

BRITAIN'S INTERVENTION IN MALAYA: THE ORIGIN OF LORD KIMBERLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS TO SIR ANDREW CLARKE IN 1873

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It is well known that British political control in the Malay States began with the Pangkor agreement of January 1874, which was soon followed by the appointment of the first Resident in Perak. The Earl of Kimberley's famous instructions of 20 September 1873 have generally been accepted as providing the basis for this new phase in the history of Malaya and of the British empire. Sir Andrew Clarke was told that the conduct of Britain's relations with the Malay States which were not subject to Siamese influence, would be an important part of his duties as governor. Since growing anarchy was injuring trade and British interests generally, the government had to consider whether it could do anything to improve matters in the States. Although the British government had no desire to interfere in the affairs of the Peninsula, said Kimberley, Clarke should inquire into the condition of each state and report any steps which the Straits government could take to restore peace and to protect trade. Kimberley also added the often-quoted words:

"I would wish you especially to consider whether it would be advisable to appoint a British Officer to reside in any of the Malay States. Such an appointment would only be made with the full consent of the native government...."¹

Six years before this, when Sir Harry Ord became the first governor of the Straits Settlements under the Colonial Office, he arrived with no instructions about the Malay States. What happened in six years to alter Britain's policy?

C. N. Parkinson, in his recent detailed study,² while carefully describing many of the incidents of those years, has failed, I think, to account satisfactorily for the new policy. The Colonial Office in his view, adopted a consistent policy of non-intervention in the Malay States. Although Ord was persuaded by many factors to intervene, and being unpopular in Singapore might have been tempted to make a bid for acclaim by a dramatic external policy, he was restrained by successive Colonial Secretaries. Yet Parkinson shows that intervention did take place. In 1871 Colonel Anson intervened in the Selangor Incident and in 1873 Ord intervened, on Anson's advice, in Perak, with the approval of the Colonial Office. Because of the effects of the Perak and Selangor

1. Kimberley to Clarke 20. ix. 1873. Original draft and fair copy filed after Ord to Kimberley 10. vii. 1873. Colonial Office files, Public Record Office: Straits Settlements correspondence Co/273/67.

2. *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877*, Singapore, 1960.

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wars, and because of skillful pressure by the Straits interests in London, Kimberley instructed Clarke to report on the possibility of intervention. Clarke worked fast; realising in the autumn of 1873 that the Liberal government was about to fall, and being a man to act first and report afterwards, he determined on a bold policy which he anticipated would appeal to a Conservative ministry. This in bald outline would appear to be the core of Parkinson's thesis.³

But a number of further questions need to be asked. Was the policy of non-intervention as consistent as Parkinson says? What attitude did the Secretaries of State for the Colonies take in the privacy of their office minutes, which were not published, and which Parkinson has not studied? If there were many factors compelling Britain to intervene, which was decisive in persuading Kimberley to contemplate action in the summer of 1873? Why, once some form of intervention was decided on, did it take the form of Kimberley's suggestion of the Residents? Where did Kimberley get this idea from?

My aim here is to attempt some answer to these questions by examining the rather narrow theme of the development of Colonial Office policy, as recorded in the manuscript files in the Public Record Office. No attempt will be made to narrate the details of events in Malaya, which have often been recounted. It must be emphasised, moreover, that the Colonial Office, in forming its policies had a very imperfect knowledge of these events. A good deal of the governor's correspondence about the Malay States was obviously not sent home by Ord. The reports of Irving and Braddell, which are the stock in trade of all historians of the Malay States belong, with one exception, to the period after Pangkor. The Secretary of State as he planned his future moves was rather like a general going into battle with poor maps and a weak intelligence service.

There were three phases in the development of British policy from the Transfer in 1867 to Clarke's instructions in 1873.

- (1) Ord's first tour of duty as governor (1867-71), when the question of the Malay States was first raised for the Colonial Office, which decided generally on a policy of non-intervention.
- (2) The interregnum when Col. Anson administered the government (1871-72), when new proposals for intervention were rejected, but when his actual intervention in the Selangor Incident of 1871 was approved.
- (3) Ord's second tour (1872-73), when he faced the spread of war in Perak, Selangor and the Linggi region, when he was restrained by the policy of non-intervention. In this period he did his best to intervene in all these areas; and so doing he caused, if nothing else, the Colonial Office to become concerned about the west coast of Malaya.

I

The Colonial Secretary who first had to deal with the Malay States was the Duke of Buckingham, and the policy of non-intervention was

3. Parkinson. 1-114.

formulated under his direction. It was inherited from the India Office, but at the time of the Transfer in 1867 no discussion appears to have taken place about the Peninsula. When crown colony administration was established in the Straits by Sir Harry Ord the chief interest in the Colonial Office was the revenue since fear of a new drain on the exchequer had been the main factor which held up the Transfer for so long. On 8 June 1867, however, among a bundle of papers which the India Office handed over, Charles Cox, the head of the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office found a few which were "interesting & instructive as regards our relations & difficulties with Native Princes".⁴ These documents referred to the Johore-Pahang boundary dispute, to minor restrictions on trade by the rulers of Larut, Kedah and Kelantan, and to the problem of trade with the east coast of Sumatra.

None of these matters were regarded as urgent. "Nothing further to be done at present" was the usual comment. Buckingham simply asked Ord in July 1867 for reports on the Johore-Pahang dispute and the effects of the Sultan of Kelantan's monopolies on trade. In only one respect did the India Office papers contribute to Colonial Office policy: they indicated the Government of India's attitude in a single case. Negotiations had been attempted from time to time with the ruler of Larut to persuade him to reduce his duties on tin exports. But in 1866 Governor Cavenagh had expressed a fear to the Government of India that there was a tendency in Penang "to push British interference with the Native States further than is either necessary or desirable". Generally, said Cavenagh, he interfered in two cases only: where a British subject was murdered in Larut or where there was murder or piracy on the high seas. Cox quoted this in a précis for Buckingham to show:

"what may be taken I conclude as the standing instructions under which the Gov of the Straits would act in any future case where his interference was asked for agst a Native Chief — and I should say that those instructions are sound ones".⁵

Here then was a fairly clear policy of non-intervention in the Peninsula to take over. However, instructions on these lines were not sent to Sir Harry Ord. In his draft of the governor's instructions Sir Frederic Rogers, the Permanent Under Secretary had deleted the heading 'Political Relations' and written nothing.⁶ In 1867, in fact, the Colonial Office did not give any serious thought to the Malay States.

Early in 1868 Ord's relations with Kedah and Kelantan forced the Colonial Office to remedy this deficiency. Ord was not accustomed to the routine of crown colonies where all details were referred to London, and at the age of forty eight he was an experienced negotiator, who had received the Singapore appointment because of the reputation he made

4. Minute by Cox 1. vii. 1867 on India Office to CO 6. vi. 1867. CO/273/15.

5. *Ibid.* Memo. by Cox 1. vii. 1867 on Larut papers.

6. Draft instructions dated 6. ii. 1867 after Treasury to CO 26. i. 1867. CO/273/16.

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for himself on important matters of policy in West Africa.⁷ Confident in his abilities he began to teach the Sultan of Kelantan the virtues of free trade and to try to tidy the boundary of Province Wellesley and Kedah.

It was these negotiations which introduced the Colonial Office to the question of relations with the Malay States. The whole matter had to be considered in February 1868, and apart from the merits of the actual negotiations (and there is no space to discuss them here) it was evident at once that Ord's action opened an important question of principle for the Colonial Office: "namely our mode of dealing with the Native Chiefs — a point on which Sir H. O. has had no instructions".⁸ Buckingham was quite clear in his own mind: "Col. Ord himself is to govern the settlements not to diplomatise, which may be left to the F. O."⁹ But Rogers realised a rather wider question was raised concerning the whole sphere of the responsibility of the Governor of the Straits Settlements in South-East Asia. Ord had his own ideas. Under the Indian regime relations with the Malay States and Netherlands India had been subject to the approval of the Government of India, but Straits residents had been clamouring for years for the governor in Singapore to have wider powers. Ord supported their view and warned the Colonial Office that a diminution of his authority would encourage piracy. The Colonial Office therefore considered this question of principle before turning to the details of the Kedah and Kelantan matters.

Pleased to have a concrete case and not an abstract question Rogers considered relations with the Malay States in the broadest context by surveying the division of responsibility on the entire imperial frontier. This was something which had not been possible under the Government of India. Thus one might say that Roger's minute was the first step after the Transfer in the direction of closer interest in the Malay States. He wrote:

"in some places the FO has no machinery thro' which it can act, no channels thro' wh it can desire information — & no interest in the questions wh arise — while on the contrary the CO has all these advantages for the transaction of business. Such is the case in the countries adjoining Natal & the Cape. Consequently the CO deals absolutely without any intervention on the part of the FC, with Kaffirs and Zulus.

In China the contrary state of things exists & the contrary mode of proceeding is inferred. We are continually impressing on Sir R. Macdonell [Gov. of Hong Kong] that he is only to communicate with the Chinese Govt. thro' the diplomatic authorities.

7. The recently discovered early Carnarvon papers referring to his periods at the CO in 1858-59 and 1866-67 include a few items concerning the Straits Settlements. The following letter shows that Ord probably requested the post. Adderley to Carnarvon 26. ix. 1866 — "As I expect seeing you I have answered Col Ord to-day merely formally acknowledging etc. I think he would do well for Singapore & so Stanley would say who made his acquaintance with me on the W. Africa Committee last year". Carnarvon offered Ord the appointment in a letter on 6 October.

8. Minute by Cox 17. ii. 1868 on Ord to Buckingham 31. xii. 1867. Co/273/13.

9. Minute by Buckingham 17. ii. 1868 on Ord to Buckingham 3. i. 1868. Co/273/17.

On the West Coast of Africa I shd think the CO wd be left to take its own way absolutely, but for the fact that the FO has an interest in the Slave Trade question & consequent Treaties with Native "Kings" — Here I believe it is not unusual to invest a consular authority in the Govr or administrator who in that capacity takes orders from the FO. [e.g. at Lagos]... I am inclined to say that this double responsibility of the Govr to authorities whose bias is not always the same is not, except in very easy times, a very safe or satisfactory method, if it can be avoided

In Honduras the Govr I think would be expected to deal under instructions, from the CO with the neighbouring Indians with little or no interference from the FO so long as the question was merely a matter of Indians, but all matters wh could be matters of discussion with Mexico as sovereign of the Indians — wd go to the FO.

Now as to the Straits...."

Here Rogers defined three spheres, suggesting (1) that the governor should deal, under the Colonial Office, with the Malay States "not subject to any influence than our own", (2) that he should be able to deal directly with the Siamese tributaries, under Foreign Office approval, and (3) that relations with the Dutch would as elsewhere be handled by the Foreign Office with Colonial Office advice.¹⁰ In March 1868 the two departments worked out a policy along these lines. The Colonial Office agreed that Ord was the man best placed for gaining information on the Peninsula and that his prestige was important, but his activities might conflict (as they soon did) with British policy towards Siam or the Netherlands and that a local colonial interest might embarrass the home government. The Foreign Office had no objection to the governor having direct relations with the Siamese tributaries, provided treaties were negotiated through the consul in Bangkok. On the whole Lord Stanley, the Foreign Secretary, found it all "rather an irritating and troublesome matter" and the Permanent Under Secretary, Edmund Hammond, said "let the Colonial Office adopt their own rules".¹¹

With his ideas generally accepted in this rather casual fashion by Whitehall, Ord was now furnished with some belated instructions as to his Malayan policy. Relations with the Dutch would be as in similar regions like British Guiana and the Gold Coast. The important part of the instructions concerned the Malay States not subject to Siam. Here Ord was told:

"you will possess a larger authority. But you will remember that the relations of the settlements with those powers are matters which may at any time become of serious importance... Although therefore circumstances may not unfrequently arise in which you may be called to act absolutely on your own judgement, yet it is generally undesirable that you should enter into formal negotiations

10. Minute by Rogers 19 ii. 1868 on Ord to Buckingham 31. xii. 1867. Co/273/13.

11. Notes by Stanley and Hammond with CO to FO 17. iii. 1868. Foreign Office files: Siam correspondence FO/69/47 and FO to CO 25. ii. 1868 CO/273/23.

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with native princes...except in pursuance of an object or a policy approved by HM's government".¹²

Thus the policy on non-intervention was slightly qualified by an authority for the governor to act on his own judgement if absolutely necessary. The instruction was dated 22 April 1868. Yet after only two months Buckingham was forced to modify his policy slightly, and to admit that intervention might be necessary.

This modification was caused in the first place by requests for intervention in the Malay States from Straits companies with economic interest in the Peninsula. Within two days, 9th-11th May 1868, requests reached the Colonial Office from two quarters. The most comprehensive was from W. H. M. Read, at home on leave with an introduction from Ord.¹³ In London he was making arrangements for certain commercial ventures and his London collaborator was his brother-in-law, Seymour Clarke, the highly successful General Manager of the Great Northern Railway, who had a good knowledge of telegraph systems. While Clarke pestered the Foreign Office about a telegraph concession in Siam, Read sent both the Colonial and Foreign Offices a forthright indictment of the policy of non-intervention, in which he threw out the suggestion that new treaties might be made with the Malay rulers, who, he said

"will gladly avail themselves of an opportunity which would enable them to derive revenues from the increasing trade which must follow on treaties...and such good counsel and advice as would enable them to govern their subjects upon more enlightened principles than at present prevail".¹⁴

Although the Colonial Office were rather perplexed by Read, they were agreed on one thing: "Sir H. Ord does not require any stirring up in negotiating with the Native Chiefs". Buckingham feared Read's ideas would make the governor inclined "to meddle with native policy & that is an evil to be avoided". Sir Charles Adderley, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary (who knew Ord from the Select Committee on West Africa of 1865) said "the danger of friendly motives to Natives is that they always take them to mean more than they do & Ord is too ready that way".¹⁵ Rogers decided to scotch Read's notions. To follow them was to "involve oneself in quarters of which we cannot see the end". He said the government should not approve a policy "which has for its object either territorial extension wh. they look upon as an absolute disadvantage, or political influence, which as they believe will follow as a matter of course". When Read's letter went to Singapore Ord was reminded of the policy of non-intervention.¹⁶

At the same time the Colonial Office was considering the other request. This was from the London agents of Patersons, Simons, and Company

12. *Ibid.* Draft for Ord 22. iv. 1868 after FO to CO 25. iii. 1868.

13. Ord to Rogers (Private) 3. viii. 1867. CO/273/10.

14. Read to CO 9. v. 1868. CO/273/24.

15. *Ibid.* Minutes by Cox 12th, Buckingham 15th and Adderley 13. v. 1868.

16. *Ibid.* Minute by Rogers and draft for Ord 20. v. 1868.

who had worked in mines briefly at Kuantan, Pahang.¹⁷ Some property had been confiscated by followers of Wan Ahmad in 1863, and as neither the governor nor the Government of India would assist, the company turned to the Colonial Office. By now Rogers was evidently beginning to realise the significance of the question of intervention in the Malay States: "This is a serious question; when a false step may cause a good deal of mischief". He said the Colonial Office should completely disassociate itself from commercial ventures in the Malay States. Thus the answer to Paterson, Simons closely followed that given to Read, and to similar promoters at this time in such places as New Guinea and West Africa. Merchants venturing into 'un-civilised' lands did so at their own risk; the government would not intervene to enforce their contracts — "when the disturbed state of the country, and the disputes of rival claimants to power cause embarrassment and loss".¹⁸ The phrase quoted is significant, as it represents a slight qualification of Rogers's view. It was added to the draft of the despatch by Buckingham on 4 June 1868 because he thought "there may be cases in which it might be right & proper to take strong measures."¹⁹ He did not specify here in which cases, but his admission represents a significant qualification of the policy of non-intervention. And on the same day, 4 June, at least one possible case for intervention was cited in a reply to Ord over his Kelantan reports.

Without going into the details of the negotiation, it should be said that Ord first reported the matter home at a time when any idea that he should 'diplomatisation' was anathema, so he was duly cautioned.²⁰ But Siamese commissioners who visited Singapore in March 1868 had satisfactorily cleared the matter up, so Ord replying to his caution raised the whole matter of the Malay States again. This despatch, which arrived exactly a week after Read's letter was couched in such similar terms that Rogers, noting that all these letters were about "extensions of our influence" suspected some concerted move. Ord offered now a comprehensive policy for the Malay States. Firstly, in the case of the Siamese tributaries, he did not know what Siam's precise relationship was, but in the Kelantan and Kedah negotiations he had seen Siamese commissioners complete the business without so much as a reference to the rulers concerned. Ord thought "the subjection of these native States of the Peninsular to Powers greater and more civilized than themselves is an advantage to themselves and to all who have relations with them". Secondly, in the southern part of the Peninsula he said that outside Johore there was "neither order, peace, nor regular government". "I feel", he concluded, "that it would be greatly to the advantage of the settlements if our influence could be thus extended over the Peninsular, and I shall not fail to avail myself of any opening that may present itself for doing so".²¹

Ord, then, had decided what his duty was in the Malay States, and Rogers did not like it. "Settlers and merchants are always ready to

17. Paterson, Simons, (London) to Buckingham 8. v. 1868. CO/273/24.

18. *Ibid.* CO to Paterson, Simons 8 vi. 1868.

19. *Ibid.* final phrase in Buckingham's hand dated 4. vi. 1868.

20. Ord to Buckingham 14. x. 1867. CO/273/12. Ord to Buckingham 3. i. 1868 and CO to Ord 22. ii. 1868. CO/273/17.

21. Ord to Buckingham 8. iv. 1868. CO/273/18.

call for operations of which they are to reap the profit and Govt. to bear the coast.... And Governors are only too apt to fall in with a policy wh. gives interest and importance to their proceedings".²² Only four days before he wrote this, Hammond of the Foreign Office also wrote, apparently quite independently: "I hope Governor Ord will not be too active with the petty states."²³ Ord was reminded, therefore, a third time of the policy of non-intervention and he was told to keep clear of any disorders in the neighbouring Malay States "which do not directly affect or threaten the peace of the settlements themselves".²⁴ Here, then, was Buckingham's ground for local discretion. Having admitted, privately to the department, that intervention might become necessary, he permitted Ord to do this if the security of the colony was involved.

Buckingham's regime at the Colonial Office ended in December 1868. In summarising his Malayan policy, it can be said that the Colonial Office had evolved its own policy of non-intervention, and since Ord seemed rather anxious to be off the mark, this was re-iterated several times. At the same time the governor was given a local discretion where the security of the colony was involved, and it had been admitted in London that intervention might become necessary. The germ of a revolution in policy lay in this, for when in 1872 Penang became involved in the Larut war this provided the condition for the use of Buckingham's discretion.

Gladstone's ministry of 1868-74, which would be responsible for Clarke's instructions in 1873, began with a short tenure at the Colonial Office by the second Earl Granville, but he did not modify his predecessor's Malayan policy. He approved Ord's successful mediation in the Johore-Pahang dispute,²⁵ but when Ord tried to revive the British claim to the Dindings, Perak, Granville restrained him. Granville was a politician rather than an administrator, and since Lord Stanley of Alderley (who had lived in the Straits and could be a nuisance in the House of Lords) demanded an explanation of the Dindings move, Granville reminded Ord of the policy of non-intervention.²⁶

Having been cautioned now on four occasions Ord ceased trying to do what he believed was needed in the Peninsula. He told his Legislative Council at the end of 1869 "my hands are tied".²⁷ He refused to intervene in the Selangor civil war when requested by the Sultan in 1870; in fact at this time Ord did not realise what the war was really about. As he was going on sick leave to England in March 1871 he waited until he saw the Secretary of State in person before raising the question of intervention in the Peninsula again.

22. *Ibid.* Minutes by Rogers 20. v. 1868. Parkinson (p. 106) quotes this incorrectly as 1858; Rogers joined the CO in 1859.

23. Note by Hammond 16. v. 1868 on CO to FO 15. v. 1868. FO/69/47.

24. CO to Ord 4. vi. 1868, after despatch cited in fn. 21.

25. Ord to Buckingham 20. i. 1869. CO/273/26; Linehan, W. 'A History of Pahang', *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, XIV, Part 2 (1936) p. 91.

26. Stanley of Alderley to Granville 26. iv. 1869. CO/273/35; Ord to Granville 14. vii. 1869 and CO to Ord 10 ix. 1869. CO/273/30.

27. Minutes of Legislative Council 20. xi. 1869 received 7. ii. 1870. CO/273/43.

II

It was Colonel Anson, who administered the government of the Straits in Ord's absence, who first forced the Earl of Kimberley to think seriously about the Malay States. When he became Colonial Secretary in July 1870 Kimberley obviously had little knowledge of, or interest in, the Peninsula. For instance, when he saw some photographs of Malays which had been sent home for Professor Huxley he thought they were "a hideous series",²⁸ and when a rumour was circulated by the Dutch that the Maharaja of Johore was about to lease Tioman Island to the North German Confederation as a naval station, Kimberley wrote "the first step is to ascertain distinctly *where* the Maharaja & his islands are".²⁹ What Kimberley was interested in, as a former diplomatist under Palmerston, was imperial strategy. As Under-secretary in the Foreign Office ten years before he had favoured supporting the Dutch in the Archipelago to prevent France stepping in and threatening India and Australia.³⁰ But after the Franco-Prussian war he believed France could be discounted as a colonial power for a number of years; now, it seems, his fears were of Germany. Thus although in 1870 the German rumour did not alarm him, probably because he had no idea where Tioman Island was, the rumour of a possible German interest in Selangor in 1873 would find him alive immediately to strategic implications. As against Kimberley's rather narrow interest and his somewhat cynical aloofness from Malay affairs, Robert Herbert, the new Permanent Under-secretary who succeeded Rogers in 1871, was a man with first hand experience of the colonies. He had been both Colonial Secretary and then Premier of Queensland and he had also visited the Straits Settlements.³¹ How, then, did these men react to Anson's attempts at intervention in the Peninsula?

It is somewhat ironical that while Ord failed to move Kimberley while he was on leave in England, Anson not only intervened with force in Selangor and gained Kimberley's approval, but without knowing it he forced Kimberley to admit, like Buckingham, that intervention might become necessary.

Anson, however, did not achieve this by the merits of his advocacy, since it is quite clear that the Colonial Office took great exception to him from the start. They felt Anson was too eager to reverse Ord's policies behind his back. "Mr. Anson is very busy & inclined to put a great many irons in the fire at the same time".³² Kimberley was very irritated when Anson displayed "the foolish tendencies of acting governors to fussy meddling with the policy of their superiors".³³ Attempts by

28. Minute by Kimberley 14. i. 1871 on Ord to Kimberley 21. xi. 1870. CO/273/41.

29. Minute by Kimberley 21. vii. 1870 on FO to CO 7. vii. 1870. CO/273/42.

30. See memo. 18. viii. 1860 quoted in Tarling, N. "British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago 1824-1871", *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, XXX, Part 3 (Oct. 1957) p. 164. Kimberley had been Under-sec. in the FO 1852-56; Envoy to St. Petersburg 1856-58; Under-sec. in the FO 1859-61; special Envoy to Denmark 1863.

31. Herbert had been Col. Sec. then, with the grant of responsible government, the Premier of Queensland, and not governor as Parkinson says (p. 106). He no doubt called at the S. S. on his way to or from Australia. "I certainly have been in an hotel at Penang", he once wrote on Ord to Kimberley 2. ix. 1870. CO/273/39.

32. Minute by K-Hugessen 1. vii. 1871 on Legislative Council Minutes received 28. vi. 1871. CO/273/47.

33. Minute by Kimberley 6. vi. 1871 on Anson to Kimberley 25. iv. 1871. CO/273/46.

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Anson to make pettyfogging modifications in the Malay States policy caused Kimberley to write: "desire Col: Anson not to moot any question as to changes in our relations with the Native States without express instructions from home".³⁴ Therefore, when in June 1871 Anson announced the findings of the committee which reviewed Malayan policy, a hostile reception, partly on personal grounds, was to be expected. It was simply regarded as yet another example which showed Anson "is somewhat *over* zealous, as if desirous to cast the absent Gov. in the shade".³⁵

Anson appointed the Malay States committee largely because relations with the States lying between Johore and the Siamese tributaries were unsatisfactory and trade was affected. In the spring of 1871 the Selangor civil war (called locally the 'Klang war') was reaching a critical phase. Anson probably knew that when Ord visited the Sultan in May 1870 he confined himself to advice. He knew also that there was tension in Perak, and by the time the committee's report went to London Anson knew of the death of Sultan Ali — the event which brought matters to a head. Anson also found papers from Malacca referring to a case of robbery in Rembau which were endorsed by Ord 'left for Col. Anson'. So there were good grounds for attempting some improvement in relations with the states of the west coast lying between Malacca and Province Wellesley.

The Committee was probably pre-disposed towards intervention. Major McNair, the Colonial Engineer, had served in India for a time but had been at the Straits and Labuan since 1853. Commander Robinson, the Senior Naval Officer, commanded the tool by which any intervention would have to take place, and Arthur Birch, who was acting for Anson in Penang, had been lent by the West Indies department of the Colonial Office and evidently had closer relations with the Peninsula than his superiors at home either knew about or desired.³⁶ Later events were to prove many of the committee's findings were valid. They reported that while Straits officials were appaulingly ignorant of the Malay States, much trouble originated because disreputable British subjects (unnamed) took office under Malay rulers. The committee proposed that carefully selected and qualified Europeans should be appointed, on the application of the Sultans to reside in the Malay States. They would advise on government and economic development and would form a channel of communication with the Straits government. Johore, they said, had virtually adopted this system. The suggestion was very like that of the later Residents, but Anson did not support it and made a more modest proposal. He wanted a "political agent" to visit the Malay States frequently³⁷ — by no means an outrageous idea in view of Ord's visits to Siam, Trengganu, Pahang, Johore, Selangor and Batavia. But the

34. Minute by Kimberley 22. vi. 1871 on Ord to Kimberley 14. vi. 1871. CO/273/55.

35. Minute by K-Hugessen 11. viii. 1871 on Anson to Kimberley 3. vi. 1871. CO/273/47.

36. When Arthur Birch went home in 1872 Penang residents thanked him "for the visits you have paid to the neighbouring Native States and for the friendly correspondence you have opened with them". "Of wh. however we know nothing", wrote Cox of the Eastern dept. on Ord to Kimberley 11. iv. 1872. CO/273/57.

37. Committee's report 19. v. 1871 encl. in Anson to Kimberley 3. vi. 1871. CO/273/47.

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Colonial Office was now impatient with Anson. "I do not find the slightest pressing need for moving", wrote Cox, the head of the Eastern department. Although Cox personally believed that "judicious & friendly communication" with the States might increase British influence and trade, since Kimberley had discussed this with Ord he dropped the question.³⁸

Ord later claimed that he had tried very hard while at home to convince Kimberley that Britain's policy should be changed, if, as he said, "we hoped to hold our own in peace on the Peninsula".³⁹ But Kimberley, who approved Ord's cultivating close personal relations with the Malay rulers, would not widen the governor's authority. He said he would not approve of any measures likely to bring an increase in territory or any step likely to lead to a collision with the Malay States — save when it was a question of self defence. Thus the committee's proposals, Anson's plan, and Ord's pleading failed to move Kimberley.

It was, in fact, the Selangor Incident of July 1871 which caused a modification of Kimberley's views. There is no need to recount the details of this piece of gun-boat diplomacy, which are fully described by Parkinson.⁴⁰ What concerns us is the development of Colonial Office policy. For the intervention, which began in the pursuit of pirates, ended with the coercing of the Sultan of Selangor, with the Straits government taking sides in the Selangor civil war, and with publicity for the whole affair in England.

Although, as Parkinson says, it had a considerable moral effect in Malaya,⁴¹ there were a number of questionable things about the Selangor Incident. After the pirates and the stolen junk had been found in the Selangor River Anson could have turned the matter over to the Sultan under the terms of the 1825 treaty, or, since the police officers had been resisted and shots had been fired on the steamer *Pluto*, Anson could have telegraphed home for instructions. Instead he ordered a search for the escaped pirates in Selangor territory, and the wellknown *Rinaldo* bombardment followed.

Although no doubt Anson believed he was acting in a case of piracy and self-defence (and this was accepted by the Colonial Office) he found himself interfering in the Selangor civil war. He later claimed that he did not know the political situation in the Selangor River when he ordered the search.⁴² Therefore the expedition stumbled unwittingly into the complexities of Selangor politics. It was left for Charles Irving (the Auditor-General), who was one of the few Straits officials who had studied the Malayan political system and who had visited Klang in April 1870, to paint the background. Since Irving believed that the Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din was the most promising candidate for power in Selangor, Anson decided to support him. Irving wrote that the Tengku had

"what may be called European ideas about his Government, & I am

³⁸ *Ibid.* Minute by Cox (despatch received 31. vii. 1871.)

³⁹ Ord to Carnarvon 18. xi. 1874. CO/273/78. Kimberley's Desk Diary in the *Kimberley Papers* (by courtesy of the third Earl of Kimberley) records interviews with Ord on 21 Apr, 24 May, 7 July, 8 Aug, 12 Dec 1871 & 23 Jan 1872.

⁴⁰ Parkinson 48-60.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 58.

⁴² Anson to Kimberley 19. x. 1871. CO/273/50.

inclined to think, if circumstances gave him the chief command in Selangor, he would prove a good ruler and a good neighbour to the Colony".⁴³

On the basis of this advice the well-known Langat settlement was forced on the reluctant Sultan Abdul-Samad. Although he knew that his son-in-law, the Tengku, was unpopular, and that it was by no means certain that he would prevail in the civil war, the Sultan was forced by J. W. W. Birch, the Colonial Secretary, to renew the old authority of 1868. This was possibly designed originally to enable the Tengku, after marrying the Sultan's daughter, to derive an income from the revenue of the Langat region, but it included that well-known, ambiguous, phrase that he would "give up the country with its districts to Our son...to govern and develop for US and for Our Sons".⁴⁴ Henceforth, the Straits government were convinced that the Tengku was "viceroy" of Selangor, and Raja Mahdi, his most troublesome opponent, was outlawed. Whether Birch promised support officially is not recorded. Wilkinson suggests that he gave the Tengku "the full support" of the Straits government.⁴⁵ Certainly the impression was gained locally, as the Tengku toured the Selangor river mouths in the company of R.N. vessels, the Britain was committed to his support. Irving compared Birch's action at Langat with what had been done previously with Johore: the most promising ruler had been picked and supported with advice and influence.

How did the Colonial Office react to this? When the news of the *Rinaldo* shelling arrived on 21 August 1871, Anson's proposal of the "political agent" was still unanswered. Kimberley saw the report on the Selangor affair on 26 August. He took no exception to it, although he considered that Anson had handled it badly by exposing the police to danger in the first place. If there were to be armed landings, he wrote, they must be in force, and he wondered if the Straits government was sufficiently prepared for such events. "I should be very glad", he said "if Sir H. Ord would consider how far it will be convenient to have no native troops at Singapore for employment on such occasions as these".⁴⁶ On the same day, replying to Anson's plan for the agents, he said there would be no question of political intervention except in case of emergency.⁴⁷ In view of Kimberley's reaction, we may assume that the Selangor action was such an emergency. The report of the Langat settlement arrived on 4 September 1871; Kimberley saw it on the 10th and found it "thoroughly satisfactory". He hoped Birch had not pledged support to the Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din, yet for the benefit of the office he added this significant qualification: "I use the word 'pledge' because it might become advisable to give him [the Tengku] support but this is very different from promising it".⁴⁸

43. Memo. by C. J. Irving on Selangor Disturbances no (no date) in Anson to Kimberley 14. vii. 1871. CO/273/48.

44. Winstedt, R. O. "A History of Selangor", *J.M.B.R.A.S.*, XII, Part 3, (Oct 1934) p. 21; Wilkinson, R. J. "History of the Peninsula Malays", *Papers on Malay Subjects*, No. 7 (1923) Chapter XIII, p. 144-5.

45. *Ibid.* p. 149.

46. Minute by Kimberley 26. viii. 1871 on Anson to Kimberley 14. vii. 1871 (received 21. viii. 1871) CO/273/48.

47. CO to Anson 26. viii. 1871 after Anson to Kimberley 3. vi. 1871 (received 31. vii. 1871) CO/273/47.

48. Minute by Kimberley 10. ix. 1871 on Anson to Kimberley 28. vii. 1871 (received 4. ix. 1871). CO/273/48.

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Thus, the Selangor intervention did not meet disapproval; the Colonial Office regarded the matter as one of piracy and obviously they did not realise its political implications. However, the affair caused flutterings elsewhere. On 13 September 1871 Sir Benson Maxwell, the former Chief Justice in Singapore, in a letter to *The Times* castigated the incident as "an act of war". What right, he asked, had a governor to arrest people in a foreign country or to punish subjects of that country who obstructed him? The Sultan of Selangor was at peace with Britain, yet because some of his people resisted British officers who were carrying out an unlawful order

"his town and forts were . . . destroyed, a number of his subjects were killed, and he was himself compelled, by threats of further hostilities, to appoint to the administration of some province an officer nominated by the English Governor . . ."

It was inglorious and unnecessary, said Maxwell, and should "raise a blush of shame and indignation on every English face".⁴⁹

This tirade reached the right quarters. Gladstone remembered the trouble over Raja Brooke and the Dyak pirates and he asked Kimberley what had happened. Thus on 19 September 1871 Kimberley sent the reports to the Prime Minister and held up his despatch of approval to Anson. "The Malay pirates are desperate men, and the murders committed on this occasion were most atrocious", wrote Kimberley melodramatically and not very accurately.⁵⁰ Gladstone was prepared to accept Kimberley's judgement, but he wondered, with quick perception, whether "on principle as well as for want of sufficient force" the governor should not have applied first to the Sultan of Selangor.⁵¹ Kimberley therefore agreed to alter his despatch to Anson. While approving of his action he said that in future incidents with the Malay States the governor of the Straits should ensure that "all means of obtaining redress by peaceful means are exhausted before measures of coercion are employed".⁵²

Clearly the Selangor Incident was regarded by the Colonial Office as exceptional. That the situation in Selangor might lead to further crises was not realised, for when Ord, who was still weak from malaria, applied for an extension of leave until January 1872, Mr. MacDonald, a clerk in the Eastern department, could see "no reason why Sir H. Ord's presence at the Straits is urgently needed".⁵³ Ord did not return until 23 March 1872.

In summarising British policy in the period of Anson's administration we can see that the policy of non-intervention was re-affirmed in the face of Anson's and Ord's suggestions of change. On the other hand the Selangor intervention evidently fell within the category of a local initiative which was permissible in an emergency. Moreover, like Buckingham before, Kimberley admitted privately that further intervention might be necessary and that they might have to support the Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din.

⁴⁹ *The Times* Wed. 13. ix. 1871. p. 9.

⁵⁰ Kimberley to Gladstone 19. ix. 1871. *Gladstone Papers*, British Museum Additional MSS, 44224/203.

⁵¹ Gladstone to Kimberley 21. ix. 1871. *Kimberley Papers* A/8b.

⁵² Kimberley to Gladstone 23. ix. 1871. *Gladstone Papers* 44224/207.

⁵³ Minute by MacDonald 3. x. 1871 on Ord to Kimberley 2. x. 1871. CO/273/55.

III

Ord's second tour at Singapore was the period of the worst disorders in Perak and Selangor. Although his actions were circumscribed by the policy of non-intervention he did his best to understand what was happening. He sent Irving on a mission to the west coast in April 1872, and he visited Sungei Ujong and Selangor himself in October. He went to Penang in connection with the Larut problem in December 1872, and finally in August 1873 he committed his government to taking sides in the Perak war, much as Anson had done earlier in Selangor.⁵⁴

It should not be overlooked that in this period from March 1872 to May 1873 Ord had a new subordinate at Penang. Colonel Anson had applied for leave, and the Colonial Office thought it wise that he should be out of the way when Ord returned.⁵⁵ J. W. W. Birch, who offered to go to Penang, was needed at Singapore, so the Colonial Office had to find another substitute. The choice fell on G. W. R. Campbell (later Sir George) who was Inspector of the Police in Ceylon and who had ten years previous experience in India. Parkinson suggests that Campbell was rather a failure at Penang, but he probably played a significant part in the development of British policy. If the Colonial Office had brought to Malaya their general experience of the frontiers of empire, Campbell took to Penang his experience of government in the Indian states. Moreover, he was not afraid to make bold suggestions for a new policy in Malaya, and he seems to have impressed Lord Kimberley when he was on leave in England in 1873. In fact Kimberley's first admission that intervention might be necessary was made after reading one of Campbell's reports.

Ord faced five serious problems in the Peninsula in 1872-3. (1) the controversy over Raja Mahdi, and, after the latter's return to Selangor, the consequent adverse turn in Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din's fortunes (2) the possibility of the Selangor war spreading to Sungei Ujong. (3) the disputed succession in Perak. (4) the Chinese miners war in Larut, which became entangled with the Perak dispute, and, through the secret societies, directly involved the colony. (5) the effect which the Malay problems had on Straits trade, which caused further demands for intervention both from European and Chinese merchants. Again, this is not the place to narrate the details of this situation; what concerns us is the changing attitude of the Colonial Office to Ord's attempts to match up to his problems.

For some reason Ord could not put a foot right with the Colonial Office in the vital period 1872-3. He certainly convinced them that something had to be done, but unfortunately he seemed to do this by his own mistakes rather than by force of argument. He was extremely late in forwarding some of his reports, and those which reached home in 1872 created a very unfavourable impression. By December 1872—January 1873 the Colonial Office was quite furious with Governor Ord.

54. See Parkinson 61-105.

55. On Anson's application Robert Meade, Assistant Under-sec. wrote: "Perhaps it will be just well that Col. Anson should disappear for a time on Sir H. O's return". 28. xi. 1871 on Anson to Kimberley 24. x. 1871. CO/273/50. Anson left Penang on 30. iii. 1872.

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The trouble began over his relations with the Maharaja of Johore. Abu-Bakar wished to purchase some rifles from England for his police, but as Kimberley had read from a Straits newspaper that the Maharaja was harbouring Raja Mahdi (who they knew as the villain of the Selangor Incident) with Ord's collusion, Kimberley demanded an explanation before he would sanction the arms purchase.⁵⁶ Ord showed this despatch to Abu-Bakar, who was pained to think that Kimberley was suspicious about his relations with Raja Mahdi. Ord also pointed out to the Colonial Office that the Straits officials were divided over the rivalry between Raja Mahdi and Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din, and that there were good reasons why the Selangor outlaw had not been arrested. Before setting out on his expedition to Selangor of October 1872 he wrote privately to Herbert "I think I might have been credited with more common sense". Obviously he was by now very frustrated by the policy of non-intervention and resented the suspicions which had been entertained in the case of Raja Mahdi where he had followed it. Of the general situation in the Peninsula he wrote: "murder, plundering and burning are the order of the day, and the *bad ones* are beginning to believe the popular cry that 'nothing will induce the Government to interfere'".⁵⁷

The Colonial Office reaction to this was very vehement. On the question of intervention generally Herbert wrote: "most certainly the present Governor cannot be trusted to interfere wisely". On the specific issue of the Johore rifles, by showing Abu-Bakar the despatch Ord was "guilty of great indiscretion". "This shows that Sir H. Ord hardly understands the rudiments of his duty as a Governor", wrote Herbert, and Kimberley agreed that Ord should be censured, although in a manner which would not undermine his influence with the Maharaja. Kimberley drafted the censure himself on 12 December 1872.⁵⁸

By this time the Colonial Office had received the results of Ord's visit to Sungei Ujong and Selangor in October. Despatches received on 9 December 1872 included a summary of Irvings findings in Perak and Selangor (up to 15 June 1872) and the complaints of Malacca and Singapore merchants that Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din was not receiving sufficient support, so that a promising growth in the Selangor trade was endangered. Ord also made a report on the 'State of the Country' which he ended by saying

"I trust it will satisfy your Lordships that I have been neither so ignorant nor so unmindful, as has been alleged, of the bearing which the internal conditions of these States has upon certain important interests in the Settlements, and that notwithstanding the little actual power I am able to exercise I have done what I could to protect those interests".⁵⁹

56. Ord to Kimberley 10. vii. 1872 & Kimberley to Ord 2. ix. 1872. CO/273/58.

57. Ord to Herbert (Private) 24. x. 1872. CO/273/60.

58. Minutes by Meade and Herbert 26th, Kimberley 28 Nov and draft dated 12. xii. 1872 on Ord to Kimberley 24. x. 1872. CO/273/60.

59. Encl. in Ord to Kimberley 6. xi. 1872 (CO/273/61) along with

(1) a summary of Irving's memo. of 24. vii. 1872 which was not sent in full until after Pangkor.

(2) Petition of 34 Malacca traders 27. vii. 1872 and J. W. W. Birch's answer re-affirming the policy of non-intervention.

(3) W. H. M. Read's contradictions of Birch, 17. ix. 1872.

See Parkinson 65-66.

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Unfortunately the Colonial Office were not impressed. Kimberley wrote on 22 December 1872 that the whole situation represented "a tangled web which I fear Sir H. Ord is not the man to unravel".⁶⁰ At least the Colonial Office now had a few facts; they began to appreciate the complexity of Malayan politics, but as yet there was no thought of further intervention from London.

A week later they received information on the war in Larut. It came in the shape of a report describing Lieut-Governor Campbell's expedition to the Larut River on 16-18 October 1872.⁶¹ Although the Colonial Office found this "unfortunate and undignified", and Parkinson says it displayed "wavering indecision" in Penang, in some ways it had important consequences. For as it was becoming obvious that the Chinese societies at war in Larut were based upon Penang, whence their arms were obtained, Campbell made his expedition to warn those engaged in this traffic of "the grave offence of which they had been guilty" and to "prevent turbulence by the presence of a British man-of-war at Larut". He did not achieve anything, and he was censured for allowing the societies to use Penang as their supply base, but his report indicated to Ord, and to Whitehall, the seriousness of the Larut war. What is more significant, from the point of view of Colonial Office policy, was the new course which Campbell urged.

Apparently a leading Chinese had told him "When the British flag is seen over Perak or Larut every Chinaman will go down on his knees & bless God".⁶² Therefore Campbell, drawing on his Indian experience, wrote urging "the appointment of a Resident or Political Officer for certain of the Malay States which I made at some length in my letter to your address No. 720 of the 6th [September]".⁶³ This may be the letter quoted undated by Wilkinson, which clearly indicates the source of Campbell's idea:

"I speak with difference, being so new to this portion of the East, but I think it worth consideration whether the appointment under the British Government of a British Resident or Political Agent for certain of the Malay States would not, as in India, have a markedly beneficial effect. Such Resident or Political Agent would need to be an officer of some position and standing and a man of good judgement and good personal manner, and he should, or course, have a thorough knowledge of the Malay language. . . . In India, in many a native ruled State, it is marvellous what work a single well-selected British officer has effected. . . ."⁶⁴

The suggestion met with no response from Ord, who no doubt agreed with it but knew it was impossible at the moment. But in London Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen, the Parliamentary Under-secretary in the Colonial Office, said the fact that Penang was getting mixed up in the Larut war was

60. Minute by Kimberley 22. xii. 1872 on Ord despatch of 6. xi. 1872. CO/273/61.
61. See Parkinson 75-82.

62. Campbell to Birch 24. x. 1872 in Ord to Kimberley 11. xi. 1872. CO/273/61.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Wilkinson, "Notes on Perak", *Papers on Malay Subjects*, vol. 4 (1908) 99-100.

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"only one of the many instances in which the neglect of proper precautions in the first instance has increased difficulties... if my memory is correct, the annexation to British Rule of the country in which the disturbances took place, and which its inhabitants are said to desire, would be most beneficial to Penang and contribute to the tranquility & prosperity of the Settlements in no slight degree — this idea however, is not to be encouraged, I suppose, just now..."⁶⁵

His supposition proved correct. Kimberley's could not agree "that further extension of British territory is the proper remedy for these evils. If we are to annex all the territory in Asia where there is misgovernment we must end in dividing Asia with Russia for I know of no part of Asia which is decently governed except those under English or Russian rule with very slight exceptions".⁶⁶ Thus Campbell's suggestions of the Residents, like those of the Anson committee, and Knatchbull-Hugessen's idea of annexation, fell on deaf ears in January 1873. Yet after only eight months Kimberley changed his mind and gave Ord's successor the scope which enabled him to fulfill Campbell's hopes. What caused Kimberley's crucial *volte face* in the summer of 1873?

There appear to have been three reasons. Firstly, he realised the growing seriousness of the Larut war. Secondly, he was subjected to skillful pressure from those with economic interests in Selangor. Thirdly, there seemed to be a possibility of foreign intervention.

During the early months of 1873 various hints were received of the growing dangers in Larut. Ord applied a blockade, the Admiralty reported that R. N. vessels were patrolling off the coast, and Ord admitted that the situation was getting worse and was leading to piracy too. As a result, on 7 July 1873, Kimberley admitted that something would have to be done. He had just read Campbell's report dated 28 June 1873 on Larut, in which the Lieut-Governor had written:

"It is possible that friendly intervention on our part would end the condition of things described and it is more than probable that a resident political officer, a carefully chosen discreet man with a good knowledge of the people and their language would prevent its recurrence. Most native ruled states in and around India have such officers and the value of their influence is unquestionable.... I have found all the Malay potentates most amenable to reason, most courteous and most anxious to please".⁶⁷

Kimberley thought it was "an excellent report",⁶⁸ and at the same time he had a conversation with Campbell, who was home on leave.⁶⁹ Evidently Campbell impressed the Secretary of State and possibly it was he who

65. Minute by K-Hugessen 6. i. 1873 on Ord to Kimberley 11. xi. 1872. CO/273/61. This suggestion was not made in 1872 as stated by Parkinson (p. 106).

66. Minuted by Kimberley 8. i. 1873 on despatch cited in fn. 65.

67. Campbell's Report, dated London 28. vi. 1873 (received 3. vii. 1873). CO/273/74.

68. *Ibid.* Minute by Kimberley 7. vii. 1873.

New South Wales correspondence CO/201/569 and 23. vii. 1872 on FO to CO

69. That Kimberley spoke to Campbell in person may be gathered from the record of a conversation on another matter mentioned by Kimberley in a minute on 8. vii. 1873 on Admiralty to CO 27. vii. 1873. CO/273/72.

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convinced him that something would have to be done. For Kimberley wrote on the same day that Sir Andrew Clarke, the next governor, would have to look into the Larut problem:

"I think we must endeavour to put a stop to these disturbances. It is evident that Penang is a base of operations for these contentious Chinese. The difficulty is how to do anything without direct interference with Perak which is very undesirable".⁷⁰

Thus, Kimberley, while admitting he should do something to stop the trouble in Larut, still clung to the policy of non-intervention. As yet he was undecided what action to take. But at the end of July the second factor came into play and helped him to make up his mind.

Attracted inevitably by the success of Chinese tin mining, a few Englishmen were attempting to enter the Malay States for the same purpose. The group which was destined to influence Lord Kimberley in an unexpected manner was the Selangor Tin Company with which James Guthrie Davidson and W. H. M. Read were connected. They were both interested in Selangor's prospects. Read had attempted to collect the Klang revenue on a commission basis for the Sultan in 1866, but the civil war upset this.⁷¹ He was one of those who believed the Straits Government was not doing enough to support Tengku 'Zia'ud-din in 1872. Davidson was the financial backer of both the Tengku and Yap Ah Loy, and therefore he had invested in the success of one side in the Selangor war.⁷² In March 1873 he secured a concession from the Tengku of tin mining rights in Selangor for ten years and the Selangor Tin Company hoped to exploit this.

But the company had first to convince prospective investors in Singapore and the City that operations in Selangor would be secure. Thus on 25 June 1873 Davidson's London solicitors asked the Colonial Office if it would allow the company to employ its own soldiers in Selangor.⁷³ This was immediately refused, therefore the company tried a different approach. They turned to their chief ally in London, Mr. Seymour Clarke, who was married to Read's sister. He was a very successful railwayman, who probably became concerned with Malaya, through Read, as a telegraph expert. As a young man he had been Brunel's chief clerk during the construction of the Great Western Railway, and while still in his twenties, as Traffic Superintendent of the London division, he had demonstrated early telegraph equipment before the Duke of Wellington in 1839, and in 1842 he had organised the first Royal Train.⁷⁴ He became General Manager of the newly built Great Northern Railway in 1850 and ruled at Kings Cross Station (Read's London address) until he retired through ill-health in July 1870.⁷⁵ He is said

70. Minute by Kimberley 7. vii. 1873 on report of 28. vi. 1873. CO/273/74.

71. Winstedt, *History of Selangor*, 19.

72. Swettenham, F. A. *Footprints in Malaya* (1947) 20; Middlebrook, S. H. "Yap Ah Loy", J.M.B.R.A.S., XXIV, Part 2, (1951) 84; Parkinson 68-72.

73. Lambert, Burgin, and Petch to Kimberley 25. vi. 1873 and CO reply 5. vii. 1873. CO/273/74.

74. MacDermont, E. T. *History of the G. W. R.* 57, 230, 661, 677.

75. Grindley, C. H. *History of the G. N. R., 1854-95*. 153, 246; *GNR Minute Books* 1/36, 148, 236 (by courtesy of the Archivist, the British Transport Commission); *Herapath's Journal*, XXXVIII (1876) 339 for his obituary.

to have been influential with Gladstone when the latter arbitrated in railway pooling arrangements, and through his railway work he must have had useful contacts with manufacturers of telegraph equipment, hence his value, I suggest, to Read and the companies building telegraphs in south-east Asia. As leading London director of the Selangor Tin Company he was given the task of getting the Colonial Office to ensure that Selangor was safe for the companies efforts.

Thus on 18 July 1873 Clarke passed on a letter from the Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din dated 3 June 1873 in which he asked a member of the Selangor Tin Company "to ascertain if the English, or any other Government, would interfere in any disturbance that might arise in the territory of Salangore". On the face of it this was a vague, and, for this period, not an unusual request from the ruler of a small state on the fringes of British influence. But Clarke also added that a Singapore resident (Read?) had recently expressed the view that "the independent sovereigns of the smaller States of the Malayan Peninsular, would put themselves under the Protectorate of some European Power, and Germany was mentioned as most likely to be approached failing England."⁷⁶ Since a naval officer only a week before had written to *The Times* suggesting that German intervention in the Straits of Malacca would be unwelcome,⁷⁷ Clarke's letter brought the third factor into play in influencing Kimberley.

As has been suggested, Kimberley was likely to be sensitive to the dangers Clarke revealed. He supported the Dutch war in Aceh because he realised an unsettled independent Aceh might provide an excuse for foreign intervention. After the incident of the American colony in North Borneo in 1865 and the Italian plans for a penal colony in 1870, the possibility of intervention by some power could not be ruled out.⁷⁸ Thus when in February 1873 the Foreign Office passed on a Dutch rumour that Italy or the U.S.A. contemplated treaties with Aceh, although Herbert was at first inclined to dismiss the idea, careful inquiries were made in Singapore, Rome and Washington before the matter was left.⁷⁹ When Germany was mentioned in connection with Malaya in 1870 Sir Frederic Rogers had said "if Prussia likes to have an island there — I should say let her by all means", he felt that the government should not oppose unless it would injure British interests.⁸⁰ The juniors in the Colonial Office received Seymour Clarke's letter in the same spirit. "The probability of a German Protectorate seems small", wrote MacDonald. Cox agreed, but as he cherished prestige he said that "with a judicious Govr we might almost imperceptibly have a considerable moral influence over the various Native Chiefs". Herbert suggested that Sir Andrew Clarke might consider confidentially if it might "be safe and advantageous to extend our influence to some parts of the Malay territories beyond our settlements". Knatchbull-Hugessen said that would be easy, but he doubted whether it accorded with the accepted policy:

76. Seymour Clarke to Herbert 18. vii. 1873. CO/273/74.

77. Rear-Admiral Osborn, *The Times* 12. vii. 1873, p. 12.

78. See Tregonning, K. G. "American activity in N. Borneo 1865-1881", *Pacific Hist. Review* (Nov 1954) 365; FO to CO 16. ix. 1872. Labuan correspondence CO/144/39.

79. Memo. by Vivian 25. ii. 1873. Netherlands correspondence FO/37/534; FO to CO 22. iii. 1873. CO/273/73. Herbert began a minute "It is hardly supposed that the U.S. would interfere in the affairs of Acheen", but he crossed this out.

80. Minute by Rogers 20. vii. 1870 on FO to CO 14. vii. 1870. CO/273/42.

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"I do not understand that to be the policy of H.'M. Government, but rather to keep ourselves to ourselves as much as we can & to avoid these complications which may follow extensions of 'influence', which entails as a rule extensions of responsibility".⁸¹

He can hardly have believed in this; one senses in the phrase 'keep ourselves to ourselves' a contempt for such an attitude. In 1872 he had condemned "the surpassing love of Economy" and "dread of incurring responsibilities" which prevented Gladstone from annexing the Fiji Islands, and he wrote "*Serve us right if Germany annexes Fiji*."⁸² Early in 1873 he said annexation was the ideal solution for the Malay States and he urged the annexation of Fiji again.

Certainly Kimberley saw Seymour Clarke's letter in entirely new light. "It would be impossible for us to consent to any European Power assuming the Protectorate of any state in the Malay Peninsula". Writing this on 22 July 1873 he decided to consult the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for India. His first idea was that Sir Andrew Clarke, the new governor, might make new treaties in which the Malay rulers would agree not to cede territory to another Power without British consent.⁸³ Meanwhile he studied what the existing treaties implied. MacDonald made a survey of the existing political relations with the Malay States on 23 July and Kimberley was full of detailed inquiries. On 31 July 1873 he made an interim decision.⁸⁴

Seymour Clarke was to be told that all correspondence about the Selangor Tin Company would have to go through the governor. With this breathing space gained Kimberley ordered a thorough study of the Malayan treaties. Meanwhile he was busily engaged in the early days of August 1873 with arrangements for Sir Garnet Wolseley's Ashanti expedition in West Africa—a matter in which Sir Andrew Clarke was an adviser, and for which he had been originally selected by Kimberley as commander. Before deciding on the Malayan matter Kimberley gave the department a fortnight to prepare a comprehensive memorandum on relations with the Malay States under the Indian regime and after "so complete as to be intelligible without books or papers."⁸⁵ Even after MacDonald had done this Kimberley still called for some of the original documents. He studied the memorandum most carefully and it is adorned with his pencilled comments.⁸⁶ Thus Parkinson's statement that "The Colonial was not unduly impressed" by Seymour Clarke's letter is quite wrong. The reply to Clarke on 5 August 1873, which Parkinson quotes—a repetition of the policy of non-interference—was simply designed to gain time. Kimberley told his department that the whole question of the Malayan policy would be dealt with in connection with Sir Andrew Clarke's instructions.

81. Minutes by MacDonald 19th, Cox 20th, Herbert 21st & K-Hugessen 22. vii. 1873 on Clarke to Herbert 12. vii. 1873 CO/273/74.

82. Minutes by K-Hugessen 22. vi. 1872 on OAG-NSW to Kimberley 19. iv. 1872 22. vii. 1872. CO/201/571.

83. Minute by Kimberley 22. vii. 1873 on Clarke to Herbert 18. vii. 1873. CO/273/74.

84. *Ibid.* Memo. by MacDonald 23. vii. 1873 and Kimberley 31. vii. 1873.

85. *Ibid.* Minute by Herbert 10. viii. 1873.

86. *Ibid.* filed after Herbert's minute.

IV

The following pattern emerges then: the Perak and Larut war had caused Kimberley to decide early in July that Clarke would have to look into Peninsula affairs; the possibility of European rivalry raised by Seymour Clarke added urgency to this inquiry later in July; the final step came at the end of August when Kimberley wrote the new governor's instructions. Before he did this the well-known petition from the 248 Chinese traders reached London with the comment by Ord that the whole of the west coast from Province Wellesley to Malacca was in a state of anarchy. On 28 August 1873 Cox wrote "Lord Kimberley is about to consider how far it may be desirable for the British Govt., that is the Govt. of the Straits Settlements, to interfere actively in the Malayan States".⁸⁸ Kimberley wrote his famous draft for Sir Andrew Clarke on 31 August.⁸⁹ In Parkinson's view "the month or six weeks during which the trend of policy was so strikingly reversed" was from 21 August, when the traders petition arrived, till 20 September, when Clarke's instructions were sent.⁹⁰ The foregoing argument shows that it took place between early July, when Kimberley saw George Campbell, and 22 July, when he contemplated new treaties with the Malay States after reading Seymour Clarke's letter. The Chinese traders petition only underlined a situation which Kimberley had already appreciated. After giving Wolsley his Ashanti instructions on 10 September Kimberley sent Clarke's instructions to the Prime Minister with this rather apt summary of the situation:

"The condition of the Malay Peninsula is becoming very serious. It is the old story of misgovernment of Asiatic States. This might go on without any serious consequences except the stoppage of trade were it not that European and Chinese capitalists stimulated by the great riches in tin mines in some of the Malay States are suggesting to the Native Princes that they should seek the aid of Europeans. . . . We are the paramount power on the Peninsula up to the limit of the States tributary to Siam, and looking to the vicinity of India & our whole position in the East I apprehend that it would be a serious matter if any other European Power were to obtain a footing on the Peninsula".⁹¹

He assured Gladstone that the instructions "do not actually pledge us to anything but they imply that some attempt is to be made to produce a better state of things".

Thus in the autumn of 1873 the Colonial Office realised "we are getting somewhat actively mixed up in Perak politics."⁹² Captain Speedy joined the Mantri of Larut; Ord recognised the latter as an independent ruler thus committing the Straits government; HMS *Thalia* shelled the stockades of the Chinese faction who opposed the government's new protegee; and in Selangor the alliance with Pahang, which was arranged

87. Parkinson 109. Kimberley made this note after his draft of the reply to Seymour Clarke 5. viii. 1873. CO/283/74.

88. Minute by Cox 28. viii. 1873 on Ord to Kimberley 10. vii. 1873 (received 21. viii. 1873). CO/273/67.

89. *Ibid.* draft by Kimberley 31. viii. 1873 (sent to Gladstone 12. ix. 1873).

90. Parkinson 111.

91. Kimberley to Gladstone 10. ix. 1873. *Gladstone Papers* 44225/103.

by Ord, enabled Tengku 'Zia'u'd-din to prevail in the civil war. But the Colonial Office was not unduly worried now that the Straits government had compromised its neutrality in the Peninsula. "I do not see that we can avoid interference", wrote Herbert, and he even suggested that the Malay rulers should police their rivers with gun-boats commanded by Englishmen. Kimberley said "Englishmen commanding Malay Gun-boats would soon acquire a preponderating power in Malay States".⁹³ The Colonial Office, in fact, approved of all Ord's last minute efforts and they settled down to await Clarke's report.

As everyone knows, Clarke worked on the principle that it was necessary to act first and report afterwards. By a remarkable coincidence the telegram announcing the Pangkor agreement reached London on 24 January 1874, the very day that the dissolution of parliament was announced and Gladstone's Greenwich manifesto was published. Parkinson makes a good deal of the point that Clarke had highly placed friends in both political camps, that he therefore went to Singapore in the knowledge that the Liberals were about to fall, so that he had reason to presume that a bold policy in Malaya would meet with Conservative approval.⁹⁴ But it is just as likely that Clarke, having seen his solution to the Ashanti problem in West Africa rejected for Wolseley's more ambitious expedition, wished to shine in Malaya and prove that his methods of limited intervention would work.⁹⁵ It is unlikely that Kimberley would have been any less favourable to Clarke's solution than Carnarvon, since it was strictly a limited intervention, and anyway it had been suggested by Kimberley in the instructions. Clarke himself was opposed to Jervois's later attempt at annexation in Malaya, which Carnarvon stopped. Disraeli, in spite of the popular conception, had severe misgivings about permitting forward moves in South Africa and Afghanistan and in his great imperial venture in the Eastern Question he stood for neutrality and non-intervention as compared with the policy of Russia, and he refused to annex Egypt.⁹⁶

Although Carnarvon was a very conscientious Colonial Secretary there appears to be no evidence that he gave to Malay affairs the same close attention he gave to certain other matters. It would be fair to say that Kimberley studied the Malay problem more carefully than Carnarvon. What is important is the fact that both ministers were searching for a way of achieving order on the frontier of the empire in the Straits by some method which fell short of the extension of British sovereignty. This was the real origin of the Resident system. People like W. H. M. Read had long hinted, hopefully, that the Malay States were ripe for some new relationship with Britain. The Anson committee and George Campbell suggested explicitly the appointment of Residents. By coincidence Campbell spoke to Kimberley in London at the time when the situation on the west coast was causing him to change his mind, and Seymour

92. Minute by MacDonald 11. x. 1873 on Ord to Kimberley 5. ix. 1873. CO/273/69.

93. *Ibid.* Minute by Herbert 11th and Kimberley 12. ix. 1873.

94. Parkinson 107-108.

95. Clarke did not, like Wolseley, advocate a British expedition; he also wished to hand the government back to Africans after the war. In Malaya too, as compared with Jervois, Clarke was a supporter of limited intervention.

96. See Moneyppenny, W. F. & Buckle, G. E. *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, London (revised edition in 2 vol.) 1929. Vol. II, Part 6.

Clarke's production of the unlikely threat of a German protectorate was a sort of political blackmail to a sensitive diplomatist like Kimberley, who immediately felt a challenge to Britain's position as the paramount power in Malaya. In later years he remembered the 'German scare' of 1873.⁹⁷

This, I think, is a more satisfactory description of the background to the famous instructions of 1873. Since Buckingham's time Britain's policy had really been 'non-intervention — unless...'. There was always the reservation that intervention might be necessary if British interests were affected or if the security of the colony was endangered. These were vague, infinitely flexible, conditions. The various requests, incidents, qualifications, attempted interventions, private admissions, and actual interventions between 1868 and 1873 all led gradually to the moment in 1873 when Kimberley said 'the time has come'. He decided then that something more comprehensive should be done to solve the problem, so he hoped, once for all.⁹⁸

97. See Thio, E. *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula 1880-1909* (PhD thesis, University of London 1956 quoted by courtesy of the author) 9 & 316. Kimberley wrote in Sept 1881: "Bismarck used to be the bugbear, and was believed to have an eye on Selangor" and in April 1885: "I mention Germany because some years ago the Germans were intriguing in Selangor, now under our protection".
98. I must acknowledge the criticism and advice received from Dr. C. D. Cowan of the School of Oriental & African Studies, with whom I discussed the ideas contained in this article.