RED SHADOW OVER MALAYA

By the same Author

Memoirs of a Junior Officer

RED SHADOW OVER MALAYA

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This Book is Dedicated
to the
OFFICERS AND MEN
who served
in
63 GURKHA INFANTRY BRIGADE
and
made the story
which
I here unfold

PREFACE

In this book I have tried to give an account of the operations against the bandits in Malaya, undertaken by 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, while I had the honour of commanding it—from January 1952 to December 1954. The other brigades in Malaya must have had the same sort of experiences; so I believe this book gives a fairly general picture of operations in Malaya as seen from the level of Brigade Headquarters.

This is not intended to be a controversial book. It is not easy, however, to describe so many things without occasionally stating or implying opinions. These are always my own personal opinions. Except where stated, they do not necessarily express official opinion as well. Some opinions may, in fact, be contrary to official opinion. Where there has been controversy, I have tried to state fairly both sides of the case.

I have used the expression "bandits" throughout the book. The official term for a bandit in Malaya is "Communist terrorist," abbreviated to C.T. The only reason I have not used that term is that it is rather a mouthful for constant repetition, and its abbreviation is not generally known outside Malaya. Communist terrorist is, however, a good description of the bandits in question.

A word about Security. The reader may wonder whether anything said in this book is detrimental to the public interest. The answer is No. I have described some of our processes in the planning and execution of operations, but all have been revealed from time to time in the Press. This will not help the Communists. I have described only events that are finished and done with, and I have described some stratagems that were used. This will not affect the future. All stratagems are variants of a classical few, and the stratagems described in this book are as old as the hills. I have been careful to avoid mention of plans for the future.

When I decided to write this book in October 1954—three months before leaving Malaya—I asked various officers for help: statistics, copies of speeches, photographs, diaries of events and so on. Without exception these officers rallied far better than I deserved. Below are the names of some of those to whom I am particularly indebted and to whom go my grateful thanks.

Mr D. C. Watherston, Chief Secretary to the Federal Government. Mr W. P. Thompson, Malayan Police. Major Stuckey, South Staffordshire Regiment. Major Hart, R.E. Captain Willie MacHardie, Gordon Highlanders. Captain Chalkley, Intelligence Corps. Major Poulson, Buffs. Mr Woolnough, Malayan Police. Mr Howes, Malayan Police. Major The Lord Wyndford and Mr Power, both on the staff of H.E. The High Commissioner. Mr M. C. ff. Sheppard, Malayan Civil Service, offered particular help in Chapter XV.

I am also indebted to the subordinates of these officers who, I was told, did the spade work for their masters. These are unknown warriors, but they have my thanks.

I have made use of some material that I wrote in ' Blackwood's Magazine ' and ' The Military Engineer.' I thank the Editors severally and collectively for permission to republish.

Finally, I must thank those to whom this book is gratefully dedicated—the Officers and Men of 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade.

M. C. A. H.

EASTER 1955.

PS.—I hope no one will think this is an officially sponsored book. It is not. I, alone, am responsible for the opinions stated and for the accuracy of the facts given.

M. C. A. H.

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FOREWORD

In this book Brigadier Henniker describes the operations carried out in Malaya by his brigade during the three years he commanded it. Based on first-hand experience, it is a story of real and lively interest to the layman as well as to the military reader.

Some of the questions Brigadier Henniker touches on are of course controversial, and individual readers will have their own opinion; but irrespective of such matters there are three features of the campaign against the Communist terrorists in Malaya that stand out prominently throughout the story. First, the wide variety of tasks which the troops in Malaya are called upon to perform, and the imagination and skill, the endurance and patience with which the many difficulties that surround these tasks have been met and overcome. Second, the very high standard demanded of the leaders, both military and civilian at all levels, which the author himself proved by his own example. And third, the fact that in conditions such as exist in Malaya, close and happy relationships between the Armed Forces, the Police and the Civil Administration are of crucial importance. It is on these three subjects that the military reader should ponder.

Read in quick succession, the stories of ambushes, patrol encounters and other incidents present an exciting picture, but it is as well to remember that they cover some three years, and that in between were long periods of dull and tedious work with no self-evident result. It is perhaps in his readiness to take the rough with the smooth with never-failing good humour, and in his friendly understanding attitude to the peoples of Malaya and their many problems, as much as in his courage and skill in action that the British soldier has made a unique contribution to the steady improvement in security and stability in Malaya.

I commend this book to all readers as a story of which not only Brigadier Henniker and his gallant troops but the whole British people can justly be proud.

John Harding F.M.

CHAPTER I

The Prospects

(*See Map I*)

If you have been a soldier for a quarter of a century, as I had been in 1951, you cannot fail to have a random correspondence with all sorts and conditions of men with whom you have served from time to time. Since 1945 I have kept a selection of these letters. They came from all parts of the world and from every stratum of society.

It was not, therefore, much of a surprise when I found on my table one August morning a blue envelope containing two sheets of blue, lined notepaper from a cheap block and inscribed in the hand of one who was clearly a clerk. The address at the top was of one of the departments of the War Office. The post-mark was Whitehall. The writer had presumably written it during the afternoon to while away the time and had posted it on his way home.

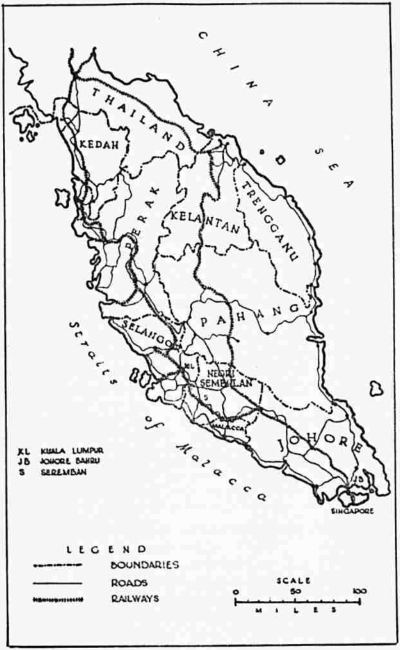
Sir : (it ran)

> You will remember me in the 38th Field Company in 1939. Well, now I work in this department of the War Box and yesterday I happened to see a file in which it was stated that you, Sir, had been appointed Commander (Brigadier) of 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade in Malaya with effect from 1st January 1952.
>
> Sir, I do congratulate you on your promotion and I wish you the best of luck against the Bandits in Malaya.
>
> With sincere regards, I remain, Sir,
>
> (ex Corporal) X. X. X.

I had had no inkling of this from any official source; and, indeed, I viewed it with some doubt. My mind went back nine years to 1942 when I was sent for by the Divisional

MALAYA

MAP I


CHINA SEA
THAILAND
KEDAH
PERAK
KELANTAN
TRENGGANU
PAHANG
SELANGOR
KL
NEGRI SEMBILAN
S
MALACCA
JOHORE
JB
SINGAPORE
Straits of Malacca
KL KUALA LUMPUR
JB JOHORE BAHRU
S SEREMBAN
LEGEND
BOUNDARIES
ROADS
RAILWAYS
SCALE
0
50
100
MILES

Commander and told to be prepared to take over command of a brigade, and to take a few days' leave while the formalities were completed. But when I came back from leave—fortunately I had kept my joy and excitement to myself—I was told there had been a hitch. It did not seem impossible that there might be a hitch here too.

There were naturally some difficulties on the home front: children's education, disposal of a pony and some furniture and various other things like that; but Army families become expert in coping with these affairs, and friends and relations rallied round to help. To cap it all, a publisher published my first book, and the War Office confirmed what my ex-corporal friend had written.

But while everything seemed to be as it should be in my own affairs, things seemed to be going from bad to worse in Malaya. Tucked away in odd corners of the papers I read a catalogue of misfortunes. On 2nd August (1951) I read about a hundred Chinese houses in Malacca being burnt by terrorists near Jasin. On 13th the terrorists killed thirteen policemen in Perak, and on the next day a band of fifty killed a village headman in the same State. On 16th the troops found a bandit camp showing every sign of prosperity, organisation, and even comfort. There were twelve or thirteen huts, a lecture hall, printing press, parade ground and armoury. On 17th the terrorists killed a planter in Rembau in Negri Sembilan. On 20th they killed five members of the Security Forces—the papers did not specify whether soldiers or police—in the Central District of Malacca. A British police officer and two constables were ambushed near Kuala Lumpur on the same day. On 27th a British Police Lieutenant was killed near Tampin, and on 31st a garage, petrol pumps and vehicles were gutted in Tanjong Malim.

A similar catalogue of violence characterised September; and in October the High Commissioner himself was ambushed and killed in spite of an escort. All this seemed very bad, but as a professional soldier about to proceed to the scene of action it all seemed " just up my street."

Red tabs sprouted on my jacket with the tailor, and I wrote to George Collingwood from whom I was to take over

63 Brigade to ask him what life in Malaya was actually like. Did one live in a house? Or a mangrove swamp? Or a gangster film? What battalions were there in the Brigade? How did one set about quenching the bandits? Did one declare Martial Law? Did one send soldiers as guards to protect life and property? Was the Army in aid of the Civil Power, or was it operating independently in the jungle? All kinds of things like this occurred to me; and on very few of them could I get much information in England.

In due course a long and helpful reply came, ending with a caution: "It's all very interesting (Collingwood wrote) but after three years of it you find yourself beginning to go mad." I was able to re-assure him on this. "As a Sapper (I wrote) I have the advantage of being mad already."

Meanwhile I heard that a brother officer of Chindit fame was at home on sick leave from Malaya; so I went to see him. He was in bed when I arrived. Indeed, I think I roused him as I entered his bedroom. He rolled over, opened one eye and closed it again as though about to relapse into slumber. Instead, he delivered himself of as good a lecture on the origins of Communist terrorism in Malaya as any University professor could achieve at Oxford or Cambridge. I cannot hope to recapture his incomparable words, but I can repeat the gist of what he said.

The origin of the trouble in Malaya was the formation in the 1920's of the Malayan Communist Party. This was a Chinese association in spite of its name; and never having applied for registration under the existing law it was, from the start, an illegal association. There is no evidence of active help from Russia, but its members read and preached from the orthodox Communist books and regarded Moscow as the fountain of all good.

The Chinese, who form about half the population of Malaya, are naturally attracted by, one might almost say addicted to, any form of secret society; and, under the fanatical leadership that seems to be a common characteristic of Communist activities, the Party gained in strength. In 1937, it was able to organise extensive strikes in the rubber, tin, and other industries of the country. Occasionally, small terms of imprisonment were meted out to Communists found guilty of illegal acts. Such punishment was regarded as rather an honour. However, the members did not like repatriation to China; so, to avoid that and because of its illegal status, the Party went "underground" with its experienced workers.

When the Japanese invaded Malaya, the Malayan Communist Party was in a dilemma. Its Chinese composition gave it a natural bias against the Japanese, who were at war with China in Manchuria. On the other hand, the Malayan Communist Party had the overthrow of the British Empire as one of its benevolent aims. Adversity, however, makes strange bedfellows, and one of the effects of the Japanese invasion was to throw the British and the Malayan Communist Party together as allies in 1941.

At the time of the Japanese occupation of Malaya, the Malayan Communist Party, aided by a few British officers, remained behind as the only active underground movement. This composite force of British officers and Communists became known as the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army. Almost all of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army lived in the jungle, suffering fearful hardships and privations throughout 1942-1943. They were sustained later by air-drops from Allied aircraft operating from India and Ceylon. They were also aided by Chinese squatters on the jungle fringes.

These squatters are an important element in the present struggle and some explanation is needed. The Japanese, in spite of protests to the contrary, imposed a ferocious régime on all Asians in Malaya. The Malays, who are mostly smallholding farmers or fishermen, withdrew to their villages and kept as clear as they could of Japanese contacts. The Chinese, however, are mainly concerned with business and money-making, and they permeate every walk of Malayan business life. They could not avoid contact with their Japanese masters. They had no option but to co-operate with the Japanese or leave their businesses and homes. Great numbers decided upon this latter course and trekked from the towns, staking out claims, squatting on the jungle fringes, to make a livelihood by agriculture. It was these squatters who provided food for the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army living in the jungle. The squatters were not necessarily Communists; indeed the evidence points the other way. They were, however, anti-Japanese and, therefore, in sympathy with the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.

When the Japanese surrender came there was a hiatus in government. The Japanese no longer exercised local authority, nor had the British resumed it. Into this void stepped the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army; and from the Japanese surrender, on 16th August 1945, for about a month, they were the only effective authority in some parts of the country. By the end of September the British Military Authority was well in the saddle and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was disbanded. For the most part they handed in their arms and ammunition and dispersed; but considerable quantities were hidden in the jungle "against a rainy day." These stores are occasionally unearthed to-day. Many Chinese drifted back into the towns, and trade was resumed. Many other Chinese, however, remained as squatters on the jungle fringes, working on the tin mines and rubber estates reopened by the returning British.

It was part of the policy of the Administration to accept those who had been their comrades in arms against the Japs. The Malayan Communist Party was allowed to work as an open, legitimate, political organisation and great efforts were made to gain their co-operation and help. The British felt that this was their due after the part that they had played with them in the fighting. Moreover, an open political party, even a Communist one, is always more satisfactory than a clandestine one.

The hard-boiled Communists of the Malayan Communist Party, however, would only pretend to co-operate. What they really worked for was nothing short of a Communist millennium, which the British were not prepared to institute. Some of the leaders disappeared "underground" and the rank and file of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army were formed into the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army

Old Comrades' Association. Thus an uneasy relationship was preserved till June 1948.

It was then that the Malayan Communist Party resorted to violence and was declared an illegal organisation. The Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army Old Comrades' Association departed into the jungle and called itself the Malayan People's Anti-British Army. It was a misleading term, for there were hardly any Malays in the Malayan People's Anti-British Army, and had it achieved its aims there is no doubt that it would have imposed a purely Chinese Communist régime upon the people, Malays, Indians, and Chinese alike. It was, however, anti-British.

Here then were the roots of the present troubles. By 1948 the Malayan Communist Party had its plans ready. It had about three or four thousand men in the jungle, mainly trained by the British and armed with the weapons concealed when the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was disbanded. For food they relied partly upon the open market; but also, in traditional Chinese military style, they relied upon extortion from the squatters.

The first aim of the Malayan Communist Party was to overthrow the Government of Malaya—by then largely Malay as well as British. The plan was to seize power and start a Communist Republic of Malaya. The Communist jungle army, which came to be known as the Malayan Races Liberation Army, was to be the instrument whereby the Malayan Communist Party achieved its purpose. The Police Force of Malaya was not a large one, and there were few troops in the country. The plan was to murder in one fell swoop all the British planters and administrators and seize power in the ensuing chaos. Had it been competently executed, the plot could hardly have failed; for no one carried arms and few even possessed them. But it went off at half-cock. The government declared a State of Emergency and weathered the storm.

This brings us to the present day. The population of Malaya is about 5,500,000, of whom Chinese and Malays in equal numbers form the majority. Out of this total the Malayan Races Liberation Army, living in the jungle, is about one thousandth part.[1] Under the Briggs Plan, inaugurated in 1948, the Chinese squatters, on whom the Malayan Races Liberation Army used to feed, have been resettled in Resettlement Areas, later known as New Villages. Instead of living scattered on the jungle fringes where they could not be protected from the ravages of the Malayan Races Liberation Army, their New Villages are compactly planned and surrounded by wire fences for protection. In many of them is a police post to patrol the wire. Most New Villages have a Home Guard. Naturally, in some New Villages there are a few Communist supporters or even relatives of Malayan Races Liberation Army members; so the police in the New Villages combine with the task of protecting the villages the task of preventing Communists within from passing food and money out.

The Malays, meanwhile, still live in their pristine kampongs or villages dotted about the country. For racial reasons they do not support the Malayan Races Liberation Army much (the latter being largely Chinese), though under duress or for profit they may supply a certain amount of food. The Indian population, other than those who live in the towns, are mostly labourers, working on the rubber estates, tin mines, or public services. They, too, have been regrouped into more compact settlements where they can be protected by police or Home Guards.

Thus one finds the minute Malayan Races Liberation Army from the jungle preying upon all the rest of the population. A small number of the population supports the Malayan Races Liberation Army willingly, taking considerable risks to do so. Others help under pressure with food or money: when working alone in the fields it is not easy to withhold from an armed bandit one's purse or the vegetables one is hoeing. Again, others take extraordinary risks to help the Government against the bandits.

There is yet another factor. The Chinese are a very shrewd, far-sighted race. They know that it is the declared British

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[1] Federation of Malaya Population, 31st December 1951: Chinese, 2,067,027; Malays, 2,673,114; Indians, 602,388; Europeans, 12,810; Eurasians, 11,433; others, 53,966—total, 5,420,738.

Policy to give Malaya independence " within the foreseeable future." They have seen what has happened in Burma and they have seen what nearly happened in Korea. They add all this up to a possibility of a Chinese Communist régime establishing itself in Malaya when the British have gone. Some Chinese, therefore, feel it prudent to have a foot in both camps, Government and Communist. This section of the population varies its weight from one foot to the other according to the trend of events.

Having delivered himself of this masterly oration, my friend turned over in bed and fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

SINGAPORE

THE troopship, *Empire Orwell*, in which my wife and I were to sail, broke down in Southampton. "Owing to a defect in the engine room (the signal ran) *Empire Orwell* will not sail on 5th November as planned, but at a date to be notified later."

We lived out of suitcases, the heavy baggage having gone, in a state of suspended animation for a month, and sailed on 5th December.

If you happen to be the senior Army officer in a troopship you travel in some state. A civilian travelling in the same way would have to pay £200 for the privilege. The accommodation for the soldiery, too, is good. Gone are the hammocks of old. Gone are the days when the troop deck officers and sergeants had to grope their way on nightly Rounds, stooping and crouching, beneath the gently swinging hammocks, from some of which come heavy snores and from others the vomiting of seasick soldiers.

Instead, the soldiers sleep in bunks, three in a tier, and two tiers back to back with alleyways between. Each has a cupboard for his belongings and each has a reasonable area of deck space in which to spend the day. The soldiers' meals are served in rather an ingenious way. Each man draws from a pile a pressed-metal, shining tray. In it several depressions have been stamped. As the soldier moves past the line of cooks he receives into each depression of his tray his meat, two veg. and gravy, his stewed fruit and plum duff. He takes this to a table and eats it with a knife, fork, and spoon provided with the tray. When this cafeteria meal is over, all the trays are put in a rack and washed and sterilised with steam and boiling water. Standing in their racks, the trays dry out ready for the next meal.

Looking at the soldiers in a troopship I am always impressed with the innate goodness of the British race. About a half of what you see are National Service soldiers. Why the hell should they be dragged by Act of Parliament from their homes and sent to the uttermost ends of the earth? To fight in Korea (fighting was still in progress then)? Or Malaya? Or to garrison Hong Kong? To languish in a place whose name even they had never before heard of? To live in a tent? To get prickly heat, impetigo, and *tinea*? Perhaps even to be killed?

Of course their regimental officers gave them talks on all these things, and one or two soldiers occasionally heckled them in a good-natured way. But for the most part the soldiery were not really interested in these grave problems of Commonwealth and Empire. Their interests were much more easily aroused by gramophone records, boxing, Western thrillers, and cinema films. I noticed that lectures by their officers on the profession of arms-gunnery—mine laying, infantry tactics, vehicle maintenance, and so on—were listened to attentively.

The British soldier knows in some mysterious way that his Queen and his Country have decided after profound thought and debate in Parliament to send him to fight the bandits in Malaya. That is sufficient for him.

The voyage thus passed without adventure. We went ashore in Algiers because the ship required water and in 1951 it was deemed inadvisable to stop at Port Said for it. I thought the troops' bearing and turn-out a great credit to our people in this French North-African port; and their saluting of their officers exemplary. In the Suez Canal numerous Egyptians made rude gestures at us with their thumbs, at which the soldiery laughed good humouredly. We also went ashore in Colombo where the enterprising sellers of useless bric-á-brac swindled the soldiers with the greatest of ease. Finally we entered Singapore Roads early on the morning of 5th January 1952.

I had never been so far East before. This was a new sight. First you get a view of green islands with low, red laterite cliffs. The sea is a perfect blue and on this particular day rain was falling from a leaden sky. We came alongside

No. 1 Berth and tied up. Towards the entrance of the harbour there is a brick two-storey building with the remains of camouflage paint on it, and you could see one or two gun emplacements; but there were no scars of war. Those have been left in the hearts of men.

A Staff Officer from G.H.Q. Far East Land Forces greeted me on the gangway. I had suddenly become quite an important person. I was to call upon the Commander-in-Chief at 11.30 that morning. Meanwhile I seemed to be faced with three possibilities: either to get soaked to the skin by the rain, or to get drenched in sweat under a mackintosh, or to carry an umbrella in uniform. I chose the second of these courses and arrived at the house of a brother officer, where we were to stay the night, in a muck sweat.

Our host and hostess were the Chief Engineer and his wife, who lived in 4 Berkshire Road. The house, I later discovered, was one of the largest types of married quarters in Singapore. It was regarded by its present owner—a Brigadier—as a very suitable abode; but in the piping days when it was built (in about 1935) it had been designed as a Major's quarter. Full colonels to-day often live in quarters designed for warrant officers and find them big enough; but all that I did not know then.

The first things that struck me as I entered 4 Berkshire Road—apart from the hospitality of the owners—were the tiled floors, the doors with tops at shoulder level only and ending on a level with your knees, and the electric light bulbs in the cupboards kept burning day and night to prevent mildew growing on your clothes.

An *amah*, or Chinese housemaid, took my coat and trousers from under the door of our bedroom and ironed and pressed them with amazing celerity so that I looked reasonably tidy to call upon the C.-in-C.

A Standard Vanguard with a Chinese civilian driver took me to G.H.Q.

A wire mesh fence surrounds G.H.Q., and the offices—except for the C.-in-C.'s and Chief of Staff's—consist of black, creosoted huts like chicken-coops with roofs thatched with the leaves of the atap palm.

The rain continued to descend in bucketfuls, and within the perimeter fence the officers and men employed there walked from office to office with umbrellas. Some carried gorgeous golfing ones, others the humble Chinese bamboo and varnished paper ones.

The C.-in-C. was kind enough to see me, and asked who was in the betting at Home for the post of High Commissioner in Malaya. General Templer's appointment had not yet been announced; and I was told that in Singapore rumour had named everyone of note from Churchill downwards. He also impressed on me the need to avoid being shot by the bandits myself. While the loss of a senior officer did not in itself matter much, the effect upon bandit morale and civilian morale would be considerable. This tallied with my own view. I did not want to be killed by the bandits, I wanted to kill a lot of them.

It had been arranged for us to go up country by train, but floods intervened cutting both rail and road; so we decided to go by air to Kuala Lumpur and motor to Seremban from there.

For various reasons it was not possible to travel immediately, so I spent the intervening time looking round Singapore.

There is a spacious water-front in Singapore with wide roads, impressive public buildings, banks, shipping offices, shops and squares. There is a club with a cricket ground, a cathedral with a bishop, and eating-houses that would delight the hearts of gourmet and gourmand alike. Behind all this there are narrow back streets with rows of washing hanging out to dry on poles from upper windows; and behind that again the most wretched squatter hovels, which in the ceaseless, pelting rain looked too miserable for words.

There were no beggars. The people all looked remarkably clean. Cleanliness is, I should say, a characteristic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaya. Hardly a day passes without rain; and water sluicing down the monsoon drains carries all the filth and garbage of the streets before it. There are few flies—you never see one in a private house that is properly run—and even the poorest people wash their clothes continually.

I found it strange walking in this city surrounded by people talking Chinese of which I could not understand a word. In Northern India I had always been able to understand what any man said to another; but here I had not the faintest idea. I had a feeling that nobody else knew either, that far too few people in Singapore could speak Chinese.

All the time I could not help thinking of the defeat of 1942, almost ten years to the day before. The memory of it seemed to oppress the spirit of the Island. The Ford factory, a great white building on an eminence above the road to Bukit Timah, where a British General signed the Japanese surrender terms, stands like a memorial to Britain's shame. Although the edifice built by British soldiers, *kow-towing* to their Japanese masters, to commemorate the Japanese victory has been removed, the hill on which it stood and the road up to it remain for all to see. Nearly opposite is the British Cemetery. Nearly all the graves are those of the men who died from the horrors of the Japanese occupation. The most distressing thing, however, was that in January 1952 many people seemed certain that this was all about to happen again. The Communists, they said, would make government in Malaya impossible. Chinese armies from the North would repeat the Japanese successes of ten years ago. Moreover, if the Japanese had chastised the vanquished with whips the Chinese would chastise them with scorpions.

There is no doubt that in January 1952 morale was very low. That is presumably why, on 10th January, Mr Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner-General in South-East Asia, saw fit to assure the people in a broadcast that Britain had determined not to let the same thing happen again.

What was not realised was that the tide was on the brink of turning in Malaya; and that if the Korean war was anything to go by, the Chinese would not enjoy—as the Japs had done—complete air and sea supremacy in the Malayan theatre.

Here, indeed, lay a challenge to leadership and resolution.

While in Singapore I motored across the causeway that separates the Island of Singapore from the mainland. I went to Johore Bahru to see the Commander of 26 Gurkha Infantry Brigade who had his H.Q. there.

Lewis Pugh and I had been at the Shop together; but I had not seen him since, his lot having been cast in the jungles of Burma while mine was in other fields. He took me round his Joint Operations Room, a long, dark, cavernous building in the Police Headquarters.

As he walked from office to office and looked upon the maps and charts, Lewis Pugh described in broad outline how the Administration, the soldiers, and the policemen coped with the situation. He bewildered me with strings of incomprehensible initials as he rattled off the workings of the machine. There were SWECs and DWECs (pronounced like living words); the M.R.L.A. and M.P.A.J.A.; the S.F., the C.P.O., the B.A., and M.B. There were also the, to me, more comprehensible military abbreviations: C.O., 2 i/c, G1098, R.Q.M.S., and so on. It is a curse of modern life that pure speech is bedevilled by initials and abbreviations. Perhaps we live in too much of a hurry.

However my guide was patient and I was fairly receptive. That evening I wrote some notes.

How then do the Administration, the soldiers, and the police grapple with all this? Like many things in this life, it is largely a matter of organisation. Each State and Settlement in the Federation of Malaya has a police contingent, and in support of each contingent is an infantry brigade. (Inequalities in local conditions prevent quite so tidy a plan throughout, but that is the idea.) Each police contingent is subdivided again into " circles " and " districts." To one is allotted a battalion, to the other a company—again with modifications to suit local conditions.

The district is an important unit, for in each district is an administrator, known as the District Officer, a policeman, and a soldier. These three prosecute the war against the Communists in all its aspects—political, economic, and military. They order curfews; they control food supplies;

they cut back the jungle ; and they order police and military operations.

Perhaps something should be said about food control. Many people believe this to be the key to eliminating the Malayan Races Liberation Army. Others say that it can not be more than a deterrent. The Malayan Races Liberation Army, they say, is so small in proportion to the population that even the most exact system of food control could never starve it ; particularly when only very few are prepared to help them. Also, most country people can grow rice and tapioca. The Malayan Races Liberation Army, itself, does so to some extent in the jungle ; though air photography makes it a precarious form of husbandry.

It would be wrong to suppose that the opposition has the initiative. He is hunted much more than he hunts, and the process is not unlike that of hunting a man-eating tiger. There are three principal methods. The most productive is acting on information. Just as a hunter hears from villagers that a tiger haunts a water-hole at dusk, so the soldiers or police in Malaya hear of a bandit rendezvous to collect food or money. They try to forestall and ambush the bandits at the rendezvous. The second method is by beating or driving, the object being to drive the quarry to the guns. Finally, there is what is known as " jungle bashing." An experienced hunter knows the kind of place where he may find a tiger and the experienced bandit hunter knows the kind of places where bandits are likely to be. The experienced junior officer leads his men to such a place, relying on instinct and jungle lore.

If the troops are careless, and sometimes even when proper precautions are taken, an ambush by bandits is possible. They lie hidden, and often dug in, at a strategic point : perhaps where a road passes through a cutting with jungle growing up to the roadside. Here they wait for a worthwhile target. They seldom open fire unless they think they can kill everyone and get the arms. Soldiers caught in an ambush usually give back more than they get, giving the bandits a bloody nose. The bandits, therefore, usually reserve their ammunition for a single police vehicle or a solitary planter with one or two special constables. The provision of armoured cars and the increasing skill of the police has reduced losses through such raids, which are the exception now rather than the rule.

A steady toll is taken of the opposition every month, but the number of bandits does not necessarily decline by the number of kills or captures. Sympathisers and fellow travellers will take their places. Sometimes one shoots a leader, but they are usually deep in the jungle, well protected and incredibly wary.

The war is a political war, too. The populace, particularly youth, must be protected from the Communist virus. Some measures which the soldier deems desirable are ruled out by the administrator as being likely to make more Communists in the process than the soldiers will kill or capture. A nice balance must be struck; the administrator, the soldier, and the policeman must work as a team.

Lewis Pugh warned me of the friction there was apt to be between the members of this team: civil, military, and police. Striving for harmony, he told me, was one of the preoccupations of a Brigade Commander. "None the less," he added candidly, "it is a big day when all one's associates are on speaking terms with one another."

The details of the prosecution of the war stemmed from the Districts, being formulated by a District War Executive Committee. The policy was directed in each State and Settlement by a State War Executive Committee. At the summit was General Sir Rob Lockhart, the newly appointed Director of Operations, advised by a joint committee of soldiers and policemen. At that time there was no High Commissioner. Sir Henry Gurney had been assassinated on 6th October and, until General Templer's arrival, the Chief Secretary to the Federation of Malaya (Mr Del Tufo, whom I never met) assumed a post under the curious title of Officer Administering the Government.

CHAPTER III

SEREMBAN

WHEN we alighted at the airfield in Kuala Lumpur the Brigade Major of 63 Brigade, Major A. G. Patterson, was there to meet us. I do not know what first impression *he* formed, but I realised at once how lucky I was to have him.

During the three years I had the honour to command 63 Brigade, I had two Brigade Majors—Pat Patterson and Dick Stuckey—and both matched up admirably to the exacting requirement. My debt to them is great indeed.

We motored from Kuala Lumpur to Seremban, a journey of about an hour and a quarter. Behind us came a truck-load of Gurkhas as escort.

As we motored I was able to survey the scene. A blue tarmac road with red laterite or grass verges led through rows and rows of rubber trees. The sun was low in the sky and the rain had stopped. We went through the small town of Kajang where the Headquarters of 1st Battalion The Suffolk Regiment was proclaimed by a notice on the southern outskirts. The town had a barrier of tar barrels at each end. This formed a traffic block which a police constable surveyed with aloof disdain. There were no coils of barbed-wire or pill-boxes such as I expected to find in a country turned into an armed camp.

As we passed through the town I was struck by the number of children, Chinese children. There seemed to be four or five playing in front of every shop and every other Chinese woman seemed to be an expectant mother. A few elderly Chinese men in conical hats pottered about and there were a few " grannies " in black silk trousers and blue shirts. Very occasionally one saw a woman with bound feet. Mostly, however, the Chinese looked a young and virile race.

Although with practice you can easily distinguish the three principal races in Malaya—Malays, Chinese, and Indians—

to the newcomer they look alike. This is a factor to be reckoned with in the employment of British soldiers in aid of the Civil Power.

Chinese houses are easily distinguished from Malay ones. The Malay house is built on stilts, whether it be the hovel of the poorest peasant or the carved and ornate edifice of the more prosperous farmer. The Chinese, on the other hand, build with a concrete plinth, the bottom floor being at ground level.

I was struck with the blatant way that each race flaunted its religious convictions (or lack of them). Malays are Moslems and, like Jews and Christians, believe it wrong to make graven images, to bow down to them and worship them. Yet here, at the roadside without any wall to screen them from the public eye, were grotesque Hindu images of Krishna, Vishnu, and Shiva. The Mosques too had no walls, so at this time in the evening the faithful could be seen by the idolaters prostrating themselves in their devotions to the one true God of whom Mahomet is the Prophet. Elsewhere, in the towns the carcase of the unclean pig or of the sacred cow might be seen hanging before the portals of a Chinese butcher's shop; and Chinese lorries, loaded with pigs in baskets, were hastening towards the slaughterers in Kuala Lumpur. At the roadside, wherever the road crossed a green and open valley, the land-starved Chinese worker might see the fertile paddy acres of the Malays. He might also see those other acres; acres of long, wild grass, cultivated by no one, yet forbidden to him and reserved for the Malays.

Whichever way one looked there were sights that might well offend the eye of any one of the races, had that eye been in the mood to take it in, or the mind been in the mood to take offence. "But they are all so tolerant in Malaya," I was told. I put this remark in the same category as that of the young lady who pointed her gun at the gamekeeper and brightly remarked that it was not loaded. One day, young woman, the gun *will* be loaded, but you won't know it till it is too late.

It was rather anticlimax that we never saw a bandit. Reading the papers in England one imagined that bandits on Malayan roads were as plentiful as zebra crossings. However, perhaps they did not like the Gurkhas in the truck behind; and we arrived safely in Seremban just as it was getting dark.

Pat drove us to a large house—the General's Residence, Flagstaff House—in which we were temporarily to reside while its owner was in England. A vast porch; a tiled hall with a drawing-room to the right and a dining-room the other way formed a vista exceeding the length of a cricket pitch. Beyond, a black balustrade and staircase led to a wide verandah room above, all dark and sinister, with black doors leading to the bedrooms and dark-stained heavy furniture. Outside, great trees, confused with parasitic ferns and creepers, crowded in upon us, blocking out the sky. In the branches of a nearby tree a solemn night-jar hammered out its rhythm like an undertaker knocking nails into a coffin.

"All very jolly, this," I was about to remark, when a cheery voice from below caught my ear.

"Can I come up?" it called. "It's George Collingwood here. Hope everything's all right."

Up the stairs came a man of middle height in a shirt and shorts, the light over the stairs reflected on a bald head. The "Wicked Uncle" was the nickname I had heard of my predecessor; but when I saw him I knew at once how inappropriate it was. A kinder eye or a more honest and disarming smile you would not find the world over.

Behind the Wicked Uncle came Ah Siong with a tray and glasses. We had a *stengah* (colloquially pronounced "stinger") all round and personally I felt much refreshed. *Stengah* literally means "half," and in some circles of Malayan life, half whisky and half water may be the usual dose; but Ah Siong had been trained in another school, a more right-thinking one as I should say, and dispensed the sovereign remedy of petty cares with both reverence and economy.

"Come to lunch to-morrow," invited George. "I have some people coming to meet you."

We accepted gratefully and the conversation became general.

63 Brigade, it appeared, consisted of the 1st Battalion The Green Howards, the 1st Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles, and the 2nd Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles. In support were C Squadron 13th/18th Hussars and occasionally a troop of 93 Field Battery Royal Artillery. For operations the Brigade came directly under Headquarters Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, though this was tempered by its subordination to the State War Executive Committee. For administration the Brigade came under South Malaya District. The General Officer Commanding this District was the proper owner of Flagstaff House, but was then in England on sick leave. (He subsequently retired from the Army and I never met him.) Meanwhile, George Collingwood combined the functions of Commander 63 Brigade with those of General Officer Commanding South Malaya District. In this latter capacity he was also Deputy Director of Operations for South Malaya. We therefore agreed that for ten days I would go round, meeting the personalities in the Brigade Area and take over on 23rd January, which happened to be my birthday—forty-six.

When George had departed we sat down to dinner—ordered by the wife of the Brigade Major, who had had all made ready for us, God bless her.

The evenings in Malaya are pleasant. They do not compare with the cold crisp evenings that I knew in Northern India when one sat with pleasure before a fire; but they are not bad. Indeed this is a characteristic of the Malayan climate. It is never bad. It is never unbearably hot, nor is it ever cold. It never rains for long, nor is it often without rain for more than a few days. The atmosphere is moist so that the slightest exertion makes sweat run down your face in runnels.

It is the ideal climate for beachcombing. You never need a blanket at night, and except for decency you do not need clothes by day. The moist atmosphere relaxes the muscles. You tend to get fat; not necessarily from eating too much and doing too little, but merely because the muscles that otherwise contain the figure like a belt become too idle to do so. The muscles that make your eyes focus to read small print get slack and you find yourself wearing glasses for reading. The muscles of the brain I do believe get slack as well; so that a brain that was, in England, tensed up like the strings of a tennis racquet and able to react to a ping-pong ball soon becomes sluggish like the inside of a cow. In Malaya the brain becomes capable of dealing with a bushel of wet grass, but is hopeless for any nimble wit.

The absence of marked seasons in Malaya has other effects upon man. In England you must do this " before the winter " or do that " because it will soon be summer," and so on. The changing season alone keeps you up to the mark. In Malaya no such change is perceptible. On mid-winter's day the sun is a few degrees to the south of you at noon, and on mid-summer's day it is a few degrees to the north (though hundreds of Europeans in Malaya have never noticed this curious phenomenon); but there is no reason to expect mid-summer's day to be either hotter or colder, wetter or drier than mid-winter's day.

Consequently, if you fail to do something to-day, to-morrow will do just as well, and to-morrow week will probably be the same as yesterday. The climate in Malaya is not a hard taskmaster. It is a sedative; and the achievements of the British in Malaya are a tribute to the resolution of the race against the enfeebling and corroding effects of a relaxing climate.

Next morning George Collingwood had to attend the funeral of a planter; and my wife and I found our own way to St Mark's Church to a service known as Sung Eucharist. I do not like this sort of service: the mumbo jumbo is not sufficiently striking to be good entertainment; yet it is sufficient to divert my mind from true piety. To me it seems mildly ludicrous; but it suits the Asian mind. In Asia the Church must do as Asia needs; and in the eighty Sundays that we were in Seremban we attended this service seventy-six times.

Incidentally, the Anglican Church seems to be at a great disadvantage in Asian countries because it is an established Church of England with the Queen as its titular head. The Prayer Book enjoins the priest to pray for the Queen's most excellent majesty; and the congregation is required to say Amen to prayers asking for the preservation of the High Court of Parliament. Many Asian peoples must think that this is arrant British Imperialism and nothing whatever to do with God or Christ. Those inclining to the Christian Faith are much more likely to adhere to the Roman Catholic or Free Churches. Both are international and the priest is at liberty to pray for Mr Gandhi and leave out the Queen if he feels inclined. Unestablished churches in Britain and in the British Commonwealth no doubt do pray for the Queen, both from conviction and from loyalty; but it is not compulsory. Furthermore, the Roman Catholics have their discipline and pageantry which really are first class; and the Free Churches allow members of the congregation to have their say, which appeals very strongly to the loquacious Tamil with his addiction to oratory.

However, it is most touching to see these vast Christian Churches and the great Asian congregations in Kuala Lumpur and Malacca. I always felt that many of the barefooted communicants who went up to the altar rails to receive the Holy Sacrament had hearts far purer than mine; and many were as loyal to our Queen.

After Church we returned to breakfast and saw the local newspapers. The appointment of General Templer as High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya was the banner headline. He was to have many new powers. He was to combine full responsibility for police and military operations with his civil responsibilities. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Lyttelton, in a statement to the Press, emphasised the political as well as the military importance of the post. He re-stated H.M. Government's aim to create a united Malaya with self-government. He urged the need for more Chinese in the Civil Service and the Police; and he stressed the need for a Chinese Home Guard.

We read the papers and wrote letters till lunch-time. It was a hottish day, but there was a cool breeze when we walked across a grassy " gully " in front of Flagstaff House to where George Collingwood lived. (His bungalow was to become ours, so we took a keen interest in it.)

The other guests had arrived when we got there. There was the British Adviser, Mr Sheppard, whom the reader will meet frequently again and whom I will not introduce now; and a Mr and Mrs Hamilton Moore.

Ian Hamilton Moore was a local big-wig in the planting world, the Manager of The Labu Cheviot Estate. He was the first planter I had met, and I looked upon this example of the " whisky-swilling die-hards " with considerable interest.

Ever since I was a second lieutenant I have always been far more interested in people than things, and I find myself unconsciously summing up strangers whenever I meet them. This man was not at all what I expected of a whisky-swiller. He had a clear complexion, a handsome face, and a bright eye. His carriage was so erect you might have thought he had a crick in his back. I had no doubt that he would have known what to do if you offered him a whisky and soda on an appropriate occasion, but he was no more a whisky-swiller than I am.

Indeed, I found this to be true of the majority of senior planters. In every community there are a few ne'er-do-wells who find solace in the bottle; and in Seremban there were one or two. But they were not senior planters. They were the dregs, not the leaders, of the European planting community.

The average senior planter came to Malaya just after World War I. Some had served in France and Flanders, at Gallipoli, or in Palestine. Some had come straight from school or university in the 1920's. Amongst those who came from the battlefields of World War I there must have been many rough customers, and perhaps from the schools and universities too. But since the 1920's every kind of process has contrived to weed them out. No commercial company —and most of the rubber estates managed by Europeans belong to commercial companies—can afford to employ incompetents or drunkards. Moreover, the slump in the late '20's and early '30's still further weeded out the unsuitable men. For every planter who remained in Malaya in those days there was one found redundant and sacked. Naturally the less efficient went to the wall. To-day the senior men in the planting community are the survivors; and to dub them all as whisky-swillers is far from just.

It would be equally absurd to regard them as a community of supermen. The climate, as I have said, tends to make a man fat and rather soft. The lonely life they lead tends to make some of them cantankerous and crusty, full of ideas that have been formed in solitude but which will not stand the rough and tumble of argument. Although the Government has clipped their wings in many ways, reducing their authority over their labour, the manager of an estate is still a man of some consequence within its confines. The manager of a big estate, like the Dunlop estate of Ladang Geddes, has many European subordinates, a large labour force, and much machinery and transport under his control. Living an exiled life, far from the haunts of man, he rules his estate as an old sea-captain commands his ship. He acquires many of the same characteristics. You see him at his best at his own job.

Many planters of the old school have been through rough times. Most were incarcerated in Changi Jail for two and a half years like common criminals by the Japanese. Some worked as coolies with the prisoners of war on the Siam Railway. Only the lucky few were on leave in 1941 and saw the war as others saw it. These hardships have left their scars. They have affected many men physically and some mentally. On the whole, though, this is not so noticeable in planters as in Government Servants.

The junior planters are much more mixed. Since 1945 there has been a shortage of planters in the lower grades. Men have gone into the planting industry who had far better stayed out of it. Some were brilliant fighters in the Navy, the Army, or the R.A.F.; but this is not necessarily the best training for supervising the planting of rubber trees or the management of native labour. Some are the rough diamonds one finds everywhere East of Suez. Some are merely rough. But many are excellent. In January 1952, the time to which I now refer, the process of natural selection since the end of World War II had not had so long in which to operate. Managers faced with the choice between a second-class man and no man at all may be pardoned for preferring what they knew to be inferior. None the less, many of the younger entry are clean living, decent youngsters, who work hard, treat their labour with understanding, play rugger at weekends, and exemplify the ideals that in Britain are normally considered right.

In the present Emergency the planters have borne the brunt of the civilian casualties. Living on isolated estates, with a small police escort, going about their business in the estates and on dangerous roads, theirs is not an enviable lot. Instinctively one takes a charitable view of any shortcomings. I am always amazed how well they and their wives have stood up to the strain of it.

During lunch we talked mainly shop, the bandits and how to deal with them, and the new High Commissioner. Did I know him? Yes, I did. What was he like? Of course I said he was the hell of a chap; but privately I wondered whether the people of Malaya would like the jerk that he would certainly give them.

We all agreed that something fairly drastic needed doing, though it was not easy to suggest what. In the after light it is quite easy to see; and from my knowledge of military history I should have seen it then.

In every struggle in which the British are involved we start with one disadvantage, namely that the struggle was initiated by someone else—by the Germans, by the Japanese, or by the bandits in Malaya. We then try every shift and expedient to cope with the situation. There is infinite work and worry for those at the top. Numerous set-backs are inevitable from the circumstances of our own unpreparedness and the enemy's initiative. All the time those at the top are gradually being exhausted physically and mentally by toil. They become discredited professionally by the succession of failures. Their forward march is obscured in defeat. It is unjust but inevitable.

This is the state the Egyptian Expeditionary Force had got into after the Second Battle of Gaza in 1917. It is the state the Eighth Army had got into in the summer of 1942. And it is the state into which the Government machine in

Malaya had fallen in January 1952. There was a feeling of frustration and bewilderment on the lower levels and exhaustion at the summit.

"Why," demanded those on the ground, "do we never seem to win? We have suffered, we have worked, we have fought and endured. We have done all that has been asked of us and yet we go on continually being worsted. Why?"

At the summit an equal, but a different, bewilderment prevails. Everything that experience, knowledge or ingenuity suggests as possible or desirable has been attempted. No effort has been spared either in planning or supervision. Long hours have been worked and great strain has been endured. The leaders gradually become exhausted and begin to have doubts. Glib critics pillory them as being out of date and working on the wrong lines. Bright young men, with no responsibility whatever, put up new and impracticable plans with prodigal profusion. Gradually and imperceptibly a feeling grows that the High Command is a failure. It has lost the confidence of the rank and file. Morale sinks to rock bottom and the machine ceases to spark.

What must be done? What is the remedy? The answer is as old as the Odyssey itself. It is *a Man*. The conduct of government and the conduct of war are high expressions of man in his dealings with mankind. Both government and war are very much alike. One leads imperceptibly into the other, and the other reflects the one. Success in both stems from the unconquerable mind of a Man.

Allenby was the man who brought back to the Sinai Peninsula the confidence that the army had lost in the sand-dunes of Gaza. Alexander and Montgomery were the men who brought back to the Desert Armies a spirit of victory. The contribution of these men lay not so much in what they *did* as what they *were*. Each was the man of the hour. Each breathed into the machine his own fervour and gave it new life. Here, then, in January 1952 was the need of the hour—a Man. And General Templer was that man.

It is no part of this chronicle to estimate his achievements. That must be left till Time gives us perspective. I set myself only the task of telling what I saw myself. From this the reader may form any judgment he chooses; but I am bound to record that it was not long before quite a new spirit reigned throughout all circles of society in Malaya. And this, I contend, came not from new Measures but from the heart of a new Man.

CHAPTER IV

JOINT OPERATIONS ROOM

(*See Map II*)

AT a quarter to nine next morning, being Monday, George Collingwood came to Flagstaff House and collected me in his car to go to the Joint Operations Room for what were rather irreverently called " Morning Prayers."

Morning Prayers were to become a feature of the conduct of operations against the bandits, but in January 1952 the procedure was in its infancy. I was told that the State of Negri Sembilan was considered very advanced for holding Morning Prayers at all. Even so they were conducted in a somewhat haphazard way.

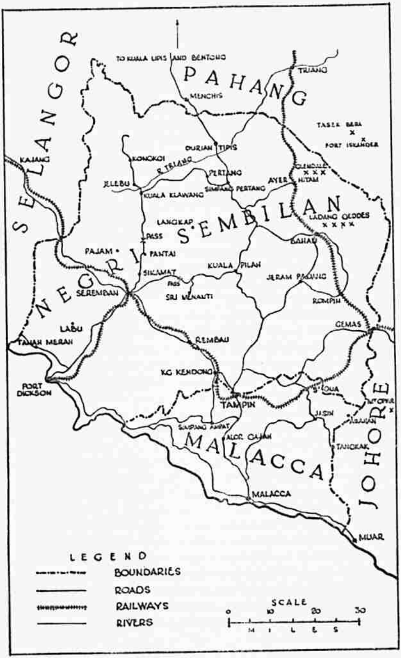
As we motored, George explained that Morning Prayers were held in the Police Headquarters building of the Negri Sembilan Contingent of the Malayan Police Service. (To call the Police Headquarters " the Police Station " was considered rather bad form, though Police Officers themselves often did so.)

In 1952 the Operations Room was in the main building, upstairs, and was an extension of the Chief Police Officer's office.

The room was almost dark—had the sun been streaming in it would have been unbearably hot—and there was a miscellaneous assembly of soldiers and police officers present. I was introduced to all of these, though I introduce only three of them to the reader now.

First there was the Chief Police Officer, Tommy Thompson, a dark haired, sturdily built man with many small scars on his face which he had received during the fighting in Hong Kong in 1941. He had been a Hong Kong Police Officer and had skilfully managed to avoid a useless internment there when the colony was overrun by the Japanese. Instead,

NEGRI SEMBILAN AND MALACCA MAP II


SELANGOR
PAHANG
NEGRI SEMBILAN
MALACCA
JOHORE
TO KUALA LIPIS AND BENTONG
TRIANG
MENCHIS
TASEK BERA
FORT ISKANDER
DURIAN TIPIS
KONOKOI
R. TRIANG
KAJANG
PERTANG
JELEBU
SIMPANG PERTANG
AYER HITAM
GLENDALE
KUALA KLAWANG
LANGKAP
PASS
LADANG GEDDES
BAHAU
PAJAM
PANTAI
KUALA PILAH
SIKAMAT
PASS
JERAM PADANG
SEREMBAN
SRI MENANTI
ROMPIN
LABU
TANAH MERAH
GEMAS
REMBAU
KG KENDONG
PORT DICKSON
S'GUA
TAMPIN
Mt OPHIR
JASIN
ASAHAN
SIMPANG AMPAT
ALOR GAJAH
TANGKAK
MALACCA
MUAR
LEGEND
BOUNDARIES
ROADS
RAILWAYS
RIVERS
SCALE
0
10
20
30
MILES

he had made his way on foot to Chunking. Whether anyone thanked him for it I cannot say; but it must have been no mean achievement.

At this time there were what one can only describe as "rifts" in the Malayan Police Service. The addition of men from other police services—Palestine, India, Hong Kong, and Great Britain—clearly did not make a happy mixture. There was also some legacy of the war years, when only those who had suffered internment or captivity in Japanese hands regarded themselves as the genuine article. Even those who had previously been in the Malayan Police Service, but through luck or ability had avoided captivity, were apt to be regarded as not quite out of the top drawer. It was an understandable attitude, but a wrong one.

Tommy was an Assistant Commissioner. That is to say he wore a crown and two stars on his shoulder like a full colonel. Later the post was upgraded to Senior Assistant Commissioner, but by then Tommy had gone. He had two brothers in the Army, one of whom I knew quite well, so the circumstances were propitious for co-operation.

The Police Contingent over which Tommy presided was a vast rambling structure, hastily expanded to meet the Emergency and with a very low proportion of officers to rank and file. First, there were the Regular Police, largely Malay, who were to be seen in towns and villages engaged on normal police duties and mostly armed with rifles. Then there were the Special Constabulary, a horde of hastily enrolled, largely untrained and only partially equipped Malays, and a few Chinese and Indians, who provided guards for planters, tin miners and so on. There were the Auxiliary Police, some of whom were raised and paid for by commercial companies to protect their property. There was a Jungle Company of policemen, which also consisted mainly of "specials" and was supposed to function like an infantry company. But it had no wireless communications between Company Headquarters and its platoons, and the Company Commander came directly under the Chief Police Officer, who was far too busy to give him the supervision and help he needed.

Tommy would have been the first to admit that this contingent, of which he was the head, was very far from the efficient force he would have liked. It had been expanded to about eight times its designed size. It was short of equipment—the " specials " did not even have mosquito-nets in January 1952. It was short of training—I often met a man who had never fired his rifle—and some of the junior leaders were highly unsatisfactory.

There was a brand of junior leader known as a Police Lieutenant. He was a European, but not a gazetted officer or an Inspector. He was a new thing to the Malayan Police, a betwixt and between. Many were excellent, some were shocking.

The pre-war Malayan Police Officers had not been trained in the handling of what the Army calls British Other Ranks. In this respect they resembled the British Officer of the old Indian Army. With their own native—and I use the word in its literal and not its derogatory sense—constabulary they were experienced masters. They knew the language, the customs and habits of their men ; and they had the affection for them that characterises all the best disciplined forces. But they were not experienced in the handling of these Police Lieutenants. Often they were indifferent judges of the good from the bad. Often the Police Lieutenants were entrusted with far more responsibility than they were capable of taking, and they failed in consequence. Even in the British Army, where every officer, from his earliest days, is in charge of his fellow countrymen, there are many who lack the " touch " with the soldiery. How much more so is that likely in a service where the officers have never had the early experience and training !

Inexperienced people often think that you have but to organise a force or service on paper, equip it with suitable weapons, and fill the establishment with men. Indeed, so ignorant are they that they even refer to these men as " bodies," or (worse) " odd bods." This is a hopeless attitude which at one time I regret to say was in danger of creeping into the Army. It is hopeless because it is men that count, not bodies. Each man is different from his neighbour. Each must be judged aright and must be treated accordingly. This is what is meant by man management; and poor Tommy Thompson, weighed down with a thousand cares, had little time to instruct his subordinates in the management of his many men.

The Chief Police Officer is, amongst other things, responsible for Law and Order in his State. The mere fact that there was an Emergency proclaimed the inability of the Police to maintain this Law and Order. That is why the Army was called in. It was futile to blame the Police for this failure. Many of them had foreseen the trouble coming and had given warning. Somehow the warning was not heeded. Through all the ramifications of the governmental machine one must in the end lay the blame at the door of a man. It is not helpful for me to say who that man was. He was certainly not a Policeman. The Police had no responsibility for bringing about a state of affairs wherein they had lost control of Law and Order. Equally, the Army was not in Malaya because it liked it. No soldier wants to play second fiddle indefinitely to a police force that has demonstrated its inability to maintain Law and Order, which is its proper function.

I put these facts thus bluntly to emphasise the immense scope that existed for misunderstanding and bad feeling between Army and Police. It was in this field that Tommy and George Collingwood had made perhaps one of their best contributions to the Emergency problem. They had built up a spirit of harmony in Negri Sembilan that certainly did not exist everywhere. John Barnard (who shortly succeeded Tommy) and I (who succeeded George Collingwood) were very lucky in the inheritance of goodwill we found.

The Joint Operations Room was an expression of this goodwill; and I am glad to think that when the soldiery brewed up tea—as Thomas Atkins invariably does on the least provocation—they gave a cup of it to the Chief Police Officer, who at any rate pretended that he liked it.

At one end of the room was a map of Negri Sembilan covering a whole wall. Over the map was stretched a piece of talc or transparent paper on which were many marks in chalk.

" Anything happened ? " asked George.

" Yes, sir," replied the Staff Officer Operations. " Business has been brisk."

The Staff Officer Operations was a young police officer who with the help of the Brigade Intelligence Officer and the Brigade Intelligence Section ran the Joint Operations Room. Between them they kept the maps up to date, they marked in all incidents, they collected all the situation reports, they produced appreciations saying what they thought would happen next, and they answered the numerous inquiries from Kuala Lumpur about why this or that had been (or had not been) done.

Like everything else in the Operations Room it was a partnership. The manpower was Army, the maps were Army, the techniques of display were Army, yet in one particular respect the responsibility was a police one. This was the matter of " clearance " which I must explain.

It is absolutely essential, when a patrol goes out into the rubber or jungle, that it shall not meet another patrol. In a jungle contact with the bandits, because of the denseness of jungle and undergrowth you only get a fleeting view of your opponent. The man who shoots first survives. You must therefore arrange matters so that in any particular area a patrol can safely shoot on sight any armed person encountered. If soldiers and policemen were allowed to roam about entirely at will there would be innumerable clashes between friendly patrols and casualties in consequence. You cannot, in practice, shout " Halt ! Who goes there ? " for if the other man is a bandit he will have fired before the words are out of your mouth and you will get your reply from St Michael. Equally, the bandit may vanish into the undergrowth never to be seen again, and you will curse yourself for having missed him.

A patrol is said to have clearance in an area when its commander is sure that his is the only armed body legitimately in it, and that anyone he encounters is therefore a bandit.

The arrangement of clearances emanates from the Joint Operations Room and in Negri Sembilan the responsibility for it rested upon the Staff Officer Operations. By marking patrols on the map, by receiving regular situation reports from them, and (above all) by using a system of decentralisation, this responsibility could be kept to manageable proportions. But it was a continuous and unending one. Of all the qualities required in the Staff Officer Operations I should rate reliability in matters of clearance as the first. In the three years I was in Malaya I met many Police Officers holding this appointment and each in this way was excellent.

We crowded round the map, Tommy, George, Pat (the Brigade Major), the Intelligence Officer, the Staff Officer Operations, and several others. Numerous incidents were marked in red chalk. A bus had been burnt near Ayer Kuning on the Malacca border. Rubber trees had been slashed by bandits in Bahau. An estate manager had had shots fired at him in Pertang. Some rubber tappers returning from work had been harangued on Communism in South Johol, and their identity cards had been removed. In Rompin a timber contractor's foreman, cutting forest trees in the jungle, had been abducted. His body had been found tied to a tree and slashed to pieces with a knife. Communist pamphlets were scattered round the body.

The bandits had the initiative at this time, and every day we were greeted in the Joint Operations Room with some tale of woe.

George screwed up his eyes and held his head on one side. He had been at this game for three years and he knew exactly what to do. After a few words with Tommy and Pat, some orders were given. Pat made a note in the large diary he carried on these occasions and the Morning Prayers dispersed.

George then took me to see the Special Branch, whose officers had squalid offices, either on the verandahs or tucked away in rooms with no windows and electric light only.

The Head of Special Branch at this time was a Mr Henchman, but he shortly went on leave and a Mr Kibble, a product of the Special Branch in Scotland Yard, took over from him. Later he was superseded by Peter Howes. These kaleidoscopic changes in the leadership of Special Branch were not conducive to the efficiency of a key branch in the machinery for hunting the bandits. Indeed, during 1952, everyone in every branch of the Police seemed to change far too often. Many officers had volunteered early in the Emergency to defer their leave at Home till things got quieter. Others were compulsorily retained after their leave was due. Many new men came in when India was given independence in 1947, and more again when the Palestine mandate was given up in 1948. They all became due for leave after a three-year tour at about the same time.

Sorting it all out must have given someone in Kuala Lumpur a headache, but it did not make for efficiency on the ground. The prosecution of the war against the bandits depended very largely upon the efficiency of the Special Branch, and efficiency does not come from continual changes of men.

The Special Branch is no new thing. The Metropolitan Police started a Special Branch in Scotland Yard in 1884 to deal with the dynamite outrages of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Since then it has kept watch on various bodies of people regardless of political opinion, whenever their activities seemed calculated to disturb the peace—Sinn Fein, Suffragettes, Fascists, Communists, Indian Nationalists, and German spies.

According to Sir Harold Scott[1] the Special Branch in Scotland Yard is a *part* of the Criminal Investigation Department. In Malaya it is a *parallel* department. Peter Machen-Cook, when he was head of Special Branch in Malacca, put it to me thus: "Pimps, prostitutes, and swindlers can all bring grist to my mill, but the C.I.D. wants to spoil all that by arresting them. It is therefore best to keep the two branches apart."

It is the function of Special Branch, amongst other things, to keep abreast of the Communist organisation in Malaya.

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[1] Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, 1945-53, and author of 'Scotland Yard' (André Deutch). See p. 193.

This is done in many ways, some of which it is prudent not to record here in case Mr Ping Pong—or whoever it may be—takes advantage of it.

Some of the Special Branch methods of obtaining information are, of course, well known to the bandits and no harm can come from describing them.

Occasionally a bandit surrenders and comes in from the jungle. Perhaps he is fed up with Communism, having realised that it is a futile creed. Perhaps he has had a quarrel with his leader and knows that it is only a matter of time before he is murdered by him. There are many reasons why he may have surrendered, and often he is both willing and able to tell the Special Branch about the personalities and organisation with which he has been associated. In this way the Special Branch can gradually build up the Enemy Order of Battle.

Sometimes a citizen spontaneously gives information to the Police. Perhaps he has been met by bandits while working amongst the rubber trees and has had conversation with them. Perhaps he has had a quarrel with a bandit's relative in a village and thinks he can get even with his adversary by telling tales. Perhaps a prostitute or a taxi-driver has had dealings with a bandit and has not been paid. Special Branch pays for their information in cash.

Information may thus be received as a result of many incentives—envy, hatred, malice, jealousy and greed, just as much as purity, godliness, or brotherly love.

The bandit organisation cannot be run entirely without paper. There must be lists of stores, nominal rolls, and accounts. When bandits are surprised in a camp, or when a courier is captured or killed, enemy papers are captured too. These were a fruitful source of information.

Sometimes a suspect is detained by the Special Branch for questioning. Occasionally one reads in the paper of a prosecution alleging maltreatment to extract information; from which the uninitiated might suppose that maltreatment is tolerated. That is not so. There is no need for maltreatment or force. Skilful questioning will in the end reveal the truth. The suspected person is said to have "broken down "—a dramatic expression conjuring up visions of the thumbscrew and the rack, broken bones and twisted joints. Exactly what does pass through the suspected person's mind I cannot say. In the first place he probably has a guilty conscience. Bit by bit it is borne in upon him, as he answers questions, that the Special Branch knows much more about him than he thought. The interrogator lets the suspected person suppose he knows everything. Eventually a time comes when the suspected person feels that it is useless to hold out any more. He has got himself into a tangle by telling lies and truth mixed up; and he reveals the truth to ease his mind. I have never been present during the whole of this process, but I have seen something of it in an open Court in England. Anyone interested in the process can see it in action by reading any account of one of the famous cross-examinations at the Old Bailey. It is a matter of the mind not the flesh. There is, of course, rather a narrow border-line between where the mind ends and the flesh begins; but I can assure readers that the use of ill-treatment would be very severely punished by Authority if resort were made to it.

The bandits, on the other hand, freely have recourse to methods that are across the border-line. That is because they are Communists. Communism is a religion without a god. Many of the tenets of the Christian Faith apply equally to the Communist creed. The worldly aims in both religions, Christianity and Communism, are the same in many ways. Both creeds uphold the poor, the downtrodden, and the under-dog. The difference comes in the means of attaining that end. Communism excuses the means for the sake of the end. Christianity insists that the means are important too. The Communist feels justified in strangling his neighbour if he shows any reluctance to share his worldly goods with him. The Christian is adjured to love his neighbour even though he happens to be an enemy.

The process known to Communists as " brain washing " is merely the translation of cross-examination beyond the realms of the mind into those of the flesh and prolonged over a considerable period. Imagine a man living in a

Communist jungle camp with every sort of discomfort. Every day he is instructed in Communism. Every day he is examined in it. If he learns diligently he receives more food. If he proves his zeal by words or deeds he receives privileges, great or small—perhaps he may be given a blanket; or, when very advanced, a rifle to defend himself. At the back of it all is the knowledge that if the Communist recruit does not make sufficient progress, or if he tries to escape, he will be strangled or hacked to pieces with a knife. Anyone can see how the " comrades " can have their minds so washed that they give in and think only the " right " thoughts.

If you are a Communist you must accept Communist methods as well as aims. The Christian knows that these methods are cruel and wrong whatever the ultimate aim.

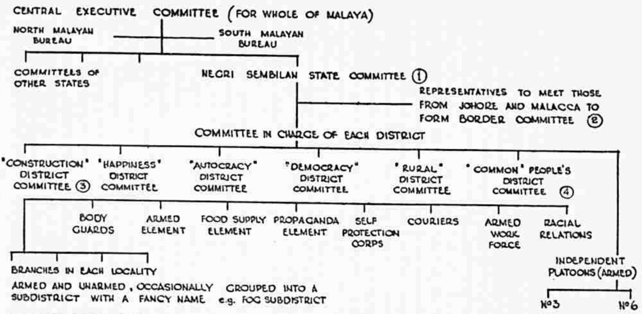
However, by simple and legitimate means the Special Branch in Seremban had a pretty accurate picture of the Communist organisation in Negri Sembilan; and an Army officer, the Military Intelligence Officer, was charged with the task of maintaining the Enemy Order of Battle. This officer also passed to the Army any information that came into Special Branch where the military significance might be missed by the police Head of the Branch.

The State of Negri Sembilan was divided by the bandits into five districts, each with typical Communist names: " Construction " District round Seremban, " Happiness " District round Tampin, " Autocracy " District round Bahau, " Democracy " District round Menchis and Jelebu, and " Rural " District round Kuala Pilah. Away, far beyond the bounds of habitation in the swamps and jungles of the Tasek Bera was the "Common " People's District. (See Plate I.)

In each bandit district there was a District Committee composed of Party Members. It was supported by an armed element, a food supply element, a propaganda element, couriers, and every stratum of the creed. There was the uniformed man with a bren gun; the bespectacled clerk with a duplicator; the part-timer with a uniform, which he hid in the jungle and only wore " for a job "; and the

COMMUNIST ORGANISATION IN NEGRI SEMBILAN

PLATE I


CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (FOR WHOLE OF MALAYA)
NORTH MALAYAN BUREAU
SOUTH MALAYAN BUREAU
COMMITTEES OF OTHER STATES
NEGRI SEMBILAN STATE COMMITTEE ①
REPRESENTATIVES TO MEET THOSE FROM JOHORE AND MALACCA TO FORM BORDER COMMITTEE ②
COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF EACH DISTRICT
"CONSTRUCTION" DISTRICT COMMITTEE ③
"HAPPINESS" DISTRICT COMMITTEE
"AUTOCRACY" DISTRICT COMMITTEE
"DEMOCRACY" DISTRICT COMMITTEE
"RURAL" DISTRICT COMMITTEE
"COMMON" PEOPLE'S DISTRICT COMMITTEE ④
BODY GUARDS
ARMED ELEMENT
FOOD SUPPLY ELEMENT
PROPAGANDA ELEMENT
SELF PROTECTION CORPS
COURIERS
ARMED WORK FORCE
RACIAL RELATIONS
BRANCHES IN EACH LOCALITY
ARMED AND UNARMED, OCCASIONALLY GROUPED INTO A SUBDISTRICT WITH A FANCY NAME e.g. FOG SUBDISTRICT
INDEPENDENT PLATOONS (ARMED)
Nº3
Nº6

NOTES ① EVERY STATE HAD A STATE COMMITTEE

② THE BORDER COMMITTEE SOUGHT TO COORDINATE OPERATIONS ON THE BORDERS OF THE STATES

③ EACH DISTRICT WAS SIMILARLY ORGANISED INTO BRANCHES

④ COMMON PEOPLE'S DISTRICT WAS INCLINED TO BE A "LAW UNTO ITSELF" sympathiser who lived openly in a village. Nearly all of them, except those in the open, were armed; most wore uniform, consisting of a khaki cap, khaki shirt and slacks, and rubber hockey boots. About 450 of them were tabulated by the Special Branch in Seremban.

The five Districts were controlled by a State Committee. This comprised, amongst other things, a Treasury, Couriers, Armourers, a Racial Committee, a Propaganda Department, a Secretariat, and two Independent Platoons—No. 6 which operated between Tampin and Gemas, and No. 3 which operated between Seremban and Jelebu. The two top men in Negri Sembilan were Ah San and Ah Yo, each with numerous aliases.

The genuine fighters were known as the Malayan Races Liberation Army. The politicians were the Malayan Communist Party. The " tail," as it is called in conventional armies, was known as the Masses Movement (Min Yuen).

Each State and Settlement had its own contingent of bandits. Supreme control in Malaya was vested in the Central Executive Committee. Control of policy was in the hands of a Politbureau consisting of the older hands of the Central Executive Committee. The Secretary-General of the whole thing was a man called Chen Ping.

By cross-questioning every surrendered bandit the Special Branch could find out the names of the men in each District or Platoon. They could also ascertain how they were armed.

No Army ever knows exactly what is happening on the other side of the hill; but in this kind of war, with all its shades of colour from shooting to propaganda, both sides had ample opportunities for observing each other. Whenever we killed a bandit there was nearly always some surrendered bandit who could recognise him. His identity and his arms usually tallied pretty accurately with the Enemy Order of Battle compiled by the Special Branch.

One seldom killed a bandit whose weapon could not be traced to its source—an ambush laid by the bandits at some former date, or a weapon of British or Japanese manufacture, a legacy of World War II. Occasionally, with the help of a surrendered bandit, we unearthed a "hide" of arms or ammunition. I never heard of anyone finding either arms or ammunition that came from Russia or China.[1]

I quote this in support of the statement, frequently made by the Government, but frequently doubted in speech and print, that no appreciable aid was coming from outside. All one found could easily be accounted for without outside aid. Although this is not conclusive evidence it has some weight. And of course things may change.

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[1] I have since read (May 1955) in the English newspapers that arms and ammunition in small quantities which have been found on bandits killed in the Northern States of Malaya can be traced to trans-border sources in Siam. This certainly did not apply in the South up to the time I left Malaya in January 1955.

CHAPTER V

THE GREEN HOWARDS KILL TWO BANDITS

AFTER Morning Prayers, George lent me his car to go and visit the Green Howards. The battalion was disposed partly in the Settlement of Malacca, for which 63 Brigade was also responsible, and partly in the most southern police circle of Negri Sembilan, in Tampin. There was a small Tactical Headquarters in Malacca Police Headquarters, where the Commanding Officer and his Intelligence Officer were to be found. Three rifle companies were in the Settlement: at Jasin, Alor Gajah, and Asahan. The fourth rifle company was at Gemas, with the remainder of the battalion at Tampin.

There is no satisfactory way of dividing a battalion in two, and it was a disappointing arrangement for the Commanding Officer. All his service he had worked and waited for the day when he had command; and now when that day had come, he could only really command half of it, the half in Malacca Settlement. The other half he wisely left to Bertie Beuttler to manage from Tampin; and thither I went in George's car.

I went straight to the Joint Operations Room in the High Street, where Bertie met me. Strictly speaking, Bertie belonged to the Duke of Wellington's. His first company commander, when he joined the Army, had been my cousin, Major Sir Robert Henniker, so introductions were easy.

There was considerable excitement over a surrendered bandit. He was Chinese, incredibly emaciated, and wore the mark of some evil sickness. He was about twenty years old, with wiry black hair, pointing downwards all round his head like the bristles of a sweep's brush. Under the influence of that excellent person Thomas Atkins, he grinned cheerfully, exposing his gums, from which protruded four long and ugly fangs. He smoked one of the said T. Atkins's cigarettes.

"Tame as a puppy, sir," the sergeant said.

The captive was interrogated at the Joint Operations Room. He had joined the bandits under duress. At first he had supplied food because he liked the excitement, and out of curiosity, and partly because he had a relative in the gang. Soon he had gone too far to turn back and he was forced to enrol. When fully trained he worked as a rifleman; but in a skirmish with a patrol neither he nor his friend, who had joined with him, was deemed to have comported himself with sufficient courage. So his friend was strangled —a rope round the neck with the "comrades" pulling on both ends—and he himself was disarmed in disgrace and made to cook. After a few months, either his sin was expiated or his cooking was too bad even for the bandits; for his rifle was restored and he was re-employed as a fighting man.

The rigorous conditions in which he lived proved too much for him, and when an opportunity to desert presented itself he took it. He was sent with some medicine for a sick comrade. When unobserved he slipped from the jungle path and made his way down a watercourse to the jungle fringe. Here he took off his uniform (jacket, trousers, boots, hat) and hid it with his rifle, his bandolier, the medicines, and a grenade; and in his underpants alone he walked to the nearest habitation.

A policeman collected the uniform and firearms, and now the deserter was so thankful to be free that he talked and said all manner of things. He mentioned a camp in a piece of jungle that an officer of the battalion happened to know well, just as one Londoner might describe to another the whereabouts of a tavern tucked away in the purlieus of the City.

Bertie thought it prudent to check this as a precaution against being double-crossed. So he sent the officer with a small escort of private soldiers and another surrendered bandit known as Wee Ping. (The deserter was too exhausted to walk any more.) They drove a certain distance down the road. Four soldiers sat alertly in the truck for all to see, while four more with Wee Ping lay sweating under a tarpaulin on the floor.

At the appointed place the truck was stopped and the driver dismounted, raised the bonnet and fiddled with the engine. A Tamil passed by with some cows. Soon the way was clear.

" Coast clear, sir," said the driver in an undertone.

The officer, with Wee Ping and the soldiers, jumped out and disappeared into the jungle, and the four men from under the tarpaulin took their places. Presently the truck, still with four men sitting upright in it, overtook the man with the cows. No visible change. After a suitable circuit it returned to base.

Meanwhile the officer led his men, by a way he knew, to the place described by the deserter. There, exactly as described, was the camp ; but there were recent signs of life : warm ashes, empty tins, and foliage newly cut for mattresses. Wee Ping pointed. " They've gone that way," he said, using a sixth sense.

He led the way up a steep slope ; and there, at the top, were numerous footmarks—fifteen men at least—easily recognised as bandits by the prints of their rubber hockey boots. For a hundred yards the tracks were together ; then they divided. The officer wondered what to do. He had only three men with him, they had no rations and no water-bottles, and soon it would be dark.

" Perhaps they'll come back," he said ; and the soldiers withdrew silently by the way they had come, covering their tracks as they did so.

When they got back to camp the officer asked Bertie if he might take out the " first eleven " ; and when Bertie agreed, he set out again just after midnight.

In single file the first eleven—all eighteen of them—left from the back of the camp down a well-worn track leading to an improvised rifle-range. On the way they had to cross a tarmac road. On the tarmac they turned sharp left, leaving no tracks, and followed the road to where it joined the main road. They followed this to the place where they had jumped from the truck the day before. No one saw or heard them.

It was pitch dark, and they left no trace as they slipped silently into the jungle. Underfoot was soft spongy soil with rotting vegetation on it. The officer halted and one by one they sat down, resting, sentries being posted against surprise. No one spoke as they waited for the dawn.

They had not long to wait, for it had been a well-timed approach march. All the mysterious sounds of the jungle crowded in upon them. Slowly and imperceptibly the black velvet night was turned to grey. The patrol stood-to. The officer led the way, with Wee Ping just behind him, then a corporal and the rest in single file.

They were a well-trained team, and the procession seemed to glide forward noiselessly between the walls of trees like a serpent, turning now this way, now that. But the bandits are a seasoned enemy. A watchful bandit sentry might see them first and fire. The officer in the lead would certainly be killed or wounded. The stakes in war are high, and such privileges as a subaltern enjoys in barracks he pays for in the jungle. The idea was to strike the trail by which the bandits left their camp and to ambush it.

But the birds had flown ; or rather, they had not roosted there, having perhaps heard the officer the day before, or seen the tracks. However, time was no longer against the patrol, so the officer decided to follow the old tracks leading away from the camp to see where they went. He put Wee Ping in front as tracker and covered him with a carbine a yard behind.

Wee Ping followed the trail up the hill, through a strip of rubber plantation and back into the jungle. The tall tree-tops, closing in overhead, had stifled the undergrowth, and the going was easy. It was a cool, dark underworld of trees. They followed Wee Ping in silence round the spur of a hill. Suddenly the officer halted. Strangely, it was the senses of the Englishman, brought up in the surroundings of Britain, that were keener here than those of Wee Ping. An unexpected aroma assailed the officer's nostrils. The aroma was unmistakable. Someone was smoking a cigarette.

The patrol froze in its tracks and Wee Ping was withdrawn. There was no doubt in the officer's mind: mankind was near at hand. The officer looked down at his carbine, put the safety-catch silently off, and waited with a beating heart. There was no sound whatever; but, quite unheralded, coming down the hill towards them were two men. They wore khaki-drill with the peaked caps, bearing the red star, of the bandits. They carried firearms; the leader a rifle, his fellow a shot-gun.

The leading bandit took a pace or two forward and stooped down, dusting the leaves aside with his fingers. Satisfied, he led on two more paces and stooped again.

" Why ? " you ask.

It is the way of the tracker. When new leaves fall they obscure old tracks, and even when none fall the tracks are sometimes invisible. The foot of a man makes an indentation in the soil, but the elastic carpet of leaves on the soil resumes its original form after the man has passed. The tracker must therefore move the leaves to see the track.

It was hard to say who was hunting whom: the patrol or the bandits. Both relied upon primitive instincts. Each knew something of the other, but neither knew all. The officer conjectured that the bandits were now returning to their camp; but, to avoid falling into a trap, they had sent two men ahead as scouts to verify that all was secure.

Here now was a visible proof of the value of discipline. In spite of the strict code of the Communists their scouts were not obeying orders. One of them was smoking on parade, and both would pay the price. The British officer fingered his trigger. His men were round the spur of the hill and could only see their officer's expectant gaze. If anything went wrong they would, at least, avenge him.

The bandits were now plainly in view—you can only see a few yards in the jungle—the leader, a crafty and experienced warrior, tracking; his companion, a slightly supercilious intellectual in glasses, following with a cigarette dangling from his lips.

Twenty yards—fifteen yards—ten yards—there could be no missing now. The man who fired first would kill.

With a quick, well-practised movement the officer raised his carbine and fired. The leader fell and the intellectual turned to run. The patrol went after him in full cry, jumping the corpse as they went.

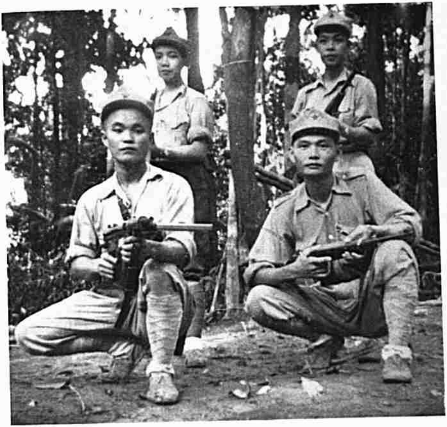
The intellectual turned and fired his shot-gun at point-blank range. There was a flash from the muzzle and a thud of bullets in the tree-trunk a foot above the officer's head. By the grace of God the Communist had missed.

He turned to run again, but stumbled. This cost him his life.

The patrol returned in triumph, and two more bandit hats were added to the macabre row of trophies in the " Ops." Room.

I had a long session with the bandit deserter; and thereafter I made a point of talking to every surrendered bandit I could. I soon formed the opinion that there were many in the jungle who wanted to escape but did not know that we would treat them well. I therefore conceived the idea of having a kite balloon tethered to a lorry on a logger's track in the jungle, to broadcast appeals from it. (In order to extract tree trunks from the jungle the loggers make rough lorry tracks right into the heart of the jungle.) The idea was to send up a cluster of loud-hailers in the basket of the balloon. The electric power unit, whether batteries or a generator, would remain on the ground with the operating crew, who could either speak into a microphone on the lorry or play gramophone records. The microphone and heavy equipment would remain on the ground, the loud-hailers alone would go aloft.

The theory was that only the top rank bandits were allowed to listen to the conventional radio sets in the jungle for fear of corruption by the " wicked " Radio Malaya or the B.B.C. But if we sent up a balloon and broadcast from it, the humblest bandit could hardly fail to hear us. If we played a fair amount of popular music and gave health talks (Chinese are very health-minded) they would want to hear it too. The rank and file would make reasons for going to do so. The essence of the plan was to ensure that, whether they liked it or not, the sound should get to the rank and file.



A Group of Bandits. The Photograph, taken by a Bandit, was recovered by our Troops in 1952

Then the leaders must either let them listen or quit. Another essential was to persevere for a long time in the same place, so that the voice became a recognised land-mark and institution.

Tiresome people of the kind who always boggle at anything new or odd strangled this plan at birth ; but later on in 1952 we achieved a compromise. We improvised a loud-hailer in a semi-armoured vehicle which towed a power unit in a trailer. With this machine we bellowed at the jungle fringes in Chinese, Tamil, or Malay. The bandits heard it the first time it was used and its success was assured. In a document that we captured on a dead bandit they referred to the voice as " the foul mouth of British Imperialism." The instrument then assumed the politer name of " Loudmouth."

Loudmouth was perfected by better mechanics in Kuala Lumpur and became a piece of general equipment throughout Malaya. Loud-hailers were also fixed in aircraft—known as Voice Aircraft—and used with great success. But I still think the balloon was a good idea.

CHAPTER VI

GURKHAS IN 63 BRIGADE

(See Map II)

YOU cannot command anything, however small or however great, unless you know the men who comprise your command. Nor can you do any good if you do not know the ground over which the troops have to operate. But before I could do either of these things I thought it prudent to discover from George and Pat how one travelled about the roads without being ambushed by the bandits. If they could kill the High Commissioner they must be fairly formidable. Yet George Collingwood went everywhere and they had not got him. What then was the formula?

In the first place you must always fight the enemy that you actually have against you. Otherwise you will burden yourself, like the White Knight, with all kinds of equipment and precautions that are not necessary, or you may omit some essential.

The bandits did not attack unless they were certain of a walk-over. They did not like a fight. If, therefore, it was obvious to them that there might be a fight, and that it would not be a mere massacre, they preferred to remain hidden. This, of course, is an elementary principle of guerilla warfare, but its application in Malaya was different from that of Ireland during "the Troubles" or Palestine in 1947-1948.

The golden rule of travel in Malaya, therefore, was to demonstrate to any would-be attackers that you would welcome an ambush so as to kill *them*. The simple way of doing this was to have an escort. The escort travelled a certain distance behind. The bandits, lying in wait, could see that if they attacked you they would themselves come under fire from the escort. This would not necessarily have deterred the Hagannah, but it deterred them. The cunning lay, of course, in having the escort of a suitable size and properly placed. If it were too small or too close behind, the whole party might come into the ambush simultaneously and get killed without a fight. If the escort included one or more armoured vehicles its chance of giving a good account of itself was much improved. If it extended over say four hundred yards of road there were very few places in Negri Sembilan where the head or tail of the column would not protrude beyond the limits of the ambush. Then the escort could de-bus and attack the ambush position from its flanks or rear, outflanking it.

In some districts the bandits were timid, in others they were more offensive. In some they were numerous, in others the bands were small. On some roads there were many suitable ambush positions, in others there were none. The local military or police officers usually knew the form, and I never hesitated to inquire. In a little time I got the feel of the roads and I knew instinctively what escort was needed.

When escorting Very Important Persons, such as the High Commissioner, other rules prevailed. These I shall come to later.

My first trip had been to Tampin to see Bertie and the Green Howards. My next was to see Johnnie Curling and the 1/7 Gurkha Rifles. This battalion also was split, with a Tactical Headquarters and three companies in the Bahau area and the rest in Seremban. (I did not like this arrangement for the Gurkhas any more than I did for the Green Howards; but there were good reasons for it and George's hand had been forced.)

The Gurkhas' camp at Bahau consisted of a collection of tents clustered round a wooden building near the railway line. Once the building had been a hospital, staffed and provided by the Dunlop Rubber Company for its labour force. Now it was used as an officers' mess by Johnnie, Duggie Moore (the Intelligence Officer), a young Police Officer, and any company commanders who happened to be there. It was very hot in the bungalow. The water supply, which had been adequate for a small hospital, was totally inadequate for a military camp; and the electric light, which at its best was too feeble to read by, ceased at 10 P.M. Conditions were adequate but primitive.

Johnnie took me round the lines, introducing me to his Gurkha officers and senior N.C.O.s. The 7th Gurkhas had been through many vicissitudes. (They have not lived in proper barracks since 1938 or 1939.) They had been through all the Burma Campaigns and the aftermath in the Far East and India. The "opt"—that is, the chance given to the rank and file of joining the British Army Gurkhas when Independence was instituted in India—had been badly handled from Delhi. The two battalions of the 7th came over from the Indian to the British Army very short of men, particularly N.C.O.s. The Regiment spent a disastrous period being trained as gunners and now were in the thick of the Emergency as infantry again.

I talked to many officers and men. The older ones can all speak Urdu, in which I had passed several examinations twenty years before; and the younger ones are learning it from the Indian films shown all over Malaya.

The Gurkha soldier is one of the few soldiers to whom Thomas Atkins has given a nickname. Johnnie Gurkha he calls him, and this is proof of his affection and esteem. There is some similarity between the Gurkha and the British outlook on the profession of arms, but it is a mistake to suppose (as some people do) that the similarity is more than superficial.

The Gurkha soldier is a professional fighting man. His crowning ambition is to serve for twenty-two years without a single entry on his Conduct Sheet, to acquire a collection of medals on his chest, to know all there is to know about soldiering, and at last to retire to Nepal with a pension. His private ambitions are to marry a wife who will give him male offspring, and to have a piece of land at home in Nepal to provide for his old age. As about fifty per cent of a British battalion are National Service soldiers their outlook must be totally different.

The British and the Gurkhas are the best fighting stock in the world. Under good leadership both are superb. Both have a keen sense of humour. Both are patient and uncomplaining in adversity. Both are very easy to lead if you know how, but the manner of doing so is different for each.

There is a feudal atmosphere about a Gurkha battalion that reminds one of Rudyard Kipling's India. You expect to see the 'Civil and Military Gazette' on the breakfast table, and if the Colonel told you that he banked with Grindlays' in Calcutta you would not be surprised. They still buy sports gear in Pakistan or India.

The men have two main meals a day : at about 9.30 A.M. and at 5.30 P.M. When in camp they have a mess-tin of tea at 1 P.M. In a rifle company there is only one British Officer. In the jungle he takes his own meals at the same time as his men—usually eating the same curry and rice because no one can do English cooking.

There is a tremendous bond between officers and men, though the men do not really "accept" their officers till they have been with them for five or six years.

If a senior officer passing in a jeep waves to a group of British soldiers waiting for transport at the roadside, many will wave in reply, and all will grin. The same technique would fail with Gurkhas—unless the senior officer be one of their own. They would, instead, spring to attention and the senior soldier would salute gravely. Yet see a Gurkha talking to one of his own officers, and animation shines in every gesture ; they grin and laugh together.

Many of their British Officers are the sons of Indian Army officers or men who served in India. Johnnie's father was in the Indian Railways, Pat's in the Indian Civil Service. The East comes easily to them and few of them can picture serving anywhere else.

I doubt if the average citizen of London knows what he owes to these Gurkha battalions. In countless campaigns the Gurkhas have fought for the causes of the Crown. On countless battlefields they have died for British ideals. To-day they sustain a great portion of the military load in Malaya, and have done since 1948.

Officers who have never served with Gurkhas often complain that those who have that honour get " Mongolmania " or become " Gurkha-mad." There is some truth in this, and the following story emphasises it.

The Commander-in-Chief was visiting one of the Gurkha battalions. He had been round B Company with the young major who commanded it. The major had earned a D.S.O. in battle. He had a lively mind and forceful opinions. The Commander-in-Chief detected an officer who ought to go to the Staff College and rise to high command.

" You ought to start working for the Staff College Examination," he said.

" What, sir ? " replied the astonished major. " Work for the Staff College, sir, and leave B Company ! "

Mongolmania springs from many sources, and there are many stories illustrating the faithfulness of the Gurkha soldier to his British officer. One of the nicest of them was told me by Guinea Graham of the Commanding Officer of a battalion of Gurkhas in Italy in 1944. He (the C.O.) was an absent-minded man. When he went round his battalion positions he was apt to leave his map, his compass, or his field-glasses at a view-point or a company command post where he had stopped on his round. So he told his Gurkha orderly, who always accompanied him, to search after each halt and see that nothing was ever left behind. One morning the C.O. and the orderly were returning after a visit to the forward companies when the Germans elected to mortar the battalion's H.Q. Everyone spread-eagled in the mud till the " stonk " was over. At length all was quiet, and the C.O. got up ; but the orderly remained on the ground, mortally wounded. The C.O. ran to him and began to apply his own field-dressing to the wound. The Gurkha's lips were moving. The C.O. bent down to catch his dying words. " Sahib," he said, " your prismatic compass is in my trousers pocket." He never spoke again. Is there any wonder at the C.O.'s Mongolmania ?

Some people say that Gurkhas are stupid men. In some ways they are ; even the most Gurkha-mad officer will admit it. It is hard to explain, but there is certainly astuteness mixed with their stupidity. They have a genius for minor tactics; even a young rifleman will know what to do if his Lance-corporal is killed and he must carry on in his place. You may say that minor tactics does not require a high standard of scholarship; but it is a useful attribute in a soldier, and it is often incredibly difficult to instil it into a Bachelor of Science at an Officer-Cadet School in England. Another thing: the Gurkha is very quick to learn a foreign language. Many of them picked up Egyptian, Greek, and Italian in the War; and many in Malaya can " get by " in English, Malay, or Tamil. Few British soldiers can do as well, even the longer service ones.

As for their stupidity there are many stories, most of them old chestnuts, though the one about the Gurkhas who learnt to be parachutists will bear repetition. The Gurkha Officer [1] and his British company commander were discussing the company's first parachute jump on the morrow.

" From what height shall we jump, Sahib ? " asked the Gurkha Officer.

" From about six hundred feet, Sahib," replied the Company Commander.

" We have been talking about it amongst ourselves, Sahib," interposed the Gurkha. " We think six hundred feet is too high. Could we not jump from two hundred feet ? "

" No, Sahib," replied the Company Commander. " Two hundred feet is too low. It is doubtful if the parachutes would have time to open. It would be dangerous."

" Oh, I see, Sahib," concluded the Gurkha thoughtfully. " We are going to use parachutes, are we ? That makes a difference ! "

Then there is the more recent yarn of the Gurkha driver who lost the key of the tool-box of his truck. He was reprimanded for losing it; and when he lost it again he was punished. But the punishment rebounded on the Company

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[1] In the days of the British Indian Army, Gurkha Officers were known as Subedar Major, Subedar or Jemadar according to rank. To-day they are known as Queen's Gurkha Officers with the ranks of Gurkha Major, Gurkha Captain, and Gurkha Lieutenant. A few Gurkhas have commissions on a par with their British Officers and are known as Gurkha Commissioned Officers.

Commander when he travelled in that same driver's truck. They had a puncture and must needs change the wheel.

"Where are the tools ?" asked the Officer.

"In the tool-box," replied the driver, producing the box with pride.

"But where is the key ?" asked the Officer.

"The key," replied the Gurkha brightly, "is in the Quarter Guard, in camp, so as not to get lost."

The idea that Gurkhas are savage little men, who delight in killing, probably comes from their renown as soldiers and from their somewhat gruesome ceremony of slaughtering a buffalo at the Dasahra festival. It has, however, no foundation in fact. Of course there are cruel men in any race, but on the whole the Gurkha soldier looks upon killing in much the same light as the British soldier, as a painful necessity that must be done in accordance with orders. It is, indeed, the soldier's *raison d'être*. As for the slaughter of buffaloes, that is a sacrificial rite enjoined by his religion, just as killing the enemy is enjoined upon the soldier in time of war. And except in the due course of law, where duty must be done, the Gurkha has a marked gentleness which manifests itself in his dealings with children and animals. The 7th Gurkha Rifles had two pets, an elephant and a tiger. These illustrate the point.

The elephant was found by a patrol of the 2nd Battalion shortly before I arrived. The patrol was moving in single file along a jungle track when they came upon a baby elephant, caught in a trap. The trap was a hole about eight feet deep and eight feet square, with vertical sides. It had been dug by aborigines, who inhabit clearings in the jungle, and who have to protect themselves and their meagre crops against pigs, elephants, and other wild game. The trap had been dug on a track that was known to be used by wild elephants. The spoil from the digging had been carefully removed, and the hole itself had been covered over with bamboos, earth, and leaves.

History does not relate how it happened that a young elephant came to tread on the false roof over the pit and tumble. All that is known is that the unfortunate animal was there and could not get out. The Gurkhas naturally took pity on it. There was no reason why they should do so. Had they been thoughtless or cruel they might have left it to die, and " passed by on the other side." Or they might have shot it, for they were all armed. They decided, however, to act differently. The Gurkha corporal in command of the patrol put out sentries, as the military situation demanded, and sent two riflemen in search of the aborigines' clearing to borrow implements with which to dig. When they returned, the Gurkhas set to work and dug a sloping ramp down to the elephant. It was heavy work, digging through roots and, by the time they had got to the bottom, the men were hot and thirsty.

The corporal gave permission to drink from their water-bottles. At the sight of water the wretched elephant came trumpeting, unhurt, from his pit. He was very thirsty, and the good-natured soldiery gave him water to drink. He quickly learnt how to take a water-bottle and pour its contents into his mouth.

When the water-bottles were empty the patrol went on its way. But they had not counted upon the elephant. He followed them, thundering this way and that, uprooting saplings and eating their leaves. The military efficiency of the patrol was considerably impaired. He drank at the streams where the Gurkhas refilled their water-bottles and put the chlorine tablets in the water ; but whenever he was thirsty on the line of march he felt for a soldier's water-bottle with his trunk. The good-natured Gurkha then watered the elephant rather than himself. He was, in fact, a considerable embarrassment, both tactically and in the administrative sphere. The Gurkhas could easily have got rid of him by shooting, but they preferred to keep him as a pet. For two days he followed the patrol to its destination. The signaller then opened up his wireless set and gave his whereabouts to his Company H.Q. They had reached a road and the Company Commander sent a truck to fetch them. When they mounted the truck the elephant tried to get in too, but could not manage it. So they reversed against a high bank and opened the back of the truck. With a little digging and manœuvring they made a means of access which the elephant could negotiate. He jumped on board and travelled back to camp.

At Battalion H.Q. he became a great favourite and wandered at will round the tents and "bashas." The Gurkha-major had on one occasion to shoo him away when he tried to follow a defaulter in front of the C.O.

But he grew very large, and his feeding became both expensive and troublesome. In a country such as India or Burma, where elephants are used for various purposes, there are people who understand them. In this part of Malaya, however, no use is made of elephants, although there are plenty of them wild in the jungle. Had there been available a regular Elephant Bill there might have been a different end to the tale, but in the absence of an Elephant Bill the elephant became a problem. He uprooted the young banana trees in the Mess garden; he uprooted a flag-pole as a playful gesture; and he eyed with a mischievous look the canvas hood of a senior officer's jeep. The C.O. felt he could not continue to be the official custodian of this ever-growing monster, and the elephant was sent to a zoo, where, one hopes, he will live happily ever afterwards.

The other pet, a tiger, is also in a zoo—the zoo in Regent's Park. I was present at Bahau when it was brought in.

I asked how they caught it, and this is what I was told: A section of six Gurkhas had gone out to ambush a track along which it was thought that bandits might move. The soldiers were in position just after dark, for the enemy was expected by moonlight.

Readers of A. E. W. Mason's 'No Other Tiger' will remember the tenseness and excitement a hunter feels as he sits up a tree waiting for a tiger. The whole jungle seems alive. It is a stirring experience; and, of course, it is even more exciting when you are on the ground and not up a tree, and when you expect a party of armed men intent upon your destruction.

The Gurkhas had not been in position long when they heard the tremendous roar of a tiger. A man who has heard this sound at close quarters can never forget the tremor of apprehension and excitement that it sends through him. Even when well armed with a double-barrelled .500 one feels slightly awed. When armed with a carbine it must be positively terrifying.

However, the Gurkhas stood firm and no one moved a muscle. The tiger came nearer; so near that some of the men said they could hear it breathing. Every now and then it uttered a soul-searching roar. It seemed to be pacing round and round the soldiery. This continued all night.

Whether the bandits had ever intended to pass that way or whether they were frightened by the roar of the tiger is not known. But they never appeared, and by the morning they were no longer expected. So the lance-corporal stood up and signalled to his men to do likewise. The tiger also heard the signal, for there was a loud " woof," and one or two of the men saw the back and tail of a tiger as he bounded away through the scrub where the ambush was laid.

Under the direction of the lance-corporal the men quartered the ground, more from curiosity than for any other reason. They saw the traces of two tigers, one of whom they supposed to be a tigress; and then, deep in the grass, they saw a miserable, cowering tiger cub. They had no desire to kill the little animal; and, rightly or wrongly, they believed that it would be deserted. Rather than leave it to its fate they picked it up and brought it back to camp in a haversack, where it was transferred to a basket and brought for our inspection.

It was a tigress, a yellow-and-black ball of fat and flesh, the size of a very large cat. The Gurkha took her out of the basket and she struggled to get free from his arms. She was very nervous, and once on the ground she did not dart away as though trying to escape, but crouched, shivering.

They named her Nepti, which is Gurkhali for " snub-nose." Gurkhas' children—and adults too—are often snub-nosed, and the name Nepti is sometimes applied as a term of endearment by a proud father to his child. So Nepti had a child's name and was treated like a child. Soon she became accustomed to her new surroundings. The soldiers off duty played with her, and she was quite tame. She dined on pork and milk, and slept under a soldier's bed in one of the tents. She was a show-piece at parties and a favourite with all.

But just as the elephant became an embarrassment, so did Nepti. As she got bigger she became rather rough, not realising her strength. Also she needed a mighty helping of pork. There was never an instance of her actually hurting anyone, but it was clearly only a matter of time. The rations issued to a Gurkha battalion often consist of goats on the hoof; and goats frisking about the camp are not an unusual sight. Chickens, too, are sometimes kept by the cook, and run about unpenned. Nepti often made passes at these; and on one occasion she was seen stalking a Gurkha baby in the family lines. Thereafter she had to be kept on a lead; and after some negotiation she was sent from Singapore to the London Zoo, where she is on view to-day.

It may be said that a zoo is a sad fate for a wild animal; but in these two cases, but for the goodwill of the Gurkhas into whose hands they fell, a much worse fate might have overtaken them both.

Johnnie very kindly let me have a soldier as an orderly, Rifleman Prithe Bahadur Rai. He served me faithfully for eighteen months, cleaning my kit, carrying my water-bottle when I went into the jungle, manning the bren gun in my scout car escort, or making my bed in my caravan. In due time he went on leave in Nepal and was succeeded by Rifleman Gul Bahadur Limbu, also of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles.

If you have been brought up—as I have—with British troops, nothing can wean you entirely from your first love. But the " Gurks " came jolly near to doing so.

CHAPTER VII

THE STATE WAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(*See Plate II*)

I MENTIONED earlier on how the operations in Districts were carried on by a District War Executive Committee, consisting of the District Officer, the Officer Commanding the Police Circle, and the local O.C. Troops—a Battalion or Company Commander. At the State Capital of Negri Sembilan, in Seremban, there was held every other Wednesday afternoon the State War Executive Committee.

The day soon came round for this, and as George Collingwood had not actually handed over we both attended my first meeting of the Committee.

We drove together to the Residency, arriving at 2.30 P.M. George dismissed the driver, telling him to return about 7 P.M.

"My God!" I exclaimed. "This is going to be a bit of an endurance test."

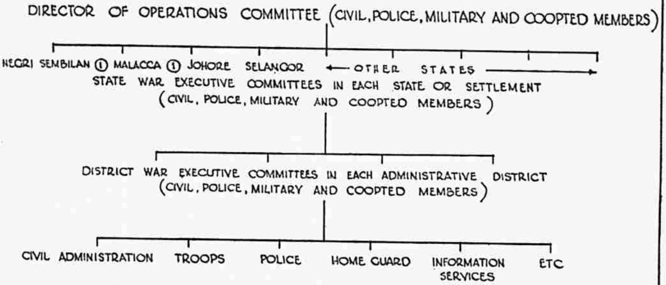
"It is rather a bore," replied George. "You'll probably fall asleep."

This was a remark showing great understanding, for when you first arrive in Malaya you find keeping awake after luncheon next to impossible. After a time you find a way of doing it. One way is to lie down on your bed, quite blatantly, after luncheon and sleep for a quarter of an hour—it is quite enough—and you become game for almost anything. Another plan is to do something active instead of indoor work after lunch; but this was not possible on these Wednesday afternoons. Each man has his own method and after the first few weeks I seldom felt tempted to sleep at all.

We entered the British Adviser's Office, where there was a long polished table with chairs round it. Everyone had

GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY ORGANISATION IN MALAYA

PLATE II


DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (CIVIL, POLICE, MILITARY AND COOPTED MEMBERS)
NEGRI SEMBILAN ①
MALACCA ①
JOHORE
SELANGOR
← OTHER STATES →
STATE WAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES IN EACH STATE OR SETTLEMENT
(CIVIL, POLICE, MILITARY AND COOPTED MEMBERS)
DISTRICT WAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES IN EACH ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT
(CIVIL, POLICE, MILITARY AND COOPTED MEMBERS)
CIVIL ADMINISTRATION
TROOPS
POLICE
HOME GUARD
INFORMATION SERVICES
ETC

NOTES ① A 'BORDER' COMMITTEE WAS LATER ESTABLISHED TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES ON THE NEGRI SEMBILAN / MALACCA / JOHORE BORDER assembled, so after a few formal introductions we settled down to business.

In the middle of the long side of the table, facing the windows, was the Chairman. He was the Mentri Besar, or Prime Minister. He was a Malay, a middle-aged, devout Muslim, who had been to Mecca. His name was Dato (a title) Haji (to show he had been on a pilgrimage) Abdul Malik. I imagine that in his day he had passed the School Certificate, but he was not in any way a scholar. He had been a Civil Servant for many years and was experienced in the machinery of Government. He was stout-hearted, stolid, painstaking, and stubborn. I suspected that he did not love the Chinese much; and, like many patriots, would like to have seen the last of the British. He was immensely kind to my wife and me. He was a devoted husband and left the service about a year later because of his wife's ill-health. When I went to say good-bye to him in 1955, his wife was restored to health and the Haji was living in retirement in a small house in Seremban. I hope he thinks as kindly of me as I do of him.

In front of the Chairman was a thick pile of files, minutes, and agenda. Imagine the scene reversed. Imagine yourself surrounded by files in (say) Turkish script. Imagine yourself surrounded by Turkish gentlemen, each an expert in his line and each a protagonist of his own particular cause. Imagine that the main purpose of your meeting was to discuss some aspect of life with which you were totally unfamiliar from training, upbringing, or (until recently) experience. You would have been completely out of your depth; and so was the Haji. But he struggled manfully.

On his left was Sheppard, the British Adviser. In some States—Johore for instance—the British Adviser took the chair at these meetings, but not so in Negri. The Haji was always there, even in the month of Ramzan (called Puasa in Malaya) when he had fasted since the rising of the sun.

Sheppard and I had been at school together, though neither was aware of this fact for some time. We must have been at Cambridge together too, where he had taken an honours degree and passed into the Malayan Civil Service. During the fighting in Malaya he had caught some ghastly disease (scrub typhus I think), but had survived it and was interned in Singapore. On top of the usual humiliations and ill-treatment accorded by the Japanese, he had been a prisoner of the Kampetei or Secret Police whose treatment of prisoners beggars description. In spite of this he played a good game of squash racquets and would have been excellent at tennis if he had had the time to play more often.

At these Committee meetings he had the difficult job of keeping the Haji and the rest of us on the rails. He had no charter of authority over the Haji and very little over us. He had to rely on his personality and intellect; and whenever we got anywhere it was largely due to him.

On his left, at the end of the table, sat the Secretary. He was a young Civil Servant, with a war experience of the North-West Frontier of India. He and I used occasionally to converse in Pushtu, which nobody else could understand. He had a brilliant brain, but he hated Malaya and hankered after barren rocks. (He soon got himself transferred to Aden. In his place came a succession of excellent young men. Because they had been well chosen by Sheppard, they showed promise and the High Commissioner took one for his Private Secretary and the Deputy High Commissioner took another.) The Secretary had a second pile of files at least a foot thick.

On his left again, facing Sheppard, was George Rotheray. He combined the post of Secretary for Chinese Affairs in Negri Sembilan with that of State Emergency Information Officer—the Dr Goebbels, so to speak, of the State. Except that he had been educated on the Continent—at the Sorbonne I think—he had no similarity with Dr Goebbels. He had commanded a company of the Queen's Royal Regiment in Burma, where he was awarded a Military Cross and suffered a severe wound. He spoke Chinese fluently. He was not the least bit military, but I found in him a kindred spirit, and we were often in agreement.

On his left sat the Chairman of the Negri Sembilan Planters' Association, who was Manager of Tanah Merah Estate near

A Cup of Tea with the Gurkhas during a Visit by Helicopter

Port Dickson. He went Home on leave very shortly, and at this meeting Bob Shotter, the Manager of the Dunlop Estate of Ladang Geddes, sat beside him.

Bob Shotter had motored over fifty miles in an armoured car to attend this meeting. He had therefore had time to read all the relevant papers in the car, and he knew what every item on the agenda was about. (George Collingwood also knew, and was often a jump ahead of everyone.) Bob kept all his papers in one thick file and could usually turn up an old reference more quickly than the Secretary. Had he been chairman of the meeting we should have got through the business in half the time. He was a very efficient man; but you do not become manager of a Dunlop Estate unless you are efficient.

There was no one at the other end of the table; but facing Bob, on the same side of the table as the Chairman, was Tommy Thompson, the Chief Police Officer. Next to him—between him and the Haji—came the Military Member: George (later, me). But I was barely awake.

The first item on the agenda was to confirm the minutes of the last meeting. As no one, except Bob, had read the minutes, and as there were four pages of them, this took some time. George had an arrangement whereby Tony Ward, one of the officers at Brigade Headquarters, used to go through the minutes of each meeting before the next one. So in our copy of the minutes we found various places sidelined by Tony. This saved a lot of bother and I determined to continue the arrangement.

After some haggling as to whether one or two items really did mean what the speakers of the last meeting had actually said—or meant to say—the minutes were confirmed and the Haji duly signed them.

The next item was " Matters arising from the last Meeting." This was a long and tedious affair. Many of the matters considered last time had only been half-baked and when fed to the administrative machine were indigestible. So nearly every item had returned to the meeting to be baked some more.

We, as a State Committee, would often send decisions for action to the lower, or District, Committees; but they, having got them, would argue the toss.

They argued the toss for three reasons. First, it was not always practicable to do as they had been told by us. We might, perhaps, have told them to put two wire fences round a new village. When they came to try it they found the land was privately owned and planted with rubber. By acquiring it compulsorily they would bankrupt two or three smallholders. So they sent the problem back to us to think again.

Another reason for their non-compliance was that they resented interference by those whom they regarded (with some justification) as bungling bureaucrats in the stratosphere.

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

The reader will perceive that the machinery was right enough, it was the spirit that was wrong. General Templer soon put that right.

By the time we had flogged our way through the minutes of the last meeting everyone was in a thoroughly bad temper; and it was only the appearance of Rosalind Parker, the British Adviser's secretary, with a tea tray, that restored any vestige of harmony.

There must have been about ten items on the agenda, though I can only remember in particular two of them. In order to discuss the first one, two gentlemen, who had been waiting outside for about an hour and a half, were summoned. One of them was Noakes, the State Forest Officer; the other was a representative of Malayan Railways from Gemas.

The problem was this: the railway needed a phenomenally large number of sleepers, which were to be cut from the jungles on either side of the railway line. The process would take about eighteen months to complete. The only piece of jungle that was sufficiently stocked with suitable timber was on the East Coast Railway, in Bahau, one of the worst districts for bandits. The railway man was " damned if he would leave a lot of trucks and an engine parked on a siding all day to be shot at by bandits." Noakes was " damned if he'd let any other piece of forest be worked for this purpose." And what was the State War Executive Committee going to do about it ?

Tommy was certain he could not tie up large numbers of policemen for eighteen months to come. On George's advice I was unwilling to commit the necessary troops for static defence either.

We tried by argument and suggestion to make one of these gentlemen, each only striving to do his job properly, shift his ground.

" Why," we asked, " should the train stay there at all ? Why not collect the logs near the railway, and only send the train there (under escort) once a month to collect them ? "

" Because," came the bland reply, " the labour will have to be taken out there daily by train ; and it is too far for the train to come back between delivery of the labour in the morning and collection in the evening. So the train will have to wait anyway."

Every card we played was trumped with an ace, or something very like it.

George, however, had been at the business a long time and he was a realist. He knew that the logging contractor would include in his contract-rate a margin to cover blackmail to the bandits. There would not be any atrocities in consequence. The only practical thing that we could do was to send out a military patrol into the area occasionally, hoping to catch a bandit like a wasp near a honey-pot.

This was cold comfort for Noakes and the railway man. In effect our proposal for the protection of their loggers and their train was to do nothing. But a formula had to be devised for the minutes that would commit us to nothing but satisfy all concerned, including the staff of the Director of Operations in Kuala Lumpur. Face had to be saved on all sides. This takes time and we deferred the problem, half-baked, to the next meeting. Noakes and the railway man were thanked politely by the Haji—Malays are the world's champions at proposing votes of thanks at meetings—and filed out of the room, having spent the afternoon trying to get escorts which were not forthcoming.

Another problem with which we grappled at this first (and many another) meeting was the boundary with Malacca Settlement, where it adjoined Negri Sembilan.

The boundaries of the States and Settlements in Malaya were defined in various treaties with the Sultans of the States dating back to the days of Raffles. Consequently the dotted line on the map and the boundary stones on the ground were unalterable facts of life. But they carried with them many trials.

First, the boundary ran through the middle of the town of Tampin, down the high street I think. Negri Sembilan might impose a curfew at 10 P.M., Malacca might prefer 11 P.M., and a nonsense on the border-line was inevitable.

The Police are very rigid about boundaries. The boundary of the Metropolitan District of London, delineated in 1839, was not altered till 1946. If an offence is committed on one side of a boundary line, the police investigation report must be made by a policeman from that side of the boundary. If a prosecution follows, all the reports, paper-work, and eventually the trial must occur on the appropriate side of the border. And on that side of the border the record, including perhaps finger-prints and a description of the accused person, must be filed. This is both convenient and desirable in normal times to deal systematically and efficiently with crime; but when you have bandits who live on one side and hunt on the other they can use the boundary like the line round Tom Tiddler's ground.

The difficulty is aggravated by the question of "clearance" which I mentioned in an earlier chapter. Suppose a police or military patrol is following a trail: as soon as it reaches the border of another territory it must halt till it has received clearance into it. Even if the machinery works like clockwork a delay of several hours is not uncommon.

On the Civil Service side there are innumerable reasons why the writ of one District Officer cannot conveniently run in the next-door district—more so when it is in another State or Settlement.

The railway, too, wound its serpentine course, following the contours, between Gemas and Tampin. It crossed the boundary between Malacca Settlement and Negri Sembilan many times. At one point the Malacca authorities were responsible for its safety, a mile away the Negri authorities.

Some bandit leaders realised this difficulty of ours and took advantage of it to operate on the border. Others simply drifted to the border for the same sort of reason that dust drifts under the sofa—because it is hard to get at.

On the military side there was not much difficulty, because the Green Howards were disposed on both sides of the border, but even there clearance caused delay at times.

George Collingwood, by patient negotiation with Malacca, on whose Settlement War Executive Committee he (and later I) also served, had devised a *modus vivendi*. He had invented a term he called " shooting rights." He had by January 1952 very nearly achieved agreement between the two committees on shooting rights. Under the terms of this agreement a good tactical boundary line had been drawn on the map. The statutory functions of the Civil and Police authorities remained according to the statutory boundary; but troops might cross the statutory border for purposes of shooting bandits: they only required a fresh clearance when they crossed George's line. This they seldom had to do, because of the cunning with which George had drawn it.

When George handed over, complete agreement had not yet been reached either in principle or detail, but it was on the way. This line was consequently a frequent subject of debate in these Committees. It was a good line that George had drawn, but his term " shooting rights " was genius itself. Every Briton fancies himself as a sportsman, and the term suggests the raising of bandit hunting to the level of an old English pastime. The most parochial, hide-bound townsman from Upper Tooting was flattered to think he was only asked to concede shooting rights to his neighbour, just as the Duke of This might do for the Earl of That. The term became universal in Malaya, but I have reason to believe that it was George who introduced it.

Meanwhile the meeting worried on through the agenda. Outside, the sun set and Sheppard turned on the strip lighting that illuminated his office. I heard George's car come at 7 P.M. It was beginning to get reasonably cool; and at 7.30 P.M. the meeting broke up, with one member at least utterly bewildered.

CHAPTER VIII

Taking Over

At this time there was a great divergence of opinion on how to fight the bandits. Even the old hands were groping. But in 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade I felt certain that the battalions knew their part of the business, and George had collected about himself a first-class team at Brigade Headquarters. I therefore knew that I was singularly lucky to command this Brigade. If anything was not right in what happened to us it would be no one's fault but my own.

On his last day in command, George addressed all ranks of Brigade Headquarters in the N.A.A.F.I. and, by arrangement with him, I timed my arrival for when he had finished.

"There you are!" he said. "It's all yours. Look after 'em. They're a good lot."

Whereupon he handed over the green pennant, which in those days Commanders of Gurkha Brigades flew on their cars, and stepped into his own car. He was to continue as General Officer Commanding South Malaya District as a stop-gap till May. He had been one of the best bosses I have ever served. Having commanded my Brigade himself for three years, the temptation to interfere with my handling of it must have been considerable. He never succumbed to this temptation and I shall always be warmly grateful.

When George had gone from the room I addressed the Brigade Headquarters staff as their new Commander. I told them that in ten days I had seen a lot of the Brigade and the Staff, and that no one knew better than I how lucky I was in taking over a good show. I reminded them that no two men exercise command in exactly the same way, any more than two bowlers deliver the ball identically. There would inevitably, therefore, be some changes in approach to problems and ways of dealing with them; but they were not to suppose that I was making changes for the sake of change, or because I was dissatisfied with the previous régime. If I could do as well as my predecessor, I should be quite satisfied.

I then went on to tell them some of the tenets of my military faith.

First, a headquarters must be a happy one. If there is lack of trust, or bickering, or ill-feeling there can be no efficiency. No officer is so remarkable that he is indispensable; and if any officer did not work happily in the team he would have to go. (I did have to get rid of one officer. He was borrowing money from improper sources and owing it to Asian shops, to officers' and sergeants' messes, and to individual officers. His bad cheques were all over the place. He was an efficient staff officer on a Short Service Commission; but he was getting the British in general, and 63 Brigade in particular, a bad name. I tried to straighten out his affairs—so did the Bank Manager—but he deceived us both by only declaring the debts that suited him. I gave him an adverse report and he faded away. It was a necessary and distasteful business.)

Next, I explained that I did not propose to sit in my office all day. I should be out a lot. Consequently decisions would often have to be taken in my absence. Officers must, therefore, be prepared to act on their own responsibility, but must tell me what they had done in my absence. I reminded them that it was always wrong to do nothing, or to " pass the baby " to someone else. Anyone doing this would leave by the next train. If an officer made wrong decisions he, too, would have to go; but I would, at least, see him off at the station. A sensible decision would always receive my support. For my part I undertook to see that they all knew my views on everything going on, which would help them to decide rightly. I am not conscious of any of my staff ever having failed me in the three years, and I well know the debt I owe.

I told them that the Brigade Staff must always be well turned out, and the Headquarters must be spick and span. Nothing undermines the confidence of the troops in the skill of the " management " so quickly as a slovenly looking show at Brigade Headquarters.

I told them that Headquarters, 63 Brigade, was to be a willing horse. Whenever humanly possible the answer to any request from below or above was to be Yes. If it could not be Yes, or if it was not fair on the troops to say Yes, then only might the answer be No. But I was to be told at once so that I could confirm it in writing.

I told them that a Brigade Headquarters was too near to the fighting troops to shut up shop over the week-end or on Wednesday afternoons. On the other hand no one can work without respite. They must therefore take their fair share of leave ; and we would make arrangements for someone else to do their work. Equally, if there was work to be done at any time (day or night), they must stay to do it. There could be no " going off with the hooter." Conversely, if there happened to be nothing to do at ten in the morning, I had no objection to them being absent, providing the duty officer knew where to find them and could recall them quickly.

Finally, I told them that any of them could come and see me if ever he wanted help. He could visit me at my house in the evenings. If ever they had any ideas on how to kill more bandits I was " in the market " for ideas.

None present wanted to ask any questions, and Pat and I walked back to the office together. He pointed out that he fully agreed with my ideas, but he foresaw one field where it would be difficult to be the willing horse. Higher headquarters were always asking for officers for this appointment or that. If we always said Yes, there would soon be no one left. This was very true and I had, in fact, meant to mention it, but it had escaped my mind at the time. This question of finding officers to fill staff appointments was always a running sore, sometimes even a cause of strife with higher headquarters. Everyone above us tried to ease the burden, but it always weighed heavily.

Looking back on the last three years I am impressed with the extraordinarily efficient and loyal way I was served. For anything that went wrong I willingly take responsibility. I know that, thanks to my staff, jolly little did go wrong.

George took away his driver with him, and one of the first things I had to do was to provide myself with another. D'Arcy Mander, Commanding Officer of the Green Howards, asked me if I was going to have a British or Gurkha one. Properly speaking, the Commander of a Gurkha Brigade should have a Gurkha driver. But Johnnie Curling had given me a Gurkha orderly, so I asked D'Arcy if I might have a driver from him. Private Mackenzie—a Scot domiciled in Yorkshire—was the first of a series of British drivers with whom I still keep in correspondence. He was a National Service soldier and remained about six months. His successor, Lance-corporal Horwood, a Gordon Highlander by choice but a Cockney by upbringing, remained about eighteen months. Private Urquhart (a National Service Gordon Highlander from Lumphanan, and so " broad " that I almost needed an interpreter) and Trooper Saunders from A Squadron, 11th Hussars, split the rest of the time. An excellent lot of boys.

A good driver is an essential in Army life. Every week I used to drive about four hundred miles, and the other drivers on Malayan roads are curiously fatalistic. One seldom went a long journey without seeing a motor accident, or the results of one—a car overturned in a paddy field, or a wreck at the roadside—and life would have been hell if one had narrow escapes oneself. We never touched anything from start to finish, and I never found myself having to trample anxiously on the floor of the back seat as though braking, or urging the driver to have a care.

On the home front George bequeathed us some excellent Chinese servants. They had been with him for three years, and for three more they stayed with us. Nothing was ever too much trouble and we never had a single breakage of glass or china.

We had, of course, to do a fair amount of entertaining. When big-wigs came to see the Brigade they usually stayed with us or had a meal. We thus enjoyed having to our house many people from all walks of life.

Civilians sometimes criticise the Army for trying to live at an impossibly high standard. They wonder why it is that with the good pay that an officer gets he never seems to save any money. The answer is not far to seek. If you live in London, as the manager of a business, and a customer comes from Malaya to see you, you have but to call a taxi and the widest possible range of entertainment is at your beck and call. You can take him to the Ritz and a box in a theatre, or to the coffee shop round the corner—and in your income tax return I suppose you might say this was a legitimate expense. In Malaya the boot is on the other foot. When someone comes from Home to see the soldiery in Malaya, he naturally stays with the Commanding Officer, the Brigadier or the General. It would, I suppose, be possible to give him stew out of a mess tin and a cup of tea from a tin mug; but he would not think it a very warm welcome when he had travelled so far. So, instead, you put him up for the night, give him whisky when the sun goes down, and ask people to dinner to meet him. You cannot do any of these things unless you have a properly run house with proper servants, who can put on as good a meal as the visitor deserves.

Our first visitor was a professor, who came to lecture to the troops on some topic or other. He was a member of the Athenæum. Although I could not recommend to him the process of actually reading my first book, I could not resist urging him to tell his club librarian to get a copy. I quote this for the benefit of any readers, who happen to be members of that club, to explain its presence sandwiched between the learned tomes that I presume are to be found there.

Our next visitor was quite a new line for me. My wife opened a note brought in by the *amah* after dinner.

"Now that you are a Brigadier," she said, "you must expect to have bishops for breakfast now and again."

Here I ought to explain that "bishops for breakfast" was not some exotic savoury like "angels on horseback," but the genuine article. A real Right Reverend Doctor of Divinity, signing himself with a cross and the name of his diocese, was to have breakfast in our home.

My wife knew all about bishops, having once been secretary to one of them; but they had hitherto remained outside my orbit. Till then my conversation with bishops was limited to the words " I will " ; words which I strongly recommend in their context, but a meagre introduction to bishops in general.

" What shall we talk about ? " I asked. " I barely know the difference between a rubric and a chasuble."

" Never mind," replied my wife. " They don't make them bishops unless they have some human interests. Besides, at breakfast no one talks very much anyway. And, as a last resort, we could introduce him to Ah Siong's family."

Ah Siong was our major-domo in Flagstaff House. He was a quite inscrutable Chinaman and had four fascinating children. We called them (because their real names were too difficult) Ah Sing, Ah Song, Ah Click, and Ah Clock. They were Boy Scouts ; they grinned from ear to ear whenever we met ; and they saluted me when I was in uniform with a jolly shout of " Hoolay ! Hoolay ! " My response to this was " Tally-ho ! " which went down big too.

Thus, all prepared, the Bishop came to breakfast with us on the Sunday morning after the early service.

We got out of the brand-new car at the spacious porch, and entered the vaulted hall paved with black and white tiles. (This sounds like a quotation from the Odyssey, so perfect was the house ; but remember, we were temporarily living in Flagstaff House till the G.O.C. returned from leave or our own house was ready ; " whichever happens first," as they say.)

We then moved with due solemnity into the vast dining-room, in the middle of which was one small table laid for two. As we were four persons—the Bishop, the Chaplain, my wife and I—this event may be recorded as Crisis Number One.

Ah Siong hung his head. He had misunderstood my wife's instructions ; which is not surprising since my wife's Chinese was as limited as my ecclesiastical small-talk. However, he quickly rose to the occasion and switched on the electric fan. This was very necessary ; for the Bishop was wearing a sort of mauve dressing-gown which looked fine but must have been darned hot. Ah Siong then flashed out and brought in extra plates, cups, saucers, knives, forks, and finger-bowls.

(All right! Mrs Ah Siong washed up, so we even used a butter-knife.)

The meal, thereafter, proceeded according to custom, beginning with a kind of red melon which grew at the top of a tree in the garden. It tasted almost entirely of the slice of lemon which you squeezed over it before you ate it. Ham, eggs, tea, and toast followed. (I am sorry to tell you all about this food, but it was still quite a novelty after the austerity of 1951 England.)

Soon, however, Crisis Number Two occurred. The Bishop helped himself to butter and marmalade and the Chaplain took the last piece of toast from the rack.

" More toast, please, Ah Siong," said my wife, raising the toast-rack to make her Chinese more easily intelligible.

Ah Siong smiled deprecatingly.

" No bread," he announced blandly.

I was about to make some comments of a general nature which might not have earned ecumenical blessing, but Peach Blossom (Mrs Ah Siong) glided into the room with some Ryvita and all was well.

In spite of these two crises it was a pleasant party. The Bishop spoke easily and well on a wide range of subjects. The Chaplain pleased Ah Siong by saying something suitable in polished Cantonese. It was a simple, homely affair; and I formed a genuine liking for the Bishop. Indeed, it seemed all too soon when I had to motor our guests back to the Vicarage to prepare for their next duty.

In the car we talked mildly about the bandits, and I mentioned that we had recently found a small bandit camp (abandoned, alas!) quite near home. The Bishop seemed interested.

" Would you like to see it ? " I asked.

" Yes, I should," replied the Bishop, and he consulted with the Chaplain over times and appointments.

" Could it be seen to-morrow morning before eleven o'clock ? " he asked.

I thought it could; but I was not prepared to make any promises before talking it over with Johnnie Curling, C.O. of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, who had found it.

We drove on in silence.

"Look," I said as we turned into the Vicarage, "it won't do to have any publicity about this. Not a word to anyone. Keep to-morrow morning free. I'll write you a note later."

I put the Bishop and the Chaplain down at the Vicarage and motored home to have a good look at the map.

Whoever took the Bishop (I should not be able to go too, for I had other duties) would have to go about four miles from Seremban. It was a wide open road. There was no jungle on the roadside and no undergrowth under the rubber trees. No chance of a sniper on the road, I thought; and with an escort, no fear of a hold-up.

Then they would have to dismount and walk about a mile up a cart-track through the rubber to the jungle fringe. The bandit camp was just inside the jungle. With an escort of a platoon or so they should be safe enough. A large bandit gang could not conceal itself, and a solitary sniper would never get away alive. I judged the risks acceptable.

So I wrote a note to the Bishop :—

MY DEAR BISHOP (I wrote),

The object of the exercise is for you to see an abandoned bandit camp. The last thing I want is for you to get shot at, so we must have recourse to deception. War is a dirty game in which deception is as good as armour-plate—and much lighter to carry. Actually the danger in this venture is no more than when crossing the Charing Cross Road in a rush-hour.

So let us call the camp CHARLIE'S PLACE ; and if anyone asks you where you are going, say it is to visit Charlie's Place, the abode of an acquaintance you have in common with the Brigadier.

I shall have to make some arrangements, and at 9 A.M. to-morrow I shall telephone to you saying whether your visit to Charlie's Place can happen or not.

Yours, &c. . . .

PS.—I cannot let the Chaplain go ; it will make too much of a crowd.

Later on, I went to the 1/7 Gurkha Rifles camp where I knew Johnnie would be awaiting the mid-day wireless reports from his patrols in the jungle.

We discussed the idea of the Bishop's trip to Charlie's Place. It would be a good thing, as a matter of routine, to revisit the camp to see if it were still in use ; also we might pick up some information. The troops were ready and an experienced British officer, " Pod " Hume, was available. We agreed that the Bishop's visit was " on." So next morning I telephoned to the Bishop.

" The visit to Charlie's Place," I said, " will happen anyway to-day, and if you like to go, too, Captain Hume will be pleased to take you. But I'm afraid," I added, " Charlie himself will not be at home."

" Never mind," replied the Bishop, " I'm all for it."

A car went to fetch him, and soon I heard that Pod had departed with a platoon as escort taking the Bishop with him. I then went about my own affairs.

When I got back to lunch the telephone rang. It was Johnnie.

" Your Bishop," he said, " had an exciting time, sir."

" Good God ! " I exclaimed. " What happened ? "

Johnnie fetched Pod Hume to the phone to tell me himself. This was his story :—

" The Bishop came dressed in a white cricket shirt, blue shorts, and brown shoes ; so we gave him a jungle hat and an olive-green shirt and shorts," he began.

" He and I with a driver and an orderly led the way in the jeep to the fourth milestone, followed by a platoon of C Company in two vehicles."

" And what happened ? " I interrupted. " Did he get shot ? " But Pod was a methodical type and could not be hurried.

" We dismounted," he continued, " at the appointed place and went into the rubber. It is a well-kept estate with no undergrowth, so we advanced through it in diamond formation : a section in front with two scouts forward of them, a section on either flank, and two Gurks in rear. The Bishop and I with two orderlies moved in the middle. The platoon went very silently, there was no sun under the trees and no tappers about—really quite creepy. I had a feeling that something would happen, and I began to wonder whether to turn back.

" Suddenly, as we were going up a rise in the ground, the scouts lay down as they topped it, and we all went down too. The corporal reacted correctly and the drill went off like clockwork."

I could not resist another interruption, but Pod was not to be hustled.

" The scouts had seen two bandits. We'd taken them by surprise and they ran like hell. The troops were all for giving chase, but I restrained them. The range was too great for shooting a moving target. I told the Bishop I was sorry we hadn't bagged a couple for him ; but he said he'd had his money's worth without the corpses."

" And did you see the camp ? " I asked.

" Yes, sir," he replied. " We went on and saw the camp. It is really more of a bivouac area than a camp, but it's been in use again, about six or seven chaps with a sentry-post in an old ant-hill. I think it might be worth sitting-up over it some time. Anyway, I reckon the Bishop enjoyed himself. He is a sporting sort of bird. He'll have plenty of material for his next sermon, sir."

Pod rang off. The Bishop had departed by air. We often met again and remained on speaking terms ; so I presume he liked it.

CHAPTER IX

GENERAL TEMPLER'S VISITS

THE new High Commissioner arrived in Kuala Lumpur on 7th February 1952 and electrified everyone by his energy, his enthusiasm, and his human touch. Here was something the like of which Malaya had not seen for many years, if ever before. He talked to people high and low. He toured the country without ceasing, and he breathed into the administrative machine something of his own fire. He appeared to have the ear of the Home Government; for armoured vehicles, Red Cross nurses, Women's Voluntary Workers, missionaries from China, Home Guard Officers from Australia, arms and ammunition came forth in a flood where before there had been but a trickle. The Chinese seemed to be offered a new deal. The Home Guard, which must be largely Chinese from the nature of things, was to be taken seriously; Chinese were to be encouraged to assume Federal Citizenship, and an appeal for two thousand Chinese youths to join the Police was made from King's House.

On 25th March a particularly brutal murder was committed by the bandits in a village called Tanjong Malim in Selangor. The pipe-line that brought water to the village was cut and the District Officer and a Public Works Department engineer with a few policemen went to see what could be done to restore the supply of water—an even more essential commodity in a hot climate than in a temperate one. The whole party was ambushed and twelve men were killed, including the District Officer and the P.W.D. engineer. Eight more men were wounded.

The High Commissioner swept into the village two days later and confronted the people. They must have been supporting the bandits who had committed the outrage, for no one could live there unless they got food from Tanjong Malim. Drastic measures were ordered and headlines appeared in every paper.

Amongst the people I met, the High Commissioner's action was largely approved. " Here, at last," they said, " is someone who is actually prepared to take responsibility himself and *do* something."

The bureaucrats and little men looked anxiously at themselves and wondered if they were really doing their duty. Was the writing of polite, but slightly obstructive, minutes really the best way to end the Emergency ? Were they preferring the rules to the game ? Was the State War Executive Committee really doing its stuff ? And were the District Committees really trying to co-operate with it ? These and other searching questions raised themselves in all men's minds ; and then, out of the blue, so to speak, came the General himself.

The last High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, had been ambushed on his way to a hill resort on a Saturday afternoon. Opinion was not agreed whether or not it was a stroke of luck for the bandits or a deep-laid plan. None the less it had been a first-class military success for them, and it clearly ought not to be allowed again. Quite apart from anything else, it would not have looked very efficient for a General to be carved up in the same way. The High Commissioner's movements were, in future, to be planned in the greatest secrecy. This was to be his principal protection against a planned bandit attack. But secrecy did not rule out the possibility of a fluke. The bandits by mere chance might have been lying in wait for someone else when the High Commissioner drove that way. An escort was therefore essential.

I have no doubt that General Templer was quite prepared, like any subaltern, to travel in a jeep. But to take a risk like this was wrong. Quite apart from the melancholy consequences to the victim, the offer to the bandits of so worthwhile a target would have been the hall-mark of military incompetence by those planning the itinerary.

The High Commissioner's visit was thus shrouded in secrecy and his actual progress through Negri Sembilan was to be well escorted.

There was some confusion at first about who should be responsible for what, though this was soon ironed out. Briefly, the arrangement was that the British Adviser and the Mentri Besar (helped by the Brigade Commander and the Chief Police Officer) decided upon the High Commissioner's programme. The General usually wanted to see certain things for himself and the programme had to cater for that; but otherwise it was left, more or less, to us to decide where to take him and what to show him.

This early planning was done with great secrecy, and Sheppard himself used to hammer away on a typewriter or keep the letters in his own handwriting.

The next thing was the provision of a suitable escort. Tommy Thompson had by this time left Negri Sembilan and John Barnard had taken his place as Chief Police Officer. He and I agreed that the best plan was as follows. Whenever the High Commissioner was on the open road, outside the Town Board limits of any town, I would be responsible for his safety. Equally, if he decided to stop anywhere not provided for in the programme, whether in a town or not, I again accepted responsibility. But whenever the High Commissioner made a planned journey through a town, or halted in it according to plan, John Barnard would provide a Police escort. Later on, when most of the dangers were past, refinements to this simple understanding began to creep in. However, in 1952 we reckoned we had got it buttoned up securely.

Writers and speakers have often criticised General Templer for travelling in a column of armoured cars; but in Negri Sembilan and Malacca, at any rate, I take full responsibility for them. It would have been madness to travel about without them, and while I was responsible for his safety I was thankful to have them.

Whenever the High Commissioner's route passed through dangerous stretches of road I always insisted that he travelled actually inside one of the armoured vehicles; and I generally used to have the road picqueted with troops. The General was very good at doing what he was told, although I am sure it irked him to be made such a fuss of.

In Negri Sembilan and Malacca the High Commissioner's escort came from Jasper Selwyn's C Squadron of 13th/18th Hussars stationed in Seremban. Jasper himself usually commanded the escort, and the N.C.O.s and troopers took pride in turning themselves and their vehicles out as smartly as possible for the occasion. At the end of the day the General would have the men paraded for him to thank them personally for taking so much trouble. I noticed that other Very Important Persons, whom from time to time we escorted, did not always remember this civility. The British soldier reacts well to a word of thanks, and escort duty for the High Commissioner was always as popular as it was arduous.

The High Commissioner's first visit to Negri Sembilan had to be cancelled at the last moment, because he was indisposed; but it gave us all a chance to go through the motions and practise the drill. Next time he proposed to come I was away on an exercise in Singapore, and Johnnie Curling made the military arrangements. These must have caused him some anxiety, for the General insisted on visiting the worst areas in Bahau, and stopped the night with Bob Shotter and his wife in Ladang Geddes Estate.

My wife and I returned from Singapore in time to attend a garden party at the Residency. Next morning George Collingwood and the General went into conclave in the Operations Room of South Malaya District. Although I did not know it then, George was in fact "selling" to the General the idea that a good success might be scored against the bandits by concentrating an extra battalion in the Seremban area for a period "not less than two months." This later developed into Operation "Hive," which I shall describe in a later chapter.

The General made numerous other visits to the Brigade Area. Although it is a break with chronology, I shall describe two visits that occurred later, one in 1952 and one in January 1953.

During the summer of 1952 the Ruler of Negri Sembilan, known as the Yang Di Pertuan Besar by the Malays (and the Rum Tum Tum by Thomas Atkins because he could pronounce it more easily), had his fifty-seventh birthday. Part of the celebration was to be a banquet luncheon at his country house at Sri Menanti followed by the professions of allegiance to him by the village headman of the State.

The Ruler was a hospitable man and invited all the world and his wife to the allegiance ceremony, and as many as he could cram into the banqueting hall to the luncheon. Amongst his guests were the High Commissioner and Lady Templer.

The road to Sri Menanti from Seremban winds its way over the Kuala Pilah Pass in many twists and hairpin bends, and is surrounded on both sides by limitless jungle. There had been many ambushes on this road in 1951 and, unless they went by helicopter (which was unreliable owing to uncertain cloud ceiling), there was no other way of getting the High Commissioner and his party to the festivities.

John Barnard and I foresaw, rightly as it turned out, that the secret of the High Commissioner's intention to visit Sri Menanti was bound to leak out through the numerous entourage of the Ruler who knew about it. Even if it had not leaked out beforehand, his return journey, after he had been seen there by all and sundry, was bound to be along the same dangerous road. The theory that the bandits would not interfere with the festivities on the birthday of their popular Ruler would not hold water. They had blown up the train in which he was travelling on 8th June 1951 because some idiot had given his journey publicity. And now the Ruler, his guests, and the High Commissioner were almost certainly known to be making the double journey along a dangerous route.

Any possibility of subterfuge or deception was out of the question. Sheppard told him of the risks, but duty called the High Commissioner and he was determined to attend. We therefore had recourse to brute force. First we insisted that the party travelled in an armoured vehicle—the General spoilt it all by sticking his head out of the top and waving to the crowds who waved to him. Then John Barnard turned out five hundred policemen to line the more or less inhabited parts of the route. For my part I picqueted the road over the Pass, using two companies of Gurkhas and one of Gordon Highlanders. Aircraft were alerted on Kuala Lumpur airfield and an Auster circled overhead.

Everyone got safely to Sri Menanti and after luncheon the show began. At one end of a long chamber the Ruler and his wife sat cross-legged on a dais. At the other were the Malay village headmen. (Not to be confused with Chinese headmen of the Chinese New Villages.) These headmen were required to make obeisance to the Ruler, crawling on all fours the length of the chamber and up the steps of the dais to kiss the royal toe. Having done this they crawled back again in reverse.

Looking at these headmen I was prompted to reflect upon the character of the Malays. In Negri Sembilan a matriarchal system of inheritance prevails, property being handed down from mother to daughter. This must, after centuries of practice, have had some effect upon the menfolk. So must the balmy climate and the rich soil. Generally speaking, in Negri Sembilan at any rate, there was a shortage of dominant characters. We had difficulty in finding the kind of Malay personalities living in the countryside who would naturally and easily assume leadership of the Home Guard. The equivalent of the Punjabi *zemindar* or influential landowner did not exist. On the contrary, the Malays seemed to enjoy the more civilised characteristics : good manners, good taste in colours, charm of manner, and an easy-going, generous, happy-go-lucky attitude towards life. There are those who say that these qualities only receive their just reward in Heaven. I cannot say. Certainly the Malays are a pleasant race with a carefree approach to the harshness of this world that one seldom meets elsewhere.

The ceremony took about two hours to accomplish. When it was over we went into the spacious grounds of Sri Menanti where many small tables were laid out and where tea was served to the strains of a Malay band.

During tea I heard with joy that the troops had killed five bandits. Not, indeed, the troops who had been lining the route to Sri Menanti, but men of the 1st Fijian Infantry Regiment who had recently joined 63 Brigade and were in Kuala Pilah nearby. Apparently the military activity that was visible on the route had caused the bandits to suppose that every available soldier was engaged in this task. They consequently thought it an appropriate time to keep a long-promised engagement with a man from the village of Jowassi to collect food and money. What they did not know was that there was a double dealer somewhere in the pay of the Special Branch. A section of Fijian soldiers was also at the meeting point and killed five out of five bandits.

Thus the day ended without incident on the road; but highly successfully not five miles from it.

The other visit of the High Commissioner that I wish to recall was known as Operation " Jaunt." It was clearly desirable that General Templer, as Director of Operations, should see for himself what it was like operating in the jungle. Through General Stockwell, the General Officer Commanding the troops in Malaya, I was told to organise a patrol in which both Generals could take part.

Here was an instance when the greatest secrecy was needed. If the Communists had any inkling of where we intended to go our progress might have been very hazardous indeed. Every letter dealing with the proposal was therefore classed as Top Secret and handled by a restricted few.

One of the things I wanted the Generals to hear was the strange noises that haunt the jungle at night, and in the morning when the birds and animals, particularly the monkeys, come to life.

Pat and I therefore determined to combine Operation " Jaunt " with a Signal Exercise that I intended to run in January 1953. Upon the top of the Jelebu Pass was a small Gurkha camp for a platoon. The platoon's task was to patrol the sides of the road on either side of the Pass to prevent bandits laying an ambush there. (Before George had installed this platoon, ambushes in the Pass were common, and in 1954, after 63 Brigade had left the area, the platoon was withdrawn and another fatal ambush took place.)

The camp on top of the Pass provided exactly what I wanted. You could motor to within a few hundred yards of it. No extra men would have to be deployed, so that no explanations would be needed.

We debated whether to establish a really convenient camp with tents, latrine buckets and proper washing arrangements, or whether to have the primitive improvisations that troops usually adopt. We decided upon what Pat called a " Rajah's camp." Here was the value of the Signal Exercise. I had always maintained that anyone could live like a pig in squalor and discomfort. Therefore, for the Signal Exercise, there was nothing odd in my insisting on an officers' mess tent, a couple of caravans, and an electric lighting set. We even went so far as to have a bugler to sound Lights Out and Reveille!

I also wanted the Generals to experience the sensation of being in the neighbourhood of bombing and shelling in the jungle. People who had never been in the jungle often talked big about driving the bandits here or there by bombing and shelling. I was anxious to demonstrate exactly what it was like for the bandits when shells and bombs rained down (say) half a mile away. A situation in the Signal Exercise could be made to cover this and a troop of guns was deployed accordingly.

Under Pat's expert guidance I had no fears about getting lost in the jungle. None the less it seemed a good opportunity to demonstrate how a lost patrol could call up a light aircraft from Seremban by wireless, light a smoke candle when its engine was audible overhead, and get its position fixed from the air. The Signal Exercise could be made to cover this too.

Brigade Headquarters consequently moved out to the camp on top of the Jelebu Pass on D-day—3. All that day and the next we did our Signal Exercise and the umpires lived in the caravans while we all enjoyed the convenience of a mess tent. At mid-day on D-day—1 the Signal Exercise came to an end and I broke to Brigade Headquarters the plan for that evening and next day.

In the evening, after dinner, General Stockwell, who was staying in my house, and I went to the Residency where we collected the High Commissioner and his Military Assistant. We then motored into the night. Outside Seremban we were met by the Brigade Defence Platoon mounted in transport. Pat formed up the column with my car-load of Generals in the middle, and we motored up the Pass.

It was a lovely night with a bright moon. Cicadas and lizards chirruped and whistled in the trees, and the jungle seemed alive with what sounded like the ringing of telephone bells. Fanciful shapes danced in the moonlight and in the distance a tiger roared. I could not have stage-managed it better had I tried. The mess corporal, a Gurkha, produced whiskies and sodas for a nightcap and soon we were dispersed to our tents and caravans.

In each tent or caravan a typewritten programme (typed in camp during the Signal Exercise) announced the programme for the morrow. Pat had remembered everything.

Next morning Reveille rang out in the clear still air an hour before dawn. We shaved and dressed and assembled for breakfast. Mepacrine was dispensed against malaria, and to each V.I.P. a Gurkha was allotted to carry his water-bottle and pack. In a halting speech I explained what we were going to do and dished out maps all round (specially mounted in cellophane) with our route marked on them. We zeroed our watches, checked our compasses, and loaded our several weapons. The Generals carried carbines. Personally, I always preferred a pistol or a Service rifle. Just as the sun began to show over the hill-tops we sallied forth in single file with the defence platoon suitably disposed.

Pat was in charge of the party in much the same way as the Captain of the Admiralty yacht is in charge when the Board of Admiralty puts to sea in her. The Generals and I were passengers, taking our orders from Pat.

We started with a long steep climb. Until one has seen it, one is apt to imagine the jungle is flat. This disposed of that supposition at once. It was like climbing a steep and slippery bank for nearly five hundred feet. As we walked we had to duck under this or climb over that, using our hands, pulling on creepers and saplings, to hoist ourselves up the slope.

Malayan jungles are of two principal kinds. There is primary jungle and secondary jungle. Primary jungle is the genuine article. The trees, racing for light and air, grow two hundred feet high without a branch. Above, the foliage spreads out like a canopy blotting out the sun. Underfoot is a carpet of dead leaves. Small saplings grow hopefully, waiting for a giant to die and let in the light. Then the saplings have a race for survival. The strongest gets to the light and blots it out from the weaklings. A few creepers trail down from high branches to the earth below. There is very little undergrowth in primary jungle, and—apart from the gradient—progress is fairly easy. Visibility is about ten to twenty yards, not so much on account of the lack of sunlight as on account of the density of trees.

Secondary jungle is a different kettle of fish. Wherever primary jungle has been cleared, either by man or through some freak of nature—a landslide, for instance—every growing thing gets the light and has an equal chance in life. Here, in secondary jungle, the trees that one day may be giants are wreathed about with ferns and creepers. Unless there be a recently made path, progress in secondary jungle is impossible without hacking one's way.

Pat, looking from time to time at his compass, went with the advanced guard. On either side of the main column a flank guard of a section kept some five to ten yards away. Four to five paces separated each man from the man in front. A small rearguard followed in our wake.

After the first stiff climb we came to the ridge-line of the spur along which we were to go. Wild animals had worn a pathway on the ridge, and going was quite easy. We followed this up the spur and then skirted round the contour of the jungle mass, keeping high ground to our right. This was a tiring stretch, as there was a tendency to be fought all the time of drifting away left-handed, downhill. Presently we came to a stream up which we walked till we found ourselves on a watershed. We had been going for about an hour and Pat called a halt.

Able Dacre, the Signal Officer, then got to work. He spread out a wire aerial between two trees and switched on his set. Soon he was through to the Gunners. In the distance we could hear the firing of the guns and later the crash of shells landing in the forest. The sound of this is fluky. Sometimes it seemed close, and sometimes it was nearly impossible to say in which direction the shells were falling. There are many practical lessons to be learnt from this, and until one has heard it one is likely to have misleading ideas about the effects of shell-fire.

When it was time to continue our march, Able closed down his set. Pat asked if all were ready, and on being told Yes we set off. We continued with short, half-hourly halts for two more hours. This brought us to a place where there had been a landslide. Here we halted while the Gurkhas brewed up. Mess-tins of hot tea appeared as though from nowhere, and those with apples in their pockets ate them.

At this point we called up Brigade Headquarters to get an airstrike on a bandit camp site that we knew of. It was in a valley the other side of the main massif. We heard the roar of the aircraft and the crash of bombs, but for safety's sake we had timed it so as not to be too close, and the effect was disappointing.

After this we marched again for an hour and had another halt. We had been marching for four hours. The Generals both seemed to be going well and the worst of the going was behind us. Able Dacre set up his wireless again and we called up an Auster. When it was overhead the pilot's voice came so loud and clear into Able's earphones that we could all hear him.

The Gurkha Officer threw a smoke grenade and a wisp of pink smoke filtered up towards the tree-tops.

" Can you see the smoke ? " asked Able. " Over."

" Yes," came the reply. " I will give you your position. Wait."

In a few seconds Roy Royle, whose voice it was from the aircraft, spoke again. He gave us a six-figure map reference which Pat plotted on his map.

"If that is so," he remarked, "we are just about right. We should strike a track (he pointed at the map) in about half an hour."

This we duly did. An old track, once made by loggers, wound gently down the hillside and we followed it. Twice we crossed streams and near one of them leeches could be seen on the ground positively dashing towards us. But our jungle boots kept them off—all except one that fell from a branch down Able's neck and attached itself to his shoulder, bared by the drag of his equipment. At the next halt someone dislodged the leech with a lighted cigarette. (This is the best way. If you pull it off with your fingers it is apt to leave its head behind beneath the skin.)

The terrors of the jungle to-day have largely gone. We know how to live and move in it. The jungle is simply another element in which men fight, like the sea, the air, or the desert. The enemy may fill any of these elements with his hazards; but of the four, the jungle itself contains far less natural hazards than the sea, the air, or the desert.

At our next halt we alerted Jasper, who had brought the British Adviser with a detachment of C Squadron to escort us home. The British Adviser had warned the headman of the village where we emerged; and soon we were drinking coconut milk from the many coconuts that were split open in our honour.

It had been a good trek through the jungle; nearly seven hours, and at the end of it we all felt we had earned our lunch and a sleep after it. A few days later I received a letter from each of the Generals thanking all those who had contributed to the success of the occasion; and Pat saw that this percolated to the rank and file concerned.

CHAPTER X

ON THE MENCHIS ROAD

(*See Map II*)

THE main central range of mountains that forms the spine of Malaya runs through Negri Sembilan and finally peters out near Tampin. It is much narrower here than in the north, and if you go from Seremban to Bahau by the north road, through Kuala Klawang and Pertang, you cross the watershed. From Seremban your bath-water runs away into the Straits of Malacca to the west. From Kuala Klawang or Pertang your bath-water runs into the Triang River and thence into the China Sea.

On the eastern flank of the mountains a road runs from Pertang village up through Durian Tipus to a place called Menchis, just over the border of Negri Sembilan into Pahang. Bandits had lived in the Menchis area since the days of Spencer Chapman, and occasionally they acted in a most ferocious way. Generally, however, their main rôle in those parts seemed to be to maintain a well-provisioned camp—a sort of transit camp—for couriers or important Communists making their way to the north.

At one time there had been a company of Gurkhas at Pertang, but in the early part of 1952 the only security-force unit of any consequence in the area was a Federal Jungle Company at Durian Tipus.

These Federal Jungle Companies were a sort of police private army. They suffered from all the defects that one might expect from independent units of company size; but when they happened to have a good commanding officer he was able to overcome many of these inherent defects. The one at Durian Tipus was commanded by Bill Sergeant, who had started life as a Palestine Policeman. After commanding the Jungle Company successfully for some time he became Staff Officer Operations in Seremban, and has now left the Police and taken Holy Orders.

Quite recently a bus had been stopped and burnt on the way to Pertang, and when George had left Seremban no one seemed to know much about the Menchis road or what went on there. I therefore thought I had better go and see the area for myself. It looked a deserted sort of place, from the map, with a lot of jungle about ; so Pat arranged for a troop of C Squadron to meet me near Kuala Klawang and escort me to and from my destination.

At the appointed time I arrived at the rendezvous. A troop was drawn up under the trees by the Police post. Bobbie, the subaltern in command, a pink-faced young National Service Officer, came up and saluted.

" Which one would you like to travel in ? " he asked.

I looked down the line. They were all named with the names of racehorses.

" That one," I replied, pointing at Colonist II.

The driver, a lance-corporal, grinned over his shoulder as I climbed in through the turret.

" 'Morning, sir," he said ; and soon we were started.

It was indeed a good morning for a ride. The early hours in Malaya are really very pleasant, and as we slipped through the cool air I had the feeling in my veins that one can only describe as the " joy of Spring."

I tried the shifting seat. Holding on to a rail in front of me I gripped a lever like the brake of a pedal cycle, and the seat dipped down so that my head was below the level of the turret. Then, gripping the lever again and taking my weight on my feet, the seat shot up to meet me so that my head and shoulders were above the turret. After that I checked the twin Brens above my head. With their circular magazines in place they were beautifully balanced. From inside the turret I could rotate the guns or elevate them ; or fire either or both by remote control from below the armour-plate. All the time I could hear the crackle of Bobbie's voice in the earphones that hung on a hook by my side. He was talking to his car commanders, closing up or opening out the column.

Occasionally I could hear him report our position to his Squadron H.Q.

" What a splendid command for a boy," I thought ; " even an Admiral has no better."

We travelled for about ten miles through rubber estates. There were good, well-kept ones, with no undergrowth. Little cups hung on the trees for the white latex to drip into from the spiral cut in the bark. Tappers—Chinese, Malays, and Tamils—moved mysteriously under the trees intent upon their business. There were also ill-kept acres with tangled jungles of undergrowth, waist-high, between the rows of trees. Sometimes we came to a place that called to mind the pictures of Delville Wood in World War I. The old rubber trees, perhaps a hundred feet high, had been poisoned after their useful life was run ; and now leafless, and often branchless too, they pointed gauntly to the sky. Between the rows of dead trees grew young ones, recently planted, with the undergrowth kept in check by leguminous creepers that make a green carpet over the ground.

Soon we had passed the last rubber estate and were entering virgin jungle. The road was only partially tarmac and a red dust off the laterite began to rise from the vehicle in front. I pulled my goggles over my eyes and lowered the seat. The road began to climb to a low ridge at the top of a ragged line of hillocks, twisting and turning as it rounded a spur or dived into a re-entrant. At the side of the road was the skeleton of the burnt-out lorry that had been stopped and robbed by the bandits.

At many places an attempt had evidently been made to cut back the jungle from the road ; but where it had been cut a secondary jungle had grown—a tangled mass of creepers, palms, tall grass, and shrubs. This secondary jungle was as dense as rhododendrons and as entwined as a fishing-net. An army of bandits could have hidden themselves anywhere along the verge.

Presently, when we were beyond Pertang, we came to a clearing. A heavy timber-lorry stood to one side of the road and some Sikhs were to be seen working at another lorry with a crane on it.

" Hullo, Bobbie," I said on the wireless, somewhat disregarding the precepts of the School of Signals. " Halt here, will you, please ? I want to talk to these birds."

Bobbie did his stuff in the text-book manner, and the column halted. Perspiring troopers (it was by now very hot) jumped from their armoured lorries and glared menacingly at the jungle on each side, their rifles cocked and ready for all emergencies.

" Oh, Khalsa," I said, addressing a patriarchal Sikh in Hindustani.

" Salaam, Sahib," he replied, raising his hand to his turban.

We spoke first about wood-cutting and then I asked about the bandits. (Dacoits is the usual Hindustani expression for them.)

" There are plenty in the jungle, Sahib," he said, pointing.

" And why don't they rob you as you work here in the jungle ? " I asked. " Do you pay them a toll to keep them away ? "

" What can a man do, Sahib ? " replied the Sikh, with an oriental gesture equivalent to a shrug of the shoulders.

Here was a manifestation of the problem we had considered at the State War Executive Committee.

Soon we came to some Malay houses in a straggling kampong, or village, each house standing on stilts as is the custom. The village was surrounded by a barbed-wire fence, and a Malay Special Constable at the gate saluted when he saw my flag.

Bobbie waved to the children, who waved and cheered in return. Some of their elders also waved, but most looked apathetically at us.

Beyond the village the country opened out into a valley with rice growing in little fields, each separated from its neighbours by a low mudbank to retain the water that had been deflected from the river. Here and there was rice spread out on sheets at the roadside to dry in the sun ; and occasionally we met children returning from school, it now being past mid-day. The little girls in blue sarongs with a white upper garment looked most attractive. Some of the boys wore Boy Scout hats and waved to us.

THEIR ONLY COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD WAS BY WIRELESS

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After a mile or two we came to a Chinese New Village. Here the houses were built at ground level, each with a small patch of vegetables in front. Sometimes there was a shop on the road's edge; and, because it was the time of Chinese New Year, many had red-and-gold paper charms tacked to the lintel.

At the far end of the village we met a Police Lieutenant. I told Bobbie he could fall out his men while I went with this officer of the Federal Jungle Company. He was a tall, clean-shaven Scot of about twenty-eight; his face was the colour of a beetroot from the sun, with a cheerful smile and large, rather serious brown eyes. Among the numerous medals which he had evidently put on for the occasion was the Atlantic Star.

" Where did you get that ? " I asked.

" R.N.V.R.," he replied.

He had started work as an insurance agent when World War II began. After five years at sea he joined the Metropolitan Police in 1946. In due course he had come to Malaya, and here he was, an officer in a Jungle Company.

" How do you like it ? " I asked.

" Oh, I quite like it," he replied with a grin. " We are certainly doing a good job. But I didn't exactly join the Police to be a soldier."

" Where do you live ? " I asked.

He pointed to a tent in the trees in a wired-in compound.

" That's our *Mon Repos*," he said; " and that's the Police Station," he continued, pointing to a whitewashed hut alongside with the words POLICE STATION painted above the door.

" May I have a look round ? " I asked.

" Yes," he said. " It's all poshed up for you."

The officers certainly lived in primitive conditions, eating Malay or Chinese food, except when they fried themselves eggs and bacon.

" Let's have a look at your men," I said.

" They're mostly out with Bill Sergeant in the jungle," he replied, " but I've got a platoon back in the camp; and you can see the guard."

The guard turned out and saluted in military style—a very smart body of men, four Malays and one Chinese, all armed with carbines. The men's quarters were relatively better than their officers' and consisted of huts with sixteen table-tops as beds in each. At the end of the hut was a kitchen, store-house, and wash-up.

" 'Shun ! " shouted a Policeman as we entered.

The men stood by their beds. They were in various stages of *négligé*, having been on guard the night before. With the help of the Police Officer as interpreter, I talked to each of them. They came from all parts of the Federation and I formed the opinion that, if well led, they would give a good account of themselves.

" How do you get on with them ? " I asked the Policeman.

" Fine," he replied. " They're splendid lads. I only wish we could meet some bandits. All they want is ' blooding ' and then they'd be the cat's whiskers."

" Where do you get your rations from ? " I asked.

" They come up by lorry twice a week," he replied. " They are on their way up now."

" Who escorts them ? " I asked.

" We do," replied the Policeman.

I told him I thought he would get a battle soon enough escorting the rations.

" Does everyone know what to do in an ambush ? " I asked.

" Rather, sir," he replied. " We've practised it again and again. I am quite certain we can give a good account of ourselves."

He was certainly full of confidence, this ex-sailor. I only hoped things would work out as he said ; but I tied a knot in my handkerchief to remind me to tell his boss to exercise a certain amount of unpredictability in the timing of the ration convoys. " Twice a week " suggested a regularity that courted mishap.

We walked back to Bobbie's troop of armoured cars. As we approached, the troopers emerged from a Chinese tea-shop whose portals looked like the gateway to the tomb by way of typhoid, enteric, diphtheria, and all other fell diseases.

"Good God! Bobbie," I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say you let your men go and eat in there?"

"Yes, sir," replied the unashamed Bobbie. "We always go in there for coffee when we come up here. It's perfectly O.K., sir; come in and see."

We entered the tea-shop, which was dark and smoky within. An ancient, wizened Chinaman fingered a worn abacus. He rose and bowed slightly as we entered.

"Can I have a look round?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied in English.

He led the way through the shop, past rows of tables with spotless glass tops, into a rather lighter room behind. In the corner was the largest refrigerator I have ever seen outside an R.A.S.C. food depot. It was a glistening white outside, and the inside, with its bottles of beer, soda-water and ginger-ale, and its hams and cold chicken, was suggestive of a London restaurant. On a shelf were ten bottles of Benedictine.

"Where does the milk come from?" I asked.

This was a silly question. Most milk in Malaya is made from powder and the old Chinaman showed me his tin, which bore the same trade-mark as that in any Officers' Mess. And of course the coffee too came from a familiar tin. A kettle boiled on an oil-stove.

We then set off home, returning by the way we had come; which is a mistake in principle, but we were in such strength that I did not think it would matter.

On the return journey I saw a faded notice at the entrance to a drive running at right angles to our road. It read: "Durian Estate. Proprietor W. Aucutt."

"Poor W. Aucutt," I thought. "It will be some time before you live there again."

The drive was overgrown with grass, and in the distance I could see a once smart bungalow standing in what had been a well-kept garden. But now the house was as faded as the notice on the gate, and the garden had grown up level with the eaves.

Just after this we met the Jungle Company's food convoy. The men looked alert and the officer, a Chinese, saluted with a cheerful grin as we passed, exposing as he did so a row of white teeth coated with gold.

When I returned home I went to the Joint Operations Room to speak to the Chief Police Officer. I had the handkerchief with a knot in it in my hand.

" Hullo, sir," the Staff Officer Operations greeted me excitedly. " I've just heard on the 'phone that the Federal Jungle Company has had a battle."

" Where ? " I asked.

The Policeman pointed to the map near the estate of W. Aucutt.

" Just there," he said, " at 14.00 hours."

" What happened ? I was there myself about then."

" The bandits were lying in wait for the ration convoy. They must have seen you go by, being too much for them to take on. But they let fly at the Jungle Company. The men acted with great dash. They de-bussed and charged the ambush, firing as they did so. The bandits ran, leaving a lot of literature, haversacks, clothing, and so on."

" And the Police casualties ? " I asked.

" The driver drove into a tree and broke his leg. Otherwise nothing."

" Thank God for that ! " I said, and untied the knot in my handkerchief. The Federal Jungle Company had been " blooded."

We had many trials and tribulations over the Menchis Road, mainly because the border of Negri and Pahang ran between Durian Tipus and Menchis.

Menchis is in Pahang and about thirty miles from the District Headquarters at Bentong. Durian Tipus is in Negri and about the same distance from the District Headquarters of Kuala Pilah. For both districts, therefore, the border is " out on a leg " and control is flimsy. This was aggravated by the Post and Telegraph Department's refusal to lay a telephone cable across the border from Durian Tipus to Menchis. A telephone call from one to the other—five or six miles by road—had to go round by Kuala Lumpur and Bentong. If you got a call through in two hours you were doing well; and if you could hear each other distinctly enough to carry on an intelligent conversation it was unusual. A military line was laid between the two police stations, which brought the two police officers concerned a little closer together, but the line was often broken by elephants, for it was not on proper poles but looped from tree to tree.

The worst separation between the two places, however, came from parochial, inter-state rivalry. The Pahang boys would accuse the Negri ones of failing to control food supplies properly, so that the bandits could get whatever they wanted. The Negri boys would counter by complaining that the Pahang curfew rules were pusillanimous.

Another feature of this parochialism came from the fact that any information about the bandits in Menchis went through Bentong to Kuala Lipis, the capital of Pahang. Any information from Durian Tipus went to Seremban. With the difficulty of inter-communication between the two places and the divergent loyalties of the personalities, it was not difficult for the bandits to have a pretty easy time between them.

Later, about the time of the Coronation in 1953, by the great exertion of all concerned and long flights by helicopter, we convened a meeting in Bentong. Sheppard, the Haji, John Barnard, and I met our opposite numbers from Pahang. Pahang agreed to put a rifle company at Menchis with a platoon at Durian Tipus and to vest in us the operational control of the whole area. On the strength of this we launched an operation called "Chapman" and cleared up the bandits who lived there. It was a successful operation in which eight bandits surrendered, some of whom had taken part in the ambush I have already described.

One of the eight had on him a report he had written on the ambush. It gives a view of the other side of the medal. Here is a translation:—

"REPORT ON ACTION ON MENCHIS ROAD

1. *Determination.* All the comrades were full of fight and ready to attack the Red-haired Imperialists, or the pawns whom they

hold in their hands. We thus determined to kill the Malay policemen who went daily from Durian Tipus for rations in Simpang Pertang.

2. *The Plan.* Our leader divided us into seven parties consisting of :—

(i) Frontal Intercepting Unit. It was their task to fell a tree across the road in front of the police truck.
(ii) Covering Fire Squad. This was to intercept the police as they fled from their vehicle into the jungle on either side of the road.
(iii) Another Covering Fire Squad. Same as above but on the other side of the road.
(iv) Leader and Sentry Group. This group was to watch the road and give the signal to fire.
(v) Light Machine Gun Group. This group was armed with two bren guns and was to shoot up the vehicle when it stopped.
(vi) Charging Unit. This unit was to attack the vehicle with hand grenades.
(vii) Rear Intercepting Unit. This was to block the road behind the vehicle and prevent escape.

3. The whole ambush position was to extend three hundred yards along the road, where the road bends round a spur by Milestone 30.

4. *Execution.* We waited from dawn and saw the Police truck go South for rations, but we waited to attack it as it returned, so that we should get some rations too. Presently a powerful military convoy of armoured vehicles passed, travelling North, and at 14.15 hours it returned the other way. There was no other traffic.

5. At 14.30 hours the ration truck returned with a Chinese 'running dog' Inspector sitting by the driver. Fierce fire was opened. Many of the comrades' bullets did not fire. The shooting also was inaccurate, through insufficient training due to ammunition shortage. The police truck was wrecked. Several policemen were seen to have been killed. Our leader decided to withdraw and gave the signal.

6. Our casualties were None."

The shortage of ammunition for practice and inferior ammunition in action accounted for much. There is, however, yet another factor that I believe to be important. Most Chinese have bad eyesight, the result, perhaps, of having to learn their difficult writing. Glasses cannot be easy to obtain in the jungle, and even if worn are apt to cloud over in the steaming atmosphere. The bandits' shooting is often bad in consequence, and that is why they seldom plan an ambush where the range exceeds ten yards.

CHAPTER XI

ABU NUR AND THE *PAWANG*

IN conventional warfare the soldier has little truck with the politician except at the highest level. War and policy are closely intertwined at the summit, but further down the scale commanders are concerned with military means only. Apart from man, the weapons of war are guns, aircraft, tanks, lorries, bulldozers, bridges, and quantities of material and ammunition of all kinds.

In fighting the bandits, however, a different conception prevails. The wide aim is a political one, to convince the people that it is a bad thing to espouse Communism, that Communism will swallow them up if they do not resist it, and that therefore the people must not help the bandits by giving them food or money. This aim must be borne in mind at every level. If a platoon commander were to shoot a single civilian, even though it be an accident, it would do irreparable harm, creating Communist sympathies right and left.

There are many weapons beside the conventional ones that the soldier, the policeman, and the administrator can use. There is the curfew that keeps the law-abiding from the areas where the troops are operating. But if the curfew is unreasonable the people's hearts turn towards the Communists. There is food control. If you control food wisely the bandit helper will find it hard to get food for his Communist friends in the jungle. You will also strengthen the hand of the man who is pressed against his will to help the bandits. He can truthfully say: " Food is controlled. I cannot help." But if food control is unreasonable it only makes enemies of the people.

Then there are the weapons you can use against the bandits in the jungle. There are the conventional weapons—though you may use them in an unconventional way—and the unconventional. The chief unconventional one is the use of the Information Services. You can drop leaflets on the enemy; you can broadcast to him from vehicles on the ground and from aircraft. You can start a whispering campaign. And there is great scope for deceptive measures of all kinds.

Most officers I met were singularly free from hide-bound prejudice. They rejoiced to use any conventional weapon in an unconventional way; and they were always ready to have a try with any unconventional weapon too.

In the Negri Sembilan State War Executive Committee we were not averse from trying something new. My interest was thus at once aroused when, after one of our meetings, Sheppard took me out on to the lawn, where we could not be overheard, and asked me with an air of mystery if I knew what was meant by a "*pawang*." I explained that I did not, and at the risk of boring those readers who know about Malaya and the Malays I will repeat his explanation.

The older generation of Malays are a superstitious people, and even those who are well educated in Western ideas still entertain beliefs that would be laughed at in England. For example, some reforming zealot of the Public Works Department might dig a well in a village and find that no one would use it, the reason being that an unfavourable spirit haunted the vicinity of the well.

This preamble was to prepare me for Sheppard's proposal which, as he said, "bordered on the realms of the fantastic." He (Sheppard) had had a visit from a man he had once met in another part of Malaya; and the visitor claimed strange powers; not those of a sorcerer derived from the Devil, but those of a holy man derived from God. He was, in fact a *pawang*, and he was even now in the Residency, where we at once went.

The drawing-room was the chosen meeting-point, and the Residency butler, with a slight smirk, ushered in the *Pawang*. He was a man of about fifty, greying at the temples, and wearing an open-necked cotton tunic and an expensive looking sarong. In contradistinction to most Malays of his age he had a very European cast of countenance. Malay youths are often good-looking, but as they grow older the climate, their rice diet, and other factors are apt to give them hollow cheeks, open nostrils and, for some reason, protruding front teeth. It seems to be characteristic of the race. But this *Pawang* did not look a bit like that. He had a bronzed complexion, a firm mouth, and eyes that looked as honest as the day is long. I was struck at once by the firmness of his handshake and the dead-honest look in his eyes. This was to have a bearing on what followed.

It was the month of fasting—*Puasa*, the Malays call it; Ramadan is the usual name in English dictionaries—and the *Pawang* had not eaten since the dawn. There was, however, an hour to go before dusk, so he was pleased to sit in a chair in the cool of the Residency drawing-room. He spoke with Sheppard in Malay and I only caught odd words, but the gist of his message was that he thought he had the power to go into the jungle and put a spell on a bandit and cause him to surrender. He felt he was more likely to succeed with a Malay bandit than with a Chinese one, and he was more likely to succeed during *Puasa* (which had about a week to go) than after it. And could (or would) we put his powers to the test ?

John Barnard, the Chief Police Officer, was on leave, so we sent for one of his subordinates, and I, for my part, sent for Bertie, who, as the reader will remember, commanded the troops in the Tampin Police Circle where we knew that a Malay Communist lurked.

Bertie and the Policeman were needed for various reasons. In the first place, we could not let the *Pawang* roam about at will, for he would probably walk into an ambush by troops or police and get shot. Also, he wanted a base from which to work, and Bertie had just the thing. A platoon of the Green Howards was on the trail of a Malay bandit named Abu Nur and had, for its base, a deserted bungalow near the level-crossing at Kendong. The *Pawang* could operate unseen from the same base, and if he worked under the orders of the platoon commander a clash between him and the troops could be avoided.

The *Pawang* said he must have a look round the area first.

He wanted to get the feel of it, so to speak, and would come back by Friday to report—it was now Wednesday. So, through the interpretation of Sheppard, we all wished him luck and he departed in Bertie's car, covered over with a mackintosh so that no one should see where he was going.

On the Friday he reappeared with a map, drawn in pencil on a sheet of drawing-paper.

Malays are often artistic. Even unschooled they sometimes surprise one. But this map was in a class by itself. It covered a lozenge-shaped area, about ten miles each way, bounded by roads, in the middle of which were jungle, rough grassland, and some rubber. Though his "conventional signs" were far from conventional, it was perfectly obvious that his map represented the area between Tampin and Simpang Ampat. In its way it was a work of art; and it is a pity that it was subsequently turned to pulp by the rain.

The *Pawang* explained that Abu Nur, with a mixed band of Chinese, Malays and Tamils, was in this area; and that he was prepared to have a try for Abu Nur. I explained that Abu Nur and his band were both numerous and well-armed and might have a try for *him*. The *Pawang* said he would need a bodyguard, and he named five Home Guard youths in his own village whom Sheppard contracted to fetch. Meanwhile, he could stay concealed at the Residency—he was particularly anxious not to have his movements watched—and we agreed to meet again next day, Saturday.

On the Saturday we had another meeting at the Residency after sundown. The *Pawang* and his bodyguard had fed and it was a long session. Bertie and the young Policeman were there too. Considerable preparations would be needed. He, the *Pawang*, must have "fire and steel," by which he meant a pistol. His bodyguard must have shot-guns, in the use of which they needed further training, particularly in safety precautions. There must be cooking-pots, rations, and waterproof capes against the torrential rain that is a frequent occurrence in Malaya. In fact, a military expedition had to be trained, fitted out and launched into the jungle before daylight next morning. It would be seen if it entered the jungle by daylight, and there were only two more days of *Puasa* when the *Pawang's* powers were at their zenith, so we had to hurry.

Here it must be pointed out that one of the obvious military precautions to limit terrorism, banditry, and so on, is to control the possession of arms, yet here we were, proposing to arm six total strangers on a wild-goose chase and loose them into the jungle. They might lose the weapons through carelessness. They might be overpowered by Abu Nur and his band, and lose the arms and their lives in battle. The whole thing might even be a plant with the object of adding six armed men to Abu Nur's band.

Sheppard and I were well aware of these facts. We realised only too well that if all these gloomy forebodings came true, we should have some difficulty in justifying our actions before any sort of inquiry that might follow. However, Sheppard knew the *Pawang* as a man of good faith and had heard of a similar and successful enterprise during the Japanese occupation. I put my money on the look in the *Pawang's* eyes. I felt sure he was not the kind of man to let anyone down. I was fortified in this by Bertie, who had formed the same opinion. The young Policeman, however, had a twinkle in his eye.

" When you are court-martialled for all this," he remarked, " I shall be happy to give evidence as to character ; but the facts will, I'm afraid, speak for themselves."

When John Barnard returned from leave he was frankly shocked at the simplicity of Sheppard and myself. However, it was by then too late. The *Pawang* and his bodyguard had been equipped and armed ; they had received half an hour's midnight weapon-training instruction from the platoon sergeant of the Green Howards ; they had been given " ponchos " (army capes) by the Quartermaster (Bertie had to sign for them, the Q.M. being prudent) ; and they had vanished from their base into the night.

All next day it rained, and the *Pawang* and his works were forgotten in other cares. The next day passed, and during the following night the *Pawang* was expected back.

But he never came. There was not a sign of him or his bodyguard. John Barnard was gloomy and the young Policeman was full of ill-concealed mirth at our expense.

"You'll want that evidence as to character yet, sir," he said.

However, I continued to put my faith in that straight, honest look in the *Pawang's* eyes; and I conjured up in my mind, to comfort me, the picture of his serenity as we sat in the Residency drawing-room planning the expedition. He was a devout Moslem and, I was certain, a man of his word.

Another day passed without news and I was beginning to wonder what could have happened, when the telephone rang. It was Sheppard. The *Pawang* and his bodyguard had returned. They had not succeeded in extracting Abu Nur, but they had returned their arms and equipment. Did I think it a good egg to try them out again?

"No," I said. "I think it too exciting. The old methods are the best."

So there, for a time, the matter rested. But about ten days later the Yorkshire sentry prowling round the billet near the Kendong level-crossing saw two figures approaching. They looked suspicious, so he took his stand behind a pillar of the verandah and covered the two men with his rifle.

"Halt!" he cried.

The two men replied in a babble of incomprehensible Malay. The Yorkshire mind does not work fast, but it works thoroughly.

"Well, wait there," said the sentry; and he called out to the Guard Commander.

The Guard Commander looked out of the window.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Don't know," replied the sentry slowly.

Meanwhile the two suspicious characters babbled on in Malay. Suddenly a familiar word fell upon the sentry's ears.

"Oo?" he exclaimed. "Abu Nur? Bah gum! Eh! Sergeant, I do believe it's Abu Nur."

And so indeed it was: Abu Nur and a chum from the jungle, hale but heartily fed up with Communism. They had brought their rifles with them.

In due course the Special Branch at Police Headquarters interrogated him. The following is a quotation from the Interrogation Report :—

> ". . . the cause of his surrender is not certain. He says it was a change of heart ; but there is no evidence (as claimed in certain quarters) that he was in any way influenced by a *Pawang*."

Well maybe. You may believe what you like. Here is one explanation. On his first visit, when he made the map, the *Pawang* met some relative or supporter, who lived in the vicinity of Abu Nur, and who fixed a meeting with the bandit himself. They met, but a day late (hence the delay), and the *Pawang* told Abu Nur not to be a fool but to come out before the Green Howards got him.

However, that's terribly dull and I hope you'll believe the other thing.

The reason John did not like *pawangs* was that he knew them of old. In ordinary police affairs, when chickens are stolen the thief has been known to report to the police saying he is a *pawang*. He then miraculously gets the chickens back and claims a reward. It does not do, as a general rule, to encourage *pawangs* ; it is best to rely on the Criminal Investigation Department.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIJIANS JOIN 63 BRIGADE

IN early May 1952 I was told that the 1st Battalion The Fiji Infantry Regiment was to join 63 Brigade. Geoffrey Cox, the Staff Officer at Brigade Headquarters who dealt with questions of personnel, quartering and administration generally, went with me to visit the battalion in the Far East Training Centre near Johore Bahru.

They were camped on the barren hillside and went out daily to the rifle ranges, or the rubber estates and the jungles nearby, to learn the techniques of fighting the bandits.

The Commanding Officer, Ron Tinker, was a New Zealander. He was a product of the Long Range Desert Group and an experienced fighter from World War II. His Second-in-Command, Edward Cakabau (pronounced Thackambough) was a Fijian. He was a tall, upstanding man wearing the Military Cross ribbon, won in the campaign in the South-West Pacific. He was by profession an officer in the Administration of his own country. He would have been a leader in any company, but amongst his own people he was also a hereditary Chief and enjoyed an authority that could not be disputed.

The officers were partly New Zealanders and partly Fijians; the rank and file almost entirely Fijians with a few New Zealanders amongst them.

At that time I barely knew where Fiji was, and the reader, too, may have to look at a map of the Pacific to find it. The people of Fiji are, I believe, what are technically known as Melanesians with a strong infusion of Polynesian blood. To the uninitiated they look rather like Jamaicans. Their soldiers are men of terrific physique, and in the battalion sports they contrive to equal or beat Army records almost as a matter of course, particularly in sprints, hurdles, and field events. They are mostly Methodists to-day; eighty years ago they were cannibals. Indeed Ted Cakabau introduced a now well-known story by announcing in the club that he was a Scot " by absorption." When asked to explain, he spoke as follows:

" In the days of my great-grandfather, a sailing ship, outward bound from Glasgow, was wrecked on one of the islands. The survivors struggled ashore and my forefathers ate them; since when Scottish blood has always run in our veins."

However, they are great story-tellers, the Fijians, and when two or three soldiers gather together you often notice that one is spinning a yarn and the others are listening with attention. They are also great singers, and almost any platoon can produce a more-than-medium quality of male choir.

Another characteristic that struck me on first acquaintance is that the soldiers went bareheaded and had the privilege of saluting with the right hand (" tip of the forefinger one inch above the right eye ") when not wearing a hat. Malaya has, however, somewhat modified that. The prickles and spikes in the jungle have led the Fijians to prefer a jungle hat, a deer-stalker type of thing, on operations; and to-day they are authorised to wear a green beret with the regimental crest on it. Nevertheless I have no doubt that orthodox drill sergeants of the future will still get a few surprises in the matter of saluting when bareheaded.

The Fijians have absorbed many of the traditions of New Zealand, and they have a unique position in the British Commonwealth and Empire by the manner of their joining it. There was no question of migration, trade, or conquest. The Fijians joined the Empire of their own free will. Tradition has it that a letter from the Paramount Chief, King Cakabau, arrived from the blue of the Pacific upon the breakfast table of Queen Victoria. In it the King asked if he and his subjects might join her Realm, rather as one might join an exclusive London club.

On one occasion in Malaya I went into the jungle with some Fijians to see a bandit camp. On our return journey a raucous bird gave a squawk and flew noisily away.

The Secretary of State for War, Mr Antony Head, at the Fijian Kava Ceremony

"There will be a pig in there," whispered the sergeant ahead of me, and shortly afterwards a corporal contrived with a few men to drive the pig across our path. No one who appreciates Nature can fail to admire the jungle-lore that told the sergeant the pig was there, or the jungle-craft that enabled the corporal to make it run the way he wanted.

The Fijians have many graces, of which good manners and smiling faces are the outward signs. There is absolutely no suspicion of colour bar, and within the battalion Fijians and men of European descent took their places as leaders or subordinates without any question of colour or race. I found this most attractive, but it produced complications in some of the hide-bound clubs and bathing pools of Singapore.

It is a custom in Fiji that if a man takes a fancy to some possession of a neighbour, the neighbour will give it to him, as did the Jews in Biblical times. This, too, led to complications, but of another kind. Any soldier was quite prepared to present his boots, or his mosquito-net or the body-locking pin of his Bren gun to the next man in the ranks. It appeared to be quite impossible to stop these friendly gestures, but the practice gave the quartermasters more than a little trouble.

The Regimental Band were long service men, many with medals from World War II; but in Malaya the Fijian officers and other ranks had signed on a two-year agreement only. They had a natural gift for battle, but all the administrative side of soldiering came hard to them. Frankly, they were not interested in accounting for stores; and Geoffrey Cox had many struggles to help them with their petrol accounts and quartermastering generally.

Fijians in their homes are liable to bad sores, known as yaws. Science has found a cure for these, but I was told that the cure for these sores has simultaneously removed from the Fijian a natural immunity from gonorrhœa. (The Almighty has done this in other countries too. Where He has allowed men to find cures for many fatal diseases He has also, in His infinite wisdom, revealed to him the secrets of nuclear fission. So the score remains at love all.)

In their own islands the drinking of alcohol is much restricted, and in the battalion no man below the rank of sergeant was allowed to buy beer in the canteen. This was a wise provision, for the slightest drop of beer seemed to send the Fijian soldiery almost mad. Their officers, however, drank the stuff with equanimity and in their Officers' Mess there were no irksome prohibitions.

Instead of beer the Fijians drank a beverage known as Yaqona (pronounced Yanngona). It is made from the root of a tree, powdered up and mixed with water. It is non-alcoholic, and has a nondescript taste at the time, though after drinking it one is conscious of a burning taste in one's mouth, not unlike ginger. I was told that, although non-alcoholic, it cannot be drunk in quantity, for it excites the tippler and the party becomes riotous.

When you enter a Fijian company office you will often see a soldier in the background mixing Yaqona, and you are given a mouthful of it from the hollowed top of a coconut. The soldier who offers the Yaqona crouches while you drink. You drain the coconut top, drop it on the ground and clap twice. A bond is forged between the drinker and the soldier who proffers the drink. It is a much more picturesque custom than telling the orderly to get a cup of tea, half of which he slops into the saucer before he gives it to the visitor.

When a distinguished person visits the battalion, however, a more formal ceremony, known as the Kava ceremony, is performed. I was honoured in this way myself and I have seen it performed for the Secretary of State for War and for the High Commissioner. The distinguished visitor is usually first invited to inspect a guard of honour. Not infrequently the band and the Colour are on parade as well. This rather foxes the average civilian in Malaya ; for hats are seldom worn, and to acknowledge the salute of the guard or to salute the Colour without a hat is difficult to do with any sort of dignity.

This being accomplished, the party moves off to the site chosen for the Kava ceremony, a piece of level ground about half the size of a tennis court. Seated cross-legged on the ground are twenty to fifty soldiers—the number depending on the intensity of military operations at the time or the importance of the visitor. The soldiers wear grass skirts over their shorts and are stripped to the buff above. Their faces have black stains round the eyes, and in the intense heat of the mid-day sun these powerful men, sweat coursing down their bodies, look a warlike sight indeed.

Facing the soldiers a tent with open sides may have been pitched to shade the more important spectators, for whom chairs are provided. As the party approach their seats the soldiers start chanting in deep bass melodious voices.

"Ah—Ohh—Huh! Ah—Ohh—Huh!" they seem to chant.[1]

They then clap, the clapping coming and going rhythmically like the waves of the sea. At length the visitors are seated and the clapping ceases.

One of the soldiers has a wooden basin in front of him and into it another pours some water from a green bamboo stalk, three or four inches in diameter and five feet long. The Yaqona root, which looks like a bundle of tow, is soaked in the water and squeezed like a sponge. It is sluiced round in the water and squeezed again and again, till all the good has come out of it into the water. The drink is now ready.

After some further ceremony a soldier gets to his feet and makes a speech in Fijian, as though proposing a toast, and another soldier holds up a coconut cup of Yaqona before the company. The distinguished visitor who is being honoured is given the cup. He drinks it dry and drops the cup at his feet, where the soldier who presented it is crouching. Everyone claps twice and there is a bass growl from the soldiers.

This ceremony is repeated for all the visitors, ladies included, and many of the soldiers also drink. When this is done the distinguished visitor is required to reply to the earlier toast. Fijians are a good audience and anyone accustomed to addressing soldiers will have no difficulty in observing their appreciation of a few simple sentences, which are translated to them by the Padre. In former days it was customary to present a whale's tooth, about the size of a spectacle case, to the distinguished visitor, but in Malaya they are hard to come by, so a whale's tooth is presented in token and returned to the soldier who presents it. Only the most favoured few may keep the whale's tooth now.

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[1] Their actual words I have never caught properly; but this is what it sounds like.

After this the party may break up or there may be singing. The band are usually the chosen singers and in their red coats and white *sulus* (a cloth skirt down to the shins and cut round the bottom like sharks' teeth) the singers look as magnificent as they sound. They sing mainly in their own tongue, though occasionally they sing in English—as when they conclude with " God Save the Queen."

The Fijians joined 63 Brigade as soon as their training was finished, and I put them in the Bahau area. There were rifle companies at Glendale, Ladang Geddes, Rompin and Jeram Padang, with Battalion Headquarters and the mortars (there was no Support Company) at Bahau.

Almost at once they began to kill bandits. They did not rely entirely upon information from the Special Branch informers and agents. They got them mainly by hunting. The company commander would divide his area into ten or fifteen sub-divisions, each with a boundary recognisable on the ground. These would be numbered and the Commanding Officer would have a master map with all the company sub-divisions recorded upon it. Each company was divided into an appropriate number of patrols, according to the numbers present, and seventy-five per cent of the patrols were sent out into the numbered areas every day.[1]

The size of the patrol varied, generally there would be five or six men. They would be motored out as near to their patrol area as possible and would then set off on foot. They might patrol the area for three or four days—five days is about as long as a patrol can exist on the food it carries—without seeing a sign of bandits. Sometimes, however, they were luckier. They might find footmarks and follow them. Or better still, they might hear something. Bandits in camp take care not to make a noise when they think troops may be in the vicinity. Instead of cutting firewood noisily with a chopper they saw the branches silently when it is raining. They do not sing Communist songs or shout party cries by way of evening entertainment; and they speak in low voices. But if the troops have been put into the jungle with cunning, and have moved silently, the bandits may suppose themselves to be safer than they are. The patrol may hear the sound of chopping wood or singing. Some say you cannot whisper in Chinese because of the nature of the language—it depends on tones rather than sounds and you cannot (they say) intone in a whisper—but whether this is so or not the sound of voices was often the tell-tale of a bandit resting-place or camp. Then the patrol would creep in upon it. With their superior eyesight the Fijians often saw the sentry before they were themselves seen. One man would dispatch the sentry while the others charged in to fire upon the camp. The bandits would disperse when the first shot was heard; but a Fijian with a Bren gun can run faster than a Chinese running for his life. Three or four would be hacked down, and the patrol would bring in the corpses in triumph.

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[1] This technique was invented by Captain Bob Genge, who was killed in an ambush in 1955.

The corpses were taken to the Police Station, where some surrendered bandit would identify them. They were then struck off the Enemy Order of Battle. Captured documents were given to the Police for translation, and arms recovered were locked up. Occasionally bandits had money on them. A collector of subscriptions from the masses might have several hundred dollars. When there was an officer with the patrol the money was reported in the official report and paid into the police headquarters. More often, though, the troops divided it with the informer (if any) or put their share into platoon funds. Quite apart from ethics, it was usually considered unlucky to pocket the cash taken from the pack or pockets of a dead man.

When the bandits learnt that Fijian patrols were small, and always charged, they changed their tactics: they stayed and fought. The Fijians changed their tactics too, occasionally having patrols of fifteen or twenty men. This created uncertainty in the bandits' minds. They were not sure whether it would be prudent to stand and fight—not knowing the strength of the adversary—or whether to run away. They usually ran.

Another favourite tactic was to go out in platoon or company strength and make a base in the jungle. From this, patrols of two men each went out radially searching. If a camp were found one man would watch, while the other returned to fetch the company. The camp was surrounded and attacked scientifically from all sides—at least that was the theory.

The size of a patrol depends on many factors of which the nerve of the man is the most compelling. It is no use sending out a patrol of two men if they are frightened either of the bandits or of getting lost. It is better to send a few more men. If you intend to lay an ambush you will probably want at least ten men. The bandits are cunning too, and seldom walk close together in a bunch. They do not often follow tracks, and they never seem to come the way you expect. You therefore probably prefer to set your men out covering a considerable area. Then, whichever way the bandits come, someone will see them ; and even though they are well spaced out they will all be within the ambush area when the first shot is fired.

Cunning is needed in concealment, for the bandits are as wary as tigers. A broken twig, a few leaves out of their natural lie, or (worst of all) a footmark, and the bandits will not come that way.

The smell of chewing gum or tobacco smoke will scare the bandits. Even the body odour of the soldiery gives the show away. Those who fought the conventional warfare of Europe or the Desert will remember the peculiar smell of German or Italian trenches when captured ; and the smell of German prisoners of war being marched to the rear was unmistakable. The Germans said the same of us. Each race has its own particular aroma when hot and sweaty—it is something to do with their diet—and bandits would sheer off at once if they smelled the smell of troops.

Skill is needed in springing the ambush. The whole enemy party must be allowed to enter the ambush area before fire is opened. If the jungle is thick and the enemy well spread out, it is not easy for the leader to place himself so that he can see when the psychological moment has come. And suppose one man sees a bandit and assumes, from the direction of his movement, that no one else will see him. He will only have a fleeting glimpse of him. Should he open fire? He may spoil the whole thing by firing. By not firing, other bandits, whom he cannot see, might have presented a better target a few seconds later. And what if a soldier suddenly conceives the idea that the bandits have seen *him*? Should he fire or should he lie still, remembering that the man who does not fire first may not live to fire at all? All these are knotty, human problems, not easily answered by rules from text-books. The answers spring from the fighting instinct of the soldier, and from mutual trust and confidence.

The Fijians had this fighting instinct and seldom made a mess of any contact with the enemy. Their physical strength and athletic prowess, indeed, often enabled them to excel where others failed. (It was not unusual to find a Fijian who could handle a Bren gun with one hand like a pistol!) Their skill as hunters enabled them to gain contact with the enemy as often as the best jungle troops in Malaya. With all these things in their favour they quickly established for themselves a reputation second to none. It was equalled in the jungle only by their success on the rugger ground.

The Fijians remained with 63 Brigade till about September 1952. The plan then was for them to join 1st Malay Brigade in Pahang. They did not like this prospect much. The Malay Brigade consisted primarily of battalions of the Malay Regiment. These regiments are Federation troops, not Imperial ones, as Gurkhas are, and the Fijians thought joining them was *infra dig*. As one of their senior officers wrote: "We are all for serving with Green Howards and Gurkhas, but it won't do lumping us in with a lot of Malays in a colonial brigade."

The British Army has had experience of this sort of thing before. Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African, and other contingents have often fought with British armies. Each has its *amour propre*; each, in its way, is different; and each, in its way, is a private army. A private army is often a good fighting machine, because it is a private army, and the constitution of the Commonwealth is such that these contingents always must be private armies. The skilful commander knows how to handle them. He does not seek to break down their private nature; he seeks to foster their corporate allegiance without disturbing their private one. Higher Authority was quick to perceive this sentiment in the Fijian Infantry Regiment; and, by a suitable reshuffle, the battalion left 63 Brigade to join either 26 or 99 (I forget which) Gurkha Infantry Brigade in Johore.

I was sorry to lose them; but they were needed in Johore. In their first week there they got three bandits and the High Commissioner sent them a signal congratulating them on their first try in the new area. Almost before the signal was recorded, the battalion got two more. Ron Tinker sent a signal, "Try converted: two more this evening."

Later, as the reader will see, Brigade Headquarters was moved to Johore too and took the Fijians into the fold again.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GREEN HOWARDS LEAVE 63 BRIGADE

THE summer of 1952 slipped imperceptibly by, each day exactly like the last, as is the way with the Malayan climate, till it became time for the Green Howards to leave. An advanced party from the Gordon Highlanders had come.

The Green Howards were to go to Tappah for their last few weeks in the country. I cannot remember the exact sequence of events that led up to this move for so short a time, but it suited the Green Howards. They had done extremely well in Negri Sembilan and Malacca and had bagged about eighty-five bandits. In doing so they had more or less denuded the area, and they were madly keen to get a hundred before they left the country.

It sounds rather blood-thirsty for a whole battalion to have no other ambition than to kill a hundred men. People who think it vulgar and rude to have such ambitions must remember that Communists also are vulgar and rude. Given control of the country the Communists would not be satisfied till they had killed a hundred thousand deviationists and had everyone toeing the party line in a docile manner. Besides, they had killed quite a number of officers and men of the Green Howards and that, too, makes a difference. As I have remarked before, Communism can accept any means, however brutal, if it is likely to achieve the end. Communism is not a thing to be dealt with in kid gloves.

In dealing with the bandits, the Green Howards had freed the country-side from the tyranny of thugs. People could now live more freely. But in doing so they had reduced their chances of getting a hundred, for there were not many left to get. Indeed, you had to motor thirty miles from their Headquarters in Tampin to get anywhere near a bandit. Sorry as I was to lose them from 63 Brigade, I was glad they were going to a really bad area where they could—and did—achieve their ambition.

They owed their success to a number of factors.

First, I should say, they owed it to their Commanding Officer and to Bertie, their Second-in-Command. As I have explained, these two officers conducted the operations in Malacca Settlement and the Tampin Circle respectively. Both men, from different backgrounds, thoroughly understood the business. D'Arcy Mander, the C.O., had been captured in the desert in 1942 and was taken prisoner-of-war to Italy. When Italy collapsed in 1943, D'Arcy had remained at large in Italy, conducting subversive activities in Rome till it was liberated by the Allies in 1944. He had been on the other side of the fence himself for almost a year, and he could divine the twists and turns of the bandits in their evasion of the forces of Law and Order.

Bertie, on the other hand, had commanded a company in Malaya and had learnt by that experience. He, too, could think one step ahead of the opposition. These two officers had thrown their whole hearts and souls into the pursuit of Communist terrorists. Both were always prepared, at a moment's notice, to jump into a jeep and dash to the scene of an incident, or lead a patrol into the jungle. They would turn out cooks, batmen and clerks to aid the chase. They would stick at nothing.

Of course, this attitude had its repercussions. Their laudable successes against the bandits were paid for by shortcomings in other fields. It was taking a risk, for if they had failed to kill bandits these shortcomings would have brought retribution. But commanders in war have to take risks, including risks with their own reputations. In this case the risks were rewarded by the results.

Higher Authority, of which I suppose I was the most frequently visible representative, supported them. D'Arcy was promoted and Bertie was decorated in recognition of their efforts. They must have had many anxieties and I am glad they were not in vain.

Next, I think they owed their success to their officers and their soldiery. The Yorkshireman is an unyielding kind of man who does not relish being worsted. He needs a particular kind of leadership and their officers were prepared and able to supply it. The battalion had the right proportion of townsmen and country boys. Everyone realises the countryman's prowess in the field, but in this kind of war the townsman, too, has a place. He has gained a quickness of wit and perception that relate with uncanny accuracy cause and effect in gangsterdom. Food-lifts, abductions, murders, or blackmail are things he can understand. As one of their officers once remarked to me: "They relate them to what goes on in hell, Hull, and Halifax."

Thirdly, they owed something to the quality of co-operation with the civil and police authorities. In Tampin there was a peculiarly happy trio: Jimmy Patrick (Civil Service), Bertie (soldier), and an elderly Policeman named McMahon. In Malacca the Head of Special Branch—Bill Woolnough—had a great deal to offer. As the Emergency continued, the troops throughout Malaya began to rely more on the Special Branch; and the quality of Special Branch information in Malacca was a prime factor in killing bandits.

Finally, there were at that time plenty of bandits. This made the area a profitable one.

In due course, however, the time came for the Green Howards to go. I went round all the companies to say farewell. They said kind things and I felt their departure keenly.

I want you to try and picture the men of the Green Howards.

You must not think of the red coats of an earlier day, or the khaki battle-dress of England. Think of the jungle green of Malaya. Picture a group of five or six men in green deer-stalker hats with a band of colour round the crown to distinguish the wearer from a Communist in the jungle; picture a green shirt open at the neck, and green trousers tucked into canvas jungle boots coming half-way up the shin as protection against leeches. On each soldier's back is a pack with all his wants for several days, including a mosquito-net. Two ammunition pouches, a water-bottle, a spare bandolier of ammunition, and a rifle and bayonet complete the picture. Transfer all this into a hot-house at Kew full of palms, ferns, and bamboo; unleash a snake or two and a monkey, and you get in your mind the kind of picture of the men that I would have you see.

In the process of hunting Communists the battalion had endeared itself to the people. It happened imperceptibly, but now that the battalion was about to leave the locality the ties between them and the people were particularly evident.

At first people used to refer to the soldiers collectively as " the army " or " the military." I never know which is the more impersonal; both expressions suggest the epithet " brutal and licentious." After a time the soldiers began to mix with the people, giving sweets to children or lifts to old coolie women. The people and the soldiers began to know one another. They were no longer " the military," but the Green Howards—even *our* Green Howards.

The companies were widely spread over the country-side and operated in small detachments all over the place. A few successes against the enemy caused great enthusiasm. As one passed through the villages the people waved, the children saluted with broad grins and gave a " thumbs-up " sign.

The effect was immeasurably increased when one of the companies gave an evening's entertainment for the school children. It was a simple affair. They sent out army lorries to bring them from the villages near the camp. Many of the children from the Chinese New Villages had never before been in a motor car; and as for the children from some of the more remote Malay *kampongs*, they were even more thrilled. A few old people, wizened and toothless, Malays and Chinese, came too. " 'Ere, Granny, up yer go," a soldier would say as he pushed some old woman into the back of his truck. (Thomas Atkins never really knows any language, English included; but he has no difficulty in expressing himself to his own satisfaction in all of them.)

Arrived at the camp, the whole party was given an orange crush, a drink common in Malaya. It tastes vaguely of orange; it is fizzy and promotes rather than quenches thirst.

However, it was widely appreciated, and particularly by an assembly of school children. A doughnut from the N.A.A.F.I. completed the menu.

It was now dark and the audience was seated in rows on planks, supported on logs, before a white screen. A film was displayed. It was a Wild West film—furious galloping, amazing leaps across yawning chasms; a heroine from an upstair window was brought down a ladder; the sheriff, robbers, and mounted police all streamed in bewildering succession across the screen. None of the visitors could understand a word of what was said, but all could follow with breathless excitement the movement of the drama to the happy climax at the altar with the wedding bells pealing from the steeple. There were shrieks of applause.

The film ended; more bottles of orange crush were distributed, and happy children, their faces wreathed in smiles and orange, were bundled into trucks and packed off cheering to their villages and *kampongs*. It had been a great event in their lives. It had been organised by that most excellent person, the Company Sergeant-Major, and paid for by another excellent type—rapidly becoming extinct—the Company Commander, who happened to have private means.

And then next morning, before the dawn had broken, the camp was still and empty; the troops had gone forth in stealth "on operations."

It was a particular kind of operation, known as Operation "Question." The form is this: a New Village of ill-repute is selected, one from which it is known that food, medical supplies, and other help is going out to the enemy. Before it is light the troops are in position round the village to see that no one bolts. It is not easy to surround a village silently and in the pitch dark so that no loophole exists. But the company is well trained; it has alert, efficient officers and good N.C.O.s, who can translate a plan made from an air-photo of the village into a cordon on the ground.

After the place has been surrounded in the dark there is a pause till dawn, when the villagers emerge from their homes, taking down the battens from the Chinese shopfronts or the shutters from the windows.

Then the loud-hailer vans go into action. The householder of every house is summoned to the village school—a wooden white-washed structure with a broad roof against the sun and rain, and side walls no more than waist-high to admit plenty of fresh air. Here a group of men assembles—old and young, tappers, market-gardeners, labourers, shopkeepers, all Chinese. Some wear wide-brimmed hats shaped like Mount Fujiyama, others trilbies; some wear the most popular hat of all—the " Bombay bowler "—and some are bareheaded.

The District Officer addresses them in the *lingua franca* of the country, and his words are translated, sentence by sentence, into the several dialects of Chinese. The householders depart each to his own house. No one speaks, there is no noise but the " clop-clop " of the wooden sandals on the road, and the lesser " flip-flip " of the same sandals on the soles of their wearers' feet. It is all rather inscrutable.

Next a squad of British soldiers under a fat corporal enter the village. To each house they hand a paper written in English and Chinese. There are several questions on each paper and a space for an answer that may help the Police to track down those who help the Communists in the jungle—who are, of course, the world's champion extortionists.

As the soldiers go round with the papers, the children, peeping round their father's knees, see their friends of the night before. There are childish laughing shouts, and a pat on the head from the fat and fatherly corporal with the question papers.

A bugler sounds a " G " on his bugle. The doors shut and the householders consider their answers. What goes on behind closed doors I cannot say. I need not remind you that many of the people present cannot read or write. But some can—and do.

After an hour or so another bugle sounds. The fat corporal and his men re-enter the village, this time each with a sort of letter-box, made by the pioneers from ammunition boxes. Each is padlocked and sealed, and into its gaping mouth the villagers thrust their question papers. The platoon commanders, mostly National Service subalterns, walk down the middle of the roads to see fair play—not that that is necessary; for there still exists that bond linking the soldiers with the grinning Chinese children, who emerge with their parents as soon as the papers are collected.

The headmen of the village, three elderly and rather fat Chinese, then mount the waiting lorry; and with the soldiers they all go back to camp.

"You may smoke," the officer says.

Soon Chinese and British are grinning at one another in the back of the lorry. Two armoured cars provide an escort, each named with a battle honour of the battalion. It is unlikely that anyone will shoot at this convoy; for they would give back more than they would get. The opposition knows that and seldom takes any action.

Back in camp a meal is given to the headmen. It consists of bacon, beans, bread and marmalade, and mugs of strong, sweet tea. It is a meal such as Thomas Atkins loves, and the Chinese seem to like it too; though knives and forks give them the same difficulties as chopsticks would to us.

After breakfast the headmen set forth with the soldiers, who are now wearing their smartest suits of olive green: shirts, shorts, hose-tops and puttees, and whitened belts and Regimental Police arm-bands. At King's House the boxes are unsealed. The High Commissioner personally opens them. The headmen are dismissed and return, still grinning at their escorts, to their New Village.

Thus ended the last operation the battalion was to undertake in these parts. It was time to leave the district, and there were farewell ceremonies to be performed. It will have been seen that fairly close co-operation must be maintained between the District Officer, the battalion, and the Police. By a mutual regard for this over-riding principle the professional differences of the three services had never been allowed to mar personal relations. The District Officer naturally tends to be father of his flock and takes a lenient view of their misdemeanours. The policeman is scrupulous regarding the law it is his duty to uphold. The soldier is naturally impatient of the leniency of the one and red tape of the other; his professional self says " off with their heads and to hell with the law." But with the Green Howards all these attitudes of mind had been blended with goodwill; and at an evening party at the District Officer's house the Commanding Officer was awarded, with mock ceremonial, a medal and a government citation for " his valiant and unending struggle against the Administration."

It was a cheerful evening, but it had its serious counterpart; for the District Officer, this time in all solemnity, presented to a representative party from the battalion next day a cheque for a large sum of money which had been contributed. There were a few considerable sums from rich tin and rubber companies, and many handsome presents from individual planters and Chinese towkays; but also there were many pages listing all the " widows' mites " from Chinese, Malays, and Tamils who had wished to express their thanks and goodwill. It was really a most remarkable document, and with the piece of plate that was bought with the cheque it will remain a treasured possession among the archives at the Depot.

All this time, though, the Quartermaster had been busy handing over the camps—it is extraordinary the discomfort in which the British soldier has to live in these camps, and the appalling cost of even that which he has. All had to be properly accounted for and handed over to the Gordon Highlanders. Readers experienced in the profession of arms will not need telling that those coming in feel that the camps they are taking over are in a far worse state than the ones they have left. The Green Howards felt just the same about the camps to which they were going.

However, at last the final day dawned. The soldiers were up before daylight. By eight o'clock the camps were swept and garnished. The Gordons arrived at mid-day and the Green Howards boarded the now empty train—counting all the electric-light bulbs in the carriages and the window-panes cracked or broken, knowing that at the journey's end everything would be checked and the last occupants charged for any visible damage. The signal went down, the train whistled, and the guard—not the railway guard but the military one—sitting in an armoured wagon, cocked their rifles and Brens ready for any emergency on the line. Just as a precaution there was a light aircraft swooping overhead and roaring down the line ahead of the train.

Soon the train came to the local junction, Seremban. It looked like any other passenger train till a few heads appeared at the windows; then more and more; shock heads, red heads, bald heads, well-kept heads—all kinds of soldiers' heads.

What had brought them out as the train slowed down at the junction platform? Was it some strange new mystery brought forth by the East?

No. It was the beat of drums, the skirl of pipes, and the tramp of feet. The pipe band of the 7th Gurkhas was at the station, marching down the platform to speed the Green Howards on their way. There is something about pipe music that stirs the soul and there was a tenseness in the air. Five hundred men craned from the windows of the train, watching in silence. The Gurkhas were in jungle green, and over their shoulders floated the tartan of their Scottish sister regiment —the Cameronians.

Suddenly the tension was broken, a soldier cheered, and the cheering was infectious. It ran up and down the line of heads at the train windows. British soldiers shouted and waved, and the Gurkha drum-major, combining the dignity of his office with a sense of comradeship, included in the flourish of his mace a gesture to the soldiers in the train. A grin suffused his weather-beaten face, and a strange sense of the fitness of things filled all our hearts.

It was a great occasion, but no military occasion is without its comic side. From the rearmost coach of the train the heads that peered forth were not British heads; they were Asian and of every type and shape—charwallahs, dhobis, barbers, ex-bandits, and scallywags of every kind. All were under the command of the provost sergeant.

"Who are all these followers?" someone asked.

" Not followers, sir," came the prompt reply. " Battalion pets, sir."

The whistle blew, the signal fell, the train moved forward, and the cheering faded into the distance.

Somehow the fat Indian stationmaster seemed to hit the proper note : " All very fine ambassadors of Britain, sir," he said.

I am sure you will agree.

CHAPTER XIV

OPERATION "HIVE": PLANNING

(See Map II)

THE reader will remember from an earlier chapter how George Collingwood persuaded the High Commissioner that a concentration of troops in Negri Sembilan would pay a good dividend. It was accordingly decided to rearrange the annual training periods of the Gurkhas so that both 1/7 Gurkha Rifles and 2/7 Gurkha Rifles should be available for this operation. It was to be known as "Hive," beginning on 25th August 1952.

The Green Howards had been replaced by the 1st Battalion the Gordon Highlanders, in June or July, and the Fijians had joined in May. 63 Brigade, therefore, consisted of four battalions—1 Gordons, 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, 2/7 Gurkha Rifles, and the Fijians. It was thus possible to concentrate two battalions into the area of any one of them without leaving a dangerous void anywhere in Negri or Malacca.

George, having sold this idea to the High Commissioner in May, stepped smartly into an aeroplane and flew to England; so I had no chance to discuss with him how he thought it should be done.

At that time I do not think anyone had ever achieved a notable success in what was called a big operation, and the idea was most unpopular with the battalions in 63 Brigade, if not throughout Malaya. The previous form had usually been to surround some area with a considerable body of troops and try to work it like a partridge drive. This usually failed, because the jungle affords so much cover that hiding in it is easy. The bandits could hear the beaters coming and could hide like grouse on a wet day. They could let the guns and beaters pass over them. The consensus of experienced opinion was that "sticking to the framework" was the best thing to do and that big operations were "damn silly." However, we were committed to a big operation, and the thing to do was to devise some way of doing it which was not "damn silly."

Here I was much assisted by Edward Hill, the Second-in-Command of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles. He had remarked to me one day that their rifle company which worked the Seremban area never seemed to have enough men to do it properly. There were plenty of bandits, there was a fair amount of information forthcoming about them, and the officers of the battalion knew the ground like the backs of their hands. All they lacked was men.

The Gordons were new to the State and could not know the ground yet. The Fijians' area was an unpropitious one, because the bandits could so easily cross over the border into Pahang, where we could not follow them. (This difficulty was overcome later, but it applied forcibly at the time.) The area occupied by 2/7 Gurkha Rifles was difficult to work because it was largely a paddy-growing one—along the valleys of Kuala Pilah. The Seremban area, therefore, seemed to me the most favourable for an attempt.

After some argument, having placed these facts before the Director of Operations Staff, this conception was accepted; and the State War Executive Committee was told to try to eliminate the organisations of the Malayan Communist Party and the Malayan Races Liberation Army in the Seremban District.

The enemy against us, we thought, consisted of eighty-six armed men, two of whom had Bren guns. This total was made up as follows:—

(*a*) District Headquarters and bodyguards	22
(*b*) No. 3 Independent Platoon, operating in two sections	31
(*c*) "Fog" Sub-district, operating in four branches and a Self-Protection Group	26
(*d*) A unit of unknown name	7
Total	86 men

The area of their operations was about twenty-five miles each way.

We knew a lot about the personalities of the opposition through the skill of a Punjabi Moslem, an officer of the Special Branch. He was the son of an old ex-subadar of the Indian Army. He had spent most of his life in Malaya. He was a keen Moslem and therefore hated Communism. He had been long enough in the area to have worked up many contacts with members of the opposition. Indeed, people in jest often said that Mobarak kept the Seremban Communists like ordinary people keep chickens. He fed them and petted them, and every now and then he killed a few to prevent them becoming too numerous. Had he been given more time he might have been able to introduce into the ranks of the opposition some of his own agents. Then, if we succeeded in killing any of the Communist leaders, the agents might be promoted in their places, much to our advantage.

This process is known as " penetrating " the other side. Both sides do it and both know that it is done. The Communist aim is to introduce Communist Party members into the Armed Forces, the Police, the Trades Unions, the School Teachers' Organisations, the Fire Services, the Home Guard, &c. By diligent application to duty the Communists hope that their men will get promoted to controlling positions in those organisations. The organisation is then said to be successfully " penetrated." Government does the same thing, though it would clearly be undesirable to say with what success. Occasionally the Communists find that someone whom they have hitherto supposed to be a genuine Party Member is actually in the pay of the Government. They strangle him at the first opportunity. The stakes are high on their side of the fence.

Communism transcends both national loyalties and patriotism. There is nothing fundamentally impossible in having Communists in the top grades of any department of Government. Conversely, it is now well known that Loi Tak, who at one time was no less than Chairman of the Communist Central Executive Committee in Malaya, became a deviationist and vanished in 1947. His successor in the Party, Chen Ping, then discovered that it was Loi Tak who had betrayed many of the leaders to the Japanese and had even assisted the British Intelligence.[1]

The significance of all this, as Mobarak pointed out to me one day, is that agents and informers often work both ways. Most of them work for us for money, though the best ones do it for revenge or out of conviction. While prepared to sell Communist secrets to us they will not, in the nature of things, be averse from getting credit with the Communists by letting them have a few of our secrets in exchange. If they were men of integrity they might prefer some other livelihood.

One of our anxieties, therefore, was to make sure that the enemy did not have warning of our plans. We feared they might depart from the area and lie low outside it until the dust had settled. We knew so much about them, it was inconceivable that they, working through the same agents perhaps, would not know a lot about us.

We therefore decided upon a deception plan which we called Operation "Whipcord." We located "Whipcord" in the Bahau area. We put it about tactfully that this was to be the scene of a new campaign. We spared no efforts in making this seem likely. We ordered hundreds of maps, pinned them into a composite series of Bahau, and distributed them to those who would have needed them had the operation been a real one. We had maps made, showing all the likely food supply areas, and sent them out as well. We sent, *in an unsealed envelope*, a letter to the Managing Director of Malayan Railways asking for a special loading-ramp to be built in the Bahau Railway Station. To ensure wide circulation of this letter amongst the clerical staff who would open it the letter was endorsed "Top Secret. Personal and Confidential." Next day, to make doubly sure that the letter had wide circulation, we sent another Top Secret letter (this time in a properly sealed envelope) asking the Managing Director to withdraw the previous one as quickly as possible.

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[1] 'Menace in Malaya,' by Harry Miller (Harrap), pp. 65-71. Loi Tak is believed to be dead.

George Rotheray, who combined the offices at that time of Secretary for Chinese Affairs and for Information Services, applied his organising ability to the deception plan. He warned the people of Bahau of food checks to come, and explained how new curfew regulations were to be operated. One way and another I think we made it pretty clear that Bahau was to be the chosen area. The Seremban bandits slept peacefully at nights.

We debated anxiously whether or not to arrest all the known Communist food suppliers in Seremban. The arguments were these: while they were supplying food they could be watched, and information would continue to pour in about bandit movements. If they were suddenly removed, the bandits would have to make fresh contacts to get food; and these new contacts might be in Mobarak's pay. Troops might then be in ambush at the point of contact.

Another theory was likened to that used in laying minefields in conventional war. The minefield theory is this: you lay extensive minefields but leave gaps in them. The theory is that the enemy tanks will prefer the gaps to the minefields and go that way. By deploying concealed guns in the gaps you shoot the enemy tanks. The parallel theory in Malaya was as follows: you remove the known food suppliers in one area but leave them in another. The bandits will therefore restrict their operations to that other area. In this way you will reduce the size of the area to be patrolled. You give yourself a killing ground.

Both theories, however, fall down in practice. In conventional war the enemy attacks where there is a piece of dominating ground that he feels he must have in order to go any farther. If there are mines in the way he plans to pick them up. Similarly with the bandits. If they want food at point A they will make some plan to get it. They do not go to B just because it is easier.

Do not misunderstand me. Mines, laid in the right place, may help you to prevent the enemy from capturing the objective of his choice. Their presence, however, is not likely to induce him to attack some other objective which he does not want. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to bandit food sources. It is a good and useful thing to impede the bandits in getting food from A, but do not imagine that they will necessarily leave the area and go to B.

We knew the bandits had stocks of food in the jungle. We had found no fewer than twenty-five dumps in the last three months; and there were presumably many more unfound. Until these stocks were eaten, the bandits would not be short of food. They would never even broach them while their other sources of food were open.

On balance, therefore, we decided to arrest every known food supplier. This in itself would inconvenience the bandits considerably. Moreover, by skilful interrogation of the food suppliers we should get even more information.

An important item in the plan was to prevent food getting out of the town of Seremban. Legislation existed that made it an offence to take food out of the town; but the necessary supervision did not exist to see that the Laws were obeyed.

Round half the town there runs a river; and at every bridge over it a Food Check Point was established. At each point John Barnard posted a few of his policemen, each with a civilian officer to supervise and help. Sheppard organised these civilians. First he held a meeting of them all at which he and John and I addressed them, telling them what was required. Sheppard then organised rosters of duty and a volunteer organisation of ladies to take round tea and buns. Round the rest of the town we had Home Guard patrols. To make their work easier, Pat had a signal wire attached to rubber trees so that the perimeter for patrolling was defined.

We did not at that time consider reinforcing the police in the New Villages with soldiers. This policy was invented, I think, by 26 Brigade; and the Cameronians were the first to make a success of it.

There were many loopholes in our food control plan. All rice dealers at that time were allowed to hold five per cent excess stock to make up for wastage. This in itself would feed the eighty-six men of the opposition for a lifetime. Rice was actually growing in many parts of the District. By offering good prices the bandits were bound to find some poor farmer willing to sell. Food supplies had to be taken from the country to the markets, and from the markets in bulk to other towns to stock the shops. People had to take food from the town's market to their own houses. There were a thousand loopholes. Some of these we perceived but could not stop. Some we only discovered later. But this was the first time a serious effort had been made to control food effectively in the area, and the bandits were taken by surprise.

When I say it was the first time this was done I must qualify the remark. Every sensible step taken to control food is likely to be effective till the enemy finds the loopholes. Then a further step must be taken to close them. The bandits find yet another way through the new measures and you have to try again. The human brain is at work on both sides. What is effective to-day will not be so effective in three months' time. It is like changing the bowler at cricket. If you leave even the best bowler on too long he gets tired, and the batsmen, too, learn how to score off him. In Operation " Hive " we put on, as we thought, far better bowlers than had ever bowled before. To-day our efforts would look amateurish. Then they looked very good.

On the purely military side our plan was simple. We defined an Outer Ring or band inside which we intended to keep the bandits. Within this Outer Ring we intended to hunt them.

We deployed the whole of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles and two Squadrons of the Special Air Service Regiment on the Outer Ring. They operated in deep jungle and were supplied by air. They had two tasks. First, they were to ambush all known tracks out of the area and all ridge lines which, because they are followed by wild animals, form natural highways in the jungle. Secondly, they were to conduct a slow and systematic search of the Outer Ring. We hoped that these precautions would prevent an exodus of bandits from inside the ring; and would disclose any camps, hiding places, and food dumps on it to which the bandits might withdraw.

The bandits would thus be contained within the Outer Ring. The space within we divided into eight sectors, lettered A to H. Into any or all of them we could deploy 1/7 Gurkha Rifles in whole or in part, knowing that they knew the ground thoroughly.

In considering all this it must be remembered that we were searching for under a hundred bandits in an area exceeding six hundred square miles. By hunting in one sector at a time, however, there would be a reasonable density of troops. We hoped that informers would tell us which sector held the bandits; but in default of this information we could use our mobility and guile to pounce upon whichever sector we fancied. Thus, we should have plenty of options on the military side. The bandits, we hoped, would live in suspense, never knowing what would happen next.

This plan commended itself strongly to the officers and men who were to take part. It was a normal framework operation conducted with four times the normal number of soldiers, *and those within the Outer Ring all knew the ground*.

While the infantry were thus engaged in a giant game of hide-and-seek, we had tasks for everyone else, too. C Squadron 13/18 Royal Hussars escorted food convoys to see that the drivers did not cast off sacks of rice for bandit consumption. They conducted surprise food checks of vehicles in the area. They escorted "Loudmouth," which I described in an earlier chapter, when George Rotheray wanted it to broadcast to the jungle fringes. They patrolled roads to cordon off any area being searched. The Gunners disturbed the peace of the bandits—and the populace—by firing at night into all the known bandit camping areas. The light aircraft of the Air Observation Post flight in Seremban plastered the area with literature telling the bandits we were going to give them hell and that they had better surrender.[1] To make it a little easier for deserters, we shone a searchlight beam at night. The pamphlets told any potential deserter that he should creep out at night to the latrine, and from thence make for the light. George Rotheray also had word put round the New Villages that we did not ask the relatives of bandits to betray them, but only to advise them to come in and surrender.

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[1] The voice-aircraft—*i.e.*, a Dakota carrying loud-speakers—was not then in use.

The Royal Air Force agreed to maintain by air all the troops in the jungle and to bomb and harass any targets we could give them.

The State War Executive Committee formulated this plan in outline and handed it to the Seremban District War Executive Committee. They handled the operation from day to day in all its aspects—Civil, Military, R.A.F., Police, and Information Services.

What we hoped would happen was this :—

(*a*) The troops in the Outer Ring would, by their unexpected arrival, have a few contacts and kills and chivvy the bandits into the inner area.

(*b*) We then hoped to hear from informers which sub-division, A to H, they were in. Into this, two days later, we would launch the whole of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles. We thought they would certainly get some more contacts and kills.

(*c*) Then we proposed to arrest all known food suppliers, who, under the Emergency Regulations, could be detained for (I think) fourteen days for interrogation. The effect of this we foresaw would be twofold: (i) we should get a lot of information, and (ii) the bandits would withdraw to their food dumps in the jungle.

(*d*) We then foresaw a pause while the bandits thought what to do next. During this time we would give the troops in the deep jungle rest and refitting in rotation.

(*e*) Presently, we expected, the bandits would come towards inhabited areas to try to find out what was going on, and to arrange new food supply lines. Meanwhile, however, we thought the populace would take heart from the presence of so many troops and give us plenty of information.

(*f*) Thereafter the circuit of operations would begin again. Information, kills, rise in morale, more information, more kills, and so on. A trickle of surrenders was to add spice to the whole operation.

What we did not know then, but only learnt by later experience, was that bandit gangs showed very little tendency at any time to quit their own particular stamping ground. They frequented one particular area for two reasons. First, they had a Communist job to do there; to cultivate the masses, to procure food for their comrades, to protect a propaganda unit, or whatever it might be. The big men were permitted to move about from one area to another, just as generals move about their theatres of war. The rank and file were no more permitted to leave their general area than are regular troops allowed to quit the battlefield when it gets too hot for them. Secondly, they hesitated to leave because of their food lines. If they went into a strange area it would be risky establishing a new food line. They might get betrayed.

We foresaw this operation lasting at least two months. If we could retain the troops for longer, so much the better; but we were promised them for two months as a minimum.

CHAPTER XV

OPERATION "HIVE": EXECUTION

(*See Map II*)

JUST before Operation "Hive" was due to begin we suffered a setback. A platoon of the Gordon Highlanders was out with a surrendered bandit known by the troops as "Charlie Boy." They were operating in the Gemas Forest Reserve trying to find the camp of a famous bandit known as Ah Kuk.

Ah Kuk was later killed by his bodyguard while returning to South Malaya after attending a meeting of the Central Executive Committee in Pahang in May 1953. His slayer put the head of Ah Kuk into a haversack and made his way to the railway, where he stopped a train by standing in the line and waving. He astonished the engine driver—and the police to whom he was taken—by displaying the head in the haversack.

However, in August 1952 Ah Kuk was still very much alive. Towards evening the Gordons halted and made a camp. The sergeant and most of the men went down to a nearby stream to wash, leaving a corporal, a cook, and a sentry on duty in the camp. All was quiet except for the crackle of sticks burning in the cook's fire and the gentle dripping of the rain.

The corporal's attention was suddenly aroused by the sound of footsteps, which he presumed to be those of his comrades. He wondered whether he should shout to the sergeant telling him not to make such a noise. He was, however, only a junior National Service corporal and the sergeant was an old hand; so he decided to walk towards the sound of footsteps. If it were the sergeant he would say nothing; but if it were a private soldier he would give him a piece of his mind.

He picked up his rifle, slung it on his shoulder and took a few paces forward. Suddenly he was face to face with a bandit. He was short and squat and walked with a limp. He could be none other than Ah Kuk, whose photograph he knew well. Both the corporal and Ah Kuk had their rifles slung; for the corporal was expecting to meet his sergeant and Ah Kuk had walked unexpectedly into the Gordons' camp by a chance in a million. For a second both stared at each other. The sentry ran towards them so as to get a shot without risk of hitting the corporal. Ah Kuk turned and fled.

With Charlie Boy's help the Jocks followed the track some way. They could only do this slowly as Ah Kuk would never move far alone. There must have been other bandits about, and they would be lying in ambush for the pursuing Gordons. Soon it was dark and the chase had to be called off.

They resumed the hunt early next morning, but it had rained in the night and they lost the trail. At about 11 A.M. they heard a fusillade of shots. Very cautiously they stalked to the sound of the firing. At last they got there. A Police semi-armoured car, of a type known as a G.M.C. (after the General Motors Corporation who make them) was burnt out on a track, around it were the much mutilated corpses of eight or nine policemen. One man alone survived and he confirmed that it was Ah Kuk and his gang who had ambushed them.

There was naturally an urge in some quarters to postpone "Hive," to set the troops assembled for it to avenge the ambush, and to try to get Ah Kuk. It is possible that this might have been Ah Kuk's plan too. He may well have known that an operation was impending—even though the deception plan ("Whipcord") made him think it was in an area other than where it really was. He may have planned this ambush with no other purpose than to deflect us from our intention. However, we took no notice of him.

On 20th August, 2/7 Gurkha Rifles and the two Squadrons of the Special Air Service Regiment went into their jungle bases on the Outer Ring and sent out ambushes according to their plans.

Almost at once one of the companies of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles found a half-built bandit camp in the depths of the jungle. The Gurkhas estimated it was intended for twenty to thirty bandits. It contained a large quantity of salt in tins. From the appearance of the latrines they judged that three or four men had been building it, and must have left it the day before. They decided to ambush it for three days, by which time they would need more rations themselves.

On the third day they heard the noise of chopping wood. This, they thought, must be the builders cutting poles to continue building; so they waited two more days—without food. On the fifth day they set off for their company base. As they marched, fire was opened upon them. The Gurkha corporal ordered his men to charge. They crashed through the jungle in the direction of the firing and found themselves in the middle of another camp. Three men—Malays—disappeared in the opposite direction. This camp was an even bigger one than the last. It was for fifty bandits and contained eighty tins of fish, forty tommy cookers, a sack of rice, a tin of sugar, twenty-five pairs of canvas shoes, eleven khaki shirts, eleven pairs of jungle green shorts, sixty yards of red and white assorted cloth (for flags) and an armourer's kit.

There was no trace of the three bandits whom they had seen, and it was not likely they or any others would return; so they pulled down the bandit shelters, collected the spoils, and returned to their company base.

Here they heard that other Gurkha patrols from their company had found camps too. There was one for thirty and two or three small ones. The rest of the battalion and the Special Air Service Regiment had drawn a blank.

The Intelligence Officer deduced from this that, by a fluke, the company had blundered on a camping area being prepared for a series of meetings under the auspices of either the Communist State or District Committee. The R.A.F. bombed and straffed the area to discourage them and the Gurkhas continued the search elsewhere.

Meanwhile, through an error of map-reading by a Gurkha N.C.O., a party of porters carrying rations for the Special

Air Service Regiment and escorted by a few British troopers, was ambushed in the jungle by the Gurkhas. Fire was opened by the Gurkhas and the troopers returned the fire. The Gurkhas realised the mistake first and called out "Gurkha, Gurkha." The Special Air Service men had been caught this way by bandits once before and continued firing. One Gurkha soldier was killed. There was much sadness on both sides.

The operations on the Outer Ring had not been productive, but informers had told Mobarak that bandits had assembled in the overgrown rubber and jungle in Sector B, not far from the camp of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, on a rubber estate known as Sikamet Estate.

Now was the chance of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles.

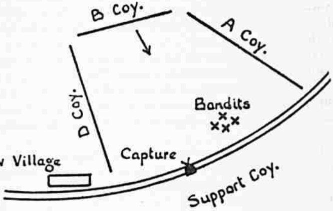
The Sikamet New Village was always a bad one containing many Communist sympathisers. The C.O. of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, Johnnie Curling, guessed where the bandits would be. He took A, B, D, and Support Companies out through the back of his camp by a route he knew. By dawn they were in position. Support Company was disposed along the road that passed the New Village. A Company and D Company were at right-angles to the road, facing one another. B Company was parallel with the road, five hundred yards back from it ; so the four companies formed a square, five hundred yards each way, with one side (Support Company's side) actually on the road. The Companies had got to their positions in absolute silence, and if the bandits were inside the square they must be unaware of the presence of troops.

The plan was for the two companies at right-angles to the road (A and D) to remain stationary. B Company was to work forward towards the road.

The signal for B Company was the sound of a truck travelling along the road blowing its horn in a series of short blasts.

Everything went like clockwork, and B Company began to work forward. Unlike beaters in a partridge drive, they were to be absolutely silent. Suddenly the Company Commander of B Company heard voices. It must be bandits ; for the curfew in the New Village had not yet lifted. A second later he was under fire. He saw five or six bandits at whom he fired. The bandits turned and ran, scattering as they went. One was a small boy of eleven or twelve, who ran with the rest. The Gurkhas ran after them. The boy was not so fleet of foot as his comrades and was being overtaken. He turned and threw a hand grenade at Brian Webb, the Company Commander. The grenade did no damage, in fact I do not think it exploded, and the boy was captured. Although an intensive search was made, nothing more was seen of the other bandits.

Pat rang up to tell me a bandit had been captured and I hurried down to the Police Headquarters. There, in tears, and in the arms of a nice-looking Chinese girl, was the boy. He was a most pathetic sight. The girl was Johnnie Curling's *amah*, or housemaid, and sister of the boy.



Inquiries revealed a sad story. Communist sympathisers from Sikamet New Village were wont to go into Seremban to buy rice and other supplies and leave them at the roadside for collection by the bandits. The Government, therefore, decided to open a rice shop in the village itself so that there would be no need to go shopping in Seremban, four miles away. The Headman of the village—by name Chow Fong—had openly supported the Government on many occasions and offered to run the shop.

One day a bandit, dressed in plain clothes, was smuggled into the village by sympathisers and went to the house of a widow with two small boys. He intimidated the widow and gave a hand grenade to each boy with instructions to throw them into Chow Fong's shop.

Fortunately the bombs exploded harmlessly in the road. One boy made his way to Kuala Lumpur and gave himself up as a surrendered bandit when he found the police were after him. The other went into the jungle ; and here he was captured.

The rule at that time was that captured bandits were tried and might be hanged. This boy, however, was sent with his brother to the Henry Gurney Approved School for Boys in Malacca, and has since been released, a reformed character, so they say.

Chow Fong did much to help Government and was subsequently awarded a British Empire Medal.

The boy did not know anything that we did not know ; but he confirmed the names of his comrades as part of the Sikamet Branch of the Communist " Fog " Sub-district.

The next act was for the Police to arrest known Communist helpers. They roped in one hundred and seven persons and put them in sheds specially constructed for the operation. Fifty of them proved to be Party Members and were Executives of the Masses. These were detained for questioning ; the others were released at once.

When the Police arrest Communist helpers in this way for questioning they also have to arrest those who give information to us ; otherwise the informers would be under grave suspicion from the bandits and would not live long.

Consequently when this mass arrest was made all our informers were brought in too. Information dried up. We had expected this and took the opportunity to bring 1/7 Gurkha Rifles back to camp for rest and refitting.

Meanwhile, Johnnie had an idea that the bandits might send messengers to a place called Langkap to see if food could be had from there.

Langkap is an interesting place. It is right in the middle of the jungle and at that time there was no road to it. It had been picked out by the planners in South-East Asia Command working in Colombo in 1943 as a likely place in Malaya to drop parachutists to cultivate the Resistance Movement against the Japs. A number of British officers were subsequently landed there by parachute. I walked there once. It is a small village of aborigines who live by fishing and cultivating tapioca.

To send troops there was to draw a bow at a venture. The troops could have no guidance from us; they would have to hunt like hounds, picking up and following any scent they found. This was just what suited the Fijians. I got hold of Ron Tinker and he sent D Company there from Kuala Pilah by a circuitous route and with great promptness. They found tracks leading south and followed them. Towards evening they heard voices in the jungle. They crept forward and saw two bandits crouching over a small fire. With a bound the Fijians were on them and killed both. They were members of No. 3 Independent Platoon. They were technically outside the area delineated for the Operation, but they came from the Seremban District and were on that Order of Battle. So we notched them up as credits to the Operation. It always seemed to me rather clever of Johnnie to think of Langkap, and skilful of the Fijians to find anything there.

This success came at a very opportune moment, for we were in the midst of a phase in which nothing happened. There were no contacts, no information, and no kills. I think the Director of Operations Staff began to think that something had gone wrong; and I was told to go up to Kuala Lumpur to brief General Stockwell on the whole operation. A map was produced, the General, the Chief of Staff, and all the Intelligence boys sat round it. I gave them a résumé of what had happened. I told them that we had expected a dull period, though it had, in fact, lasted rather longer than we had hoped. I urged persistence and the General agreed, making a few suggestions as to what we might try next.

The High Commissioner came down to Seremban himself on 5th September. He came straight to the Operations Room. We had a large-scale map on the wall, on which

Johnnie pointed out all that had happened. Sheppard, John Barnard and I all urged perseverance, and I outlined what I proposed to do next. I knew that there were many other calls on the 2/7 Gurkha Rifles; and four battalions was certainly excessive to lock up in Negri and Malacca if they did not get any bandits. However, the High Commissioner was not the one to turn back, having set his hand to the plough. He said " Stick to it " and wished us good luck. The Fijians' success at Langkap came next day. Meanwhile, helicopters had made their first operational appearance. I went round in an S53 to see the troops in the Outer Ring. I did a lot of this in Malaya from time to time. It was great fun. It gave me something of the " feel " of the jungle, and I was able to take back letters for posting. (The troops could receive letters by air-drop with the rations; but they could not send letters in reply. They could, of course, only send operational signals by wireless.) The soldiers always seemed pleased to see a " brass hat " in the jungle, and usually brewed up tea for the occasion.

One has to see the conditions in which the soldiery live in the jungle to realise their discomfort. The day's patrolling probably does not end till about 4 P.M. Two hours of daylight only remain. It may well be raining. Two pieces of wood must be cut for uprights and another as a crossbar between them. A poncho is hung over this and the ends pegged down with string and wooden pegs cut locally. Underneath, some sort of bed is constructed, depending on the skill of the soldier and the time available. Two men share each shelter. When once it gets dark there can be no lights showing; and between halting and darkness there is stand-to and a meal to be arranged for all. The officer has a busy time; he must send off a signal reporting the day's work, he must post sentries, make some plans for the morrow and warn all his men of them. Then there is washing to be done and weapons to be cleaned.

People who have been on safari in Africa or shikar in India often wonder why the soldiery in Malaya cannot, or will not, make themselves more comfortable. The principal reason is time. If a camp is occupied for two or three days there are many refinements; but it is a physical impossibility to make much comfort between four and six in the evening as well as take all the military precautions necessary.

Let us take a look at one of these camps. We arrive at the airfield and get into the S53 helicopter. Two or three passengers sit behind the pilot. In front a perspex dome gives a clear view up and down and to both sides. The engine roars, the pilot gently moves his controls and suddenly we are airborne. The aircraft seems to have a forward tilt, which gives one the feeling of riding a horse with no shoulders, or sitting on the edge of a precipice. Quickly we gain forward speed and are flying over the ragged, jungle-covered hills.

Presently a wisp of smoke is seen. The pilot turns towards it. There is a clearing in the jungle the size of a basket-ball pitch. In the middle is a yellow cloth panel in the form of the letter L. We circle this, and the pilot makes an approach from down-wind. Dust swirls up all round, the grass waves, and we are on the ground. A British officer, bearded and weather-beaten to the colour of his Gurkhas, comes towards the helicopter. We alight and exchange greetings. As we do so, we perceive other men, kneeling with rifles at the ready, watching in all directions.

The officer leads the way and we plunge into the black jungle. The camp is three hundred yards away and we scramble and climb up a muddy slope, sinking up to the shins in mud at each pace, and slipping as we do so. We slither down the other side. Quite unexpectedly we find ourselves four inches from the muzzle of a rifle with a Gurkha soldier concealed behind it. His hat and jungle green uniform, but above all his stationary posture, make him invisible in the foliage. From his position, looping back into the camp like a cord, is a piece of creeper strung between trees to a ration tin with a stone in it. With this he can give the alarm.

From the sentries' post steps have been cut, and pieces of bark laid on the treads. We walk down to the main position.

"No. 3 Platoon," announces the officer.

There is a cluster of *bashas*, higgledy-piggledy, wherever the ground permits one to stand. By each one a solemn Gurkha sits, silently oiling his rifle or stripping his Bren. As we approach, each man springs to attention; but in his rubber boots there is not a sound. I always tried to talk to each man on these occasions; and when any one of them had had any particular adventure I used to try and get it first hand.

The officer leads us round to each platoon. The whole company covers an area of about fifty yards each way; but because of the unevenness of the ground it is confusing, till one is accustomed to it, telling which way one is facing; or whether one has seen this or that *basha* before.

The ablution area is on the stream below, and upstream of it a stone in the middle of the stream denotes the source of drinking water.

" What happens when it gets dark ? " you ask.

" You just go to bed," replies the officer.

" What do you wear at night ? "

" I take two sets of clothes into the jungle," explains the officer. " Every evening I wash and put on the other set. I sleep in this, boots and all, in case of alarm, and wear it next day. In this way I nearly always have dry clothes to wear at night."

" What about the rations ? "

" I always eat curry and rice with the Gurkhas in the jungle," the officer replies. " They have their own times for meals and if I stuck to our times we should never have time for anything else."

Meanwhile the officer's orderly or batman has produced a couple of mugs and a mess-tin full of tea. The tea is hot. The mugs are made of enamel and are hot too. Time is short as the helicopter pilot wants to get back before dark, and rain clouds are clustering round the hill-tops which he can see from the landing zone. So we pour some chlorinated water into our mugs from a canvas bag by the officer's *basha* and drink quickly.

" Can I do anything for you ? " I ask.

" Yes," says the officer. " Find us some bandits ! "

" Anything else ? "

" I wonder if you'd ring up my wife when you get back and tell her all is well." (I was always thankful on these occasions that we had a good cook; so that my wife could ask the abandoned wives to meals. This country owes a lot to soldiers' wives.)

We return through the mud to the helicopter. The engine starts, the dust swirls, and the grass is beaten down by the slipstream of the rotor. Everyone clutches his hat to prevent it from being blown into the whirlwind, and we sweep up above the tree-tops. A great and flashy bird, a hornbill, darts down from a tree towards the stream as we pass over. It is the only sign of life one commonly sees. Soon we are back on the airfield and we can see rain over the camp we have visited.

I describe a visit to a Gurkha camp as opposed to a British or Fijian one, because it so happened that it was John Thornton's company of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles to which I made my first trip by helicopter. It also happened that my visit coincided with an air-drop of rations.

A Viking twin-engined aircraft appeared over the hill-tops. John's Gurkha officer fired a smoke grenade. The aircraft saw it and made a trial run over the place where the helicopter stood. Satisfied, it made another run, and the Royal Army Service Corps despatcher pushed out some packing-cases of rations, a bundle of mail, and the well-packed rum-ration. Coloured parachutes floated down with incredible accuracy of aim, and hurrying Gurkhas anxiously collected them. We took the parachutes back with us in the helicopter.

A visit to a British or Fijian camp is very much the same. In a British camp the soldiers grin and joke with the visitor more than Gurkhas do—unless you happen to be their Commanding Officer—and they usually have more letters to post. They are always hesitant of giving these to the visitor if they have no stamps for them. In the damp atmosphere of Malaya stamps stick together, and it is not easy for the officer to arrange to take stamps for his men, but they always try. As I looked at these soldiers, half of them National Service lads, I often used to wonder what their parents would think if they could see them now. More often than not the young officers, platoon commanders, were National Service too. Their man management very seldom lacked for want of thought or trouble taken. Experience only was lacking. In the five British battalions that I was lucky enough to have in 63 Brigade for various spells, I very seldom had occasion to criticise the discipline, man management, or sense of purpose that characterised the young officers, particularly in the jungle. Britain may well be proud of her young men ; and I wish I could conjure up the sight, smell and sounds of these jungle camps, and the cheerfulness and good humour of the soldiery in them. All they asked was contacts with the bandits, and for this they happily endured everything. It was a sobering thought when planning operations.

When I returned from this visit to John Thornton's company, I went with Sheppard and John Barnard to a meeting that had been convened for the civilians who had helped on the road-blocks. They had been at it for some time. Their hours of duty had been long, the work tedious, and apparently without avail. They toiled all day at the road-blocks and the artillery firing at night disturbed their sleep. (It is extraordinary how annoying is a gun that fires a shell every two minutes from 6 P.M. till daylight.) Yet nothing seemed to happen. There were no kills, no contacts, and apparently no end to this tedious operation. Sheppard sensed that there was some discontent, and he decided on a " pep talk." He said just the right things, and I was able to describe to them, while it was so fresh in my mind, what the soldiers had to put up with in the jungle. To cap it all, a messenger entered with a note for me. It was from Pat. It announced the Fijians' kills at Langkap. A wave of enthusiasm broke out, and the meeting dispersed in high spirits.

Nor did we have long to wait for more results. The Support Company of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles, ambushing one of the ridge-line tracks to the north of the Outer Ring, killed a bandit entering the area. He was a courier from outside. He was walking briskly along, his rifle slung, oblivious of any care in the world. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks. These bandits have the cunning of wild animals from their long years in the jungle. He stood and sniffed. He smelt the odour of man. But he did not sniff twice. It was too late.

He had on him documents about a meeting to come. It was written in Chinese. The names and places were in code and the dates were in code too.

One of the bandits who had recently surrendered could reveal about half its meaning. The rest was beyond his ken, but we had a line to go on.

The informers, too, were back in circulation and we got on to the food-collection movements of the bandits.

Contact was made with five bandits on No. 1 Field of Pajam Estate. Twenty were reported on the Cambrai Division of Pantai Estate, and an Auster aircraft pilot spotted a camp in the Outer Ring. Information was pouring in and the patrols had collected over a ton of food in various dumps they had found in the jungle.

Of course not all the information was accurate, nor was it always up to date; but we could not afford to neglect any of it. Johnnie Curling was scraping the barrel to get soldiers. The pipe band, the buglers, and even the leave party under the sturdy old Gurkha-major were called upon.

But results began to come. During the first period, 20th August to 25th September, we had killed four bandits and captured the boy. Between 25th September and 21st October, when the operation was planned to stop, the total went up to twenty-five eliminations, and because they were all in one enemy district we felt that we must have done that district some harm. Over a quarter of their total number had been eliminated, including two or three leaders. The gangs had been split up into twos and threes, who could only fend for themselves, being insufficiently strong to do any harm to us.

In the original plan a two months' period had been envisaged. That two months were now up. All kinds of arrangements had been made by Headquarters Malaya on the basis of this operation being finished by 1st November—that is, after two months as planned and ten days for luck. What should be done next? From the partisan view, I was all for keeping the concentration of troops for another two months and trying to finish off the Seremban District of the Malayan Communist Party. But there was a wider view. In

1952 the bandits were still being a scourge to the people. Major incidents were two-a-penny in Johore State. There were two serious ambushes in one day near Yong Peng. We had reduced one small district to impotence. "Let someone else have a try," was what they said in Kuala Lumpur. Looking at it dispassionately I am sure they were right. Now that our adversaries had split into penny packets, our food-denial measures had much less chance of success. While plans to collect food for twenty or thirty bandits could be foiled, plans to collect for two or three were much more difficult to detect, far less prevent.

The 2/7 Gurkha Rifles, therefore, withdrew to Sungei Besi for their annual retraining period of two months; and the Fijians were sent down to Johore. The Special Air Service Squadrons also dispersed. The civilians on the road-blocks were thanked by the War Executive Committee and "stood down."

This sort of operation came to be known as a Food Denial Operation. Many improvements in planning and execution were added as time went on. Subsequently these Food Denial Operations came to be battles of attrition. What I liked about "Hive" was that, apart from the sickening hiatus in the middle, there was always something happening. One felt there were brains the other side against which we were pitting our own, and the other chap had to dance to our tune. "Hive" was no battle of attrition. No inexorable organisation was grinding the enemy to pulp. It was cut and thrust, and we cut more than he did.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE EMERGENCY

ONE reads in fiction, or in the papers, about insurrections in Ruritania and the declaration of Martial Law in Latin American States; and many people said, when they heard of General Templer's appointment as High Commissioner, that he should do that sort of thing in Malaya.

In theory, Martial Law seems an attractive proposition when Law and Order are set at nought by armed men. In practice there are difficulties. The officers of the Regular Army are all needed to run the Army. There are no spare files waiting for extra duties.

The declaration of Military Law would certainly have brought about an increase in support for the bandits; because inevitably, owing to the necessarily summary nature of military rule, there would have been occasional miscarriages of justice.

That ruled out Martial Law in this case. In different circumstances, or even at the beginning, it might have been useful.

The next best course is to declare a State of Emergency and bring in new Regulations that give summary powers to Civil, Police, *and* Military Authorities. In a country that predominantly supports the Government—as in Malaya—this is perfectly satisfactory. It gives the Government all the advantages of Martial Law without the bother of setting up new machinery. Of course if the magistrates are hostile the Government must think again; but in Malaya they were not, whether British, Malay, or Chinese. So the basic idea of declaring an Emergency in Malaya was perfectly correct.

You thus get the conception of the Police applying the enactments or Emergency Regulations, and the Courts dealing with the offenders. In Malaya, however, the disorders had gone too far. The Communist Terrorists had got too strong for the Police, and the Army was called in to help.

This raises the problem of controlling the activities of Civil, Police, and Army. One solution is to appoint Civil Commissioners in each State to co-ordinate the work of Civil, Police, and Military Authorities. This, I believe, is roughly what was done in South Africa to cope with the Boer resistance when the war was reduced to a guerilla affair. It could not, however, be done in Malaya. The persons to appoint did not exist, except in the Settlements. The titular head in each State was the Ruler. The head of each State Government was the Mentri Besar, or Prime Minister. Few of these dignitaries had the military experience to do the job.

Some of the British Advisers I met during my three years in Malaya could have done it; but without altering the constitution they had not got the powers to do so. They were advisers only and not administrators in their own right.

In the Settlement of Malacca, however, there was a Resident Commissioner. When I arrived in 1952 this post was held by Mr G. E. C. Wisdom. He was an ex-African Civil Servant and had both the right and the ability to co-ordinate the Police, the Army, and everything else in his Settlement. Partly in consequence of this, the number of bandits in Malacca was reduced from two hundred and ten when I arrived in Malaya in 1952 to sixteen when he left the country in 1954. He was able to demonstrate to the people of the Settlement that his government was much better than they would ever get from the Communists. I did not always see eye to eye with him. On the contrary, we had some fierce tussles; but they were always characterised by good humour. I was delighted when he got a C.M.G. for his work before he retired from the Service.

In the States, however, it was constitutionally impossible to appoint a British officer as Commissioner, and few of the Malay Civil Servants or Rulers were sufficiently capable.

Thus, whether he liked it or not, the new High Commissioner had to make do with the machinery of State War Executive Committees and District War Executive Committees which he found on arrival. The reader will have observed from Chapter VII that hitherto in Negri Sembilan this Committee could never have been described as efficient.

It was soon sharpened up by General Templer. He praised those who did well, but he was clearly capable of sacking anyone who did badly or did nothing at all. To go on serving up these half-baked schemes in our minutes after every meeting ceased to be thinkable. Very soon the machine began to work; and, because of the authority we in the Negri Sembilan State War Executive Committee had behind us, we could make our District Committees toe our line. They ceased sending back all our plans with their obstructionist observations; they did as they were told—or tried to do so.

Whether by order from Kuala Lumpur or on our own initiative I cannot remember, but soon after the new High Commissioner arrived, we began to have meetings of an Operations Sub-Committee of the State War Executive Committee.

These Sub-Committees consisted of the Haji, Sheppard, John Barnard, and me. We used to assemble every Monday morning to discuss operations. This was a handy Sub-Committee because it was not too big. Later it was swelled by all kinds of experts and, as I think, lost its character and competence. On this Sub-Committee the Haji and Sheppard answered for every aspect of Civil Government. John Barnard answered for all aspects of the Police, and I answered for the Army. We could, therefore, only deal with principles, omitting details; and because there were no subordinates present we could all speak freely—and did!

Here I must permit myself a digression. As I say, in the early days John Barnard, as Chief Police Officer, represented *all* Police interests, including the Special Branch. Consequently, before any Special Branch matter could carry any conviction with us, it had first to carry conviction with John Barnard. This by itself was a safeguard against our being hoodwinked by top-secret hoodoo. John knew that we would cross-examine him if he quoted Special Branch advice that was contrary to our own views. In order to resist this cross-examination he had to make himself master of the facts before he arrived at the meeting. When Special Branch advice rang true through John's exposition of it, we naturally listened to it. When he knew he could not make it ring true (because there was a flaw in it) he did not bother to voice it. The Chief Police Officer, therefore, made a very great contribution to our debates. Later, however, the Head of Special Branch was also invited to attend. He was John's subordinate and both belonged to the same Service. Many reasons, of which natural loyalty was a strong one, made them cling together. We could not, with decorum, cross-examine John's subordinate in the presence of his master. Nor could John advise us to overrule him. This very much clipped the wings of the Chief Police Officer. We often accepted Special Branch advice which John, with his expert knowledge and experience of Police affairs, would have shot down in flames in the privacy of his own office, but did not care to treat so roughly when we were there to watch.

Exactly the same occurred on the Military side. At a later date all kinds of military officers, from the General Officer Commanding 17th Gurkha Division to the Officer Commanding the flight of light aircraft which supported us, took their places at our table. And on the Civil Service side the State Information Officer, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, and others often attended. None of these officers had votes, but all had tongues and ears. The Sub-Committee gradually ceased to be an anvil on which good ideas were hammered out with heavy and resounding blows. It became a rostrum for platitudes and a factory for plans which, because they were agreed by so many, could only be safe and second class. If the chairman had been ruthless and blunt, less evil would have come from this increased assembly; but the good Haji was much too kind to deal roughly with any of us.

In the purely military field great improvements were made by General Stockwell and the new High Commissioner.

The separate brigades operating independently under Headquarters Malaya were grouped into Divisions. At first, and with much gestation, 99 Gurkha Infantry Brigade was born again; and later, with equal gestation, Headquarters 17th Gurkha Division was formed. Up in the North, 1st Federal Division was formed later.

When George Collingwood went home, Major-General Perowne came out to Malaya after heading the British Military Mission to Greece. He came in the dual rôle of Major-General Brigade of Gurkhas and General Officer Commanding South Malaya District. In this capacity he had no operational control of the brigades in South Malaya, for that was done from Headquarters Malaya. In the early days of shortages of everything this had been necessary; but as more units and equipment became available in Malaya—two Armoured Car Regiments, for example—a change was clearly both desirable and possible.

From this the 17th Gurkha Division, which had so distinguished itself in Burma, was re-formed in 1952. I could fill a book on the many toils endured by the Commander and Staff of this Division to make it a going concern, and the many things they did to enhance its reputation and prowess. But like "the rest of the acts of Ahab,"[1] those must be relegated to another volume to be written by another hand.

Morning Prayers in the Police Headquarters did not seem to John and me to be managed in a very businesslike way. We would all stand round the map, so that half those present could only see the backs of those standing in front of them. We therefore made a change.

We had a six-foot table placed broadside on to the main map in the room and four feet from it. John Barnard sat at one end of this and I sat at the other. In the middle, facing the map, was Sheppard's place, though he usually sent his secretary, a bright young Wykehamist Civil Servant, to represent him. Civil, Police, and Army were thus all represented. In the background were numerous Policemen,

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[1] I. Kings, 22, verse 39.

Soldiers and Civil Servants, including the State Information Officer.

The proceedings went as follows :—

First, either my Intelligence Officer or the Staff Officer Operations—they worked hand in glove—gave a résumé of what had happened over the last twenty-four hours. The actions and reactions of both sides were all displayed on the one map that faced us. As I had, so to speak, invented this game I took the chair and asked John and the Wykehamist in turn what they proposed to do about it all. Mostly they knew the answers and spoke " off the cuff." Sometimes they had to ask one of their own officers to clarify something.

When all had had their say, and it seldom took more than a quarter of an hour, I had mine. There might be some argument between John, the Wykehamist, and me ; in fact there generally was—often heated but ending without rancour. I then broke up the party and both John and I found our immediate subordinates or Staff Officers at hand to receive detailed orders.

At Morning Prayers we were concerned with the nuts and bolts of execution of policy and we had to ensure that all were screwed up tightly. We therefore needed our subordinates with their metaphorical spanners and screw-drivers to be present.

Even when Sheppard, or occasionally the Haji, were present the procedure remained unchanged ; because both of them saw that they were not, and could not be, sufficient masters of the details to interfere with the execution of the policy. In the formulation of policy it was different ; then the Haji or Sheppard must, of course, be chairman.

I attended Morning Prayers in Selangor and Johore—they did not occur in Malacca for good reasons recounted in another chapter—as well as in Negri Sembilan ; and I still think that John Barnard and I had the best set-up in 1952 and 1953.

The reader will observe that although the British were represented at every level in all this, and the Malays at the

Troops on Patrol moving Upstream

very summit by the Mentri Besar himself in the person of the Haji, the Chinese and Indians were not represented by one of their own race. It is true that the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, George Rotheray, represented the Chinese in Negri Sembilan, but no one represented the Indian community.

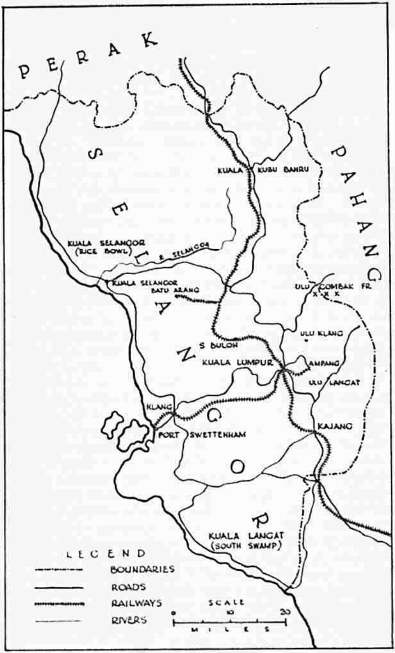
This was put right in 1955, though I was not there to see how it worked. The following remarks, however, may be of some interest. Let us deal with the Indians first.

The Indians in Malaya are nearly all Southern Indians. They come predominantly from Madras, Travancore and so on, and are collectively (though inaccurately) known as Tamils. There are also some Northern Indians and Pakistanis—Sikhs, Punjabi Moslems, Ahirs, and Doghras. These (again wrongly) are collectively known by the Malays as Bengalis. The number of Northern Indians is so small as to be almost insignificant, though many of them are fine men, holding important posts.

The main Indian population is the Tamils, of whom there are about six hundred thousand. (The whole population of Malaya is about six million.) A considerable number of the Tamils return to India to die and go there regularly on leave. They send their savings to India ; and in general they go to Malaya for the same sort of reasons as the British do—namely, to work there in Government employment or to do business and trade. They are not a warrior race. Rather, they have a natural gift for politics, trades unionism, the learned professions, debate and advocacy generally. History shows them often as gallant martyrs for a cause. They provide an insignificant number of bandits, though I expect that a number of the Tamil labourers are quite prepared to be Communists. They all look to India as their spiritual home and many regard it as their temporal one too. It seemed to me that their natural political agility had got them far more say in Government affairs than was either right or necessary. After all, if they did not like the way the place was governed they could go back to India, just as the British could return to the United Kingdom or the Americans to the U.S.A. Malaya would lose by their

SELANGOR

MAP III


PERAK
SELANGOR
PAHANG
KUALA KUBU BAHRU
KUALA SELANGOR (RICE BOWL)
R. SELANGOR
KUALA SELANGOR
BATU ARANG
ULU COMBAK FR.
ULU KLANG
S BULOH
KUALA LUMPUR
AMPANG
ULU LANGAT
KLANG
PORT SWETTENHAM
KAJANG
KUALA LANGAT (SOUTH SWAMP)
LEGEND
BOUNDARIES
ROADS
RAILWAYS
RIVERS
SCALE
0
10
20
MILES

going, but that was Malaya's affair, not theirs. Rightly or wrongly, I was never very concerned at the non-representation of the Indian community in the State War Executive Committee.

The Chinese, however, are another matter. Half the population of Malaya is Chinese. Most of the bandits are Chinese, as are quite ninety per cent of their helpers. If the Chinese, with one accord, would forswear all help to the bandits, the bandits would have to capitulate in a matter of weeks for want of food.

There was much to be said for having a prominent Chinese *towkay* on the State War Executive Committee in Negri Sembilan or Malacca. When I went to Selangor I found Colonel H. S. Lee, C.B.E., on the State War Executive Committee. He was a prominent Chinese business man in Kuala Lumpur, a Cambridge golf blue and a great help in our business. I found we had much in common and I was glad that a relative of mine, living in Cambridge, could be kind to two of H. S. Lee's sons, who were at school there.

As far as we were concerned in Negri Sembilan the coming of General Templer as the new High Commissioner brought with it a new impetus. The mainspring of the machinery was wound anew, oil was applied where it was wanted, and broken cogs were removed. A more buoyant spirit prevailed everywhere and an improvement in the situation was marked in every field.

The bandits, too, saw that their tactics were doomed to failure. At first they had relied upon armed revolt and terrorism. Now they changed their tune. Even before the new High Commissioner arrived they had decided upon a change of policy. In October 1951 the Communist Central Executive Committee in the jungles of Pahang sent forth a new Directive, commonly known as the October 1951 Directive.

I first heard of this in July 1952 when a document was found on a dead bandit in the Jelebu District of Negri Sembilan. In August 1952 Pat, who used to produce an amusing commentary on Brigade affairs, included an article in it on this October 1951 Directive. It is summarised below :—

THE NEW COMMUNIST DIRECTIVE

" Copies of the October 1951 Directive have been picked up in the State and there is reason to believe that it is filtering down to the rank and file of the terrorists.

Reduced to its simplest terms the October 1951 Directive says : ' Don't let's be beastly to the masses, let us woo them instead.'

We believe that the effect of this new Communist Directive *might* be :

(*a*) A drop in the incident rate.
(*b*) An increase of terrorist activity of a non-martial kind.
(*c*) An increase of cultivation in the deep jungle.
(*d*) An increase in the murder rate where the people are co-operating with the Government.
(*e*) Certainly no decrease, but possibly an increase in the ambushes of the troops to get arms.

If it is coming to a straight fight between the Government and the Communists for the minds of the people of Malaya we must expect to see an increase in political effort and a decrease in military effort on the part of the opposition. It might mean that some terrorists would bury their weapons and change out of uniform. We must keep alive to this. . . ."

How right he was !

CHAPTER XVII

THE DEEP JUNGLE

(*See Map II*)

OUT to the east of Negri Sembilan, beyond Bahau and Ladang Geddes Estate, lie the jungles of Pahang, sprawling away to the China Sea. These were outside the domain of the Negri Sembilan War Executive Committee, being in another State; but what went on in this vast expanse of waste affected us profoundly.

We had troops in Bahau itself, on Ladang Geddes Estate, in Glendale Estate, in Rompin and Gemas. These troops were interconnected by the East Coast Railway line running north from Gemas. It was great fun to travel in the armoured train from one point to another. The engine-driver was a pock-marked Anglo-Indian, with dyed hair, a bottle nose, and a strong aroma of toddy. He had a stout heart and never hesitated to drive his train wherever bidden, provided he could get " Line Clear " from the Railway. Many times I travelled on the foot-plate between Glendale and Bahau, and I introduced this fascinating pastime to many Very Important Persons, including Sir Donald MacGillivray. You could pull the string that works the whistle, open the steam regulator that controls the speed, throw lumps of coal at the monkeys on the trees at the side of the railway, or even cause the soldiery in the steel-plated wagons to fire a broadside into the jungle.

Having studied warfare I never had any illusions about the vulnerability of armoured trains in general, or this one in particular. All that could be said was that it was fun to travel on it, and that from Gemas to Rompin there was no other land route that went direct. You could fly by Auster from Gemas to the Dunlop airfield at Ladang Geddes; but if you went by road you had to make a long detour through Tampin.

In the State War Executive Committee, therefore, we constantly urged the construction of a road from Gemas to Rompin. The Japanese had planned one during the occupation but had never built it. The trace had been cleared of trees and a few light bridges had been built; but by 1952 these preliminaries had all been swallowed up by weeds and white ants. If only there had been some Sappers in the Federation this, we thought, would keep them usefully employed. I have so often, in my Service, had to teach my Sappers road construction on a sand model because you could not just walk out of barracks and build a road.

But alas! in 1950 or thereabouts it had been categorically stated that there could be no use for Sappers in Malaya. So that was that. No Sappers were available in 1952.

The need for this road was frequently demonstrated, but never more forcibly than on 3rd March 1952, when a passenger train was blown up at a bridge three miles from Rompin. No. 2 Troop of C Squadron, 13/18 Royal Hussars, under a National Service subaltern, 2nd Lieut. Jacques, were billeted in Rompin and acted with commendable speed; but because there was no road they had to act on foot. They arrived too late to chase the bandits, though they did good work in succouring the injured and wounded. Had there been a road they might have done something more offensive.

I went to see this wreck, as I happened to be in Bahau that very day. It was a rotten sight. The railway wagons were wrecked, with the pathetic goods and chattels of the unbelievably poor third-class passengers scattered in all directions. The bandits had left a long pole near the site, from which I deduced that an unexploded aerial bomb had been carried, slung like a pig, to the bridge and used as the demolition charge. There were snipers' firing positions on both sides of the bridge and many expended cartridges nearby. The small train-guard of troops and police had not been injured and had given a good account of themselves. The Hussars had heard the firing and turned out; but on foot they could not but arrive too late.

The Intelligence Officer started a research into this and previous incidents on the line and noticed that derailments always occurred within four days, one way or the other, of the first of the month. It was connected with the pay days of the coolies in some obscure way. Thereafter we instituted special precautions over this period. We had light aircraft patrols, morning and evening, over the line at the dangerous period. On one occasion the pilot saw suspicious persons running into the jungle, and a foot patrol summoned by wireless found suspicious signs. That was the nearest we got to the bandits, but there were no more derailments.

Fundamentally, however, the trouble was that the bandits could fade away into the wastes of Pahang where we could not follow them. Nor was the area more accessible from Pahang. Till helicopters became available it was a long march out to the bandits' retreat from Ladang Geddes, and much farther from the nearest roadhead in Pahang.

I was fascinated with this area, out beyond Ladang Geddes, from the start. It seemed to me that there was nothing to prevent the Communists hoisting the red flag, subjecting the aborigines who lived there to their rule, inviting an ambassador from Peking or Moscow to join them, publishing a formal constitution and setting up a Communist Republic of their own. From there they could organise forays against the railway or beyond, and retreat to their stronghold at will—rather like Hereward the Wake in the Isle of Ely.

Early in February, just after I had taken over 63 Brigade, I got Roy Royle to fly me over the area. It seemed rather hazardous in a light aircraft with only one engine, so he had another to accompany us; then each could report the fate (if any) of the other.

We flew to the Dunlop airfield at Bahau, refuelled from tins sent out by road, and departed east over the jungle. Over Bob Shotter's bungalow in Ladang Geddes Roy Royle set a compass course for a lake marked on the map as Tasek Bera. (We used to pronounce this as though it were Tasek " Beer, ah," till Sheppard said this meant something very rude in Malay, and that it should be " Tassy Brar.")

As we flew, I could see the rolling expanse of tree-tops below and occasionally the glint of water lying stagnant beneath them. The area was clearly largely swamp. Eventually we arrived over the lake. Although over ten miles long it was hardly recognisable as a lake, being covered with long rushes and green weeds. But through the weeds there were cleared waterways. We saw a number of boats plying to and fro, and in one of them a man stood up and saluted in military style. I waved to him in return.

Round the edges of the lake were many aborigine huts, each standing on stilts in a small clearing of its own, cultivated with tapioca. Occasionally, though, there were the unmistakable signs of Chinese cultivation. The Chinese cannot bear to cultivate in any way but the best. Round their cultivation were wooden fences built to ward off wild pigs, which love to rootle amongst vegetables. In the cultivations, which were better termed gardens, the careful Chinese cultivators had laid out their vegetables—pumpkins, beans, and radishes—in straight, symmetrical rows. Near one of these Roy Royle pointed out an unmistakable camp. There were *bashas*, a parade ground, and a bathing point nearby.

What could be done about it ? The Chinese there could only be bandits ; yet we could not bomb them for fear of killing innocent aborigines as well. And as far as I could see we could not get there because of the interminable swamp between Ladang Geddes and Tasek Bera.

As we circled Roy pointed down. There lay the remains of an airstrip. Through the weeds that had grown on it, you could see a red laterite surface, fifty yards wide and perhaps two hundred and fifty yards long. A few coils of rusty barbed-wire were visible round it, and a tumble-down building near one end.

When we got back I caused inquiries to be made. Apparently in early 1949 an expedition of Seaforth Highlanders and policemen, under Lieut.-Col. Douglas and Mr William Neill respectively, had been there. Later in 1949 Jock Neill went there again. He had been in 1st Airborne Division where, besides winning a D.S.O., he had become air-minded. He had cajoled and coaxed the Semelai aborigines into manual labour. They had made the airstrip and built a Police Post. In forty-four working days the job was done and a light aircraft had landed there. It was a wonderful achievement of foresight, faith, and improvisation. And the pilot of the first aircraft must have been a good man too.

Two years later, in 1950, the pressure of the Emergency had forced the Police to contract its responsibilities and the Post was abandoned. It must have been heart-breaking for Neill.

I got in touch with Neill, and this led to other contacts with men who knew something about this fascinating area. Guides were produced who could find the way there; and under General Templer's stimulus, helicopters soon appeared. These changed the face of the problem. I got clearance from Pahang to operate in the Tasek Bera area.

I told Johnnie Curling to fit out an expedition of about a company and send them out to see the form. The first attempt was a failure. After two days the Gurkha officer with the patrol signalled in distress that he had lost his British officer. He had been in camp at night. Next morning he was gone. They had seen many signs of bandits and there was more than a little mystery in the air. Three days later the officer appeared. Johnnie sent him to me. He told how he had gone to sleep at night as usual, but had woken up in the middle of the jungle entirely alone. He had no idea where he was. He told me that at first he lost his head and hurried frantically this way and that—he had no map or compass, nor any rations. He tried to follow a stream thinking that this was bound to lead to the haunts of man. Suddenly he remembered that it might lead to the East Coast, over ninety miles away as the crow flies. He sat down and thought. A glint of sunlight through the tree-tops cast the shadow of his fingers on his trouser leg. The sun must rise in the east, he thought; and if he went west he was bound to hit the Railway somewhere. So he marched west, using the sun as guide. After three days' march he arrived amongst rubber trees, and the tappers brought him to the manager of the estate.

Thus ended the first attempt. The officer was on a Short

Service Commission which was about to terminate. Some aspects of the story did not seem to me to ring quite true when I cross-questioned him on them. He returned home, on completion of his tour of duty, within a week or two of this incident.

The next officer to go there was Brian Webb. He went out in a soldier-like way, surrounded by his Gurkhas and led by a Semelai aborigine guide. He took some Police with him too, and after about a fortnight, being supplied by air, he returned and submitted an excellent report.

Many of the Semelai were sick. Some had pieces of cast-off clothing and equipment left by the Seaforths and the Police from the Post, and all were terrified of the bandits. The Semelai were completely under the thumb of the Communists. Many believed that the British had been driven from Malaya, that the country was governed by Chinese Communists, and that the aircraft which occasionally flew overhead were Russian.

By now the price of rubber, the tell-tale of Malayan finances, was falling. The Government was getting hard-up. To fight the Communists in the settled areas cost money. To embark upon adventures in the Tasek Bera was out of the question except on a " no-cost basis." I think I should have pressed it harder, but I could see both sides of the question, which is quite fatal when you want to get your own way. I agreed to send patrols there every two months. Several officers took out patrols and a route was found that could be traversed in eleven hours. I sent a young Sapper officer. He reported that a road was out of the question, because of swamps. The patrols were often wading in water up to their chests.

It was, however, Peter Willis's company of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles that brought the matter to a head. Most British officers, especially those with the Gurkhas, have a liking for Eastern peoples and their ways of thought. Peter had it very strongly and made a great impression on the Semelai. He found bandit camps all over the place—one for ninety men—and killed one or two armed Chinese bandits, who were identified as Negri Sembilan bandits from Bahau. He did a bit of rough and ready doctoring. The Semelai, never having had our drugs, were particularly easily cured by them. Two or three crystals of Epsom Salts—that was Peter's medical form—would work the marvels that require a tablespoonful with more sophisticated people.

But he could not stay there for ever. When he made preparations to return, a crisis arose. The Semelai said they must come too. They could not live out there now. They had helped the Government and the Communists would kill them. Either we must protect them, or they must return with the Gurkhas and throw themselves upon the generosity of the Government to feed them.

The Operations Sub-Committee went into conclave on the subject of the Tasek Bera. Signals were sent to Kuala Lumpur and I told the C.O. of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles that Peter Willis and his men must remain there another week, thereafter another company must relieve them.

Next day Sheppard and I boarded a helicopter and flew there. I had been there several times this way; but I think this was Sheppard's first visit. He was at once impressed by Peter's tale. He could speak the language fluently and he cross-questioned the Batin or headman.

The aborigines at Tasek Bera, being Semelai, are animists of some kind and worship spirits. At the tops of trees were windmills made from split bamboos. As they revolved, the wind in the bamboos made a strange monotonous *who-poo, who-poo* sound. The houses were of bamboo, standing on stilts against the floods, all looking very flimsy. All round was jungle, but a tongue of the lake stretched in towards the village and on it were several dug-out canoes. The people go to work by canoe. They clear a patch of jungle and plant tapioca, which grows like a weed. Most days they go fishing; but from time to time they fetch in their crops. Once a year they move their clearings, for the ground has been soured by cultivation without manure.

The people are small of stature, wizened, even from a young age, and look unhealthy. Malaria racks them all, and they have terrible sores from lack of vitamins. Their ruler is the Batin, an hereditary chieftain. He has powers of life and death; though death is only awarded for incest, and then it is death by drowning.

Sheppard spoke to them for some time in Malay. All that Peter Willis had said was only too true. There was a community of Semelai there about six hundred strong. Now they were working for us, reporting the bandits' whereabouts. If we left, the bandits would first kill a few of them. Then the rest would have to cultivate food for the bandits, catch them fish, and help them to trap pig. Moreover, the Semelai would provide an intelligence screen for the bandits, warning them of the approach of military forces.

A possible course was to evacuate the Semelai to Bahau. Then we should have to feed them for at least six months, till they could get new crops going. This was an admission of defeat. Surely we must keep Police or troops out here. We could not let Peter pull down his Union Jack on his camp; for the Communists would hoist the Hammer and Sickle next day.

Wishing everyone good luck, and taking two sick aborigines with us, we got into our helicopter and flew back to Seremban.

After luncheon, Sheppard and I motored to Kuala Lumpur. Here we attended a meeting, presided over by General Oliver, Principal Staff Officer to the Director of Operations. Every aspect of the problem was discussed; and the following decisions were made :—

(*a*) 63 Brigade would keep a rifle company or its equivalent in the area for another month.

(*b*) A Police Post would by then be built there.

(*c*) Steps would be taken to form the Semelai into a Home Guard so that they could protect themselves.

Sheppard and I returned, highly pleased with our day's work.

Within a few days a Sapper officer, a Police Lieutenant, and fifty policemen were flown out by helicopter. Later they were joined by a National Service Medical Officer, a newly qualified young man from Edinburgh. He had the time of his life curing the sick, bringing the young into the world, extracting teeth, and generally advancing science on enthusiastic patients.

Gradually a Fort grew. It was called at first Fort Alexander, but later it was Malayanised to Fort Iskander.

The Fort consisted of about a dozen bamboo *bashas* for barracks, a canteen, a guard house, a trading post, and a school. The runway proved too difficult for the aborigines to repair. They were too weak for hard work, and not sufficiently amenable to the idea of work for even short periods each day. Much to my regret it had to be abandoned. I believe that if the National Service Sapper had not been on the verge of being demobilised he might have got the Semelai to do it. I could not persuade Kuala Lumpur to fly out some men by helicopter, a bulldozer in pieces and reassemble it on the site to rebuild the airstrip. (This has since been done, but that was after my time.)

Fort Iskander had many ups and downs. Its fortunes immediately reflected the quality of the Police Officer in charge of it. Circumstances demanded much of him. He was, from the nature of his command, a junior officer. He lived off Police rations, for which, if he paid anything, he paid very little. He was entirely his own master and he could spend his time and his surplus pay either sensibly or foolishly. If he were a good man he saved his money, he improved the defences, paraded his men, inspected their barracks, checked their kit, or took them out on patrol in search of bandits. If he were a good man, and interested, he won the confidence of the aborigines and looked after them as well as his own men. He had great scope for doing good; and if he were a good man he took advantage of it.

But no one could stay there indefinitely. It was not fair on a good youngster to imprison him there for too long; so changes were planned by Police Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. Officers and men changed every two months or so. Some of the officers who went there—they were mostly only Police Lieutenants—were not as strong-minded as the best ones. The temptations of Fort Iskander were considerable. The worst ones could organise supplies of beer and whisky in their air-drops but not much else. It was always fearfully hot. To do anything required an effort of will. To drink oneself into a coma by mid-day was not at all difficult; and "the rest of the day was observed as a holiday." Considering the temptations and the calibre of man available to fill the post, I think Fort Iskander might have been much worse served.

It was easy enough for us to criticise in offices under a fan in Seremban or Kuala Lumpur, drawing circles on the map showing the areas dominated by the Fort. It was a very different story sweating in a *basha* amongst the swamps. Too much, I think, was asked of these Police lads. Those who did well deserved great credit; and there was a reassuring number of them.

The Gurkhas were not the only people to operate out there with the Police. There were numerous villages of aborigines up and down the lake. The intention was to persuade them to congregate round the Fort under its protection, but internecine feuds amongst them made congregation unpopular. Consequently, outlying villages remained. The theory was that patrols from the Fort would visit them frequently. Under a good Police officer this certainly happened. It was quite a risky adventure. The patrol had to go by boat. The aborigines always knew when one was about to start. Very likely they knew, too, where it was going. There was nothing but their goodwill to ensure that they did not arrange a reception committee of bandits to meet it.

The Home Guard idea was not always popular either. Sometimes the Police Lieutenant, having confidence in the Semelai, encouraged the training of a local Home Guard. Another might feel that to arm them was only adding to his own risks in patrolling. The Semelai, themselves, were not always enthusiastic.

"What," they asked, "happens if armed bandits approach us and demand our Home Guard weapons? If we say 'No,' they shoot us and take the arms. Yet how can we say 'Yes' and surrender them?"

It was a difficult position. Looked at dispassionately it was far better to risk the loss of a few Home Guard shot-guns in the hands of the Semelai than to maintain a regular Police or Army garrison there. The really cold and calculating mind might equally say that it was better to take the risk of a Police Lieutenant being shot at now and then by a disloyal Home Guard than not attempting to make them defend themselves. The Police Lieutenant at the sharp end, however, may well be pardoned for seeing it in a different light.

Consequently, policy tended to wobble, as one view or the other predominated.

At one time we had Gordon Highlanders out there and at another a troop of 11th Hussars. The reasons for sending 11th Hussars to a place they could only get to by leaving their armoured cars a hundred miles away, were the worst possible ones from a military viewpoint. But in aid to the Civil Power you have to compromise over military principles occasionally. The Hussars were not there long.

I always enjoyed my visits to Fort Iskander and to the troops nearby. There was the helicopter flight from Bahau, the landing in a clearing in the jungle, the cheerful greeting of the soldiery. British soldiers are past masters at the ludicrous. There would be a tiny *basha* labelled " Palais de Dance " or " Nobby's Mart " ; or the whole camp might have a name-board " Ideal Homes Exhibition " or " Edinburgh Castle," with perhaps a thirty-mile-an-hour speed limit or a Belisha beacon.

The proper answer to the Tasek Bera area was to build a road out to it and develop it systematically. There were vast acres of potential rice land, great scope for forestry, and perhaps even mining. This has been the traditional British way with outlandish places. Why it had never been tried in Malaya during a " boom " period when money was plentiful remains a mystery. Perhaps it was the insidious climate.

Under the stimulus of the October Directive, the bandits began to make more gardens in the jungle. They were not all so deeply buried as the Tasek Bera. As one flew over the jungle one sometimes saw a sort of rash of clearings. In their early stages one saw the trees felled. The bark of the long branchless trunks shone white in the sunlight like matches spilled on the carpet. In the next stage a pig fence might be seen round the edge of the clearing. Then crops would appear in neat green rows. Perhaps a hut would be visible at the edge, nestling under the jungle trees. Steps might be cut, or the whole thing built in tiers on a hillside.

We carried out a number of operations visiting these.

One of the most exciting was Operation "Metcalf" on 18th February 1953. It was named after Ken Metcalf, the pilot of an Auster aircraft. Some of the young men flying these aircraft became exceedingly sharp-eyed in spotting bandit camps in the deep jungle, and Ken was one of them.

One day he was flying over the jungle when he saw something suspicious. He was amongst hills, the weather was closing in, and there was not much time to spare. It is quite fatal to circle a suspicious clearing in the jungle; for the bandits, seeing an aircraft circling, take fright and quit the area if it is a camp. Ken, therefore, took his field-glasses, had a quick look, checked his position on the map, and flew home.

He reported what he was sure was a small bandit garden and a camp nearby. The bandits had cut saplings and stuck them into the ground, within the garden, to conceal it from the air. This concealment, or camouflage, was good, but not quite good enough. Ken had seen the regular rows of green vegetables beneath the saplings, and a shaft of sunlight through the clouds had picked out a camp in the trees nearby.

The camp was at least eight miles from the nearest habitation. There were no aborigines in the area. It could only be bandits. There was a hard core of feeling that this was an admirable target for the Royal Air Force. In principle I was all for the R.A.F. having a shot at it, but there were difficulties. Ken could not be absolutely sure exactly where it was. To unleash a squadron of Lincolns at a target whose exact location was not known did not seem to be making the best possible use of the taxpayers' bombs. To have them stooging round the sky, looking for it, would merely frighten the bandits away before the bombs fell.

Westland Sikorsky Helicopter about to land in Jungle Clearing

The job was entrusted to the Gordon Highlanders. The Commanding Officer's plan was for his A Company to motor up from Ayer Kuning, in the south, and enter the Gemas Forest Reserve, on foot, at Sungei Dua. The bandit camp was eight miles north from there, as the crow flies, and the first day was to be spent on the approach march. John Thornton's company of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles at Jeram Padang, to the north, was under command of the Gordons at the time; so the C.O. ordered John to march with two platoons south towards the camp. Their task was to provide a long-stop to intercept any bandits escaping north after the attack upon the camp by A Company from the south.

By 3 P.M. on the first day both companies reported themselves in position, each about one thousand yards from the supposed position of the camp—one north of it, one south. But here events began to take a turn that had not been foreseen.

John Thornton, before bivouacking for the night, sent out his customary patrols to see that no enemy were about. One of these patrols, consisting of a Gurkha lance-corporal and five men, came upon footprints leading east.

The lance-corporal left two men to watch the track, lest other bandits came along it. One man he sent back to the Company Commander (John Thornton) to tell him that he (the lance-corporal) was following the tracks with two men to see where they went.

The three men followed the tracks, not stepping in them —which might arouse suspicion if bandits later came that way—but keeping to a flank. Very cautiously they advanced, till suddenly, by some fluke of acoustics, they plainly heard the sound of chopping wood. The lance-corporal sent back one man to tell the Company Commander what he was doing.

With the other man he made his way stealthily towards the sound of chopping. He came to a steep declivity in the ground with a stream running at the bottom of it. Water tumbled and cascaded in a torrent over stones and boulders. The setting sun dimpled the surface of the water in a pool with the shadows of branches and leaves. In the waters of the pool were two men, stripped and bathing. On the bank, behind them, were two rifles and two piles of khaki garments and equipment. The men chatted to one another, raising their voices to be heard above the rushing of the water on the boulders.

The lance-corporal withdrew out of sight, but followed the stream. Presently he found himself on the edge of a clearing. A man in khaki uniform was erecting cut saplings in a garden to replace those whose fading leaves ceased to give concealment to the garden. Another detour and the lance-corporal and the rifleman with him were on the edge of a camp. There was a parade ground the size of a boxing ring, seven *bashas* and about twenty bandits sitting on benches, cleaning their arms, reading, or mending their clothes. All wore uniform with khaki hats.

Sending the rifleman back to the Company Commander to fetch the company, the lance-corporal settled down to watch the bandits. He saw them change the sentry, and he noted the sentry post. An hour went by and half another hour. It must have been an exciting hour and a half. At length the rifleman returned to recall the lance-corporal.

John Thornton had decided to defer the attack till next morning. It was a difficult decision to make. If he attacked there and then he would certainly find the enemy at home. On the other hand, he might have a clash with A Company of the Gordons. There was clearly something very wrong with somebody's map-reading somewhere. The camp should not be as close as the lance-corporal reported.

If he postponed the attack till the morrow he could be sure of avoiding a clash with the Gordons. On the other hand, the bandits might, as they went about their business, have seen the footprints of one of the Gurkhas. Then they would decamp. By the morrow, perhaps, the birds would have flown. On balance, however, he decided to attack at first light next morning.

As dusk was falling the C.O. of the Gordons was called to the wireless set. He spoke to John Thornton and to his own Company Commander. The one was to attack the camp at first light, the other was to recall his men into a close perimeter to avoid all chances of a clash.

By first light next morning the Gurkhas were in position round the camp. The lance-corporal was within two yards of the bandit sentry. He shot him dead. This was the signal to begin.

" Charge ! " shouted John.

The Gurkhas crashed forward through the jungle, jumping the pig fence round the camp in their stride. A bandit appeared from a *basha* and sprayed them with a Bren gun. John heard the bullets thudding into the tree trunks. Grenades were hurled, and all hell was let loose.

The next thing John knew was that he and one platoon were in the camp. Two dead bandits lay by the Bren gun. There was absolute silence and not a live bandit in sight.

This is often how attacks upon a camp end. The most promising situation ends with very little to show for it.

On this occasion, however, the camp had been totally surrounded. Soon shots were heard ; first this way, then that. There was the sound of bursting grenades. Then all was quiet again.

" What's happened, Sahib ? " shouted John to his Gurkha officer.

" We've got six, Sahib," replied the Gurkha.

They had, indeed. Altogether they had got eight, and there were masses of propaganda and papers, documents of all kinds ; a Bren, two pistols, a carbine, and a couple of rifles. Some of these were recognised as weapons taken from the Police at the Ayer Kuning ambush described in an earlier chapter.

A helicopter landed in the clearing and removed the corpses for identification. Three of them were what Thomas Atkins calls Top Brass.

There was great jubilation everywhere except in A Company of the Gordons, who had heard the shooting but missed all the fun.

CHAPTER XVIII

OPERATIONS "CARROTS" AND "CHAPMAN," AND THE CORONATION

(*See Map II*)

THE bandit policy of withdrawing into the deep jungle began to reflect itself all over the Operations Map. Wherever there was deep jungle, far from roads or the haunts of man, a rash of gardens appeared.

The obvious course seemed to be to spray them with weed-killer from aircraft, and we succeeded in organising that in one or two places. The Royal Air Force was naturally hesitant in sending a helicopter to hover over a garden unescorted. While it sprayed the garden, it would be too easy for the bandits to spray it in reverse—with a Bren gun. So they liked to strafe the garden first. This effectively prevented us putting troops in the area and it was not for some time that we found the spray had been ineffective. The liquid used was, I was told, the same as that used by the planters to kill the undergrowth amongst the rubber trees. On most well-kept estates hundreds of gallons of the stuff are used every year to kill the undergrowth. The labour in every rubber estate knows all about its application and its action. The bandits knew this too. They lay low while the attack was on. As soon as the helicopter had gone away, they trotted into the garden and picked off every leaf on which the drops of spray had fallen. The roots were still good.

Later the R.A.F. adopted a more effective technique, but by then we had moved to Selangor where there were no gardens worth mentioning.

When we discovered the shortcomings of the spray we had no option but to send troops to the gardens discovered from the air. This we did in a series of operations known as "Carrots I, II, and III." These made heavy demands upon the troops. The reasons were as follows.

63 Brigade had been reduced from four battalions to two in the middle of 1953. When the Fijians were withdrawn in 1952, I felt fairly satisfied that we could exert sufficient pressure on the bandits to keep them in order with the three remaining battalions—one British and two Gurkha. But when 2/7 Gurkha Rifles were taken away to form a Federal Reserve and I was left with two battalions only—Gordon Highlanders and 1/7 Gurkha Rifles—I had doubts. In the Operations Sub-Committee of the State War Executive Committee we considered the prospect before it became an accomplished fact. Our view, which we expressed both by word of mouth and in writing, was that with three battalions we could manage. If we were reduced to two battalions, we said, it would certainly take the bandits two months to tumble to the effects of the change. After two months we foresaw an increase of incidents; after four months we foresaw shots being fired at planters and the whole game going back to square one.[1] However, factors outside our control were operating, and in due course 2/7 Gurkha Rifles went away to Pahang, where they were to earn great renown.

By reason of the reduced strength of the Brigade, we could not take on all the gardens at one mouthful. We therefore took three bites at the cherry, each one requiring one rifle company at a time. The technique was as follows: an Auster pilot plotted all the gardens that he saw in a selected area and the soldiers went out into the area and formed a company base near one of the gardens. From there, patrols were sent to the others to uproot the crops and set them on fire. The ashes, visible from the air, were an indication that the garden had been visited. It could then be crossed off the list. In this way we systematically eliminated all the gardens in the Jelebu and Durian Tipus areas, about sixty all told.

The process was a tremendous physical toil for the soldiery and it seems ungrateful to dismiss it in so few lines. These

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[1] Most of this came to pass, but not so speedily as we feared.

Operations "Carrots I, II and III," however, had a powerful influence on the next Operation, "Chapman," which I shall come to later. Meanwhile, there were two incidents worth recording in more detail.

The first refers to a question often asked: Was there any European influence at work in the jungle with the Malayan Communist Party? The answer was undoubtedly No. The Communists read Engels and Marx and probably listened in to Peking Radio, which presumably broadcasts in all Chinese dialects at stated hours. But there is, as I said earlier, no reason to suspect any arms or equipment coming from outside. All of the vast quantities we captured in South Malaya can easily be explained without recourse to gun-running from China or Russia.

Could there not be, though, British soldiers, deserters, in the jungle with the Communists? We know there are Communists in England. There is nothing impossible in a British soldier being a Communist, and it would not be impossible for him to join the bandits. It would not be easy, and it would need good nerves; but it would not be impossible. From the records of Army deserters and so on, it can easily be shown that there are no British persons in the jungle on the other side. Also, if there were, some of the many bandits who have surrendered would know about them, and some of the many documents captured would mention them.

I am, therefore, quite certain in my own mind that the man who told me the following story was mistaken; and I only record it because it shows how rumours start.

For some reason, which I now forget, the District Officer of Jelebu—Tony Johnson—wanted to go up the Konkoi valley where the 1/7 Gurkha Rifles were operating in "Carrots I." The Officer in Charge of the Police District and a mixed escort of Gurkhas and Police went with him. As they were passing through tall undergrowth between two abandoned rubber estates, the leading scout, a Gurkha, by the merest fluke, stumbled upon some bandits resting in the heat of day. Shots were exchanged and one bandit was killed. The corpse was brought to the Police Station where a bandit, who had recently surrendered, recognised it. He confirmed what was on record in the Police Station—namely, that the dead man was one of a band of four, all of whose names were known to the Police.

The leading scout, however, when asked about the event by his Company Commander, declared that there were five bandits in the resting place, not four; and that one was undoubtedly a B.O.R., or British Other Rank, being a private soldier. It so happened that I was in Jelebu that very day myself. Hearing this story of a B.O.R., I spoke to the leading scout, a Gurkha lance-corporal, before he had time to retell it many times. He spoke with absolute conviction; there was no possible motive for invention; and what he told me he undoubtedly believed.

This was his tale :—

He was moving silently in his rubber jungle-boots down a narrow track through high undergrowth. The track he thought was made by a wild elephant; for there were many unmistakable footprints and droppings. Quite suddenly the track widened out and the first thing he perceived was a man—presumably a bandit sentry, raising a rifle to take aim at him. The lance-corporal was carrying a Bren and he let drive from the hip. The range was about three yards and the burst of Bren took the sentry in the throat, nearly severing his head from his body. (I apologise for the details, but they correspond with the corpse I saw.)

At the same time, just behind the sentry, in the wider part of the track, he saw four figures dive for cover.

"What did they look like?" I asked.

"Three of them, Sahib," he replied, "jumped so quickly into the undergrowth that I scarcely saw them. They were wearing khaki drill shirts and slacks. I know there were three of them, because two jumped to the right and one to the left. They looked like Chinese, but I could not be sure."

"And what about the fourth?" I interrupted.

"The fourth, Sahib," he said, "looked to me like a B.O.R."

"Why?"

"Because he had ginger hair, a ginger-coloured beard;

and he wore a piece of green camouflage netting tied in a knot round his neck."

" How was he dressed ? " I asked.

" He was wearing a torn jungle green jacket. Under the tear I could see white skin—sunburnt but white—and he had no hat. One leg of his trousers was tucked into his jungle boot at the ankle. The other was free and I thought he had been surprised in the act of taking off his boot."

" How was he armed ? "

" He was carrying a Bren gun, Sahib, though no Bren was used in the fight which followed."

That was his story ; and although I did not try it, I am certain that no cross-examination would have shaken him. Anyone who knows the British soldier will recognise the telling points : the ginger hair, the piece of camouflage netting round the neck, and the torn jacket with the white skin beneath.

The Bren gun seemed to be a little unlikely. Only a bandit leader carries a Bren gun ; and no one can survive to be a bandit leader unless he is the *first* to jump for safety on the approach of danger, and not the last. Also he would have used the gun later.

I was advised by officers whose judgment I respect not to include this story in this book. If the Gurkha were mistaken, they said, why tell the tale ? Yet how could the Gurkha be right in face of such overwhelming evidence to the contrary ?

I reply that I am quite certain that the Gurkha *was* mistaken. He only had a fleeting glance, and in perfectly good faith he was mistaken in what he said he saw. Anyone who has heard soldiers—or civilians for that matter—give evidence in a Court Martial will realise that even when an event occurs in slow time in broad daylight, no two people agree on the details of what happened. How much more likely is a mistake in a case like this ?

I repeat that I only record this event to illustrate how a false rumour starts.

The other incident concerned one of the Auster pilots. These splendid young officers came from 656 Air Observation

Post/Light Liaison Squadron R.A.F. (656 AOP/LL Sqn. R.A.F. for short). Some of them are Gunner officers and serve in A.O.P. Flights. Some are in other arms of the Service seconded to the Glider Pilot Regiment.

This particular young man was, by upbringing, an officer of the Royal Signals, but he wore a red beret and Army Flying Wings. He was doing a reconnaissance over a most inhospitable piece of jungle north of the Jelebu District. Narrow jungle-covered valleys and steep ranges of hills, also covered in jungle, composed the scene below.

The purpose of his reconnaissance was to seek out a possible place for a helicopter to land. A Gurkha patrol was somewhere in the jungle below; and one of their men had fallen and injured his ankle, so that he could not walk. A helicopter was needed to take him to hospital; but, not being a stork, it could not land on the tree-tops. A landing-zone had to be found. To the Gurkhas on the ground, with a field of view amid the trees of about ten yards, the situation looked bleak. However, they had modern aids. They rigged up their wireless aerial and called up the Company Headquarters. An Auster came over with a Gurkhali-speaking officer in the passenger seat. As the aircraft approached the position of the patrol a wisp of pink smoke emerged above the tree-tops, and the Auster pilot headed for it. First he pin-pointed the wisp of smoke on his map before it vanished into thin air. This in itself is a considerable feat, and the skill of Auster pilots in map-reading always filled me with admiration. Having done this, he looked about for a possible helicopter landing-zone. As luck would have it, there was a sandy bed in the bend of a stream that meandered along one of the valleys. There were no trees on the sand and it looked as though a helicopter might land with safety. The pilot took a compass bearing from the pink smoke to the sandy bed and located it on his map. Having measured the distance and checked it by eye, he was able, through his Gurkhali-speaking passenger, to tell the Gurkhas below which way to carry their injured comrade. He was also able to signal the map reference of the landing-zone to the helicopter waiting to take off in Kuala Lumpur.

When one considers that all this was done while flying an aeroplane with one hand, with a map in the other; peering over the side one minute, looking at the map the next; and yet keeping an eye on the hills, while he descended into the valley to get a better view; when one considers all this as part of a day's work of the Auster pilot in Malaya, I conceive one should raise a metaphorical hat in salute.

However, at this particular moment no one felt like raising hats of any kind, metaphorical or otherwise; for the engine began to emit the most sinister sounds.

Down the valley, two or three miles away, some paddy-fields were visible, being near the haunts of man. With a spluttering engine and rapidly losing height the pilot turned towards them. Suddenly, amid the paddy-fields, he saw an army lorry careering along the blue ribbon of a tarmac road that crossed the wide mouth of the valley. Following the lorry was a Gunner " quad "—a vehicle towing a field-gun—and behind that was another, also towing a 25-pounder. A troop of artillery, moving in convoy, was using the road.

Often in times of stress the soldier expresses the sentiment immortalised in Lady Butler's picture: *" The Guns! Thank God! The Guns!"*—or words to that effect. But now such pious thoughts never even crossed the mind of our young friend. He had resolved to land his aircraft on the road, and the troop of guns which an inscrutable Fate had decreed should share it with him was very much in the way. He made a few remarks of a general nature concerning the Royal Regiment of Artillery and turned in to land behind the convoy on the road.

A Cockney soldier with a refined accent, in the back of the rear vehicle, awoke with a start.

" Chorlie! " he exclaimed, hammering on the driver's cab. " We are bein' followed."

The driver looked round and found himself being pursued by an aeroplane at a very fast pace. With his foot he did the right thing: he trod on the accelerator. It was his eyes that failed him. Instead of looking where he was going he remained spellbound, with his eyes glued to the trouble behind. The lorry lurched and dived off the road into the rice-fields, while the aircraft landed safely. It was the pilot and his passenger who had to go to the rescue.

No one was more thankful than those who knew roughly what was happening from the signals, but were unable to help in any way. Sighs of relief were heaved on all sides.

Not many bandits were accounted for in these three operations. It was in the next Operation, " Chapman," that we drew the dividends from the labours of the Gurkhas in " Carrots I, II, and III."

Operation " Chapman " was to begin at the same time that Pat, the Brigade Major, handed over to his successor, Dick Stuckey: that is, on 15th April 1953.

We reasoned as follows: We have destroyed the deep jungle cultivation in the Jelebu and Durian Tipus areas in " Carrots I, II, and III." If, therefore, we could seal up the other sources of food in these areas, we should make life for the bandits very unpleasant. They would be compelled either to surrender for want of food or to come into the inhabited areas. If we have plenty of troops about, the people's morale will be high. They will tell us of the bandits' efforts to get food and we shall have them by the short hairs.

There had by then been many improvements in technique worked out by other brigades since our early efforts in " Hive " in 1952. One was to employ soldiers on food control. This had a twofold effect: it ensured that the job was vigorously done, and it heartened the people to see the soldiery about. Another refinement was for the Supplies Department—the branch of the Civil Administration that deals with rationed goods and such-like commodities—to collect all surplus rice before the operation began. Under the Emergency Regulations no householder was allowed to hold in his house more than (I think) six days' supplies of rice, and a day's supply was reckoned at a fixed figure by sex or age. Every rice dealer had to keep an account of rice sold. Everything had to tally with the ration cards of the householders.

Wilf Aucutt, whose name—occurring on a sign-board—the reader may remember in an earlier chapter, was the Assistant

Controller of Supplies for Negri Sembilan and Malacca. The plan was for him and his minions to go out at crack of dawn in a surprise check of the area. All surplus rice, of which several van-loads were found (more through lax accounting than a desire to help the bandits), was bought at an equitable rate. This ensured that no one had more than the regulation ration to live upon. It imposed no serious hardship on the people; and it strengthened their hand in refusing rice to the bandits. They could simply say they had none.

There is no restrictive regulation in which there are no loopholes. There were, in fact, plenty in these which the bandits have since discovered; but at that time this was the last word in Food Denial.

The most productive step in the technique of this sort of operation, however, was in the improvement in the State Information Services. There was by now a whole-time Information Officer, Trevor Wilson, who had at his beck and call "voice-aircraft" from Kuala Lumpur. These were R.A.F. twin-engined aircraft with loud-hailers mounted in them. It was possible with these to speak to bandits in the deepest jungle and make them hear, whether their leaders wanted it or not. The aircraft could "saturate" a fairly wide area to compensate for rather vague information on where the enemy was. Every State submitted its daily requirements to Kuala Lumpur, and a special joint committee considered priorities for the voice-aircraft.

We named the Operation "Chapman" after Spencer Chapman, author of 'The Jungle is Neutral,' because he spent some time "with the Menchis bandits," who inhabited roughly the area of our operation.

It was a very suitable area for a Food Denial Operation. The only possible sources of food (other than gardens, which we had destroyed) were the inhabited areas and the loggers. The inhabited areas were few in number and within our resources to control. The loggers all had to pass along the road from Simpang Pertang to Durian Tipus to get to the jungle blocks being worked. They could thus all be searched.

Because of the impending loss of 2/7 Gurkha Rifles, we had to decide whether to conduct this operation over a prolonged period with a few troops—two rifle companies only were available—or to take a risk and concentrate a whole battalion at the expense of the rest of the State. We decided on the latter course and deployed the whole of 1/7 Gurkha Rifles and C Squadron 13/18 Royal Hussars (less one troop) on the job. This left numerous voids in the framework of the State, but we thought—rightly as it turned out—that if we did not prolong " Chapman " for much more than two months, the risks were acceptable.

The day-to-day control of the operation we vested in the Jelebu District War Executive Committee. They organised the food checks, the food lifts, the Information Services, and the tasks for the soldiers. Johnnie Curling being on leave, Edward Hill was commanding 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, and he was appointed the military member of this Committee, with the local Company Commander—John Heelis—as his deputy.

Before the operation started we had this Committee down to Seremban to give a presentation of their detailed plan in the Operations Room. I thought all three of them—Civil, Military and Police—gave a very competent picture of what they intended to do, and the operation started on an optimistic note.

Almost at once the patrols began to find camps with dumps of food in them. Two bandits, couriers, were encountered on the second day. It was a chance encounter, but one of the bandits was killed. From the documents he carried it was clear that he was the " boss " and the other man his bodyguard. The voice-aircraft was sent to bellow at the bodyguard, whom we rightly presumed to be lost in the jungle. Three days later he surrendered. What he told us led to more contacts, none of which was successful, but the bandits were scattered. More voice-aircraft brought in more surrenders.

Meanwhile the food control began to tell. Trevor Wilson with a public-address van was continually telling the people not to give away any food and that the troops would protect them. The troops themselves killed one or two bandits trying by night to get to the perimeter of the New Villages to make contact with the inmates.

One bandit, very emaciated through lack of food, came in to surrender. He was one of three men, separated from the gang. Two of them had decided to surrender. They had clubbed the third to death while he was asleep at night and had set off for freedom. On the way one said he could go no farther, being near starvation. The other got to Durian Tipus early next morning. He took the troops back by the way he had come. They found that the companion who could go no farther had died where he had abandoned the march to freedom. They also found the body of the third man, clubbed to death.

The enemy band in the area consisted only of about twenty-five. Of these eight were killed and nine surrendered. The rest were not worth much, though it would have been satisfactory to have got them too. But for the reasons I gave before, we had to call the operation off after two months.

The Coronation came in the middle of all this and I think contributed to the success. It is difficult to describe the enthusiasm that pervaded the land. In every Chinese New Village, in every Malay *kampong*, in Labour Lines, shops, hotels, garages, and public places there were expressions of loyalty to the Sovereign. "Long Live Our Queen" was woven in atap leaves by the very poor, and in gold braid by the very rich, on doorways, shop windows, and in triumphal arches over roads and tracks. Pictures of Her Majesty were hung in every conceivable place. Cynics might say the people were toadying to an Imperialist régime; but they would be wrong. Hundreds of people, who had absolutely nothing to gain by their demonstrations of loyalty, went out of their way to make them.

There were two main ceremonial parades in 63 Brigade Area. One was in Seremban and one in Malacca, though most Districts made what show they could of any Soldiers, Police, Home Guard, and Boy Scouts whom they could assemble.

General Perowne, Sheppard, and the Ruler of Negri Sembilan, under his yellow gold umbrella, took the salute in

Seremban. I went off with my wife and stayed with the Resident Commissioner of Malacca.

The parade in Malacca was commanded by the Commanding Officer of the Gordon Highlanders. In their No. 3 Dress and with their Pipes and Drums they made a fine display. They were followed on parade by Police, the Federation Volunteer Force, the Home Guard, the Fire Services, St John's Ambulance, Red Cross, and every corporate body in the Settlement whose members were capable of marching in threes, and some who were not.

The Coronation Proclamation was read aloud by the Resident Commissioner in English. It was then translated into Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. Each time it was greeted by spontaneous cheers; and the formal three cheers by the troops were echoed by the crowd.

At night the Municipality was illuminated and Wizzy (as the Resident Commissioner was irreverently called—his name being Wisdom) gave a party. At this I learnt a new Malay word.

I make a point in every country I visit of learning enough of the language to be able to say everything necessary at the bar, in clubs or pubs. I quickly learnt the useful cries in Malay: "Two whiskies and sodas please—put these down to me—split the bottle between the two—same again"—and so on. All this I knew pat. But on Coronation Night I wanted a word I had never used before. It was "enough." I could have said this in French, German, Italian, Arabic, Hindustani, Pushtu, or Gurkhali; but in Malay I could not find the word. I have since learnt it; but on that occasion I had to fall back on English. "Stop!" I said, and the hospitable Resident Commissioner's boy understood. "O.K., Tuan," he said. "Plenty gin no welly good!" He was quite right.

CHAPTER XIX

LEAVE

LEAVE is an important factor in a soldier's life. The profession of arms differs from most other professions in that its practitioners are seldom actually practising it. To make a success of war an officer must read and think in peace-time.

There are various ways of encouraging officers to read and think about their profession. One way is to arrange formal instruction for them. In 63 Brigade we had Officers' Days from time to time, when, in spite of the bandits, all the officers of the Brigade came to Brigade Headquarters to study some aspect of warfare. All the other Brigade Commanders did this too—it is, in fact, an accepted practice—and I am certain that those who arranged these Officers' Days and those who attended them derived benefit from them.

My own experience, however, is that leave gives one the best opportunities to think and read. I have written books on leave—I am writing this one; I have corrected a Promotion Examination paper, and I have learnt to fly an aeroplane on leave. I have visited foreign countries and I have even attended a campaign on leave.

Nor is my own experience unique. Many officers of my vintage have done the same as I have.

There is, too, another aspect. The day-to-day driving of the military machine has become a full-time task. Gone are the days when one simply said, " Carry on, Sergeant-Major," and went to Ascot for a week. Whatever the causes of this, the fact remains that officers, particularly commanding officers, lead an exacting life.

Let us consider the task of a Lieutenant-Colonel commanding a battalion of British infantry in Malaya.

The battalion probably consists of about eight hundred men. Of these, about four hundred will be National

Service men; three hundred will be Regulars on a three-year engagement; and the remaining hundred may be of longer service.

You can show by arithmetic that if the battalion serves a normal tour of three years overseas, all the National Service soldiers will change at least once, because their National Service lasts only two years and time is spent in training at home and travelling to and from their foreign station.

Some National Service soldiers will join the battalion within a few months of its arrival abroad and leave before the battalion returns. These men will, therefore, " turn over " twice.

Similarly, the Regulars on a three-year engagement will all be replaced once while the battalion is abroad. Some will be replaced twice.

Nor will all the long-service Regulars remain the whole time; some will be due for discharge and some will leave the battalion for odd jobs at headquarters or camps on the L. of C.

Thus a Commanding Officer will bring home from an overseas tour only about fifty of the original men whom he took out three years before; and about two thousand men will have passed through his hands during that time.

If you visit a rifle company you will probably find no more than five or six men (including the company commander and his company sergeant-major) with over six years' service. You may find no more with over three years' service.

The company commanders (Majors) do not remain unchanged either. Those who are " staff trained " are often taken for staff employment after about two years with the battalion, being replaced by others. Some must be taken now and again as instructors at training establishments; and because all cannot become Lieutenant-Colonels, some prefer to send in their papers and retire from the Service as Majors. I have known a turn-over of company commanders as great as six in six months.

Such is the background against which a Commanding Officer must work—a perpetual stream of officers and men coming, serving and leaving. His output is seven times that of Eton, and he has a war on his hands as well. It is no one's fault; it is the consequence of National Service and short-service terms of Regular Service.

The Commanding Officer's responsibilities are colossal. He takes the knock for every single thing that goes wrong; and when things go right very few people stop to thank him.

If a soldier thinks he has had a " raw deal " and writes to his Member of Parliament, it is the Commanding Officer who gets most of the blame if it turns out that someone has acted wrongly. If some soldiers get drunk in a pub and beat up the publican it is the Commanding Officer who is told that his men are a disgrace. If a crooked storeman has found a way of " flogging " public equipment it is the Commanding Officer who is told that his administration is shocking. If a soldier's wife has a baby and the Transport Sergeant details an open truck to take her to hospital, it is the Commanding Officer who gets hauled over the coals for the bad arrangements. If the battalion, or any part of it, fails to come up to the mark on the ranges, or on the parade ground, or on manœuvres, it is the Commanding Officer who must bear the blame. If the battalion is on active service in Malaya, Korea or East Africa, every single casualty, accident, or operational failure weighs upon the mind of the Commanding Officer.

Besides all this, it is on the Commanding Officer that principally falls the responsibility for seeing that the young men entrusted to the Army receive some education in its widest sense. National Service brings a cross-section of the population into the Army. The majority of young men are excellent material, but a distressingly large number have little or no religious background. They feel and know—particularly when they have experienced danger—that something is lacking. Xenophon's soldiers many centuries ago, when they beheld the sea, felt instinctively that they ought to do something spiritual and they built a cairn of stones in gratitude for their deliverance. I have seen British troops in that mood too. They yearn for a spiritual outlet and it is one of the many duties of a Commanding Officer to see that his soldiers know which way to turn for it.

I know of more than one Commanding Officer who runs courses in Practical Religion. They are voluntary to the extent that any soldier may " contract out " of them ; but very few do. Indeed, it is uplifting to see the interest and enthusiasm—especially when the course is ordered, like any other Army instruction, by the Commanding Officer himself.

Some people imagine a Commanding Officer can be a tyrant, with life and death powers ; but this is far from true. He has less disciplinary authority than the chairman of the local bench ; and although he is held responsible for eight hundred lives and thousands of pounds worth of weapons, vehicles and equipment, he has no more financial latitude than the secretary of a Wigan Slate Club.

Yet with all its cares and worries the Commanding Officer's appointment is the goal for which all soldiers strive. For many it is the fulfilment of a life of service. The reward is the loyal support of his men, the satisfaction in a job well done, and the honour of upholding the regiment's good name. He would change places with no one.

Salute the Commanding Officer, then, for his unceasing service ; but do not suppose that he can do all this without it taking something out of him.

The junior officers and soldiers in Malaya, serving in operational units, lead an exacting life too. Generally speaking, the young keep fit, but there is sometimes a tendency to get boils, which I think must be due to being run down ; and sometimes young officers and their men get skin troubles in the humid atmosphere. These depart with a change of air.

In the days between World War I and II the orthodox form for young officers' leave was to go in search of adventure —tigers in India, rhino in Africa, fox-hunting in Leicestershire, ski-ing in Austria, or ocean racing ; or indeed, anything that threw them back upon their own resources, to develop their endurance, stamina and powers of organisation.

In Malaya all that is changed. The subaltern officer in a battalion can take his patrols out and hunt the biggest game of all—men. After six months in and out of the jungle hunting bandits, shooting at them or being shot at by them, the last thing a young man wants is to go after tiger or elephant. They are dull compared with bandits. What the young man then wants after six months in the jungle is the sophisticated pleasures of life : tennis, golf, bathing, dancing, and the society of the other sex. He has learnt some of the rougher virtues in the jungle : he needs to learn the graces in another school. We do not want to bring up a race of officers who *only* know life in the jungle : they must know something of civilisation too.

Thus the need for leave for soldiers of all ranks from the Commanding Officer to the bugler remains unchanged ; but in Malaya it was not easy to get. The two hill stations in Malaya—Fraser's Hill and the Cameron Highlands—are both incredibly dull. There is little or nothing to do at either. If you go anywhere else, short of Australia or India, you do not get away from tropical climates : sun, humidity, mosquitoes, and snakes. Hong Kong in winter is the exception.

The Commanding Officer of the Gordon Highlanders fixed up some excellent exchanges between his soldiers and the sailors of H.M. ships. Soldiers went in aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and even submarines ; and sailors visited the Jocks in their jungle camps. It was not uncommon to turn a corner in a camp and surprise a group lined up for a photograph. Soldiers might be seen wearing bell-bottoms and a Balmoral, or sailors in the kilt and a sailor hat. All this was good.

By chance, the Captain of H.M.S. *Concord*, who had travelled in the same troopship as my wife and me, brought his ship for a refit in the Naval Base in Singapore. We arranged some exchanges of soldiers and sailors and I enjoyed a long week-end afloat with him. I look back on it as the greatest fun.

Perhaps the most memorable high-light of leave was a trip to Hong Kong. Troopships going to the Far East often discharge at least half the troops in Singapore, and go, half empty, to Hong Kong, Korea, or Japan. By a wise provision of the War Office, officers and other ranks serving in Malaya or Singapore may occupy the accommodation left empty in these troopships and sail to Hong Kong and back for the cost of their messing.

For a trifling sum my wife and I went to Hong Kong in January 1953; and for a few dollars extra I was able to take Lance-Corporal Horwood, my driver, too. When we got there I fixed him up with a regiment in Kowloon. He had a bed and a dining-hall as a basis of existence, and could spend as much or little of his time or money as he chose in exploring Hong Kong or the New Territories. My wife and I similarly based ourselves on the Miramar Hotel in Kowloon.

The cold, star-lit nights, the bright sunshine by day, the dry air and the log-fires were indeed a change. The Army is itself a fraternity and our friends rallied round with unbelievable hospitality. We seldom saw our hotel except at night.

I went with the Commander of one of the Brigades in Hong Kong and looked from a mountain-top through field-glasses across the border into Red China. It reminded me of a similar occasion, twenty years before, of the view from the top of the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan: the rocky hills, the blue, cloudless sky, the frontier posts and the soldiers of the other side drilling on the parade grounds beyond the wire.

As we returned to the Mess for lunch I noticed a body of soldiers, perhaps a hundred of them, wearing the cap badges of regiments I knew to be in Korea. Fighting was still raging in Korea and it seemed strange to me that these men were in Hong Kong instead of with their regiments, where I felt sure they might be wanted in a hurry.

" They undergo a period of training here before they go to Korea," explained my guide.

I questioned him on this; and he paid a nice tribute to the qualities of the young man in khaki—and to his leaders.

" Nothing," he said, " would be easier than for one of them who does not want to go to Korea to ' slosh ' an N.C.O. and get six months in detention. By that time, with any luck, the fighting will be over. But that never happens.

Their behaviour is exemplary and they strive to get all they can out of their training."

Meanwhile, my wife was enchanted by perhaps the finest shopping centre in the world. Here come the goods of Asia, Europe, Africa, America and Australia, and because there is no purchase tax the cost is moderate too.

It was a splendid ten days, which, with five days at sea each way, going and returning, set us up with a feeling of energetic well-being.

Another high-light was a trip home to England: an expensive affair, but well worth it. We flew home in a tourist aircraft of B.O.A.C. We had, for various irrelevant reasons, left our children in England; but the arrangements for keeping them there would soon have needed a change. So we flew home, spent six weeks in England, and brought them back by air.

Children do very well in Malaya up to an age variously defined as eight or twelve. Ours varied between rising seven and rising three, and the eighteen months in Malaya suited them well. Dressed in nothing but sandals and shorts, they became bronzed with the sun. They learnt to swim and dive —children of eighteen months are to be seen swimming in Malaya; and I saw a child of three dive from a three-metre board!

We sent the boy to the Army School. This is the hitch. The Army Schools in themselves are fairly adequate; but we did not stay long in any one place. The Brigade Headquarters was moved from Seremban to Kuala Lumpur and then to Muar in the eighteen months we had the children in Malaya. Consequently, the boy had three different schools in a very short time. Indeed, by the time he goes to a preparatory school as a boarder at eight and a half, he will have been at five different schools. Those who calculate the proportion of a soldier's Income Tax that goes to education should bear this in mind. A soldier's son must go to a boarding school, as opposed to a State school, if he is ever to get any continuity. I suspect that an officer contributes more than his fair share in Income Tax towards a State education that his children can never enjoy.

As a result of these two relatively long spells of leave, and a few short ones, my wife and I both kept very fit in Malaya. I missed one day's duty through sickness in three years, and very few people in England do better than that.

Before one of these periods of leave I had to attend a conference in Singapore. It is a characteristic of military conferences that you meet your friends and hear all the gossip, and I came by this yarn in that way. It is about a young subaltern, Ian.

It begins at what the Army calls 05.00 hours when Ian woke up and looked at his watch. He jumped out of bed in a panic. His arrangements for being roused had not been prudent and, like many a healthy young man before him, he had overslept. He was due to meet his C.O. at a rendezvous at seven o'clock, and there was not really time to get there. Furthermore, he had not warned the driver of his Land-Rover to be ready, so he would have to drive himself—an act which might not meet with the C.O.'s approval, for Ian was not an experienced driver.

He shaved and dressed hurriedly, wondering which route he should take. Here I should explain that for military purposes the roads in Malaya are divided into categories. Some are " white " roads. These, for various reasons, are regarded as safe for vehicles travelling singly. Some are " red," and along these military vehicles may only go in convoy; and on some roads a stipulated escort is the strict rule.

Going over the factors known in formal military appreciations as " Time and Space," our young friend came to the following conclusions. If he went by the white, or safe, road he would certainly be an hour late; the C.O. would certainly give him a rocket, which is always a bad thing; and his lateness would probably upset the arrangements of many other people. On the other hand, unless he had a fatal motor accident, which was not improbable, he would certainly arrive intact, unmolested by bandits. He would also be conforming to the rules, being one vehicle alone.

There was, however, a short cut to the rendezvous. He was not quite sure if it was red or not, but he knew it to be a murky colour and often watched by the enemy. If he used this road he would be taking a considerable risk, and he would be breaking the rules; but he could just get to the rendezvous on time, and it was unlikely that the C.O. would ask him which way he had come.

So he decided on the murky road, Communists or no Communists, and jumped into the driver's seat of the Land-Rover, throwing his haversack containing his sandwich lunch, cut overnight, into the back of the vehicle.

The engine started at once, the lights worked, and he flashed off down the road. For the first few miles it ran through rubber estates. Even in broad daylight the rows of rubber trees enclose a kind of sinister gloom, which one feels all the time bodes no good to the intruder. But any misgivings Ian had while in the rubber were dwarfed by those he entertained when the road plunged into virgin jungle. It wound and twisted up a pass, through a gorge, and down the other side. The surface was of red laterite; it was not wide, and a tangle of jungle came right up to the verges. The strange sounds of jungle birds, beasts and insects, coming to life as the day dawned, were none of them calculated to ease his mind. He also suddenly remembered that he had left his carbine in the guard-room, and that besides being alone, against orders, in a dangerous area, he was completely unarmed. The prospect was the reverse of rosy.

However, the worst was soon over and the road emerged from the jungle into a long straight stretch with grass about waist-high on either side. The laterite surface gave way to tarmac and he could go a little faster. Calculation also revealed that he should get to the rendezvous close on time.

His rising spirits, however, were short-lived. The long grass on the right of the road began to quiver and out stepped a man. He was dressed in a khaki jacket and slacks, he wore rubber boots on his feet, and on his head he wore a peaked khaki cap with a red star for a cap badge. He was clearly a bandit, and what was Ian to do?

The dilemma was resolved by the bandit himself. He put his hands above his head and surrendered. Ian breathed again. He stopped the Land-Rover and bundled the bandit into the back. There was a piece of tarpaulin lying there, so he made the bandit lie on the floor and he covered him with the tarpaulin. He did this for two reasons. First, a surrendered bandit will sometimes lead you to a jungle camp, but you will always find the birds have flown if they know there has been a surrender. So you do not want the general public to know immediately you get a surrender. The tarpaulin would serve this purpose. It would also inconvenience the prisoner if he started any monkey tricks as they drove.

Ian was naturally much relieved, but it was too soon to crow. There were still some miles to travel, where anything might happen. Also he had wasted precious time with his capture and he might now be late. It does not do to keep the C.O. waiting, and Ian drove like fury.

Suddenly, his heart almost lost a beat. The grass quivered again and two more bandits appeared. One of them carried a rifle. "This," thought Ian, "is the real thing."

To his astonishment, the armed man put his rifle on the surface of the road and both put their hands up in surrender. Without ceremony he bundled them also into the back of the Land-Rover and covered them over with the tarpaulin.

By great exertion Ian reached his rendezvous only a few minutes late. The C.O. was there with his escort, and wore that old-world look that C.O.s adopt when kept waiting by junior officers. He was, however, somewhat mollified by the production of the three surrendered terrorists, though he was not to be entirely done out of his rightful early-morning liver.

"And besides being late, Ian," he growled, "I suppose you've also forgotten to bring a sandwich lunch."

"No, sir," replied Ian brightly. "It's here." And he waved the haversack from the back of the Land-Rover.

But when he looked inside it, he found the bandits had eaten the contents.

CHAPTER XX

KUALA LUMPUR

(See Map III)

WHILE I was on leave in England during August 1953, Lieut.-Colonel Duke, the Commanding Officer of the Gordon Highlanders, acted in my stead. Before leaving I had expressed the opinion that a further operation in the deep jungle in the Tasek Bera area was desirable. The Special Branch were always hearing of a Communist deep-jungle base, and the Tasek Bera was the obvious area for it. Moreover, more signs of deep-jungle gardens began to appear when the area was viewed from the air.

I was consequently delighted when I found that in my absence an operation to be known as " Boxer " had been tee'd up for the Tasek Bera area. It was to be short and swift, lasting from 3rd to 25th September ; and the troops taking part were to be 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, less one company, which could not be spared from the framework, and either one or two (I cannot remember which) squadrons of the Special Air Service Regiment.

The plan was to put all the troops into the jungle by helicopter, where they would form company bases. From their bases they would send out patrols of suitable size to visit all the gardens seen from the air. They were to destroy the crops and capture or kill any bandits found. It was the first operation 63 Brigade had done using helicopters on such an extensive scale, and it involved a lot of staff work.

In theory, nothing could be easier than moving troops by helicopter ; but in practice you must make good detailed plans or there is tremendous waste of time loading and unloading, refuelling, and in " dead mileage " through flying unloaded from each stage. Above all, there are the men to be considered. The air crews and ground staff must have somewhere to live and decent feeding arrangements. The soldiers to be transported into the jungle must arrive there fully equipped. You do not want to have the soldiery hanging about the departure airfield before they are needed ; nor do you want them on the landing-zone in the jungle waiting for equipment which has been despatched in error to the wrong landing-zone. There are endless possibilities for friction and error.

However, when I appeared in Seremban on 3rd September I found all these arrangements had been made, and the air-lift was due to begin next day, having been postponed one day by bad weather. I was, therefore, only a spectator and critic, and I thought it had all been well arranged by the staffs concerned.

In the three weeks of the operation, the troops visited and destroyed ninety-three gardens. During the process they unearthed five large dumps of food carried into the jungle by porters and stored in empty oil drums. These dumps were near camps, of which seventeen were found. There were nine contacts with the bandits, of whom six were killed and two more surrendered.

One promising skirmish was interrupted and terminated in a way typical of the good nature of the British soldier. One of the patrols of the Special Air Service Regiment came upon a camp of bandits unexpectedly. The bandits dived for cover into a thickly wooded ravine in which a stream ran. There was some " bunching " amongst the bandits as they fought their way through a gap between two prickly bushes. They were at the mercy of the soldiers, who had a Bren gun. But a bandit woman with a new-born baby in her arms turned towards the soldiers and, raising the babe in a gesture of despair, stood facing them. The soldier held his fire and at least six bandits—all armed and accoutred—escaped. People refer to the " brutal and licentious " soldiery, but it is a jest and not to be taken seriously.

Incidentally, the future of this innocent child hardly bears contemplation.

While this Operation " Boxer " delighted me, there was another development while I was in England which I did not like so much.

For reasons that I need not enter into, it was thought desirable to transfer 18 Infantry Brigade from Selangor to Pahang and make 63 Brigade responsible for Selangor as well as Negri Sembilan and Malacca. The plan was that the Gordon Highlanders and 1/7 Gurkha Rifles should be responsible for Negri and Malacca, while the Somerset Light Infantry, 2/2 Gurkha Rifles and one squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment should be responsible for Selangor. The plan was for Headquarters, 63 Brigade, to move to Kuala Lumpur and command the four battalions and the squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment.

Militarily this was perfectly acceptable ; but there were difficulties in the State War Executive Committees and Morning Prayers.

Brigade Headquarters moved to Kuala Lumpur on 9th October. I thought the married officers and men who had houses in Seremban took this very well. All were put to inconvenience and many to separation ; those with children at school (and I was one), had to yank their children out of one school and put them into another. But I never heard a single grouse from any of them. I do not know what would happen if the same were done with an industrial concern. The Headquarters staff in Kuala Lumpur took great pains. They gave us an excellent camp, and as soon as married quarters became available these, too, were given to us. It was a good effort.

Living in the Federal Capital was quite a different kettle of fish from living in Seremban. Malaya is a great country for formalities and protocol ; and in Kuala Lumpur this was raised to the *n*th degree. If one went to an important function all the guests had to arrive in the correct order, and on arrival all the senior guests looked carefully round to see if they were top dogs or not. When the chief guest had departed, the motor cars of the remainder had to be brought to the door in order of precedence. Indignant Legislative Counsellors might be seen scowling at managing directors, and light-hearted Staff Captains cocked metaphorical snooks at furious Brigadiers because their respective cars had been brought to the door in the wrong order.

It is easy enough to poke fun at this and to call it fatuous pomposity; but it was in fact inevitable. You do not want to insult foreign diplomats on whose goodwill so much might depend. You must, therefore, have some protocol, and having once set out along that road there is no half-way house till you get to the end of it.

Protocol, so the dictionary tells us, is partly derived from the Greek word *Kolla* (meaning glue) and functions were apt to be sticky in consequence. But this was not so at all in King's House itself, nor in Carcosa, next door, where the Deputy High Commissioner (and later the Chief Secretary) lived. Within these portals one knew at once, in spite of the pomp and circumstance, that one was in a home where a united family lived and had its being.

There were sometimes ceremonial parades of extraordinary magnitude, as, for example, on Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday. Guns were fired, aircraft dipped in salute, flags were broken, and over a thousand men marched past the saluting base.

At such parades there might be the nine flags of the nine States. As each Ruler arrived (in order of protocol) his flag would be broken, the band would play the anthem of his State, and the patient, uncomplaining soldier of many races would present arms. This was repeated for each Ruler, leading up in crescendo until " God Save the Queen " was played as the High Commissioner arrived.

Watching these parades always reminded me nostalgically of those in Delhi twenty years before. Then a whole brigade of cavalry would advance in review order at the trot, and a battery of Royal Horse Artillery would go past at the canter. *Eheu fugaces.*

One of the effects of being in the Federal Capital was that the official procedure in the State War Executive Committee, and even in Morning Prayers, was far more important than it ever had been in Seremban. In Seremban no one worried very much about the rules; it was the game that counted. In Kuala Lumpur the rules were paramount and any breach of them gave such umbrage that in Brigade Headquarters we coined the expression "taking huff." If anything were attempted in a way likely to cause anyone to "take huff" it were almost better not to have attempted it at all.

To some extent we were all guilty of "taking huff" from time to time. This was a pity, for in the direction of affairs connected with the Emergency there were some very high-class people in Kuala Lumpur. The Chief Police Officer has now risen to be Commissioner of Police in Nairobi and the State Information Officer had, in order to serve his Queen and Country in Malaya, given up the editorial chair of an influential daily newspaper in England. The Head of Special Branch, the late Lance Searle, too, was in a class by himself. The pity was that the team was not matched against a tougher proposition. Then the rules would have paled into insignificance before the game.

There were, however, compensations. One saw or met some interesting characters; and as they usually had a good deal to say for themselves, one often heard at first hand something of what was going on in the outside world. The first of these V.I.P.s was the Vice-President of the United States, Mr Nixon; and such an extraordinary thing happened during his visit that I cannot help retelling the story.

Luck plays no part in a properly constructed short story. The author so arranges affairs that each event follows logically from the last till you come to a conclusion or climax that is both inevitable and unexpected. It is in combining the unexpected with the inevitable that the cunning of the story-teller lies. In this story, however, luck played a leading part, and I only ask you to believe it because it happens to be absolutely and perfectly true. I am quite sure that many people in the United States will have heard it; the Vice-President told it himself, and it was reported in numerous papers. Their several accounts may have strained the credulity of listeners and readers, and prompted them to exclaim against the veracity of pressmen and politicians alike.

This, however, is the inside story.

It began about tea-time when Dick Stuckey, my Brigade Major, was summoned to King's House by one of the staff to discuss a matter unsuitable for the telephone. He returned to our camp at the same moment that I, too, returned ; and he broke the news at once.

The Vice-President, he explained, was staying at King's House and had expressed a wish to see a patrol return from the jungle. He could start as soon as was convenient after first light next morning, but had to be back for another engagement by 09.30.

In theory nothing should have been easier. Patrols were continually coming and going, and one was almost certain to be emerging at a convenient time and place. But there were several practical difficulties. Freddie De Butts, the Second-in-Command of the Somerset Light Infantry (the C.O. being on leave), pointed out the most serious one. In order to prolong the life of the wireless batteries carried in the jungle, it is customary to keep the sets in the jungle switched off except at specified times of day. If a patrol gets into difficulties, they can switch on their set and communicate with their base, where a set is kept continually manned for such an eventuality. But the converse does not hold. If someone at the base has a brain-wave he can transmit it only at the specified times, when the patrol's wireless set is switched on.

There was a patrol due out of the jungle at a place called Ulu Langat at about eight o'clock next morning, and that would be very suitable ; but it was by no means certain that it would come out punctually ; nor was it certain exactly where it would emerge. The commander of a patrol enjoys considerable latitude, and might quite legitimately come out an hour later or an hour earlier ; and whether he hit the road north or south of Ulu Langat was totally unpredictable.

Normally patrols " came up on the air " at 4 P.M. and it was already past that. Freddie telephoned to the wireless control at the base, and here was our first stroke of luck. 2nd Lieutenant Ely, who was in command, had asked for and received permission to "come up" at 5 A.M. next morning instead of the customary 7 A.M. It would thus be possible to communicate with him before the proposed meeting, with a reasonable chance of arranging it.

I say it would be *possible* to communicate with him, but it was by no means certain. Atmospheric conditions in Malaya are notoriously unreliable, and a wireless channel that may be perfect at one time may be unusable owing to atmospherics an hour later.

We should therefore need luck to get through to the patrol. We should need more luck to find them in a position to emerge at a rendezvous between 8 A.M. and 8.15 A.M., and that was essential if the Vice-President was to be delivered back to King's House in time.

Of course we might have adopted a simpler course and sent out the Brigade Defence Platoon then and there, telling them to arrive at the rendezvous at the given time; but this would be an unwarranted "messing about" of the soldiery who had other work to do, and it would savour of a hoax, which was clearly undesirable. Furthermore, 2nd Lieutenant Ely's patrol had been a very satisfactory one. They had been in the jungle over a week; they had surprised a band of Communists in a camp and shot two. (2nd Lieutenant Ely was a noted shot and on one occasion got a left and right.) So his would be a good patrol to show to the Vice-President; and we decided to try and achieve the desired meeting.

The risk of error was considerable. It was quite possible that we might arrive at the rendezvous and find nothing whatever to see.

"Then," as Freddie pointed out, "the British Army's genius for organisation will not show up in its most effulgent light."

So, in case of accidents, we arranged a few "side-shows." We had some dog-handlers with their dogs, a couple of mortar detachments, and an experimental wireless set that was being given troop-trials. All else failing, the Vice-President would see these. They were in the nature of a side-bet to offset losses if the favourite did not win.

Freddie clearly saw the form and I trusted that all could be safely left in his hands. But I was not entirely without misgivings; for Brigade Headquarters had taken over the area only two days previously and I did not myself know the way to Ulu Langat, where the rendezvous was fixed for 8 A.M. next morning. Nor did I know personally whether it was a dangerous road or not. Although it is tiresome to be killed oneself, everyone will agree that it is far more tiresome to have a V.I.P. killed when one is responsible for his safety; so I rang up Tommy and told him to have every sort of escort standing by.

I woke at about five next morning after a good night's sleep. I was tempted to ring up Freddie and hear what had been the result of his talk with 2nd Lieutenant Ely in the jungle. On further reflection I refrained, thinking that I should only be adding to his worries. I therefore made use of one of God's most priceless gifts and put away another hour's sleep.

At 7 A.M. I presented myself at King's House. Tommy was there with his escort of armoured cars. The High Commissioner was there; the Vice-President was there; his Aide—a Colonel of U.S. Infantry—was there. Everyone was there—all talking about what they were to see at Ulu Langat. I only hoped there would be something there to see.

We set out in convoy through the streets of Kuala Lumpur. I was in the same car as the Vice-President, and looking at his face I reflected on the ghastly lot that falls to the big shots in politics. The Aide had told me before we started that the Vice-President had a good " constitooshun," adding that he could " kiss a mile of babies " if he thought it was his " political dooty " to do so. I hoped that this jaunt would be less exacting.

We seemed to travel interminable miles. I had memorised the journey on the map, but the ground did not seem to tally with it in the least. The distance seemed twice as long and the road encompassed by twice as many potential ambush positions as I had expected. Intelligent comment on the forthcoming elections in the Philippines was difficult to maintain with any enthusiasm. Everyone was beginning to look anxiously at his watch.

" When are we doo ? " asked the Vice-President.

" Two minutes from now," I replied hopefully.

Tommy, of course, had been as good as his word and almost at once we were in the village of Ulu Langat. We flashed past the dog-handlers and their dogs, the mortar detachments, and the signallers with their experimental wireless sets. I reflected that the side-bets at any rate had been well placed.

Eventually we stopped at the police-station. All hands and the cook seemed to be there—Freddie, the District Officer, his assistant, the officer in charge of the Police District, the Home Guard Officer, the Signal Officer, the Mortar Platoon Commander, the Second-in-Command of 2nd Lieutenant Ely's company, the C.S.M., and numerous others.

Delighted as I was to see them (if for no other reason than that their presence proved that we had come to the right place), what I really wanted to know was whether Ely was in the offing, ready to make a landfall at the psychological time and place. They all seemed in very good spirits. Grins spread from ear to ear. I felt sure all must be well; but when I heard what they had to tell, I could hardly believe my ears.

Of all the thousands of villages in Malaya, Ulu Langat was but one. Of all the days of the five-year-old Emergency this was but one; and of all the hours of that day 8 A.M. was only one. Yet ten minutes before this precise time at which the Vice-President had been brought to this particular village an important bandit had thought fit to emerge from four years in the jungle and surrender to the Home Guard standing at the gate. And there the ex-bandit was, complete with tommy-gun. He had all the proper characteristics: shaggy hair, emaciated countenance, ragged khaki uniform, and eyes like those of a hunted rat. If it had been the Archbishop of Canterbury himself I could not have been more surprised to see him there—or more pleased. I nearly wrung him warmly by the hand, and I wondered whether the

Vice-President would mistake him for a " mile of babies." Cameras clicked, " cinés " purred, and smiles were on every face. The day was made by Communist ex-bandit Woo Chin Ming.

After that, 2nd Lieutenant Ely and his warriors who came over a rustic bridge (like the Peers in " Iolanthe ") in a most convincing style, dead on time, seemed small beer. This was a pity; for Woo's surrender was directly attributable to their labours. They had found his camp, attacked and scattered it, killing two bandits. Woo had wandered for a week without sighting his henchmen and without food. He was haunted by fear and a guilty conscience till in the end he had given himself up in desperation.

" Can you assure me, Brigadier," asked the Aide as we returned, " that that was a genuine affair ? "

" I can, indeed," I assured him. " It was nothing but luck."

And when asked on his departure from the airfield if he thought it was a hoax, the Vice-President is reported to have replied to the Press: " Was that a hoax ? No. I don't think so. General Templer would never have allowed it."

He certainly would not have allowed it. No British officer would have allowed it. But I venture to suggest that no one on God's earth could have arranged it.

CHAPTER XXI

OPERATIONS ROUND KUALA LUMPUR

(See Map III)

SELANGOR was a very different State from Negri Sembilan. There is the teeming municipality of Kuala Lumpur, with its sprawling squatter dwellings round its outskirts. Kuala Lumpur presented a problem of its own.

The Ulu Gombok Forest Reserve runs like a finger of jungle down from the north-east to the village of Ampang, which is only a few miles from the centre of Kuala Lumpur. Somewhere in this Forest Reserve there lurked a famous bandit known as Yeung Kwo. He was the Secretary of the Selangor State Committee of the Malayan Communist Party, and Number Two to Chen Ping, the Secretary-General to the Central Executive Committee. It is Yeung Kwo who would live in Carcosa under a Communist régime in Malaya, while Chen Ping lived in King's House.

Yeung Kwo was a thoughtful, non-violent kind of Communist, verging on the intellectual. He must have had considerable charm of manner and undoubted leadership; for documents captured often referred to him in glowing terms. He, Loi Tak (who later deserted) and Chen Ping were listed by the Japanese as the three most dangerous men in the country in 1943. He appeared to be content to sit and wait for the turn of events, to write and to think. As a military leader against us he was not worth tuppence. He sought only to avoid contact, not to force it. But politically he would be a worth-while target.

Alongside him, to the south, in the Sungei Lalang Forest Reserve, there lived a bandit called Chen Lu. He was just a common thug who preyed upon the district of Kajang, but he was timid. It was from his gang that the Vice-President's bandit appeared at Ulu Langat.

In the north, round Kuala Kubu Bahru, there lived another thug called Heap Thiong, who was reputed to have organised numerous hold-ups and murders, and was a formidable fighting man, though lascivious and untrustworthy.

Towards the coast was an area known as the Kuala Selangor "Rice Bowl." This area had largely been reclaimed from the sea or the jungle and had been opened up as paddy-land. Cultivators of all races, Malays, Javanese, Indians and Chinese, worked this land, and very rich it was too. In the harvest season several thousand labourers from outside the area came to harvest the rice and great quantities of money changed hands. From the Communist point of view this was an easily worked gold-mine. You need money to run a Communist campaign just as you need it for any other campaign, and here was the place to get it. All the Communists had to do was to murder one or two local people to show they meant business. Then, anyone who had money on him—and because of the conditions of labour there were plenty with it at harvest-time—was at the mercy of the Communist extortionist. It was said by some that the bandits collected anything up to £20,000 a year in this area by extortion. And, of course, Heap Thiong was just the man for this.

Again, to the south of the State, on the sea-board and adjacent to Negri, was an area properly known as Kuala Langat, but popularly known as the South Swamp. This area, about twenty-five miles by eighteen, was entirely jungle, and swampy jungle at that. Round the edge of the jungle ran a road on which were situated numerous rubber, coffee, palm-oil, and other estates. There were also two or three sawmills on this road. The loggers ran light railways into the swamp with typical Chinese ingenuity and industry. Wooden stakes, or piles, were driven vertically into the swamp at two-foot intervals and in two rows, "covering off" as soldiers in two ranks do. Transverse planks were nailed to these as sleepers for the lines. On these light railways great quantities of timber were hauled out to the sawmills.

There were, thus, roughly five areas for operations. In one area only was there a dangerous man—Heap Thiong—and the total number of bandits was not more, as far as I can remember, than about a hundred and fifty.

When I took over in the area my predecessor, Bill Lambert, reckoned that a change of plan was about due; and it was rumoured that if we bid quickly and strongly we might be allotted 2/7 Gurkha Rifles who, as the reader will remember, had become the Federal Reserve.

Dick Stuckey, the Brigade Major and I favoured a drive against the bandits in the South Swamp. It seemed to us that their food must come from the relatively few labour lines on the peripheral road. If these sources of supply could be stopped the bandits would be at our mercy. Furthermore, there were no aborigines in the jungle area of the swamp, so that any sign of human life could only mean bandits or loggers. By stopping the activities of the loggers, one could safely bomb the others from the air. The South Swamp, we thought, lent itself to the food denial technique that we had started in Operation " Hive " and perfected (as we thought) in Operation " Chapman."

There was yet another factor in favour of the South Swamp. In Malacca, as the reader will find in a later chapter, a considerable area had been cleared of bandits and declared " White." Here the tiresome Emergency Regulations had been rescinded. A tendency to " whiten " the coastal strip of Negri was also discernible in the councils of their State War Executive Committee. If the South Swamp could be cleared of bandits a continuous white strip could be declared from Malacca to Port Swettenham.

This project in the South Swamp, however, was swept aside on the advice of Lance Searle, the Head of Special Branch. This officer, by his many excellent qualities, had built up for himself and his Special Branch in Kuala Lumpur a reputation for infallibility that properly should be reserved for God alone. The pros and cons of operating in the South Swamp were never seriously considered; and as new boys to the area we could not press them with sufficient conviction.

The " Rice Bowl " area was enjoying a close season till the harvest-time. That left the areas round Kuala Kubu Bahru where Heap Thiong lived, the Ulu Gombok jungle where Yeung Kwo lived, and the jungle round Kajang where Chen Lu operated.

The troops available for these choices were the 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry, based on Kuala Lumpur, and 2/2 Gurkha Rifles in Kuala Kubu Bahru.[1] Both these were very high-class battalions, well led and of the staunchest material. There was also the possibility of getting the Federal Reserve (2/7 Gurkha Rifles). I was quite certain that if only we could put these troops in to bat on a good wicket they could not fail to score.

That we finally decided upon a rather sticky wicket is a lasting source of regret to me. It was the penalty of war by committee. The brigade commander was the man to whom in the last analysis the soldiers looked for guidance. It was he who had to put the plan across to them and fill them with his own fire. Yet here I was being jostled by a lot of civilians and policemen into a plan in which I had little confidence. I could, of course, have resisted, but this could only have led to a major explosion on the State War Executive Committee. As the newcomer, I would not have been listened to, and by the time the explosion had died down the soldiery would still have been committed to the majority plan. A skilful diplomatist could have got his own way in the end; but I do not believe anyone operating with a time factor such as we had—the Federal Reserve was only available for a month—could have done otherwise. Having made my protest in the appropriate places before we began, and having got no change, I resolved to support the majority plan with loyalty and try to make the best of it.

The plan was as follows:—

First, as a side-line, 2/2 Gurkha Rifles would support an operation against Heap Thiong. This was to be a food denial operation and was to be managed by the District War Executive Committee in Kuala Kubu Bahru. We called it Operation "Sting" and it was a continuation of a similar operation mounted by the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. The Queen's Own had extracted eleven kills from it, but we never succeeded in adding to that. The fact was that a new plan was required.

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[1] There was also a Malay Rifle Squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment, but at that time it was required to remain near Klang.

Secondly, we decided to have a full-scale operation against Yeung Kwo; the troops for this being the Somerset Light Infantry and 2/7 Gurkha Rifles, who were allotted to us from 15th December 1953 to 15th January 1954. This we called Operation "Ivanhoe."

In order to get Yeung Kwo and his men, about forty all told, it was essential to have them within the net before we began. We therefore decided to give him the code name of "Falstaff" and always to refer to him as such. In this way careless talk, particularly on the telephone, which you cannot entirely avoid in this sort of warfare, would be less likely to put him on his guard. We also decided to go through the motions of mounting an operation, to be called "Corduroy," in the Kajang area. A bandit whom the Somersets had killed in the Kajang area had on him papers that led us to suppose that Yeung Kwo was contemplating a move there. We thought that by openly preparing to mount an operation there he would be less likely to go there too. In this way we were proved correct. The thankless task of mounting a bogus operation was entrusted to the Kajang War Executive Committee.

We could thus begin on the basis that our quarry was in the wedge-shaped piece of jungle between Ulu Klang and Ulu Langat. This area we proposed to have searched systematically by 2/7 Gurkha Rifles. Meanwhile, it was essential to get Yeung Kwo and his men anchored to their camps and food dumps, many of which we knew about, in that area. In this way we thought the chances of meeting the enemy about average. To anchor Yeung Kwo to his camps we decided to stop all food getting to him from any other source. The idea might be compared with shutting all the shops in the town so that the housewife has to live on her store cupboard.

Our plan to stop food getting to the enemy was simple. It could, we thought, only get to him in one of three ways. It might go out to him in small packets on labourers, rubber tappers and so on, many of whom were women, working on the estates that flanked the jungle. To some extent this could be prevented by putting police with women searchers on the gates of the wired-in villages. Over half of the labour would have to go through gates of this nature, and police and women searchers on the gates would certainly act as a deterrent to the suppliers even though not entirely perfect.

The next source of food was from the main roads. There was nothing to prevent a food supplier from buying food from, say, a restaurant proprietor in Kuala Lumpur, and taking it out along a road in a bus, taxi, private car, or bicycle to a rendezvous in the area. Here he might leave it to be collected by the bandits. To stop this we put a road-block on every road leading into the area. At each one a small police search party, including a woman searcher, was posted. These parties had a very difficult task, calling for discrimination between the innocent countryman bringing some delicacy from the town to his home, and the bandit helper smuggling rice to his pals in the jungle.

The Mentri Besar, or Prime Minister, of Selangor passed suitable legislation prohibiting the transport of food by road (except with a permit) and several other measures. These measures were inevitably complicated and needed discrimination in their application. We thought it asking too much of the police constables at the road-blocks to exercise this discrimination, so we had recourse to other means.

The British Adviser, Mr H. G. Hammett, mobilised the resources of both the Federal and State Governments; and civilian officers from all branches of the Administration volunteered to do a tour of duty at a road-block. The civilians manned two road-blocks in this way, the Police and the Army two each also. The movement of foodstuffs by road was thus effectively supervised by high-powered teams in which everyone from the Attorney-General downwards did his stint. The police constables did the actual searching, the gazetted officers interpreted the law in an intelligent way. It was thus a combined operation in the truest sense.

The final stone in this edifice of blockade was provided by patrols of the Somersets. They patrolled the jungle edges, lying in ambush at likely places, to intercept anyone attempting to get food into the jungle.

The evidence was that this food denial was satisfactory. The Special Branch sent out surrendered bandits, dressed as bandits, to contact the tappers in the rubber estates to ask about food supplies. They always came back with the report that the provision of food was deemed impossible by the civil population.

Meanwhile, 2/7 Gurkha Rifles were introduced into the jungle with the greatest stealth and started their search. It was incredibly difficult jungle to search. It was a succession of razor-edged ridges. Along the ridge lines it was possible to move quietly, but the slopes were so steep that it was impossible to move along them, or up or down them, without setting stones rolling, which at once betrayed the presence of the troops. When once the enemy knew that troops were moving, they were able to lie still and listen. Then, by judicious hiding and movement, they could dodge the searchers, just as grouse evade the beaters on a cold day on the moors.

The Somersets took me out several times into this jungle and I believe I was the only person in the State War Executive Committee who could know of this unavoidable weakness in our plan. The Gurkhas exercised great patience and exertion. They never spared themselves in any way whatever; but with the whole battalion deployed they had only two fleeting glimpses of the enemy. Although shots were fired no hits were recorded. I thought they made an excellent attempt at an almost impossible task. Success could only be achieved by a comparative fluke, for the conditions favoured Yeung Kwo; and relying on a fluke is no better way of waging war than playing billiards.

There were also two loopholes in our food denial scheme that I only found out after the operation had been launched, but which the State War Executive Committee should have known before it began.

The first loophole we discovered when a patrol of the Somersets found in the jungle fringe a *basha* filled with civilian clothes. From this it was obvious that bandits were in the habit of putting aside their uniforms in the jungle and entering civilisation dressed in plain clothes. We tried to counter this by allowing surrendered bandits to watch the people at strategic points, to recognise bandits if possible. Also, on several occasions we rounded up all the tappers in a rubber-field and counted them. Although we found on several occasions that there were more present than there should have been, it was never possible to *prove* that the extra ones were bandits in disguise. It might have been possible in, say, the Albert Dock, where labour is much more rigidly controlled, but it was not possible here. The arrangements for tapping smallholdings had too many ramifications to be sorted out so simply.

The other loophole defied all our efforts. Round the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur are many tin-mines, some worked by European and American companies, but the majority worked by the Chinese. The Chinese way of tin-mining is primitive but effective. The top soil over the tin-bearing stratum is shovelled away to make a " bund " or retaining wall round the concession. Water is then introduced into the pit or depression either by diverting a stream or laying a pipe-line. A sort of slurry of sand and water ensues, and this is pumped up to the top of a high tower made of bamboo poles lashed into a giant scaffolding. From the top of the tower the slurry runs down a sloping timber trough back into the pit. As it runs down the sloping trough it cascades over battens laid across it. In each of these the solids, including the tin, are precipitated ; and the fine, grey sand that is the raw tin is collected.

This process must be continuous, twenty-four hours a day, which postulates three things. First, there must be men working there day and night in shifts, some of whom, with or without the connivance of the owners, may be Communist helpers. Secondly, there must be a man at the top of the tower to regulate the apparatus. He is the perfect Jim Crow to observe the approach of military or police patrols. Finally, men must patrol the bunds day and night to see that no breach occurs ; for any breach would lead to dangerous (and expensive) flooding.

All the bandits needed was to have the sympathy of one foreman in a tin-mine. They could then don their plain clothes in the jungle fringe, wait for the all-clear signal from the Jim Crow, and return to civilisation with the bund patrol. The men working in the mine had to have food by them and could hand it over.

Our whole plan, which was one of attrition rather than rapier thrusts, was thus brought to the level of chance contacts with the bandits. This could have been done in a much less cumbersome way and with a quarter of the resources. The machinery for food denial which succeeded so well elsewhere could not be effectively worked in this area.

In various guises we modified and altered Operation "Ivanhoe," and the soldiers and policemen did succeed in killing a number of bandits and forcing others to surrender. But they never got Yeung Kwo. He was much too cunning to be caught like that. The only man who could possibly have got him was Lance Searle. He could have lured him into a trap. I believe Lance Searle would have succeeded, but he was killed in a most unfortunate shooting accident in which the Intelligence Officer of the Somersets and a private soldier were also shot and wounded.

I do not think anyone could have differed more with Lance Searle on professional grounds than I did. None the less, being such an enthusiast, and so capable, he was a man after my own heart, and I was glad to be afforded the privilege of writing as follows in an Obituary Notice :—

"We in 63 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, now serving in Selangor, lose a staunch supporter in Lance Searle, who was killed in operations against the Communists last night.

He was a man of exceptional enthusiasm, whose professional life in Selangor was entirely devoted to the cause of freedom and the destruction of Communism in Malaya. I have seldom seen a harder worker. Of these qualities others than I can speak with more knowledge. It is of his personal courage that I want to write.

He had an unlucky war as a P.O.W. in Hong Kong, and because he was a man of outstanding physical courage he felt this deeply.

Deprived by the fortunes of war from gaining fame in battle, and having a natural talent for battle, he was always ready and eager to take part in operations against the terrorists. I can think of three incidents where he showed the mettle of which he was made. In June last year he was present at the well in Cheras Road in which five terrorists were cornered. He was largely instrumental in discovering that they were there. A man who lacked spirit might well have stayed at home and left the action to the soldiers. But that was not Lance Searle's way of doing things. He was there himself and narrowly avoided a hand-grenade thrown at him by the terrorists.

A few weeks ago he heard that a certain terrorist wanted to surrender at a certain place. It was not in the jungle, but it was not far off—certainly an eerie place to go at night. Lance had no doubts about his duty. He went there himself, unarmed at dead of night, and gave the signal. Who was to know whether this was a terrorist trap? Lance stood in the path waiting. Twice he gave the signal. Tension mounted. Then the bushes waved and a terrorist emerged. Unarmed, Lance waited for him. The man surrendered. Lance must have had some awe-inspiring moments; easier to write about than to endure.

In the operation in which he was killed he was again in the forefront. You may say it would have been better had he stayed at home. Perhaps it would; but personal courage was at the root of the man's make-up, and staying at home was not his way.

In his death the soldiers lose a good friend. Honour the brave and comfort the bereaved. Such are the feelings of the soldiers in Selangor."

CHAPTER XXII

SIDE-SHOWS IN THE BRIGADE AREA

ABOUT this time it became necessary, through shortage of troops in Negri Sembilan, to remove a platoon post that we kept at Sungei Dua, near Gemas on the Central Road. For some time nothing untoward happened, but a few days after I returned from leave in England, my Intelligence Officer, David Laidlaw of 11th Hussars, was shot at very near there. The same day a jeep belonging to the Volunteer Force was shot at and the occupant in diving for cover lost a Bren gun. A N.A.A.F.I. van was also shot at.

The next day, being Sunday, Roy Liddel, the Gordon's padre, had a run for his money between Sungei Dua and Asahan, which I was constrained to describe under the title "Bren and Book" in 'Blackwood's Magazine.' It was a splendid occasion, and I repeat what I wrote then for the benefit of laity and clergy alike.

Unless there are operations in progress, Sunday afternoon in Malaya tends to be a slack time. The I.A. or Immediate Action platoon remains at the alert and the padre also is busy. This tale tells of a Church of Scotland padre on a Sunday afternoon.

Imagine a tall, thin, ascetic-looking man with a Balmoral on his head, jungle-green shirt and shorts, black shoes, and a tartan belt round his waist. He is what the Army looks for in its padres: minister, scholar, soldier, athlete, and friend to all men.

It is a hot and sticky afternoon. It has rained in the morning and now the sun is drawing the moisture from the earth. It feels like the orchid-house at Kew.

While his brother officers nod over their coffee in the Mess at Battalion H.Q., the padre climbs into the commander's seat of a scout car to go first to A Company and then to D Company to preach the Word of God.

For the benefit of the uninitiated I must explain that a scout car is an armoured vehicle. There are various patterns, but this particular one is a Humber with the engine at the back. The driver sits in the belly of the thing, looking forward through an oblong window over which he can quickly bring down a sheet of armour-plate with a narrow slit for limited vision. Beside the driver is a seat for a wireless operator, the wireless set being behind the driver. On this occasion there is no wireless operator because the padre can operate the set himself. Placed centrally behind the driver's seat and the operator's is the turret. In the turret is a Bren gun. The commander of the car can stand or sit. If he stands, his head protrudes above the turret and he gets a good view of the countryside. If he sits, his head is below the level of the armour. In this position his view is restricted to what he can see through two narrow slits in the armour-plate. By releasing a securing bolt the commander can make the turret revolve. His seat revolves too, so that he is always facing the same way as the Bren.

"A Company first, please, McLeod," says the padre. Private McLeod, a pink-faced young National Service soldier and a farmer's son from Aberdeen, grins.

"O.K., surr," he says, and they start.

As the car travels through the camp the padre switches on the wireless set and puts the earphones over his head.

"43 calling. 43 calling. How do you hear me? How do you hear me? Over," he asks.

"Hullo, 43. Hullo, 43. Loud and clear. Loud and clear. Over," comes the prompt reply.

The padre terminates the conversation in the appropriate manner and hooks the earphones over the handle of the fire-extinguisher. Meanwhile he reflects upon the contrast between the unchanging form of prayer from man to God and the many changes in the wireless procedure between man and man. The Church, unlike the Army, seldom amends the manual.

But he cannot reflect for long. When he gets out of the camp gates he must load the Bren gun. Having done this, he elevates and depresses it once or twice, pulls out the securing bolt and traverses the turret.

The scout car hums along the blue, shimmering tarmac road, with rubber trees on either side. They are well-kept rubber estates here. There is no undergrowth between the rows of trees, and there is therefore little danger of being shot at by bandits. The padre sits back in the seat, splays his feet before him and idly rotates both seat and turret from one side to the other. Soon he loses himself in the kind of thoughts appropriate to a minister of religion on a hot afternoon after a curry luncheon.

His contemplation is disturbed by Private McLeod.

" Surr," says the lad over his shoulder, " this is where the Brigade Intelligence Officer got shot up yesterday."

The padre surveys the scene. The road here is on the side of a gentle slope, running in a long curve, like the letter C, round a re-entrant. From one lip of the C to the other is 300 yards. On the left a red laterite bank rises some fifteen feet above the tarmac. On the right the ground falls away. Rubber estates have given place to jungle here, but the trees have been cut back fifty yards from the verges. Where the jungle has been cleared, however, a certain amount of scrub has grown up, and it was in this that the bandits hid when they ambushed the I.O.

I was shown the place myself and the I.O. described what had happened, as if it were a battlefield tour. As he came round the first bend a burst of fire from a Bren went through the radiator of his Land-Rover. Luckily neither the I.O. nor his driver was hit. Thereafter driving was characterised as much by speed as by dexterity. As they rocketed along the road the I.O. saw a bandit, wearing a peaked cap with a red star on it, standing on the lower side of the road about 150 yards ahead. The bandit dropped down and another Bren opened fire—you could see the marks in the tarmac where the bullets had struck ; and you could also see where the bipod legs of the Bren guns had been. Tracer filled the air and the I.O. sprayed the roadside with the automatic in his hand. He could not see his assailants, but they probably did not know that. Perhaps some of his shots were closer to the mark than he guessed. Anyway the bandits' fire continued to be most inaccurate. The Land-Rover was peppered, but nowhere vital. After about fifteen seconds they were clear of the ambush—" more frightened than hurt " as the I.O. described it. Both had behaved with commendable coolness.

However, on this Sunday afternoon the padre's luck is in —or out ; for he is a militant type—and the scout car in due course arrives at A Company's base. The padre conducts the service, has a chat with some of the soldiers, and prepares to take his leave of the Company Commander.

" What time are you due at D ? " asks the Company Commander.

" Five o'clock," replies the padre.

" You'll be a bit early, won't you ? "

" I expect they'll give me a cup of tea before the service."

With that he departs. As they travel he hears voices on his wireless. A Company is telling D Company to expect the padre at four o'clock. " And," adds the signaller, " Sunray says to gi' the mon a cup a' tea."

At the tenth mile the padre turns off the main road. He has three or four miles to traverse on a lonely side-road. On either side are wide stretches of *lalang* or long jungle grass. It is an area where the bandits of No. 6 Platoon are wont to operate—that is why the C.O. makes the padre go in a scout car. He cocks his Bren, just in case—and puts the change lever to Automatic.

As they round a bend they see a log across the road. There is barely room to stop. McLeod changes down to third gear.

" On you go, my lad," urges the padre. " Take it by the roots."

Private McLeod puts his foot firmly on the accelerator. The scout car bounds forward with a roar, and all hell is let loose. Tracer bullets rattle from the *lalang* and spatter on and round the car. Ricochets rocket into the sky.

The padre swings the turret and lets drive with the Bren. *Rat-tat-tat-tat.* A short burst. Then another one. There is a fine feeling of exhilaration in firing a Bren from a scout car. There is no recoil—that is taken by the mounting—there is only a powerful vibrant throb. It is eminently satisfying.

Suddenly there is a crash and the scout car lurches. It has taken the log " by the roots." The padre's shoulders are banged first against one side of the turret rim and then the other ; but he maintains his grip on the Bren.

" I think the steering's gone," comments McLeod coolly.

" Never mind," replies the padre. " Just pass me up another magazine."

The padre reloads and the scout car, having overcome the log, careers towards the side of the road. The near front wheel goes into the ditch and the vehicle comes to a halt. The padre fires two more magazines.

He has had the time of his life, and the bandits do not like it. Their fire has ceased and four figures are seen to scuttle, retreating, through the long grass. The padre gives them a burst " for the road." The enemy has fled, leaving the padre master of the field.

In laconic signal phrases he reports the action to A Company —he is still out of range of D—and a suitable replacement vehicle comes to take him on. He arrives at D Company on the tick of five o'clock. The Company Commander greets him.

" Hullo, padre," he says, " we expected you for tea. The brutal and licentious are waiting for you in the N.A.A.F.I."

They walk towards the N.A.A.F.I. tent used as recreation room, church or cinema. The padre makes a few preparations, takes the service and delivers a short address. The incident on the road is not mentioned.

When it is over the officers return to the Mess. A puzzled Jock with a signal in his hand is waiting for them on the verandah. The Company Commander takes it and reads. It is a personal signal to him from the Commanding Officer.

" Ask the padre this one," it reads. " In which hand the Bren gun, in which hand the Book ? "

The Company Commander is utterly mystified and looks to the padre for explanation. The padre is fumbling in his

Bible. He finds the reference he wants. The Jock is ready with a pencil to take down a reply.

"From padre to C.O. (stop) One Chronicles (stop) Chapter 12 (stop) Verse 2 (stop) For Bow read Bren (message ends)."

It was only then that he thought fit to say why he had not arrived in time for tea.

It always seemed to me that one of the worst things that could happen in one's Brigade Area was to have a planter murdered by the bandits. Quite apart from natural or human feelings, an occurrence of this sort sent our morale down to rock bottom, the bandits' morale rose, and information dried up.

In Negri Sembilan the planters had been good enough to ask me to address them at the various State and District meetings of their Associations. At these meetings I had never minced matters. I always told them that they, as individuals, were no more important than the meanest coolies: a man is a man whatever his calling. The significance of a planter's murder was that it provided headline news and harmed our Cause. The planter himself would read it from another world. Moreover, in nine cases out of ten, the murder of a planter—or a soldier for that matter—was largely his own fault and was often a sign of professional incompetence. Every planter had a bodyguard of Special Constables, and nearly all had armoured cars of some sort. If they went about without taking sensible precautions they had no one but themselves to blame if things went wrong.

I could have quoted, though I did not do so, many instances to prove this. Nearly always when a man was murdered by bandits he was doing something foolish. Perhaps he was a man of fixed habit, daily taking the same road. Perhaps he scorned his escort and went without it. Perhaps he had been careless in whom he told where he was going.

It must also be remembered that if a manager and his labour had a dispute it was quite easy for the labour to get in touch with the bandits and, if the manager were careless, have him ambushed. It is not all "bonus payments" being a planter in Malaya.

The planter has many difficulties to contend with. He must go out to see the work on the estate. He wants to meet his people at pre-arranged places, yet this is just what is most calculated to lead him into an ambush. Many of the vehicles provided by the rubber companies for their managers are unsuitable for the purpose. Many managers only had a jeep with the front part armoured. The manager might drive with one Special Constable beside him. As a good-hearted man he would hesitate to put two more Special Constables in the unarmoured back seats. But when he gets to his destination with only one man he is in a hopeless position. Either he must go into the rubber unescorted (which is madness), or he must take the one man (which is insufficient) and return to the vehicle where bandits (if they have any cunning) may be waiting for him. This sort of vehicle is only suitable when there is no question of leaving it. Even then it is not ideal. A proper vehicle is a large saloon car with armour-plate all over it. A number of rubber companies provided these, and by judicious use of them the risks of ambush could be reduced to reasonable bounds. If the planter wants to go where this vehicle will not go he must use his feet.

There is another difficulty that faces the planter but does not face the soldier. I went myself hundreds of times into the rubber and the jungle, yet never ran the slightest risk. In the first place, I did not have to tell people I was coming. This in itself is a ninety per cent safeguard. Next, the corporal (or whoever was in charge of the escort) disposed his men and managed them properly without my having to worry about it. The bandits could see that if they tried to shoot one of my escort or me the others would be upon them. In the long run it was they, not us, who would come off worst. Consequently nothing ever happened. (I regret to say that on some occasions I, too, was careless; but had anything gone wrong it would have been my fault alone.)

The planters, however, did not always have a skilled man in charge of the escort, nor did they always have sufficient men. They could, of course, get more men from the nearest Police post, but it might have been inconvenient to do so. The unskilled man in charge of the escort does not dispose his men sensibly and it is not easy, morally, for the planter to say, " No. You lead the way, while I follow." It was much easier for me. The corporal put the men out and I merely walked where he put me.

The planter, however, must be efficient in these matters. His heart must be as hard as his head, and then no one will come to any harm. Much too often the planter went his way with his escort trailing in single file (very likely half-asleep) behind him. All were easy meat for the bandits and it is a wonder that more were not murdered.

In the early days of the Emergency the planters had been authorised to raise, train, and supervise their own escort of Special Constables. This was the only way to do the job in a hurry; but the Service mind revolts from this, calling it " irregularity." In 1952 the policy was to regularise the position by grouping these Special Constables under Police supervision. I could argue the pros and cons of this policy, but I can also understand the planters not liking it.

Occasionally one met a planter whose escort of Malay Special Constables drilled, turned themselves out and escorted him like guardsmen. These planters ran a negligible risk.

In Selangor it seemed to me that many planters acted with extraordinary lack of prudence, and I felt sure it was only a matter of time before one was " bumped off." Dick Catling, the Chief Police Officer, was also shocked at their casual behaviour with arms. On more than one occasion the police had found planters' cars, open in a car park, with a rifle or pistol in the back. Several times the police had recovered weapons that had been lost in this way.

With the assistance, therefore, of the Planters' Associations, a series of meetings was arranged at which the British Adviser, the Chief Police Officer and I were privileged to address the planters. We told them these home truths, and Dick Catling, who could understand their difficulties with escorts, did what he could to remove them. I am happy to record that during the three years I had the honour of commanding 63 Brigade there was never one instance in my Brigade Area of a planter being shot. I attribute this to the planters themselves. They all realised the great part they had to play and they played it very well. I cannot speak too loudly in their praise. But perhaps our harangues helped too.

It was soon realised by everyone that it was not a practical proposition for 63 Brigade to be responsible in two States, Selangor as well as Negri; and on 6th December 1953 another dispensation was made, whereby Selangor alone was our responsibility. This meant saying good-bye to the Gordon Highlanders and 1/7 Gurkha Rifles and to many friends in Negri Sembilan and Malacca. I hate saying good-bye and I felt this parting very much. The Gordon Highlanders made a nice presentation of plate to the Brigade Headquarters Officers' Mess before they went home in 1954; and, as the wheel of Fate went round, 1/7 Gurkha Rifles returned later to the Brigade.

One evening in Kuala Lumpur, when the nurse was out, I was upstairs at about 6.30 P.M. talking to my wife as she put the children to bed. I heard a sudden burst of fire and looked out of the window. Over in the direction of Headquarters, Malaya Command, I saw tracer bullets flying about and later, Verey lights. Very soon the Operations Room rang up to say that two bandits had been killed.

Next day I got hold of the young National Service 2nd Lieutenant, an old Etonian, who had been in command of the successful patrol and he took me to the scene of the contact.

His Company Commander knew the habits of the bandits. They used to come from the jungle to meet people working in the worked-out tin-mines and rough ground between the Somersets' Camp and the camp used by Headquarters, Malaya Command. He had, therefore, sent the lad out—Raikes was the name—with a patrol of four men to watch and listen.

It is a test of nerves, moving in the moonlight, particularly for the leader; and Raikes had arranged to halt and listen, and change the order of march every twenty minutes. The darkness came quickly and a full moon rose. Raikes ordered a halt. They lay down, facing outwards, ready for anything. Suddenly, without sound or warning, he saw two men silhouetted against the moonlight. They stood as though in doubt which way to go. Both wore jungle hats, both carried rifles. The officer's first thought was that two of his own men, misunderstanding their orders, had moved from where he had posted them. Anxiously he watched, wondering whether they were friend or foe. Not a word was uttered. Silently one of the men turned. He was wearing a pack on his back. None of Raikes' men wore packs. The figures in the moonlight must be bandits. They were no more than three paces away from him. Raikes was carrying a Bren gun and the end was inevitable.

On the ground next day was a patch of dark blood the size of a barrack table, and about fifty yards away was the corpse of the other man. He had run the distance carrying a prodigious number of bullets in his belly.

The whole episode occurred within two hundred yards of the nearest building of Headquarters, Malaya Command. Truly the bandit hunting in Selangor was of the barn-door type.

I always regarded this incident as an excellent example of the responsibility that the young officer must bear in Malaya. Had these figures in the darkness been his own men he could never have forgiven himself for killing them, even though the Army might have made allowances. Had he done nothing, or foozled what he did, he would, at the best, have missed a never-to-be-repeated chance. Fate only beckons once to a man in battle. At the worst, the bandits might have seen and killed him or one of his men. The whole affair probably took only ten seconds, and in ten seconds it is not difficult to make a wrong decision.

While we were in Selangor a Sapper officer came forward with an interesting stratagem which we tried. Down in the South Swamp we were very short of troops, for they were mostly concentrated round Kuala Lumpur searching for Yeung Kwo. One of the officers in the Administration had received threatening letters and the new Chief Police Officer, Jack Masefield, was not entirely happy about the state of security down there.

We scraped up what troops and Police we could find, but there were none too many. The Sapper's idea was to scare the bandits away by other means.

The Sappers rigged up a flat lorry with a large red box on top of it labelled " Z-RAY. KEEP CLEAR." This they drove conspicuously through Kuala Lumpur with a Police escort on motor cycles. They went down to the area of the South Swamp and installed themselves with every sign of precaution in an abandoned estate building. The Sappers, who were Malays, were instructed to do some indiscreet talking in the coffee-shops. Malays have a great sense of humour and entered into the spirit of the game with zest.

Next, a high tower of bamboos, cut from the jungle, was built in the jungle fringe, and a fence was put round it. Prominent notices in every language were posted urging people to keep clear, and sentries were posted at appropriate places.

At a monthly meeting with the planters' representatives I explained this stratagem, so that their wives would not be frightened by the rumour of atomic bombs, gamma-rays, or radio-active dust.

The planters were tickled with the idea, but one of them foresaw the device having the contrary effect to what we expected. He turned out to be right, for early one morning the sentry on the tower heard stealthy footsteps. Two bandits were in the vicinity, prompted by curiosity, to see the strange device. Shots were exchanged, but no hits recorded.

The Sappers were only available for a fortnight and were then withdrawn for more conventional employment. It was a great pity they did not get the two bandits ; for that would have been a regular triumph of mind over matter. However, the threatening letters ceased and I should like to think that the Z-Ray had something to do with it.

When 63 Brigade had been in Kuala Lumpur for about six months, General Templer left Malaya. Thousands of people from all walks of life came to see him off at the airfield. They came from motives of affection and regard, and the departure of the General and his family was in consequence a moving one. Lieut.-General Sir Geoffrey Bourne took over from him as Director of Operations.

War does not remain static. Imperceptibly circumstances change so that methods and deployments that suit to-day will need revising to-morrow. By July 1954 there was not enough work in Selangor to warrant a Brigade Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and a move was what the Army calls "envisaged."

No one was more glad than I. I longed to be back in a State where there were lots of bandits, and bellicose ones at that.

On 9th July, 63 Brigade Headquarters was moved to Muar in Johore. It was bad luck for the families, but excellent from every other point of view.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE NEW BRIGADE AREA

(*See Map IV*)

THE new Brigade Area was an interesting one. It included the troublesome border area where Johore, Negri Sembilan and Malacca join. In the north were the Tampin and Segamat Police Circles, in the west was the Settlement of Malacca, and to the south lay the Police Circles of Batu Pahat and Muar.

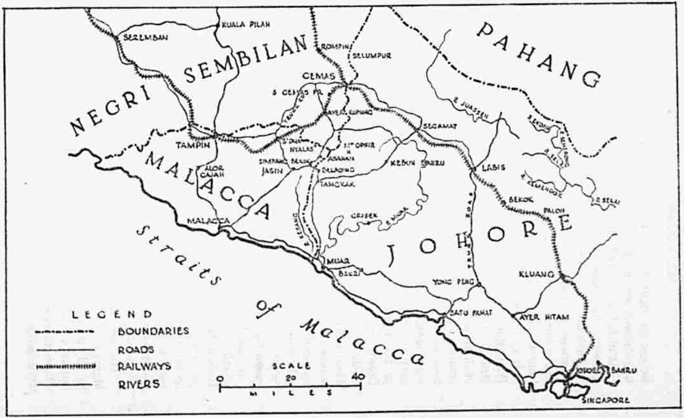
The main trunk road, or Central Road, from Singapore to the north runs through this area for about a hundred miles of its length. Almost the first day after we assumed responsibility there was an incident on the road. Two Gurkha soldiers of 2/6 Gurkha Rifles, stationed in Segamat, were motoring down the road towards Singapore in a 15-cwt. truck. They were fired upon and one of the Gurkhas was hit. The other drove on, taking his wounded companion to Kluang Military Hospital, where he died almost at once.

Apart from losing one of these splendid little Gurkhas, it was particularly maddening as the Central Road is the first artery of Malaya. In my view, at any rate, it should always be kept safe for traffic. Throughout its length from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore Island the places suitable for ambushes are not numerous and this incident was at one of them.

When I looked through the records of incidents on the Central Road I found that the red pins marking them grew like clusters of red toadstools. To lay a successful ambush certain conditions are essential. The ambush party must have sufficient concealment to lie hidden for some hours, waiting for a worth-while target. A long stretch of road must be within view, to give warning of the approach of a good target. In the ambush area itself the target vehicle must

THE BRIGADE AREA, 1954

MAP IV



NEGRI SEMBILAN
PAHANG
MALACCA
JOHORE
Straits of Malacca
SEREMBAN
KUALA PILAH
ROMPIN
SELUMPUR
GEMAS
S GEMAS FR
TRUNK RD
AYER KUNING
TAMPIN
S'DUA
NYALAS
MT OPHIR
SIMPANG BEKOH
ASAHAN
JASIN
SELANDAR
TANGKAK
ALOR GAJAH
SEGAMAT
KEBUN BAHRU
R JUASSEH
LABIS
BEKOK
PALOH
R SELAI
MALACCA
GRISEK
R MUAR
R KESANG
MUAR
BAKRI
TRUNK ROAD
YONG PENG
KLUANG
BATU PAHAT
AYER HITAM
JOHORE BAHRU
SINGAPORE
LEGEND
BOUNDARIES
ROADS
RAILWAYS
RIVERS
SCALE
0
20
40
MILES

be out of sight from other vehicles—unless they, too, are targets—or fire from another vehicle may be brought to bear in aid of the ambushed vehicle. There must be a good get-away for those in ambush into jungle or swamp. The ambush area should not be near the haunts of man, for that increases the chances of betrayal. These conditions are not easily fulfilled. The number of suitable places is, therefore, limited.

It so happens that where the Central Road runs from the Batu Pahat Circle into the Segamat Circle there is a long stretch of road where all these conditions hold good in three or four places. It is obvious to anyone with an eye for country that this is an ideal area for an ambush, and here were we, in 63 Brigade, being caught.

An added advantage, from the bandit point of view, to the particular site chosen on this occasion was that it was exactly on the boundary line between the two Police Circles. If Police or Army units reacted quickly from *both* Circles a clash between friendly forces was almost certain to occur. The tendency, therefore, was for everyone to stand fast until it was thoroughly established who had clearance to operate. By then it was too late.

It had always seemed to me, from my experience of the North-West Frontier of India, that it was easier to *prevent* an ambush on this road than to hunt the bandits after one. Up the Khyber Pass road (and other highly "ambush-worthy" roads) it was customary, in the days of the old Indian Army, to man a series of posts along the road. The posts were so sited that anyone who attempted to ambush or snipe traffic on the road could easily be fired upon by our own forces from one of the posts overlooking the road. Consequently, the tribesmen seldom thought it worth while to undertake an ambush.

The same applies, I maintain, to the Central Road in Malaya. It would not be practical to apply this principle to all the by-roads—that would absorb too many troops—but it was feasible to establish posts on the Central Road wherever experience or intelligence suggested that ambushes were likely.

My predecessor in Negri Sembilan had done this in the two passes out of Seremban, on the Jelebu and Kuala Pilah roads respectively. All the time 63 Brigade was in Negri these posts were properly manned and nothing ever went wrong. After our departure one of them was imperfectly manned and a British Officer—Lieut.-Colonel Forrestier Walker—was ambushed.

We had kept a detachment of Gordon Highlanders or 11th Hussars at Sungei Dua, a few miles from Gemas on the Central Road to Tampin. While this post was there nothing ever happened. It had not been moved long in 1953 before there occurred the series of incidents I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. David Laidlaw, a N.A.A.F.I. van and a Volunteer Force jeep were ambushed at different times in the vicinity, and the Gordon's padre had his adventure nearby.

Of course it is terribly dull occupying one of these posts, because nothing ever happens. It is human nature to suppose it is a waste of troops and time. The establishment of posts is therefore most unpopular with officers and men alike. To me, however, they seemed essential, and I determined to have one at the point where the Gurkha soldier had been killed. Here was a chance for the Police Field Force.

Accordingly I telephoned to one of the officers in charge of a Police Circle in Johore. I did this from afar, and not knowing Johore State I did it on a Thursday afternoon.

" Can you get me the Officer-in-Charge ? " I asked over the worst line imaginable when at last I got through to the Johore Police exchange.

A voluble Malay replied in the vernacular.

" Fetch someone who can speak English," I shouted in Malay.

" There is no one," came the answer.

" Why not ? " I yelled.

" It is Thursday," was the bland reply.

" Where is the Officer-in-Charge ? " I demanded.

" It is Thursday," repeated the man at the other end.

" Put me through to the bungalow of the Officer-in-Charge," I demanded. I did not care whether it was Thursday or Easter.

"O.K.," replied the man laconically.

There was a clipping sound as the operator connected me to another line. I heard the ringing tone in the bungalow of the Officer-in-Charge. Presently I heard the receiver lifted and a treble voice answered.

"Hullo," it piped.

"Hullo," I shouted. "Who are you?"

"I'm Peter," piped the voice.

"Then fetch Daddy," I yelled.

"He's coming, sir," exclaimed Peter, and the Officer-in-Charge of the Police District spoke.

The post was duly established and until I left seven months later no further incidents occurred there.

In my telephone call, however, I had stumbled, by a fluke, on one of the weaknesses in government in Johore. I see no prospect of Communism being defeated in Johore while all the resources of the Government are mobilised for only three days a week.

Let me explain. Johore is a Malay State and its people are Moslems. All the District Officers are Malays, though they have British Administrative Officers to assist them. The public weekly holiday is, therefore, Friday instead of Sunday; and Thursday afternoon in Johore is like Saturday afternoon in other parts of the British Commonwealth. If this practice were universal in Malaya it would cause no inconvenience; but it holds only in Johore and (I think) in one other State in the north. It does not hold in the Federal Capital in Kuala Lumpur, nor is Friday observed as a holiday in any Federal Service—such as the Railways. In consequence of this, all the Federal Services shut down for Saturday afternoon and Sunday, while all the State ones shut down for Thursday afternoon and Friday.

In a serious emergency the top men, both Federal or State, will of course turn out whether it be a Sunday or a Friday—always assuming they have not gone away for what they regard as their week-end. But the lesser affairs are all shelved by the Federal employees on Saturday at noon till Monday morning, while the State employees do the same on Thursday; and the lesser men, the accounts clerk, the despatch clerk or the storeman, cannot be got hold of at all. Consequently the normal processes of Government sink into a decline on Thursday at noon and continue at half-pressure until Monday morning.

In considering the attitude of Chinese new-villagers one must maintain a sense of proportion. The jungle offers terrible hardships, but even the British soldier is often quite glad to leave his camp with all its amenities and comforts and go into the jungle to get away from the Regimental Sergeant-Major. How much more understandable is the attitude of the Chinese new-villager, who has by accident got on the wrong side of the administrative machine and becomes aware of its shortcomings. How easy for him to say: "To hell with the lot of you! I'm off to join my pals in the jungle."

I got quite cross with the Johore State Government myself. Early in July 1954 I called on the Sultan at his palace. He was very friendly and welcoming, and we discussed many subjects for about an hour. When it became time to leave I said I would do my best to rid his State of bandits and that if there was any way in which I could be of particular service to him I hoped he would ask. He thanked me and responded in similar vein. Could he do anything for me or 63 Brigade? I told him he could. He could persuade or order his subordinates to allot to the Army, for my Brigade Major, one of three empty Government-owned houses in Muar. He agreed at once and gave the necessary orders to his private secretary there and then.

The principle, therefore, of a house for the Army at Muar was agreed at the summit in July. It was later agreed in principle by all concerned, but the Brigade Major could not actually move into a Government quarter till six months later, during all of which time at least two, and sometimes three, lay empty.

There was no question of ill-will. Everyone wanted to help, but the machine was so clogged and cumbersome that it could not turn the decision into the deed in less than six months. If this was the way the machine treated a senior British officer, how much worse must it have treated some miserable Chinese rubber tapper who wanted permission to plant cabbages on a piece of waste Government land? It would be understandable if many of them would have welcomed a change in Government—even Ho Che Minh or Mao Tse Tung might have been better!

In consequence of the numerous Communist sympathisers in the New Villages of North Johore, the bandits in the jungle had a fairly easy time. Food was easily obtained, medical supplies were not hard to come by, and information about the military forces was plentiful. Bandits were, therefore, plentiful and many were aggressive. Seventy-five per cent of the bandit-inspired incidents in Malaya between 1952 and 1954 occurred in Johore.

There were some effective bandit leaders, of whom Go Peng Tuan was the most notorious. This man frequented the area where the Gurkha was killed. He operated extensively from Yong Peng to Labis. He held no political post in the Malayan Communist Party, as he was said to be a "womaniser" with no morals. On the other hand, I met a European doctor who was looking after a practice while the regular incumbent was away. Among his duties was the running of a clinic in Yong Peng. He said the local Chinese spoke highly of Go Peng Tuan. Go Peng Tuan, so he was told, had been a redoubtable fighter against the Japanese. He had been a respected person in labour disputes and suchlike troubles since the war, giving good advice to both the rubber tappers and their employers alike. Now he had gone into the jungle, an implacable foe of the Government.

Whatever the facts about Go Peng Tuan's character, he was certainly a competent leader and stage-managed several successful ambushes.

There were some who said that it was Go Peng Tuan who relieved the Home Guard of Palot of fifteen shot-guns on the night of 17th/18th September. This village was outside 63 Brigade Area and I had no hand in the investigation, so I may be mistaken in supposing the incident to be the work of Go Peng Tuan. I quote it, however, to help the reader to get the " feel " of Johore State.

The village Home Guard was in what was known as Phase II. In Phase I the Home Guard was still under training and had no responsibilities for the defence of the village. In Phase III it was entirely responsible; but in Phase II—as the Home Guard of Palot was—the Police retained responsibility for defence while the Home Guard provided the manpower under Police supervision.

The 17th September was the Sultan's birthday and an air of festivity reigned—it had been a public holiday—and in the evening as many Malay police as possible had been excused duty. A party of fifteen Chinese Home Guards was on duty in the " keep," with a police constable from the Police Station in charge. This constable was changed every two hours.

Just before 10 P.M. the constable, who was Chinese, left the " keep " to go down to the Police Station to rouse the next man who was due to relieve him.

As the relief constable (also Chinese) was on his way from the Police Station to the Home Guard " keep," he was stopped by a party of bandits. These included a woman. The constable's rifle, hat, belt and whistle were removed by the bandits, and the whole party went with the now disarmed constable to the " keep." Here they found the Home Guard feasting on Chinese delicacies—cake and so on—which the bandits confiscated and ate themselves. The bandits then took the Home Guards' shot-guns and departed. As they left they told the Home Guard not to give the alarm for half an hour, with which order the Home Guard complied.

All this time, however, in a house within fifty yards of the Home Guard " keep " were two British Police Lieutenants. One was having a bath before going to bed. The other was reading a book at an open window. In another house nearby was a Police Inspector, and neither he nor the Police Lieutenants heard a sound.

Two factors point to collusion. The total absence of sound—no scuffle, no struggle, no shouts to raise the alarm—suggests a nice friendly party. Next, the failure to raise the alarm for half an hour shows that the Home Guards were either completely under the thumb of the bandits or were accomplices. The fact that there were only Chinese Police on duty and the presence of the cakes may have been coincidence or planning.

This sort of thing brought discredit upon the conception of Phase II Home Guard units. I must, however, record that on 23rd September—about a week after this event—I saw it officially stated that no Chinese Home Guard unit in Phase III had ever suffered a reverse like this.

The deduction I made, rightly or wrongly, was that the bandits did not want to discredit Phase III Home Guards. The effect of so doing would be to have them disarmed, and it is part of the bandit plan to encourage a well-armed Chinese community in Johore. To have a Chinese Home Guard unit discredited and disarmed would be contrary to the bandit policy; but when the Home Guard was in Phase II, any misfortune could be laid at the door of the Police. To score off the Police was to score off the Government, which was naturally part of the bandit policy.

However one looks at this incident one can only deduce that the bandit opposition was a tough one—just the stuff for 63 Brigade.

Another problem that afflicted us in our new Brigade Area was the Johore-Malacca Border Committee of the Malayan Communist Party.

Representatives of the Malayan Communist Party from Segamat and Muar in Johore would meet their opposite numbers from Ayer Kuning in Negri and Asahan in Malacca every now and again, say twice a year. At these meetings, which were held in jungle camps in Mount Ophir, policy in the Border Area was discussed and to some degree co-ordinated. The results must have left something to be desired, for in 1954 a serious effort was made by the bandits to establish a permanent Border Committee with all the concomitants going therewith—a press unit, an armed platoon, a people's work unit and so on.

By mid-1954 the nucleus of all this existed; and when we arrived in Muar there were also definite signs of an independent bandit platoon—No. 5 Platoon—and a press unit as well.

It was, therefore, decided to deal with these people, and a co-ordinating committee under the chairmanship of Mr H. G. Hammett, lately British Adviser in Selangor and now Resident Commissioner of Malacca, was set up. The members consisted of representatives from Malacca, Segamat, Muar and Negri Sembilan, including Special Branch and Military representatives. I was appointed the Military representative. This committee found all the same difficulties that the bandits had found in setting up their Border Committee, of which the *amour propre* of Johore was one. However, before I left Malaya in January 1955 it was beginning to function without undue friction.

Another interesting problem was presented by the jungle areas to the north and east of the road from Segamat to Labis. Here was a great tract of jungle into which the bandits could retreat. Flying over it one could see gardens and clearings that were bandit ones. They could not be bombed as there were aborigine clearings too.

If you look at Map IV you will notice that the Central Road begins to slope away to the west at Segamat. Bandits could get food supplies from friendly sources in inhabited areas on the Central Road; so that couriers, or important bandits travelling north or south, could follow the general line of the Central Road from Johore to Segamat. If they wanted to go farther north, they either had to make the much longer journey parallel with the road or strike out across country from it. It saved so much distance that they preferred this course. But to make it a practical proposition they needed a " staging area "; and an obvious place for a staging area was north of Segamat in the area known as the Selumper Area. So the Selumper Area attracted our interest. I flew over it several times in Austers and helicopters and other flying-machines. Always I saw the same rash of clearings.

Somewhat south of this and to the east was another area where a similar rash of clearings appeared. What happened there it was impossible to say; but we could not tolerate a state of affairs wherein the bandits showed activity which we could not explain.

The tasks, therefore, in the new area boiled down to four. First, I thought, we must stop these irritating incidents on the Central Road. Next, there was the Border Area between Johore and Malacca to settle. Then there were the two jungle areas, Selumper and the jungles east of Labis. Finally, there was Law and Order throughout the whole area.

A priority for these had to be agreed by the Johore State War Executive Committee, to whom I addressed myself. This revealed another difficulty against which those who serve in Johore must contend. The capital of the State, Johore Bahru, is at one tip of it, over a hundred miles from the other end. It is a hundred and ten miles from Johore Bahru to Muar, and to traverse the distance you must cross a wide river by a tedious ferry at Batu Pahat. Although the people in Johore Bahru may be energetic and efficient Government servants, willing to motor or tour as much as possible, they all have a good deal to tie them to their offices. It is not easy for them, when there happens to be a free afternoon, to go far afield. I always found it an irksome business going from Muar to Johore Bahru; and people in Johore Bahru found the reverse journey no better. It was not worth making it unless one could afford the time to stop the night at the other end. Consequently, there was not always sufficient personal contact between those at the centre and those on the periphery. It was no one's fault—it was an accident of geography.

However, in general, the four points of our aim were agreed.

There were three battalions in the new Brigade Area. First, at Tampin was the 1st Battalion The Queen's Royal Regiment. The men of this regiment come from London, Surrey and Kent, the depot being at Guildford. Cockney soldiers predominate, with all their quickness of wit and humour. Cockneys make splendid soldiers and they took to the jungles just as their fathers had taken to the deserts of two World Wars.

Next came the 2/6 Gurkha Rifles. The 6th Gurkhas (and the 2nd) get their men from Western Nepal. They are Magars and Gurungs as opposed to the Easterners (Limbus and Rais) of the 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles. Some of their men were of a sub-tribe called Puns. These men have a quite distinctive outlook on life. As one of their officers put it: " If a Gurkha sees you fall and break your leg he cannot help laughing; but if he is a Pun he runs off to fetch another Pun to watch." They are a cheerful, resilient kind of soldier and I became very fond of them. The officers, both British and Gurkha, in 2/6 Gurkha Rifles were, like those in most Gurkha battalions, very experienced in jungle warfare.

The third battalion were my old friends the Fijians. There had been many changes since they were in 63 Brigade in Bahau in 1952; but there were still many friendly faces. There had been no falling off in standard of performance and I, rightly, expected great things of them.

Finally, there was A Squadron of the Federal Armoured Car Regiment. This unit had been raised in Seremban in 1952 under the ægis of 13/18 Royal Hussars. It was an experimental unit, partly Malay, partly Chinese and partly Indian. Most of the officers were British, though there were also some Malays. The N.C.O.s were mainly Malays, for the simple reason that N.C.O.s had to be obtained from somewhere when the squadron was raised. The Malay Regiment was the only available source, and it contained Malays only. As time goes on Chinese and Indian troopers will become N.C.O.s and, presumably, officers too. It is an experiment that will be interesting to watch.

Looking at my command, I could not but be satisfied. They were first-class troops and if there were any shortcomings it would be no one's fault but my own. The prospect was cheerful: plenty of bandits and good troops with which to harry them.

CHAPTER XXIV

Operations in Johore

(See Map IV)

August 1954 was a busy month. Fifteen contacts with the enemy were achieved, during which fourteen bandits were killed, one was captured and one surrendered. But this was not without loss. Two Gurkha soldiers were killed, one was wounded, and two members of the Home Guard were murdered.

Our successes came in the three areas mentioned in the last chapter.

The 2/6 Gurkha Rifles undertook an exploratory operation, or reconnaissance, in the deep jungle east of Labis. The operation lasted from 26th July to 25th August—that is to say one month, during which the troops engaged were in the jungle all the time, supplied by air, and rarely saw the sun. It was a fine feat of endurance, though this sort of thing has been done so often by the patient, loyal soldiery that one is apt to take it for granted.

The outline plan was for two companies (B and D), each less one platoon (required for local Law and Order), to be taken into the deep jungle by helicopter. B Company was landed at the junction of the rivers Endau and Semerong, with orders to hunt in a southerly direction, looking for tracks or signs of bandits, and to act thereafter as prudence directed. D Company was landed at the junction of the rivers Selai and Kemandok, with orders to follow these rivers upstream, again looking for tracks.

Meanwhile, two platoons of A Company marched due east into the area, one along the Juaseh river-bed, the other along a game track on high ground about four miles to the north.

Thus the six platoons set off from the circumference of a circle about eight miles in radius, heading roughly towards the centre. Their day-to-day progress was dictated by what they found, and the widest scope was left to the platoon commanders. In order to prevent a clash, however, O.C. A Company, Major Tony Taggart, was charged with the task of co-ordinating the day-to-day movements of the troops from his camp in Labis. It was the intention, if the scent did not lead the troops in some other direction, to bring the platoons together on to the line of the River Kemandok and thence back to civilisation in six parallel columns at the end of the operation.

None of us had any illusions about the "going." The Commanding Officer and I had flown over the ground in Austers and had seen it with our own eyes; and anyone who looked at the map could also see what it was like. It is a tangled mass of ragged hills covered with jungle. The hills vary from two thousand to three thousand feet at the peaks; the valleys are only a few hundred feet above sea-level, and there are no known tracks. However we tackled it, there was certain to be a great amount of climbing and slithering down steep hillsides covered in jungle. The hilltops were often shrouded in mist and cloud, and the valleys would be airless, hot and sweaty.

Bad weather prevented the helicopters from lifting B Company to operate on the first day; though D Company, thanks to the skill of the helicopter pilots and a certain amount of luck, got away to a good start. The two platoons of A Company debussed at 5 A.M. and set off on foot in pouring rain, carrying four days' rations, arms and equipment. Every officer and man knew he would not sleep in his bed again for a month.

For the first week no signs whatever of human existence were seen; but on 2nd August things began to happen.

Number 2 Platoon (A Company) found a small camp with accommodation for five or six bandits, unoccupied for eight months. It was not much, but it was something. Meanwhile, 4 Platoon (B Company) found a bandit camp for about thirty men. It had been built about a month—the soldiers tell by the appearance of the latrines, the cut ends of treestumps, fungus growth and so on. It had been evacuated only three or four days previously. Tracks led south-west from the camp and patrols followed them.

Next day this platoon found a courier post, which had been occupied by two or three bandits a few days earlier. The tracks continued and the platoon followed them. They came to another camp on 5th August in which they found three well-built *bashas*, some gym-shoes, female underwear, cooking-pots, and a small garden under the trees growing pumpkins and turnips. This platoon seemed to be hot on the trail of something, and we expected to hear of a success every day. The tracks, however, petered out.

A " cast," as with foxhounds, was made by Tony Taggart from an Auster. This brought the platoon to a series of clearings, where they found an ammunition dump containing Japanese and British ammunition, well oiled and preserved, and some Bren-gun magazines, loaded and greased.

No. 3 Platoon (A Company) had more luck. They were guided by an Auster to a small natural clearing where bandits had been growing vegetables. Here they found a small camp, sixteen sacks of tapioca and a tin of salmon. (All this at least ten miles from the nearest civilised habitation.) Tracks led south from this clearing ; and next day, 6th August, they found a camp. It had accommodation for six bandits and had been recently evacuated. A cooking-pot was boiling on the embers of a fire ; there were sacks of rice and a tin of salt in one of the *bashas*.

The platoon made a base nearby, and ambushes were laid in the vicinity of the camp. Towards evening the officer commanding the platoon heard sounds in the jungle. He thought it was a wild pig, and cursed his luck that they could not go and shoot it as pork for dinner ; for to do so would compromise the ambush on the camp nearby.

Suddenly a shot rang out. It was the platoon sentry firing.

" What the hell are you doing, shooting at that pig ? " yelled the officer.

" It was no pig, Sahib," replied the sentry. " It was a man, and I have killed him."

The officer ran to where the sentry stood. Someone in the jungle fired at them. Officer and sentry ducked involuntarily. Peering round the trees the officer saw a figure move. He gave it a " squirt " with his automatic carbine. The man shed his pack and ran, vanishing before the officer or sentry could fire again.

The man killed was a bandit courier. He carried a shot-gun, four rounds of ammunition, and fifteen pairs of gym-shoes. The pack let fall by his companion contained documents. They were of no immediate value, being Communist doctrinaire propaganda, but obviously newly printed. The press must be in the vicinity.

The patrols by this time were approaching an area within range of the 25-pounders of 93 Field Battery, of which one troop had been allotted to 63 Brigade for this operation. The Gunners began a systematic milk-round of all the camps found by the patrols on the ground, and of the clearings seen from the air. This sounds easy enough ; but, in practice, extraordinary care had to be exercised in avoiding our own patrols. One must remember the difficulty of map-reading in the jungle, of ensuring that everyone's location is accurately plotted, of selecting targets near enough to the troops to flush the bandits into them, yet not so close as to be dangerous. However, the effect was admirable. The firing stirred up the bandits and made them move. Tracks were soon picked up, and No. 3 Platoon (A Company) made a contact on 15th August.

The leading scout of a patrol doing a routine search was moving slowly down the game track on the ridge-line of a low spur. Below him he could hear the cascade of a stream, running over boulders. It was raining gently and in the distance was the sound of thunder.

Quite unexpectedly the sentry heard voices—Tamil voices. He signalled to the patrol behind him, and the patrol leader came forward to join him. They listened and heard the voices again. They sounded " like men turned into monkeys " —that is, in voluble argument. Patrol leader and rifleman crept quietly forward. A fallen tree barred their way. To look over it would be courting certain death : they moved silently to where the branches of the tree lay. Peering through the branches the patrol leader saw three men, all Tamils. One was supposed to be on sentry duty, watching the fallen tree lest anyone approach over the trunk. But his rifle lay on a boulder beside him, and he was looking back over his shoulder at the other two men. These two were seated on a bamboo bench in violent argument, in which the sentry joined from time to time.

The patrol leader thought there were some other men about, but he could not see them. Whispering to his companion, they both took aim at the two men arguing.

" Fire ! " whispered the patrol leader.

The two men locked in argument fell dead upon the ground. The sentry grabbed his rifle and ran. But he knew not which way to run and ran straight at the two Gurkhas, who killed him outright.

The patrol entered the camp and heard sounds of bandits running in the jungle. They followed these, but without success. We never discovered how many had been in the camp at the time of the shooting. Three pistols, one carbine, one sawn-off shot-gun, a hand-grenade and some ammunition were recovered. Vast quantities of Communist propaganda and literature were found. Foolscap paper, pens and ink (but no printing material) were also found.

The chief significance of this contact was the identity of the Tamils killed. One was a member of the Negri Sembilan State Committee, yet here he was deep in the jungles of Johore. The only thing that could possibly bring him to this area was a meeting with his boss. Here, then, might be the headquarters of the South Malayan Bureau, or the North Johore Regional Committee of the Malayan Communist Party. The other bandit was a member of the Propaganda Editorial Staff of the State Committee.

I was disappointed, after this very successful reconnaissance, that we could not immediately follow it up with fresh troops ; but the 2/6 Gurkha Rifles were required for another operation by 99 Brigade in South Johore, and no troops were immediately available.

However, when they returned to 63 Brigade in November the 2/6 Gurkha Rifles sent a company back into the area. Again, one of their Gurkha patrols had an unusual experience. The leading scout of a patrol came to a felled tree. The branches lay towards him like a *cheveux de frise*. He made a detour to the right and found another tree similarly felled. To the left it was the same. He therefore decided to penetrate the dead foliage and branches. He cautiously pulled a branch aside. This gave him a view of what lay beyond. Four or five trees had been felled so that they lay starwise with the branches outwards. Inside the star was a small clearing with two *bashas* in it. In front of one of them there was a Chinese.

He was an unusual type for the jungle. He had an intellectual appearance. He wore glasses; his hair was brushed more like a bank clerk's than a bandit's; and he sat on a bamboo chair before a bamboo table. He was writing with a fountain-pen. A bandit's khaki hat hung on the back of his chair. As he sat writing, the Gurkha was to his left front, about seven yards away.

I doubt whether the Gurkha stopped to think. He raised his weapon and cut the scribe in two with a burst from a Bren gun. Three or four figures darted from the *bashas* and vanished into the jungle.

The Gurkha was much criticised. Why had he fired? Why had he not called up the rest of the platoon? Why had they not surrounded the camp and got the lot? The Commanding Officer was disappointed. He had repeatedly impressed on his men the need for surrounding a camp before opening fire. Why was it not done now? He went with the helicopter that brought back the body for identification and saw the camp himself.

What had not been made clear in the wireless report of the contact was that there was, beside the scribe, a sentry. Had the Gurkha withdrawn, however carefully, the branches must have rustled and attracted the attention of the sentry. Then the chance would have gone, the birds would have flown. Better the bird in hand. . . .

The scribe turned out to be the editor of a bandit propaganda news-sheet. He thought he was perfectly safe and insufficient precautions were being observed. His companions were intellectuals, not jungle fighters. They fled in a body when the shots were fired and were tracked down by the Gurkhas. Heavy rain unfortunately fell that evening and the trail was lost. It was, however, found again three or four days later—one of the fugitives wore a hockey boot with a sole that left a peculiar imprint. The tracks led to a camp.

The camp had obviously been made by comparative amateurs. There were none of the refinements such as the genuine jungle fowl would make. On the ground were the skin and the chewed bones of a lizard, which had apparently been eaten raw as there were no traces of a fire.

We deduced, perhaps optimistically, that the quarry was lost, dispirited and hungry. The voice-aircraft was summoned. It circled the area assuring the fugitives that they would be well treated if they surrendered. All they had to do was to light a fire or display white underclothes in a clearing, or fire shots into the air. This would be seen from the air or heard by the pursuers and taken as a signal for surrender.

The voice-aircraft circled for several hours. Auster aircraft relieved it, and a watch was kept till nightfall. All next day the watch continued, and the voice-aircraft flew again with its message. But there was no sign of smoke or white cloth in any clearing, nor were shots heard. The voice-aircraft was called off and we turned to other things.

Some days later the patrol came upon a clearing. In it was a pile of wood as though to make a fire. An attempt had been made to light it, but rain had evidently prevented it from catching. There were no tracks because of rain. That was the last that was found. Only time will tell. Eventually a document will be captured, or a bandit who knows what actually happened will surrender.

During this operation various members of the Brigade staff and I went by helicopter to see the soldiery from time to time. Always the soldiers were in good heart, never were they discouraged. The Gurkha, like the British soldier, is a hospitable person and seldom let us return without brewing up a mess-tin of tea. Tony Taggart arranged that each platoon received daily a general picture of the whole operation, so that those who saw and heard nothing knew something of the excitement of the chase.

On one occasion I visited a bandit camp that had apparently been used as a hospital of some kind. The *bashas* had tumbled down, having been empty for over a year; but there were many signs of surgery: tin spools on which surgical plaster had once been wound, empty bottles that had once contained M. & B. pills, a pair of rather ghoulish forceps, and a pair of child's shoes three inches long. Perhaps some poor mother had brought her first-born into the world here.

In the Selumper Area, too, the 2/6 Gurkha Rifles had successes. Directed from the air, they went from one clearing to the next destroying the crops—or eating them, which always seemed to me better value for money. On 2nd August they came upon a garden full of ripe pumpkins and tapioca. Under the jungle trees at one edge of it was a small grass shed. The patrol leader, a lance-corporal, and his men went over to this to investigate it. When they had entered the shed, a bandit, who had been watching them from the jungle edge, approached stealthily, thinking to kill them all with a hand-grenade as they bunched inside the doorway. He put his hand to his belt and took a hand-grenade from it. As he looked up he saw in a flash that he was doomed. He saw a Gurkha with an aimed rifle, specially positioned by the lance-corporal for just this eventuality. The bandit's expression, so I was told, was something never to be forgotten. His name was Yong Sang, *alias* Yong Sum. He was a member of No. 4 Independent Platoon; and as the evening report laconically had it, " one 36-grenade was recovered in good condition."

Ignorant people sometimes think that any fool can be a soldier; but if the lance-corporal on this occasion had not had his wits about him there would have been a different ending to this episode.

The normal framework operations also had their highlights. The reader will have noticed that each of the various companies that set off into the deep jungle left one platoon behind to take care of Law and Order in support of the Police.

From the nature of things, with the resources of the Special Branch behind them, troops working on the framework are likely to kill more bandits than those going into the jungle in search of them. The pity with framework operations is that the enemy's casualties are evenly spread all over the area. Turning the thing inside out : it is much worse for a Company Commander to suffer eighteen casualties in one platoon than to have six in each of three platoons. So it is with the bandits. One must weigh up whether it is good value to sacrifice the larger number of successes, spread over many bandit sub-units, in favour of a lesser number concentrated in one of them.

It was particularly difficult to weigh this up in August 1954 in North Johore, as the quality of Police information was so very high. In the Segamat Circle, for instance, troops or police went out five times in the month on red-hot information, and each time came home successful. This they were able to do because the District War Executive Committee were individually and collectively an excellent team, and the Special Branch Officer had that touch of genius that exceeds what can be done by merely taking pains—though I expect he did that too.

In the Muar Circle, Major Nathaniel George with his C Company of Fijians, usually acting on information, succeeded in wiping out the whole of the Bakri Branch of the Malayan Communist Party, though this was not completed till November. This enabled the Emergency Restrictions in the area to be lifted and the area declared " white." It was a fine achievement, and the direct result of excellent team-work and planning of the Muar District War Executive Committee and the skill-at-arms of the Fijians.

In the Border Area where Malacca, Johore and Negri Sembilan join, an interesting series of operations was staged between 26th August and the end of the year. They were known as Operations "Lash," "Trapper" and "Petard," and are best dealt with together in a later chapter.

It would be a mistake to suppose that all these operations were achieved without loss to ourselves. I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that two members of the Home Guard were killed. One was bludgeoned to death in his bed in the middle of the night. The other was bicycling back to his home in the evening when he was waylaid by bandits. An account of this murder, written by the bandits after the event, was found later by a patrol of the Queen's in a jungle "letter-box" (a hollow tree). This stated that five men from 5 Independent Platoon were sent to do the deed. The victim was selected because he was likely to be an easy target. The purpose of the crime was to intimidate the people in his district in a general way—there was no personal vendetta against him. More information about the bandits was getting to the police than the Communists liked; so they decided to murder someone just to show that helping the Government did not pay. The fact that information did not entirely dry up after the murder says a lot for the hardihood of the people—mostly Chinese new-villagers. The murder itself was done by shooting. Sixteen shots were fired, of which over ten were misfires (not misses), but of the six that went off, three or four hit the target.

There were also military losses: one man in July (killed); two in August (killed) and one injured by a falling tree while he slept at night; one (wounded, not seriously) in September when a planter on his rounds of his estate saw figures and fired, but the figures were British; and three Police (wounded) in October.

In November the Fijians suffered two severe losses. One was the result of an accident. A Maori sergeant (Nepia, son of the Rugby football full-back who played in the All Blacks' English tour in 1924), fiddling with his weapon, shot himself fatally through the body.

The other Fijian loss was near Yong Peng. The bandits had made several successful assaults upon outlying police and Home Guard posts in various parts of the country, though not in 63 Brigade Area. (One of these I described in the last chapter.) At the request of the police, therefore, a patrol from the Fijian rifle company in Yong Peng was sent to stiffen up a police post in an outlying part of the Yong Peng Estate. After about a fortnight the officers concerned found that this process was like supporting a dumbbell at arm's length and decided to withdraw the police completely from the post on Monday, 15th November.

On the day before that particular morning the Fijians' escort armoured car would not start. Instead of towing it to make it start, the corporal, a Fijian—and Fijians are happy-go-lucky as well as courageous—decided to go without the armour. The men got into a fifteen-hundredweight truck and went to their destination. Next morning, on 15th November, they set off on their return journey in the same fifteen-hundredweight truck, the policemen being due to follow them later. On the way back the Fijians ran into an ambush. Five men were killed and six were seriously wounded. Eleven weapons were lost.

I saw the scene next day. The Fijians' vehicle was on an estate road, climbing a gentle slope and on a slight right-handed bend. On the left of the road was a barbed-wire fence, perhaps five and a half feet high, with strands about nine inches apart and diagonal wires between the posts. I cannot say the purpose of so high a fence, but it protected some acres of rubber saplings a few inches high. On the right of the road the ground was planted with rubber trees, with very little undergrowth, though there was some in the ditch and on the verge of the road. The ground sloped up slightly to a crest fifty yards back from the road. On the road itself was a stain of blood the size of a blanket, and tracks where the front wheels of the vehicle had run into the ditch on the right of the road.

The positions from which the bandits fired could be seen—thirty-two of them. They had lain in the scanty undergrowth on the road verge, not more than a yard from the

Fijian Soldiers waiting to emplane in Helicopters before an Operation

laterite surface and only a few inches above it. This was very unusual for bandits, who prefer a cutting with a lip, high above the road, against which return fire is difficult. The positions, however, commanded a view of the road for a hundred yards as it curved up towards them.

Piecing it together afterwards, what I think happened was this: A band of terrorists, under Go Peng Tuan, had either got wind of the proposed withdrawal of the police post and had come looking for a chance to ambush it, or they had come to reconnoitre for an attack upon the police post, not knowing that it was due to be withdrawn. As they topped the crest in the rubber to the right of the road they heard a vehicle coming towards them. They threw themselves down in what cover they could find and the vehicle came into view. To their joy it was a " soft " vehicle which, taken unawares, might prove an easy prey. Whether the bandits saw they were Fijians only at the last moment is not certain. It is possible; for the bandits have a wholesome respect for the Fijians. Anyway, when the vehicle was within three or four yards of the ambush two Bren guns opened fire upon it, and other firers joined in with lighter weapons. The windscreen was shattered and the driver killed instantly. The corporal, who had many wounds—neck, shoulder, arms and abdomen—jumped from the truck and cleared the wire fence on the left of the road. He ran some way, but another bullet hitting his hand caused him to drop his weapon. He was in open ground, the saplings being only a few inches tall, without a weapon and badly wounded. He could do nothing but hurry towards the main road, where he rightly thought he might summon help. It was an almost incredible feat of endurance.

A Police officer and a British subaltern of the Federal Armoured Car Squadron were among the first on the scene. There was nothing they could do but pick up the wounded and send them to the Kluang Military Hospital. When I visited the wounded, the doctors, who had done marvels for them, told me that they had seldom seen men live with so much lead inside them. None, I think, had less than six bullets in him, and some had more.

The Commanding Officer of the Fijians and all his men were out for revenge. Every soldier they had—cooks and clerks included—were turned out ; but Go Peng Tuan (if it were he) and his band evaporated into the jungles and swamps.

Thus, from 1st July to 31st December, eight of our soldiers were killed and twelve were wounded (not all seriously), as against forty-one bandits killed, four captured and twelve surrendered, besides fifteen wounded but escaped.

CHAPTER XXV

OPERATIONS AGAINST THE BORDER BANDITS

IN a previous chapter I have shown how both the British and the bandits found it troublesome to organise operations in the Border Area—that is, where the States of Johore and Negri Sembilan join the Settlement of Malacca. The organisations of both sides creaked as they worked.

I felt that, given time, ours would work well enough. Like a new motor engine, it needed running in. No one was better qualified, by tact and patience, to run it in than Mr Hammett, its chairman.

On the military side there was less difficulty. The task of co-ordinating military operations against the Border bandits was entrusted to the Commanding Officer of the Queen's Royal Regiment. He had his headquarters in Tampin, which was about fifty miles away; so he, too, had difficulties, but they were not insuperable. His rifle companies he moved in July 1954 into the Border Area.

The Border Area lies between the rivers Muar and Kesang. It would be convenient if these two rivers had many bridges and roads connecting them; but they do not. Between the two rivers is a mountain—Mount Ophir—some four thousand five hundred feet high, eight miles wide, and fifteen miles long. The Malacca side of Mount Ophir is mainly precipitous, but the other side, the Johore side, has ridges running eastwards. It might roughly be likened to the letter E. The upright stroke of the E is the razor-edged spine of the mountain. To the west there are few spurs and the mountain presents a flat, unbroken, steep face. To the east, numerous steep ridges run out like the horizontal strokes of the E. Between the ridges run streams and waterfalls. On each side of the mountain runs a road, and these two roads join north and south of the mountain, but there is no road across.

The mountain itself is covered by jungle, though on the west face there are bare, rocky cliffs visible here and there.

This mountainous area formed the hub of the bandits' Border Committee Area and the lair of their No. 5 Independent Platoon. The Communist Committee consisted of a bandit called Ho Lim Seng, with a bodyguard, a propaganda unit and a few henchmen. No. 5 Independent Platoon consisted of fifteen to twenty bandits. There were also three branches of the Malayan Communist Party subordinate to Ho Lim Seng : the Belading Branch in the east, the Simpang Lima Branch in the south, and the Kebun Bahru Branch in the north-east. On important occasions these people were joined by bandits from outlying districts of the Border Area. There was thus a permanent nucleus, or hard core, with a floating population, varying in quality from the experienced jungle fighter to the small boy who rapped a tree-stump with a stick to give warning that troops were in the vicinity.

It will be seen that these people nearly all came from Johore ; and indeed, strictly speaking, the whole mountain is in Johore. But the villages, which formed the feeding grounds for bandits at the foot of the mountain on the western side, are partly in Malacca, and some are in Negri Sembilan. Hence the need for co-operation across the border, both by the bandits and by us.

The first operation we attempted against the Border bandits was known as Operation " Lash." It started almost by accident. The Commanding Officer of the Queen's and I were discussing the situation in front of the map in his office.

One of us said : " These Border bandits haven't been knocked about for some time. I believe that if we gave them a hammering with aerial bombing, artillery and mortars the weaker vessels would crack and we should have some surrenders."

Hardly was the thought expressed than Dick Stuckey, the Brigade Major, telephoned. Division had, out of the blue, offered us the support of 93 Field Battery R.A. from 26th August to 6th September. What did I think ?

" Let's have 'em," I said ; " and give them to the Queen's."

That is how it began.

The Commanding Officer went to the Muar District War Executive Committee with a concrete proposal. The Committee put their heads together and hatched an elaborate plot. The chief weapon was to be noise. First the mountain was to be blasted by aircraft, guns and mortars. Then aircraft would fly over it telling the bandits to surrender with the alternative of another pounding.

Foot patrols had located numerous camps, both old and new, and these conformed with a pattern of the streams on the mountain. The most likely camping sites could thus be approximately predicted, and these would be the basis of the artillery bombardment.

In order to take advantage of any movement caused by the bombardment, troops would occupy points on the fringes of the jungle where we thought it likely they would get a sight of the enemy.

The controversial item in the plan was how to give the bandits the best chance to surrender. One school of thought, to which the Commanding Officer (and I) subscribed, was to declare, in effect, a three-day truce or amnesty. Under this plan the voice-aircraft would announce that no troops would be in the jungle for three days, and that neither troops nor police would move on the surrounding roads for three days. Any bandit who wished to surrender, therefore, could safely walk anywhere he wished without fear of meeting troops or police and getting shot at.

The cautious people all said: "This is giving the bandits the most marvellous chances to do what they like for three days."

The State War Executive Committee, away in Johore Bahru, took this latter view and wrote a fierce signal to the Muar Committee telling them to cancel this dangerous precedent. Posts and signals, however, worked so slowly that their signal arrived too late. It came, as it were, by the same post as the first surrenders, and was followed by a long letter giving all the reasons why no surrenders could be expected.

The Muar Committee was tempted to reply: "Propose cancelling operation and returning surrendered bandits to jungle."

However, when the distance barrier between Muar and Johore Bahru was overcome by personal contact the joke was seen by all and the " face " of the Muar Committee was restored.

The operation achieved four things. Two important bandits were intercepted and shot by the troops put out on the ground. Three more surrendered and told us all about what went on in the mountain. Next, the bandits were split up into small bands, which made them more susceptible to what the Information Services were able to tell them by voice-aircraft and other means. Thirdly, a number of bandits abandoned the mountain area in favour of the inhabited areas in the plains, where they were much easier to find. Finally, the civil population was much heartened by this audible proof that something was happening to discomfort the bandits.

About this time the new Director of Operations, General Bourne, introduced a new item in the military policy against the bandits. It was well known that certain bandit leaders had frequented their chosen stamping grounds since the beginning of the Emergency: men like " Ten-foot-long " in Negri Sembilan, Yeung Kwo in Selangor, or Go Peng Tuan in Johore. It might, therefore, be a good plan to position troops in the said stamping grounds and so shift the bandit leaders.

This policy—the New Look as it was sometimes called—was enunciated in a Directive to State War Executive Committees, and communicated to the Press at a Press conference later.

Taking this Directive into account, and looking at Mount Ophir, it seemed to me that here was an admirable place to try the New Look.

Mount Ophir was a most unpleasant place to patrol. Whichever way you went, you almost had to go on all fours, either climbing up or slithering down, or even skating along the hillside. It was consequently difficult to move silently.

Hitherto it was our patrols that moved (noisily, in spite of every effort to go silently) and the bandits who sat silently listening for our approach, when they could quit. We often heard them do so, but that was too late.

If we were to occupy the mountain, the boot would be on the other foot. We should be able to stop and listen, the bandits would have to advertise their approach.

Another difficulty in Mount Ophir was the streams. As I pointed out earlier, the hillsides were steep and the streams cascaded over boulders or in waterfalls. When a patrol was near a stream the sound of running water drowned all other noises in a curious way. The patrol leader could not make himself heard in a whisper—he had to shout ; and that was absurd, for the shout would carry a long way farther than the sound of the stream. Even breaking a stick or dislodging a boulder by treading on it seemed to make a sound that travelled far beyond the sound of cascading water. The streams were quite maddening. As one young officer said to me : " You cannot hear yourself think beside a stream ; yet the bandits can hear your lightest tread."

The streams also ran in narrow jungle gorges. You had to slither down to the stream, cross it, and scramble up the other side among the trees. This presented a tactical problem. When a patrol crosses a stream in flat jungle, the Commander can put out a Bren gun to cover the crossing. It is then unlikely that bandits will shoot at the men wading in the water; for they know that they themselves will be shot at by the covering Bren gun if they disclose themselves. But in one of these steep jungle gorges this did not apply. The bandits, taking their time, could find a position to cover the crossing with fire. The patrol leader, crossing the stream, could seldom find a place for his Bren gun from which he could be sure of being able to return the fire. This gave the patrol a sense of helplessness. I always felt, when crossing one of these streams, a naked sort of feeling ; and it must have been much worse for the leading scout. Of course, the patrol leader changed the leading scout from time to time ; but there is a kind of soldier who likes being leading scout and excels at it. You do not want to spoil his nerve by asking too much of him; at the same time you cannot afford to neglect the services of an expert.

Patrols of the Queen's, operating in Mount Ophir, were fired upon several times in circumstances such as I have described; and it seemed to me to be only a matter of time before we suffered a truly bloody nose. This made the New Look commend itself to me even more strongly. If we could occupy the mountain—useless though it was—it would be the bandits, not us, who entered it with the odds against them. We should greatly reduce the chances of a reverse and improve our own of scoring a success.

The Commanding Officer of the Queen's thought likewise; and we therefore decided to establish a force in the mountain itself, in the manner prescribed by the New Look.

Two questions arose. What sized force would be needed or could we afford? And how long could they be expected to remain there before being relieved?

To the first question we thought there was a good deal of scope for cunning. To cover the whole mountain effectively we should need the whole battalion, which was out of the question. We could not afford that. But if the troops moved their camp, so that the bandits never knew where they were, much less than a battalion would do. Because the mountain was visible from the plains round it, any aircraft that dropped supplies would be seen by many bandit sympathisers. They would see the parachutes descend; and we could make them think there were far more troops than there actually were. We could also deceive them as to place. It was not essential to drop the supplies (though it was convenient to do so) exactly where the base camp was; and by stopping the air supply and sending the rations by porters, we could, with a little cunning, make it appear that there were no troops there at all.

The New Look seemed to offer us everything our own way. We decided, therefore, to send a company as a start, and reduce or increase it later to suit the state of the game.

To the second question—how often should the company be changed?—the answer dictated itself. We soon found that, patrolling from a fixed base, a time came, after three weeks, when every area within one day's range had been covered. The Company Commander must then send out his patrols on a two- or three-day patrol (during which at least a day was mere travelling to the area to be patrolled); or he could move his base to the new area and start again. When once a company packed up its base to move it, a good chance presented itself to change over the companies. Thus, say, A Company might cover area A completely in the first three weeks. Then B Company would go to area A, leaving A Company free to return to the company camp and see the sun again.

The soldiery kept extremely fit in Mount Ophir. The altitude made it cold at night, and the cold killed the mosquitoes. In the first month that the base was occupied only one man went sick; and he with an earache that had nothing to do with the conditions prevailing.

Michael Lowry's D Company was the first to go. (For some internal reason, which I forget, the Commanding Officer found it better for him to take only two of his own platoons and a third from C Company.)

When they had been there two days they found a bandit camp only a few hundred yards away, in the next ravine to their own. The camp contained ammunition and cooking-pots and showed every sign that it would be reoccupied.

The Company Commander, therefore, decided to ambush it. He put a sergeant and fifteen men in it, changing them over every two days. They had instructions to eat their rations raw with no cooking—or cook two days' supply before going there—and smoking and talking were forbidden. In his own camp, too, exceptional precautions were taken: no lights after sundown and so on.

This imposed upon the officers and men considerable inconvenience, not to say hardship; but Michael Lowry was quite convinced it was worth it, and because the Company Commander thought it so sincerely the men soon thought it too. There was tremendous keenness and quite a state of tension as the days went by. On the tenth day the bandits entered the camp. The evening report ran as follows:

"Fire was opened, but no casualties were inflicted except two bandits possibly wounded."

Knowing, as I did, the disappointment to the whole company (even to the battalion) I decided to go to the scene as soon as possible and try to understand what had happened.

My caravan was towed to one of the Queen's company's camps and I spent the night there. Next morning it was pouring with rain as we set off before dawn in an armoured three-ton lorry to the debussing point.

Looking about him to see that no one was observing us, the young officer in charge of the escort stopped the lorry. We quickly vanished from view into the rubber trees to the left of the road, and the lorry went on.

It was the hell of a grind up to Mike Lowry's camp, and the drenching rain made the mud underfoot even worse than usual. We halted two or three times. At one halt I saw the largest scorpion I have ever seen. It was almost as big as a lobster, and black.

After about two and a half hours the young officer went ahead with two men to make contact with the camp. The sentry was expecting him, having had wireless warning. After exchanging some form of pre-arranged animal noises for signals, contact was made. The officer returned and led the remainder of the party to the camp.

Although I was looking out for him, I never saw the sentry till I was within a few feet of his rifle's muzzle. Some steps had been cut and we descended them to the camp.

The camp had been occupied by the troops for about a fortnight. Every two men had a *basha*, each one to the occupants' particular design. Most of them had built a pent-house type of roof thatched with *atap* palm leaves. The floor on which the occupants had to sit or lie was of horizontal bamboos well clear of the sloping ground. Many of the *bashas* had names, as in a street in a London suburb.

One soldier had signs of an incipient skin trouble on his face and, with Michael's permission, had abandoned shaving and had grown a beard; but all the rest, apart from the mud on their boots, were well turned out. From never seeing the sun for so long their faces were curiously sallow;

but they were all as fit as fleas and looked very hard physically.

Everyone felt keenly the disappointment at their unsuccessful ambush in the nearby camp ; so, having exchanged the customary civilities, I asked for a guide to take me to the place.

The bandit camp consisted of four excellent *bashas*, each about the size of the shed a builder puts up before building a few houses. There was one smaller one, not completely built. The camp straggled down a valley with boulders and rocks strewn amongst the trees. The topmost *basha* was a hundred yards from the lowest one.

The camp had been ambushed from within, and my guide was the sergeant who had been in charge at the time of the unsuccessful contact.

On the tenth day of the ambush the sergeant, who was concealed outside the lowest *basha*, heard Chinese voices on the hillside above him. Numerous rocks and trees made it impossible for him to see the owners of the voices, so he moved cautiously to a position behind a rock, from which he judged he would get a view.

One of the Chinese voices called out, shouting a Chinese name. Beside the sergeant there lay a Chinese Liaison Officer who called back.

" Here I am, comrades," he cried. " All clear."

The sergeant then saw a bandit, dressed in khaki and carrying a rifle under his arm as a sportsman carries a twelve-bore. One hand was in his pocket, and with the other he was beckoning to someone behind him whom the sergeant could not see.

No ambush ever laid looked more likely to succeed. The bandit was beckoning his companions towards a bowl-shaped re-entrant that had been planned as the killing ground. There seemed not the slightest doubt that all the bandits would have to enter this place.

Six soldiers, including one with a Bren gun, lay covering this bowl. The bottom of the bowl was sandy, and five paces across, with no undergrowth in it. The sides of the bowl were partly rock and partly steeply rising jungle. Trees interlocked above it. Any man who was wounded when in the bowl would never climb the steep sides out again ; and even an unwounded one would not climb quickly. At the lower exit of the bowl were the sergeant, the Chinese Liaison Officer and two men—one a lance-corporal—all fully armed. Soon the bandits would " cop it good and proper."

The sergeant had repeatedly told his men not to fire before he did. That was to be the signal to begin. None the less, he whispered to the man beside him : " Don't fire ! Don't fire ! " The bandit did not hear the whisper for he continued to beckon.

Suddenly a shot rang out and firing became general. The sergeant fired his carbine and hit the beckoning bandit, as he thought, in his heavy pack as he turned to flee. (He had not, of course, got down to the bowl or he must have been killed.) The bandit fled into the trees and vanished.

The sergeant collected his men. Those covering the bowl had seen three or four other bandits being beckoned to, including a woman. One of the men said he saw a " tall Malay " entering the camp from another direction.

The sergeant led his men at once after the fugitives. They found signs in two places of blood, indicating that two bandits had been wounded. (A bandit who surrendered afterwards confirmed that one man was badly wounded and had subsequently died.)

Michael Lowry had heard all this from his camp and had looked at his watch. It was 8.30 A.M. He heard one single shot that started the affair and then a general fusillade. He took the whole company on a search with a tracker dog, but found no further traces of the enemy.

The first thing one asks is : " Who fired that first shot ? " No one would admit to it. The sergeant was not sure, except that it was one of his men, not a bandit.

I did not see fit to conduct an inquisition of the soldiery ; but I had a chance to speak to the sergeant privately. He said : " I am pretty sure, sir, who it was ; but I cannot be sure enough to have him up before the Colonel. But," he added, " I'll never have the —— man with me again in action."

My own belief is that one man thought he had been seen by a bandit. Perhaps he had moved. He felt it was only a matter of seconds before the bandit raised his rifle and fired. This thought flashed through his mind in a split second and he fired.

As Michael Lowry put it : " That man is now thoroughly ashamed of himself and will not own up." It would take a man of great moral courage to do so. And because all the other men were keyed up, looking down their sights, one can understand how it is that no one but the man himself knows who the culprit was.

After this heart-breaking disappointment the company remained another twenty days in the jungle (making it a calendar month) ; but they never saw another bandit. The New Look had worked and the bandits had quitted the mountain.

CHAPTER XXVI

OPERATION "PETARD"

(*See Maps IV and V*)

AFTER the bandits left Mount Ophir it was not long before we heard where they were. One or two had returned to the South Gemas Forest Reserve in Negri Sembilan, where they would be like needles in a haystack. Some had gone into the inhabited areas of Tangkak or Grisek, where occasional contact was made with them. The majority, however, were in the vicinity of the New Village of Kebun Bahru (meaning the New Garden) and the Negappa Estate nearby.

There were two ways of getting at them in their new playground. One was by cunning; the other by force. Though I usually prefer cunning in operations in aid of the Civil Power, here I did not; I should have preferred force.

Let me explain. The rifle companies of the Queen's were deployed round the foot of Mount Ophir in various disused estate buildings, reached from the road that ran round the mountain. Each company had its defined area of responsibility. Any bandits within a particular company's area were game for that company to hunt. All round the mountain, therefore, except in one place, the bandits could find no sanctuary from the Queen's.

There was one place where they could, and did, find sanctuary. That was in the aforementioned areas of Kebun Bahru and Negappa Estate. In this area was posted a unit of the Special Operations Volunteer Force. This unit, a platoon in strength, consisted of surrendered bandits, who had seen the folly of Communism and who had volunteered to serve with the Police. It was a Police unit, entirely subordinate to the Police, taking no orders from the Army.

It is a popular British fallacy that the troops of the enemy are invariably better than our own. No Briton will ever have a word said against the skill of the German soldier or the courage of the Jap; and it is popular to suppose that the Malayan bandit is a wizard too. Thomas Atkins and Johnny Gurkha are supposed to be good-natured simpletons beside the genius of the bandit. The truth is the reverse. Thomas Atkins and Johnny Gurkha are better men, better led, better armed, and better trained than the bandits. If they were in the bandits' place no government could resist them. The only quality the Malayan bandit has, which we lack, is an ability to carry lead in the belly without actually expiring.

Following this conception, there were many officers—Police and Army alike—who supposed that if the bandits sought sanctuary in the area of the Special Operations Volunteer Force they would stand no better chance of survival than in an area dominated by the Queen's. This, of course, was rubbish, and I should have welcomed the removal of this ex-bandit platoon. Then the Queen's would have entered their area and given the bandits a bad time. This is what I mean by relying on force.

There was, however, another opinion—the opinion that advocated cunning. The leaders of this opinion were Roy Henry, the officer in charge of the Police District of Segamat, and his Head of Special Branch, Roy Sutcliffe. These two very competent young officers—the two Roys we used to call them—had no futile illusions about the relative skills of British troops and ex-bandits. Both had been soldiers themselves, one in the Sappers, the other in the Green Howards, but they had another plan. Although, left to myself, I should have turned down their plan, I could see that there was much to be said for it. It was, perhaps, six of one and half a dozen of the other. So I accepted their plan, and the Queen's adopted it.

Their plan was to make use of the peculiarities of their ex-bandit platoon. In Chinese warfare there has always been, since the dawn of history, a fair amount of secret communication exchanged between both sides, even during hostilities. It was partly for this reason that the military profession was not highly regarded in Mandarin circles. Here the soldier, particularly the general, was regarded as an extortionist and robber, who was quite prepared to change sides if the opposition would make it worth his while. I doubt if this applies to the new régime of Communist Chinese generals ; but it is the traditional old-world Chinese view.

The ex-bandit platoon could, therefore, be relied upon to be in touch with the opposition in some obscure, Oriental way. They would soon find out who was feeding the bandits. They might even feed them themselves. The plan of the two Roys depended upon this. Given time, they would soon have the bandits eating out of their hands. Then would be the opportunity to bring in the soldiery.

This, accordingly, is what they planned to do. The Far East being what it is, I expect the bandits knew what was happening too. It was a style of warfare comprehended in every aspect by both sides. It might be compared with the attitude of an audience watching a conjuror. The audience pay the conjuror. The conjuror deceives the audience, and the better he deceives them the more delighted they are. But they know all the time that they are being deceived. It is a sort of convention.

This process of schooling the bandits to do what we wanted was bound to take time. It might take six months or even a year. At the end of that time one might have a scoop and get a number of bandits ; but over the same period, by straightforward patrolling by the Queen's, one would probably get the same number and perhaps more. Moreover, during that period the bandits might do something nasty—murder a planter or something like that. That is why I preferred the other method.

However, having embarked on the plan of the two Roys, the thing to do was to make a success of it. The troops were disappointed. They knew—everyone knew—that the bandits were in the area for which the Special Operations Volunteer Force was responsible. " Why," they asked, " don't they either kill them or get out and let us ? "

The planters were apprehensive. They received information from various sources, including their own labour, that the

Armoured Car patrolling the Gunners' Area while they are in Action

bandits were in the Negappa Estate and round Kebun Bahru. "What the hell does the Army mean by leaving them there unmolested?" was what I heard from every manager.

It was easy to pacify the soldiery. One could tell them the truth. One could tell them that the plan was to "ripen" the bandits for the soldiers to pick when the time came. There was not the slightest fear of the soldiers giving away the secret; but it was not so easy with the general populace. Of course, we took the senior planters into our confidence; but a line had to be drawn somewhere, and there were many people, Europeans and local people alike, who wrote angry letters complaining that the whole thing was being mismanaged.

Time slipped quietly by. Week succeeded week, and one month became two. Another factor began to weigh in the scale. Every battalion and every Commanding Officer in Malaya is inevitably judged to some extent by their successes against the bandits. It is often an unjust talisman, since some battalions are in better areas than others. But everyone knew that, in the Border Area of Malacca and Johore, there were lots of bandits. "What," they began to ask, "is the matter with the Queen's that they kill so few?"

The people who counted, the Divisional Commander and the General Officer Commanding Malaya Command, of course knew what was happening; but it could not be so on the lower levels. One could only hope that when the time came to pick the fruit there would be plenty to pick. My three years' experience against the bandits, however, had shown that if you got four bandits in one action it was a good one. To get six was unusual and to get ten was almost unheard of. By the laws of chance—if there are any—it was unlikely that the Queen's would get more than four bandits when the time came to pick the fruit. Had they hunted in the ordinary way in the Negappa Estate area they might have counted upon two a month. If, therefore, the process of schooling the bandits (excuse the change of metaphor) lasted more than two months, it became more and more problematical whether it was a good investment.

The unsuccessful contact, described in the last chapter, that drove the bandits off the mountain had taken place on 12th October. I was satisfied when Roy Sutcliffe told me in early December that he believed that 12th December would be " the night." That made two months' waiting. In that time the Queen's could hardly have got more than four bandits in the area ; so any excess over four satisfied honour. Such was the background to Operation " Petard."

The information on which the plan for " Petard " was based was as follows : on the night of 12th/13th December a party of bandits would collect food from the village of Kebun Bahru. Almost a ton of rice and other foodstuffs were to be collected.

The bandit plan was to collect this food and carry it to some distant hide. Then they would stage a major incident, for which they must have long been planning. They might ambush the soldiers or the police ; or they might kill a planter. Having done this, they would withdraw to their hide and live upon their ton of rice till the hue and cry died down. (This, of course, was largely conjecture ; but I am certain it was a true conjecture.)

The village of Kebun Bahru [1] is a neatly laid out village, rectangular in shape, with the main road running down one of the longer sides. There is a wide gate in the middle of this side that admits traffic from the main road. A double fence, five feet high, surrounds the village ; but at the back of the village—almost opposite the gate on to the main road at the front—is a smaller gate, by which the villagers may go out to their vegetable gardens or to their work on the rubber estates nearby.

This smaller gate is locked every night and lights on the wire fence are lit at sundown. This was done by the Malay Police who had a post by the main gate.

Inside the wire fence, and near this gate, was the house of a Communist supporter. Bit by bit he had collected the food in sacks in his house—a wooden building like a large chicken-house. On the night 12th/13th December the food

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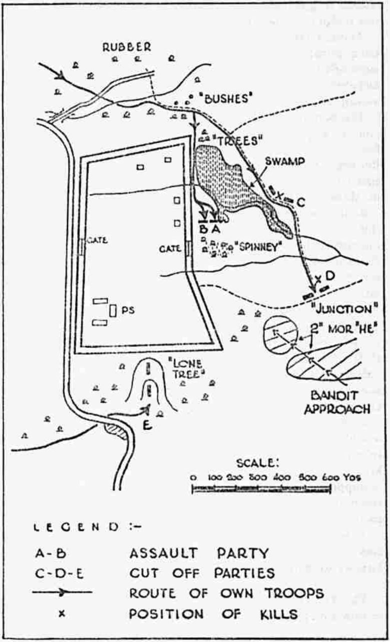
[1] See Map V.

KEBUN BAHRU

MAP V


RUBBER
"BUSHES"
"TREES"
SWAMP
C
B A
GATE
GATE
"SPINNEY"
D
"JUNCTION"
2" MOR "HE"
PS
"LONE TREE"
BANDIT APPROACH
E
SCALE:
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 YDS
LEGEND :-
A-B ASSAULT PARTY
C-D-E CUT OFF PARTIES
ROUTE OF OWN TROOPS
x POSITION OF KILLS

was to be got out through the back gate, though history did not relate how the gate was to be unlocked.

About forty yards behind the village and in line with the back gate there was a clump of trees or spinney. On three sides of the village, away from the road, were rubber estates. Between the rubber fringe and the spinney were long grass, swamp, and vegetable gardens.

The bandits planned to take delivery of the food from the spinney at 7 P.M. Exactly who was to take it to the spinney, bandits or civilian supporters from the village, was not known. At the time they took delivery (7 P.M.) it should just be getting dark; and it gets dark quickly once it starts in Malaya. While it was still daylight the bandits would assemble in the rubber somewhere on the half-circle behind the village. They could safely do this, for there was no undergrowth in the rubber. No troops could be concealed there in ambush. (Remember, the bandits suspected that *we* knew what was happening, just as we suspected *they* knew what *we* knew.)

Ordinarily, everyone is required by the curfew rules to be out of the rubber by 5 P.M. and inside the villages by 7 P.M. On this occasion, however, the bandits would put out their own sentries to make sure no troops were within the half-circle contained by the road and the rubber. Some of these sentries (we conjectured) would be armed bandits. Others would be civilian sympathisers. If police or troops were seen, the sentries would tap on the trees and the bandits would call off the operation. A few civilians might be run in for breaking curfew rules, but their fines would not be heavy.

Supposing, however, that the sentries reported all clear, the bandits could then safely walk to the spinney, collect the food, and withdraw as the darkness descended.

This was their plan, we believed, and a very good one it was too. But then the bandits had been at the game as long as we had!

The task of thwarting their plan was entrusted to the Commanding Officer of the Queen's. His nearest company to the village happened to be D Company under Michael Lowry.

I offered the Commanding Officer everything we had in 63 Brigade and to get for him anything else I could if he wanted it. There was about a week in which to make the plan and put it into effect. He asked for (and got) a squadron of armoured cars, a troop of artillery, some searchlights, and R.A.F. co-operation in the form of bombing, leaflet dropping, and the dropping of flares.

Michael Lowry and the Commanding Officer, dressed in plain clothes and carrying a theodolite, so as to look like surveyors of the Public Works Department, made a reconnaissance of the scene. An aerial photo was also taken.

It was at once obvious to them that it would be impossible to ambush the spinney. If they tried to do so, bandit sympathisers from the village would see them getting into position and the food lift would be called off by the bandits.

It was equally impossible to put a cordon round the rubber estates that fringed the area behind the village. If they tried to do this before the bandits arrived at their rendezvous they would be seen by civilian spies. Then the bandits would not arrive. If they tried to do this when the bandits were at the spinney they would be seen by the bandit sentries. By firing a few shots, these sentries would give the alarm. Then the bandits from the spinney would have a lesser distance to run to escape than would the troops to stop them.

They considered bombarding the spinney with artillery, mortars, or medium machine-guns. They turned this down for two reasons. First, the spinney was only forty yards from the village, and one badly aimed shell or mortar bomb would make more Communists than the other shells would kill. Secondly, it presupposed knowing the *exact* time the bandits were there. This would necessitate someone in the village giving a signal when the spinney was full of bandits. They deemed it impossible to do this with sufficient secrecy. Either someone already inside the village must be in the know, or an outsider must be inserted to give the signal. This course was rejected.

They considered a bold assault through the village, with a barrage behind the spinney to keep the bandits in place till the assault party arrived. This they turned down too. The bandits would take their chance in the barrage, and by the laws of chance many would escape—perhaps all.

Only one other course lay open to them. It was to lie up in the jungle on the other side of the road. Let Michael Lowry and his men lie up there all day, getting there before first light so as not to be seen. As it was getting dark, let him lead his men to the road and across it. Let them follow down one edge of the village at right angles to the road.

By this route they would be wading in a boggy stream in which tall reeds grew. They would be inside the bandit sentry screen on the rubber fringe, and thus stand a fair chance of reaching the spinney unseen.

Before assaulting the spinney the company would divide. One platoon, under its National Service 2nd Lieutenant, and the other, under the company sergeant-major (there being no officer), would make for cut-off positions to intercept any fugitives as they ran from the spinney.

The chief danger in this plan was that while Lowry might avoid being seen by the sentries in the rubber, he might be seen by someone looking out of a window in the village. If there were bandit helpers in the village the alarm would be given in the conventional way—switching on the " amenity " radio diffusion at full blast, or making " bird noises."

To cover this risk, it was decided to deploy the rest of the battalion in a wide outer cordon ; to stiffen this up with armoured car patrols ; to shell and mortar and machine-gun all the likely hiding places (revealed by the air photo) within the cordon ; and to illuminate the whole scene with pyrotechnics from aircraft, mortars, and Verey pistols.

This, indeed, was the outline plan. I went through it myself and approved it. I had but one comment. I feared lest the assault party, in the half-light, might kill a lot of civilians carrying the food from the village to the spinney, mistaking them for bandits. Of course they would deserve to be killed ; but by only trifling distortion the Communists would make excellent capital out of it. In the event there was no risk of this ; and I hope my *caveat* did not cramp Mike Lowry's style.

Anyone acquainted with the mechanics of turning a military plan in a Commander's mind into co-ordinated action on the ground and in the air will realise that much detailed work remained to be done. No one could move from his base till the last possible moment. The R.A.F. must orbit out of earshot. The assault party, lying in the jungle, must not be seen. The gunners must know their targets, the signallers their frequencies, and everyone must know the way to his station and what is required of him when he gets there. The Queen's, however, " buttoned this all up."

A further complication was that although the night 12th/13th December had been appointed by the bandits as the night for the food lift, they would probably alter it. A simple way to test their own arrangements would be to stage a false start. From this they would also see whether we were going to react or not.

Roy Sutcliffe reckoned that he would know by 4 P.M. on the day whether the bandits proposed to act or not. But no one would know till the last moment, except the bandit chief, whether they would perform the whole act or only a trial run. Therefore no one must move till the last moment ; but then they must go quickly.

As the day grew nearer tension mounted. But Nature had another card to play. It began to rain and continued to rain for forty-eight hours. Floods rose, and vast spaces of North Johore and many parts of Malacca were under water for a week.

Troops everywhere turned their hands to flood relief. The value of the Emergency Operations machinery was demonstrated in another light. The close integration of Civil Service, Police and Army, which forms the basis of anti-bandit operations, was no less effective in fighting the floods. There was no trial and error in procuring the necessary co-operation. It was there already.

Tents were dropped by the R.A.F. to homeless people marooned on patches of high ground. Army lorries, which, because of their exceptionally high clearance, could traverse roads covered in water, were used to take food and clothing to beleaguered villages. Army cooks served thousands of meals to refugees; and two private soldiers—one British and one Malay—gave their lives in an attempt to bring help to people in distress.

That, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter, apart from the fact that the floods caused the bandits to postpone their food lift.

Roy Sutcliffe heard, when the floods abated, that the bandits planned to take delivery of the food at Kebun Bahru on the night of 22nd December or on Christmas night.

Everyone stood-to. An excellent concert party of the Queen's, who had rehearsed a comic operetta entitled "Babes in the Wood," stood down. On both days, however, the bandits called off their food lift. The concert party again stood-to. The fatted turkeys, to whom a warning order for Christmas had been sent, ceased living on tenterhooks and appeared on the soldiers' plates and a good time was had by all.

Meanwhile my successor, Jim Vickers (10th Gurkhas), had arrived in Malaya. My three years were finished, and I was due to hand over command of 63 Brigade on 31st December. The bandits did not call for their food before the New Year, and Jim Vickers, for better or worse, left the plan for "Petard" unaltered.

At last, on the evening of 3rd January, the bandits came for their food. Mike Lowry and his company had lain up in the jungle in concealment much longer than he or anyone else cared for. It was sometimes very hot, sometimes very wet, and often both.

Away in Malacca, in the midst of packing-boxes, I heard one evening the distant sound of gunfire. I saw the searchlights and the parachute flares. I knew that "Petard" was "on." How much better to have been with the Commanding Officer of the Queen's in his command post near the scene! But one of the cardinal rules in military life, when you have handed over command, is to keep away.

Next morning I heard the news, and by invitation went to see the scene. Two bandits only had been killed, though many more must have been present.

What had happened was this: Michael Lowry with his men sallied from their concealment at 6.15 P.M. and marched silently to the road, arriving there just before 7 P.M. It was an exceptionally bright evening, a full moon wheeled in the sky and it was absolutely still. (That, no doubt, was what the bandits had been waiting for.) It was impossible to cross the road to the reeds and the stream beyond without being seen. Impatiently they waited for the dusk to fall.

As they waited, a man on a bicycle hove into view and pedalled slowly towards them. Within fifty yards of them he dismounted and looked searchingly to left and right. He was almost certainly a bandit scout. The plan had foreseen this contingency. Someone was about to pounce upon the bicyclist before he gave the alarm; but the bicyclist, having taken a good look round and having seen nothing, remounted his bicycle and entered the village. The police closed the gates after him at 7 P.M. So far so good.

Lowry crossed the road, almost certainly unseen, two minutes past 7 P.M. He led his men through the swampy stream along the fence towards the back of the village. The floods had left the stream much deeper than before and progress was slow. Time was precious and they pushed on as fast as they could, wading and splashing in the mud. As they reached the back of the village, the spinney was visible, silhouetted against the evening sky.

Again, so far so good. The two platoons under the officer and the sergeant-major hastened to their positions. They were only a hundred yards from the spinney and only a few minutes behind time. There was, however, no visible sign of a bandit. Perhaps the Queen's had come on a fool's errand and no one was there. Perhaps the whole thing was a giant hoax. Perhaps they themselves would all come under withering fire. It was an exciting moment.

Suddenly a torch from one of the houses in the village flashed. The radio blared forth the evening programme from Radio Malaya and a small boy called out, " Hoopoo, Hoopoo." They had been spotted from inside the village.

Only one course lay open. Cast stealth to the wind and charge. Lowry, as Company Commander, and being fleetest of foot, led the way. Just as he approached the spinney a shot rang out. Then another. There was a burst of Bren. Had he run into an ambush ? Or was the firing from one of the other platoons ?

Meanwhile the aircraft began dropping flares. Mortars fired parachute flares and the place was as light as day. There was another burst of fire and all was still.

The bandits had been there right enough. They had collected the food early in broad daylight and had begun to withdraw. When the warning from inside the village was given, they dropped the sacks some fifty yards back from the spinney. (Forty sacks were collected by the troops next day.) The bandits then scattered and ran.

The rest of the company had taken up their two positions, the one under the young officer, the other under the company sergeant-major. In the moonlight a bandit had suddenly appeared in front of the officer. Both men saw each other at the same instant.

" Ping ! " exclaimed the bandit. (" Ping " is apparently Chinese for " soldiers.")

The young officer was tempted to say " Pong ! " but he resisted. He pressed his trigger instead.

A few seconds later another bandit appeared in front of the company sergeant-major's men. Several men saw him and all fired. The credit was given to the company quartermaster's storeman—an elderly soldier who had never been out on an operation before.

One of the bandits killed was the Branch Committee Member for Kebun Bahru (equivalent to the quartermaster) and the other a District Committee Member for Tangkak (equivalent to the chief supply officer).

One of the armoured cars saw a third figure, flitting in the moonlight, and fired, but claimed no hit. No other sign was seen, though a great search was made.

It is often easy to be wise after an event; but in this event I had every chance to be wise before it. I could not see any marked improvements that could be made in the plan then. Nor can I think of any now. I console myself with the thought that the two men killed were the two top-ranking bandits present.

As the Commanding Officer of 2/6 Gurkhas said: " If an anarchist fired two shots at the Trooping the Colour and hit the King with one and the Queen with the other, everyone would say he had been lucky."

The voice-aircraft went out next day, working in combination with the guns, telling the bandits to surrender and get away from the shelling. Three bandits surrendered within the next few days. One was the bodyguard of the District Committee Member killed at the food lift. The other was the second-in-command to the Branch Committee Member killed. The third was a boy of no account, aged seventeen.

So " Petard " accounted for five bandits, three of whom were good ones. Maybe other kills and surrenders followed; but by then I was in a ship sailing for home.

If this operation showed nothing else, it showed what patience and hard work you must use in order to get results.

CHAPTER XXVII

MALACCA

(See Maps II and IV)

THE reader will remember how, in 1952 and 1953, the Settlement of Malacca was in the 63 Brigade Area together with Negri Sembilan, and how we left it in October 1953 for Selangor. In July 1954, when we returned to North Johore, the Settlement of Malacca came within the Brigade Area again. Thus I was a member of the Malacca Settlement War Executive Committee for the three years, less about seven months. It is therefore convenient, despite chronology, to deal with the Malacca Emergency problem in one chapter—and a bright chapter of success it is too.

I found that my predecessor, George Collingwood, had said at a conference on 20th November 1951 : "I believe that the concentration of troops now in Malacca will soon lead to the disintegration of the bandits' fighting potential in the Settlement." He was quite right.

When I arrived in January 1952 the Tactical Headquarters of the Green Howards was in Malacca Municipality—it does not like being called a town—and three rifle companies were operating in the Settlement : one in Alor Gajar, one in Jasin, and one in Asahan. Against this were two hundred and ten armed bandits. In December 1954, when I handed over command of 63 Brigade, there were under sixteen bandits, and most of Malacca had been declared a White Area with no Emergency Restrictions in force.

The credit for this should be divided as follows. First, credit should go to the Resident Commissioner, as head of the Government in the Settlement. He and his officers were able to show the people that the British way of government is better than the Communists' way, and that to support the Communists was folly. Next, credit must go to the Special Branch of the Police, who had the bandits on tenterhooks and brought them to the guns of the Security Forces—Military, Police, and Home Guard alike. Finally, credit should go to the junior leaders (company commanders and downwards) and men of the Security Forces for their endurance, their enthusiasm and their skill. For myself, I always tried to encourage and help these people in any way I could, but not to meddle with what was progressing very well.

I regard the conduct of the Emergency in Malacca from 1952 to 1954, inclusive, as a model of how to fight Communism. It was a model which, for various reasons, it was not easy to follow in the Malay States. In order to explain this I must make a digression into the history of the Settlement. (It is the only place in Malaya that has any history to speak of.)

The earliest reliable references to Malacca occur in the records of the Chinese Imperial Envoy Chong Ho, who visited Malacca in 1409. In 1411 the Sultan Mohamed Shah went from Malacca to do homage to the Emperor of China; from which one may assume that even in those days the Chinese had some influence there.

The connection between China and Malacca was severed by the Portuguese. Under Albuquerque they captured the fortress of Malacca in 1511 after an unsuccessful attempt in 1509. The Portuguese mission was inspired by Christian zeal. They regarded the inhabitants as "Moors"; and to give them a better chance in the next world they felt it their Christian duty to convert or persecute them in this one.

St Francis Xavier visited Malacca in 1545 and performed many miraculous healings there in the Name of God. The Saint died on 2nd December 1552 in the island of Sancian, off the South China coast. His body was buried there but did not putrefy or decay, and was brought to Malacca in February 1553. In March 1553 a plague was raging in Malacca, but when the Saint's body was brought ashore the plague at once abated. The body was buried again in Malacca; but on 11th December it was transferred to Goa, where it still lies intact. It was exposed periodically for the faithful until 1952.

The Portuguese left an impression of Christianity on the Municipality. They also left something of their language and architecture. There are still many Roman Catholics in Malacca; some have Portuguese names—de Souza, Gomez, Fernandez, for example. Some still speak Portuguese and there is a definite look of the Continent of Europe about the buildings. As you motor from the north, by the main road to Malacca, the first sign you see of it from across the rice-fields, three and a half miles away, is a pair of conventional church towers rising above the tree-tops—not a bit Oriental.

The Portuguese were supplanted by the Dutch in 1641. The Dutch were actuated by trading impulses. Though Christians themselves, they were not Roman Catholics. Indeed, they persecuted the Roman Catholics so that their priests had to live in the jungles as the bandits do to-day.

The Dutch, too, left their mark. The river was canalised by them and solid buildings on either bank were built so that to-day, looking over the bridge in the middle of the Municipality, one is reminded of some township in Holland. Many of the names are Dutch—Jonker Street, Heeren Street—and the Government Secretariat building is still known as the Stadthuys.

During the Napoleonic wars the Netherlands were overrun by the French; and there was some danger of the Dutch possessions in the Far East going over to the "Quisling" Government in Holland. Until the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 put an end to French sea-power, there were the same sorts of potential danger in the Dutch East Indies as there were in the French island of Madagascar in 1942.

The British consequently occupied Malacca in 1795, though they left the Dutch officials to administer the territory. The Napoleonic Wars ended at Waterloo in 1815 and by 1820 the British had established themselves in Singapore and Penang. From these two great trading sea-ports they were able to strangle the Dutch economy in Malacca. So in 1824 two wise and hard-headed peoples—the Dutch and the British—signed the Treaty of London.

By this treaty Holland ceded Malacca Settlement to the British, while we ceded Bencoolin to the Dutch.

Thus the position of Britain in Malacca is entirely independent of treaties with Malay Sultans, Rulers, or peoples. This is the fundamental condition of the success of the Government against the Communists. In Malacca Settlement the Government is entirely British. It emanates from British brains and it is administered by British Civil Servants, assisted by Chinese, Malays, and Eurasians of British, Portuguese or Dutch extraction. Everyone has an equal chance under the traditional umbrella of *Pax Britannica*.

This is the first fact to grasp—unpalatable though it may be to those who decry the British and their colonial policy. Of course, we cannot stand still. Times are moving to-day just as they have done throughout the long history of Malacca; and the British in Malacca must move with them. In my view, there are great possibilities for using our position in Malacca to bring to an end the tensions in Malaya from which the Emergency springs. That, however, is outside the scope of this book. But I repeat, if we stand still the state of the Emergency will go backwards in Malacca.

The Settlement War Executive Committee of Malacca in January 1952, when I joined it, was very different from that in Negri Sembilan before the arrival of General Templer. In Negri there was a dual head—the nominal head or chairman, who was the Haji, and his consort the British Adviser, Sheppard. In Malacca there was only one head, Mr G. E. C. Wisdom, the Resident Commissioner.

Wizzy was an excellent leader and he had that indefinable, though easily recognised quality of " drive." When he left in 1954 one of the marks he left behind by which he will be remembered is a park, reclaimed from the sea and flanked by an avenue known as Wisdom Drive. This is a better pun than perhaps later generations will guess.

Wizzy always came to meetings of the State War Executive Committee well briefed. He knew what all the papers were about, and had usually made up his mind what he wanted done about each item on the agenda. Round the table sat his own subordinates (that is, excepting the senior planter and myself), so business was done with despatch and efficiency. Occasionally we had battles, but they were conducted without rancour. Wizzy would listen to reason and, as I insisted on the final say in what the soldiery would or would not do, we got on famously.

Wizzy had the spirit of adventure, rarely found in the trained Civil Service administrator. Whether it was his idea, or whether it was planted in his mind by General Templer, I cannot say, but the suggestion of a White Area in Malacca was mooted in June 1953.

Wizzy summoned a meeting of the Operations Sub-Committee of the Settlement War Executive Committee. He very rarely did this and General Perowne, Commander of 17th Gurkha Division, and I both attended. He pointed out that great headway had been made against the bandits in 1952 and early 1953. Their numbers had gone down from over two hundred to round about fifty. " Surely," he argued, " it is wrong to penalise with Emergency Restrictions —food control, curfews, and so on—the whole population of Malacca Settlement just because we cannot catch fifty bandits." There had been no incidents of any kind in certain parts of the Settlement for nearly a year. Why not declare them White ? Why not remove the Emergency Restrictions ? Why not tell the other districts that if they would get rid of the bandits by denying them food and telling the Police of their activities they would be freed of restrictions and declared White too ?

The cautious members of the Committee shook their heads. " Too soon," said some. " The White Area will provide a feeding ground," said others. " What happens if we have a recrudescence of terrorism in the White Area ? " asked others. Wizzy was ready for all of them. " You must begin somewhere," he argued ; " and someone must take the responsibility of making the beginning. If the bandits start feeding off the White Areas the Special Branch informers will tell us. If there is a recrudescence of terrorism in the White Area we shall know without being told. Then we can clap on the Restrictions again good and hearty."

"But," he concluded, "I don't think we shall be let down by the people. I believe they will play their part."

To-day, when there are White Areas in many parts of Malaya all this seems obvious. But then the idea was entirely novel. Certainly there was risk in it; for if we did have to put on the Restrictions again the Government would "lose face"; and "face" counts for a lot in the Far East. In the Far East it is often wiser not to try at all than to try and fail. Best of all (and everywhere) is to try and succeed. This is what Wizzy was confident of doing; and to add emphasis to the occasion he proposed to invite the High Commissioner down to Malacca to declare the opening of the White Area. Again the cautious shook their heads. "Better not involve the High Commissioner in all this," they said; "for if we then have to go back to the Restrictions, we shall lose double the 'face.'"

Personally, I was captivated by the idea. I saw the White Areas being used by the Information Services as an offensive weapon. There were plenty of sticks in the Emergency Legislation with which to beat the people. Here was a carrot to hold before them. Let the Information Services go to it and exploit the new weapon.

Also I foresaw the bandits, when they tried to re-enter the Settlement, being told by the people of Malacca to run away to Johore. When the people again tasted freedom the bandits would be the most unpopular visitors imaginable; for they would certainly be followed by a re-imposition of the Restrictions. Let the White Area spread, I thought, pressing the bandits before it. There was a risk, it is true, but faint heart only won fat woman.

There was a risk, of course; but in the last analysis it was Wizzy who took the risk. If the whole thing went wrong the cautious could all say "We told you so," and Wizzy, as head boy, would take the rap.

Wizzy had his way at this meeting, and we then had to decide how big an area we should declare White, and how we should define it. This was a difficult technical problem. Clearly, there was a great advantage in following a *mukim* boundary (equivalent to a parish boundary).

These boundaries were long established and well known. There would be no ambiguity in interpreting the extent of the White Area if it followed *mukim* boundaries.

On the other hand, *mukim* boundaries were drawn in the same haphazard way as parish boundaries in England. Sometimes a *mukim* boundary ran down the middle of a road. Then one would get the absurd position of the householders on one side of a road being subject to (say) a curfew, while those opposite were free to stay out all night.

In the end we achieved a compromise, so that the first White Area followed *mukim* boundaries except in residential areas where a variant was found following a stream or other easily recognisable landmark. A coastal strip of Malacca was decided upon for " whitening."

The policy of White Areas was inaugurated by the High Commissioner in Malacca on 5th September 1953. The effect was electrical. The people demonstrated their joy with happy faces and Union Jacks. Whenever a bandit appeared in the White Area his presence was at once reported. When, as happened, a Home Guard rifle was taken by a marauding bandit, the headman wrote to the High Commissioner and to the Resident Commissioner promising to get it back. In a few days its return was reported. (This illustrates the state of collusion that must exist in a guerilla campaign, and how it can be turned to our advantage.)

Gradually the White Areas of Malacca were extended, and when I left in January 1955 all but a small portion had been declared White. Here I feel bound to say that after Wizzy's departure in the autumn of 1954 a more cautious line was taken by his successor. I deprecated this caution. It seemed to me that if the promise of White Areas could be used as an offensive weapon by the Information Services the more vigorously it was used the better. Also, it seemed, that if the Government were blatantly to take a risk by showing its confidence in the people (even if the time were not entirely ripe) only good would come from it. However, it was not I, about to depart, who stood to take the risks ; so I was not in a strong position from which to argue.

White Areas were declared in other States and Settlements. By the end of 1954 the idea was a popular one. Even Selangor was bold enough to try the experiment. But it was in Malacca that the experiment was first tried; and I have no doubt that, had it gone awry, there would have been plenty of people both inside and outside Malacca who would have been delighted to reproach Wizzy with " reckless and irresponsible administration." However " the good is oft interred with their bones," and I am glad to dig it up now as another memorial to Wisdom's drive.

While the administrative skill of the Settlement Government must take pride of place in freeing the Settlement of Malacca from bandits, the Special Branch ran it a close second.

The whole Settlement of Malacca is no larger than many districts of Johore and other States. There are few places in the Settlement to which one cannot get, on the excellent roads, in under an hour. In 1952 the bandits totalled about two hundred and fifty. The Special Branch had dossiers on most of them; and two hundred and fifty is not so many that one single brain cannot cope with them all. Consequently Bill Woolnough, the Head of the Malacca Special Branch, could cover the whole Settlement with a personal touch that would have been impossible in another State.

It would be imprudent to explain how he got his results. Suffice it to say that it was not necessary for the troops to scourge and struggle for them in the manner necessary elsewhere. For the most part the contacts with the bandits came " on information "—from Bill Woolnough personally. If anyone were to ask who conducted the Security Forces' operations in Malacca, the truthful answer in 1952-53 would have been the Head of Special Branch. However, I do not mind sharing the reflected glory with the four Chief Police Officers who flashed across the scene, each holding the appointment for about six months, over the two years.

In 1952 the soldiers and police eliminated forty-seven bandits, which included ten surrenders. In 1953 there were over twenty surrenders and about the same number of kills. At the same time a number of bandits decided to go by small boat to Sumatra across the Malacca Straits. When the first White Area was declared there were between fifty and sixty bandits left. In December 1954 the number was listed at about a dozen.

It must not be thought that the Malacca bandits were a poor-hearted crowd. They were just as brutal as those in any other area.

Here, for instance, is an example of their methods—it is a quotation from a Police report.

"Ceylonese Murdered and Robbed by Communists

Brief Facts

1. On 15.8.52 at about 7.30 P.M. 15 armed terrorists were reported to have gone to the house of a Ceylonese Estate Contractor named A. C. Kandiah residing at 27¾ m.s. Simpang Bekoh. The terrorists tied A. C. Kandiah with a rope and dragged him behind his house at the point of the pistol.

2. The wife tried to persuade them to leave her husband but they just kicked and pushed her down and threatened her not to shout. They also robbed the house cash amounting to $150, 3 *gantangs* of rice and 7 fowls as they abducted A. C. Kandiah.

3. When the terrorists left the house the son-in-law named K. Nagalingam of deceased made a report to the Police at Simpang Bekoh Police Post and the Police came and searched the area. About 50 yards away at the back of the house they found the said Kandiah dead with stab wounds on the throat. Also found 2 live rounds of ammunition and Communist pamphlets strewn near the dead body. No contact made with the terrorists.

4. The deceased was the contractor of Shammugan Estate at Nyalas and was living at 27¾ m.s. Simpang Bekoh for nearly 30 years, married to a Japanese woman. During the occupation he was there with his Japanese wife and he helped most of the Chinese in that area from being tortured by the Japanese."

Nor did the bandits restrict their efforts to harmless civilians. In April 1952 the Company Commander of the Green Howards in Asahan was ambushed and killed on his way back from a conference at Tangkak. He had with him an assistant planter (a civilian) and a private soldier as driver. Both men behaved with great gallantry, which I was delighted to see recognised by Her Majesty the Queen.

Gradually we were able to reduce the military strength in Malacca from three rifle companies to one. The most intractable area was in the north-east—round Asahan. Here, D Company, the Green Howards, under John Barlow, was succeeded by D Company, the Gordon Highlanders, under John Turnbull, in 1952; and they, in turn, were relieved by D Company, the Queen's, under Michael Lowry, in 1954. All these officers led a somewhat lonely, independent life, like princes on a desert island. Each in his way became an expert in harrying the bandits; and Malacca owes much to their endeavours.

Finally, the freeing of Malacca of bandits must be attributed in some part to the good sense of the people there.

In 1952 and '53 I was a visitor every time I came to Malacca. I lived in Seremban and only came to see the troops or (every fortnight) to attend the Settlement War Executive Committee. I knew the ground from my many visits, but I could not claim to know many of the local people.

In Negri Sembilan and in Selangor, when I travelled by road, visiting the soldiery, I used to take a sandwich lunch and, about lunch-time, call at some planter's bungalow and ask leave to eat it there. Planters are hospitable and understanding people. Though they pressed me to lunch at their table, they always allowed me to eat my sandwiches more quickly and depart. In this way I got to know many of them and to hear their problems and hear about the people. But in Malacca I used to lunch with one of the rifle companies or Wizzy, and I did not know the planters or people so well.

It was not till 63 Brigade Headquarters was moved to

Muar in July 1954 that I had an opportunity to study the people in the Settlement of Malacca. For many reasons it was convenient for me and some of my officers to live in Malacca. Then it was that I found what a welcome awaited. Wizzy tried all he could to get Brigade Headquarters positioned in Malacca. The usual tendency to shoo the "brutal and licentious" away was completely lacking. Here we were invited, and it was *we* who had to say No and go to Muar, where we could be actually on top of an Auster strip—a *sine qua non* in my view.

Not only was the Government welcoming, but the commercial houses were too. The Shell Company let my wife and me have one of their bungalows (at half the rent they might reasonably ask). The United Engineers did likewise for the Intelligence Officer; and Dunlop followed suit for my successor when the two of us overlapped for a month. While rapacious sharks in Singapore asked private soldiers' families two hundred and ten dollars a month for a double room, the Shell Company only asked me that amount for a whole house.

It was a nice house with a big garden and a gardener provided by the Shell Company. One morning there was great excitement. An old Chinese woman, who lived on the edge of the rice-fields that we could see from our windows, came to the house. A tiger, she said, had been in the rice-field. We went out and inspected the "pug marks." Sure enough, they were a tiger's marks.

An old man, part hunter, part soothsayer, came to look at the pug marks. He said that the tiger frequented the jungle some miles away, visible from our top windows. Every week, when the local people killed a chicken or a goat to eat, they would put the entrails out for the tiger near a shrine. Owing to the floods of December 1954 the people could not get to the shrine, and the tiger went hungry. So it came down to the outskirts of Malacca where we lived, in Klebang, to see what it could find. The soothsayer said it was a friendly tiger and that it would not come again. Nor did it.

The old woman who had brought us news of it was a queer old character. The well from which her household drew water had a yield of indifferent quality—brackish and clouded—so she used to draw water from a tap by our garage. Shortly before we left, she brought a basket of eggs as a present to my wife in return for the water. There was no saying No to her.

Nearby, a Chinese fisherman had a boat. The sail was made of old Australian flour-bags, and the rigging was stick and string. Every Sunday after tea, if it were a fine evening, he and my son and I used to go sailing in his boat. We sailed to an off-shore island, or to one of the numerous Chinese fish-traps off the coast. He was a comparatively well-educated man and could read and write English. For many years he had worked as a clerk in a business house in Singapore. This was lucrative, but it did not satisfy his soul. He left it to return to his native Malacca. He had bought a house from his savings and a boat. With these he led a precarious but contented life. As he said: "Very risky, sir, and not much money, but healthy and happy."

When we left for England, the fisherman wrote farewell letters to my wife and me. The one to my wife was worded as follows:—

"DEAR MEM,

I am very glad to write to you these few lines.

Ever since I met you and your husband Mr Henniker, this will be my foremost letter.

It is understood that you are leaving for England at about one month more. So I want to write and tell you how I feel about your going away. In fact I am very sorry about it.

Regarding your kindness and also your husband Mr Henniker's, I can never forget them. I shall always remember both of you, even if you both were away in England. May I pray to GOD, so that all of you will arrive in England safely, after a happy journey. I am hoping you will be coming back to Malacca at an earlier period.

As you have artistically drawn our portraits, you will be taking them along with you to England. So that will keep our memories, and remember us here, whenever you take a look at them in

England. My wife also conveys her best wishes to you. And we hope you every success at home in England.

Your son Aidron (Adrian), I hope he will become a good scholar in England. And don't forget to write to me, when you have safely arrived there. I shall be waiting for news from you more and more, and without fail I shall reply it.

As your son Aidron likes to call me 'Choon Chou Chuan,' but my school name is Goh Kim Chuan. He always like to call me by the above name. I am very fond of him.

As a matter of fact, I like to teach him more about the sea, if ever he stays here a little longer. Congratulations for his future professional education. And don't forget to remind him about me, 'Choon Chou Chuan' the fisherman.

Yesterday you have snapped our party photograph at the coast. I shall very much expect a copy of one, so I can keep it for the sake of remembrance during your absence—when you all were away in England.

In the meantime, I send you all my utmost regards and best wishes.

Hoping you all BON-VOYAGE in advance.

Yours faithfully,

G. K. CHUAN,
The fisherman."

Experience of the East is apt to make one seek some ulterior motive behind Oriental gestures; but there can have been none behind this as the circumstances show.

I have quoted these as instances of kindness; and I could quote many more from every stratum of society, rich and poor, official and unofficial. A fine spirit ran through Malacca Settlement and much could be made of it; but it all hinged upon sympathetic and efficient government. Let the quality of this fall off and all our gains are lost.

CHAPTER XXVIII

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I

To achieve military success in Malaya it is necessary to integrate all the forces available. I hope the reader of this book will agree that we have gone a long way towards this. The devising of the necessary machinery was the work of General Briggs. Making it work was left to General Templer. Everyone strives to make it work even better now.

New men, new minds, new methods will always produce improvements in techniques and ways of waging war. But I cannot see any purely military step that can be taken to increase markedly our military successes against the bandits. All the time I was in Malaya, High Authority—of which, in a small way, I suppose I was part—was always receptive of new ideas. There were very few suggestions made that were not listened to attentively.

I personally believe, therefore, that small improvements only will be made in military methods. It is in the political and administrative field that the battle against Communism must be won.

II

The soldiery in Malaya were in extraordinary good heart, as I hope I have made clear in the foregoing chapters. From the highest to the lowest, the request they would make to a fairy godmother—if such existed—would have been the same : " Show us where the bandits are, so that we may get at them."

Whenever I talked to soldiers I found the same high morale. The one aim was to get to grips with the bandits.

It was heartening and reassuring; and the Gurkha battalions have been at it a long time.

III

I have shown the burden that National Service puts upon the Army. Do not misunderstand me. The British Army could not fulfil its commitments to-day without National Service. National Service is essential to-day; and the National Service officers and men are first class. There is not the slightest doubt about the quality of our young men. It is the continual change that causes the burden. A battalion " turns over " two thousand men during its three years in Malaya. Very few educational establishments in England have so great an output—and they do not have to fight bandits at the same time.

I do not believe that any army but the British Army could achieve the same results. Give some credit, therefore, to the Regular cadre of officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men who make it work. Give credit also to the young men themselves.

IV

If I have a criticism of the Army in Malaya, it is that there is too much " tail." I write subject to correction; but let me give one example. There exists in Malaya a considerable organisation for the repair of vehicles. Many of the men in this organisation must, from the nature of things, be National Service soldiers. All this is necessary to keep the present vehicles on the roads. I question the wisdom of bringing young mechanics out from England to mend old vehicles, when by leaving them in England they might for the same money be making new ones that need less mending. In England a mechanic works his whole week at his trade. In the Army no mechanic can work so long, because he also has his military duties to do. He must clean his kit, he must do his annual weapon training, he must do his guards and so on. Whatever expedients the Army tries it cannot get as much work from a mechanic, working as a mechanic, as can Industry at Home.

I single out this one example; but others will occur to the reader. It is, I am sure, good training for the man; but whether the correct man-power balance between Industry and the tail of the Army has been achieved seems to me open to doubt.

V

The reader will have observed how the services—Civil, Police, and Military—have been integrated in committees. I sometimes wonder if this is really the best experience for Army officers. The top-ranking soldiers in every Army must work in close harmony with the Civil Power. For them the training in Malaya, working with a Civil Power, must be a useful experience. But only a handful of officers can ever reach those heights. Successful committee work involves endless compromise. In war compromise on the lower levels is not so valuable. We must train our officers as commanders, not as committee men. I leave the reader to judge the risk, but I offer the opinion that there is some danger here.

VI

The external threat to Malaya needs a few words. Take Korea as a pattern of the Communist design. The original Communist intention was to make the North Koreans do the dirty work. The plan was for them to attack the South Koreans and their American friends and defeat them, casting the Americans into the sea. They nearly succeeded, but not quite. The reaction of the United Nations was quicker and fiercer than they foresaw. The Chinese Communist armies had to join the fray themselves. Russian aircraft and technicians had to be employed too. Even then the Communists could not succeed.

In Indo-China the same design was employed. Here the Chinese Communists did not have to go so far. The Viet Minh, with Chinese technicians perhaps, but without Chinese armies, did the dirty work alone. But make no doubt about it, the Chinese armies were ready in case of need. They had but to march to join the battle.

In Malaya, too, the Communists have tried, and are trying, to make the bandits do all the dirty work. They have not succeeded. And here comes the difference: without passing through Siam the Chinese armies cannot intervene. There is thus no significant external threat to Malaya while Siam remains independent.

But Siam is vulnerable. In Siam there is a Communist element, and on the borders of Siam is China. Suppose the Communists try the Korean design in Siam. First the Siamese Communists will be urged to try and do the dirty work alone. If they fail they will be offered Chinese or Russian technicians. In the background will be the Chinese armies. Perhaps it will be necessary to employ them.

If Siam goes, the same design can be applied to Malaya. Here are the steps up which the Communists must march to present an external threat to Malaya.

VII

I must touch on the question, " What is to be the end of the affair in Malaya ? "

The Emergency has been going on in Malaya since 1948 and no man can say where it will end. Basically it is a political problem, not a military one. It is necessary for soldiers and police to kill bandits, just as it is necessary for the surgeon to lance the boils on the ailing body. But the military pursuit of bandits is no more likely to cure the ailment than is the surgical treatment of boils. The bandits, like the boils, are the symptoms of the ailment and not the evil itself.

To comprehend the ailment and its cure some repetition is needed. The first thing to realise is that the Federation of Malaya does not include Singapore. Singapore is an island colony connected to the mainland by a causeway which spans the Straits of Johore. When you cross the causeway and set foot upon the mainland you leave the island of Singapore and find yourself in the Federation of Malaya.

The Federation consists of nine Malay States and two British Settlements. The Malay States are Moslem States, each the province of a hereditary sultan. The British are in these States only by virtue of treaties with their sultans.

The facile answer to the Emergency in Malaya is: "Give independence to the country and the grievances of the people against colonial rule will vanish and the bandits with them." This is ill-digested rubbish. Although the bandits make use of the nationalist aspirations of the people to curry favour with the people, these aspirations are not the cause of the trouble. The trouble is deeper than that. The root cause of the trouble is Communism.

Communism is a religion—an evil religion, a religion without a god. Its aim is world revolution and any means likely to help towards that end are legitimate means. To-day the exploitation of nationalism is a useful weapon in the hands of the Communists. If, by the waving of a fairy wand, independence were granted to-morrow, the Communists would continue to seek grievances of the people to exploit. The only form of government that would satisfy the Communists is a Communist Republic of Malaya. That, by hypothesis, the British are not prepared to grant; first, because it is contrary to our way and purpose; secondly, it would be contrary to the wishes of a majority of the people of the Federation.

The people of the Federation are not all Malays, as is often thought. Of the six million souls in the Federation only about two and a half millions are Malays. About an equal number are Chinese, and the remaining million consists of Indians, Pakistanis, Eurasians, Europeans (about twenty thousand) and others.

The Malays are Moslems, mainly small farmers or fishermen, and loyal to their sultans. Their entire upbringing, religious teaching and outlook are opposed to the Communist creed. They, too, have a religion, in which they firmly believe, and they acknowledge " one true God." Communism to them is as alien as it is to the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope. If independence were granted to-morrow and the Malays were entrusted with the government of Malaya they would have no use for Communism ; but they would be no nearer to beating the bandits than the present régime. They would find the same Communist element pitted against them and the same bandits in the jungle waging a guerilla campaign to overthrow them in favour of a Communist Republic.

Indeed, a Malay Government might find more opposition from the Communists than does the Government to-day. Whereas the Government to-day only has a certain number of the Chinese against it, a purely Malay Government would find a far bigger number of the Chinese against it. The reason for this is more difficult to explain.

The Chinese to-day are numerically about equal with the Malays. They have come from China—all but a few born and bred in Malaya—in pursuit of a livelihood in trade, industry, mining, rubber planting, and labour generally. Although they are numerically about equal with the Malays to-day, numerous factors are operating that tend to give them a numerical superiority. The most potent of these factors is one of biology. Both the Malay and the Chinese populations are increasing every year, but proportionately the Chinese are increasing faster than the Malays. An increasing preponderance of Chinese could never tolerate with equanimity a purely Malay Government. Many would therefore throw in their lot with the Communists to help overthrow the Malays.

Thus a purely Malay Government of Malaya is both unpractical and unjust. A Chinese Government is equally, if not more, unacceptable. The Malays own the land and it is only by treaty with the sultans that the present Government exists. A Chinese Government may thus be ruled out too.

The problem is far from a simple one ; but there are various options open to Her Majesty's Government. For better or worse, the one embarked upon is the setting up of a free and a United Malaya with a democratic form of government. There are those who view this as a will-o'-the-wisp and proclaim it unattainable. Whether this is so or not remains to be seen ; and it is in any case a matter of opinion. However one looks at it one is forced back to the original premise that a successful end of the Emergency will emanate only from successful political decisions. The ailment will be cured by political medicine, not by military surgery.

It is still too soon to say whether the political medicine that has been prescribed meets the case or not. If it does not meet the case, Her Majesty's Government must explore the other options before it is too late ; though I doubt if it would be helpful for me to do so here.

The short answer, therefore, to the question, When will the Emergency end ? is : As soon as all the people of Malaya see a political future that is brighter than that offered by Communism.

VIII

I shall end this book with a memory. It is the memory of the soldiers, British and Gurkha and Fijian : their keenness, their endurance, their tolerance, and their good humour. It is hard to speak too highly of the Soldiers of the Queen.

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