yet these warnings were not heeded. This was primarily because the effects of Sir Percy Sillitoe's campaign to subvert the MSS had taken effect. However, it does also appear that the dynamic between officials and the MSS was out-of-balance. Modern commentators recognise that there needs to be an equilibrium between officials requesting (or "pulling") intelligence on certain themes or subjects from their intelligence agencies and the latter sending (or "pushing") intelligence to the former which they think might be of interest.[43] In the case of Malaya, a broad range of intelligence was "pushed" by the MSS on a fortnightly basis to officials but

[42] Thompson, *Defeating Communist* Insurgency, p. 84; Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, p. 287; D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare—Theory and Practice* (London 2006), p. 50; FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 79; Alderson, "Britain", in Rid and Keaney, eds., *Understanding Counterinsurgency,* p. 29.

[43] P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore Station and the Role of the Far East Controller: Secret Intelligence Structure and Process in Post-war Colonial Administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 105–129.

there is no evidence to suggest those officials directed that process in anyway. This raises questions about the potential value they placed on security intelligence in general and, more specifically, that provided by the MSS.

Hence, perhaps the first lesson that might drawn from the Emergency is that the "push–pull" dynamic between policy-makers and intelligences needs to be balanced. This is a problem with which contemporary practitioners continue to wrestle. For instance, in January 2010 Michael Flynn, Matt Pottinger and Paul Batchelor released an influential report entitled *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*. In it they say,

> Of critical importance to the war effort is how a commander orders his or her intelligence apparatus to undertake finite collection, production, and dissemination. "If a commander does not effectively define and prioritise intelligence requirements," Marine Corps doctrine warns, "the entire effort may falter."[44]

If the push-pull dynamic is successfully balanced, the next challenge is to ensure that policy-makers are prepared to accept unpalatable or unforeseen intelligence assessments, or at least work with the intelligence organisations to probe and substantiate these assessments, rather than dismiss or ignore. Of course, in the years since the end of the Emergency both practitioners and scholars have undertaken a great deal of work on cognitive bias and the relationship between intelligence providers and consumers.[45] And yet significant fault lines still occur, as exemplified

[44] M. Flynn, M. Pottinger, and P. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Centre for a New American Security January 2010), p. 23. Accessed on 6 July 2015 via, www.cnas.org/files/…/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf.

[45] See, for instance, J. Cooper, *Curing Analytical Pathologies—Pathways to Improved Intelligence Analysis* (Centre for the Study of Intelligence 2005); A. Gendron, "Improving the IC's Analytical Performance", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 25: 2 (2012), pp. 420–426; S. Marrin, "Intelligence Analysis Theory: Explaining and Predicting Analytical Responsibilities", *Intelligence and National Security*, 22: 6 (2008), pp. 821–846; S. Marrin, "Preventing Intelligence Failures by Learning from the Past", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 17: 4 (2004), pp. 655–672; C. Wastell, "Cognitive Predisposition and Intelligence Analyst Reasoning", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 23: 3 (2010), pp. 449–460.

in the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq debacle.[46] Even if this relationship is sound (and it is often not), a robust and imaginative set of Indications and Warnings metrics may pay dividends because at the point in which a besieged government recognises that it is under significant threat, its opponents may have already spent years quietly preparing in the shadows.[47]

Agency Adaptation

Depending upon how mature the insurgency is at the point of discovery, the existing intelligence agencies are likely to be required to change focus rapidly to meet the threat. The more mature the insurgency, the more rapidly the intelligence agencies may have to change. In the case of Malaya, the civilian elements of the intelligence apparatus struggled to make this change. Indeed, the declaration of Emergency triggered an unseemly apportioning of blame for the apparent failure to forecast the start of the communist insurgency. Sir Edward Gent, who died in an aircraft crash on the way back to London for talks, could not defend his reputation. Col. John Dalley, who had already been subject to a significant campaign of back briefing by Sir Percy Sillitoe, was made an escapegoat and the MSS was abolished. In hindsight, the latter decision seems extraordinary. The failings that Sillitoe had highlighted over the previous twelve months were that the MSS might be operating outside of Malaya and that it was not sharing intelligence with SIFE. These were issues that could easily be remedied and did not warrant the abolition of Malaya's sole intelligence service at the time it was needed the most. The folly of this decision was highlighted by the inability of the Security Service in the Far East to fill the void left by the demise of MSS and real challenges faced by the newly created Special Branch of the Federation of Malaya Police.

The episode highlights the problems faced by intelligence agencies when confronted with a paradigm changing threat, transitioning from a peacetime stance to a level of organisational activity suitable for a pseudo war. None of the civilian intelligence organisations in Malaya adapted

[46] Lord Butler, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London 2004).

[47] For instance, see S. Freyn, 'Using Structured Methods to Improve Indicator and Warning Analysis, *Competitive Intelligence,* 15: 4 (October / December 2013), pp. 22–29.

quickly or efficiently to the demands of the emergency: the MSS did not get a chance to do so; the JIC (FE) failed to recognise the need to do so; despite Sillitoe's ambitions, SIFE simply lacked capacity to replace the MSS; Special Branch was bereft of both a presence on the ground or an effective analytical capability; the uniformed branch of the Police shifted quickly to a paramilitary strategy which, arguably, was necessary to halt insurgent momentum in the short-term but was entirely at odds with the need to generate intelligence in the long-term. Over time and at different rates, the MSS, JIC (FE) and SIFE left the orbit of the Emergency. This, then, left the Police alone among the civilian intelligence agencies to confront the MCP. However, it was not until Col Arthur Young's reforms took effect in the mid-1950s that either the Special or uniformed branches were able to counter the insurgent threat effectively.

In contrast to the civilian agencies, however, the military were able to adapt quickly to the demands of the Emergency. It has been shown how quickly the Army moved to establish interagency committees to coordinate local counterinsurgency efforts. Just as importantly, the RAF's decision to co-locate its forward Headquarters with Army allowed the creation of what would be known as the Joint Operations Centre, which proved to be the keystone upon which an effective theatre-level intelligence apparatus was built. Similarly, the creation of JAPIC (FE) ensured that there was an effective interagency photint capacity from the earliest stages of the Emergency. A central tenet of conventional British counterinsurgency theory states that it is fundamentally a civil function. However, in relation to the intelligence effort, it was the armed services that demonstrated the institutional agility to adapt to the needs of the emergency—it was the military, not Special Branch or any of the civilian intelligence agencies that created the local and theatre-level intelligence framework that were in place throughout the Emergency.

The presumption displayed by Thompson and Kitson that future British counterinsurgency campaigns would focus upon a Special Branch is a logical function of the colonial context of the time. However, as Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, contemporary British counterinsurgency operations are unlikely to benefit from an effective, consensual-based, local Police force. This, in fact, is not unlike the situation in Malaya at least until Arthur Young's reforms began to take effect. Contemporary counter-insurgents may well benefit from considering the very significant burden this placed upon the Army and Royal Air Force "to pick up the intelligence baton." Such a burden not only required the military

personal to work together effectively, it demanded a different mindset. Indeed, many revisionist critics suggest that the military in Malaya did not alter its mindset, resulting in repression. Certainly, repeating the mantra of "hearts and minds" is not sufficient—in the future counter-insurgency campaigns, and in lieu of an effective local Police force, it is likely the military will have to become "pseudo" Police officers to enable them to really get into and understand the community they are trying to protect.

All Source Intelligence

The Emergency was a truly a multi-agency affair: the uniform branch of the Police, the Special Branch of the Police, the Army, the RAF, and JAPIC (FE) were key actors throughout the Emergency. Moreover, the JIC (FE) and the Security Service in the guise of SIFE *should* also have been key actors but largely failed to fulfil their responsibilities and evolved away from the counterinsurgency campaign.

Despite the presence of these multiple intelligence agencies during the Emergency, commentators focus nearly entirely upon Special Branch. In reality, as this thesis has shown, it would be entirely incorrect to characterise the intelligence effort in Malaya as being solely or predominantly the affair of Special Branch. Arguably, it was the ordinary "bobby" rather than the Special Branch detective who held the fate of Malaya in his hands—lacking a presence on the ground, particularly in relation to Chinese speakers, Special Branch depended upon their uniformed colleagues to identify sources of information from within the Chinese community. Robert Thompson suggests in theory a police force is the idea agency to counter an insurgency because generally "the police force is a static organisation reaching out into every corner of the country and will have had long experience of close contact with the population."[48] However, in Malaya this was not the case—due to the severe dislocation during the Second World War and its aftermath, the Malayan Police did not reach into every corner the country and its experience of close contact with the population was interrupted for four years by the Japanese occupying forces. It is understandable in theory that Thompson

[48]Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 85; C. Grado, *Anticipating Surprise, Analysis for Strategic Warning* (Centre for Strategic Intelligence Research 2002); S. Khalsa, *Forecasting Terrorism—Indicators and Proven Analytic Techniques* (Oxford 2004).

subsequently suggested that the Army should not have any responsibility for internal security intelligence. At least in the case of Malaya, however, the Police Service wholly unprepared for the demands of insurgency and there was little option other than to use a mixture of the military and paramilitary forces to fill the void.

This placed a huge pressure on the military to assume a new character—to move from a weight of numbers and contesting for territory to decentralised forces, to contesting for the allegiance of the population until the Police were in position to take the burden. From the earliest days of the Emergency the military looked to generate operational intelligence, whether that was via the Ferret Force, the efforts the Intelligence Corps or RAF intelligence officers out on patrol with their security force colleagues, and to assess and coordinate that information via means of district-level intelligence committees. Similarly the Army worked jointly with the RAF to develop aerial intelligence. Photint and visual surveillance provided an on-going and critical stream of intelligence to the security forces providing products such as up-to-date maps and detailed photographic surveys, and the capability of coordinating operations from the air and calling in airstrikes. There was, therefore, a clear desire to inject momentum into the intelligence cycle. However, it was not until the late 1950s that the Police was able to provide the Army with sufficient human intelligence to move to a more targeted method of operations. Within this context, the Emergency shows the importance of an integrated operational intelligence capacity in which *all* streams of potential information are assessed—if the government simply relied upon the Special Branch, as Thompson retrospectively advocated, the Emergency may well have taken a very different course.

The 2010 Flynn Report suggested that information gathering in counterinsurgency differs from that in conventional warfare: "In a conventional conflict, ground units depend heavily on intelligence from higher commands to help them navigate the fog of war…information flows largely from the top down. In a counterinsurgency, the flow is (or should be) reversed."[49] This undoubtedly would be the ideal position. And yet neither Malaya nor Afghanistan presented circumstances to allow this position to develop nor, probably, will any counterinsurgency environment. Perhaps a key point from Malaya was that all forms

[49]Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, p. 12.

of intelligence were critical. The flow of humint was, for large periods of the Emergency limited, which only elevated the value of other streams of intelligence. Just as important, however, was the means of networking intelligence provided by the Joint Intelligence Rooms at District and State level, the Joint Operations Centre and JAPIC (FE) at a theatre level, and FIC at a Federal level.

Strategic Direction

All these streams of information required coordination, which generated a number of intractable problems during the first six years of the Emergency. The civilian intelligence agencies in Malaya were beset by divisive inter-organisational squabbling even prior to the declaration of emergency. This was largely because until 1952 there was no one person, department or organisation able to coordinate intelligence and referee squabbles. The obvious candidate for the role was the JIC (FE), not least because its charter enshrined such duties. However, the committee was too immature and narrowly focused to recognise the need for intervention or the potential consequences if it did not. Sir Henry Gurney refused to create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC), which may well have provided the direction and coordination that was desperately needed. While Gurney did not support the idea of a LIC, he did decide to establish the post of Director of Intelligence, partly to reform Special Branch and partly to coordinate the wider intelligence apparatus. However, in its initial guise under Sir William Jenkin, interagency intelligence tensions only increased.

Hence, in the eighteen months prior to the declaration of Emergency and for at least four years of the subsequent counterinsurgency campaign, there was little, if any, strategic coordination of intelligence. The bitter and highly destructive feud between the Security Service and the Malayan Security Service was not forestalled or minimised. Moreover, Nicol Gray, the Police Commissioner, was unable to coordinate the efforts of the Police, Special Branch, the Army, the Royal Air Force and the Security Service. Moreover, Jenkin failed to resolve the situation—in fact he made it worse. Matters improved significantly under Jack Morton and Sir Gerald Templer but this is more attributable their strength of personality than any robust, structural, resolution to the general problem of coordinating Emergency intelligence and the particular issue of

defining the relationship between the Director of Intelligence and the High Commissioner.

Much of the problem can be traced back to the process of designing Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. SEAC provided a poor foundation. Its interpretation of the JIC was arguably the least developed of the iterations in operation across the globe during the Second World War. Moreover, SEAC's relative lack of demand for security intelligence meant that the Counter Intelligence Combined Board provided SIFE with a limited inherence, both in terms of conceptual a foundation or practical resources. The planning for the post-war apparatus exacerbated the situation. Although the idea of SIFE had been debated for some years, the collapse of the Japanese at the end of the Second World War caught officials off-guard and there was a pressing need to commence effective government of British territories in region as soon as possible. The result was that SIFE, the MSS and JIC (FE) were introduced quickly, with poorly defined remits. This might not have mattered had the MCP decided not to destabilise Malaya—the issues emerging from the limited remits could have been considered, debated and resolved without the pressure of an emerging insurgency. This, however, was not the case—the Emergency was declared when SIFE, the MSS, and the JIC (FE) were immature, lacking the organisation agility to adapt quickly to the MCP challenge. The result was that rather than working in concert the MSS and SIFE were in a state of deep conflict. Moreover, the JIC (FE) was in the process of establishing itself, and simply ignored Malaya's rapid decline into conflict.

With the benefit of hindsight, the solution to this issue appears self-evident. Either the JIC (FE) had to meet the element of its charter that gave it a responsibility for coordinating the intelligence apparatus in the region or the Federation had to create a Local Intelligence Committee, chaired by a non-executive Director of Intelligence. Only in this way could a degree of strategic coordination be imposed upon the various decentralised components of Malaya's intelligence machine. It remains difficult to understand why Gurney opposed so vigorously this solution, particularly when one considers his otherwise sophisticated and perceptive understanding of the security problems with which he was confronted. The problem was not solved until 1952, when Templer created the Federal Intelligence Committee. It is near impossible to correlate with any degree of certainly the impact that the FIC had upon the

counterinsurgency campaign. Nevertheless, a decrease of conflict within the Malayan core executive, a change in interagency relations from competition to dependence, and a general stability characterises the Malaya intelligence apparatus after the establishment of the FIC, which is in marked contrast with the first four years of the Emergency.

The problems experienced by the Malayan authorities in coordinating emergency intelligence highlights a problem which will inevitably be a pressing challenge in any contemporary counterinsurgency operation. The fact that the Malayan authorities took over four years to resolve this problem meant that the Emergency was severely compromised when such inter-organisation strife could be least afforded.

Final Thoughts

Far from being irrelevant to contemporary counter-insurgents, the Emergency continues to provoke discussion about its conceptual legacy and value of the perceived lessons upon which current doctrine in the United Kingdom and United States is based. It is unfortunate that for the best part of fifty-years, through misinterpretation and well-intentioned myth-making, a skewed understanding of the development and management of intelligence has worked its way both into the historiography of the Emergency and, perhaps more importantly, into subsequent counterinsurgency theory.[50] Rather being dominated by a Special Branch which developed in a linear, whiggish, fashion, the intelligence apparatus in Malaya was broad and diffuse, with different elements developing independently and in non-linear rates. The origins of its failure to forecast the start of the insurgency were far deeper than the simple explanation that the MSS was flawed. Rather than being the defining element, Special Branch was but one of a number of organisations that subsequently fought the counterinsurgency. Moreover, it was dependent upon a Police force that was unable to serve as the "eyes and ears" of Special Branch in any meaningful way to due to paramilitary strategy which was employed in the first four years of the Emergency. It fell to the military to "hold the ring" until the civilian elements of the intelligence apparatus had fully adapted to the demands of counterinsurgency. This is a

[50] Paul Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn advocate a similar argument in relation to 'hearts and minds'. See Rich and Duyvesteyn, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, pp. 362–363.

fundamentally different interpretation of the evolution of intelligence during the Emergency. Moreover, it leads to the conclusion that effective forecasting; the need to react proportionately when a threat is detected; the importance of truly joint intelligence operations; and effective strategic coordination are the enduring lessons from the Emergency in relation to intelligence.

General Briggs bemoaned in his plan that intelligence was "our Achilles' heel".[51] Despite his best efforts, it remained the counter-insurgents' "Achilles' heel" for the best part of the Emergency. The efforts of the Federation to tackle the communist insurgency do not provide a blueprint or mystical formula for managing intelligence that might be used without alteration to other campaigns. The process of devising an appropriate intelligence structure suitable to produce sufficient intelligence to halt the Emergency was tortuous and prolonged. In many ways, it provides the model of what *not* to do. However, it is hoped that this thesis may encourage contemporary counter-insurgents to reconsider the management of intelligence during the Emergency and whether the efforts of people like Dalley, Gurney, Briggs, Templer, Young and Morton may have continued relevance in today's difficult, unconventional, security situation.

[51]AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya, from April 1950 to November 1951, by Sir Harold Briggs.

Appendix A: The Ballad of the SACK and SINK

At a time when the difficulties between the 'SAC's Planners' and the 'C-in-C Planners' were at their height the following Ballad was written. It is reproduced here as a warning against trying to run two separate Joint Planning teams.[1]

"Oh Sinks are Sinks and Sacks are Sacks,
And each of the other must think
That they ought to be ruthlessly pruned with an axe,
Or be drowned in an ocean of ink

The Sinker's work will never win
The war, say Sacker's planners;
It just consists of throwing in
Obscure logistic spanners.

[1]WO 203/6193, Headquarters, Supreme Allied Command South East Asia, "The Organisation and Working of the Joint Planning Staff in SEAC", SAC (46) 8, 1 February 1946, Appendix B.

R. C. Arditti, *Counterinsurgency Intelligence and the Emergency in Malaya*, Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,
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And so their plan are oft repu
diated by the Sackers
(Who, in the Sinker's humble view,
are definitely crackers).

Such Sacker's work that sees the light
of day is handed back;
This is the reason for the trite
expression "cul de Sac"

Oh, many and fruity the jokes to be cracked
and many the toasts to be drunk
Before the Sinkers are finally sacked
Or the Sackers are totally sunk.

An end to levity let us see;
Let sacks and sinks be link'd;
And let their future effusions be
Brief, lucid and sac-sinct."

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