

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Principiis Rebellionis in India Orientalis:
Taming British Counterinsurgency in Malaya
1944-1954*

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and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, June 2018

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Abstract

This work dissects Britain's counter-insurgency campaign during the Malayan Emergency and her wider experience at decolonisation in Southeast Asia. The Darurat - as it is known in the local Malay language - is considered as the typical case of a successful modern-day counter-insurgency campaign. The conventional theoretical wisdom posits; that in order to win a counter-insurgency campaign, the force responsible for such a campaign must, similar to Malaya, embark upon a policy of 'winning hearts and minds'. However, as more official colonial documents pertaining to the Emergency are uncovered and released to the public, the increasing publication of memoirs from individuals directly involved in the Emergency across the political spectrum, and the increased willingness of ex-insurgents as well as members of previously besieged communities affected by mass resettlement to come forward and share their accounts; there is ground to doubt the accuracy of our inherited and imbalanced knowledge of the Emergency along with the 'lessons' we have derived from it. This thesis has strengthened the argument, with an emphasis on Malay language and Jawi scripted sources, that; (1) through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two. And that (2) force which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war in 1954 was regarded as 'exempted' force wrapped in a grand narrative despite the on-the-ground reality for the people.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION¹

The admirable and persistent scholarly works concerning insurgencies and counter-insurgencies over several decades since the turn of the Twentieth Century has continued to enrich our collective understanding of the relative experience of human conflict. In particular, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of insurgencies as well as its known ‘opposite reaction’ – counter-insurgencies. Such areas of investigation are inevitable it seems. In his 2013 book, Max Boot makes the argument that insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and unconventional conflict have been the most common forms of warfare dating back to the Romans and the Jews in AD 66.² Thus, the question of whether we can at all arrive at, or, whether there can be an eventual ‘lesson to end all lessons’ which may wholly inform us of the activity of insurgency and counter-insurgency, we believe, should not pressure the researcher to abandon exploring contrary, or alternatively, to established facts, and thus turning their backs toward the possibility of rigour as well as the accumulation, and cultivation, of nuances in knowledge. However firmly we decide to hold to the facts we consider as true and timeless, we ought to consider what others have shown us, that facts also decay, and facts by the same token also have, half-life. Arbesman, through scientometrics, explains that the facts, in any given field of study is akin to radioactive decay: we cannot predict which individual fact is going to succumb to decay, but we can know how long it takes for half the facts in a discipline to become obsolete.³ Even in 1953, when the Chinese premier Zhou En Lai was in Geneva for the peace negotiations to end the Korean War and was asked by a French journalist what he thought about the French Revolution; Zhou replied: “It is still too early to tell”.

The conflict known as the Malayan Emergency is said to begin simply. In 1948, twenty miles east of Sungei Siput was an isolated rubber plantation, the Elphil Estate, ran by British estate manager, Arthur Walker.⁴ On 16 June 1948, Walker and his wife, who had been in Malaya for twenty years, were scheduled to leave for England.

¹ Note on title translation: *Principiis Rebellionis in India Orientalis* (“The Principles of Rebellion in the East Indies”); Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (1879) *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Charlton T. Lewis (1891) *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*, New York: Harper & Brothers; Charles du Fresne du Cange’s *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis* (augmented edition, 1883–1887); Félix Gaffiot’s *Dictionnaire Illustré Latin-Français*, Hachette (1934)

² Boot, Max. 2013. *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*. New York: Liveright Publishing.

³ Arbesman, Samuel. 2012. *New Scientist*. 19 September. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21528831-800-truth-decay-the-half-life-of-facts/>.

⁴ Shennan, Margaret. 2000. *Out in the Midday Sun: The British in Malaya 1880-1960*. London: John Murray Publishers Ltd.

Mrs Walker had already left for Sungei Siput for some eleventh-hour shopping, while Arthur Walker, busy with paperwork in the estate office. At around 8.30 a.m. three Chinese men arriving on bicycles, walked into the estate office saying ‘*Tabek, Tuan!*’ or ‘Greetings, Sir!’, proceeded to shoot Walker dead, and consequently fled the office, allegedly ignoring a large sum of money in an opened safe. Thirty minutes later, ten miles east of the Elphil Estate, on the Sungei Siput Estate, twelve comrades from the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) allegedly besieged its main plantation office, torched the estate’s rubber stocks, and proceeded to murder two British estate managers: John Allison and Ian Christian. A third attack that day allegedly saw a MCP killer squad kill a Kuomintang (KMT) foreman. Except for Ian Christian, the rest of those murdered had a record for strikebreaking while in Malaya. These were allegedly the ‘first(s)’ casualties of the Malayan Emergency.

Perhaps understandably, within hours, the British declared a state of emergency in several districts, which then later expanded to cover all areas of Perak and Johore and within 24 hours, the whole of the Peninsula. On 18 June 1948, when the Emergency was proclaimed for all of Malaya; all leftist organisations were declared illegal and banned; the MCP, PKMM, PETA, AWAS, BTM, Hizbul Muslimin, NDYL,⁵ and other labour organisations were proscribed. Then, on 20 June 1948, the British undertook massive arrests of all comrades or members of leftist parties or organisations. They were either incarcerated, tortured, sentenced to death by hanging or exiled.⁶ Three important Malay MCP leaders were arrested; Kamarulzaman Teh on 20 June 1948, Abdullah C.D. on 10 July 1948, and Rashid Maidin also in July 1948, who later was sentenced to hang in 1951, but was pardoned to serve life in prison.⁷ The following

⁵ The Communist-inspired New Democratic Youth League (NDYL) was inaugurated in Singapore in December 1945 with attendance by 3,000 people. It is the parent organisation to other Communist youth bodies ‘free democratic education’ and civil liberties through such events as International Youth Week in March 1946. The NDYL also used performances to undermine Kuomintang influences and plays were a regular feature of fund-raising events and rallies.^[1]

⁶ 1861/1948 – Che’ Mohamed Ariff bin Abdul Raof; 1971/1948 – Abdul Latif bin Arshad; 2022/1948 – Haji Yahya bin Haji Abas; 2123/1948 – Ahmad Boestamam; 229/1949 – Tiagam binti Haji Othman for Haji Abdul Latif; 901/1949 – Raja Musa bin Raja Jaafar; 1002/1949 – Mohd Idris Haji Marzuki; 1060/1949 – Che’ Abdul Malik bin Buyong; 1090/1949 – Che’ Kassim bin Malek; 1091/1949 – Che Yunus bin Malek; 1057/1949 – Che Mohd Salleh bin Syed; 1092/1949 – Che Yaacob bin Ali; 1093/1949 – Che Ma’aruf bin P’I; 1095/1949 – Che Yunus bin Pendek; 1111/1949 – Che Sasi bin Buyong; 1154/1949 – Che Othman bin Binu; 1155/1949 – Che Abdul Motalib bin Haji Mohamed Not; 1156/1949 – Haji Husin bin Naim; 1157/1949 – Che Mohd Salleh bin Idris; 1162/1949 – Che Mohd Yakin bin Haji Abdul Rahman; 1173/1949 – Mohd Shariff bin Jamik; 1179/1949 – Sultan Mohd

1257/1949 – Silong bin Jafar; 1258/1949 – Agus bin Singkat; 1348/1949 – Abdul Hamid bin Haji Salleh; 1355/1949 – Yulis bin Siyu; 1358/1949 – Yusoff bin Musa; 2881/1949 – Mustapha bin Yunus; 2559/1949 – Jani bin Sudin; 2461/1949 – Maala bin Nuruddin; 2416/1949 – Samdani bin Abdul Hamid; 2182/1949 – Abdul Majid bin Osman; 1957/1949 – Ibrahim bin Ansun; 1856/1949 – Mohd Said bin Mikin; 1595/1949 – Abdullah bin Malim Raman; 1559/1949 – Abdul Latiff bin Duasat; 1501/1949 – Mohd Salleh bin Haji Abas; 1378/1949 – Junid bin Haji Yatim; 2417/1949 – Hassan bin Abdul Halim

⁷ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998 1998) CD: *Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.

Malay leaders were also arrested:⁸ Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Baqir, Cikgu Sabrun, Osman Bakar, Cikgu Muda, Cikgu Hamid, Ustaz Yahya Nasim, Taharuddin, Kamaruddin, Bizar Ahmad, Sutan Djenain, and Khatijah Ali.⁹ To this point, Chin Peng, leader of the MCP, continued to maintain till his death that Western historians writing on the Emergency frequently begin their account with the aforementioned June 1948 killings “as if the violence only began there” - resulting in a convenient but historically inaccurate narrative with ‘foul’ murder as the start point.

The tradition of refusing to simply take the words of others (*Nullius in verba*) in order to further, beyond the pillars of conventional wisdom, is a time-honoured practice. However, contained within this refusal of blindly going on the words of others, rests the first obstacle to clarity in making conclusions. The obstacle is simply that those who call themselves revolutionaries believe “that all militarism is wicked except their own militarism; that their ends are so good that they are justified in using the worst means in order to achieve them; that they are fighting on the side of an ineluctable historical process, and that, whereas their opponents’ violence is not only evil, but futile, their own brutalities are historically justified and predestined by the very nature of things to have good results.”¹⁰ In the course of historical British Counterinsurgency the British Military establishment, thought that they were able to distinguish between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’, especially drawing on the lessons it had learnt. However, it has been shown to date, that it was the application of wholesale coercion in places like Palestine, Malaya, the Suez Canal Zone, Kenya, British Guiana, Cyprus, Oman, Nyasaland, Borneo, and Aden.¹¹

⁸ 1861/1948 – Che’ Mohamed Ariff bin Abdul Raof; 1971/1948 – Abdul Latif bin Arshad; 2022/1948 – Haji Yahya bin Haji Abas; 2123/1948 – Ahmad Boestamam; 229/1949 – Tiajam binti Haji Othman for Haji Abdul Latif; 901/1949 – Raja Musa bin Raja Jaafar; 1002/1949 – Mohd Idris Haji Marzuki; 1060/1949 – Che’ Abdul Malik bin Buyong; 1090/1949 – Che’ Kassim bin Malek; 1091/1949 – Che Yunus bin Malek; 1057/1949 – Che Mohd Salleh bin Syed; 1092/1949 – Che Yaacob bin Ali; 1093/1949 – Che Ma’aruf bin Pi’I; 1095/1949 – Che Yunus bin Pendek; 1111/1949 – Che Sasi bin Buyong; 1154/1949 – Che Othman bin Binu; 1155/1949 – Che Abdul Motalib bin Haji Mohamed Not; 1156/1949 – Haji Husin bin Naim; 1157/1949 – Che Mohd Salleh bin Idris; 1162/1949 – Che Mohd Yakin bin Haji Abdul Rahman; 1173/1949 – Mohd Shariff bin Jamik; 1179/1949 – Sultan Mohd
1257/1949 – Silong bin Jafar; 1258/1949 – Agus bin Singkat; 1348/1949 – Abdul Hamid bin Haji Salleh; 1355/1949 – Yulis bin Siyu; 1358/1949 – Yusoff bin Musa; 2881/1949 – Mustapha bin Yunus; 2559/1949 – Jani bin Sudin; 2461/1949 – Maala bin Nuruddin; 2416/1949 – Samdani bin Abdul Hamid; 2182/1949 – Abdul Majid bin Osman; 1957/1949 – Ibrahim bin Ansun; 1856/1949 – Mohd Said bin Mikin; 1595/1949 – Abdullah bin Malim Raman; 1559/1949 – Abdul Latiff bin Duasat; 1501/1949 – Mohd Salleh bin Haji Abas; 1378/1949 – Junid bin Haji Yatim; 2417/1949 – Hassan bin Abdul Halim

⁹ Che Dat, Abdullah. 1998. *Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

¹⁰ Huxley, Aldous. 1989. "Introduction." In *The Conquest of Violence An Essay on War and Revolution*, by Bart De Ligt, xxviii-xxx. Winchester: Unwin Hyman Inc.

¹¹ Hughes, Matthew. 2012. "Introduction: British ways of counter-insurgency." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23 (4-5): 580-590.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Thus, recently in this vein, academics of the likes of Huw Bennet, Hannah Gurman, Karl Hack, among others, with their research have thus held the fort for ‘nuances’ with distinction, and have forced a previously closed door, ajar. They have championed the idea of a people’s history of counterinsurgency (COIN) which is a type of history that should “avoid resurrecting a simplistic grand narrative” and should instead bring together more nuanced perspectives from individuals with expertise in different areas. Crucially, they have attempted to include perspectives to gain a glimpse into the history of insurgency and counterinsurgency from “below”, which concerns the relative experience of ordinary people caught in the fog of conflict and war. In the case of the Malayan Emergency, the rise of COIN literature pertaining to its case sits alongside more general nuanced works concerning Malaysia and the region. The overall efforts remain a bulwark against champions of COIN, dubbed ‘COINdinistas’.¹² The charge is that COINdinistas tended to mould history to fit their own purposes, reducing the individual conflicts to 1) the vocabulary and ideology of COIN and 2) omitting the grimmer details of these campaigns.¹³ Any blanket stereotypes that attempt to explain everything, over every period can be little more than propaganda, or at best naïve oversimplifications.¹⁴

This research generally intends to address the charge that post-war counterinsurgencies deployed widespread, exemplary violence in order to discipline and intimidate populations. There is a trend today,¹⁵ to revisit instances of historical counterinsurgency, and this section will explore this further, investigating widespread, exemplary violence in order to discipline and intimidate populations. In the case of Malaya we do so by using the Malayan Emergency of 1948 to 1960 as a case-study in counterinsurgency ‘violence’, defined as high to lethal levels of physical force against non-combatants (civilians, detainees, prisoners and corpses). Such an

¹² Ricks, Thomas E. 2009. "The COINdinistas." *Foreign Policy*, November 30.

¹³ Hack, Karl. 2017. "The Art of Counterinsurgency: Phase Analysis with Primary Reference to Malaya (1948-60), and Secondary Reference to Kenya (1952-60)." In *Decolonization and Conflict: Colonial Comparisons and Legacies*, edited by Martin and Curless, Gareth Thomas, 177-196. London: Bloomsbury.

¹⁴ Hack, Karl. 2018. "Devils that suck the blood of the Malayan People": The Case for Post-Revisionist Analysis of Counterinsurgency Violence." *War in History* 25 (2): 202-226.

¹⁵ Gentile, Gian. 2013. *Wrong Turn America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. New York: The New Press.; Gventer, Celeste Ward, and M. L. R. eds. Smith. 2014. *The New Counter-insurgency Era in Critical Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.; Hack, Karl. 2009. "The Malayan Emergency as a Counter-insurgency Paradigm." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32 (3): 383-414.; French, David. 2011. *The British Way in Counter-insurgency, 1945-1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Bennett, Huw. 2013. *Fighting the Mau Mau: the British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Hughes, Matthew. 2009. "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939." *English Historical Review* 124 (507): 313-54.; Elkins, Caroline. 2005. *Britain's Gulag: the brutal end of empire in Kenya*. London: Pimlico.; Anderson, David. 2005. *Histories of the hanged: Britain's dirty war in Kenya and the end of empire*. London: Phoenix.; For multiple perspectives, see *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, 4-5 (2012), special issue on 'British Ways of Counter-Insurgency'.

analysis need not account for a comparative level of violence from the outset, instead, it requires a more nuanced account, differentiated either by method, location, and circumstances of occurrence to give sense to the situation first and foremost.

The result, otherwise, is a type of incumbency bias buttressed by self-serving mythology that tended to justify wars on the side of the dominant power and reinforced its image as a well-meaning force in the world. In championing nuances, this counter-position encourages and welcomes the participation from anthropologists, area experts, journalists, filmmakers, and social, military, and diplomatic historians that critically analyse the supposed successes and romanticised heroes of past counterinsurgencies, in order to attempt to write the history of counterinsurgency without the “self-serving and reductive categories of standard COIN discourse and official military spin”.¹⁶

The major works in counterinsurgency canon include more recent popular books on the history of counterinsurgency, such as John Nagl’s *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (2002) and David Kilcullen’s *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (2009), as well as old “classics” of counterinsurgency including, for example, the colonial French military officer, David Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, first printed in 1961 and reprinted in 2006.” In 2006, as head of the army’s Command and Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, and having always had a relationship with the Vietnamese case, General David Petraeus directed the writing of the U.S. Army/Marine Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24); a kind of modern day resurrection of counterinsurgency from the days of the Vietnam war.¹⁷ The U.S. counterinsurgency field manual, as well as the body of pro-counterinsurgency literature produced in subsequently, rely heavily on case studies from past counterinsurgency conflicts. These official and semi-official history of counterinsurgency served as the corpus for a U.S. grand narrative of COIN used to indoctrinate military personnel, as well as the public, into the COIN paradigm strengthening arguments for a mix of grand social, governance and economic intervention with large military force and host nation training: as opposed to clear and quick exit strategies combined with light footprint assistance.¹⁸ ‘Early’ COINdinistas, so to

¹⁶ Gurman, Hannah. 2013. "Introduction." In *Hearts and Minds A People's History of Counterinsurgency*, edited by Hannah Gurman, 1-16. New York: The New Press

¹⁷ Petraeus, David Howell. 1987. "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era." *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

¹⁸ Gentile, 2013. See also Feichtinger, Moritz, Stephan Malinowski, and Chase Richards. 2012. "Transformative Invasions: Western Post-9/11 Counterinsurgency and the Lessons of Colonialism." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3 (1): 35-63.

speak, through the 1960s to 1980s, including Sir Robert Thompson¹⁹ and Frank Kitson espoused what had ‘worked’ in Malaya, emphasizing the primacy of civil power and pursuing victory in the socio-political battle, maintaining the rule of law through Emergency powers, using ‘minimum force’, and population control as a relatively harmless way of separating insurgent and the people before development and ‘winning hearts and minds’.

Throughout the 1980s, works by Mockaitis and Stubbs, among others identified comparatively a ‘British’ way of counterinsurgency which underscored further the lessons above,²⁰ with academics working on new interpretations of British COIN such as Bennett’s 2013 ‘Fighting the Mau Mau’ and French’s 2011 ‘The British Way in Counterinsurgency’. The overall contribution of these works tended to characterize abuses as episodic and passing, underplaying brutal campaigns such while emphasizing positive experiences such as Malaya. Such approaches believe that the lessons extend education for the officer class and in general, the British Army establishment. However, insufficient attention was paid to the limitation of doctrines and the expectation of reality to fit doctrine.²¹

Generally, what are insurgencies? Current American doctrine defines insurgency as “...the organised use of subversion or violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority”.²² Stanley McChrystal, once in charge of the American War in Afghanistan championed a COIN which “protects the people” as mission objective.²³ The conflict was thought to “be won by persuading the people, not by destroying the enemy.”²⁴ The crucial distinction here is one between the “people” and the “insurgents.” The distinction of these two groups is central to the practices of COIN. Forces are meant to “continue to secure the people and separate them from the insurgents,”²⁵

However, that distinction cannot be made so conveniently, especially in situations where one concedes as inherently exceptional or as an emergency, brought on and justified by an

¹⁹ Thompson was a senior civil servant in Malaya during the Malayan emergency, serving successively as Deputy Secretary and later Secretary for Defence in the Malay Federal government.

²⁰ Stubbs, Richard. 1989. *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare; The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*. New York: Oxford University Press Pte. Ltd.

²¹ Bennett, Huw. 2010. "Minimum force in British counterinsurgency." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21 (3): 459-475.

²² 2012. U.S. Joint Chiefs of State, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Publication 1-02, November 8, 2010, as amended through November 15, 2012*. Washington DC.

²³ Gurman, Hannah. 2013. "Introduction." In *Hearts and Minds A People's History of Counterinsurgency*, edited by Hannah Gurman, 1-16. New York: The New Press.

²⁴ Hall, Michael T, and Stanley A McChrystal. 2009. "International Security Assistance Force Official Texts." *North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*. August. https://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf.

²⁵ United States Army; Lt. General David Petraeus; Lt. General James F Amos. 2006. *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. Paladin Press.

exceptional danger. For example, in Malaya, as we will see, the so-called ‘people’ are often husbands, uncles, sons, and fathers of the ‘insurgents’. The very idea of a neat physical divide between the insurgency and the people understates nuances. Moreover, the ideological divide that underpins the physical divide also assumes the idea of a clear ideological chasm between insurgents and the population. In Malaya, on 12 January 1950, Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya, wrote to Arthur Creech Jones, asserting that:

*The enemy in Malaya is Communism, with all its implications, and is not merely some 3000 bandits.*²⁶

Gurney appears to appreciate the organised nature of the rebellion facing Malaya. He, however, suggested to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that such emotive terms such as ‘war’, ‘enemy’ and ‘rebellion’ should be avoided, and instead names such as ‘banditry’, ‘thugs’, ‘terrorism’ and so on be used.²⁷

The history of counterinsurgency, as told by its proponents, is inherently reductive.²⁸ The very language of insurgency flattens the varied histories, motivations, and makeup of individual groups that challenged the legitimacy and policies of their respective governments. Fanon, in explaining the colonial situation, indirectly elucidates the dynamic of ‘opposing liberties’, as he believes the relationship between the a ‘settler’ and a ‘native’ both regard one another as “the enemy of values”, and both in this sense are each other’s absolute evil. To the colonial, the native “is a corrosive element, disfiguring all that comes near him; he is deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind force”.²⁹

In the COIN paradigm, no matter how violent, the actions of liberal revolutionaries are justified by the greater cause of freedom while ‘insurgent’ groups are euphemism and synonyms of their own most violent tactics.³⁰ This division of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forms of resistance has implications for the characterisation of tactics across groups. Thus, the history of the Malayan Emergency includes acts of violence against the state and, in several cases,

²⁶ 1950. "Telegram from Sir Henry Gurney, British High Commissioner in Malaya, to Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies." *FO 371/84477*. January 12.

²⁷ n.d. "No 3, Secret Despatch No 5, Para 16, 'Insurance', 30 May 1949 from Sir Henry Gurney to Secretary of States for Colonies." *CO 537/4773*.

²⁸ Gurman, Hannah. 2013. "Introduction." In *Hearts and Minds A People's History of Counterinsurgency*, edited by Hannah Gurman, 1-16. New York: The New Press.

²⁹ Fanon, Frantz. 1963. "Concerning Violence." In *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon. New York: Grove Press.

³⁰ Gurman, Hannah. 2013. "Introduction." In *Hearts and Minds A People's History of Counterinsurgency*, edited by Hannah Gurman, 1-16. New York: The New Press.

against civilians, although such tactics were typically strategic in nature and perhaps neither coextensive nor commensurate to the violence carried out by security forces and their allies.

More complicated is the tendency of the grand COIN narrative to paint an equally simplistic picture of potential allies—the local ‘people’ whose hearts and minds are supposed to be central to winning a counterinsurgency campaign. Insisting on a natural alliance between a ‘good’ population and British counterinsurgency forces against a ‘bad’ insurgency, the British COIN narrative fails to acknowledge this more nuanced dynamic. This tradition of a vocabulary suitable for campaign and conflict purposes is another time-honoured activity. Somaes Jenyns during the prelude to the American Revolution made similar observations, he writes; “The liberty of an Englishman” has within the past “few years been used as a synonymous term of blasphemy, bawdy, treason, libels, strong beer and cyder”, what it could not mean, he declared, is “an exemption from taxes imposed by the authority of the Parliament of Great Britain”.³¹

Bear in mind, it is crucial to be able to say “Chinese is bandit” or “MCP is enemy”, like “snow is white”, as fact. Such caricatures of the enemy are an expected staple of war rhetoric. These are demonising and delegitimising terms, however, these are unavoidable. In the case of Malaya, for example, that group consisted of people of Chinese ethnicity, while in Kenya it consisted of the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru.³²

Such a rhetoric breaks the world into two levels; the same and the different. Suppose we take a group, any group, of diverse persons - Japanese, Chinese, English; rich, poor; male, female, etc. and mix them together. To note their equal existence and nothing more is to say how many there are. In order to do so, it is necessary to state that they exist and that they exist in the same way, none existing differently from the others. And at the same time, they are discrete from one another, without detailing their differences since the things we enumerate have the same value but are not one-and-the-same. Once this principle is established, it is possible to count - the persons, the ballots, or the votes.

If we take any two individuals, let us say Huang and Ma, and define them as a couple/pair/group by saying that Huang and Ma are not equivalent but are both members of a set, making them also elements of a set, and that anything which is a member of this set is

³¹ Jenyns, Soames. 1765. *The Objections to the Taxation of our American Colonie, by the Legislature of Great Britain, Briefly Consider'd*. London: Printed for J. Wilkie.

³² French, "Nasty not nice: British counter-insurgency.", 750.

identical with one another. Huang and Ma, hence, make a group, and we name as them “Bandits” along with all the implications that such a word carries with it transposed unto Huang and Ma. Similarly, then we take any three individuals, let us say; Henry, Edward, and Abdullah, and consequently proceed much the same and name this set “Government”. Suppose then we take the union of Bandits and Government; as a set we call “State”. Or perhaps, instead, suppose we take five million people (roughly the population of Malaya in the late 1940s) – and define them as belonging to each other as a distinct group - at the exclusion of non-members of that group - by saying that they are not equivalent but are members of a set, in which all members of this set are identical to one another and call it a “State”. And we define a State by saying that these five million people are all members of a State, and that anything which is a member of this State set is not equivalent, yet identical with one or another of them.

Rebellion, and specifically rebellion against the State, is typically understood as a refusal of obedience or order and refers to a type of open resistance against the orders of an established authority. The term comes from the Latin verb *rebellō*, “I renew war”, where the ‘re’ meaning ‘again’, necessarily characterises a disobedience toward a pre-existing order, notwithstanding the type of that pre-existing order. The rebel is thus the individual whom partakes in rebellion or rebellious activities, originating from some kind of sentiment of indignation and disapproval of a situation and then manifests itself by the refusal to submit or to obey the authority responsible for this situation. In turn, someone who has been ‘outlawed’ by an authority is a bandit, who through his actions commits banditry. The word bandit is borrowed from Italian *bandito* meaning ‘outlawed’.³³ A thug, on the other hand is a violent person, especially a criminal. The word thug is borrowed from Sanskrit ‘*sthaga*’ meaning “cunning, fraudulent, to cover, to conceal”. During British Imperial rule of India, many Indian words passed into common English, and by 1810, thug referred to members of these Indian gangs. The term thug crept into the English language through the ‘Thuggee’, an Indian network of secret fraternities who engaged in murdering and robbing travellers, operating from the 17th century (possibly as early as the 13th century) to the 19th century. Devotees of the goddess Kali, the Thugs waylaid and are known to strangle their victims in a ritually prescribed manner. They were suppressed by the British in the 1830s. Historians regard rebellion as “external to peasants’ consciousness”, and this problem arises from uncritical use

³³ See Wilfred, John Funk. 1950. Word origins and their romantic stories. Minnesota: Funk & Wagnalls.

of official sources by historians, and also due to the historians' projection of their own consciousness into the subject they are examining.³⁴

The need to discredit the natural capacity of the enemy is helpful and consistent with a language of victory. Similarly, the theme of the supposed 'feeble minded-ness' of the Chinese is reflected in a December 1948 telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, from High Commissioner Gurney stating that:

*...the Chinese 'are as you know notoriously inclined to lean towards whichever side frightens them more and at the moment this seems to be the Government.'*³⁵

This point was reiterated at a meeting of the British Defence Co-ordinating Committee (Far East) in Singapore in January 1949. Gurney stated that an alternative object of affiliation needed to be introduced which the Chinese would recognise as "stronger than the bandits and at the same time inspiring greater fear"³⁶, presumably referring to the necessity for tough measures against the Chinese population to illicit that strong sense of fear and obedience toward the colonial apparatus.

However, consider that after the surrender of Japan in 1945, the MCP had a military force of about 10,000 strong. The MCP established People's Committees in all towns and villages as institutions of local democratic government and offered help to the British Military Administration for the running of relief centres for the distribution of food.³⁷ The MCP, at the time, had decided on a policy of delaying an immediate relaunch of an armed struggle against restoration of British rule. Hence, they came out of the jungle as heroes of the resistance and played the role of a police force in maintaining law and order until the arrival of the British forces.

This begs the hypothetical that, if Britain was ultimately concerned with the security and safety of the native people and their "hearts and minds", then why for example was it never in consideration for the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) to be incorporated into eventual security arrangements.³⁸ By December 1945, MCP party members were

³⁴ Guha, Ranajit. 1988. "The Prose of Counterinsurgency." In *Selected Subaltern Studies*, edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 45-88. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³⁵ 1948. 19 December 1948, CO 537/3758. 19 December.

³⁶ 1949. "Annexure A." *Minute of British Defence Co-ordinating Committee (Far East), 16th Meeting*. Singapore: CO 537/4773, 28 January.

³⁷ 1945. "Statement of Lee Kiu, representative of the People's Anti-Japanese Backing UP Society printed in Sin Chew Jit Poh." *BMA FILE PR/3/2*. 26 September.

³⁸ Cheah, Boon Kheng. 2012. *Red Star Over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, 1941-46*. Singapore: NUS Press.

disappointed that MPAJA could not be incorporated into a defence force, instead they were required, despite their influence, to the opposite; to disband. The MCP wanted the People's Committee's to be recognised as representative political institutions to which power could be delegated and the incorporation of the BMA into the national defence force, however, this was blatantly ignored. The British Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia (SACSEA) did not allow the Japanese forces in Malaya to surrender to the MPAJA units. The Japanese were instead, asked specifically to maintain law and order.

In fact, Spencer Davies, Britain's man-behind- enemy lines writes to SACSEA in protest on 19 August 1945:³⁹

*Your recent telegrams are disturbing. Following must of course be obvious to you. Controlled AJUF are soldiers under command of SACSEA. They expect and await specific order and not vague directives. I am satisfied that they will obey such order provided they are reasonable. Orders for them to remain half-starved in the hills while the Allies leisurely take over administration from Japs will not be reasonable. Some arrangement must be made with the Japs for controlled AJUF to emerge during the interim period though they need not interfere with the Japs admin. AJUF must be given full share in the honours of victory. Controlled AJUF should now be limited to those already armed by us plus other armed men who will accept our control. They must be fully equipped rationed and used by us at the earliest opportunity until time for disbandment. Good treatment of controlled AJUF will have an excellent effect on uncontrolled AJUF many of whom may later be absorbed. Do your utmost to preserve and strengthen central control otherwise, discipline will collapse. The alternative to all this is chaos and anarchy which may take decades to eradicate. The matter is very urgent. There is serious risk of disastrous anti-climax.*⁴⁰

After the war, the 'bandits' were in possession of both 'political aspirations' and modern weaponry which represented a much greater "threat".⁴¹ Let us consider this alleged "threat" by looking at the existing Party tenets at the time:⁴²

- 1) The establishment of self-rule in Malaya based on the principles of national self-determination. The government would have the authority to determine the administration

³⁹ PRO, ref HS 1/114; See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

⁴⁰ Gent comments on Davies in his 29 August 1945 letter; "His reactions no doubt faithfully represent those of the circle with which he had been living for sometime past and will need to be kept continually in mind by those who in the new circumstances will have the handling of the problem..."

⁴¹1956. "K. Swaine, Chairman, Perak Rubber Plantations to Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State." *CO 1030/17*. 5 January.

⁴² Hara, Fujio. 2016. "The Malayan Communist Party." *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Working Papers*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.; Hanrahan, Gene. n.d. "A Simple Explanation of the Past and Present of the Malayan Communist Party." 94-95.

of Malaya, its legal code and laws, and decide on problems related to politics, economics, finances, national defence, foreign affairs, etc.

- 2) The establishment of an All-Malayan National Assembly and the drawing up of a democratic constitution; the establishment of a democratic council in each state; and the granting of the right to vote to people regardless of race, class, political party, sex or belief. The realisation of Malayan democratic government and the guarantee of a democratic press; freedom of publication freedom to organise; freedom to assembly, freedom to travel, and the right to strike.
- 3) The implementation of an independent tariff policy; opening of free trade; the improvement of the workers, peasants and commercial conditions; the expansion of the national economic structure and the improvement of social programmes. And increment in salaries; relief for the unemployed, downtrodden people; the lowering of prices; the abolition of oppressive, irregular taxes and excessively high rates of interests.
- 4) The abolition of the servile system of education, institution of a democratic and free education in the language of each race; the establishment of professional colleges and the expansion of the national culture. The institution of an eight-hour day and a social security programme; the abolition of the system of contractual apprenticeship and the usage of the economic surplus to help the impoverished.
- 5) The recognition of equal rights for women in politics and society; implementation of equal work and equal compensation; the guarantee of two months' rest for female workers before and after birth; the abolition of the system of female servitude and the establishment of a suffrage.
- 6) The unity of the oppressed people of the Far East and the preservation of world peace.

Moreover, as Chin Peng maintains that, far from authoritative consensus there remained a section of the Party whom were left disaffected by Lai Te's decision to welcome the returning

British colonials instead of continuing their armed struggle immediately after the war ended. He writes:

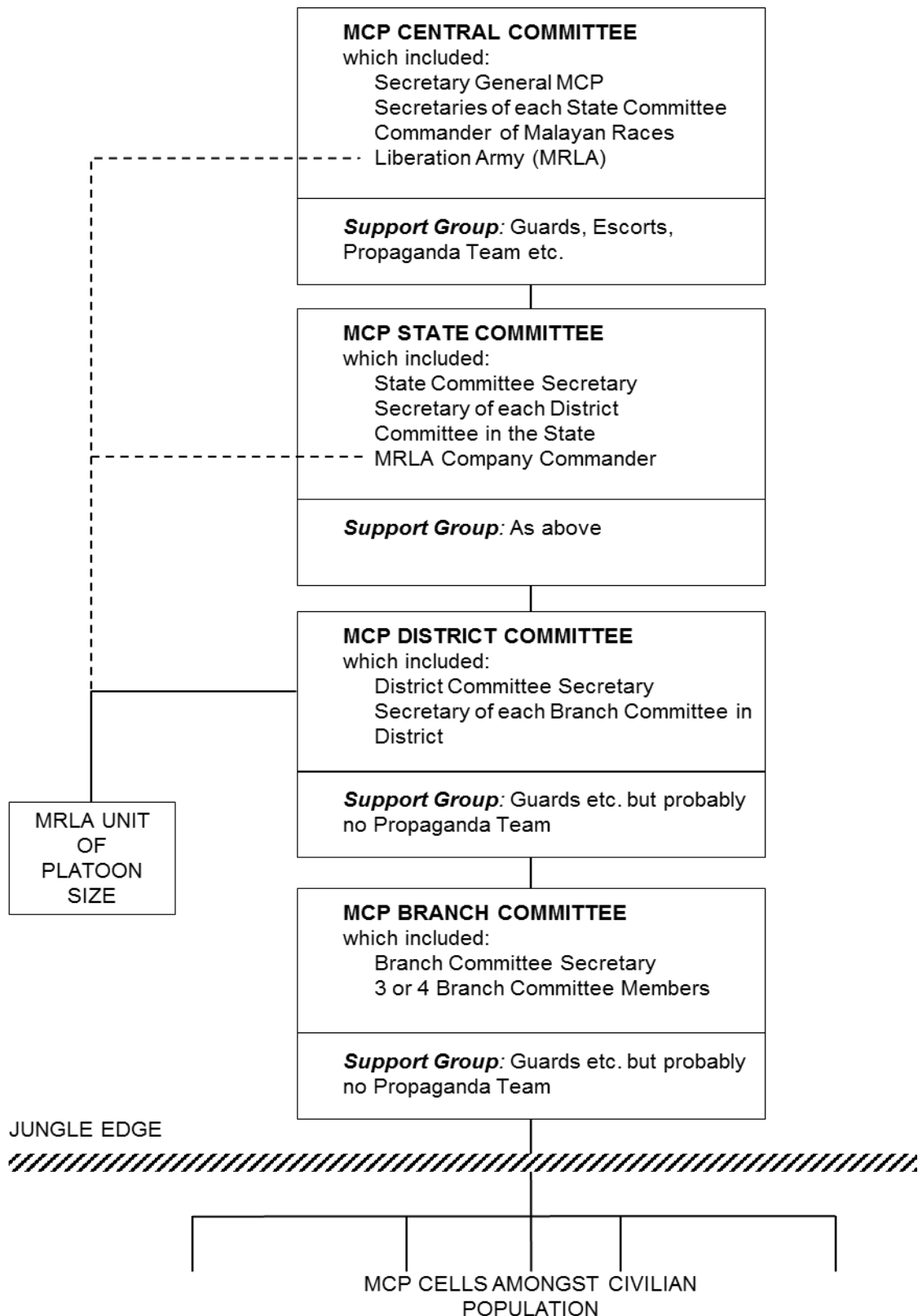
*The sudden Japanese surrender had provided us with a breath-taking opportunity to manipulate events to our advantage, and rather than seizing it, we were throwing it away! ...The feeling within the Party was that the real war remained in progress. Our objective for Malaya still remained a long way off. Compared to the incoming British, we were numerically weak with our guerrilla army being about 5,000-strong at this point. Our assessments were that the British would inevitably move against us, their war-time allies – as indeed, they did – a begin re-imposing the sort of repressive measures they had employed against us prior to the outbreak of hostilities. To move against them first was a matter of acceptable tactical expediency. Considerations of honour and morality among wartime allies did not enter the equation. Such notions certainly never impeded British decisions when it came to opposing us in the months and years that followed.*⁴³

Moreover, the returning British found that charitable work had long been a feature of political mobilisation in Malaya, both in the pre-war period and under the Japanese regime. As civil war deepened in China, Tan Kah Kee and the China Democratic League jostled with Kuomintang and Communist elements for control of the China Relief Fund, sponsoring welfare ventures such as the ‘Overseas Chinese China Sanitary Observation Mission’ which was an important focus for Overseas Chinese nationalism in this period.⁴⁴ There was, in toto, a well organised structure to the rebellion in Malaya which operated from even before the beginning of the shooting war. The party, alongside its military chain of command on its ‘open’-side, was federally and at state level vertically and horizontally organised. When operating in the jungle, and while shuttling to and fro the jungle edge, the fighting units were always mirrored by a party structure which were clear and disciplined, far from ragtag banditry. Thus, the reality of an insurgency in Malaya necessarily meant recognising and accepting a certain degree of methodical-capacity in conduct on the side of the enemy. Figure 1 illustrates the organisational capacity of the MCP.

⁴³ Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

⁴⁴ Harper, T. N. 1999. *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Figure 1: Organisation of Malayan Communist Party⁴⁵



⁴⁵ Adapted from Clutterbuck, Richard. 1967. *The Long Long war : The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Cassell; —. 1966. *The Long Long War*. London: Cassell.

An older definition of the phenomena of insurgency is by David Galula, in *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, defining an insurgency as; “A protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific intermediate objectives leading finally to the overthrow of the existing order.” Crucially, Galula holds that insurgencies “can no more be predicted than a revolution; in fact, its beginnings are so vague that to determine exactly when an insurgency starts is a difficult legal, political, and historical problem...But though it cannot be predicted, an insurgency is usually slow to develop and is not an accident for in an insurgency, leaders appear and then the masses are made to move.”⁴⁶ Thus, in general, insurgencies need to fulfil certain requirements such as “an overthrowing” of a government, and that there must be a complete degree of unity between individuals to reach and maintain this upheaval of circumstances. However, in general we can say that a successful insurgency is therefore an insurgency which is able to reach its maximum potential/strength, which is the fruition of all the insurgent’s strength, concurrently.

A less Occidental source informing us about insurgencies would be Mao Tse Tung’s expression of an insurgency in “On Guerrilla Warfare”. Mao, in showing that victory in insurgency can therefore be said as the moment when the insurgents coincide exactly with the people, rather than being a consequence of it, victory is the securing of the people holds that:

“Guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and co-operation.”

“Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy’s rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element cannot live.”

“Without a political goal, guerrilla warfare must fail, as it must, if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, co-operation, and assistance cannot be gained.”⁴⁷

On the other hand, we ask, what is a counterinsurgency? David Galula says the following:

⁴⁶ Galula, David. 1964. *Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New York: Fredrick A. Praeger.

⁴⁷ See Mao, Tse-tung. 1937. *On Guerilla Warfare*. Republic of China.

*Insurgency and counterinsurgency are two different aspects of the same conflict, an expression is needed to cover the whole; “revolutionary war” will serve the purpose....one side will be called the “insurgent” and his action the “insurgency”; on the opposite side, we will find the “counterinsurgent” and the “counterinsurgency.”*⁴⁸

Thus, a successful COIN is the exact opposite of a successful Insurgency. It is a degree of unity with the people in avoiding a revision of status quo. In the pantheon of counter-insurgency campaigns, spanning across three centuries or so since the American Revolution, the Malayan Emergency is regarded as an ideal-type of successful counterinsurgency campaign, where a high degree of unity with the people was achieved thus avoiding a revision of status quo.

However, even until July 1953, after five years of a shooting war, Gerald Templer, who himself is of Northern Irish ancestry (his father, Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Francis Templer was born in Loughgall, Armagh) and a Royal Irish Fusiliers out of Sandhurst, continued the kind of familiar ‘hibernophobia’ in Malaya which is reminiscent of the enduring belief, even as the Easter Uprising approached, that the Irish were wholly incapable of organising themselves, and ought really to rely on the noblesse oblige of the privileged instead. Comments made contained as part of the ‘migrated archive’ has Gerald Templer writing to Sir Thomas Lloyd (Permanent Undersecretary of Colonies) and contradicts Templer’s image as normally portrayed:

*It is from many points of view one of the greatest tragedies of our time that backward peoples should have highly advanced political doctrines thrust upon them before they are in any way capable of comprehending what is happening. Here in the Federation we have some 60% of the population illiterate – I have no doubt that the position is much the same in other territories and they are far too easy a prey for unscrupulous agitators who pay little or no regard to the genuine well-being of those they are seeking to enlighten.*⁴⁹

Templer’s minimalist view of the capacity of the ‘people’ despite the longstanding history of rebellion in the Peninsula reflects poorly on the establishment’s mind-set at the time.

A common theme across several memoirs written by native participants of the Malayan Emergency is agreement on the fact that anti-colonial resistance against the British was not a

⁴⁸ See Galula, David. 1964. *Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New York: Fredrick A. Praeger. p.xiv

⁴⁹ Templer’s Response, 21st July 1953 CSY.48/3 Secret and Personal; responding to letter 10th March 1953 from Sir Thomas Lloyd (Permanent under-secretary for the Colonies) of the colony – “growth of ‘anti-colonial’ activity.”; Lyttelton, Montgomery, and Churchill preferred Brian Robertson who rejected the post of High Commissioner in Malaya, then opted for Slim who rejected it as well, and finally settling on Templer.

unique phenomenon to 20th century Malaya. Europeans have had a presence in the land as early as the 16th century with the British gaining its first foothold in 1786. A history of interaction between colony and colonial master suggests that “the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living”, according to Marx. Antecedent historical circumstances often make it impossible for living human subjects to think and feel (or—therefore—act) in certain ways. That is to say, the way in which historically-created material circumstances restrict (and enable) the making of history by present generations is not (or certainly not typically) that such generations try to do things and then find that (for ‘material’ reasons) they cannot do them or cannot make history ‘just as they please’. Rather, and much more typically, such circumstances deeply form what it is that present generations can desire to do, can conceive of at all (as well as what actions they can conceive as being possible, impossible’, unfeasible, natural, and unnatural).⁵⁰ In short, we must keep firmly in mind that it is human action in and on the world, as it were, that inextricably links thought (and thus language) to ‘material reality’. The tradition of rebellion which underscored the Nanking wars in 1836, the assassination of British Resident J.W.W Birch in Perak in 1875, the Pahang Chiefs uprising in 1891 and so on, were what the MCP and other anti-British supporters were merely continuing in the 1940s and 1950s. The anti-imperial aspiration and inspiration drawn from those events is shared across both Malay and Chinese anti-British populations from the 1940s onward. Thus far, there have been works focusing on the reformation and restructuring of the British presence in Malaya under a British military administration through the Malayan Union scheme in 1946 and the Federal constitution which succeeded it in February 1948. However, the breadth of this strand focuses primarily on high politics of constitution-making leaving the period to be viewed within a colonial political framework, instead of from anywhere outside the colonial apparatus.⁵¹

Awang Ismail, a former company chief who was introduced to the nationalist youth movement Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API) by Kamarulzaman Teh, describes his reasoning:

“I was born in Temerloh, Pahang, which was famous as a stronghold of Malay nationalism. At first, I was just a farmer but after the British came back after the war, I resented it. After all, we were the ones who had endured Japanese rule. I was fired up by the spirit of independence but it was tough. API was banned, many members were killed or thrown in prison, so, partly because we felt we had no other choice, we decided to go into the jungle to fight for our cause.”

⁵⁰ Marx, Karl. 1852. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>.

⁵¹ Harper, T. N., 55.

It was much the same for Liau Chin Sun @ Mamat Abdullah, a native of Triang, Pahang, who followed his older brother into the MCP. Liau eventually joined the MCP's 6th Regiment under Chin Nam.

During the Japanese Occupation, my brother joined the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army. When the British came back, we joined in the struggle to liberate our country. When I finished school in the late 1940s, I was punished with a 40-day jail term for my involvement in the unofficial tentera tani (farmers' militia). My parents bribed local officials and I fled to the jungle, joining ambush patrols on the armed forces and police, whom, we felt, had chosen to side with the British. I eventually joined the 10th regiment.⁵²

Siti Mariam, also hailed from Temerloh.

I was 20 when I entered the jungle. I left two children behind but I was proud and happy to fight for my race, religion and my land. We were a poor family, I married at 12 and had my first child at 14. My mother encouraged me to fight for my beliefs and I left my children with her. When my mother was herself detained by the authorities, other relatives looked after my children. Of course the struggle was difficult, but our spirits were high, and I was not afraid, not of people nor animals. Abdullah C.D. was a great leader, like a father. He had to worry about food, safety, so many other things, yet he led us well.⁵³

In 1948, the notion of a type of a native resistance against a colonial apparatus was not at all an alien nor foreign notion. The tradition of rebellion for the native has century-old roots. For instance, in 1863, Pahang was ruled by Bendahara Wan Ahmad who had earlier on won a bitter seven-year civil war against his younger brother Wan Mutahir who had the support of the British. Britain then sent Temenggong Abu Bakar from the neighbouring kingdom of Johore to help Wan Mutahir on the condition that he surrender the Endau area, including Tioman to the kingdom of Johore. Despite the arrangements on the side of Wan Mutahir, it is argued that with the help of intense support of the locals for the resistance and the fact that Bendahara Wan Ahmad had received the backing of the feared fighter and strategist Datuk Bahaman, Wan Mutahir was defeated. In 1887, Britain sent gun-boats to Pahang when Bendahara Wan Ahmad cancelled a British concession, leading to Ahmad being forced to sign an agreement officially recognising Wan Ahmad as Sultan of Pahang and imposing a British Resident, Hugh Clifford, to his court. Later in 1891, the Pahang Chiefs uprising took place, with Dato' Bahaman and his followers rising against British foreign mercenaries who

⁵² 2009. The Star Online. November 29. Accessed April 30, 2012.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/watching-the-world/2009/11/29/at-peace-in-their-village/>.

⁵³ Ibid.

were employed to suppress and extort them.⁵⁴ The local people who were once free to collect any produce from the jungle, or fish, build houses or open-up land to cultivation, now had to apply for licenses and pay taxes to carry out these activities. They were also forced to work two months a year to open land to build a road to the mines owned by the British. It was then in October 1891 that the Lubuk Terua incident occurred; it was an attempt by Dato' Bahaman to rescue Malays arrested by Sikh mercenaries for collecting jungle produce. The rescue evolved into resistance and fellow Semantan-ites and Bentong-ites rose-up and joined forces with him. Consequently, Bahaman drove the British out of Temerloh in December 1891. As a result, reinforcements were sent out while other chiefs like Tok Gajah, and his son, Mat Kilau began to rally around Bahaman. The British exerted pressure on Sultan Wan Ahmad to denounce Dato' Bahaman, who was then declared as traitor, and that any chief consorting with him, would face a death sentence. When the British failed to catch Dato' Bahaman, they resorted to destroying and burning villages. Sultan Wan Ahmad appealed to the British to stop the atrocities during Ramadhan in March of 1892, but by 1895 the British had banished Bahaman and five other chiefs to the neighbouring kingdom of Siam (present day Thailand).⁵⁵

In the half decade leading to 1948, the formation of the union of anti-fascist organisations were already in motion. In 1941, when about half of the Malayan territory in Japanese hands, the *Persatuan Umum Pengerahan Melawan Musuh Para Perantau Tionghua Singapura* ('Singapore Overseas Chinese General Union for Anti-Enemy Efforts') was born as a union of Malayan Tionghoa⁵⁶ anti-fascist organisation. As the Japanese army encroached the banks of Slim River, and at this critical moment, British occupiers were forced to admit the legitimate position of the MCP and hurriedly asked Tan Kah Kee to come forward to organise a mass assembly, the *Perhimpunan Kerahan Umum Para Perantau Tionghoa* ('Overseas Chinese General Order Assembly'). The gathering, organised on 30 December 1941, instantly formed the *Persatuan Umum Kerahan Melawan Musuh Singapura* ('Singapore General Union for Anti-Enemy Efforts') with Tan Kah Kee as chair, Ye Yudui as General Managing Director and Liu Yushui, as his deputy. Lim Bo Seng, a Kuomintang Tionghok⁵⁷ member, acted as Labourer Services Director, while Ng Aik-Huan and Chen Xiqing served as deputies. Lin Chiangsi (MCP representative) became director of the armed resistance

⁵⁴ Newsinger, John. 2006. *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. London: Bookmarks.

⁵⁵ See Ahmad, A. Talib b. Hj. 1961. *Sejarah Dato Bahaman, Orang Kaya Semantan*. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Garuda.; Ahmad, Siti Rosnah Haji. 2002. *Bunga Bangsa dan Pahlawan Negara*. Kuala Lumpur: Golden Books.; Linehan, R. 1936. "The History of Pahang." *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (14): 139-68.; Jeran, Kalthum. 1986. *Hikayat Pahang*. Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti.

⁵⁶ A Chinese person, or person of Chinese descent.

⁵⁷ From China

faction, Hu Yuzhi as Director of Information, with Tang Buotau and Shao Zhonghan as deputies. Along with the establishment of the General Union, progressive cultural figures that were forced to leave Southern China and work in Singapore due to Japanese oppression such as Hu Yuzhi, Yu Dafu, Wang Renshu, Shen Cijiu and others, organised a symposium for Singaporean cultural and education figures at the Ai Tong School, Teluk Air at the end of December. They exchanged opinions on the participation of Singaporean Tionghoa cultural figures in joining the opposing war efforts in Singapore and the Malayan peninsula.⁵⁸

After the Malayan War erupted, the MCP's *Sidang Ke-2 Jawatankuasa Kerja Pusat Ke-7* ('Second Assembly of the Seventh Central Working Committee') on 10 December 1941 once again puts forward positive proposals to the British, demanding to arm the people and launch a comprehensive anti-Japanese war. The *Sidang* decided that the main occupational duty of the party is to be diverted to armed anti-Japanese struggle, issuing the call to "act, arm yourself and fight the Japanese in defence of Malaya". The *Sidang* called for all MCP members to be at the front lines of battle, formed guerrilla forces in enemy territory, led the call to arms against the Japanese, fighting drenched in blood to protect Singapore and the Malayan Peninsula. On the same day, eight Singaporean labour associations under the leadership of the MCP which are the; Sawmill Labour Union, Warehousing Labour Union, Rice Transport Labour Union, Loading Labour Union, Brick Labour Union, Tionghoa Drivers Welfare Union, Port Workers Labour Union and Trishaw Driver Welfare Union, organised a collective assembly, sending a letter to the Governor of Singapore and issuing a manifesto. They appealed for all people to unite against the Japanese, demanding the Singaporean government to grant freedom and the right to armed struggle against the Japanese to 600,000 Tionghoa in Singapore, and to fight with the aim of eradicating the Japanese invaders.⁵⁹

From a military perspective, the MCP continuously sent 165 core members from various states in four groups to join short military trainings at the *Sekolah Latihan Khas 101 Singapura* ('Special Training School 101').⁶⁰ In other aspects, the MCP mobilised the masses to store food rations and military gear, pick up abandoned weapons and bullets left by British forces that had fled, built camps and formed armed anti-Japanese forces. Approaching the fall of Singapore to Japanese forces, the MCP continuously formed anti-Japanese guerrilla forces (or

⁵⁸ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: The Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

⁵⁹ Che Dat, Abdullah. 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

groups) of moderately large size in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Johore, Pahang Timur and Barat and in Kedah. They launched guerrilla warfare in enemy territory, sabotaged railway and bridge access, ambushed Japanese forces, received and sent stray British soldiers left behind during the retreat. In short, from the north all the way to the south of Malaya, in tandem with the defeat of the British Army and the Japanese occupation, where there had been battles, there would have been weapons or bullets left behind by the retreating British. The people there would pick up war equipment left behind by the British to retaliate against the Japanese Army invasion.⁶¹ The will of the Malayan people in valiantly fighting the enemy made a world of difference compared to the cowardly retreat of the British, hastily leaving their weapons and other war equipment. However, as there was no support from the British authorities nor coordination from the British military, the strength of anti-Japanese guerrilla forces launched under the MCP in enemy territory were still weak. In addition, the early days of the war, were the early lessons for their overall battle experience.

The development of anti-Japanese organisation unions amongst the people was regarded as imbalanced, with the middle and upper class having less faith toward the issue of defending armed struggle against the Japanese. This was an ugly consequence of the ‘divide and conquer’ policy toward races that was practiced by the British occupiers all the while as well as Japanese propaganda lies. At the start, the understanding of a number of Malay and Indians toward the dangers of Japanese invasion was generally still shallow. Meanwhile, the majority of them were mere spectators in the anti-Japanese resistance in Malaya.

In *Life of Galileo*, a play by Bertolt Brecht, Andrea says to Galileo “Unhappy is the land that breeds no hero”, to which Galileo replies; “No...Unhappy is the land that needs a hero.” The native’s own sense of historicity tended to form ineffable truths to fuel generations. It is difficult to erase facts which resonate well in the same way the Northern Irish, for example, do not forget the Nine Years War and how it ended in defeat for the Irish chieftains, which led to their exile in the Flight of the Earls and to the Plantation of Ulster.

The same applies to Malaya. Many memoirs begin, and continue throughout to hark back to the claim that anti-colonial resistance had been present in the Malay Peninsula from as early as the first half of the 19th century. The insurgents of the 1940s and 1950s saw themselves as part of an historical resistance movement to British colonialism. The massacres,

⁶¹ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: The Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

and the communist-led resistance to the Japanese, established a narrative of martyrdom and anti-fascist heroism.⁶² This is obvious when the Malayan communist leader Abdullah C.D., reflecting on why he had chosen such a politically radical path, remembered two great influences.

Abdullah C.D.'s memoir comes in three volumes. I have relied on the first two volumes of his memoir as it covers the specific period that this research is interested in while keeping in mind that the MCP was involved in a second insurgency, known as the Second Malayan Emergency, which lasted between 1960 and 1988.⁶³ There was Mr Lewis, his English teacher at the Clifford School who had lent the bright schoolboy books by Karl Marx which he found to be 'very interesting'. The second mentor Abdullah recollected was a rubber tapper called Pak Inu, who lived near Kuala Kangsar. A revolutionary fighter from across the Malacca Strait who had taken part in the 1925 uprising against the Dutch, he escaped to Malaya with his wife and son. He, too, lent young Abdullah many thought-provoking books from his *kampong* library. Some were by the famous Indonesian communist, Tan Melaka. Both of whom inspired Abdullah to look at earlier anti-colonial resistance.

Similarly, Rashid Maidin in his memoir recalls that it was Lai Raifel (@Lai Raifu, @Toh Lung San, @Tu Lung San), a Chinese agent born in Sitiawan, Perak, who exposed him to the anti-colonial lessons from the events which transpired with Datuk Maharaja Lela and Datuk Sagor that led to his own sense of nationalism and patriotism flourishing. Between 1945 and 1948, during the open and constitutional struggle phase which the MCP embarked on, Rashid Maidin was an 'open' mass worker who was tasked with the responsibility, together with Abdullah C.D., of organising Malay support for the MCP. He is the first Malay cadre to be sworn into the Party, and was later arrested during the opening years of the Emergency. Following a well-engineered escape, Rashid Maidin joined the 10th Regiment to fight alongside his old comrade Abdullah C.D..

Such was the story of British Malaya. It was a type of supposed enduring Peninsula of loyalists and bandits much like the other dominions of the British Empire. It was a Peninsula of loyalists and bandits involving the tripartite of the insurgent, counter-insurgent and the

⁶² Hack, Karl, and Kevin Blackburn. 2012. *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore*. Singapore: NUS Press.

⁶³ Che Dat, Abdullah. 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.;

people who stood side by side in 1948. The RAND Corporation describes the Malayan Emergency with the following passage:

The British had already begun to cede government control back to the Malayan states following WWII, establishing a system whereby the states retained sovereignty under British protection. Still, dismayed at the extent of their disenfranchisement under the new government, Chinese communists launched a Maoist guerrilla war to expel the British from the country in 1948. Beginning the conflict with an under-strength military and police force, the British immediately created a sizeable special constabulary, employing conventional tactics and large-scale jungle sweeps that proved wholly ineffective. However, the COIN force ultimately adapted to shifts in insurgent strategy over the course of the conflict, and the second phase ushered in a COIN strategy focused on population and spatial control as part of the Briggs Plan's massive resettlements. These strategies were largely successful and were continued and improved upon under the policies of Sir Gerald Templer. Along with efforts to win the "hearts and minds" of the population, Templer's focus on improved intelligence, as well as a better organized and larger COIN force and efforts to reach a political settlement to the conflict, contributed to the COIN force's success by 1960 (violence was infrequent following parliamentary elections in 1955). Notably, Britain's efforts in Malaya are often held up as a paradigm of effective British COIN practice.⁶⁴

The actual shooting-war of the Malayan Emergency, lasting for twelve years, roughly between 1948 and 1960, was not Britain's first attempt at dealing with insurgency in the twentieth century. Prior to the Malayan campaign, Britain had already been committed to dealing with violent challenges to its imperial position in Ireland and Palestine.⁶⁵ It is, however, the supposed success enjoyed in Malaya that elevated the campaign to overshadow Britain's failed efforts in Palestine and allowed it to gain a reputation for being the first of its kind, an ideal-type case, for future counter-insurgency campaigns to follow.⁶⁶ Thus, the conventional military and contemporary academic theoretical wisdom holds that in order to win a counter-insurgency campaign, the side responsible for such a campaign must, similar to in Malaya, embark upon a policy of 'winning hearts and minds'. In other words, counter-insurgency campaigns are generally won by replicating practices acquired in Malaya through efforts at

⁶⁴ See Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Molly Dunigan. 2013. *Paths to Victory*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

⁶⁵ See Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶⁶ See Branch, Daniel. 2010. "Footprints in the sand: British colonial counterinsurgency and the war in Iraq." *Politics & Society* 38: 15-34.; Chin, Warren. 2007. "Examining the Application of British counterinsurgency doctrine by the American Army in Iraq." *SW&I* 18: 1-26.; Clutterbuck, Richard. 1984. *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*. Singapore: Singapore National Printers.; Moyer, Mark. 2009. *A Question of Command. Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*. London: Yale University Press.; Komer, R.W. 1972. *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a successful counterinsurgency effort*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.; Ucko, D.H. 2010. "The Malayan Emergency: the legacy and relevance of counter-insurgency success story." *Defence Studies* 10: 13-39.; Nagl, John A. 2002. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. Chicago: Chicago Press.; Mumford, Andrew. 2012. *The Counter-Insurgency Myth; The British Experience of Irregular Warfare*. New York: Routledge.; French, David. 2011. *The British Way in Counter-insurgency, 1945-1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the population where the conflict resides. To achieve this, COIN had to focus on the needs and interests of the civilian population, including security and the provision of basic government services, such as electricity, irrigation, and roads. Above all, counterinsurgency forces would need to avoid civilian casualties.⁶⁷ The underlying issue of approaching such a historical investigation with a language that securely dichotomises its participants washes over the nuances necessary for such investigation.

There has always been, at one time or another, a variety of stories about a country, or kingdom, in which certain inhabitants called ‘loyalists’ always tell the truth, and others called ‘bandits’ always lie.⁶⁸ It is assumed that every inhabitant of the island is either a loyalist or a bandit. The loyalist and the bandit are indistinguishable in their outward appearance, perhaps other than the colour of their skin. However, what complicates the situation is when some of the inhabitants, some among the loyalists and bandits, are considered totally irrational and thus completely deluded in their beliefs. Thus, due to their irrationality - all true propositions they believe to be false and all false propositions they believe to be true. The rest of the inhabitants are completely rational and know which propositions are true and which ones false. Thus, the inhabitants of such a situation are of four types: (1) Rational Loyalist; (2) Irrational Loyalist; (3) Rational Bandits; (4) Irrational Bandits. And therefore, by logical implication, characteristically; (1) whatever a Rational Loyalist says is true. Loyalists are thought to never lie, and always tell the truth. They are Rational Loyalists thus all true propositions they believe to be true, and all false propositions they believe to be false; (2) whatever an Irrational Loyalist says is false because while Loyalists never lie, and always tell the truth, but to Irrational Loyalists all true propositions they believe to be false and all false propositions they believe to be true "because he really believes in what is contrary to the truth"; (3) whatever a Rational Bandit says is false; because Bandits always lie. A Rational Bandit knows the truth and then lies. And finally, (4) whatever an Irrational Bandit says is true because Bandits always lie. They regard a certain way then lies about that regard. Thus, an Irrational Bandit, because he does not believe in the truth, and then lies about what he believes, says true things.

⁶⁷ United States Army; Lt. General David Petraeus; Lt. General James F Amos. 2006. *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*. Paladin Press.

⁶⁸ Smullyan, Raymond M. 1978. *What Is the Name of This Book?: The Riddle of Dracula and Other Logical Puzzles*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Thus, given any statement X, and suppose a Malayan, inhabiting this Peninsula of Loyalist and Bandits⁶⁹ believes that he believes X, does it follow that, that statement must be true? Suppose on the one hand that he, the Malayan is rational. All rational actors believe only in the 'true' truth because a rational actor knows which propositions are true and which ones false. For if, a rational actor believes the statement that 'he believes X', then the statement that he believes X must be true. Therefore, he in fact does believe X. And since he is rational, X must be true.

On the other hand, suppose the Malayan is wholly is irrational. Irrational actors are considered totally irrational and deluded in their beliefs as all true propositions they believe to be false and all false propositions they believe to be true. Thus, if an Irrational Malayan believes the statement that he believes X, then the statement that he believes X must be a false statement, because an Irrational Malayan believes only false propositions to be true. If the statement that he believes X is a false statement, which means that he does not believe in X. If he does not believe he believes X, in other words he does not believe in X, and also he is irrational, then X must be true because for irrational Malaysians all true propositions they believe to be false and all false propositions they believe to be true. Similar to rational actors, irrational actors do not believe in statements they consider as false statements. If the statement that he believes X is false then the irrational actor will not believe in what he considers as false.

We thus can show that if a Malayan believes, that he believes X, then X must be true regardless of whether he is rational or irrational. Similarly, it can be shown that if he doesn't believe that he believes X, then X must be false. Thus, given any statement X, suppose a Malayan believes that he believes X, it follows that X must be true, regardless of the perceived rationality of the Malayan. And therefore, the commitment to a kind of 'hearts and minds' being understood only as the instituting of public good programs as a primary driver for a successful campaign of winning the allegiance of local populations and turn them against insurgent forces has nuances often absent from it. A simple rational-irrational dichotomy in the analysis of COIN experiences and from the standpoint of either solely the establishment view or the native view is necessarily incomplete as an enduring 'lesson' for all generations.

While the native experience is salient, it also does not deserve primacy and represent finality in any narrative. The aim nonetheless is to adopt an approach that gives voice to fighters and their supporters but also triangulate it in such a way it captures the multiplicity of

⁶⁹ Bandit is *Petualang*, while Loyalist is *Pejuang*.

and diversity of the native. The task is thus to avoid a one-sided account that privileges neither rebel nor loyalist, in favour of one that also includes the perspectives of victims of insurgent violence and those who resisted insurgency.⁷⁰

With regards to memoirs; Shirlow and Murtagh argue that “there appears to be a common tendency in societies emerging from conflict to present the future as utopian, shared and equal. Such naivety undermines the potential for history...the desire among most to remain attached to separate ideas, beliefs and practices”.⁷¹ Further, competing and exclusive interpretations of the conflicts like The Troubles may also comprise attempts to wrest control of the narrative telling and retelling of the conflict, shaping the future historical understanding of the nature of meta-conflict. Memoirs, particularly those authored by leadership figures, often seek to transmit and interpret the dramatic changes that the movement has lived through, in order to make sense of this evolution for both an internal constituency of activists and sympathisers, and external audience of sometimes sceptical or hostile onlookers. ‘Personal memoirs’ may help us to understand the motivations and the ‘narrative interpretations’ that members have developed to explain their beliefs and actions to themselves and others. Prison memoirs and narratives often contain lapses in memory and a tendency of authors to depict information and experiences in ways that were intended to portray former political prisoners as heroes and champions. The heroism is typically underscored by an endurance and drive of a strong sense of moral justice in confronting colonial rule. It may also serve as tools of state and/or party propaganda.⁷² These considerations are present in the memoirs about the Emergency, but these are also “historical fragments” that “appeal to an alternative perspective, or at least the possibility of another perspective” to contrast with official colonial reports which, more often than not, are more concerned with reporting the “progress” of prison management instead of the human experience of detainees.⁷³

The point on documentation and databases draws out the point of the nexus between record keeping and circumstances. Often, we observe that circumstances which are worth

⁷⁰ Hack, Karl. 2013. “Malaya - Between Two Terrors: “People's History” and the Malayan Emergency.” In *Hearts and Minds: A People's History of Insurgency*, edited by Hannah Gurman, 17-49. New York: The Free Press.

⁷¹ Shirlow, Peter, and Brendan Murtagh. 2006. *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City*. London: Pluto.

⁷² Tai, Hue-Tam Ho. 2001. “Reading Revolutionary Prison Memoirs.” In *The country of memory: remaking the past in late socialist Vietnam*, by Peter Zinoman. Berkeley: University of California Press; Clough, Marshall S. 1998. *Mau Mau Memoirs: history, memory, and politics*. Boulder: Lynsee Rienner.; Clutterbuck, Richard. 1984. *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia 1945-1983*. Singapore: Singapore National Printers; Arnold, David. 2004. In *Telling Lives in India: biography, autobiography, and life history*, by Stuart Blackburn David Arnold. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁷³ Pandey, Gyanendra. 2000. “Writing from the Edge: The Struggle to write Subaltern Histories.” In *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, 296. New York: Verso.

investigating, are also often circumstances which are exceptional to a degree where some of the things which could otherwise theoretically be achieved are negated by particularities that make the circumstances an exception.

If we are left with only interpretation of the actions and beliefs of participants of the Malayan Emergency, then perhaps we ought to remember as Weber has argued that the clarity which ‘science’ brings to the understanding of things which would otherwise be ‘highly ambiguous’ can come from an “interpretive understanding of social action” which reveals “causal explanation”(s) of said action’s “course and consequences”. Weber speaks of ‘action’ as something ‘social’ in that action has subjective meaning that takes into consideration the “...behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.” Crucially, Weber establishes at the gates of his overall argument that meaning can come as firstly either the actual existing meaning in the given concrete case of a particular actor or instead the average or approximate meaning attributable to a given plurality of actors. And secondly, a more essentialist position where a theoretically ‘pure’ meaning attributed to the hypothetical actor(s) in a given type of action.⁷⁴

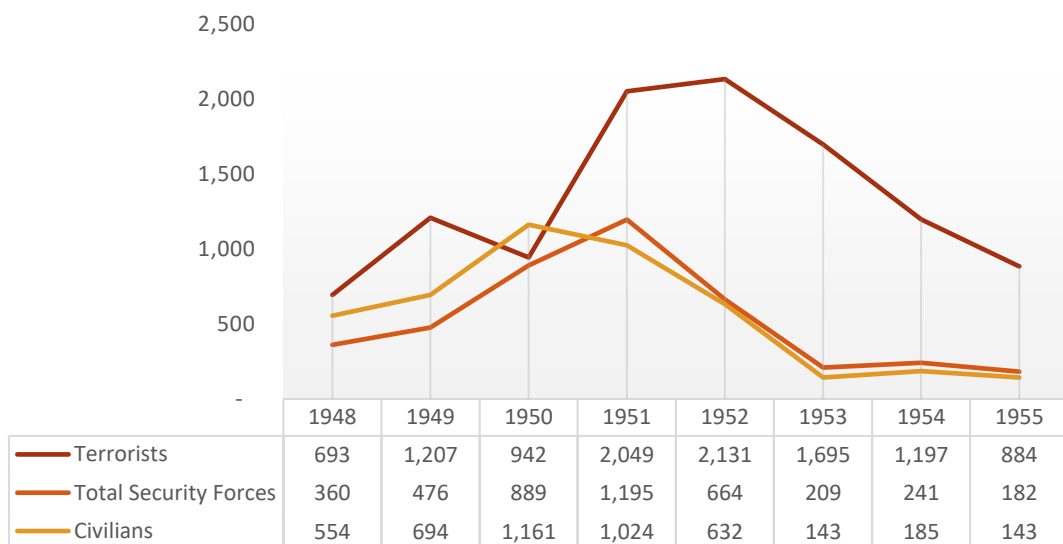
We must underscore here that “In no case does it refer to an objectively ‘correct’ meaning or one which is ‘true’ in some metaphysical senses”. Weber goes on to insist that it is the awareness of the above “...which distinguishes the empirical sciences of action, such as sociology and history, from dogmatic disciplines in that area, such as jurisprudence, logic, ethic, and aesthetics, which seek to ascertain the ‘true’ and ‘valid’ meaning associated with the object of their investigation.” As we have discussed above, we concur, as Weber does, that the “...line between meaningful action and merely reactive behaviour to which no subjective meaning is attached”, perhaps “cannot be sharply drawn empirically” is proven by at least one case, and that case being Malaya. We acknowledge that the “...basis for certainty in understanding can be either mathematical, or it can be of an emotionally emphatic or artistically appreciative quality”. And that all “...interpretation of meaning, like all scientific observations”, must strive for, “clarity and verifiable accuracy of insight and comprehension”. The authors of contemporary COIN analysis take these nuances as uncomplicated, thus they tend to adopt a vocabulary that is fit for campaign purposes rather than for historical nuances and accuracy as well as inclusiveness.

⁷⁴ Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Wittich Claus, 22-31. Somerville N.J.: Bedminster Press.

1.2 THIS RESEARCH

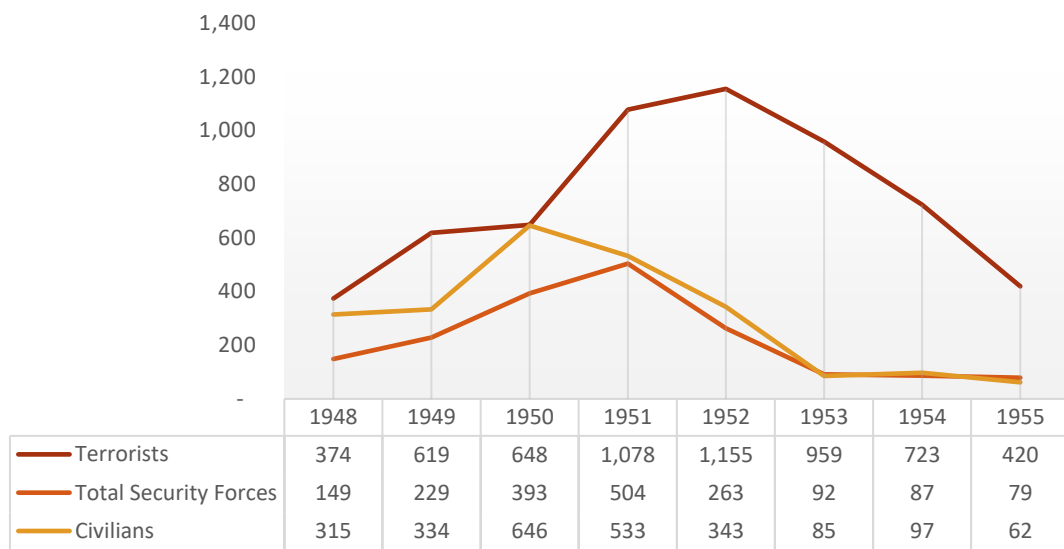
My investigation suggests that (1) through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two. And that (2) force which was used in the conduct of concluding the conflict in 1954 was regarded as ‘exempted’ force wrapped in a grand narrative despite the on-the-ground reality for the people. It thus, found that, there was more to just winning ‘heart and minds’ by way of ample use of force and coercion in turning the outcome of the war especially between 1948 and 1952. As yearly levels of violence increased from 1948 and peaked in 1951, and subsequently began to dip in 1952, this change in casualty pattern is accompanied by evidences of repressive crackdowns (arbitrary imprisonment) by the British on leftist nationalist groups, the relocation of approximately half a million individuals into concentration camps, mass deportation, and the exemplary destruction of villages. These tactics mentioned earlier were perhaps neither new nor novel, calling into question the exceptionality of ‘restraint’ in Malaya. Further, I re-examine the very spirit which underpins a policy that centres on securing the “hearts and minds” of people for the ends of concluding a conflict. Figure 2 to Figure 5 below, illustrates the aforementioned, yearly levels of violence. Figure 4, in particular, breaks down the numbers for ‘Security Forces’ in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Total number of casualties, 1948-1955



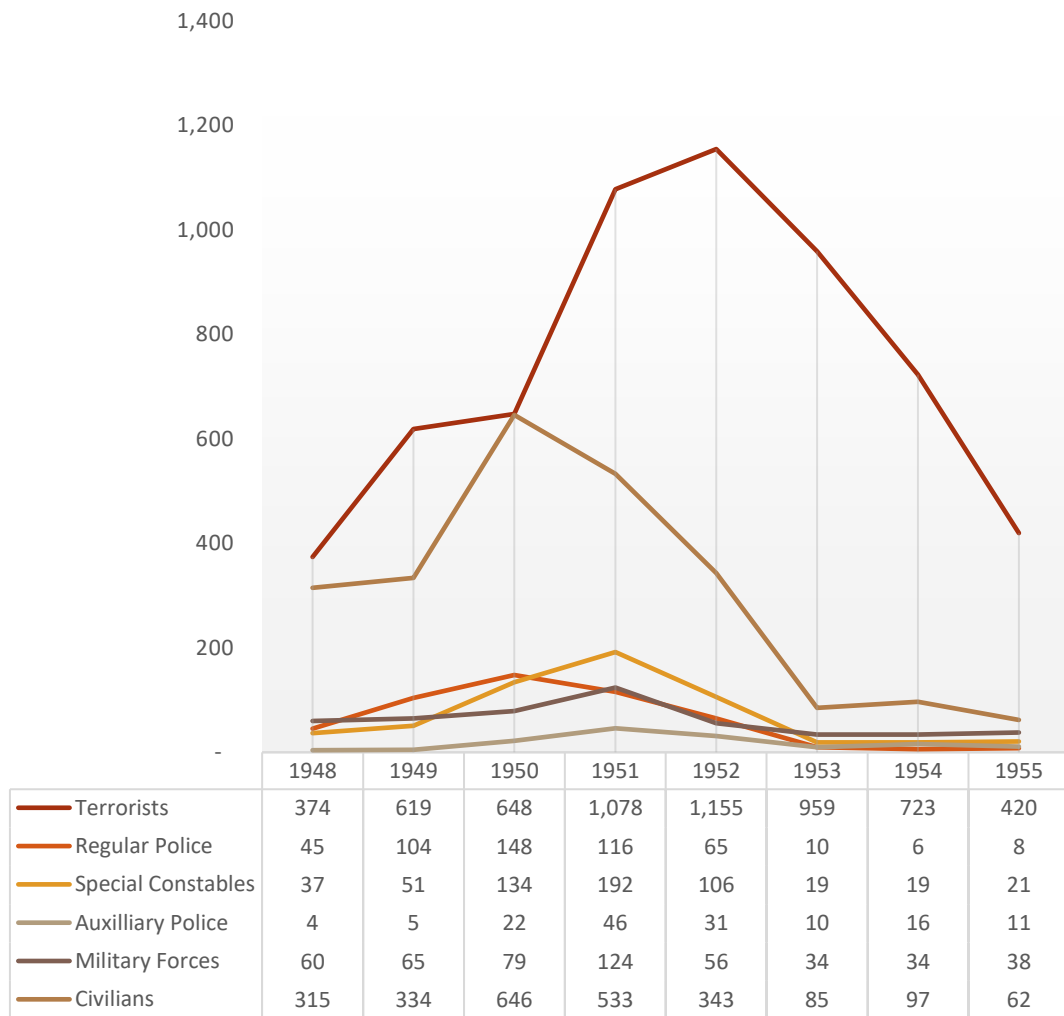
Source: Department of Information (Malaysia), Ministry of Defense (Malaysia), Royal Malaysian Police Museum

Figure 3: Total number of persons killed, 1948-1955



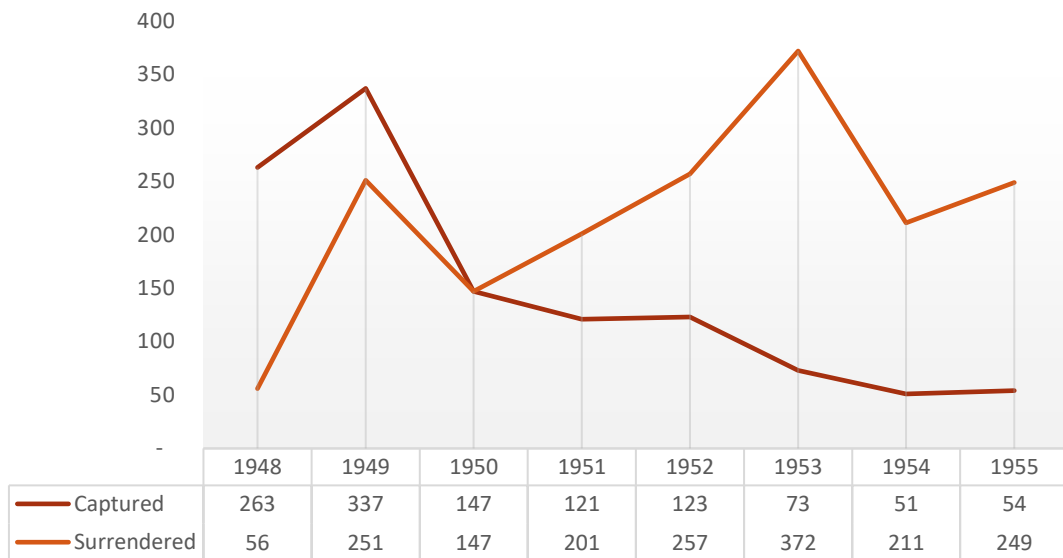
Source: Department of Information (Malaysia), Ministry of Defense (Malaysia), Royal Malaysian Police Museum

Figure 4: Total number of persons killed, detailed breakdown, 1948-1955



Source: Department of Information (Malaysia), Ministry of Defense (Malaysia), Royal Malaysian Police Museum

Figure 5: Total number of terrorists captured and surrendered, 1948-1955



Source: Department of Information (Malaysia), Ministry of Defense (Malaysia), Royal Malaysian Police Museum

In a sense, it is the revoicing of victims and losers. In doing so, it has relied on oral history, significant memoirs, and assistance from notable ‘memory advocates’ in Malaya. It documents harsher realities, and views from the insurgent and civilian side of the Malayan Emergency.⁷⁵ In the course of this thesis we will evidence significant levels of such violence, from sporadic shooting of civilians to the killing of 24 unarmed workers at Batang Kali (Chapter Five). It will demonstrate varieties and nuances in force, for instance with multiple and very different forms of mass population displacement. This research suggests a type of counterinsurgency analysis that is able take into account the above as well as in step with the aforementioned research trend today. By building on other native memoirs and interviews, especially Malay memoirs on the Malay-front, this research thickens the discourse, currently led by Hack et al. which has its foci mostly on only Chin Peng’s memoirs, if at all.⁷⁶ We will see in the course of this research that a ‘purely Chinese’ interpretation of events is an interpretation of convenience in narration, especially given a shared heritage of resistance against colonialism and imperialism between the Malays and Chinese in Malaya. In the least, this work spotlights Malay

⁷⁵ E.g. Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau*; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*; Elkins, *Britain’s Gulag: The Brutal End of empire in Kenya*; Hack, *Malaya - Between Two Terrors: "People's History" and the Malayan Emergency*; amongst others.

⁷⁶ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998) CD: *Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Fakeh, Shamsiah. 2004. *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari AWAS ke Rejimen Ke-10*. Bangi: Penerbitan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

involvement in early post-war challenges to British colonial rule alongside the overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese MCP. This places an emphasis on the fact that MCP top leadership also included the participation of Malay personnel such as Abdullah C.D. and Rashid Maidin. They represent Malay motivations, but also shows that there existed the aforementioned shared heritage of resistance (especially among the Malay, 10th Regiment of the MCP), across the racial sections in Malaya which the British, and later COINdisitas, had glossed over deliberately.

The main problem with the literature on the Emergency and the causal explanation of it as a British success is generally two-fold. Firstly, there is a reliance on ‘official’ colonial documents that makes the historiography of the Emergency problematic. This reliance is not in and of itself problematic, however, existing narratives based on archival documents are incomplete and need updating as they do not include the newer documents which have recently been released to the public, both in Kew and in Kuala Lumpur. And secondly, there is a dearth in the literature where it concerns the inclusion of indigenous language sources of every form in the analysis of the Emergency.

Among the recently released documents referred to in the above include those from the Migrated Archives made available since 2012. On 18 April 2012, the National Archives at Kew began releasing the first batch of thousands of "lost" colonial-era files previously believed to have been destroyed. The archive came to light in the previous year when a group of Kenyans detained and allegedly tortured during the Mau Mau rebellion won the right to sue the British government. The Foreign Office promised to release the 8,800 files from 37 former colonies held at the highly-secure government communications centre at Hanslope Park in Buckinghamshire. The tranches in question contain documents which were secretly sent back to the United Kingdom when former colonies became independent. Those papers that survived the purge were flown discreetly to Britain where they were hidden for 50 years in a secret Foreign Office archive, beyond the reach of historians and members of the public, and in breach of legal obligations for them to be transferred into the public domain. The historian appointed to oversee the review and transfer, Tony Badger, master of Clare College, Cambridge, says the discovery of the archive put the Foreign Office in an “embarrassing, scandalous” position as “These documents should have been in the public archives in the 1980s” and is “...long overdue.”⁷⁷ Among other content include records showing that ministers

⁷⁷ 2012. *The Guardian*. April 18. Accessed April 20, 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/apr/18/britain-destroyed-records-colonial-crimes>.

in London were aware of the torture and murder of Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya, including a case of a man said to have been “roasted alive” and papers detailing the lengths to which the UK went to forcibly remove islanders from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. The release especially those removed from colonies on the cusp of independence and held secretly at Hanslope by the Foreign Office has facilitated the process of comprehending nuances by opening up new documentary avenues.

There is a consensus among those privy to these files that it contains thousands of documents detailing some of the most shameful acts and crimes committed during the final years of the British empire and that they were systematically destroyed to prevent them falling into the hands of post-independence governments. Among the documents are a handful which show that many of the most sensitive papers from Britain's late colonial era were not hidden away, but simply destroyed. These papers give the instructions for systematic destruction issued in 1961 after Iain Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies, directed that post-independence governments should not obtain any material that “might embarrass Her Majesty's government”, that could “embarrass members of the police, military forces, public servants or others e.g. police informers”, that might compromise intelligence sources, or that might “be used unethically by ministers in the successor government”. The documents show that colonial officials were instructed to separate those papers to be left in place after independence – usually known as “Legacy files” – from those that were to be selected for destruction or removal to the UK. The content of the Migrated Archives depicts a period of mounting anxiety amid fears that some of the incriminating watch files might be leaked.

In many colonies, these were described as watch files, and stamped with a red-letter W.⁷⁸ There was concern that Macleod's directions should not be divulged – “there is of course the risk of embarrassment should the circular be compromised” – and officials taking part in the purge were even warned to keep their W stamps in a safe place. If a single watch file was to be removed from a group of legacy files, a “twin file” acting as a ‘dummy’ file, was to be created to insert in its place. If this was not practicable, the documents were to be removed entirely.

In 2013, when my investigations really began to take off, any person who would have been 15 years of age in 1948 Malaya were entering exactly the age of eighty. Chin Peng himself passed away on 16 September 2013. What the native memoir writers left posthumously were one or two memoirs of their experience. To allow myself a chance at, as it were, verifying for

⁷⁸ The red letter ‘W’ signifies ‘For watch’

myself the claims in some of these memoirs, I undertook the task of personally tracking down any surviving memoir writer, including Abdullah C.D. and several other individuals who were involved at the time who themselves had not written any memoirs as yet, or ever will. It is the natural hazard of the circumstances that death takes with it everything except those things we write down. In the example of the case with my time with Abdullah C.D., over the span of three days and two nights I was able to get a feel for myself, perhaps in case something had been lost in translation or lost dulled by the passing of time, some of the claims he made in his memoirs by spending time not just with him but a host of others who now make up the inhabitants of the 'Sukhirin Peace Village' deep in the remote jungles of the province of Narathiwat. I set out for Kampung Chulabhorn 12, an hour away from the town of Sukhirin in Thailand's southernmost of province of Narathiwat. The journey is tricky, as one has to cross the currently volatile area. It is presently experiencing a low-intensity, almost 'cold', insurgency of its own, and hence it is a particularly notorious area for consistent bomb explosions in the very confined and narrow streets of the Golok river border. After crossing, it was another two-hour drive through approximately a dozen or so military checkpoints along the way, which after some treacherous off-road terrain, led to an isolated village deep in the heart of the jungle.



Pictured above: Author (right) pictured with Abdullah C.D., in his home, in Kampung Chulabhorn 12, 'Sukhirin Peace Village', 2014.

This photo, Abdullah C.D.'s residence in Kampung Chulabhorn 12, 'Sukhirin Peace Village', 2014, has been removed for confidentiality reasons.

Pictured above: Abdullah C.D.'s residence in Kampung Chulabhorn 12, 'Sukhirin Peace Village', 2014.

Another key meeting during this period was one with Indrajaya Abdullah⁷⁹, the principal translator into Bahasa Malaysia of an original document considered the ‘Chinese edition’ of *Ringkasan Sejarah Tentera Anti-Jepun Rakyat Malaya* (‘A Brief History of the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army’) published in Hong Kong in 1992 by the Witness Publish Company, Hong Kong. He maintains that his efforts are meant to restate the true history of the anti-Japanese war, which lasted for three years and eight months, in more detail for the people. As we will discuss in later chapters, the anti-Japanese struggles informs the decade leading up to 1948. Further the overall work maintains that at the time, under the leadership of the MCP, people of different races in this country were united with one heart and one ambition; to resist bathed in blood without regard of 1,001 sacrifices and inconveniences, for the ambition to protect their homeland and evict the fascists.

Thus, in order to restore history which has been manipulated / muddled and ensure that valuable historical facts are not lost in or to time, the *Kesatuan Para Perantau Tionghua Singapura/Malaysia* (‘Singapore/Malaysia Overseas Chinese Association’) had in early 1987 organised and directed 16 comrades, who were; Zheng Guan-biao, Luo Xu-mo, Lu Ming, Lin Wen-guang, Zhang Chang, Ye Zhi-hui, Yi Tian-xiong, Wang Xian-ping, Wu Ya-liang, Lao Lu, Zheng Yue-hua (Ah Zhen), Wen Xun, Ah Zu, Chen Liu, Ruo Ping and Wang You-fa, to establish a *Dewan Pengarang Buku* (‘Publishing Council’) for the publication of *Ringkasan Sejarah Tentera Anti-Jepun Rakyat Malaya*. Indrajaya has discharged his duties of translation into Bahasa Malaysia today. The council set up in the late 1980s was responsible for project management, issuing notifications/notices, collection of historical evidence and conducting interviews, inviting and organising several seminars with former anti-Japanese resistance movement members.

The council also appointed their members to collect and verify historical evidences and later arrange/organise them into preliminary historical works/documentation of each regiment. Subsequently, the council appointed four main authors to add, edit and complete these preliminary works/documents. This book was edited and published after going through the abovementioned process several times over a span of four years. Everyone who supplied historical evidence and were involved in the compilation of this book consisted of former commanders, MPAJA fighters who were involved in the anti-Japanese war in Malaya. Among them were party representatives, *Panglima Markas Rejimen* (‘regiment commanders’),

⁷⁹ Abdullah, Indrajaya, interview by Meor Alif Meor Azalan. 2014. (May 15).

company chiefs, political workers and over a hundred *pekerja penyusun masa* ('mass organisers'). The historical evidence which they have supplied were of their own experiences.

The manuscript recognises the possibility that of course due to the passing of time, some of their recollections of the period of the anti-Japanese struggle may have faded. Many complete details of figures and events may not have been told one by one. Many numbers may not have been estimated accurately. However, they underscore that some of these mistakes are unavoidable and they apologise for any of these inconveniences. The strength of the work on the other hand lies in the fact that local figures, as well as those overseas, who were involved in the arrangement of this book were mostly between 60 to 70 years old and were directly involved in the period and have, with determination, contributed their valuable time and energy and have been kind-hearted enough to also fund the project. In fact, they have themselves undertaken the task of travelling to many different places to conduct interviews and collect historical evidence for the purposes mentioned above.

On 10 May 2012, I was able to secure an interview with two of the only three known remaining living victims/witnesses of the infamous Batang Kali massacre. I would have been able to speak to all three of them but on the day, one of them was taken ill. However, I was able to spend an entire day with two of the three of them, Mr. Oi, 71 and Mrs. Chong Koon Ying, 74. It had occurred to me that it may have been my last chance to speak to the three of them, considering that they were in their early 70s at the time, and that I should cease the opportunity to collect primary data. I am fortunate to have been able to meet all three of them in the course of this research. Sadly, at the time of writing (2016), two of the three individuals have now left us. Amongst other things, they recounted what had happened on the day and recounted the conduct of the British officers which we will discuss in Chapter Five.

The interviews, along with the other findings in this paper stand amongst a body of literature pertaining to the Emergency that is presently dominated by a specific hegemonic narrative. The bulk of the written works on the Darurat⁸⁰ (old; 'dzarurat' or 'dlarurat', meaning compulsion, violence, want, need, emergency) suggests that British success in Malaya came about as a result of the conscious implementation of the policy of winning 'hearts and minds'. As mentioned earlier, this is where the dominant historiographical trend lies. However, the

⁸⁰ See *dzarurat*, *dlarurat* in Winstedt, R O. 1963. *An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary*. Marican & Sons.

question of what constitutes the entirety of said policy is still very much unresolved, with different accounts constituting the policy through different elements.

1.3 MALAYA AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY

A monographical work concerning the Malayan Emergency in 1948 is inevitably a self-evident single case study of Malaya. It risks a reliance on evidence drawn from a single case, and at the same time attempts to illuminate features of a broader set of cases – those cases in this instance, being subject to further investigation hopefully at a different time. Being a “case of all cases” for general COIN prescriptions it generates the consensus that the policy of ‘winning hearts and minds’ rests on the broad understanding that; (1) it is adverse toward indiscriminate use of force; and (2) attempts to incorporate the civilian population as much as possible into the day to day running of the state and its organs in preparation for independence. Here, the contention in most discussions concerning the policy, revolves not on whether it was at all implemented, rather, on when (at what phase of the campaign) it was carried out.⁸¹

Chief of these, is the popular ‘stalemate thesis’ which argues in support of the introduction of Gerald Templer and his novel policy of ‘winning hearts and minds’ to the campaign. This strand of literature argues that the assassination of High Commissioner Henry Gurney toward the end of 1951 is indicative of a period of deadlock between the Government force and the Malayan Communist Party and that the arrival of Templer in 1952 proved to be the deciding factor in breaking a period of stalemate.⁸² It maintains that what made the crucial difference in 1952 to 1954 was General Sir Gerald Templer as both High Commissioner and Director of Operations (DOO). His brand, was a kind of energetic and indefatigable ‘Supremo’ type of centralised as well as, personalised leadership. He is remembered as responsible for the intensification of attempts to win ‘hearts and minds’ which included an effort to encouraging police officers to be helpful and approachable to the general public. Under his tenure, elections were held first at the town and local level, then at the state, and, ultimately, at the federal level where new facilities were provided for villagers. The result was supposedly that

⁸¹ Hack, Karl. 2009. “The Malayan Emergency as a Counter-insurgency Paradigm.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32 (3): 383-414.

⁸² See Stubbs, Richard. 1989. *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare; The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*. New York: Oxford University Press Pte. Ltd.; Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.; Coates, John. 1992. *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.; Smith, Simon. 2011. “General Templer and counter-insurgency in Malaya: hearts and minds, intelligence, and propaganda.” *Intelligence and National Security* 60-78.; Templer, Templer: Tiger of Malaya. The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald. 1985. *John Cloake*. London: Harrap.

the campaign turned between 1952 and 1954, with incidents decreased by more than half over this period. Templer ended his stint in Malaya in 1954 leaving behind his legacy of another monomyth fitting for a Cold War interpretation of a counterinsurgency morality tale, where the good 'Loyalist' democrats won because through the application of calibrated force as well as the 'hearts and minds' of all Malaysians.⁸³ Juxtaposed to this thesis is Karl Hack's 2009 work which challenges the stalemate thesis by demonstrating that the tide was turned in Britain's favour by the end of 1951 before the arrival of Templer, arguing that the strategy of counter-terror alongside the strategy of clear and hold (exemplified by the Briggs Plan)⁸⁴ explained such gains. In Hack's reading of the situation, winning hearts and minds, therefore, becomes a moot point in determining the outcome of the shooting war and merely marks a period of optimisation of earlier policies. Regardless, it is clear that the "orthodox" narrative offers a simple account of the Emergency.⁸⁵ As we have argued above, and as a notable theme that will carry through the chapters of this research, the situation for the native was that the tide had begun to turn earlier as result of coercion.

Except for Victor Purcell's (a journalist at the time, who relied on documents as well as interviews and his own observations) account of the Communist situation in Malaya, which he wrote while the insurgency was still on-going (making it one of the earliest books written on the Emergency), many of the literature about the campaign relies solely on official colonial documents available at the time of the writing, and is consistent with the dominant historiographical trend mentioned earlier. The above is especially true for the supposedly authoritative, monograph-like, account of the Emergency written by Anthony Short titled, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*, published in 1975. Anthony Short, joined the University of Malaya in 1960 and was commissioned by the university and the Government of Malaya to write, for publication, without censorship, "the history of the communist insurrection". To this end, he was provided "with every assistance" by the Malayan Government; the most important of which was "full access to their confidential and secret papers". The British Government however chose to be bound to the Fifty-Year Rule which meant, as Short acknowledged, supposedly missing the top five to ten per cent of sources relevant to the work in London (in fact, we now know that huge volumes of files were illegally hidden by the British authorities). A manuscript was handed to the Malaysian Government in

⁸³ Hack, *Malaya - Between Two Terrors: "People's History" and the Malayan Emergency*.

⁸⁴ See "Federation plan for the elimination of the communist organisation and armed forces in Malaya (the Briggs Plan): Report by COS for Cabinet Malaya Committee," CAB 21/1681, MAL C (50)23, Appendix 24 May 1950 [henceforth "The Briggs Plan"].

⁸⁵ Hack, *Malaya - Between Two Terrors: "People's History" and the Malayan Emergency*.

1968 and for the next three years, Short waited for an indication of intention by the Government and eventually was told that it was not to be published. Short recognises that his version is ‘an account which, while not ‘official’, is “as close as it has yet been possible to write”. However, having said that, Short also goes on to admit that he had failed to give due weight and consideration to one or other or more of the many sides involved. It lacks insights that a native Malay, Chinese or Indian author could have provided. And against these charges, he admitted no defence. In fact, he goes on to acknowledge that his work is “perhaps too concerned with the framework of ‘colonial’ decisions and activities”.⁸⁶

The more recent writings on the Malayan Emergency tend to take a noticeable pattern of repeating evidence originating from Short’s ‘archive document-intensive’ grand account, and have tended to take these evidences as a matter of indisputable fact instead of a matter of investigation.⁸⁷ These types of works are commonly found and most apparent in those that use Malaya as an example to support observations in other insurgencies, like Vietnam or Iraq.

Over the past half-decade or so, there have been a few books which attempted to situate the Malayan Emergency on a spectrum of other ‘bloody’ British counterinsurgency campaigns from colonial times to the present.⁸⁸ However, these accounts tend to be very brief as Malaya takes up one part of an attempt at a much larger survey of all previous counterinsurgency engagements that Britain has ever committed herself to. These accounts tend to be too short to be very meaningful to the body of literature already in existence on the Darurat, while some tend to be anecdotal falling short of the required standard for credible academic work. This is not to say that the work is of substandard quality, rather, it is to acknowledge every project has its own objective, and that perhaps these particular projects were constrained by the very outcome they were pursuing. A survey loses meaning if it begins to shift too much focus on a particular case. As a result of all the above, it is inescapable that contemporary understanding of the Emergency is tilted in favour of the Empire and predisposes us to believe in the official British narrative.

The basis of this narrative since the early 1960s is the work of Sir Robert Thomson entitled *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (1964). Thompson offers a comprehensive analysis of

⁸⁶ Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.

⁸⁷ See Mumford, Andrew. 2012. *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare*. New York: Routledge.; French, David. 2011. *The British Way in Counter-insurgency, 1945-1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Grobb-Fitzgibbon, Benjamin. 2011. *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.; Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁸⁸ Ibid

counterinsurgency based on his experiences in both Malaya and Vietnam. In Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, he sets out the claim of a clean success by COIN forces in Malaya.⁸⁹ Thompson's legacy in COIN theory lies in his "principles" for government, or the counterinsurgent that supports the government. COIN forces must have a plan that not only aims at neutralising the insurgents, but one that also addresses all the other issues in a comprehensive approach since the insurgents are not the only issue. Therefore, the comprehensive plan also should take into consideration social, political, economic, administrative, police and other key issues as well. These various aspects or domains should be mutually-supportive of each other in the counterinsurgency campaign and a proper balance between military and civilian action is essential. The Government must have an overall plan with complete coordination in all fields, which perhaps is a euphemism for a 'Supremo' heading the coordinating.

Thompson argues that; (1) Government must function according to law and must avoid temptation of government acting outside the law. It must not take the excuse that the processes of law are too cumbersome, and that normal safeguards in the law for individuals are not designed for an insurgency and that a terrorist deserves to be treated as an outlaw anyway. But as we will observe later, what is considered law is often stretched to its limits in COIN under the guise of legality in Malaya. Further he argues that; (2) a government which does not act in accordance with the law forfeits the right to be called a government and cannot expect the people to obey its law, however we will observe later that in Malaya, obedience was extracted using fear borne out of what the law egregiously permitted. Thompson goes on further to concede that statute law can be modified by emergency law, and laws of procedure and evidence can be simplified as there is nothing to prevent government from enacting very tough laws to cope with situations but it must be effective and fairly applied.⁹⁰

On the point of coercion and the use of force, Thompson makes convenient taxonomies of what is considered necessary and acceptable. Thompson concedes that tough laws were enacted in Malaya - such as the laws which allowed government to seize and deport all Chinese found in a declared bad area, or the law that allowed the government to impose collective fines on all inhabitants of an area where the population was uncooperative - and goes on to concede that these forms of coercion were later abandoned in favour of other coercive

⁸⁹ See Thompson, Sir Robert Grainger Ker. 1966. *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*. London: Chatto and Windus.

⁹⁰ Ibid

methods such as the laws imposing strict curfews, mandatory death penalty for carrying arms, life imprisonment for providing supplies or support to terrorists, restricted residence or detention for suspected terrorist supporters, that we were introduced to and effectively used. What does this therefore say about the use of force and coercion in Thompson's work? From what we observe, we ought to rule out the possibility that force was precluded at any point and that it was never used at all. Thompson's justification defends the point that some laws pertaining to the use of force was seen to be used fairly, and indiscriminately, and applied equally to all, over those laws which permitted a more discriminate method of use of force.

He adds on by arguing for the point of fairness by underscoring the fact that where the population knew and were informed of what the laws were, and because the government functioned in accordance with these laws despite their bias, the population could be expected to fulfil its own obligation and obey the law regardless of its repressive nature and ends. We will discuss Malaya as a 'model' for counterinsurgency in Chapter Seven.

My process in investigating the Malayan Emergency adopts an approach that gives voice to fighters and their supporters and one which captures the multiplicity of "the people", including avoiding a one-sided account that privileges neither rebel nor loyalist, in favour of one that also includes the perspectives of victims of insurgent violence and those who resisted insurgency. To do so, one would lean on E.H. Carr's description of how the historian goes to work when he writes history:

The commonest assumption appears to be that the historian divides his work into two sharply distinguishable phases or periods. First, he spends a long preliminary period reading his sources and filling his notebook with facts: then, when this is over, he puts away his sources, takes out his notebooks and writes his book from beginning to end. This is to me unconvincing and an unpalatable picture. For myself, as soon as I have got going on a few of what I take to be the capital sources, the itch becomes too strong and I begin to write – not necessarily at the beginning, but somewhere, anywhere. Thereafter, reading and writing go on simultaneously. The writing is added to, subtracted from, re-shaped, cancelled as I go on reading. The reading is guided and directed and made fruitful by the writing. The more I write, the more I know what I am looking for, the better I understand the significance and relevance of what I find...I am convinced that any historian worth the name, the two processes of what economists call ‘input’ and ‘output’ go on simultaneously and are, in practice, parts of a single process. If you try and separate them, or to give one priority over the other, you fall into one of two heresies. Either you write scissors-and-paste history without meaning or significance; or you write propaganda or historical fictions, and merely use facts of the past to embroider a kind of writing that has nothing to do with history.⁹¹

In examining my empirical findings, and especially when looking at competing historical narratives, I am confronted with competing “facts”. Good science is science that is distinguished by its ability to state its conclusions in verifiable factual terms. But what is a fact? Arguably, we cannot observe ‘facts’, rather ‘facts’ are interpretations of observations. The task is therefore:

...navigating delicately between...an untenable theory of history as an objective compilation of facts, of the unqualified primacy of fact over interpretation, and...of an equally untenable theory of history as the subjective product of the mind of the historian who establishes the facts of history and master them through the process of interpretation.⁹²

In so far as ‘ignorance’ is concerned; ignorance is that which “simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits.” It is the “first requisite of the historian.”⁹³ And as Strachey explains that it is “...not their business to be complimentary” and instead, the historian’s business is to “lay bare the ‘facts’ (my emphasis) as he understands them. The historian “lay bare the facts of some case” as he may “...understand them dispassionately, impartially, and without ulterior intentions.”

⁹¹ Carr, E. H. 1964. “The Historian and His Facts.” In *What is History?*, by E. H. Carr, 18. Penguin UK.

⁹² Ibid, 29.

⁹³ Strachey, Lytton. 2009. *Eminent Victorians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This struggle of primacy between facts and interpretations is as much as true in physics, or mathematics, or any other branch of rigorous investigation of knowledge, as it is in social science. And in saying so, I concur with many others that the researcher who is “most conscious of his own situation is also more capable of transcending it.” The ability to appreciate differences as well as similarities between the researcher’s own situation and those of others, across time and across location allow the researcher the ability to gain more than someone who “loudly protests that he is an individual and not a social phenomenon.”⁹⁴ And thus, like others, I acknowledge that I am, myself a social phenomenon.⁹⁵

The infamously-named ‘Operation Legacy’ instructed in no uncertain terms a process for managing the narrative of the Malayan Emergency. On 30 July 1957, Sir Donald Charles MacGillivray, the High Commissioner for the Federation, wrote to Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister stating that prior to independence certain documents would be removed. The offices most affected by this removal were those of the High Commissioner and the Chief Secretary. Following correspondence with the Colonial Office categories of documents to be withdrawn before independence were defined.⁹⁶ During the first eight months of the year, 1957, files and papers were discreetly sorted and those unsuitable for handing over were either destroyed by incineration or withdrawn into the Office of the High Commissioner for the Federation where they were again divided into two categories i.e. for destruction or for the transfer to the new British High Commission. Five lorry-loads of these papers were destroyed in the Royal Navy Base incinerator at Singapore. Until today, the legacy of ‘Operation Legacy’ persists.⁹⁷ What transpired in Malaya is of course not dissimilar to officials in other colonies, such as Kenya, where they were told that there should be a presumption in favour of disposal of documents rather than removal to the UK, and that no trace of either the documents or their incineration should remain, even if it meant documents were to be packed in weighted crates and dumped in very deep and current-free water at the maximum practicable distance from the coast.

Documents that survive from Malaya suggest a far more haphazard destruction process, with relatively junior officials being permitted to decide what should be burned and what should be sent to London. It has been suggested that what has happened to the files was due

⁹⁴ Carr, E. H. 1964. “Society and the Individual.” In *What is History?* by E. H. Carr, 31-55. Penguin UK.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ n.d. “Background report on pre-independence records migrated to.” *FCO 141.19924*.

⁹⁷ (ISD 174/07 (1963-65) Disposal of Classified Documents Prior to Independence by Colonial Territories n.d.); Operation Legacy was intended to ensure that “the British way of doing things” would be remembered with “fondness and respect”. Today, that conduct of its imperial retreat is often seen as overall exemplary.

to a blend of intentional destruction and bureaucratic incompetence and that the destruction of British colonial records in Kuala Lumpur was more haphazard than in Kenya. A file from the transferred Hanslope Park archive entitled “Disposal of Surplus Secret Records” contains lists of files to keep and others no longer needed. The contents of “List A” are marked “Suggestion destroy all”. “List B” files were to be transferred to the Colonial Office in London - though judging from named files not all reached the National Archives in Kew. The third category, “List C”, includes some deemed of historical interest but others marked “destroy”. A “Law and Order” sequence from 1948, which might have covered the alleged Batang Kali massacre of 24 villagers by British troops, was not kept. They include files marked “situation reports”, “intelligence”, “internal security committee”, “supplies”, and “emergency meetings LDC”. Other files include monthly intelligence reports on the “elimination” of the colonial authority's enemies in 1950s Malaya (now part of Malaysia). The “elimination of ranking terrorists” was a repeated theme in secret monthly reports on casualty figures circulated by the director of intelligence in British-controlled Malaya during the 1950s. We will explore the content of these documents in a later chapter, alongside the opinion shared with Laleh Khalili, that; “The files mostly dated from 1955 to 1957 (rather than the period of 1948 to 1951 when half a million civilians were resettled in concentration camps quaintly called New Villages) and what was there was either oblique, opaque, or useless. Most strikingly, the keywords “detention”, “resettlement”, “New Villages”, “reservations” (another quaint word for concentration camps, this time used in Kenya), or “detainee”, don't even appear in any of the aforementioned files.”⁹⁸

Understandably thus, ‘post-Hanslope’ historians, beginning with a provisional selection of facts and a provisional interpretation in the light of which that selection has been made, as well as an awareness of the “point in the procession” in which determines the “angle of vision over the past” of their work, ought to cease wholly rejecting one narrative over the other, and instead find a way around reconciling both observations.⁹⁹ Avoiding favouring a particular

⁹⁸ The full list of files released up to 2013 include; Aden - 18 April 2012, Anguilla - 18 April 2012, Bahamas (now being released in two tranches) - 18 April 2012 - September 2012, Basutoland - 18 April 2012 - July 2012, Bechuanaland - 18 April 2012, British Indian Ocean Territories - 18 April 2012, Brunei - 18 April 2012, Cameroons - July 2012, Ceylon - July 2012 - April 2013, Cyprus - 18 April 2012 - September 2013, Fiji - July 2012, Gambia - July 2012, Gilbert & Ellice Islands - July 2012, Gold Coast - July 2012, Jamaica - September 2012, Kenya - 18 April 2012 - September 2012, Malaya - 18 April 2012, Malta - September 2012 - September 2013, Mauritius - April 2013, New Hebrides - April 2013, Nigeria - April 2013, Northern Rhodesia - April 2013, Nyasaland - April 2013, Palestine - April 2013, Sarawak/Brunei - 18 April 2012, Seychelles - 18 April 2012, Sierra Leone - April 2013, Singapore - April 2013 - September 2013, Solomons (BSIP) - September 2013, Southern Rhodesia - September 2013, Swaziland - September 2013, Tanganyika - September 2013 - November 2013, Trinidad - November 2013, Turks & Caicos - November 2013, Uganda - November 2013, West Indies - November 2013, Western Pacific - November 2013, Zanzibar - November 2013

⁹⁹ Carr, E. H. 1964. “The Historian and His Facts.” In *What is History?*, by E. H. Carr, 18. Penguin UK.

narrative over another, increases nuances and avoids an over-reliance on a pre-figured ‘institution of memory’ of a hegemon. As mentioned before, it is not in and of itself imprudent to rely on archival material, but that exercise must be treated in its own context of acquirement and the circumstances surrounding the particular ‘database’ in question. An over-reliance solely on official documents without triangulating those documents with other sources of observations may be problematic when one considers the prefiguring of archives and the inherent selection bias in the monographical databases that create background narratives for theories. Whether archiving is a process or a produced object, or archives as condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety rather than, as skewed bias sources, these considerations were present in examining the overall picture of the Malayan Emergency in this research. Generally, the approach to archival sources in this research is to first read proses along the grain, then against it.¹⁰⁰

The British Empire writes its own history, and just as Carr predicted, the British Empire writes a history consisting of “a corpus of ascertained facts”. And the facts are available and at the disposal of any empire builder “...in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fish monger’s slab”. The empire, then, “...collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him”.¹⁰¹ The COINdiniesta’s history of the Malayan Emergency tend to rely completely on a set of facts which have been selected for them by a generation of chroniclers who were professionally occupied in the theory and practice of preserving the British Empire through a victorious language of COIN, and who therefore thought it supremely important, and record everything related to emphasising the sentiment of success. After all, a military historian defends the reputation of the army.¹⁰²

Perhaps there are ‘hidden’ controversies that surround British conduct in Malaya which suggests that the ‘lessons’ learnt from the Malayan Emergency were over-exaggerated and much of the literature pertaining to the campaign under-emphasises the degree of force which the British were willing to employ.¹⁰³ The absence of the nuanced observations which we have mentioned earlier necessitated and allowed us the opportunity to treat earlier works concerning the Malayan Emergency as incomplete, making our findings, with the incorporation of new, and properly inclusive accounts a re-investigation of the existing

¹⁰⁰ Stoler, Ann Laura. 2009. *Along the archival grain epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁰¹ Carr, E. H. 1964. “Society and the Individual.” In *What is History?* by E. H. Carr, 31-55. Penguin UK.

¹⁰² Bennett, *Minimum force in British Counterinsurgency*, p. 462

¹⁰³ Mumford, Andrew. 2012. *The Counter-Insurgency Myth; The British Experience of Irregular Warfare*. New York: Routledge

historiography of the Emergency in order to give it more breadth and depth. This research therefore re-examines the historiography of the Darurat. There is a need to improve the historiography of the Emergency by adding more perspective to it, especially with regards to the liberal use of ‘force and coercion’ in defeating the insurgents.

The immediate task was therefore to collect more data from a wider range of sources to allow for the creation of stronger and deeper description of different possible causal chains which would then allow us to investigate different alternative explanations to the success of the counter-insurgency operation, be it ‘hearts and minds’ or the use of ‘force and coercion’. The discovery and the use of previously ignored sources of evidences is an attempt to give voice to the native accounts of the Emergency which would hopefully assist in a more accurate experience of the Malayan Emergency. It is commonly understood, many or most phenomena of interest in political science are characterised by more complex causality for which the assumption of linearity is misplaced, however, an effort to increase nuances, increases the explanatory weight of any particular narrative.¹⁰⁴

As this research on the Darurat is a self-evident single case study of Malaya, a working definition of what constitutes success was also necessary. I have defined success to be the significant decrease in the level of incidences of violence and depending on the data available, the level of violence assessed were either on monthly or annual intervals. Defining it as such would be the most direct way to observe the changing tides of the war. I have approached this investigation with the awareness that what makes it a case study is its reliance on evidence drawn from a single case and its attempt, at the same time, to illuminate features of a broader set of cases concerning counterinsurgency – those cases in this instance, being subject to further investigation hopefully at a different time.

Thus, in light of all the above, I have relied on archival material consisting of, among others, minutes of meetings (Cabinet, Committee, etc.), correspondences, directives, situation reports by security forces, and military manuals. In the United Kingdom; The National Archives in Kew, National Army Museum, The Guards Museum, The Templer Study Centre, Rhodes House Library, The Imperial War Museum and the People’s History Museum. In Kuala Lumpur; the Arkib Negara, the Muzium Tentera and the Perpustakaan Negara and finally The National Archives of Singapore. I have perused files from the National

¹⁰⁴ George, Alexander, and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Science*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Archive in Kew, as well as the national archive in Kuala Lumpur. These are files which, in content, generally concerns itself with labour and anti-British matters between the period of 1945 and 1957 - the former signifying the year the Japanese occupation ended in Malaya and the latter being the year Britain grants independence to the Federation of Malaya. The documents investigated includes a collection of archival documents that were relied on by various authors such as Anthony Short and Victor Purcell, as well as documents which I have myself searched for and discovered on my own accord. The nature of these documents varied. The documents which have already been referenced in previous works took on three forms. Firstly, (1) documents which have been used in full - these types of documents have been used as evidence in previous works on the emergency, in full, by individuals like Anthony Short. Therefore, these documents required a thorough re-check to confirm the claims which they are evidence to. Secondly, (2) documents which may have been used selectively. These were documents which presumably had only been used selectively in evidencing a claim, and required full reconsideration of its entire content and the claims they are supporting, as well as any additional claims which it can make. Finally, (3) documents which either are ignored, unused or undiscovered. Where necessary, these documents were incorporated into the historiography. The reading of these documents was done so that each document is understood in the context of the time to give better perspective on the events which were transpiring.

The conclusions presented in the following chapters will depart and improve on previous works by incorporating into its consideration a wider range of evidence. Chief among those are memoirs by key personalities from the Malayan Communist Party members, Malay leftist nationalists, and trade unionists. These include individuals like Chin Peng, Abdullah C.D, Ahmad Boestamam, Shamsiah Fakeh¹⁰⁵, and a host of other key actors. These memoirs, primarily published in the native Malay language, will help provide a new perspective to the discourse of the Emergency, as it will empower and give voice to important indigenous actors who were experiencing the Emergency as it was unfolding. In the same way that the historiography on Indian independence would not be the same and meaningful without the voices of Jinnah, or Nehru, the non-inclusion of these key actors would have a similar effect. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with former MCP members, Malay leftists, Trade Unionists, colonial civil servants and security force personnel, as well as massacre survivors

¹⁰⁵ The AWAS leader, Shamsiah Fakeh, had called on Malay women 'to wake up from their slumber and oppressed state', and the movement encouraged the wives of non-politically minded men to go on strike.

and relocated 'New Villagers' who were directly affected by the relocation and subjected to abuses as a result of British policies. Testimonies from former MCP members were also instrumental to this research as their view of the counter-insurgency operation, although arguably exaggerated, as is the case with any asymmetric conflict, were more sensitive towards instances where 'hearts and minds' or 'force and coercion' were employed.

My investigations also included other forms of primary evidence in native language found in Malay (Romanised and Jawi script), Chinese (every dialect) and Tamil. These sources - available in Kuala Lumpur - included correspondences, party directives, operation manuals, party manifestoes, and newspapers (such as the *Suara Rakyat* and the *Utusan Malaya*) published during the period. These inclusions have allowed us to bring in Chinese and Malay sources to what is essentially, to date, an English language discourse. Ultimately, my estimates of the strength of different narratives might still be subjective as it involves my "personal point of view", my personal "historical judgements" and a "refraction" of the machinations of my own mind to an extent that it is "preselected and pre-determined" by either my conscious or unconscious efforts to only uphold the facts I find to be worth supporting.¹⁰⁶ However, as long as we diligently abide by the systematic ways of discovering causality and avoid making it a completely arbitrary endeavour, we hoped to have avoided the pitfall of being non-systematic and unscientific. Moreover, at a minimum, if there is doubt over whether there is such a thing as an 'objective' truth, the ability to enhance the corpus of knowledge on the Emergency through this research by giving voice to the natives would permit into discourse more nuances on the overall experience of Malaya under British rule. To understand the Malayan Emergency from the bottom-up, we must place as much weight on understanding different groups as we do on reconstructing counterinsurgency policy-making.

Thus, among the tasks of this research was to approximate an alternative and to expand, where possible, the nuances in the native experience of the Emergency. Approximation is not merely a struggle in social science, but is pervasive in 'other' sciences as well. Every measured quality is an approximation. The mass of a chair is only able to be approximately defined. When we try to isolate pieces of a thing, to talk about one mass, the wine and the wine-glass for instance, how can we know which is which, when one dissolves in the other? To say precisely, "which atoms make the chair, and which atoms make the air, or which atoms are dirt, or which atoms are paint that belongs to the chair is impossible." There are not any single,

¹⁰⁶ Carr, E. H. 1964. "Society and the Individual." In *What is History?*, by E. H. Carr, 31-55. Penguin UK.; Carr, E. H. 1964. "The Historian and His Facts." In *What is History?*, by E. H. Carr, 1-24. Penguin UK.

isolated, stand-alone objects in the world as every object is a mixture of things, hence we deal with a series of approximations and idealisations. The task is also therefore perhaps to navigate an approximation, and an appreciation for nuances that lie between understanding that on one hand “Action is rationally evident chiefly when we attain a completely clear intellectual grasp of the action-elements in their intended context of meaning” while on the other hand, “Emphatic or appreciative accuracy is attained when, through sympathetic participation, we can adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place”.

The crucial point here is that we are able to have “a perfectly clear understanding” of both propositions in arithmetic or mathematical theorems, or of correctly carried-out “logical train of reasoning according to our accepted modes of thinking” in the same way we understand “what a person is doing when he tries to achieve certain ends by choosing appropriate means on the basis of the facts of the situation, as experience has accustomed us to interpret them”.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ See Feynman, Richard P, Robert B Leighton, and Matthew Sands. 2010. *The Feynman Lectures on Physics New Millennium Edition*. Edited by Michael A Gottlieb and Rudolf Pfeiffer. Pasadena: California Institute of Technology.

CHAPTER TWO: TEN THOUSAND YEARS¹⁰⁸

We now turn our attention to the incipient insurgency by the Malayan Communist Party from 1945. To understand the MCP, one must also understand the shelf of history it emanates from. Interpretations of what happened in Malaya in 1945 differ inevitably between the British Colonial State's and the forces of insurgency in opposition to them.¹⁰⁹ The British Colonial State was itself rooted in its own self-legitimising traditions and conventions that were lionising, dignifying, and ennobling of imperial rule.

On the other hand, the MCP draws from a distinct shelf of history to lionise, dignify, and ennoble a revolutionary tradition and ideology. Tracing the MCP's early life allows us to pivot our investigation to China and Japan and gives our considerations of the insurgency further context. Beginning with the 'Societies Ordinance' in 1889, the British colonial administration banned the old local Chinese secret societies, forcing them underground into drug-pushing, organised crime and extortion. Community power passed to new voluntary associations, called '*Huay Kuan*', which soon proliferated to meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of the '*Laukeh*'¹¹⁰ community in Malaya. The most important of the '*Huay Kuan*' were the 'Chinese Chambers of Commerce' (CCC). The first CCC was formed in Singapore in 1906 and others sprang up in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca, Ipoh and Seremban. The CCC were not political parties. But since they were not aligned to specific dialect groups or clans, they soon became vehicles driving an emerging political consciousness. The identity and consciousness among the Chinese in Malaya as members of a transnational community that extended far beyond the borders of colonial Malaya emerges out of this experience.

Soon after, Communist ideology was introduced to Malaya when internal strains and foreign activity in China lead to rebellions and ultimately a revolt of the provinces against the Qing imperial authority in 1911 in the name of a Republican Revolution.¹¹¹ Chinese military leaders, "warlords," emerged from the political vacuum created by the fall of the Qing,

¹⁰⁸ In various East Asian languages, the phrase "ten thousand years" is used to wish long life, and is typically translated as "Live long!" in English. The phrase originated in ancient China as an expression used to wish long life to the emperor of China.

¹⁰⁹ Howard, Michael. 1981. "The Use and Abuse of Military History." *Parameters* 11 (1): 9.

¹¹⁰ A person receiving no wages but pays a fixed percentage of the value of the tin extracted to the mine owners. The system allowed for flexible hiring between employer and labourer in the mining industry.

¹¹¹ Scholarship, by writers such as Edward Rhoads, challenges the notion that the 1911 Revolution was "inevitable" and suggests that reforms leading to a constitutional monarchy, recommended by the Chinese reforms of 1898 and similar to reforms of Meiji Japan, might have been possible were it not for court politics and military delays that facilitated the 1911 Revolution route; Chin, Aloysius. 1994. *The Communist Party of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Vinpress Sdn. Bhd.

controlling different regions of the country and competing for domination of the nominal central government in Beijing. Sun Yat-sen and his nascent Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang* or *Guomindang*) struggled to bring republican government to China. In the context of (a) the political chaos that follows the fall of the centralised dynastic power of the Qing in the Republican Revolution in 1911 and (b) the growing nationalism that crystallises as the May 4th Movement after the 1919 Versailles Peace settlement – two political parties work and compete to reunify China and to modernise it to face the challenge of imperialist encroachment by the West and Japan. These are the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. The KMT was established on 13 August 1912 as a consequence of the 1911 revolution overthrowing the Manchu Emperor. Two individuals named Lu Tien and Ch'iu Chi Hsien were sent to organise KMT branches in the Malay States. On 18 December 1912, the first KMT in Singapore was recognised by the government and registered under the Societies Ordinance. Subsequently, there was a steady rise of KMT branches operating secretly in Singapore and Penang, as well as the Federated Malay States.¹¹² The founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 follows the success of the communist revolution in Russia of 1917-18. For many Chinese in Malaya, Marxism (a) represents a Western theory, based on a scientific analysis of historical development, that (b) offers the promise of escape from the imperialism that is thwarting their national ambitions, and (c) promises economic development that would improve all.

Colonialism, like the one present in Malaya, is to Marx, historically important because it helps capitalism to establish itself in non-capitalist societies. Therefore, Marx views capitalism, which causes the spread of industrial development throughout the whole world, as a precondition for forming a socialist society.

Colonising traditional societies, according to Marx, advances the conditions for an international socialist revolution as only when private property, which comes along with capitalism, exists in a society can it be abolished, and only with its abolition, can man emancipate himself from his alienated existence. Marx noted that private property plays the key role in the transformation process from a traditional into a capitalist, and finally into a

¹¹² 1934. "Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs." CO 273/597/33046/Part III. August. 31; n.d. "Memorandum to Executive Council, Policy towards the KMT." CO 1022/198/SEA112/220/01.; n.d. "The Activities of The Kuomintang Party in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore." 10.; Brimmell, J. H. 1959. *Communism in South East Asia: A Political Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; 1962. "The Kuomintang in Malaya." In *Papers in Malayan History*, by K G Tregonning. Singapore: Malayan Publishing House.; Fujio, Hara. 1997. *Malayan Chinese and China: Conversion in Identity Consciousness 1945-1957*. Tokyo: Tokyo Institute of Developing Economies.; Yong, C F. 1997. *The Origins of Malayan Communism*. Singapore: Singapore South Seas Society.

communist society. However, having examined the effects of colonialism on Indian society, also led him to criticise British imperialism, as it oppressively destroyed the Indian textile industry.

The terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919, ending World War One, enraged the Chinese urban populace by recognising Japanese claims to former German rights in the Shandong peninsula of China. This led to an outpouring of nationalistic sentiment on 4 May 1919 and to the subsequent “May 4th Movement” to reform Chinese culture through the adoption of Western Science and Democracy. The Confucian system was seen as discredited and rejected by those who felt it did not provide China with the strength it needed to meet the challenge of the West. This was the geopolitical context in which two of the great ideologies of the twentieth century, nationalism and communism, took hold in Asia.

2.1 WORLD WAR TWO AND THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY

The contours of the past great wars and modern memory start to look different if, instead of the writings of a Western general, an ordinary European soldier, or poet, we consider the memories of an African labourer, and African-American soldier-labourer, Indian sepoy, or a Malayan Chinese worker. World War One had a considerable radicalising effect on the Chinese. Nearly 140,000 Chinese contract labourers were hired by the British and French governments, forming a substantial part of the immigrant labour force working in France during the war. The litany of the names of different theatres of battle often becomes the marker for the ‘world’ nature of World War One. The colonial home front however – the lives of hundreds of thousands of women and children in villages across Asia and Africa who lost their husbands, brothers or fathers, and faced different kinds of hardships – remains one of the most under-researched. Part of the problem is one of sources; many of these people were non-literate and have not left us with the diaries and memoirs that we have in Europe. However, the global dimension of this ‘world war’ is apparent when we consider the experiences of people, both men and women, combatants and non-combatants, from around the world who fought or laboured or whose lives were changed forever because of the war.¹¹³

¹¹³ Das, Santanu. 2011. *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* Santanu Das. Edited by Santanu Das. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Generally, the British Empire functioned through enlistment of the support of large numbers of local collaborators to do most of the work on the ground.¹¹⁴ The British Empire had its ruling class as well as the majority of colonial administrators drawn exclusively from a closed world of some 15 public schools and, for the *crème de la crème*, two elite universities. The same system, in Malaya, would be instituted in 1905 with the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) to reinforce and cultivate much of the same elitist structure in an already elitist Malayan society. While colonial regimes often lack the status and the local knowledge of indigenous elites, and have found it necessary to seek the collaboration of some element of the local population, and to provide training in Western-style schools for junior clerical and administrative staff. The Malay College Kuala Kangsar illustrates that relationship. A Malay College was established in 1905 to cultivate conservative opinion, serving the traditional elite and producing candidates for a Malay Administrative Service, subordinate to the almost exclusively British Malayan Civil Service.¹¹⁵ This observation is not lost on Ishak Haji Muhammad¹¹⁶ in 1937 when he wrote *Putera Gunung Tahan*. Born in 1910, Ishak, or known more familiarly as Pak Sako, was one of the leading Malay novelists and journalists of his generation. He would attend the “Eton of the East”, The Malay College Kuala Kangsar,¹¹⁷ and go on to become president of the important Malay Nationalist Party in the years after the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy. Consequently, Pak Sako also played a leading role in PUTERA-AMCJA¹¹⁸ and was detained immediately in 1948 and remained incarcerated until 1954. In *Putera Gunung Tahan*, its primary premise follows that of two colonial ‘Englishmen’, one Robert and a William, who are seeking to conquer the peak of Mount Tahan to transform it into a British country-estate and to look for fabled treasures on its peak. In 1973, he reinstated his motivations at the time, “I wrote *Putera Gunung Tahan* specifically as a battle cry for independence, justice and to expel the colonialists.”¹¹⁹

Even up to the British Military Administration, that is upon the return of Britain, after their triumph of 1945, no democratic institutions or electoral systems were set up, only ‘State Advisory Councils’ were created to “bring into consultation the various communities in the

¹¹⁴ Kirk-Greene, Anthony. 1999. *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Service, 1837-1997*. London: I.B.Tauris, 39-91.

¹¹⁵ Tarling, Nicholas. 1992. *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; A second institution, the Sultan Idris Training College, founded in 1922 to conduct teacher-training programmes, drew students from village vernacular schools.

¹¹⁶ Ishak bin Haji Mohammad was one of the leading Malay novelist and journalist of his generation. He was the Leader of the MNP after Dr. Burhanuddin, and played a leading role in PUTERA-AMCJA. He was detained between 1948 and 1954.

¹¹⁷ Malay College Kuala Kangsar. n.d. *About MCKK*. <https://mckk.edu.my/about/about-mckk/>.

¹¹⁸ PUTERA-AMCJA is a coalition between Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA) and All-Malaysia Council of Joint Action (AMCJA). The establishment of the coalition is discussed further in Chapter 4.

¹¹⁹ Note of Ishak Haji Muhammad written in Temerloh, Pahang on 14th February 1937.

country and to seek their advice on the problems which face (the Administration)”.¹²⁰ However these were staffed by appointed peoples who were from the elite aristocratic and business class.

As convention, the British colonial nobility co-opted the Malay rulers and opted to be bedfellows with the sultans and their colonial courts in whom they saw their own qualities mirrored. ‘British Malaya’ was jointly the creation of the British and an increasingly compliant and well-rewarded Malay elite. It typifies the Roman approach to organising empire of having the right men in key positions in an exclusionary hierarchical structure. Britain’s treaty obligations reflected the social order it upheld. By the 1930s, mechanisms of indirect rule were coming under strain throughout the British Empire. In the post-war years, British planners wanted to seize the moment to rewrite the treaties in new terms and substitute it with direct allegiance to the colonial state.¹²¹ The most important point to underscore here is that colonialism was never meant to create a state where the ‘native’ could rule themselves.¹²² Where one continues to exist, the other ceases to do so. The colonial state’s *raison d’être* is therefore subservience, administered not for statehood, but for the benefit of the coloniser’s metropole. John Newsinger invites us to ponder the question:

What they have to be asked is how they would respond if other states had done to Britain what the British state has done to other countries. How pro-imperialist would they feel for example if, instead of Britain forcing opium on the Chinese Empire, it had been the other way round? What would their response be if, when the British government had tried to ban the importation of opium, the Chinese had sent a power military expedition to ravage the British coastline and bombard British ports, and slaughter British soldiers and civilians? What if, instead of Britain seizing Hong Kong, the Chinese had seized Liverpool and Merseyside as a bridgehead to dominate Britain for nearly a hundred years? ... None of this is fanciful because it is exactly what the British state did to China in the 19th Century.¹²³

2.2 COMMUNISM AND MALAYA

In 1921, allegedly a young communist called Mak Chau had settled in Kuala Lumpur, where he established the ‘Nanyang Critique Society’. Ostensibly an education debating

¹²⁰ Speech by DCCAO for Negri Sembilan Advisory Council, Malayan Union Secretariat File 164/46.

¹²¹ Harper, T. N, 56-57.

¹²² See Holsti, Kalevi J. 1996. *The State, War, and the State of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Hanieh, Adam. 2011. *Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹²³ See Newsinger, John. 2006. *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. London: Bookmarks, 19; Also see Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

society, it was in fact the first communist organisation in Malaya. Communists competed with the Malayan Kuomintang to find converts in Chinese schools, which enjoyed considerable autonomy from the colonial government. Since the Chinese schools were financed by the conservative 'Huay Kuan' and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce, the KMT had much success. The United Front period saw the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the KMT freely co-operate. In 1924, the Comintern – which operated through the CCP – established the 'Nanyang General Labour Union' to organize labour in Southeast Asia¹²⁴ The Chinese were involved in low-paid (docks, transport, rubber, etc.) to middle class (shop keeping) work, as well as wealthy businesses as they straddled all classes. By 1926, several communist influence labour organisations were established; Aik Min Workers Union Port Dickson, Aik Khwan Workers Union Kuala Pilah, Union of Rubber Workers Negri Sembilan, Union of Shopkeepers Negri Sembilan, Aik Chi Workers Union Sepang, Union of Rubber Workers Tanah Merah, Union of Rubber Workers Pengkalan Kempas, Yan Khwan Workers Union Seremban, Aik Shin Workers Union Rantau, especially the Nanyang General Labour Association (a branch for the General Labour Association of China).¹²⁵ Communist-influenced newspapers also formed; Red Star Weekly, Red Star Supplement, Charcoal, Struggle, Youth's War Front Weekly, Red Flag, The Economic Policy of New China, Thin Sing Yat Po. There were also several communist magazines produced such as; The Guide Weekly, Chinese Youth, Chinese Seamen's Union.¹²⁶

The MCP allegedly evolved from the CCP's Nanyang Branch. There were numerous CCP members dispatched to, and some exiled to, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur in the 1920s. The Communists used the slogan "Protect Chinese Education" in its propaganda as early as 1926 to supplement their efforts to spread their influence among the Chinese through China schools—teachers and students were slowly converted into sympathisers.¹²⁷ This type of crafty use of nationalism is a practice common and promoted by the Bolsheviks and the Comintern.

After the KMT-CCP split in 1927, Communist elements were no longer able to operate out of KMT branches in Malaya. To fill the void, the Communist International (Comintern)

¹²⁴ See Chin, Aloysius. 1994. *The Communist Party of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Vinpress Sdn. Bhd.

¹²⁵ n.d. "Interim Report on the Kwok Man Tong in the Federated Malay States Covering Activities During the Period 1st January 1927 to End of June 1927." CO 273/537/28053. 10.; 1959. *Kua Min Tang; the Communist Threat to the Federation of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer.; Blythe, W L. 1947. Historical Sketch of Chinese Labour in Malaya. Vol. XX. JMBRAS.; 1927. "The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence." CO 273/535/28030. June. 3.

¹²⁶ 1934. "Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs." CO 273/596/33046/Part I. March. 44-45.; 1934. "Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs." CO 273/597/33046/Part III. July. 62.; 1926. "The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence." CO 273/534/C.22086. September. 2.; 1926. "The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence." CO 273/534/28030. December. 2.

¹²⁷ 1926. "The Malayan Bulletin of Political Intelligence." CO 273/535/28030. October. 4.

in Moscow established the Nanyang Kung Ch'an Tang/South Seas Communist Party in January 1928. The South Seas Communist Party oversaw two mass organisations; the Nanyang General Labour Union and the Communist Youth League. It was not until early April 1930 that Ho Chi Minh, as Comintern agent for Southeast Asia, brought together representatives of the main 'Nanyang' labour organisations in Malaya to formally open the first congress of the 'Malayan Communist Party'. On 30 April 1930, the entire structure was replaced with the MCP.

Short contends that CCP began activities in Malaya before the Comintern showed interest in the area, and that Malayan communism was nurtured within the ranks of the KMT not dissimilar to its evolution in China.¹²⁸ In this period, the developments in China heavily influenced overseas-Chinese in Malaya, and they in turn were following the developments in China with interest, at times organising themselves into support movements collecting donations and man-power for the causes back in China. After the death of Sun Yat-Sen in 1925, Short argues that Singapore became the focus of both Malayan and Indonesian communism and the South Seas branch of the CCP was formed there in the same year. However, its political organisation was disrupted by a series of police raids, while the Nanyang General Labour Union was spared a similar disaster. The turning point in pre-war labour movements, highlighted by Short and confirmed by at least three memoirs, is the establishment of the MCP in April 1930.

A Malayan Communist Party and the *Kesatuan Umum Buruh Malaya* ('Malayan General Labour Union') were created to replace the South Seas organisation. In turn, it would come under direct control of the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat in Shanghai which was itself the controlling organ of Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau. In other words, the Nanyang Communist Party and the Nanyang General Labour Union was dissolved and replaced with the MCP who was under the control of the Far Eastern Bureau Directly and not under the CCP.

Chin Peng's memoir lends credibility to the descriptions above. He claims, in the early part of the decade, that some households in his town of Sitiawan tended to regard the KMT's Chiang Kai Shek as the true leader of China as his photographs dominated - every shop-house carried a picture of Sun Yat-Sen whom everyone considered as the founder of the Republic

¹²⁸ Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.

of China.¹²⁹ By all appearance all Sitiawan residents were supporters of KMT. Chin Peng continues to explain the history of the MCP. The Party's formal structure, he claims, can be traced to a congress called in the final days of April 1930 at a rubber plantation near the Negri Sembilan township of Kuala Pilah. Present at the meeting were leading members of the Nanyang Provisional Committee of the CCP as well as the central figure of the meeting, a Vietnamese - Nguyen Ai Quoc who later went on to become Viet Minh leader and re-invented himself as Ho Chi Minh. The MCP was thence inaugurated on the 1st of May 1930.

On the Malay side, the Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (KMS), the first Malay political party was formed in 1926. However, it took the form of welfare and took a cooperative attitude toward the British. It was not until the failed 1926 Indonesia revolution led by the Communist Party Indonesia (CPI) against the Dutch, did revolutionary ideas in its Twentieth century form reached Malays of the peninsula. The failed attempt led to some CPI leaders fleeing to Malaya, who later played a part in the spreading of anti-colonial ideas among peninsular Malays.

The MCP's initial operations centred, naturally in Singapore as the island had a far greater concentration of union movements than anywhere else in the peninsula. Chin Peng goes on to underscore that from the early on, the Strait Settlements Police (SSP) were quick to respond to the Party's formation and therefore continued, throughout the first half of 1930s to target it with regular and devastating raids. The police force also began to re-organise itself. A Special Branch was established in 1933 and took over the responsibilities of what previously had been known as the Criminal Intelligence Department. According to Chin Peng, the MCP would lose no less than six serving leaders in police raids between 1930 and 1936, and court actions taken against them resulted in five of them being banished from the colony and deported to China. As of 1934, there were two 'town committees' functioning with the MCP - one in Singapore and the other in Penang. In other states throughout the rest of Malaya, the Party functioned under 'regional committees', while in geographically larger states like Pahang and Johore, they would have two separated committees each - eastern and western branch for Pahang, and northern and southern in Johore. MCP would then on begin its activities in labour unions, standing for anti-imperialism as well as relying on anti-Japanese sentiments. In light of this, Chin claims that in Singapore alone police directed 432 raids against the MCP

¹²⁹ The choice of photographs displayed at houses or premises is an indication at the time of your political leaning

between 1931 and 1935, and arrested 226 members, a large percentage of whom were deported to China.

The MCP remembers itself as a functioning organism which had made an impact over public affairs on the ground in Malaya. In the year 1934, several major strikes erupted involving railway and colliery labourers as well as rebellion amongst the navy in Singapore. Then in 1935, the Malayan General Labour Union (at the time, an illegal organisation) had organised a major protest for 'all' labourers across Malaya, demanding democracy and a change in living standards amongst labourers. There were strikes in 1936, when labourers in the field of cleaning, transportation, carpentry/woodwork and construction launched several successive work strikes. The MCP firmly and repeatedly reiterates that the struggles not only forged the spirit of the people, it also landed heavy hits to the British occupiers.

After the anti-Japanese war erupted completely in China, the democratic revolution in China entered a kind of new stage. The overseas Tionghoa movement in Malaya assisting China began to grow. The eruption of World War Two brought permanent changes toward the situation amongst races and thus winning the anti-fascist war became a common priority all over the world. In Malaya, class opposition slowed. Resisting Japanese occupation became the main priority of all races. Under such new circumstances, the people's struggle to resist the occupation and the movement of overseas Tionghoa in supporting the Chinese against the Japanese naturally aligns itself with the fight against the Japanese and the defense of Malaya. And in this moment, the MCP organised the *Sidang Jawatankuasa Pusat ke-enam* ('6th Central Committee Summit') (expanded) to face the situation at-hand. The council amended policies and direction of the MCP, demanded the British colonial authorities release political prisoners and recognise MCP's legal status, to allow the people the right to resist the Japanese, to arm the public, activate war preparations, and destroy the plot of the Japanese occupying forces unequivocally.

Under the leadership of the MCP, various places in Singapore and Malaya began establishing *Kesatuan Para Perantau Tionghua Melawan Musuh dan Membantu Negara China* ('Chinese Anti Enemy Backing Up Society') which included people of various social class and industry including labourers, farmers, youths, students, women, educational and cultural groups and thus began launching an anti-Japanese movement vigorously. Students and youths, in droves, took the streets to propagate the anti-Japanese struggle.¹³⁰ The youths

¹³⁰ Kim Hong, Tan. 2007. *The Chinese in Penang: A Pictorial History* 檳榔嶼華人：史圖錄. Penang: Areca Books.

and students organised and mobilised the various socioeconomic groups and the public toward donations as well as fundraising and charity events, boycotted Japanese goods, condemned traitors and conspirators to the Japanese. The anti-Japanese movement amongst the labourers were similarly vigorous. Nearly 10,000 labourers from two steel mills in Batu Pahat, Johore and Kampung Kemaman, Terengganu successively launched major strikes to oppose the Japanese crime in occupying China resulting in the shutting down of both mines

The years between 1936 and 1937 saw labour disturbances become more salient. Chin notes that in October 1936, seven Chinese communists from Amoy were sent to Malaya. This move led to the stiffening of MCP activities and developed a United Front (a concept originating from the 7th World Conference of the Comintern held in Moscow in July 1935) which resulted in a vast increase in membership, financial resources and influence of the MCP by working with non-communist organisations which had similar anti-fascist and anti-imperialist aims. The MCP subsequently was able to exploit genuine grievances to set up strike committees, to organise sympathy strikes, large demonstrations and even elements of insurrection.¹³¹ In 1936, there were serious strikes in Batu Arang, Sungei Besi and Tong San mines. There were also strikes in biscuit factories, stone quarries and different business centres in Singapore. 1937 saw a further wave of strikes in rubber estates spread through Selangor and Negri Sembilan which overflowed to the borders of Malacca, Johore, and Penang. It also saw some 500 strikers march to Kuala Lumpur, 110 of whom were later arrested.¹³² On the 24th of March in the Batu Arang colliery some 3,000 Chinese workers went on the strike at the colliery. These disturbances were undoubtedly followed by stern action by the colonial government and a substantial number of important members of the MCP, General Labour Union and Selangor Rubber Workers' Union who coordinated and directed the strikes were arrested. By the end of 1937, the Malayan General Labour Union was the numerically the largest subsidiary organisation controlled by MCP.

Between 1938 and 1939, tram labourers, cleaners, trishaw drivers, construction workers, dockyard union workers in Singapore, pineapple plantation workers in Johore Bahru, rubber estate workers in Bahau, Negri Sembilan, coal miners in Batu Arang, tin mine workers in Sungai Besi, rubber estate workers in Kajang, dock workers in Pulau Pinang, tin mine workers in Raub, iron ore transport workers in Dungun, Terengganu and others all organised successive anti-Japanese strikes. Then, major demonstrations by the labourers on

¹³¹ Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.

¹³² Chin, Aloysius. 1994. *The Communist Party of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Vinpress Sdn. Bhd.

International Labour Day, 1 May 1940, attracted around 50,000 labourers and the masses in Singapore. These demonstrations motivated the anti-Japanese movement and democracy to new heights.

On the Malay side, Rashid Maidin confirms the developments of the Malay front through his reflections of the time.¹³³ While working as a dredge engineer, he claims the existence of labour unions of a multi-racial nature operating in the mine where he works. And that with the help of Sutan Djenain from Indonesia, Ishak Haji Mohammad and Ibrahim Yaacob established the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM)* with aims for *Merdeka* ('independence'). He continues to comment that labour unions were not something new to him as he was previously, in 1937, part of a *Persatuan Pemandu-pemandu Melayu* ('Drivers Union') in Perak.

It was in the second half of the 1930s, as pointed out by Chin Peng, that the developments in China began to produce discernible signs of political polarisation among the overseas Chinese community in Malaya. The early division followed the left and right-wing factions of the KMT rather than outright support for the emerging Mao Tse Tung. Although, as a result of these disturbances, there was marked reluctance on part of non-communist workers to come into conflict with authority or to join the various unlawful labour unions which were being rigorously prosecuted by the police. However, labourers were instead ready to join anti-Japanese associations.¹³⁴ Chin Peng confirms that when the Sino-Japanese War erupted, their call for national salvation swept across the Chinese community in the Malay Peninsula. It created an atmosphere of agitation, where people were demanding the boycott of trade with Japan and began indulging in the mobilisation of fundraising groups to support China's war effort. Nominal reconciliation between the MCP and KMT in the face of Japanese invasion in 1937 helped to re-establish the MCP's claim to the allegiance to the Malayan Chinese. And in that moment, fearing the groundswell and fearing that communities would take advantage of the moment British authorities went on to ensure that whatever organisation that were created to answer the call of national salvation was created with government sanction. The China Relief Fund was therefore established in August 1937 for this purpose. The relief fund headed by Tan Kah Kee had the approval of the Governor of Singapore at the time, Shenton Thomas, who outlined specific conditions for the functioning of this movement – rather odd

¹³³ Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.

¹³⁴ Short, Anthony. 1975.

was its provision which disallowed monies collected to be associated with any provocative anti-Japanese declarations or for the collection to be used toward military programmes. As Chin Peng puts it, almost simultaneously, without any approval of the British, the MCP set up what was called the Anti-Enemy Backing-up Society which was identical to Tan Kah Kee's organisation. The society on the surface, announced that it stood for promoting Sino-British friendship, however it never managed to emerge to be anything more than a semi-official, semi-legal entity with the colonial authorities systematically blocking it from obtaining official registration. To cope with the situation, the Society therefore had to portray itself as a strong supporter of the Relief Fund.

It was during this period, as Chin Peng highlights, that Chang Kai Shek's government began to send military officers to Malaya for the purpose of recruiting youths to fight the Japanese invader. The colonial government did not object to this recruitment drive and tolerated the presence of KMT among the population. The recruitment continues until at least 1940 and as it would later be seen, during the Japanese occupation of Malaya, some of these recruits were sent back to Malaya on order by Chiang Kai Shek to join the British clandestine Force 136 unit.

Crackdown on communist elements continued through the 1940s. Chin Peng recollects that between March and April of that year, several of his fellow members of the Backing-up Society were arrested. Having caught rumour of his own arrest, Chin Peng left Sitiawan to escape arrest. Chin Peng continues to explain that in this chaotic period arrest so many members of the Party hierarchy were either jailed or banished that it contributed to the speedy promotion of the, later exposed, triple-agent Lai Te to leadership positions. Chin Peng himself remained in charge of student affairs at the time as well as less important trade unions such as those for shop assistance (restaurant workers, chiefs and kitchen hands), barbers, and brick-foundry labourers. Other critical unions under the influence of the MPC like those for tin mines, plantation labourers, and transportation workers were supervised by older and more experienced cadres. As far as the state of Perak was concerned, MCP's core numbers lay with the tin mining labourers throughout the Kinta Valley and southward. The MCP in Perak had a membership of approximately 500 members, and countrywide membership number totalled to just over 3,000 strong. The shift of support for the anti-Japanese cause meant that the MCP would revise its own attitude towards the British. Changes at the international level had brought cooperation between the Soviet Union and other Allied members given the looming prospect of further expansion of Japan (Germany's Axis partner

since the Berlin pact of September 1940) into the Pacific Rim countries. It was, therefore, now not only acceptable within the terms of the Comintern, but also imperative that the MCP take a friendly position toward the British.

Through Rashid Maidin's account,¹³⁵ we know that in this period leading up to the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1940 that some of the biggest labour unions of the day were not arranged along racial lines. Rashid Maidin's encounter with Lai Raifel - a MCP cadre tasked to organise dredge labourers and spread the cause for independence in the Tanjung Tualang area - confirms that the Kinta Mining Workers' Association had Malay members. What Rashid Maidin was recounting was Lai Raifel's efforts in recruiting Rashid Maidin and a few other Malay labourers in his area to become members of the union. After agreeing to join the cause, Rashid Maidin and a few other Malay labourers were sworn into the Party and became Malay cadres who were in charge of organising Malay labourers into a viable movement and establishing branches for the labour union. Rashid Maidin would later, as he claims, spread his case all the way from Malim Nawar to Tanjung Tualang. At least 10 dredges were in the area, and at each dredge there would be a labour union branch that Rashid Maidin had helped set up. The Kinta Workers' Mining Association was one of the biggest labour union at the time. It had a membership of 20,000, and its importance stems from the union's position in Britain's prized mining industry. Despite his primary role as organiser among the Malays, his labour union branches would end up being membered by individuals across racial lines. Rashid Maidin himself would eventually become leader of the Kinta Workers' Mining Association.

Abdullah C.D. recalls that on 11 December 1941, the Central Committee of the MCP endorsed the decision to fight the oncoming force. The Japanese would later at staggering speed push their invading forces down the peninsular and later, in a matter of weeks in February the following year, conclude their success by taking Churchill's 'fortress Singapore' shore batteries facing sea-ward and all. In the scramble, the British hardly put up any resistance at all, having to retreat south constantly until they lost all of the peninsula and Singapore the Japanese.

The MCP, as Abdullah C.D. puts it, was able to capitalise on the confusion, secure itself arms and later organise itself to fight the Japanese. It had offered its services to the British. They demanded the British to release their cadres who were imprisoned, and in their moment

¹³⁵ Maidin, Rashid. 2005.

of desperation, the British agreed to provide basic military training to MCP. Around 100 individuals were released and were put to a Special Training School (STS 101) in Singapore where they would receive military training. Chin Peng, describes it as an ‘extraordinary time’, police in Ipoh who previously arresting young Chinese and detaining them for being MCP members were now asked to release them from jail and provide them special transport to take them to Kuala Lumpur. Those who were already in Kuala Lumpur sent for interrogation and incarceration, were now being freed and put to the school to be armed and trained to kill. On 1 January 1942, Abdullah C.D. claims that the MCP founded the 1st Regiment of the MPAJA in Selangor. And subsequently, seven more regiments were established. In the three years from then on, the MPAJA engaged the enemy over 340 times, killing at least 5,000 enemies and collected their arms.

2.3 SINGAPORE SLING

The British forces’ swift surrender of Malaya and Singapore shattered the belief of those who were convinced of British superiority over Asian powers. What was worse was Britain’s move to rely on the locals to come to her rescue. Contemporary, mainstream narratives would have it that there were episodes of inter-communal racial violence with a series of reprisals and counter-reprisals. The guilt of instigating this violence is said to fall squarely on the MPAJA and its brutal treatment against, specifically the Malay community. However, Rashid Maidin clarifies that these episodes were instigated not by the CPM or the MPAJA, instead by carefully placed Japanese and British instigators. It was the British, he said, who established the *Parang Panjang* (‘Long Machete’) group who became roving killer squads, claiming self-defence, and attacking members of the Chinese community. While in other instances, as Chin Peng highlights, the racial violence were instigated by Chinese bandits. Abdullah C.D. explains this situation by reasoning out the incentives of the British. Fearing the unity of all races under the CPM, and the prestige which the MPAJA had accumulated as a formidable fighting force that withstood the Japanese, it was in the best interest of the British to indulge in divide and rule by flaming racial and religious sentiments and to breakdown the unity that had been cultivated and centred around the anti-Japanese efforts. Malays then were encouraged to wage ‘holy war’, however, those nationalists and progressive religious leaders saw through these efforts and instead continued to call for unity and calm. Abdullah C.D. recounts bewildering instances where village areas like Kampung Salak in Sungai Siput which used to be a strong anti-Japanese base and where multi-racial support for CPM plunged into violence as soon as

the Japanese surrendered. The kind of cooperation that had developed meant that racial violence could not have happened without instigation.

However, it seems from Rashid Maidin's account that further from being instigators of the violence, the CPM were actually involved in neutralising these flare ups. He recalls having to negotiate and diffuse near-attacks in places like Tanjung Tualang through having to convince the Malays of the area to stand down. Chin Peng offers further insight by explaining that these racial clashes had been occurring even before the Japanese surrender with Japanese officers being at the forefront of instigating these clashes. As early as July in 1945, he tells of Japanese troops dressed as Anti-Japanese guerrillas going into a mosque in Johor and slaughtered a pig which immediately angered the local Malays who then turned against the local Chinese. Both Chin Peng and Rashid Maidin also points to Onn Jaafar as a chief force behind the creation of Parang Panjangs in Batu Pahat, and later in Muar. Facing these attacks, different Chinese communities turned to the MPAJA for protection which then dragged the MPAJA into playing a part in the episodes of violence. They were if anything, protectors and not instigators.

Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia, came to realise the effectiveness of the MPAJA. He then instructed his Force 136 unit, a British intelligence unit based in Colombo, Ceylon, to contact the MCP. Through a series of negotiations, an agreement was later reached whereby the guerrillas would follow instructions from the SACSEA for military operation. It is important to note that no political promises were made on either side. Despite her undertaking of training the MCP members and supplying them with arms and medical supplies, her support was slow coming due to the initial problem of not having the appropriate long range aircrafts to fly supplies from India to Malaya, at least not until liberator planes were made available for the operation towards the end of the occupation. The lack of submarine rendezvous points also made contact between the SACSEA and the MCP difficult. The MPAJA, therefore, for more than three years were fighting on their own and the absence of Allied liaison officers from their patrol units enhanced the view that the MPAJA was fighting the war alone.¹³⁶ The MCP, despite all the difficulties, including having gone through the loss of the whole of its Central Committee in Singapore and in other states in 1942, still managed to continue to become the driver behind the resistance.

¹³⁶ Short, Anthony. 1975.

Twenty-two days into the invasion, the *Persatuan Umum Pengerahan Melawan Musuh Para Perantau Tionghua Singapura* ('Singapore Overseas Chinese General Union for Anti-Enemy Efforts') was formed. It became the thrust for Malayan Tionghoa anti-fascist movement in Singapore and Malaya-wide. At the time, half of the Malayan territory had fell into Japanese hands as the Japanese army had encroached to the banks of Slim River in the state of Perak. At this critical moment, British occupiers were forced to admit the legitimate position of the MCP and hurriedly asked Tan Kah Kee to come forward to administer 'Overseas Chinese General Order Assembly'. The gathering, organised on 30 December 1941, formed the 'Singapore General Union for Anti-Enemy Efforts' with Tan Kah Kee as chair.

Along with the establishment of the General Union, progressive cultural figures that were forced to leave Southern Tionghoa and work in Singapore due to Japanese oppression such as Hu Yuzhi, Yu Dafu, Wang Renshu, Shen Cijiu and others, organised a symposium for Singaporean cultural and education figures at the Ai Tong School, Teluk Air at the end of December. They exchanged opinions on the participation of Singaporean Tionghoa cultural figures in joining the opposing war efforts in Singapore and the Malayan peninsula. Although the General Union and *Rombongan Kebudayaan* ('Cultural Entourage') were only one month old, both organisations made significant historical contributions by mobilising the masses in joining the anti-Japanese movement, protecting societal conduct and arranging for the *Pasukan Sukarela Tionghoa Singapura* ('Singaporean Tionghoa Volunteer Squad') to join battles in defence of Singapore.¹³⁷

Britain's contributions during the period, seen as a coward's retreat, hastily leaving their weapons and other war equipments meant that there was no support from the British authorities nor coordination from the British military, the strength of anti-Japanese guerrilla forces launched under the MCP in enemy territory were still weak. In addition, during the early days of the war, none of the MCP members had battle experience of this magnitude. In a situation where the British forces retreats to the South, small-scale armed anti-Japanese squads obviously could not stop the Japanese from advancing to the South. However, guerrilla warfare had erupted, and the armed strength of the anti-Japanese people had been established. Perhaps, if British authorities had loosened policies and granted the people the

¹³⁷ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: The Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

rights to take up arms against the Japanese, as well as combine with the strength of the people in resisting Japanese invasion, the war situation in Malaya would have been different.

Britain's flaw was the bed it laid in. As the war unfolded, it became obvious that she lived all this while, wholly separated from the Malayan people. Compromising their approach in dealing with the Japanese invasion, as well as being unwilling to join-hands with the people she considered as colonial possessions whom she had 'divided and conquered' to thwart the Japanese, favouring instead upholding colonial policies and principles, resulted unfortunately with a humbling bow out from the theatre following surrender and then defeat. Furthermore, due to the active segregation of the different peoples in Malaya, the public comprehension of a number of Malay and Indians toward the dangers of Japanese invasion was generally still shallow and slow coming relegating the majority as spectators in the anti-Japanese resistance in Malaya.

Back on the Malay front, Abdullah C.D. highlights that at the time of the occupation the KMM was still engaged with the public through their two leaders, Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam. During the occupation, the KMM and the MCP took different strategies in dealing with the advancing Japanese while both still sharing the ambition for independence - Chin Peng also makes a point to underscore this fact in his account. Despite this difference, there was still cooperation between the two groups as many KMM members joined the anti-Japanese fight under the leadership of the MCP. The KMM, who stood by a policy of cooperation, would later demand for *Merdeka* from the Japanese, only to be rejected and have the movement proscribed by the Japanese authorities in June 1942.

Abdullah C.D. explains that when Ibrahim Yaacob and his colleagues - who were earlier detained by the British - were released by the oncoming Japanese, they cooperated with their rescuers but at the same time renewed contact with the MCP and MPAJA. Their work with the Japanese was effectively a cover for their underground activities. Abdullah C.D., goes on to explained that the banning of the KMM only served to heighten the anger of the public against the Japanese. He continues to relate that anti-Japanese sentiment was present cross communally among the Chinese and the Malays. The areasouth of the Perak river is said to be an anti-Japanese stronghold with Malays identifying their anger through the KMM, while the Chinese did the same through the MCP. Specifically, south of the Perak River had a population of around 60,000 people and roughly 90% of them were Malays making the support for KMM in the area, rather substantial. These communities would, according to

Abdullah C.D., organise themselves into support groups for anti-Japanese fighters, forming a civilian support structure for these fighters to continue their cause. Often they would rely, organisationally, on the local administrative structure, *Kawalan Kampung*, that the Japanese had put in place to organise themselves, treating the Japanese efforts as nothing more than a tool of convenience.

The *Lasykar Rakyat* served as a Malay civilian support group. Abdullah C.D. himself would go on to form his own *Lasykar Rakyat* the size of ten-strong with the help of the MPAJA 5th Regiment, and in return they would assist the regiment in their effort. The movement became their eyes and ears as well as providers for the anti-Japanese fighters. They would especially monitor the movement of suspicious individuals who were acting as Japanese spies. The *Liga Rakyat Anti-Jepun* ('Anti-Japanese Citizen's League') was the natural step forward, and this conglomeration of groups organised its own court system and welfare system. The league had members from all walks of life, united with the ambition of fighting the Japanese who helped the fighters as well as the public with food shortages, infrastructural upkeep and maintained a women-wing and a children network. Towards the closing month of the occupation, Abdullah C.D. was required to attend a Party Training School set up for all the MCP's Malay members, presumably in preparation of the defeat of the Japanese and the resistance against the returning British. He recounts that on his way to the school, he came across senior Party officer Ai Ker, who described the size of the MPAJA at that time as having 10,000 members with the support of a 50,000-strong *Lasykar Rakyat*. However, the plans for the school were dashed when Japan surrendered soon after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Abdullah C.D. was then tasked with helping the *Pasukan Propaganda* ('Propaganda Unit') of the MCP shortly after.¹³⁸

2.4 MALAYA'S POST-WAR MENACES

To assume that the insurgency after 1945 was purely a 'British' affair, or 'Malayan' affair insulated from international politics ignores the role of China and Japan (and beyond, the USSR). It has fallen from memory that the Treaty of Versailles that was so controversial in the European zone, leading to an enraged Germany, was also problematic to the Chinese. Similarly, World War Two began, arguably, with the invasion of Manchuria, and ended, with

¹³⁸ The propaganda section of the Perak MCP was particularly active, staging shows at sawmills, such as Tronoh, and touring throughout the state; Harper, T. N., 72.

the Japanese surrender after two atomic bombs in an 'Asian', or 'Eastern' theatre. The vibrancy of nationalism and communism among Chinese populations resonated from the impact of the assertion of Japanese imperialism from the early 1930s. Japan pursued its own dominance of China by occupying Manchuria in 1931, invading China in 1937 and remaining there until its defeat at the conclusion of World War Two in 1945. In China, the army of the Nationalist Party, led by Chiang Kai-shek (political heir of Sun Yat-sen), marches north in 1926 on the "Northern Expedition" from its base in southern China to establish a new government at Nanking in 1927 and to reunify part of China. This is sometimes called the Nationalist Revolution. Members of the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao, and pursued by the Nationalists in the 1930s, marched from southern China to a remote region, Yenan, in northern China where they refined strategies for rural mobilisation and revolution. This was the "Long March" from 1934-1935.

The Nationalist government remained in power in Nanking until 1937 (1927-37 is known as the "Nanking Decade"), when it was forced by the Japanese invasion to move inland and ultimately, it established its wartime capital in Chungking in 1938, where it remained until 1945. However, Japan captured the capital city of Nanking in 1937 in a brutal battle and subsequent reign of terror known as the "Rape of Nanking".¹³⁹ World War Two in the Asia-Pacific Theatre was essentially a struggle between the Japanese Empire and European Empires in alliance with the USA, as Japan sought to challenge Western powers for economic and military dominance in Asia. The end of World War Two in 1945 saw Japan defeated not only by the US-led Western alliance, but also by Soviet intervention, and significantly for our thesis, with Japan's defeat in China. The civil war that followed in China ended with Communist victory in 1949 and the Nationalists leaving the mainland of China and establishing a rival government on the island of Taiwan.¹⁴⁰

Hence, much like their British counterparts, the MCP in Malaya of 1948 considered itself to be lionised, dignified, and ennobled by tradition; that of historical resistance, and recent

¹³⁹ When the Japanese attack the American fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, the United States enters World War Two and goes to war with Japan; the war ends when the U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9) in Japan in 1945 and Japan surrenders unconditionally to the Allied forces. Japan's first attempt to enter the modern international system ends in failure. During the course of the war Japan conquers other Asian nations, pursuing its own imperialist objectives and challenging Western powers for economic and military dominance in Asia. Hostility and unsettled issues resulting from the Japanese occupation remain in Japan's relations with Korea, China, and the countries of SE Asia. When WW II ends in 1945 with Japan's defeat in China, the Nationalists and the Communist forces fight a civil war for control of China. The Communists are victorious in 1949 and the Nationalists leave the mainland of China and establish a rival government on the island of Taiwan. (The rival governments continue to exist today as the People's Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China on Taiwan.)

¹⁴⁰ The rival governments continue to exist today as the People's Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

resistance to the Japanese, and by the wider perception of the historical march of communism in China itself. Thus it matters greatly whose World War Two are we speaking of when we speak of the Malayan Emergency.

Historically, China has a long history with Southeast Asia, and by the time of the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in the sixteenth century, there was already a small community of Chinese there. Large-scale migration of Chinese from south China, mainly from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, to Malaya took place in the 19th century. Particularly, the Taiping rebellion in mid-19th century caused much suffering in South China, and many migrated overseas. The expanding British colonial economies in Malaya also attracted migrants. The British colonised Penang (1786), Singapore (1819), and Malacca (1824), which were merged into the Straits Settlements. These settlements were the important destination of Chinese emigration, and from there the Chinese moved to other parts of Malaya.

The chaotic period of the 1920s and 1930s saw another surge of migration to Southeast Asia. This was a period when many parts of China were controlled by warlords and a time of fighting between the Communists and KMT government. Informants in Fujian mentioned that escaping from bandits and avoiding army recruitment were the main reasons for migration during that period. The introduction of Immigration Restriction Ordinance 1930 ended free immigration to Malaya although immigration of women and children was permitted in order to balance the gender ratio.

In 1907, Sir Frank Swettenham admitted that:

The Chinese have, under direction, made the protected [Malay] states what they are. They are the bees who suck the honey from every profitable undertaking...It is almost hopeless to expect to make friends with a Chinaman...The Chinese, at least that class of them met with in Malaya, do not understand being treated as equals; they only realise two positions – the giving and the receiving of orders ; they are the easiest people to govern in the East for a man of determination, but they must know their master, as he must know them...The man who possesses the judicial mind, but is too weak to enforce his own judgment, will never be successful in dealing with Chinese.¹⁴¹

A mainstay for the Chinese is the stereotype that the Chinese character as being subject to a ‘secret society complex’, and ‘hysteria’. The Chinese were considered prone to intimidation, it made sense to instill, ‘with great firmness’ fear of the government to ensure

¹⁴¹ Swettenham, Sir Frank Althelstan. 1907. *The Real Malay*. London: John Lane, The Bodley Head.

good behaviour.¹⁴² The category of 'The Chinese' had to be constructed from the many different language and dialect groups who came to Southeast Asia over many centuries. The Chinese in Malaysia today call themselves *Huaren* in Mandarin and in their respective dialects; *Teng-lang* in Hokkiens, *Tohng-yahn* - Cantonese. In general, being referred to as *Huaqiao* ('Overseas Chinese') is considered offensive. On the other hand, there is an acceptance of the label *Orang Cina* ('Chinese people'), unlike the Chinese in Indonesia, who prefer to be called *Orang Tionghua* ('Tionghua people'). The diversity among 'the Chinese' is itself a reflection of the 'catch-all' nature of the category. In descending order of size from largest to smallest, among 'the Chinese' there are those who speak 'Hokkien' - who trace heritage from Southern Fujian, and a spread across the peninsula. The second largest group are the 'Hakka' - who trace their heritage from Guangdong in the Western Fujian, and are present typically in Sabah and rural areas across the peninsula. Thirdly are the 'Cantonese' who trace their heritage from imperial Guangfu Prefecture; or Guangzhou, and form large numbers in Kuala Lumpur in the State of Selangor, Ipoh in the State of Perak, Seremban in the State of Negri Sembilan, and Kuantan in the State of Pahang.

Then there are; 'Teochews', from the Swatow port area and present in West Johore and coastal Perak). The 'Foochow/Hokchew' from Eastern Fujian, and present in Sarawak, Yong Peng and Batu Pahat in Johore, Sitiawan in Perak. The 'Hainanese' (from Hainan Island, present mostly in Terengganu and Malacca. The 'Kwongsai' from Guangxi province who are typically in Penang). And finally the smallest groups, the 'Henghua' and 'Hokchia'. Today, Chinese Malaysians - generally speak their respective mother tongues, but they accept 'Huayu' (Putonhua in China) as their common language. It is the medium of instruction in Chinese schools, and most Chinese Malaysian can speak it.

'The Chinese' often thought to be 'lawless' have, on the contrary, a strong tradition of community organisation and structure. Typically, Chinese communities have many voluntary organisations that serve different functions to different sections of the community; speech-group, clan, occupations, religious, educational, recreational. For example, Hokkien associations at peninsula-level is an umbrella association of all levels of Hokkien-related matters, while membership of Chinese Chamber of Commerce in each town or city comprises its prominent business people, and is an influential 'Chinese' association. Later, during the Emergency and then on, the designation of 'squatter' used when discussing those affected by

¹⁴² Harper, T. N., 151.

'New Villages' (we will discuss this further in a Chapter Six) also suffers from ambiguity. Victor Purcell; a leading authority on Chinese in Malaya, and J B Perry Robinson; a Senior Information Officer Federation of Malaya, both of whom went on to write substantively on the Emergency in Malaya uses the term haphazardly to include most of the rural Chinese peasantry regardless of whether they had title to the land they lived on or not. Government publications will typically define a squatter as 'an unlawful occupant of land', but uses it as a catch-all term for all Chinese peasants as well as wage-earners.¹⁴³ Even among the Chinese, there were those urging to make a distinction between their race and citizenship. They would argue that the term 'Overseas Chinese' itself should be dropped and devotion of energies and efforts to the political cause for Freedom in Malaya continued. There were others who thought the Chinese must reform themselves before they reformed other matters. The struggle in Malaya was twofold: against servility to colonial 'Fascist' culture, and against racial arrogance within Malaya. Freedom News for example, argued that the MCP had a Malayan character and had the duty to claim Malayan citizenship.¹⁴⁴

Racial categorisations – Malay, Chinese, Indian and others – set in stone by the Department of Statistics, were a euphemism for supposedly innate racial attributes. The Chinese were cunning and avaricious; Malays lazy and shiftless; Indians amenable and obedient workers ('the mild Hindu'), and so on. From a labour point of view, there are practically three races, the Malays, the Chinese, and the Tamils. By nature, the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief, and the Indian is a drunkard. Yet each, in his special class of work, is both cheap and efficient when properly supervised. The British Empire, it is argued, is indefensible, except on the premise that the conquered peoples were somehow lesser being than the British. What British people would regard as crime "if done to them, are somehow justified by supporters of the empire when done to others, indeed were actually done for their own good."¹⁴⁵ In the late Nineteenth century, the British both feared and exploited the Chinese secret societies; later in the Twentieth, they grossly exaggerated the threat posed by the Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party. The enduring truth however; is that the resistance encountered in the 1930s onward was never novel or new, nor confined exclusively to the Chinese.

¹⁴³ 1951. *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1950/51)* 8. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. B89-101.; 1953. *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1952/53)*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. B311-22.; 1950. FMAR. 2; 1949. PFLC (1948/49). C5331554.

¹⁴⁴ 1945. *New Democracy*. "Chinese in Malaya unite!" October 11.

¹⁴⁵ Newsinger, John. 2006. *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. London: Bookmarks, 20.

Even until the insipient Japanese invasion in Malaya, the anti-Japanese movement amongst the Tionghoa was still considered wrong and illegal. Many were thrown into prison or were exiled because they were anti-Japanese. In the meantime, many of the Tionghoa peoples in Malaya continued to fight relentlessly. The Tionghoa peoples in Malaya have a long historical tradition of anti-colonial democratic movement. From one angle, they have great affection for their country of origin, they oppose the occupation and abuse by imperialist powers towards China – specifically opposing the occupation of Japanese imperialists toward China. And from a different angle, they demand democracy and a change in their lives, opposing occupation of English imperialists. These two aspects mutually influences and motivates one another and became the catalyst for the wider expansion of the democratic movement across Malaya.

The attitudes of the British towards the Malays, on the other, hand can be deduced from a number of colonial records.¹⁴⁶ Sir Frank Swettenham, in his book *British Malaya*, first published in 1905 and reprinted through the 1940s, described the Malays as a “shy and reserved race”, who were “inherently lazy”, with “no stomach for really hard and continuous work”. The making of the Malays as “simple” people, despite them being “good humoured and cheerful to a remarkable degree” persisted into the post-1874 colonial era. The typical Malay “has no stomach for really had and continuous work, either of the brain or of the hands”. They are “...hospitable, generous, extravagant, a gambler, a coxcomb...you will not wish for a better servant, no more pleasant and cheery companion...Malays were placid, compliant and servile”. Similarly, Hugh Clifford shared the sentiment that the Malays were “True children of the drowsy land in which they live...lazy, indolent, and pleasure-loving.”¹⁴⁷ The Englishmen, in relation to the Malay possessed: “The innate superiority of the ordinary Englishmen, in his sense of honour and justice, is sufficient to dominate the inferior character of the Malays...”¹⁴⁸

The naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace in his work *The Malay Archipelago the land of the orang-utan and the bird of paradise: a narrative of travel*, with studies of man and nature,

¹⁴⁶ Metcalf, Thomas R. 2007. *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁴⁷ Swettenham, Sir Frank Athelstane. 1907. *British Malaya; an account of the origin and progress of British influence in Malaya*. London: John Lane.; Clifford, Hugh. 1913. *Malayan Monochromes*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co.; Alatas, Syed Hussein. 1977. *The Myth of the Lazy Native A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited.; Wicks, P C. 1979. "Images of Malaya in the Stories of Sir Hugh Clifford." *Journal of the Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57-72.

¹⁴⁸ McIntyre, W David. 1967. *Imperial Frontier in the Tropics 1865-75*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

which he dedicated to Charles Darwin as a “token of personal esteem and friendship but also to express my deep admiration for the genius of his works”, concluded that the “...intellect of the Malay race seems rather deficient. They are incapable of anything beyond the simplest combinations of ideas and have little taste or energy for the acquirement of knowledge.”¹⁴⁹

Major John Fredrick Adolphus McNair, in “Perak and the Malays”, describes the Malay:

*He can be described only by a knowledge of his internal disposition. Naturally he is dull, heavy, and listless, fond of a life of slothful ease and takes a good deal of coaxing to make an effort for the improvement of his state, or to do anything conducing to his profit or advantage – even, it may be said, to his amusement...With such a disposition, upon which was grafted the various ideas brought about by intercourse with the Arabs, and the subsequent adoption of the religion of Mohamet, the natural result was an increased indolence and listlessness of character, and incapacity for steady labour...This strong feudal pride, arising from their principle of tribal associations under chiefs – a practice common to both Arab and Malay races – with its natural independence of spirit and love of liberty, makes it at all times a difficult task to render them tractable under coercion, though capable under a patriarchal sway, of readily yielding an implicit and cheerful obedience....Their sense of power, which, under the influence of higher civilisation is a fine trait in their character, renders them, in a less civilised state, morbidly sensitive to slight or insult. The obstinacy, however, and determination of the Malay, make him at time strongly resemble the spoiled child, who will destroy all rather than give up a single point.*¹⁵⁰

Before the British arrival, the Malays and ‘their’ Malay states were supposed to be in decline and ‘anarchy’. The whole of the Malay Peninsula, according to Harry Ord - former Governor of the Straits Settlement - was in the hands of “...the lawless and the turbulent...”,¹⁵¹ while Frank Swettenham - another Governor of the Straits Settlement, reasoned that in “...each State the ruler, whether he was sultan, raja, or chief of lower rank, was supreme and absolute. His word was law, and oppression and cruelty were the result.”¹⁵² The colonial period is typically described as the beginning of a type on an age of enlightenment. Hugh Clifford, another admired colonial administrator and former British Resident of Pahang who later went on to become High Commissioner, describes the British governance in the Malay states, which was said to have shattered the authoritarian rule and the tyranny, as an era that;

¹⁴⁹ Wallace, Alfred Russel. 1869. *The Malay Archipelago the land of the orang-utan and the bird of paradise: a narrative of travel, with studies of man and nature*. London: Macmillan and co.

¹⁵⁰ McNair, Major John Fredrick Adolphus. 1878. *Perak and the Malays*. London: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵¹ 1873. “C.1111.” Ord to Kimberley. 10 July. 30.

¹⁵² Swettenham, Sir Frank Athelstane. 1983. “*British rule in Malaya*.” In *Honourable intentions: talks on the British Empire in Southeast Asia delivered at the Royal Colonial Institute 1874-1928*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

*...has brought peace, happiness, and prosperity to those to whom these things were formerly strangers; and has given to the Malays a new life – a life which for the first time in their history is a thing worth the living” the Malays a new life – a life which for the first time in their history is a thing worth the living.*¹⁵³

And also extols:

*I, the European, the white man, belonging to one of the most civilised races in the Old World; the Malays, civilised too, but after the fashion of unchanging Asia, which differs so widely from the restless progressive civilisation of the West.*¹⁵⁴

According to Harry Ord:

*...the subjection of these native States of the Peninsular to Powers greater and more civilised than themselves is an advantage to themselves and to all who have relations with them...I feel that it would be greatly to the advantage of the Settlement if our influence could be thus extended over the Peninsula and I shall not fail to avail myself of any opening that may present itself for doing so.*¹⁵⁵

All of the above were said, notwithstanding the tradition of rebellion in Malaya and despite the long history of native resistance in the Malay Peninsula. Even in two memoranda, written at the end of July 1943, over half century apart from Harry Ord, the head of the Malayan Planning Unit, Ralph Hone, reasoned that in Malaya, the crucial radical nature of the Malayan Union plan (a plan which would later become reality in 1946 with the forming of the Malayan Union), and the expected circumstances of British return required a scheme in which no room for manoeuvre should be allowed to recalcitrant Sultans. Hone preferred a strategy whereby the Sultans be made to sign new treaties during the military regime, with the result that a close union of states rather than a loose federation might be created. Post-war Malaya, under the Malayan Union would “...provide for a single united authority representing the State and Settlements, subject to the jurisdiction of His Majesty under statutory powers...”

¹⁵³ Clifford, Hugh. 1897. *In court and kampong*. London: Grant Richards.; See Kratoska, P H. 1983. *Honourable intentions: talks on the British empire in Southeast Asia delivered at the Royal Colonial Institute 1874- 1928*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ CO273/18 Ord to Buckingham 8 April 1873

¹⁵⁶, and these “...new treaties should be sought with the Rulers, which would give His Majesty a sufficient measure of jurisdiction to enable him to legislate for the States...”¹⁵⁷

In 1948, however, the Malay anti-colonialists, also known as “Malay radicals”, were active in agitating for complete independence from British rule since the 1930s. The term ‘Malay radical’ refer to the men and women who challenged the colonial order in Malaya consisting of the British officials and capitalists, the Malay sultans and aristocrats, and the Chinese capitalists with the objective of establishing an egalitarian, equitable, and just society for all Malaysians of all classes and backgrounds. The Malay radicals sit at the margins or are supposedly occupants of the ‘fringes’ of a ‘British’ society, as well as their own, despite paradoxically belonging to the dominant Malay ethnic group that was recognised by the British as having a special position in Malaya at that time. Typically, they were teachers, journalists, trade union activists and popular preachers.

Influenced by a combination of nationalism, socialism and modernist Islam, the Malay radicals were active in several fronts and collectives which included the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM), Kongres Melayu SeMalaya, Pembela Tanahair (PETA), Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Merdeka (KRIS), Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM), Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), Majlis Agama Tertinggi Malaya (MATA), Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA), Persatuan Indonesia Merdeka (PIM), Hizbul Muslimin, Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS), Barisan Tani SeMalaya (BATAS), Sayang akan Bangsa Ertinya Reda Korbakan Apa Segala (SABERKAS), Pemuda Radikal Melayu (PERAM), Gerakan Angkatan Muda, (GERAM), Parti Rakyat Malaya (PRM), Himpunan Wanita Indonesia, Malaya (HIMWIM) and Rejimen Ke-10.

The extraction of tin from around the 1850s onward, alongside the cultivation of rubber from the 1890s, added to the commodity revenues and general profitability of Malaya. The personality of the global capitalist market of the era meant that local conditions were subject to reflect those demands. As a result, a once homogeneous native circumstance changed not just in terms of diversity, but made to be arranged along ethno-economic functions which disallowed that diversity to inter-mingle across class and socioeconomic lines. As the British administration expanded and the economy developed, fear of the receding power, position and prestige of the Malays in post-war Malaya festered.

¹⁵⁶ 1945. “Policy in regard to Malaya and Borneo.” *C.P.* (45) 133. 29 August.

¹⁵⁷ 1944. Meeting, Cab 96/5 FE (44)3 War Cabinet. 31 May.

When successive British administrators attempted to assert more direct control over the Malay states and to rationalise their governments in the interest of efficiency or for the progress of economic development, they encountered opposition from Malays, who, fearful for their rights as princes and *Bumiputra* ('sons of the soil'), would persist to be fearful throughout the Emergency period, standing loyal to the letter of the treaties. In some respect, the system of government, by acknowledging the sovereignty of the Sultans and by providing posts and pensions for Malay princes, had reinforced traditional Malay society. In other respects, especially in economic matters, British rule had weakened the Malay position in the peninsula and had provoked Malay leaders – in particular those of the SS and FMS – to criticise the government and revive their community.

Although Britain 'ruled' Malaya, they did so through their agreements with the Sultans. It was reasoned that the British were in the Malay states by the invitation of their Rulers. According to these treaties and engagements concluded at various times with the rulers, the British recognised the sovereignty of the sultans, the autonomy of their states and the special position of their people as 'princes of the soil'. Collectively, the Anglo-Malay treaties, together with subsequent statements of policy, bound Britain to respect Malay custom and religion, the sovereignty of the Sultans and the autonomy of their states. These treaties presented a stumbling block to returning Britain's 'rightful' position in Malaya prior to the World War Two. The British Adviser or Resident was authorised to advise the Malay Ruler on all questions other than those touching on Malay religion and custom. In practice, however, "an unsanctioned system of direct government of Residents developed which, however successful it may have been, was completely at variance with the *de jure* position".¹⁵⁸ The British ruled only 'indirectly' through the Malay aristocracy. This structure maintains the colonial apparatus, and thus the Malayan Planning Unit and its proposal for a Malayan Union is set up for that very purpose – to reconfigure. It was felt that if justice, written agreements and the autonomous rights of the weak nations were really respected by the British Government, then Malaya would have already have acquired a state of democratic freedom and independence.¹⁵⁹ The Malayan Union was regarded as anything but sweet smelling as it has 'not the slightest odour of democracy'.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Cowan, CD. 1967. *Nineteenth-Century Malaya*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵⁹ *Combatant's Friend*. 1946. "Statement of Central Committee of MCP on Malayan Citizenship and Legislative Council." May 7.

¹⁶⁰ *The Democrat*. 1946. "Mr Wright [Lai Teck] reveals the nakedness of White Paper." March 3.

Had it not been for the World War Two, and the revisionist nature of the war in international politics, with the United Kingdom bankrupted by the war and the United States pushing for decolonisation on the international stage (we will revisit Britain's post-war 'Financial Dunkirk' in Chapter Three)¹⁶¹, could the British Empire have persisted and endured given London's anti-imperial stance against Berlin and Tokyo and given her opposition toward the anti-imperial stance of others toward Britain? Her reliance on India's assistance in the war, meant that a double standard was maintained: Japanese imperial power was bad, British imperial power was good. The British Raj was a vast reservoir of resources and manpower for the British war effort. India also stood a strategically important territory in the defence of the British Empire in Asia. The loss of India meant that the main reasons for retaining the remaining colonies as imperial possessions became more pronounced. In the worst case; a managed succession is preferred over immediate independence, and in the case of Malaya, that management meant an extension of influence of another twelve years. A lavish twelve-year extension considering the events of 1945 to 1948 in Malaya.

War fatigue started to set in for Britain and by 1947; she had both won, and lost. Britain's domination was waning "...in a world where the grander strategies were determined by the nuclear armaments of the two countries, the United States and the Soviets" that had emerged strengthened from the war. And with India free, there would not have been a dismantling of the chain of dependencies and protectorates in Africa, the Middle East, and the China Seas which form the core of the colonial empire (as distinct from the white dominions Canada, Australia, etc.) and which acted as the peripheral defences of India and the sea routes to the trading empire on the China coast.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ John Maynard Keynes termed Britain's external indebtedness inherited from the wartime coalition government as a "financial Dunkirk". Keynes warned that unless Britain could secure a loan from the Americans, it would be unable to maintain its empire.

¹⁶² Mayall, James. 2005. "The Legacy of Colonialism." In *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance*, by Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur, 36-58. New York: United Nations University Press.

CHAPTER THREE: POST-WAR MALAYA.

In 1938, Malaya had accounted for 2.6 per cent of Britain's world trade; by 1951 this would rise to 9.9 per cent. From the end of the nineteenth Century Malayan tin exports (at approximately 52,000 metric tons) supplied just over half the world's output with tin being a crucial wartime as well as peacetime strategic metal. Singapore was a major centre for smelting (refining) ore into ingots. Tin mining also attracted attention from European, mainly British, investors who introduced new technology – such as high-pressure hoses to wash out the ore, the steam pump and, from 1912, the bucket dredge floating in its own pond, which could operate to even deeper depths. These innovations required substantial capital for which the chosen vehicle was the public joint stock company, usually registered in Britain. Since no major new ore deposits were found, the emphasis was on increasing efficiency in production.¹⁶³ European operators, again employing mostly Chinese low-wage labour, enjoyed a technical advantage here and by 1929 accounted for 61 per cent of Malayan output.¹⁶⁴ In 1944, Malaya was the largest producer of tin and rubber and its trade was “equal to that of all the British colonies in Africa put together”.¹⁶⁵ This chapter will show that the post-war climate both in Malaya as well as at the heart of the Metropole, in London is anything but uncomplicated unlike what is claimed by the aforementioned COIN grand narrative in previous chapters. It will investigate the build-up to the Emergency years to conclude that unnuanced explanations, or lessons, from this period gives rise to the acute need for a more balanced understanding of ‘historical’ COIN. Through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, it will show that the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two.

¹⁶³ Drabble, John H. 2000. *An Economic History of Malaysia*, c.1800-1990. London: Macmillan Press.

¹⁶⁴ See Ken, Wong Lin. 1965. “The Economic History of Malaysia: A Bibliographic Essay.” *Journal of Economic History* XXV: 244-262. —. 1965. *The Malayan Tin Industry to 1914*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.; Hoong, Yip Yat. 1969. *The Development of the Tin Mining Industry of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

¹⁶⁵ 1944. “Great Britain House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates.” Vol. 378. 6 June. 1286.

In the international post-war context, Malaya remained the world's top rubber producer, which brought \$120 million into the sterling area; the nearest commodity in value was cocoa at \$50 million. In 1948, the sterling area suffered an overall dollar deficit of \$1800 million, but Malaya's surplus was \$170 million. Its nearest competitors were Gold Coast (with a surplus of \$47.5 million), Gambia (\$24.5 million) and Ceylon (\$23 million). But at the end of the year, Ceylon's contribution was lost to London following her independence. By 1952-3 Malaya was providing 35.3 per cent of Britain's net balance of payments with the dollar area.¹⁶⁶ The primary task can be summarised as thus:

*Malaya's rubber production...produces dollars to an amount that exceeds in total value all domestic exports from Britain to the US...if, for any reason, the operations of the great rubber industry are interrupted or seriously impaired, Britain's dollar situation would be rendered more acute than ever. This country would then have less food, less clothes, and there would be fewer dollars with which to buy raw materials and that would mean unemployment. All of us are thus deeply concerned in what is happening in Malaya.*¹⁶⁷

And as the Conservative member for Fulham East, Hon. William Waldorf Astor, at the time described it:

*The Straits Settlements are important economically because the Straits alone offer trade equal to that of all the British Colonies in Africa put together. They produce 40 per cent of the world's rubber and 30 per cent of the world's tin. A great deal of this went to America...It is going to be of vital importance in the trade relations of the sterling empire vis-à-vis America to get this great economic asset (Malaya) into action again if we are to raise the standard of life of the whole empire.*¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ See Bayly, Christopher, and Tim Harper. 2010. *Forgotten Wars Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.

¹⁶⁷ 1948. "Text of Radio Newsreel and Overseas Circuits Broadcast, 22 June 1948 on Rubber Growers' Association Council Minutes." 19 July.

¹⁶⁸ 1944. "Great Britain House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates." *Hansard*. Vol. 400. 6 June. 1223-1319.

Thus, Waldorf explains that;

The difficulties of "plural communities" are, indeed, most acute in the Straits Settlements...There are these three nationalities, not only of different nations but different in culture and religion—the Malays Moslem, the Chinese Buddhist, the Indians Hindu—and it would appear to be almost impossible that they will ever mix. Not only that, a large proportion of the Chinese and Indians come in to make a living and then return to their own countries. They bring their own nationalisms with them. The Chinese have branches of Kuomintang in Singapore and the Indians come with the protection of the Government of India...There is the same trouble as in Kenya and in Palestine, that is, people with a different level of civilisation coming in fairly large numbers into a country and competing with the inhabitants. I think we must stick to two principles in every case. The native inhabitants of those places have the primacy, but the immigrant communities can also play their part both in the material development and the political and social development of those countries. One of the troubles in the Straits is that it, has been a part of the world where one found the classical "economic man"—immigrants have come in there just to make money. The Chinaman comes to make money and then goes home to die by the tombs of his ancestors. There has been no social conscience which transcends the interests of any particular community—the Chinese community does, not feel any social responsibility for the Malays and vice versa. I think one has to accept the fact that these communities will not mix and try to get them to work side by side rather like the system in the old Ottoman Empire by which each community, to some extent, governed its own social concern, its, internal laws, its customs, its religion, its education and its hospitals; and build up on the people who have come to live permanently in those Colonies.

In primary-producing territories like Malaya, the interests between 'gentlemanly capitalist' officials and 'unofficials' (centred in the City of London) ensured that after 1945, coercion tended to be the first resort of policy.¹⁶⁹ Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, reminded the Cabinet on 1 July 1948 that Malaya "is by far the most important source of dollars in the colonial empire and it would gravely worsen the whole dollar balance of the sterling area if there were serious interference with Malayan exports".¹⁷⁰ Consequently, in the immediate post-war period, the Malayan Peninsula experienced a 'new imperialism' or, to borrow a concept, a 'second colonial occupation'.¹⁷¹ The overriding strategic concern of the British was to re-organise the government to ensure colonial control and rehabilitate

¹⁶⁹ See Cain, P J, and A G Hopkins. 1993. *British imperialism: crisis and deconstruction, 1914-1990*. London New York: Longman.; White, Nicholas J. 2005. *British Business in Post-colonial Malaya, 1957-70*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.; White, Nicholas J. 1998. "Capitalism and Counter-insurgency? Business and Government in the Malayan Emergency, 1948-57." *Modern Asian Studies* (Cambridge University Press) 32 (1): 149-177.

¹⁷⁰ 1948. "Memorandum by Colonial Secretary." *CAB 129/25, CP (48) 171*. 1 July.

¹⁷¹ A concept in African historiography.

the economy in order to be in a position once more to tap the region's dollar-earning commodities. Indeed, Malaya is sometimes cited as the exception to the rule that in South-East Asia colonialism died in 1942 and nationalism came of age in 1945.

3.1 COMPREHENDING ECONOMIC RETREAT.

An acknowledgement that Britain in 1948, was an empire in decline, is a nod to the climate of the period which when discussed together with the use of force illuminates the period in question. Engels once remarked:

*Force is no mere act of the will, but requires the existence of very real preliminary conditions before it can come into operation, namely, instruments, the more perfect of which gets the better of the less perfect; moreover, that these instruments have to be produced, which implies that the producer of more perfect instruments of force, vulgo arms, get the better of the producer of the less perfect instrument, and that, in a word, the triumph of force is based on the production of arms, and this in turn on production in general – therefore, on “economic power”, on the “economic situation”, on the material means which force has at its disposal. Nothing is more dependent on economic prerequisites than precisely army and navy. Armaments, composition, organisation, tactics and strategy depend above all on the stage reached at the time in production and on communications.*¹⁷²

Malaya's dollar-earning from the rubber and tin industry is generally acknowledged by scholars as being important to the wellbeing of Britain's Sterling Trading Area – and by extension, the recovery of the war-ravaged British economy.¹⁷³ By August 1942, it was generally recognised by British planners in the Colonial Office that in the post-war world Malaya would be vital for Britain's strategic and economic needs.¹⁷⁴

This view prevailed across party lines and ideological positions, as both Tory and Labour personalities were empire enthusiasts as well as apologists. Malaya's importance prior to the war was not lost on the British Government, as Harold Macmillan (Tory), the Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office explained that the:

¹⁷² Engels, Friedrich. 1976. *Anti-Dubring: Herr Eugen Dubring's revolution in science*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press.

¹⁷³ White, Nicholas. 1999. *Decolonisation*. London: Longman

¹⁷⁴ 1942. CO 825/35 pt I no 55104/1942. August.

“...loss of the Far Eastern possessions of the British Empire and of our Allies has meant an immediate loss of supply on an important scale. The present difficulties and dangers of the Indian Ocean threaten a potential loss of supply, or at any rate a serious interruption. We have lost 60 per cent of the tin production of the world, 90 per cent of the rubber production and a large proportion of wolfram, lead and other minerals”,¹⁷⁵ and thus urged that the colonies should be treated as a whole so that Britain’s colonial empire should be reorganised once again and made viable.¹⁷⁶

During the world war that lasted for six years, Britain’s cities had itself faced major damage. Britain had lost three quarters of the country’s wealth, industrial and agricultural production were declining.¹⁷⁷ The imperial British market was dominated by the United States while its colonies and as well as her basic industries were in crisis.

The model of British monopoly arrived, in various places in Singapore and the peninsula, alongside its warships. They proceeded to secure tin mines, rubber estates, coal mines, railways, tin factories, palm oil processing factories and others, including the forestry, communications and foreign trade sectors. While Indonesia and Burma were no longer reliant on trade from the Singapore port during this period, the American economy, on the other hand, gradually shifted into Britain’s superior position in South East Asia. The production of rubber in Malaya saw a rapid recovery to more than 600,000 tonnes annually and constituted approximately 40 per cent of world production. The production of tin recovered to more than 70,000 tonnes annually, constituting more than a third of world production. Thus, the value of rubber and tin production contributed to approximately 70 per cent of total exports. Added with the production of iron ore, palm oil, coconut oil, wood and canned pineapple, this value increased from hundreds of millions a year to more than 1,000 million ringgit within a 2-to-3 year period. Whereas, imports, other than food and petroleum goods, mainly came from Britain and its autonomous colonies. For example, chemical goods, communications and transportation goods as well as light industrial goods that were woven textile-based. While the profits from port trading in Singapore brought more than approximately 200 million US dollars annually. For Britain who was faced with poverty and economic crisis, the foreign exchange obtained from Singapore and the Malayan

¹⁷⁵ 1942. “Colonial Affairs HC Deb 24 June 1942 vol 380 cc2002-39.” *Hansard*. 24 June.

¹⁷⁶ 1942. “Great Britain House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates.” *Hansard*. June. Column 2002-2020 and 2114-2124.; Sampson, Anthony. 1967. *Macmillan: A study in Ambiguity*. London.; Macmillan, Harold. 1967. *The Blast of War: 1939 - 1945*. London: Macmillan.

¹⁷⁷ In fact losing 1,100 million pound sterling in foreign capital and bearing additional debt of about 3,000 million pound sterling.

peninsula, in the few years after the World War had ended, were far higher in value than in other colonies. Malaya was given the moniker of “US Dollar factory” of Britain.

The Secretary of State for War, John Strachey (Labour) remarked to the Cabinet’s Malaya Committee on 12 May 1950 reinforcing two points that Britain’s policy in Malaya was being solely determined by the requirement to retain the territory because it represented the colonial power’s most important dollar earner, and that Britain was aware of the gap between rich and poor that lay at the very core of the MCP’s argument:

*We emphasize, and rightly, the most indispensable character of Malaya to us as a dollar earner. Should we not therefore be willing to expand considerable resources in Sterling on Malaya, in order to develop her both economically and socially at the most rapid pace physically possible?*¹⁷⁸

While great wealth was made from rubber and tin in Malaya, the native labourers lived poverty-stricken lives even up to 1948. Patrick O’Donovan reported of their living conditions in the Observer:

*Several times I have been shown with pride coolie lines on plantations that a kennelman in England would not tolerate for his hounds...There is little consciousness [among the plantation owners] of the poverty and illiteracy that exists in this country. And, too often, it is a foul, degrading, urine-tainted poverty, a thing of old grey rags and scraps of rice, made tolerable only by the sun.*¹⁷⁹

Japanese-Malayan ‘Banana money’ was outlawed almost immediately as the British returned to Malaya in 1945. The BMA worsened the overall living conditions. They abolished the wartime currency, wiping out savings and driving up inflation and rice was thirty to forty times its pre-war price. The British authorities’ decision to grant wage increases to a maximum of only 33.5 per cent was met by a huge public outcry.¹⁸⁰

Upon British return to Malaya, after the war, three years before the Malayan Emergency, the colonial authorities acted to cancel unconditionally and without interest Japanese paper money amounting 70,000 million to 80,000 million that had been used for three and a half years on 8 September 1945. As a result, more than five million people in Malaya and Singapore faced major losses. Their lives immediately fell into hardship. In order

¹⁷⁸ 1950. “Memorandum by Colonial Secretary, 1 July 1948.” *CAB 129/25, CP(48) 171*. 12 May.

¹⁷⁹ “What the Malayan Trade Unionists Are Up Against.” *Papers on Communist Party of Malaya including Information on Malayan Independence Struggle and the Malayan National Strike, 1946-1947*. CP/CENT/INT/36/08 1946-1947. Manchester: Labor History Archive and Study Center, People’s History Museum.

¹⁸⁰ Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

to continue living, the people had the scarce option of pawning their meagre belongings. According to estimations of the price and distribution of goods at the time, the currency distributed by the British were 1 to 2 times higher than before the war. This effectively meant that with the cancellation of Japanese paper money, the British earned 500 to 800 million Singapore dollars from agricultural transactions such as rubber, palm oil, tin and other industrial products from the people of Malaya. This was a double digit multiple over the 50 million in 'donations' demanded by the Japanese.

By 21 October 1945, some 7,000 wharf labourers refused to work on ships in the Tanjong Pagar docklands, demanding an increase in pay and protesting against the handling of ships carrying arms for Dutch troops fighting nationalist forces in the neighbouring Dutch East Indies. The BMA reaction was to create an alternative pool of wharf labour by bringing Japanese prisoners of war and certain British military units onto the docks. Then, on 23 October, Singapore's main bus operator, Singapore Traction Company went on strike. The workers wanted 40 per cent wage hikes, plus bonuses. The BMA responded by again calling in troops to man the buses. In both cases, troops broke the strike action.¹⁸¹

3.2 A NATION OF SHOPKEEPERS

In the above context, an empire pursuing survival, has at the forefront of its mind the; 'economic considerations' of 'force' or 'force by economic reasons'. It is costly to lose an asset, and even more so in difficult times. On paper, Malaya casted the shadow of a low-hanging fruit. In all ways explained by Engels, Britain already had a sword in hand, even despite the exhaustion from winning a world war. The British position was heavily boosted by the fact that its return to Malaya was met without resistance most of all from the MCP's fearsome Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army who had greatly troubled the Japanese military occupation.

Hence, also in view of financial considerations, the Cabinet's Malaya Committee was careful to ensure in May 1950 that the official description of Malayan Communist Party insurgents was changed from 'bandits' to 'communist terrorists', so that the 'Emergency' would not have an adverse effect on the insurance market.¹⁸² Alec Newbould, Chief Secretary for the Malayan Union, and later the Federation of Malaya, both under formerly, Governor

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² 1950. CAB 134/497 MAL (C) (50), 5th Meeting, 18 May.

and latterly, High Commissioner Edward Gent, considered that a declaration to the effect that “disturbances did not amount to more than riot and civil commotion”, and “would raise grave doubts as to the legality of amount of force which police and HMG forces had found it necessary to use on occasions for suppression of present disturbances in Malaya”.¹⁸³ On the other hand, the Colonial Office viewed ‘insurrection’ as “...a rising of a substantial portion of the inhabitants of a country with a view to upsetting the government and it is doubtful whether such a state of affairs can be said to exist in Malaya.”¹⁸⁴ The naming of the insurrection as an ‘Emergency’ and description of the insurgents as ‘bandits’ were deliberately amorphous; not simply for propaganda reasons, but because the London-based insurance cover for the estates and mines protected against “riot and civil commotion”, but not against “rebellion and insurrection”.¹⁸⁵ In July 1950, Julian Snow (Labour MP for Lichfield and Tamworth) would continue to affirm; “Am I not right in saying that, if a state of war were declared, insurance coverage which only applies at present in conditions of what are termed ‘riot and civil commotion’, would cease? If that international insurance ceased, it would have a very bad effect on the commercial interests of this country in Malaya.” The interest of British capital determined the very nomenclature of the conflict.

In 1945, the Labour party won Britain’s post-war election with a landslide. Labour had pulled out of Churchill’s coalition even before war in the Far East ended. They were the party to hasten Britain’s move toward a new post-war future with better conditions. And thus, the year of Churchill’s greatest victory was also the year of his greatest (electoral) defeat. And reflecting this ‘new’ world Churchill had secured, it was ‘Clem’ who was ‘Mr. Average’, with his homely pipe, a man for middle Britain who would replace the aristocratic cigar-smoking Churchill.

John Maynard Keynes, famously in a letter to Prime Minister Clement Attlee, described Britain’s post-war fate as facing a certain “Financial Dunkirk”, invoking the imagery of the tragedies at Dunkirk to bring the point home.¹⁸⁶ World War Two had cost Britain a quarter of her national wealth, with the country’s industries all geared toward arms production in a post-war world. Britain was in dire need of American financial aid. In 1945,

¹⁸³ 1948. “Telegram from Federation.” *CO 717/176/1*. 7 September.

¹⁸⁴ 1948. “Telegram to Federation.” *CO 717/176/1*. October 6.

¹⁸⁵ 2003. *The Scotsman*. 14 December.; Bayly, Christopher, and Tim Harper. 2010.

¹⁸⁶ The Battle of Dunkirk took place in Dunkirk, France, during World War II between the Allies and Nazi Germany. As part of the Battle of France on the Western Front, the Battle of Dunkirk was the defence and evacuation of British and Allied forces in Europe from 26 May – 4 June 1940.; Moggridge, Donald. “The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes Vol. XXIV: Activities 1944-1946: The Transition to Peace.” London and Basingstoke: Macmillan. 410.

the market experienced a Pound crisis, with confidence in the economy collapsing. By August 1945, an Emergency Cabinet meeting was held, with a decision to end convertibility and reinstate exchange controls. War-time rationing continued post-war. The national difficulties were a humiliation for the Labour Party. The global post-war fear of economic collapse and rising influence of Communism in Europe led to the Marshall Plan being proposed; with Britain receiving almost a quarter of America's Western European aid.¹⁸⁷

The problems of rebuilding the empire in Southeast Asia after 15 August 1945 were viewed to be extensive.¹⁸⁸ Having armed and organised local resistance to the Japanese across the region, the restoration of colonial rule would be impossible without the deployment of men, materials and military power on a scale far larger than Europeans had ever found the need to wield before, at a time when the domestic situation in the United Kingdom was also exhausted and recovering. The Americans were not willing to make substantial contributions, and Britain was already stretched by military commitments in Europe, the Middle East, and India. Loss of initiative in India meant that Britain could no longer freely deploy Indian troops in patrolling imperial territories elsewhere in the world. Moreover, the Labour government was under domestic pressure to demobilise Britain's conscript army as soon as possible and was facing bankruptcy at a time when it was committed to a programme of massive expenditure on social welfare.

Clement Attlee reasoned to the letting go of Empire; Palestine, Greece, and India - all were considered financial liabilities. Attlee was known for wanting an orderly transfer, but was also consumed by managing radical reforms at home in line with Beveridge's fight against the 'five giants' - want, ignorance, disease, squalor, and idleness - and a continued role on the world stage. Consider Attlee's statement on 13 April 1949.¹⁸⁹ As the conflict intensified, he told the House of Commons that Britain was committed to guiding Malaya to "responsible self-government within the Commonwealth" but this would not be at the expense of security, and this was, in general, a reflection of the mind-set of British officials on the issue of Malayan

¹⁸⁷ The Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was an American initiative to aid Western Europe, in which the United States gave over \$12 billion (approximately \$120 billion in current dollar value as of June 2016) in economic support to help rebuild Western European economies after the end of World War II. The plan was in operation for four years beginning April 8, 1948. The goals of the United States were to rebuild war-devastated regions, remove trade barriers, modernise industry, make Europe prosperous again, and prevent the spread of communism. The Marshall Plan required a lessening of interstate barriers, a dropping of many regulations, and encouraged an increase in productivity, labour union membership, as well as the adoption of modern business procedures. The largest recipient of Marshall Plan money was the United Kingdom (receiving about 26 per cent of the total), followed by France (18 per cent) and West Germany (11 per cent).

¹⁸⁸ 1946. "Review of political events in South-East Asia 1945 to March 1946: despatch from M E Denning to Mr Bevin." *CAB 21/1954, F5093/87/61*. 25 March.

¹⁸⁹ 1949. "Minute by Attlee." *CO537/4751*. Malaya: Stockwell, 2 April.

independence. The Gold Coast (now Ghana), which was arguably less politically advanced than Malaya, had introduced elections to a national legislature in February 1951 and in Kenya, a Member System (equivalent to a Cabinet-style system) was in place well before the introduction of a similar system in Malaya. Perhaps the post-war Labour government - seen as heroic by the British Left - was more pro-imperialist, at least in Malaya, than we first thought. In early 1950, elections were called and Labour won a second term; with an overall majority of five seats. Then, amidst the difficulties of the past two years, another election was called in October 1951 but this time, victory went to Churchill's Conservative government.

With regards to Malaya, the administration functioned in a fairly modern fashion where rank carried authority when policy was shaped. In general, the higher an issue rose in government, the more veiled written comments became, and whenever major decisions were taken at higher levels, they tended to rest on the expositions of alternative courses of action submitted from those below. Nonetheless, ministers in London were involved at critical moments: (1) the approaches to Cabinet with respect to the Malayan Union policy; (2) the conduct of the Emergency; (3) the appointments of Gurney and Templer as High Commissioner and (4) the re-organisation of Malayan administration between 1951 and 1952. The Secretary of State met leading Malayan personalities in London (Dato Onn, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Sultan of Johore) and, in contrast to the pre-war period, visited Malaya; Griffiths going out in 1950, Lyttleton in 1951 and Lennon-Boyd in 1955.

Colonial policy-making in London was not, however, the preserve of the Secretary of State for the Colonies and his officials. The Colonial Office was intermediate in standing and importance among the other Whitehall offices. And due to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary, Minister of Defence and other ministers (acting either separately as masters of departments or collectively in Cabinet) not infrequently taking an interest in Malayan affairs, the locus of policy-making shifted outside the CO to inter-departmental committees of officials or ministers. The Foreign Office led by Bevin and Morrison considered the issue with respect to international relations in Southeast Asia, and the Ministry of Defence, led by A.V. Alexander and E Shinwell, considered it in connection with British military capabilities in the Far East. Moreover, it should be remembered that Malayan policy was devised within guidelines set by the Treasury led first by Stafford Cripps, and then Hugh Gaitskell. The Treasury became committed and involved in Malayan affairs

pertaining to its post-war economic rehabilitation and subsequent development plans,¹⁹⁰ and were appreciative of the extent of British economic interest in Southeast Asia particularly the dollar-earning capacity of Malayan commodities. They were financially involved with assisting and conducting emergency operations.¹⁹¹ The Emergency cost, at a conservative estimate, some 11,000 lives and £700 million; £520 million of this total expenditure came from the British taxpayer; it was five times the amount the United Kingdom would normally have expected to allocate to Malayan defence.¹⁹² It was an indication, however, of how big the prize was perceived to be in London.

Attlee was kept informed about the growing crisis over the Malayan Union in the spring and early summer of 1946¹⁹³ and also about the conduct of the Emergency,¹⁹⁴ agreeing to the appointment of General Briggs as Director of Operations, Shinwell's request for a Cabinet Committee on Malaya in March 1950¹⁹⁵ and chairing crisis meetings in connection with the slow progress of the Briggs Plan in the following February and March.¹⁹⁶ Churchill was concerned about Malaya in his capacity as Minister of Defence as well as Prime Minister in the first months of the Conservative government from October 1951 to the appointment

¹⁹⁰ 1945. "Malaya reconstruction finance: letter from S Caine to Lord Keynes." *T220/52*, 29 March.; 1945. "Malaya reconstruction finance: memorandum by AJD Winnifrith." *T220/52*, 19 April.; 1945. "Malaya reconstruction finance: minute by Lord Keynes to AJD Winnifrith." *T220/52*, 18 May.; n.d. "Malaya Reconstruction Programme: minute AJD Winnifrith to AFB Fforde." *T220/52*; 1945. "[Malaya reconstruction finance]: letter (reply) from Lord Keynes to S Caine." *T220/52*, 23 April.; 1945. "Malaya Reconstruction Programme: minute by A J D Winnifrith to A F B fforde." *T220/52*, June.

¹⁹¹ 1950. "[Malaya and the sterling area]: minute by A Emanuel (assistant secretary, CO, 1948-1961) to Sir H Poynton on the arguments in favour of Malaya's membership." *CO 537/6089*, no 5, 26 April.; November. "Financial assistance to Malaya for security measures: minute by J I C Crombie." 1949. 16.; 1950. "[UK financial assistance for the emergency]: letter from Mr Griffiths to Sir Stafford Cripps proposing a fixed percentage." *T220/281*, 18 September.; 1950. "[UK financial contributions for the emergency]: letter (reply) from Mr Gaitskell to Mr Griffiths." *T220/281*, ff 101-103, 29 September.; 1950. "[UK financial assistance for the emergency]: letter (reply) from Mr Griffiths to Mr Gaitskell." *T220/282*, ff 1-7, 24 October.; 1950. "[UK financial contributions for the emergency]: letter (reply) from Mr Gaitskell to Mr Griffiths." *T220/281*, ff 101-103, 29 September.; 1950. "Aid to Malaya: minute by A H Clough of a meeting between Mr Gaitskell and Mr Griffiths about UK financial assistance." *T220/282*, ff 211-212, 28 November.; 1953. "[Financial difficulties]: letter from Mr Lyttelton to Mr Butler seeking an assurance of UK assistance to Malaya." *T220/284*, f 23, 30 July.

¹⁹² The National Archives. 1957. "Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957 by the Director of Operations, Malaya [Lieutenant-General R. H. Bower]." *AIR 20/10377*, 12 September.

¹⁹³ 1946. "Postponements of citizenship: minute by Creech Jones to Mr Attlee." *PREM 8/459*, 15 March.; 1946. "Fundamental principles of Malayan policy and proposed concession to Malays: minutes by Mr Hall and T L Rowan to Mr Attlee." *PREM 8/459*, 31 May.

¹⁹⁴ 1949. "[British intentions in Malaya]: minute by Mr Attlee of his meeting with Mr Creech Jones, Mr Alexander and Mr Shinwell on 1 April 1949." *CO 537/4751*, No 68, 2 April. Alexander was minister of defense, 1946-1950; Shinwell was secretary of state for war, 1947-1950; 1950. "The Malayan situation and the Far East: minute by Mr Strachey to Mr Attlee urging the appointment of a regional supremo." *PREM 8/1406/2*, 11 December.; 1951. "Malaya: minute by Shinwell to Mr Attlee on the Emergency situation." *CO 537/7263*, No 31, 22 May.

¹⁹⁵ 1950. "[Director of operations]: minute by Mr Shinwell to Mr Attlee recommending the appointment of General Briggs." *PREM 8/1406/2*, 7 March.; 1950. "[Malayan operations and policies]: minute no PM(50)6 by Mr Griffiths to Mr Attlee." *PREM 8/1406/2*, 8 March.; 1950. "[Malayan operations]: minute by Mr Shinwell to Mr Attlee proposing a ministerial committee on Malaya." *CAB 21/2510*, no 1A, 27 March.; 1950. "[Ministerial committee on Malaya]: personal minute (reply) no M.47/50 from Mr Attlee to Mr Shinwell." *CAB 21/2510*, No 5, 1 April.

¹⁹⁶ 1951. "[Briggs plan]: Cabinet Office summary of a meeting at 10 Downing Street on 26 Feb called by Mr Attlee to consider the plan's slow progress." *PREM 8/1406/2*, *GEN 345/5*, 27 February.; 1951. "[Briggs plan]: Cabinet Office summary of a meeting resumed on 12 March to consider the progress of the plan." *PREM 8/1406/2*, *GEN 345/8*, 13 March.

of Templer in January 1952. In summary, the leadership of Labour and Tory governments were deeply involved in the planning and execution of the British war.

3.3 MALAYA IS 'RED'

From the outset, consistent efforts were made by the Labour government to meet any suggestions that Malaya was facing an Asian nationalism 'problem'. There were critical voices in British politics. Among those critical about Malaya were Stanley Awberry, Tom Driberg, Fenner Brockway (Labour); Leonard Gammans, Walter Fletcher (Conservative), and in the House of Lords, there were Elibank and Marchwood. Arthur Creech Jones maintained, when the crisis was debated in Parliament on 8 July 1948, that there were connections between Malayan unrest, the advent of the Cold War and the spread of subversion to British¹⁹⁷ colonies.

*Malaya, after all, is the only colonial area in South East Asia where no genuinely anti-European movement has emerged since the war...I would say emphatically, particularly in view of the vilification of Britain - the wilful lies in regard to the Malayan situation which have been put across from Moscow - that we have not here at all the emergence of a nationalist movement which Britain is engaged in putting down. This is not a movement of the people in Malaya. It is the conduct of gangsters who are out to destroy the very foundations of human society - orderly life.*¹⁹⁸

The British default discourse for commenting on anti-colonial resistance was to frame them as "gangsters", a discourse that was as evident in Ireland in 1918 to 1921, as it was in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s, and then in Malaya.¹⁹⁹ Walter Fletcher, Conservative MP for Bury and Radcliffe, insisted in the Commons in July 1948 that "what we are seeing now is not due to the Communists, although they are a large element in the situation and will certainly use it to their own purposes" but "we are throwing dust in our own eyes to use the word 'Communist'." He urged the government not to "...deceive themselves by saying this is Communism; it is not. This is lawlessness due to a disrespect of the law which is not being

¹⁹⁷ 1948. "Colonial Affairs HC Deb 08 July 1948 vol 453 cc589-705." *Hansard*. 8 July.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁹ Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.; Hughes, Matthew. 2009. "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939." *English Historical Review* 124 (507): 313-54.; Porch, Douglas. 2013. *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

sufficiently firmly or effectively administered, and the cause of that I place fairly and squarely on the shoulder of the Government.”²⁰⁰

Through this period, at a time coinciding with the Berlin airlift, opinions differed; gangsters, bandits and criminals in the eyes of some, the perpetrators of violence were seen by others as agents of international and revolutionary communism. Attention was affixed to assisting NATO to deter the Soviets from attacking Western Europe. Thus, the Malayan Emergency, like Britain’s other wars of decolonisation were conducted against the backdrop of the Cold War.

There was cross-party agreement on the nature of the threat with Walter Fletcher (Conservative MP for Bury), Leonard Gammans (Conservative MP for Hornsey), and Arthur Creech Jones (Labour MP for Shipley) all equally and unequivocally asserting in July 1948, that the situation in Malaya was not in any sense a ‘nationalist’ or ‘nationalistic’ movement or uprising. Gammans identified the source of the problem to be “primarily a terrorist organisation, Moscow- inspired, Communist in origin” and he pressed ministers to admit, “...considering that Mr. Malcolm MacDonald has said it”, that “...this is part of a worldwide attack against Great Britain, of which another part is going on in Berlin at this moment.” Gammans would go on to maintain this position through to 1950.²⁰¹

When, in April 1949, Attlee declared Britain’s ultimate goal to be Malayan self-government, his objective was to revive business confidence by promising that there would not be premature withdrawal.²⁰² On the question of the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, a Colonial Office legal adviser in classic civil service fashion recommended the advantages of obfuscation – “I think we can, and should, avoid saying anything which would imply an answer to this problem”.²⁰³

Interaction between London and Kuala Lumpur increased with improved contact between the metropole and the periphery after 1945. No serving Secretary of State for the colonies had visited Malaya during the 70-year history of Britain’s relations with the Malay states between 1874 and 1942. In the post-war period, by contrast, James Griffiths went out

²⁰⁰ 1948. “Colonial Affairs HC Deb 08 July 1948 vol 453 cc589-705.” Hansard. 8 July.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² 1949. “Great Britain House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates.” Vol. 463. 13 April. Column 2185.; 1950. “Great Britain House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates.” Vol. 473. 28 March. Column 180-181.

²⁰³ 1946. “Minute by K Roberts-Wray.” *CO 717/148/51534/3/1945-1946*. 11 April.

in June 1950,²⁰⁴ Oliver Lyttleton in December 1951.²⁰⁵ As for Malcolm MacDonald who was, during this period British Commissioner General, General Gerald Templer, and Deputy High Commissioner David MacGillivray, on their part, for their duties, regularly flew to London for consultations.²⁰⁶ The visits to Malaya of Griffiths and Strachey (in June 1950) and Lyttleton (in December 1951) were made primarily in connection with emergency operations, and each minister reported to the Cabinet on their return.²⁰⁷ Contact between London and Kuala Lumpur increased after 1945 at other levels as well with Bourdillon assisting MacMichael in his mission in 1945; and Paskin accompanying Lyttleton to Malaya in 1951.²⁰⁸

As we will observe in later chapters, in the post-1948 period, the security situation as a result of the communist insurgency was often used to justify the delay in movement towards self-government. The independence debate in the immediate post-war period was muted by a fairly over-powering and increasingly authoritarian colonial state machinery. The Emergency provided a convenient legitimating source for the British position. A host of legislation, sometimes a hybrid of new and old legislation such as the Printing Presses Act,

²⁰⁴ 1950. "[Constitutional development]: item 1 of minutes of fifteenth commissioner-general's conference at Bukit Serene attended by Mr Griffiths." *CO 537/5961, no 25*. 7 June.; 1950. "Preliminary report on a visit to Malaya and Singapore: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Griffiths." *CAB 129/40, CP (50) 125*. 13 June.; 1950. "The military situation in Malaya: memorandum by Mr Strachey for Cabinet Malaya Committee." *CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)21*. 17 June.; 1950. "Malaya: Cabinet conclusions on reports by Mr Griffiths and Mr Strachey following their visits to Malaya." *CAB 128/17, CM 37(50)1*. 19 June.; 1950. "The civil situation in Malaya: Cabinet Malaya Committee." *CAB 21/1681, MAL C 6(50)1*. 19 June.

²⁰⁵ 1951. "[Secretary of state's visit to Malaya]: minute PM(51)1 from Mr Lyttleton to Mr Churchill." *PREM 11/122*. 30 October.; 1951. "The situation in Malaya: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Lyttleton Annexes I-III." *CAB 129/48, C(51)26*. 20 November.; 1951. "Malaya: Cabinet conclusions on the current situation and Mr Lyttleton's forthcoming visit." *CAB 128/23, CC 10(51)2*. 22 November.; 1951. "[Lyttleton's statement to the Malayan press]: outward telegram no 83 from J D Higham to A M MacKintosh requesting clarification of Mr Lyttleton's statement." *CO 1022/81, no 7*. 3 December.; 1951. "[Lyttleton statement to the Malayan press]: inward telegram (reply) no 1189 from A M Mackintosh to J D Higham." *CO 1022/81, no 8*. 4 December.; 1951. "[Reorganisation of Malayan government]: inward telegram no 1214 from Mr Lyttleton to Mr Churchill." *PREM 11/639*. 8 December.; 1951. "Malaya: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Lyttleton. Appendices I-XV." *CAB 129/48, C(51)59*. 21 December.

²⁰⁶ 1951. "[Briggs plan]: Cabinet Office summary of a further meeting at 10 Downing Street on 8 march called by Mr Attlee to consider the plan's slow progress." *PREM 8/1406/2, GEN 345/7*. 9 March.; 1951. "[Briggs plan]: Cabinet Office summary of a further meeting at 10 Downing Street on 8 march called by Mr Attlee to consider the plan's slow progress." *PREM 8/1406/2, GEN 345/7*. 9 March.; 1951. "[Briggs plan]: Cabinet Office summary of a meeting resumed on 12 March to consider the progress of the plan." *PREM 8/1406/2, GEN 345/8*. 13 March.; 1951. "Political talk with General Templer: CO minute of discussion with Templer on Political advance." *CO 1022/86, no 3*. 3 December.; 1952. "[Closer association of British territories]: minute by J J Paskin to Sir T Lloyd on discussions with Sir G Templer and COS." *CO 1022/86*. 10 December.; 1953. "Constitutional development in the Federation of Malaya: CO note of a meeting with Sir G Templer." *CO 1022/86, no 35*. 18 May.; 1953. "Closer association between the Federation of Malaya and Singapore: CO note of a meeting with Sir G Templer and Sir J Nicoll." *CO 1022/61, no 40*. 18 May.

²⁰⁷ 1950. "Preliminary report on a visit to Malaya and Singapore: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Griffiths." *CAB 129/40, CP (50) 125*. 13 June.; 1950. "The military situation in Malaya: memorandum by Mr Strachey for Cabinet Malaya Committee." *CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)21*. 17 June.; 1950. "Malaya: Cabinet conclusions on reports by Mr Griffiths and Mr Strachey following their visits to Malaya." *CAB 128/17, CM 37 (50)*. 1-19 June.; 1951. "Malaya: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Lyttleton. Appendices I-XV." *CAB 129/48, C(51)59*. 21 December.; Templer." *CO 1022/86, no 35*. 18 May.

1948. "Malaya: Cabinet conclusions on British response to Malayan disorders." *CAB 128/13, CM 50(48)3*. 13 July.; 1948. "The situation in Malaya: Cabinet memorandum by Creech Jones." *PREM 8/1406, CP(48)190*. 19 July.

²⁰⁸ Stockwell, A J. 1979. *British policy and Malay politics during the Malayan Union experiment, 1945-1948*. Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works.

Sedition Act, and Societies Act, among others, assisted colonial administration in keeping a close grip on these debates and nationalist activities.

There is a debate as to the extent of British willingness to decolonise Malaya in the newly ordered world of 1945. Some argue that the British government was already committed to the idea of granting self-government to Malaya after World War Two simultaneously in line with their commitments to granting self-government and free elections under the Atlantic Charter signed by America and Britain in August 1941. However, a joint memorandum of the Colonial Office and Foreign Office prepared in 1942 (not long after the signing of the Atlantic Charter) noted that a kind of racial hierarchy was to be operated:

*It is our intention to foster self-government in accordance with the spirit of Article 3 of the Atlantic Charter but it is evident that the attainment of complete self-government involves a degree of responsibility to which some peoples have not yet attained*²⁰⁹

Similarly, M Linehan, the constitutional adviser of the Malayan Union, noted even in 1948 that there was little prospect of the emergence of a strong nationalist movement:

*The prospect of the rise of a strong independence movement in Malaya, at any rate within the next generation or so, appears exceedingly remote.*²¹⁰

However, the argument that the nationalists were flogging a dead horse is called to question with²¹¹ the British colonial officials in the post-war period making it clear that Malaya would not be ready for self-government and independence for quite some time. Malcolm MacDonald indicated in 1950, that it would take another 25 years before Malaya would be ready for self-government.²¹² However it must be noted that he was only speaking of the granting of the status of self-government rather than full independence. He was soon after to change his mind and forecast a relatively shorter time frame of 15 years for the achievement of self-governing status, as the nationalist movements became more organised and vocal in early 1950s. High Commissioner Henry Gurney noted in 1949:

*While it is no doubt desirable to emphasise for external consumption that our aim in Malaya is self-government, the first object in Malaya itself must be the restoration of confidence.*²¹³

²⁰⁹ 1942. "A post-war settlement in the Far East: need for a definite policy": joint CO-FO memorandum." CO 825/35/4 no 52. August.

²¹⁰ 1948. "Note by W. Linehan." CO 537/3746. 2 March.

²¹¹ See Roff, W R. 1967. *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

²¹² 1950. "Minutes of the 15th Commissioner-General's Conference at Bukit Serene." CO 537/5961. 7 June.

²¹³ 1949. "Lloyd to Gurney." CO 537/4741. 2 April.

Thus, conveniently, the Emergency was viewed as an obstacle for progress towards self-governance. In a now infamous example, the prominent Malay figure Dato Onn (whose son later became second Prime Minister of Malaysia in the late 1970s) from the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) - an organisation non-traditional elites in Malaya would consider as a party for the 'co-opted elite' - announced in 1950 that Malaya would only 'possibly' be ready for independence in 15 years. Henry Gurney was quick to quash such suggestions and reprimanded Dato Onn for his comments.

The British argument was that such pronouncements would hurt the Malayan economy by driving away investments. And further there was also a strong lobby among the British businesses against the early grant of self-government in Malaya. In May and June 1950, James Griffiths would tour Malaya and attend several meetings with business lobbyist to address their concerns.²¹⁴

The nationalists were not deterred from voicing their views from time to time despite open debate on Malayan independence in the early 1950s being considered as off-limits and unspeakable. The British-controlled local media such as the Straits Times and Malay Mail were also regulated. The government saw it necessary to disseminate their own material to trade unions in hope of countering damaging reports from sources like the British Communist Party's Daily Worker and the Malayan Monitor. The Daily Worker presented the Emergency as an unwarranted attack by the imperialist British administration in Malaya on the many nationalist and trade unions in the Federation. The argument here is that legitimate nationalist aspirations were being suppressed to keep Malaya safe and secure for businesses, using the pretence of anti-Communism. The MCP was regarded as only acting in the defence of the living standards of workers and peasants as well as the rights of Trade Union organisations instead of the general public. Both circulations were also very critical of British 'atrocities' in Malaya. This version of the insurgency is now of course lost in the contemporary analysis of the counterinsurgency in Malaya apart from the faint memory of the Daily Worker in 1952 provoking outrage in Britain by publishing photos of a soldier holding decapitated heads of MCP fighters.²¹⁵

It went down in history that the Japanese invasion of Malaya occurred almost simultaneously with the bombing of Pearl Harbour. On 8 December 1941, the Japanese

²¹⁴ Records of these meetings are in CO 537/6090.

²¹⁵ 1952. *The Daily Worker*. 10 May.

25th Army landed in Kota Bahru in the north and orchestrated what would end up being one of Britain's greatest humiliation of the war. Following the ground invasion, the Japanese later sank HMS Repulse and the HMS Prince of Wales in the Gulf of Siam on 10 December.

Inadequate resources to defend a two-hemisphere empire, failure to reinforce the naval presence and provide air-cover, the costly demands of other military fronts nearer home, British under-estimation of Japanese fighting skills, fifth column activities, lack of preparation for a land attack launched from the north, poor leadership, inter-service disputes, complacency in the civil service and the administrative disunity of British possessions – all these factors have been cited singly or together in various post-mortems on the military debacle and shaped the attitudes of men planning for the restoration of British rule.²¹⁶ Although the British government did not hold an official or public enquiry into the loss of Singapore, debate over the reasons for Britain's defeat started immediately after the loss of Malaya and has been going on ever since.²¹⁷ The British general Percival, who surrendered a whole army in Singapore to the Japanese with little shooting, had as a junior officer laid claim to expertise in counterinsurgency (mainly this involved burning farms and terrorising local populations) and in the 1920s lectured British officers on his experiences in Ireland in 1918-21, but he was incapable of fighting even a smaller conventional force.

3.4 POST-WAR SOCIAL CHANGES AND IDENTITY IN MALAYA: 1941-1951

While the following provides a convenient definition risking over-generalisation and missing many subtleties, three main classes emerged in the years before World War Two;²¹⁸ the (1) Islamic-educated religious reformists; predominantly teachers and writers who sprang from the urban Muslim bourgeoisie of the Straits Settlements and were of Arab and South Indian stock rather than pure-blood Malays, (2) Radical Malay intelligentsia who were vernacular Malay-educated teachers and journalists, and finally the (3) English-schooled sons of the Malay ruling houses, who enjoyed the twin advantages of traditional status and modern

²¹⁶ 1942. "Lessons from Hong Kong and Malaya: report by Sir W Battershill, GEJ Gent and WL Rolleston." CO877/25/7/27265/7. Vol. 1. 4 December.

²¹⁷ McIntyre, David W. 1979. *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base, 1919-1942*. London: Macmillan.; Neidpath, James. 1981. *The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain's Eastern Empire, 1919-41*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Murfett, Malcolm H. 1984. *Fool-proof relations: the search for Anglo-American naval cooperation during the Chamberlain years, 1937-1940*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.; Marder, Arthur J. 1981. *Old Friends, New Enemies: Volume 1: Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941: Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy: Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941 Vol 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Allen, Louis. 1977. *Singapore 1941-1942* / Louis Allen. London: Davis-Poynter.

²¹⁸ Stockwell, A J. 1979. *British policy and Malay politics during the Malayan Union experiment, 1945-1948*. Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works.; Abdullah, Firdaus. 1985. *Radical Malay Politics: it's origins and early developments*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd; Andaya, Watson Barbara, and Leonard Andaya. 2001. *A History of Malaysia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

education from institutions like the MCKK forming the English-educated traditional bureaucrat.²¹⁹ These classes are categorised into two main groups; the first class, conservative nationalists and the second and third classes; the radical nationalists. The argument here being that the Conservative nationalists enjoyed favourable treatment from the British, while the radical nationalists suffered various setbacks due to British colonial suppression. Although, during the Japanese occupation the radical nationalists received favourable treatment from the Japanese military authority.

In describing the social moment, on June 1971, then UMNO member as well Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, upon receiving his honorary doctorate in law from Universiti Sains Malaysia, would admit in his speech that the:

Freedom fighters in those years were divided into two groups. One group believed that freedom could only be achieved through revolutionary means, whereas the other group believed in the constitutional process. British colonialists had two alternatives, namely, either to agree to granting independence to the moderate group or to take firm action in a continuously combative manner in the face of armed struggle. The British decided to concede to the nationalist group which chose the constitutional path and possessed the basis for compromise with other ethnic communities in this country. It is true that independence was achieved by the moderate group, but history has also shown that the radical nationalist group also made its contribution towards the achievement of independence.

The religious reformists maintained close links with the Middle East and hoped to rejuvenate Islam in Malaya by cleansing it of its near animist practices and by updating it to the modern world. To further their aims, they founded Malay journalism and used it, from the late 19th century onwards, to spread Islamic reformism. However, this movement was unable to garner following among the mass of Malays since it was centred in the towns and had little appeal in the rural areas where it fell foul with traditional forces. The ways of the *Muda* ('Young') clashed with the ways of the *Tua* ('Old'). Those in the second group were mostly groomed in Malay vernacular schools and at the Sultan Idris Training College for Malay school teachers. They were of rural, not urban, origins and their aim was to use Islam as a vehicle for pan-Malayan Malay nationalism. During the 1930s, this group became

²¹⁹ Abdullah, Firdaus. 1985. *Radical Malay Politics: its origins and early developments*. Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd.; Milner, Anthony. 2002. *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Milner, Anthony. 2008. *The Malays*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.; Omar, Ariffin. 2015. *Bangsa Melayu Konsep Bangsa Melayu Dalam Demokrasi dan Komuniti 1945–1950*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Sani, Rustam A. 2008. *Social Roots of the Malay Left*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Sani, Rustam A. 2011. *Asal Usul Sosial Golongan Kiri Melayu*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Lamry, Mohamed Salleh. 2006. *Gerakan dan Tokoh Kiri Kamarulzaman Teh dalam Kancab Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.

increasingly political - attacking colonialism, the forces of capitalism and traditional Malay society, as it established affiliations with and admiration for Indonesian nationalists in the Netherlands East Indies. At best, these elites were perceived as being indifferent towards the masses' aspiration, while critics regarded them as *boneka penjajah* ('colonial puppets') or *pengkhianat bangsa sendiri* (traitor to their own 'race/kind/kin').²²⁰ And the third group was represented in the state governments, in the Malayan Administrative Service and to a lesser extent, in the Malayan Civil Service. These elites, on the other hand, preferred to preserve Malay society against encroachments of the non-Malay world, and would do so at the expense of government and statehood. The English-educated Malay bureaucratic class were socially and culturally different from the masses, and there were above them, the traditional aristocratic elites, or members of the ruling houses and royal families who, by virtue of their feudalistic nature, were in even further contrast to the general public.

During the 1920s and 1930s, several attempts had already been made to draw and centralise the component parts of British Malaya namely the Straits Settlements; four Federated Malay States (FMS) and Five Unfederated Malay States (UFMS). By the end of the 1930s, the Malays amounted to but 49 per cent of the total population of Malaya (excluding Singapore where they were dwarfed by the numbers of Chinese) and while Malays predominated in the four northern states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu, they were outnumbered by non-Malays not only in the Straits Settlements but also in three of the FMS (and even in the fourth state, Pahang, their majority had been reduced) and in Johore. During World War Two, the Colonial Office reviewed these earlier attempts, including Cecil Clementi's²²¹ proposals to rationalise the administration both in Malaya and Britain's Far Eastern dependencies as a whole.

The general lines for Britain's future in the Far East were decided jointly by Ministers at the Foreign, Colonial, India and Dominions Office.²²² The policy for post-war Malaya devised by the Colonial Office in London which directed arrangements for post-war Malaya and Borneo were erected in due consideration of these general lines. The co-ordination of colonial and military interest during the war and its immediate aftermath flowed through the Malayan Planning Unit. By the summer of 1943, a Cabinet planning unit known as the MPU

²²⁰ 1946. Testament Politik Api. Kuala Lumpur: LT A.P.I Malaya (The Malayan Printers).

²²¹ Sir Cecil Clementi GCMG KStJ FRGS was a British colonial administrator who served as Governor of Hong Kong from 1925–30, and Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Straits Settlements from 1930–34.

²²² Ibid.

was formed and led by Major General Hone²²³ formerly of the Colonial Legal Service.²²⁴ The MPU was composed of colonial officials holding military rank. It was attached to the Directorate of Civil Affairs in the War Office but it followed long-term policies simultaneously being devised in the Colonial Office. The unit was charged with the dual task of planning for the Civil Affairs administration of Malaya during the period of military government and also for the permanent civil administration after military rule ceased.²²⁵ Among others, the later Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (DCCAO) in Singapore, Patrick McKerron, Alec Newbould, and Victor Purcell were involved.²²⁶ The Malayan Planning Unit in London was a court in exile in close consultation with the Colonial Office, on matters ranging 'from law to agriculture to electricity'.²²⁷

As it has come to pass, Supreme Allied Commander Lord Mountbatten would have overall political and administrative control over Southeast Asia, and would delegate civil government to Sir Ralph Hone, Chief Civil Affairs Officer (CCAO) for Malaya, and further, to Patrick McKerron as Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer in Singapore. However, it was also vital that "all the planning of the Colonial Office, in consultation with the War Office, was based upon a period of Civil Affairs administration under a military Government".²²⁸ The Colonial Office consulted with other Whitehall departments and, in conjunction with the War Office, to seek Cabinet authority for this new course.²²⁹

²²³ Ralph Hone was released from duties as Adviser Political Branch GHQ Middle East, to be the head of MPU. Hone had no previous experience of Malayan affairs. Drafter this memorandum less than a month after he had taken charge of the MPU.

²²⁴ 1943. "Post—war constitutional arrangements for mainland of Malaya: memorandum by Major-General Hone." *CO 825/35/6*. 28 July.; 1944. "Future policy in Malaya: letter from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten." *CO 825/42/3*. Vol. 21. 13 June.; 1944. "Directive on policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Admiral Mountbatten to Mr Stanley." *CO 825/42/3*. Vol. 25. 29 July.; Directive on policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten. (1944, August 21). *CO 825/42/3*, 27.; 1944. "Directive on policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten." *CO 825/42/3*. Vol. 27. 21 August.; 1944. "Implementation of future policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Mr. Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten." *CO 825/42/3*. Vol. 30. 17 October.

²²⁵ McKerron. 1943. "Plans for the Transition Period – Malaya 29 December 1943." BMA ADM/29, 29 December.

²²⁶ 1942. "Record of a discussion which the S of S had with Dr Van Mook' (Dr H J van Mook was minister for colonies in the Dutch government in exile and Lt-governor of the provisional and post-war government of the Netherlands East Indies, 1942-1948) Dutch colonial minister at the Colonial Office on the 12th June': minute by Lord Cranborne on post-war colonial restoration. Minute by G E J Gent." *CO 825/35/4, No 15*. 12 June.; 1942. "Record of conversation between secretary of state and the Chinese ambassador at the Colonial Office of Wednesday, 30 September 1942': minute by Lord Cranborne." *CO 825/35/4, no 61*. 1 October.; 1943. "Plans for constitutional reconstruction in Far East': memorandum by W B L Monson." *CO 825/35/6, no 2*. 20 March.; 1943. "[Constitutional reconstruction]: memorandum by Lord Hailey on the CO proposals." *CO 825/35/6, no 3A*. 19 April.; 1943. "Constitutional reconstruction in the Far East: CO conclusions of a departmental discussion on 13 May ." *CO 825/35/6, no 4*. 14 May.; 1943. "Constitutional reconstruction in the Far East: Malaya, North Borneo and Sarawak': revised memorandum by G E J Gent." *CO 825/35/6, no 5*. 18 May.; 1943. "Post-war constitutional arrangements for the mainland of Malaya': memorandum by Major-General H R Hone." *CO 825/35/6, no 14*. 28 July.; The CO Eastern Department endorsed the notion of 'Malayan Union' and at the end of August submitted to the Secretary of State

²²⁷ Turnbull, C. M. 1974. "British Planning for Post-War Malaya." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 5 (2): 239-254.

²²⁸ 1945. "Paskin." BMA/ADM 7. 31 July.

²²⁹ 1944. "Future constitutional policy for British colonial territories in South East Asia': memorandum by Mr Stanley for War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo." *CAB 98/41, CMB (44)3*. 14 January.; 1944. "Draft of a directive on policy in Malaya': memorandum by Mr Stanley for War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo." *CAB 98/41, CMB (44)4*. 15 January.; 1944. "Future policy in Malaya: letter from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten." *CO 825/42/3. Vol. 21*. 13 June.;

A memorandum published on 20 March 1943 titled “Plans for the constitutional reconstruction in the Far East” became the foundation document of the Malayan Union plan. The memorandum was meant as a basis for a directive for the military planners.²³⁰ As early as 4 February 1944, however, we see evidence that the Malayan Union was being planned in secret.²³¹

The appointment of Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander Southeast Asia earlier in August 1943, renewed initiative and morale into this theatre. With regards to the Malayan Union, on 4 February 1944, Admiral Mountbatten wrote to Major General Hone expressing the following with regard to the peoples of Malaya:

“To begin with, I feel very strongly that the whole of Malaya (that is the Unfederated and Federated Malay States as well as the Straits Settlements) should become one unified administration under such name as ‘Union of Malaya’”

“I am not in favour of reinstating the Sultans even as constitutional rulers, and certainly not as autocratic rulers.”

“(The Sultans)...The Japanese have kept them in position and it is inconceivable that most of them have not been actively collaborating with the Japanese.”

“I do not think we need to fear the reactions of democratic peoples to a move which is designed to unify the present very loose agglomeration of administrations in Malaya. This move seems to me progressive, in the sound sense of the word and is a “rationalisation” which I feel could only be condemned on feudal or romantic grounds. It would have been a different matter to undertake this tidying up in peacetime, but there has been a clean break with the past, in the form of foreign occupation and it should be fairly easy to accomplish quite painlessly, merely by omitting to restore what was neither necessary nor beneficial in a previous set-up.”

1944. “Policy in regard to Malaya and Borneo”: War Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Attlee. Appendices: I ‘Draft directive on policy in Malaya’ and II ‘Draft directive on policy-Borneo.’” *CAB 66/50, WP (44)258*. 18 May.

²³⁰ n.d. CO 825/35 pt I no 55104/1/1943.

²³¹ 1944. “Publicity for postwar policy: letter from Admiral Mountbatten to Major General H R Hone.” *CO 825/42/3, Vol. 7*. 4 February.; 1944. “[Future policy in Malaya]: letter from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten.” *CO 825/42/3, no 21*. 13 June.; 1944.; 1944. “Directive on policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Admiral Mountbatten to Mr Stanley.” *CO 825/42/3, Vol. 25*. 29 July.; 1944. “Directive on policy in Malaya: letter (reply) from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten.” *CO 825/42/3, Vol. 27*. 21 August.; 1944. “[Implementations of future policy in Malaya]: letter (reply) from Mr Stanley to Admiral Mountbatten.” *CO 825/42/3, no 30*. 17 October.; (‘Constitutional Policy in Malaya’: War Cabinet Memorandum by Mr Attlee 1944); 1945. “‘Constitutional policy in Malaya’: Cabinet memorandum by Mr Stanley. Annex ‘Draft statement of fundamental problems in Malaya.’” *CO 825/43/16, WP(45)287*. 7 May.; 1944. “‘Constitutional Policy in Malaya’: War Cabinet memorandum by Mr Attlee.” *CO 66/60, WP (44)762*. 22 December.

*“Our new attitude can be presented to him as a form of “paternalism” and at all events he can be made to feel that he can no longer justly accuse of purely mercenary neglect and indifference towards him.”*²³²

Crucially, Mountbatten writes:

“As regards to British capital investment, I cannot believe that in the more closely knit post-war of cartels and large-scale enterprises, it will not be of advantage to deal with a unified peninsula, rather than by a method of treaties more suitable to the days of Clive.”

*“I believe it will help enormously in the vital and difficult task of making our troops out here understand the necessity of continuing the war out here after the defeat of Germany, if it were clear to them that we have a constructive plan which their victory will enable us to put into operation: there has been so much written and said about the mismanagement of Malaya that I do not believe it enough to let them think they are fighting to restore status quo.”*²³³

In April 1944, it was agreed that the Chief Civil Affairs Officer and the Military Government in Malaya would have dual responsibility to the War Office (through Supreme Allied Commander) and to the Colonial Office (via military channels).²³⁴ Mountbatten believed it wise to “...consider that we should introduce some means by which the more educated classes can elect representatives to an Advisory Council, which would advise the CCAO during the military administration.”

The Malayan Union had three novel features: (1) a peninsular union (including the nine Malay states, Penang and Malacca but not Singapore) with a strong central government; (2) a common citizenship scheme for all who regarded Malaya as home; (3) new treaties whereby the Crown would acquire from the Malay rulers full power in their states. In other words, the sovereignty of Rulers was to be transferred to the Crown; secondly, the autonomy of the separate Malay states was to be lost within the Union. In this, it envisages direct rule in the short term and it committed Britain to delaying Malayan self-determination in the age of emancipation. It intended to break yet reconstruct the past. It also shifts the tag of authoritarianism from British colonialism to local despots, with the former now presenting itself as a progressive paternalistic regime. Centralised control would, of course, better facilitate the economic exploitation and control of Malaya.

²³² 1944. “Publicity for postwar policy: letter from Admiral Mountbatten to Major General H R Hone.” CO 825/42/3. Vol. 7. 4 February, 7.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ BMA/ADM no 212/1

Even before the war ended, in the spring of 1944, the Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo which was chaired by Attlee scrutinised and endorsed the union proposals.²³⁵ The full Cabinet accepted the Colonial Office's contention that the "restoration of the pre-war constitutional and administrative system will be undesirable in the interest of efficiency and security and our declared purpose of promoting self-government in Colonial territories". On 31 May 1944, the Cabinet approved the new principles which would underscore subsequent military planning and long-term colonial policy.

Later in 1948, when the Malayan Union was replaced by the 'Federation of Malaya' arrangements,²³⁶ it was seen at the time and has been interpreted since, as a defeat for the British because the 'Federation' restored sovereignty to the Malay rulers, reinforced the position of the Malay traditional elite in state government and subordinated non-Malay political aspirations to those of the Malay community. The powers and functions of the Federation were now divided between the Malays, who assumed control of the state governments, and the British, who were dominant at the centre. This was an arrangement that obstructed the promised advance to elections, alienated the Chinese and from mid-June 1948, hampered the authorities' approach to crushing the insurrection. We will see that even as the Emergency progressed in 1949 to 1951, the British never lost sight of the principles and objectives of Malayan Union policy.

The South East Asia Command from the beginning were ill-prepared for the sudden Japanese surrender. The sudden nature of the surrender meant that British troops were deprived of the chance to redeem their military reputation in the eyes of the locals by 'force of arms'. In July 1945, it had been decided at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 to divide the responsibilities for the military administration of Japan's empire between American, British and Chinese commands.

According to these arrangements, the Philippines, Korea and Japan were to be administered by the Americans who also assisted Chiang Kai-shek in China. The British-led SEAC assumed charge of 'colonial' Southeast Asia (apart from North Vietnam which was to

²³⁵ Ibid; 1944. "Future constitutional policy for British colonial territories in South East Asia": memorandum by Mr Stanley for War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo." *CAB 98/41, CMB (44)3*. 14 January.; 1944. "Draft of a directive on policy in Malaya": memorandum by Mr Stanley for War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo." *CAB 98/41, CMB (44)4*. 15 January.; 1944. "[Future policy]: minutes of the War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo." *CAB 98/41, CMB (44)1*. 22 March.; 1944. "Policy in regard to Malaya and Borneo": War Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Attlee. Appendices: I 'Draft directive on policy in Malaya' and II 'Draft directive on policy-Borneo'." *CAB 66/50, WP (44)258*. 18 May.

²³⁶ n.d. "Communal violence and political militancy: HQ Malaya Command weekly intelligence reviews, nos 30-32." *CO 537/1581*. Vols. 14, 15 and 16.

be occupied by Chinese troops as far south as the sixteenth parallel) upon Hirohito's surrender. SEAC's frontier was extended to embrace Thailand, southern Indochina and the greater part of Indonesia as well as Burma, Malaya and Sumatra; and Mountbatten's headquarters were transferred from Kandy to Singapore. As for British Southeast Asia, Singapore resumed its role as the seat of British military power. On 12 September 1945, Mountbatten received the Japanese surrender in Singapore.²³⁷ The colony reassumed its position in the region as the centre for British political, economic and cultural power.²³⁸ However, the on-the-ground sentiments and realities provided fertile recruiting ground for leftist parties with competing visions of politics. This Malayan Union moment was not only about the shape and form of a constitution but was also about the very nature of political freedom, and in the end frustrations focused on press censorship, the exclusion of popular organisations from the Advisory Councils and the arrests of labour leaders and MPAJA personnel on sedition and intimidation charges.²³⁹

On 2 September 1945, Foreign Minister of Japan, Mamoru Shigemitsu, signed a letter of surrender on a Missouri American warship at the gulf of Tokyo. Then on 12 September, General Seishiro Itagaki, *Panglima Kawasan Tentera Jepun* in Malaya, signed a letter of surrender at the municipality building in Singapore in the name of Terauchi Hisaichi, *Panglima Agung Ketumbukan Selatan*. The letter of surrender was accepted by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, SACSEA. In the following days, Japanese soldiers in various locations in Malaya successively conducted surrendering ceremonies to representatives of the Allied Forces in the relevant states. Representatives from eight MPAJA regiments separately had attended these ceremonies in those locations, except for Pulau Pinang and Perlis. Prisoners of war captured by the Japanese in Malaya numbered in excess of 100,000 people, including staff, clerks and traders in the political, economic and cultural sectors as well as their families.

²³⁷ 1945. "Japanese in Malaysia surrender at Singapore." The Straits Times. 13 September.

1945. "[Japanese surrender ceremony in Singapore]: inward telegram to 484 from M E Dening to FO." WO 203/5642, no 33/16/45. 14 September.

²³⁸ 1945. "Political organization in the South East Asia command": memorandum by J C Sterndale Bennett." PREM 8/189. 19 October.; 1946. "[Appointment of special commissioner in SE Asia: outward telegram no 656 from the Cabinet Office to Admiral Mountbatten :". CAB 21/1954. 13 February.

²³⁹ Harper, T. N., 79.

3.5 A SOPHISTICATED POST-WAR MCP

The surrender of Japan was followed by the Communist-dominated MPAJA returning from the jungle to establish control in villages and some towns, as well as placing suspected collaborators on trial. The BMA were at first obliged to collaborate with the MPAJA while making secret plans for their disarmament and suppression.²⁴⁰ At the same time, the British were apprehensive of the prospect of what was a conservative movement being hijacked by militant Malays elements who were potentially hopeful in providing Indonesian activists as well as Chinese Communists with the opportunity of destabilising the regime at a time of bloody inter-communal tensions.

Under the leadership of the MCP, the MPAJA decided to enter into the cities and towns peacefully. However, to maintain British colonial power, Admiral Mountbatten issued an order to the *Persatuan Pengakap Tentera Bersekutu* ('Allied Forces') on 17 August 1945, prohibiting the MPAJA from entering any of these cities and towns.²⁴¹ The MPAJA took the act as a clear signal from Mountbatten. In order to safeguard the spoils of victory that the Malayan people had struggled to obtain, and also as an answer to the reactionary plotting of the colonials, the MPAJA instructed all their companies and platoons to enter about 50 medium, large and small-sized towns and cities across the peninsula. These included the areas of Johore Bahru, South Johore, Padang Besar, Segamat, Muar, Kota Melaka, Seremban, Kuala Pilah, Kajang, Kuala Lumpur, Pelabuhan Klang, Teluk Anson, Kampar, Ipoh, Cameron, Taiping, Kluang, Sungai Petani, Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Kuala Lipis, Bentong, and Perlis in the north. The Fourth Regiment sent an experienced armed detachment into Singapore; the Eighth Regiment also sent one section into Pulau Pinang. The arrival of the MPAJA forces into the towns and cities overwhelmingly received warm welcome from people across races.²⁴² Most inhabitants in the cities and towns built arches to commemorate the victory against the Japanese and to receive the anticipated return of their soldiers.

The reaction of Japanese invading forces toward the unconditional surrender varied. The majority obeyed the orders of the *Markas Agung Tentera Bersekutu Bahagian Asia Tenggara* ('South East Asia Command'), maintained the current order, and awaited the

²⁴⁰ 1945. "Directive to AJUF on conclusion of the armistice": signal from B A C Sweet-Escott." *WO 203/5642, no 7/16/45*. 13 August.; 1945. "Force 136 Policy – Malaya": signal from B A C Sweet-Escott." *WO 203/5642, no 1/16/45*. 19 August.

²⁴¹ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: he Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

²⁴² Re-verified in CD, Abdullah, interview by Meor Alif. 2014. (15 May).

arrival of the Allied Forces to accept their surrender; while in the early moments of the declaration, some Japanese forces in various places were still attempting to cover the news. It was on 21 August 1945 in Pulau Pinang that the Japanese forces finally announced the news of Japanese surrender. As such the Japanese army that had remained in Malaya were allegedly actively using covert steps to cover up their crimes. They had chiefly destroyed a large number of documents that could prove their criminal actions. Whether the headquarters of *Pentadbiran Militer* ('Military Administration') Japanese army in Singapore, or the *Kempeitai* headquarters under the various 11 states in peninsular Malaysia, all of them were believed to put in effort to destroy their violent archives. Thus the moment was highly charged.

Japanese forces in most states generally were hiding out in their respective camps upon discovering the news that their emperor Michinomiya Hirohito had declared unconditional surrender. They rarely left these camps especially given that the MPAJA had entered cities and towns. Police in police stations at various places had mostly been disarmed by the MPAJA, *Pasukan Simpanan Anti-Jepun* ('Anti-Japanese Reserve Army') or *Pasukan Tahan Lasak* ('Tactical Forces'). They had been instructed not to leave their respective stations. While police stations in Kedah and a small number of police stations with connections to the MPAJA during the anti-Japanese war were given authority to participate in work to uphold community rule.

Some of the Japanese army attempted to contact the MPAJA. The Japanese army in the Tapah and Telok Anson area under the command of *Markas Pengawasan dan Pentadbiran* of the Taiping Japanese army, for example, had sent representatives to contact the 4th Company 5th Regiment MPAJA to attempt negotiations and demand to oppose the British 'together'. Had the MPAJA accepted these 'demands', the Japanese army under their command can be commanded by the MPAJA. Not long after, the Chief Police of Perak and the Kempeitai Squad Chief of Perak also successively contacted the 16th Company 5th Regiment that were moving around Taiping to ask and suggest similar terms. The 5th Regiment headquarters analysed the current situation, found that the Japanese army had no sincerity in surrendering, but instead were trying to fight under the guise of cooperation with the MPAJA. Therefore, they firmly rejected the Japanese army's demands. A small number of Japanese soldiers also stated the willingness to be close to the MPAJA with the hopes of obtaining amnesty from the MPAJA. There were a number of occurrences where Japanese soldiers on a small scale and low-ranked military officers and soldiers surrendered their

weapons to nearby MPAJA. Such situations were faced by most regiments. A number of Japanese soldiers that could speak Hokkien or Mandarin disguised themselves as regular citizens. They switched dwelling locations, exploring new land and farmed at the fringes of villages, or travelled elsewhere. A number of Japanese army *Kempeitai*, through negotiation, surrendered a number of light rifle weapons to the MPAJA. Most of them were rifle guns, bullets, and hand bombs and there were army boots, long range binoculars and other military equipment. Guns and light machineries constituted a small number of items. The surrenders would occasionally reach more than 100 guns at a time. Japanese soldiers that had launched fierce battles against MPAJA and had suffered defeat, for example, the Japanese *Kempeitai* squad in central Selangor, western Negri Sembilan, southern Johore and northern Kedah, remained hostile against the MPAJA.

Allegedly, ‘tens of thousands’ of supporters (namely ordinary folk) took to the streets celebrating with big displays of fireworks. The core duty of the MPAJA in entering the cities and towns were to ensure the safety of the people and peaceful order in society. This was considered as the most important step taken to protect the interest of the people at the time. Other duties involve confiscating weapons and bullets from police stations in various locations, preventing them from finding opportunity to continue to harass the people. The Anti-Japanese League in various places coordinated with the Anti-Japanese Reserve Troops to mobilise young labour and city youths to establish patrol units or temporary regulation committee. It was a moment for victor’s consolidation in their eyes.

The MPAJA established offices in all major cities in the different states, and despatched company-level units or teams to these offices to strengthen relationships with the local community and local social organisations. Therefore, it established the People’s Committee or local People’s Autonomy Committee. In fact, People’s Committees at the state level were established in Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Perak, North Johore, South Johore, Melaka, Terengganu, East Pahang and West Pahang to carry out specific functions of ruling. Other local People’s Committees all functioned as the local people’s autonomy committee for all races. Main cities, regular cities and towns established People’s Committees on different scales to administer early autonomy power in their respective areas. For example in Singapore, Pulau Pinang, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Alor Setar, Kajang, Seremban, Johore Bahru, Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Bentong. In more than 30 cities such as Sungai Petani, Kulim, Bukit Mertajam, Taiping, Teluk Anson, Kampar, Klang, Kajang, Rawan, Kuala Pilah, Segamat, Muar, Mentakab, Raub, Lipis, Kuala Krai; as well as dozens

other towns such as Gurun, Baling, Sintok, Laut Besar, Kuala Kubu Baru and Batu Arang. The state of Kedah initially used the name People's Autonomy Committee, but later changed it to People's Committee. The caretakers of the People's Committee were mostly held by Tionghoa in the area that were sympathetic to the anti-Japanese cause and displayed certain authority, there were also a handful of Malay and Indians. For example, People's Committees in areas like Kajang, Batu Pahat, Johore Bharu, Melaka and others were joined by members of the royal family or former deputy mayors from before the world war. The work of the People's Committee at its root was focused on preserving a normal life for people of all races, stimulating the market, controlling prices, restoring industry and agricultural output and smoothing out modes of transportation.²⁴³

The *Jawatankuasa Rakyat* ('People's Committee') also organised or collaborated with other community organisations of various races and levels to organise parades to celebrate their victory. These were parades or festivals intended to honour or commemorate the MPAJA. They had guided mass organisations to conduct outreach, as well as provided facilities to singing and performance troupes in terms of venue and vehicles of transport to ease their activities. Various representative institutions and self-help societies had emerged in the interregnum. The MPAJA shadow local government devolved into People's Associations claiming wide governmental powers with an estimated that 70 per cent of small towns and villages were under their control.²⁴⁴

The MPAJA also supported the People's Committee or Autonomy Committee in stabilising price of goods. After entering Kuala Lumpur on 20 August, the 1st Regiment issued an announcement to prohibit price increases, utilisation of assets and property of the people and arbitrary imposition of taxes. Concurrently, the 1st Regiment also sent supervisors to check the prices of meat, vegetables and other foodstuff in the market. It had vehemently opposed arbitrary increase in prices. Market prices in Kuala Lumpur remained steady with local press declaring MPAJA's efforts as "commendable service in preserving the order in Kuala Lumpur before the arrival of the Allied Forces". The thriving black market and price

²⁴³ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998) CD: *Pengja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Fakeh, Shamsiah. 2004. *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari AWAS ke Rejimen Ke-10*. Bangi: Penerbitan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.; Mohd Kassim, Abu Samah. 1996. *Sejarah dan Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

²⁴⁴ *The China Press*. 1951. April 21.

fluctuations then occurred when the British Military Administration cancelled Japanese currency while deadlocked in ongoing administrative matters.²⁴⁵

The People's Committee had abolished monopolistic practices brought about by Japanese companies and unions, eliminating the profiteering by the middle man practice forced upon the people. Many industry figures and traders that were of Tionghoa descent demanded the People's Committee return to them the print factories, sago factories, brick factories, match factories, sawmills, rice factories, oil factories, rubber factories and their other transport vehicles and companies that were confiscated by the Japanese invaders and their monopolistic practices. Through an investigation under the coordination of the MPAJA, the People's Committee returned the confiscated assets to the 'national capitalists'. As such, expenditure was restored after improvements and modifications were made to the economic situation. Most of the transport vehicles returned also meant improvements to their travelling situation that September.

The MPAJA had directly sent its armed squad to almost all 14 large-scale prisons in various states that had more than 100 prisoners. This was for the purpose of instructing the wardens to release political prisoners. Through negotiations between the MPAJA office and the Japanese prison directors, the Taiping prison released more than 250 political prisoners by 15 September. Over the three years, 1,860 anti-Japanese troops and innocent masses died in the Taiping prison.²⁴⁶ The People's Committee also organised and cooperated with people's organisations of all races and creed to organise rallies to celebrate the victory of the anti-Japanese, gatherings of thanks between the army and the people, and other activities that support the MPAJA. They had guided the mass organisations to conduct information dissemination activities, and provided facilities to the singing and acting squads in the form of show venues and transportation.

However, limited by the situation domestically and globally during the time, the authority to judge and punish the Japanese criminals could only be conducted by the military courts once the Allied Forces had entered Malaya. It was very disappointing for the Malayan people and the assaulted masses as well as the families of anti-Japanese warriors when relying on their oblique view toward the people, the British only sentenced punishment to a small

²⁴⁵ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: he Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

²⁴⁶ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: he Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong.

portion of the criminals. It was enough for a few Japanese war criminals that committed mass murders and torture to be punished. The scale of punishment also tended to be light. The Commission on War Criminals formed by the Allied Forces of Southeast Asia had investigated and indicted 1,101 Japanese war criminals in Southeast Asia. Whereas the total number of Japanese war criminals that had violated international law, indiscriminately killed innocent citizens irrespective of age, gender or creed, tortured and murdered prisoners and persecuting the masses without cause had actually been multiple times in volume. For example, important criminals that were involved in the planning of mass killings in Singapore such as Lieutenant-General Suzuki from the head office, Col. Masanobu Tsuji, Major Hayashi, *Kempeitai* Company Leader Miyamoto, Ichikawa, Mizuno, Goshi, Ogata and many others. On 13 August 1951, 227 war criminals in Singapore and the Malayan peninsula were deported back to Japan. They were then released as per the peace agreement between the British and Japanese. Unfair judgment could also be seen clearly in the proceeding against the main war criminals involved in the murder of 50,000 Tionghoa in the great inspection of Singapore. On 2 April 1947, the court only sentenced to death Kawamura Saburo (*Panglima Pasukan Keselamatan Wilayah*) and Oishi Masayuki (*Panglima Pasukan Kempeitai*) and meted life sentences toward five other war criminals, whereas others involved all escaped judgment. Such was the hatred and underestimation shown by the British authorities toward the people of Singapore and Malaya. The anti-Japanese war was a just war. A war of the people against an invading force. A war to defend the rights of the people and races, which was also a part of the anti-fascist war worldwide. Therefore, the bitter war that lasted for three years and eight months also forged and widened the MCP organisation itself and strengthened their relationship with the masses, particularly the workers.

The most important decision taken by the MPAJA leadership at the time was to instruct the MPAJA forces with the main duty of ensuring the security and safety of the people of all races and to impose law and order in ensuring peace. One of the ways of doing so was to seize weapons and ammunition from Japanese police stations in various locations in order to prevent the Japanese police from continuing to further exert control over the people. The Anti-Japanese League in different places also coordinated with the Anti-Japanese Reserve Forces to organise young labourers and the urban youth into establishing Patrolling and Enforcement Units or ad-hoc committees. And thus, as a result of the high prestige of the MPAJA in the eyes of the people as well as the sense of trust and support accorded to them due to their ability to meet local aspirations, it was found that all towns and

cities entered by MPAJA were done so peacefully with no clashes transpiring, and avoiding widespread looting commonly associated with post-war lawlessness. Acts of theft and hooliganism declined in some areas of cities that were far from MPAJA camps, seeing peace restored when the MPAJA sent their armed units to patrol or settle in these areas. Even in the cases of disorder and lawlessness in certain urban areas which were further away from main MPAJA encampments, armed units were sent by the MPAJA to patrol or camp in those areas and thus, were able to restore peace. Those who were not against Anti-Japanese activities, in general, during the war were not made to disarm but they were requested to assist in maintaining order in their locality under the order of the People's Committee (or Autonomy Committee).²⁴⁷ Under the coordination of mass organisations, the People's Committee also distributed a portion of items, food and fabric confiscated by MPAJA to the families of anti-Japanese soldiers. Whereas the rest were distributed to the poor of all races who were around the warehouse. In most cities, MPAJA sent representatives to negotiate with the *Kempeitai* squad and the Japanese troops to release anti-Japanese troops and masses that were captured. Whereas, in a small number of towns that the MPAJA did not visit, the duty to instruct police stations to release suspected anti-Japanese members was undertaken by the People's Committee.

During the Japanese occupation, people of all races, mainly Tionghoa (Japanese *Sook Ching*²⁴⁸ policy is documented), had been killed, tortured or extorted by enemy intelligence and spies, thus the abused parties and their families raised claims against them, either verbally or in writing, to the People's Committee or MPAJA offices. Through the MPAJA office, the People's Committee sent cases with clear evidence and serious cases to be judged and decided by the People's Court which consisted of the people's representatives. Criminals, with major cases and faced severe backlash from the people, were typically arrested first by the *Pasukan Tahan Lasak* (or *Pasukan Pembasmi Ejen Musuh*, 'Enemy Elimination Force'), while awaiting the Court's decision. After interrogation, MPAJA representatives would announce the offences, and once the Court studies and reviews the case and obtain a majority decision from the mass representatives following the trial, a punishment would be announced by the MPAJA representative. They proceeded then to organise mass gatherings to carry out death sentences executed by the *Pasukan Pelaksana*

²⁴⁷ *Jawatankuasa Rakyat* (or *Jawatankuasa Autonomi*); 'People's Committee', 'Autonomous Committee'

²⁴⁸ *Sook Ching* or *Siok-chheng*, meaning 'purge through cleansing' was a systematic purge of perceived hostile elements among the Chinese in Singapore by the Japanese military during the Japanese occupation of Singapore and Malaya, after the British colony surrendered on 15 February 1942 following the Battle of Singapore.

(‘Taskforce’) or *Pasukan Tahan Lasak* sent by the MPAJA. Most of the accused were released on bail after they were provided education, had admitted to their offences and are repentant and willing to compensate those that had suffered.²⁴⁹

The People’s Committee in various locations functioned for only 20 to 30 days. These organisations were taken over one by one by the British Military Administration at the end of September and were disbanded. Although the administration was not complete, the People’s Committee was the first practical training for Malaysians as masters of their own country, in the history of Malaya. It had provided the people with the experience of ruling. It had conducted significant work toward encouraging unity amongst the people, stabilised the people and strengthened the multi-cultural ideology in favour of democracy and freedom. Thus, the contributions and historical significance cannot be denied.

3.6 **THE EARLY DAYS OF THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY**

Allied forces arrived in Malaya on 28 August with a small portion of the fleet sent to Penang as part of Operation Jurist. Operation Jurist refers to the British recapture of Penang following Japan's surrender in 1945. Consequently, Penang became the first state in Malaya to be liberated by the British. When Penang surrendered without resistance under Operation Jurist, the fleet sailed for Singapore on 2 September, passing the Raffles Lighthouse at the Southern entrance to the Straits of Malacca. The fleet arrived in Singapore on 4 September 1945, meeting no opposition. On 30 August 1945, a flight of nine RAAF Catalinas landed in Singapore bearing medical supplies and personnel documents in preparation for the Japanese surrender and the liberation of the thousands of POW on the island. Singapore would only be formally surrendered to the British at 11.10 am, at the Municipal Building of Singapore on 12 September, with the rest of Malaya subsequently liberated in the following weeks. Post-war conditions in Malaya, as mentioned earlier, were desperate. Chin Peng is critical of the British Civil Affairs Department in his account. The department failed to control not only the price of tin and rubber but also food supplies, leading to prices soaring while crime rates surged as policing began to fail. Alongside severe corruption, there is little surprise that until today, the BMA is known as the ‘Black Market Administration’. The BMA was to maintain basic subsistence during the period of reoccupation imposing the state

²⁴⁹ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: the Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong; Re-verified in C.D., Abdullah, interview by Meor Alif. 2014. (15 May).

structure in the name of British imperial power. It was a transitory but critical caretaker from September 1945 until the establishment of the Malayan Union at the end of March 1946.²⁵⁰

The first order of business of the BMA after being established, between September and early October, was to hastily proscribe the *Jawatankuasa Rakyat*. The proscription, done without exclusion nor reason, was evidence that the spoils of victory of the anti-Japanese and any democratic rights that had been established were to be denied. The democratic right and demand for autonomy of the *rakyat*, at its core, is fundamentally opposed and cannot exist together with a colonial master, akin to “fire and water”. Allegedly, the British Military Administration had, on a large scale, accepted and taken into employ, a large group of intelligence officers and spies from the Japanese Kampeitei.²⁵¹ As a result, intelligence officers and spies retaliated by acting freely to oppress the *rakyat*. The BMA was a personal dictatorship for Mountbatten, as described in his founding proclamation:

“Establishment of military administration – A Military Administration to be called the BMA is hereby established throughout such areas of Malaya as are at any given time under the control of Forces under my command and shall continue only so long as I consider it to be required by military necessity.”

“Assumption of powers and jurisdictions – I hereby assume for myself and my successor full judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative powers ad responsibilities and conclusive jurisdiction persons and property throughout such areas of Malaya as are at any given time under the control of the Forces of my command.”

“Orders to be obeyed – All persons will obey promptly all orders given by me or under my authority and must refrain from all acts which impeded the Forces under my command or are helpful to the enemy, from all acts of violence, and from any act calculated to disturb public order in any way.”

“Suspension of courts – All Courts and tribunals, other than military courts established under my authority, are hereby suspended and deprived of all authority and jurisdiction until authorised by me to re-open.”²⁵²

Military administrations were set up territory by territory in British Malaya and British

²⁵⁰ Donnison, F. S. V. 1956. *British military administration in the Far East, 1943-46*. Michigan: HMSO.

²⁵¹ Che Dat, Abdullah. 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Che Dat, Abdullah. 1998. *Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.; Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.

²⁵² 1945. “A proclamation to establish a military administration’: British Military Administration, Malaya, proclamation no 1 issued by Admiral Mountbatten.” *WO 203/5642, no 14/16/45*. 15 August.

Borneo.²⁵³ Major General Hone, the Chief Civil Affairs Officer from Malaya and his deputies, Brigadiers Willan and McKerron established their headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore respectively. The task of the BMA was to reassert political control, repair the rudiments of an infrastructure for the provision of essentials and prepare for the return of civil government.²⁵⁴ And its administrators were called upon to set up military governments over the whole region immediately instead of step by step.²⁵⁵

Chin Peng believed that in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender, there was an overwhelming desire among the guerrillas to fight the returning colonials as the immediate post-war conditions were poor. Abdullah C.D. and Rashid Maidin describes how there was an inability in part of the returning colonials to tend to the immediate welfare needs of the public. It was, therefore the MPAJA that took the place of the colonial government and went on to help alleviate the living conditions of many. The MPAJA confiscated rice and bread from Japanese factories, hijacked bread trucks, and several MCP offices took on the role of distributing to, and even cooking rice, for the public while all they had to do was show up with their own plate or bowl.

Both Abdullah C.D. and Rashid Maidin noted that immediately following the surrender, the MPAJA and the MCP focused their efforts to maintain peace in towns, mid-sized and small townships. Additionally, village areas that used to be anti-Japanese strongholds were left to local *Lasykar Rakyat* to administer. Within hours of the surrender, Chin Peng claims that top Japanese army commanders across the peninsula began to send feelers to MCP looking to form alliances, preferring to fight against returning British forces rather than becoming prisoners of war or performing *hara-kiri* and so, around 400 Japanese joined MCP's ranks.

Unfortunately, much to the dismay of all three writers, any plans for resistance against a returning British administration were shelved with directives coming from the Secretary General and 'triple-agent' Lai Te²⁵⁶, who called for a stand-down on resistance. The directive from Lai Te made, in Chin Peng's words, "any union of Chinese, Malays and Japanese forces unviable". On 18 August, Chin Peng received orders from Yeung Kuo acting on behalf of

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ 1945. "[Post-war rehabilitation]: British Military Administration, Malaya, fortnightly report no 4, for the period ending 31 Oct." *CO 273/675/5, no.4*. 31 October.

²⁵⁵ 1945. "Directive to AJUF on conclusion of the armistice: signal from B A C Sweet-Escott." *WO 203/5642, no 7/16/45*. 13 August; 1945. "A proclamation to establish a military administration: British Military Administration, Malaya, proclamation no 1 issued by Admiral Mountbatten." *WO 203/5642, no 14/16/45*. 15 August;

²⁵⁶ Some believe him to be just a 'double-agent'.

Lai Te who issued an “Eight Point Declaration of Party Aims” a day earlier.²⁵⁷ Much to Chin Peng’s dismay, the declaration called for a programme of appeasement with the returning British. It was evidently couched in general language and made no mention of a plan to achieve MCP’s basic goal of self-determination in the immediate post-war period – a betrayal to all who were involved in Party activities during occupation years. Lai Te would later be proven to be a double-agent for the Japanese.²⁵⁸ Lai Te, as a double-agent, had critically betrayed and sabotaged the MCP twice while under cover, once in Singapore, and also in Selangor, at Batu Caves on 1 September 1942. Major Onishi Satoru, former Platoon Chief of the Shonanto Kempeitai, led the intelligence unit that specialised in sabotaging anti-Japanese activities, and his memoir written and published in 1977 titled *Kejadian Pembersihan Terhadap Para Perantau Tionghoa di Shonan* (‘Ethnic Cleansing of the Tionghoa in Shonan’) had revealed that the MCP Secretary General, Lai Te, as a Japanese spy, having had betrayed 13 MCP members in Singapore and exposed the location of a large supply of military equipment.²⁵⁹

Despite his agreement to store away weapons held by MPAJA units in secret jungle weapons caches, Lai Te had essentially called for co-operation with the British and a concentration of efforts back to the organisation of labour and the infiltration of unions. Lai Te argued further that there existed an imbalance for Party support among the races, whereby the Party enjoyed bigger support from the Chinese community than it did from the majority Malay community and that if a fight was to continue against the British, the MCP could only rely on the Chinese. However, this reading of the situation seemed quite blind towards the considerable support that was enjoyed by the MCP among rural Malays in that period and the recruitment and training among Malays which had been made in Perak. The interregnum between the surrender of Japan and the return of the British in the form of the British Military Administration is thoroughly discussed by Chin Peng, Abdullah C.D. and Rashid Maidin in their memoirs. Abdullah C.D.’s recollection gives us a good sense of what must have been a complicated period. The *Pasukan Propaganda* (‘Propaganda Unit’) he was part of took to work almost immediately from the moment of the Japanese surrender. By going from town to town to celebrate the MPAJA victory, they were apparently met with large crowds of supporters. In their *rapat umum* (‘public mass rallies’) which they held, it was standard

²⁵⁷ Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters

²⁵⁸ Mejar Onishi Satoru, Platoon Leader, Kampeitai Shonanto, formerly led intelligence operations against anti-Japanese elements admits in “Kejadian Pembersihan Terhadap Para Perantau Tionghoa di Shonan”, 1977

²⁵⁹ Abdullah, Indrajaya. 1992. *Ringkasan sejarah tentera anti-Jepun rakyat Malaya*. Hong Kong: the Witness Publish Company of Hong Kong

practice to talk about independence, hatred towards imperialists, support towards the MCP and most importantly, unity among the races.

In some places, such as Kampar, the rallies would swell to over 50,000 attendees. The team, comprising of 50 to 60 members led by Eng Ming Ching,²⁶⁰ a female cadre, then went on to tour Perak. It was at one of the rallies that Rashid Maidin first met Abdullah C.D. and formed a lasting friendship. From Abdullah C.D.'s account we know that both the MCP and KMM leadership survived the war. An official 'open' MCP office was established in Ipoh and the KMM was now in the process of reconstituting itself in the form of the Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Muda (PKMM) and holding its officiating congress; it did so on 17th October 1945.

Malay nationalists were also mobilising during this period. The Malay Nationalist Party (MNP) or the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM) was formed by a group of radical Malays in Ipoh, namely; Abdullah Thani (Ahmad Boestamam), Mohammad bin Hanif, Zulkifli Ownie, Haji Ramli Said, Dahari Ali, and Musa Ahmad.²⁶¹ They were soon approached by Mokhtaruddin Lasso (of Sumatran origin) with an offer of financial support, followed by a request of an English version of *Suara Rakyat* ('Voice of the People') to be published. In October 1945, they established MNP with Mokhtaruddin Lasso²⁶² as its first president. Elected as vice-president was Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, of Perak origins (studied in India, a leader of Singapore Muslims in 1930s).²⁶³ The MNP brought together Malayan men and women of different backgrounds, ideologies and dispositions. Unequivocally, independence for Malaya was the immediate objective of the MNP.

Soon after, in order to consolidate their position as a national party with substantial national support, in February 1946, the MNP shifted their headquarters from Ipoh, in the State of Perak (the home of native resistance against Birch and a successful MCP propaganda campaign), to the colonial capital of Kuala Lumpur in the neighbouring state of Selangor.²⁶⁴ The MNP initially supported the Malay Congress, but withdrew on the issue of its refusal to adopt the Indonesian flag as a protest to the conservative direction of UMNO. While Dr

²⁶⁰ Eng Min Chin was notably strong and women dominated the leadership of the Penang NDYL.

²⁶¹ Che Dat, Abdullah, *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*, Che Dat, Abdullah, *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948.*; Harper, T. N., *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*

²⁶² Mokhtaruddin disappeared to Indonesia in early 1946

²⁶³ Burhanuddin was a homeo-pathic doctor, educated in a Penang *madrasah*, at Ismaeliah Medical College in New 147 Delhi and at Aligarh.

²⁶⁴ Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, as President; Ishak bin Haji Muhammad as Vice President and Ahmad Boestamam as Secretary General and leader of the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API).

Burhanuddin favoured the *kebangsaan* ('nation') rather than *bangsa* ('race'), where *Melayu* would be considered as an entire nation rather than by particular races, individuals in the MNP such as Musa Ahmad, Abdullah C.D. and Shamsuddin Salleh represented the Communist section and influence of the organisation.²⁶⁵

In its formational congress, the party led by Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy had approved eight decisions, demanded for the implementation of Malayan autonomy and political democracy, guaranteeing freedom for all races and improvement of the people's lives. MNP's political proposals reflect the desire of the Malay people in demanding for democracy and freedom as well as prosper along people of other races. MNP's proposals won strong support from the mass of intellectual Malay youth. MNP established its offices in Alor Setar, Kuala Lumpur and other cities in the north of the peninsula. They had similar proposals to the MCP in many areas such as anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, union of the Peninsula with Singapore, prioritising Malay interests, equal opportunity for people of all races to obtain citizenship, advancing culture and education for all races. Therefore, the MNP was regarded as a left-wing Malay organisation.

For some time, the MNP had hope of working closely with the Malay elite who led UMNO, founded in 1946, to oppose the Malayan Union. The MNP attacked the UMNO elites, yet also sought to advance a different understanding of Malay nationalism as a more inclusive concept. When UMNO leaders showed their readiness to compromise with the British Administration and work toward constitutional reforms gradually, the MNP severed its relationship with UMNO and began to cooperate with the coalition of non-Malay groups - the AMCJA - in opposing the Federation of Malaya proposed as a substitute for the Malayan Union. The establishment of AMCJA is discussed further in Chapter Four.

The PKMM had the support of the MCP, and even the alleged support of even the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Hishamuddin Abdul Aziz Alam Shah, who donated \$50,000 to the group. The MCP had members in the PKMM, and some of them were in leadership positions - Mokhtaruddin Lasso, Taharuddin, Arshad, Khatijah Ali, who were now part of PKMM were all former anti-Japanese fighters who joined the resistance as MCP members. Ipoh now became the hub for the progressive movements, playing host not just to the MCP and the PKMM, but also labour union offices. Politics among Malays would soon evolve in

²⁶⁵ Harper, T. N., 32.

differing directions.

At the same time, the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf formed in Ipoh, on 17 February 1946, through the initiative of Ahmad Boestamam, Abdul Rahman Abdul Rahim and Abu Bakar Thareek.²⁶⁶ API was founded on the day the MNP celebrated Indonesia's independence, won 6 months earlier. Out of this MNP celebration, API emerged, and although it began as a 'youth wing' under the leadership of the fiery Boestamam, API soon became an independent organisation and established branches throughout Malaya. It received useful backing from a sister organisation, Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS: 'Cohort of Awakened Women'). Their ambitions and aspirations were clear when one considers the organisation's slogan – "*Merdeka dengan Darah*" – 'Independence with blood', which demonstrated more militant inclinations. The immediate objective of API was to unite politically-conscious Malay youth into a front that would advance the struggle for independence by training them both physically and spiritually and thus prepare them for leadership in a democratic Malaya based on the sovereignty of the people, with the Chinese included rather than excluded. In Perak, API had its strongholds in camps in areas such as Pasir Panjang, Sitiawan, Padang Rengas, Kuala Kangsar and Ipoh.²⁶⁷

To commemorate the First Congress of API in Malacca between 22 and 24 December 1946, Ahmad Boestamam published the booklet *Testament Politik API*, espousing revolution as the means of achieving independence.²⁶⁸ This action resulted in his conviction by the British on charges of sedition in April 1947. He was found guilty and instead of serving a nine-month jail sentence, chose to pay a fine of \$1400 that which was raised by Tan Cheng Lock, President of AMCJA – who would later be co-opted by the British to lead the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) alongside UMNO in a grand coalition of compromise with London.

On 17 July 1947, API became the first political organisation to be banned in Malaya. The ban merely dispersed the Malay youth who, to continue their struggle, formed various youth organisations, notably Ikatan Pemuda Tanah Air (PETA: 'Youth League of the Malay Fatherland') led by Wahi Anwar, Pemuda Radikal Melayu (PERAM: 'Radical Malay Youth') led by M. Mustaza, and Gerakan Angkatan Muda (GERAM: 'Youth Corps Movement') led

²⁶⁶ Saat, Ishak. 2007. *Sejarah Politik Melayu Pelbagai Aliran*. Shah Alam: Karisma. 81.

²⁶⁷ Boestamam, Ahmad. 1983. *Lambaian dari Puncak, Memoir 1941-1945*. Kuala Lumpur: Mahakarya. 67.

²⁶⁸ Boestamam, Ahmad. 1946. *Testament Politik Api*. Kuala Lumpur: LT A.P.I Malaya (The Malayan Printers); —1979. *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam: Merdeka dengan Darah dalam Api*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit UKM.

by Abdul Aziz bin Ishak and Abdul Samad bin Ismail, based in Singapore. API's suspected collusion with Indonesian activists troubled the colonial administration, particularly in view of vocal Malay opposition throughout 1947 to the policy of accommodation with the British adopted by UMNO on the issue of Malaya's future constitution. Playing off different ethnic groups against each other is a quintessential British technique of imperial divide and rule.

On one hand, there had been a strong tradition of overlapping loyalties and identification in the name of independence. Dato' Onn Jaafar, a community leader from Batu Pahat, would arrive on the scene to polarise and fracture the Malays between those who were interested in independence, and those who were merely interested in Malay unity and consolidation under British patronage; the latter a section agitating for a kind of Unionism, and the former section agitating for a kind of a Republicanism. With the establishment of the UMNO at the Kesatuan Melayu Semenanjung's (KMS: 'Pan-Malayan Malay Congress') Second Congress, Onn Jaafar and his faction fell-out with PKMM who left the grouping with their ambitions of *Merdeka*. The Pan-Malayan Malay Congress, of some 40 associations, convened a meeting in Johore Bahru between 11 and 13 May 1946 where the Congress converted itself into the United Malays National Organisation with Dato Onn as president and the Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang as Secretary General.²⁶⁹ Committed to the immediate defeat of the Malayan Union and the long term improvement of the Malay position in the country, UMNO was from the outset a communal party whose leaders insisted that Malaya was "*belum layak*"²⁷⁰ ('unready') for independence; unlike their counterparts who were demanding for immediate independence in the spirit of, to borrow an expression from American 'founding father' John Adams, "a free people, claiming their rights as derived from the laws of nature and not as the gift of their magistrate".²⁷¹

UMNO was regarded as a natural ally by the British against the subversive forces including the Malayan Communist Party and the 'extreme' 'Malay' 'radicals'. At the height of the Malayan Union crisis, the government began to relax the restrictions usually placed on the political involvement of its civil servants who were predominantly UMNO members. In mid-June 1946, shortly after the Anglo-Malay constitutional talks began, the government decided that the General Order prohibiting the participation of officials in politics should not

²⁶⁹ 1946. "The inaugural conference of UMNO": HQ Malaya Command weekly intelligence review, no 28." CO 537/1581, no 11. 16 May.; Boestamam, Ahmad. 1946. *Testament Politik Api*. Kuala Lumpur: LT A.P.I Malaya (The Malayan Printers); Boestamam, Ahmad. 1979. *Memoir Ahmad Boestamam: Merdeka dengan Darah dalam Api*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit UKM.

²⁷⁰ 1947. *Majlis*. 19 March.

²⁷¹ 1774. "Thomas Jefferson to Virginia Delegates to the Continental Congress, August 1774, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America"; Instructions." *The Thomas Jefferson Papers at the Library of Congress*. Library of Congress, August.

be enforced.²⁷² Newbould held that “these are exceptional times”, and that the government would allow its officers to participate in UMNO affairs.²⁷³ Only in August 1949 did the government explicitly lay down that any of its servants (except members of the Judicial and Legal Departments, Police Force and Malay Regiment) could belong to a political party and would, if unofficial members of the Legislative Council, have the right to free speech on the Council.²⁷⁴

In contrast, on 5 February 1946, in a “Letter to the Brethren of All Races in Malaya from the Central Executive Committee of the Malayan Communist Party on the Realization of the Compendium of Democracy”²⁷⁵, the MCP stressed that they aspired to an inter-ethnic shared Malaya.

“...the MCP, wish to pay the noble respects of racial emancipation to all the brilliant heroes who so bravely sacrificed their lives for the cause of racial emancipation under the rule of the Fascists. We wish also to pay the enthusiastic and loving respects of racial emancipation to the millions of labourers and farmers, young people and the learned, who unite together in the strife for democratic freedom and racial existence, and also to the revolutionary parties and cliques which, with a view to saving the races from disaster, lead the masses in opposing colonial policies, fighting for democratic freedom and in striving for the realization of racial emancipation.”

²⁷² M.U. Secretariat Confidential Circular No. 2, 18 June 1946).

²⁷³ U.M.N.O. /S.G. No. 35/46.

²⁷⁴ 1949. *Federal Secretariat Circular No. 29*, 4 August.

²⁷⁵ 1946. “On The Realization of the Compendium of Democracy.” *Letter to the Brethren of All Races in Malaya from the Central Executive Committee of the Malayan Communist Party*, 5 February.

And in further contrast to UMNO, spoke of the ‘situation’ of the ‘Malayan races and Nation’:

“(We) therefore thoroughly examined the situation the Malayan races and Nation are in today, and then fixed the mission and policy of the Malayan revolutionary strife at the present stage of the racial emancipation movement. We believe brethren of all races have exactly the same conceptions as we people of the CP. Today, only with racial unity can we bring about the termination of Colonial conditions in Malaya, and only with unity of all revolutionary parties and cliques in Malaya, fighting for racial emancipation, can democratic policies be realized soon....Today all brethren in Malaya are aware of the serious threat from Imperialistic Colonial Policies and of the fact that the sacred mission of racial emancipation is still unaccomplished. The most urgent duty of the peoples of Malaya and of this Party is therefore to carry on this unaccomplished work of racial emancipation in order to crush the attack of Imperialistic Colonial Policies. What is laid before all the brethren now is (the work of) strengthening a hundredfold the unity of the three great races, the unity of all parties and cliques, in order to ensure the quick realization of the mission of racial emancipation under (these favourable historic conditions).”

The following underscores their view on the point of dependence and any sense of ‘hesitancy’ in readiness:

“If, therefore, we depend upon the Imperialists voluntarily to change their policies, and entrust the fate of our racial existence to the execution of the rule, we shall as a result suffer a repetition of history. Today a stop must be put to the people’s attitude of dependence, hesitancy and neutrality. People having such mistaken views should confess that their conception of the development of historical progress is wrong; for the oppressed races to attain democratic freedom, racial emancipation and national independence, all must unite and fight to the last without cessation.”

UMNO’s Malay-first racial-centric position meant that only much later in 1949 could its political position on independence be bolstered by working hand in hand with the Malayan Chinese Association. Some sections of the Chinese community rallied and to protect its own interests formed the MCA in February 1949. After erecting in particular, Emergency Regulations 17D, 17E and 17F to give the government powers to detain and evict ‘illegal’ squatters, who were either deported or arbitrarily moved into ‘resettlement camps’, the cause of the ‘squatters’ was soon taken up by MCA who offered financial assistance for their resettlement as soon as action was taken on the commendations of the Squatter Committee. The Johore branch of the MCA was the first to begin squatter relief. It approached the Johore Government for land to start its own resettlement camp for detained squatters in Johore. The

idea was favourably received by the Johore Government, but it suggested that the venture should be a joint Government-MCA affair, with the Government providing the land and administrative machinery and the MCA, the funds.

While led by Malays with government experience and ran like a government department, UMNO did not pose a fundamental challenge to the continued British presence but only to specific British policies, and the authorities recognised that an accommodation should be reached with this new party. Rashid Maidin goes on to describe the labour situation and independence movement on the Malay front. He recounts that the call for *Merdeka* came 'loudest' among the Malays from those supporting the PKMM and its sister associations like the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf, Pemuda Tanah Ayer, Angkatan Wanita Sedar, Barisan Tani Malaya (BTM; the 'Peasant Front'), and Hizbul Muslimin; all of whom shared the vision of *Merdeka*. However, according to Rashid Maidin, in 1946 the British "...made a move to outflank and contain the nationalist fervour by proposing the Malayan Union plan - a plan which centralised the Federated and Unfederated Malay states into a single unit, alongside the abolition of the token recognition which was given to the Sultans of these states as being head over religion and matters of custom." The establishment of UMNO was reactionary towards the inception of the Malayan Union. It was on the basis of "...safeguarding Malay privileges and the restoration of traditional Malay power structures that UMNO based its support on, crying 'Hidup Melayu!' or 'long live Malays!' instead of *Merdeka*." Those who did call for independence would later be labelled as leftist and extremists despite their longstanding presence in the political scene. Rashid Maidin agrees that it was due to these developments that the leftist Malays united and formed the Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA), while the non-Malays were to do the same under the AMCJA. Malcolm Macdonald described the co-option strategy in May 1946:

*If we can get agreement now, we can retain full trust in British leadership in this region which is the main base of the British position in the Far East. If we do not, we shall begin to lose acceptance of our leadership by local peoples and process of our being at each stage but behind local political opinions (such as has been so unfortunate in the history of the Indian problem) will start. We must, of course, keep in mind that there are powerful political groupings in Asia which are ready to exploit any weakening of our position i.e. Indian nationalists and Imperialism, Chinese Imperialism, and especially Pan Malayan Movement led by Indonesians.*²⁷⁶

On 11 May 1946 Gent wrote:

...that almost universal Malay political opinion here gives no bases for expecting effective operation of constitution' on the basis of the Order-in-Council, that the strength and depth of Malay feeling had surprised all and that there were worrying signs of Malay non-cooperation 'in practical ways, such as police rank and file resignations' though these were 'on very small scale at present'.

*...that Malay leaders will not come to accept "Union" and the situation will deteriorate with consequent frustration in every essential object of unity and political progress.*²⁷⁷

As illustrated in a subsequent telegram despatched on the same day, Gent feared and thus also drew attention to the problem of the MCP which exploits “opportunities at any time to disturb the peace” in order to overthrow British government in Malaya through the methods of “intimidation, violence and extortion”. Such was the essence of British policy which was a type of insidious absent-mindedness to fostering inter-ethnic divisions among the many groups who, while acknowledged were repeatedly ignored by the colonial apparatus, and to proceed to co-opt the Malay elites, and demonise the MCP and MPAJA throughout the Malayan Emergency period. This chapter has shown that the post-war climate both in Malaya as well as at the heart of the Metropole, in London was anything but uncomplicated unlike what is claimed by the aforementioned COIN grand narrative. Through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, we have seen that the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two. Using more nuanced native material and sources, it has shown that any analysis of the Emergency years must give rise to a more balanced understanding of ‘historical’ COIN.

²⁷⁶ 1946. “Proposed concession to Malays: inward telegram no 6 from Mr M J MacDonald to Mr Hall.” CO 537/1529. Vol. 110. 25 May.

²⁷⁷ Sultans’ constitutional proposals: inward telegram no 267 from Sir E Gent to Mr Hall on the strength of the Malay opposition to the Malayan Union. (1946, May 11). CO 537/1529, 100.

CHAPTER FOUR: MALAYAN SUPREMOS AND THE USE OF FORCE

This chapter will show that the force which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war in 1954 was regarded as ‘exempted’ force wrapped in a grand narrative despite the on-the-ground reality for the people. It will find that, there was more to winning ‘heart and minds’ by way of ample use of force and coercion in turning the outcome of the war especially between 1948 and 1952. Through using a more nuanced reading of native sources, this chapter has taken to task the simplistic grand narrative of the use of force through looking at earlier iterations of the ‘Supremo’ offices in the BMA, then with the Malayan Union, which while not outrightly as such, exemplified the spirit behind the use of force in the full context of the people of Malaya and the Malayan Emergency. It will show that there had existed a strong tendency toward strong centralisation for Malaya several years before the Emergency which led to many earlier episodes of violence with consequence that bleeds right into the Emergency years.

In the British military tradition and in the context of our discussion, the term supremo chiefly refers to a person who is highest in rank or has overall and complete authority and charge in a command structure or area of activity. This is perhaps a hold-over from a period of giants like Field Marshall Harold Alexander, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces Headquarters; Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Supreme Leader of the China Front; General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force; General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander, South West Pacific Area; and later, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers during the Allied occupation of Japan following World War Two; and the Supreme Commanders of the Four Powers (Eisenhower excluded); Bernard Montgomery, Georgy Zhukov, and ‘Le Roi Jean’ Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. The term ‘supremo’ is an artefact of World War Two, while its origin and etymology can be traced to its Latin and Spanish roots. In Latin, the word *suprēmus* is a derivation of *summus* meaning highest. The word *supremus*²⁷⁸ may mean both ‘highest’ as well as ‘last’ in the same way a court of appeal is both the highest and ‘last’ of the superior courts. Its use in Spanish, as *El Supremo*, relating to reign and rule, may date to the period of early Latin- American dictators of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, in the context of

²⁷⁸ Grote, Dale A. 2000. *A Comprehensive Guide to Wheelock's Latin: Newly Revised for Wheelock's 6th Edition*. Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.

Malaya however, the exact terminology of ‘Supremo’ had its actual first mention and utterance in the House of Lords in 1950.²⁷⁹ On 5 April 1950, in a discussion on Defence, Lord Killearn; Baron Miles Lampson, upon recent return from Malaya implored:

“Surely, when you are faced with an abnormal situation such as this, you may have to do something abnormal to meet it, and not have a series of high authorities of all sorts and kinds and not one solitary unified control. Therefore, what one asks oneself is whether there ought not to be one individual "Supremo"—I use the word which we used at the end of the war when we had a "Supremo." I know that may be a rather startling suggestion to make—there may be constitutional and all sorts of other difficulties. But if it is a basic fact that the retention of Malaya is absolutely vital to our position in the Far East and to the whole of our world policy, then I feel we may have to take unusually stringent and drastic action. We may have to appoint one person with the fullest authority and powers, and with the assurance that he will be backed from home without question, to cope with what is undoubtedly a particularly critical state of affairs...we all know that dual control is not always the best method of dealing with things, even in normal times, let alone when faced with a critical situation such as we have now. Therefore, I come back to what may be the totally impractical suggestion of a "Supremo" in command of the whole area, with full powers and full backing, whether he wants troops or more police or whatever he wants.”

In 1950, it must be remembered that the mutual agreement to oppose the Japanese between the MCP and the British formed in Singapore on 18 December 1941 acknowledges the legitimacy of the MCP. It has never been disputed that on 31 December 1943, the SACSEA despatched John Davis and other members to Perak to sign a military agreement with MCP representatives, the MPAJA and the Anti-Japanese Alliance to together fight the Japanese and coordinate with the Allied Forces to strike Malaya. Thus, the legitimacy of the MCP was solidified at least to this extent. After the Japanese surrender, the MCP immediately launched political movements and open mass public activities, to strengthen community ties. This benefited efforts to widen the alliance of national-democratic and democratic movements. Within the party, most MCP members had already anticipated that in order to preserve her reactionary colonial interests, the British would inevitably one day completely crack down on the strength of the people’s democratic movement headed by the MCP. As such, although it had gained some legitimacy, various layers of the organisation and the positions of MCP members were kept under secretive conditions. MCP offices were established in all cities and states to strengthen relations between MCP and the people, across the spectrum of racial and mass organisations. MCP established state- and city-level offices in

²⁷⁹ 1950. *HL Deb* 05. Vol. 166. no. cc858-904. 5 April.

September 1945. All these offices were placed under the purview of state committees or local councils. They served as external relations offices, at its root responsible for disseminating or explaining the MCP's eight big proposals to people of various race and background. They also served to disseminate MCP's views and stand on various political issues the people were faced with, channel the people's fair demands to the BMA, raise objections and question the actions of the BMA that violated democratic rights and freedom, mobilise and unite peoples' actions toward the democratic and peace process.

4.1 NEO-INVASION MALAYA, THE EMPIRE'S POSSESSION REPOSSESSED

It was on 3rd September of 1945 that the British, as part of the Southeast Asian Allied Forces, landed in Pulau Pinang as part of Operation Juri.²⁸⁰ The 15th company landed in Singapore on 5 September, whereas the core team 34th company landed in Morib, the central point of the west coast of Malaya, on 9 September. They then separated into two wings and advanced toward Kajang by road (the Port Klang province was a central point of defence of the Japanese), entering Kuala Lumpur on 12 September and Ipoh on 14 September. The focus of the advancing line of the British army was chosen on the basis of safety and to prevent the possibility of military action by the enemy. After dominating the three strategic bases of Pulau Pinang, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the British army advanced further from those three bases toward Kedah, Perlis, Johore, Negri Sembilan and Perak as well as Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan. The focused targets were those that could potentially unleash military action against the British army and a small number of Japanese army that would reject surrender. The target of the British also included the Malayan people who had increasing awareness of nationalism and independence who were likely to oppose British army return. As such, upon landing, the British army had always shown an adversarial attitude toward the people of Malaya. After receiving a letter of surrender from Seishiro Itagaki, the representative of the Southern Battalion of the Japanese

²⁸⁰ Operation Juri refers to the British recapture of Penang following Japan's surrender in 1945. On the morning of 3 September, a party of Royal Marine commandos landed at Weld Quay, George Town. After raising the Union Jack, the Royal Marines, led by a local band, marched to the Eastern & Oriental Hotel, where representatives of the Asian communities in Penang were waiting to formally hand back the city's administration to the British. The Royal Marine detachment encountered no resistance in spreading out across the island. Subsequent Royal Marine landing parties then took over important military facilities including the Bayan Lepas Airport. The British commandos also confiscated Japanese military vehicles and marched the Japanese prisoners of war through the streets of George Town; the captured Japanese soldiers then surrendered their firearms before boarding the ferries to mainland Malay Peninsula, which at that point was still under Japanese jurisdiction. See Barber, Andrew. 2010. *Penang at War: A History of Penang During and Between the First and Second World Wars 1914-1945*. Kuala Lumpur: Karamoja Press (AB&A Sdn Bhd).

army, in Singapore on 12 September, Admiral Lord Sir Mountbatten disarmed the Japanese army of all weapons and military equipment within half a month. On 15 September, he declared the establishment of the British Military Administration with Sir Herbert Ralph Hone as the head of administration, placed under the Supreme Allied Forces for South East Asia under his direct command. At the same time, he established the headquarters of the 14th company to govern the 15th and 34th company. Under the full support and armed force of the 14th company, the BMA were able to intensify control over the political and economic landscape of Singapore and Peninsular Malaya and progressively tighten its colonial hold. The reality nonetheless, was that territorial re-arrangements and new strategies in a post-war climate deals with history and claims beyond that of the wartime circumstances which launched them and in light of this, generates a necessity to focus on restoring the symbols of legitimacy of Britain in Malaya.

The first important matter addressed by the BMA after establishment is hurriedly abolishing People's Committees in all cities and towns in Malaya between end September and early October. The unconditional abolishment of people's power organisations in its infancy was a sign that the spoils of anti-Japanese victory and the people's democratic rights had been hijacked. Democratic rights and demands for autonomy from the people were in reality at odds with colonial rule. Alongside forcing the abolishment of People's Committees in various places, the BMA also employed delaying and deceptive acts of supporting native democracy by forming the Consultation Commission in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The proposals that were discussed by the BMA's Consultation Commission revealed the true colours and role of the body. Discussions during the second proceeding of the Singapore Consultation Commission on 12 December 1945 revolved around public affairs and hygiene, social crimes such as fist fights, goods insurance, wages of female servers, issues of small traders and hawkers, the lodgings of prostitutes and others at the exclusion of any sensitive or important political issues of the day. The BMA had persisted in fully employing divide and rule tactics during this regime.

Returning to the BMA period which preceded the Malayan Emergency period only by several months, the main objective of the administration was to re-impose British rule in Malaya after an absence of three and a half years. Among other priorities, it included the restoration of British authority in all spheres, maintenance of law and order, direction of the human and material resources of the country for further persecution of the war in Southeast

Asia and the preparation for transition to a civil government as soon as practical.²⁸¹ Far from what was extolled, the BMA was not re-established as a favour to any locals. There was to be no manifestation of, in any form, popular sovereignty. The British commitments in the Atlantic Charter were cast aside, and the promised self-rule was postponed because the Malay peoples were, according to the British, too racially inferior to deal with that prospect. The local people were, safe to say, not at the forefront of considerations, as observed by one:

*The rapid deterioration of law and order was to be expected in the first few days, when the populace ran a bit wild and looted all they could while the going was good. But now, the thing has taken a much more serious turn, with (members of) the Army, Navy, Air Force and the police taking a very big and even leading part in the looting, and what have you going on.*²⁸²

While the disappointment on the ground was well echoed by the people:

*We thought it logical to assume that the military authorities would straight away toss aside their pictures queue soldiery attire, knit their knuckles and start right away on their avowed intention to restore our country to normalcy, rehabilitate in earnest and reconstruct a foundation so that Malaya's future prosperity is assured. Now nearly half a year has gone by and were are beginning to feel that all our hopes have been in vain, our aspirations for the future have been smashed and our very existence modelled on lives before you came. You can't blame us for being disillusioned, for being so disappointed. You can hardly blame us for holding back bouquets, for we are of the firm belief that you have not come up to our expectations.*²⁸³

And again echoing sentiments in the newspaper New Democracy:

*If the daily necessities of the people were to be imported by the Government and distributed to the people through wholesale merchants, the public who have already been impoverished will have to suffer because they cannot escape the grip of the imperialistic policy of making profits.*²⁸⁴

And finally the MCP in their 1945, "Declaration Regarding the Present Situation" argued similarly that:

²⁸¹ British Military Administration. 1946. *Report on the BMA of Malaya, September 1945 to March 1946*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer.

²⁸² 1945. "Letter dated 24 October 1945." MU Secretariat File 356/46. 24 October.

²⁸³ 1946. *Malayan Post*. 17 January.

²⁸⁴ 1945. *New Democracy*. 26 September.

*The reactionary system of colonial domination is still enforced. Africa, the Near East, and the Far East where half the world's population is still suffering. They (the colonial powers) have ignored the contribution of the colonies, semi-colonies in the anti-fascist struggle and they are relying on their military power to perpetuate their policy of colonial domination. We have yet to see any substantial and definite change in British policy towards Malaya.*²⁸⁵

4.2 **EX-ANTE MALAYAN EMERGENCY, MALAYA'S 'SUPREMOS'**

The BMA was established on 15 August 1945 by Proclamation No 1 of the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia. The BMA Proclamation provided Admiral of the Fleet Lord Louis Mountbatten with near dictatorial powers as the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia took on “full judicial, legislative, executive and administrative powers and responsibilities and conclusive jurisdiction over all persons and property throughout Malaya”.²⁸⁶ As it turned out, different iterations of the SAC's position would be created. For two years following the end of the military administration, a Special Commissioner and a Governor-General acted on behalf of the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. Later, during the Malayan Emergency period in 1948, their functions were merged, with the Special Commissioner position abolished, and Governor-General Malcolm MacDonald retained, occupying the office for another seven years. The SAC however, exercised powers through the General Officer Commanding (GOC) the Military Forces in Malaya. And delegated all powers through the GOC post of Chief Civil Affairs Officer once the post-operational stage was over after British troops had taken control of the country.

It is crucial to note that the executive of the SAC, the CCAO was given the discretionary power to selectively administer pre-war laws so long as he considered it “practical” and to exact any new laws by proclamation; again a reaffirmation of the dictatorship.²⁸⁷ The CCAO was assisted by two deputy CCAOs who were appointed with jurisdiction over the peninsula and Singapore. The three were also aided by a Senior Civil Affairs Officer (SCAO) in charge of the states. The SCAO was assisted by his own advisory council. The prevailing British attitude to these councils is important, as it shows they were a

²⁸⁵ Malayan Communist Party. 1945. “Declaration Regarding the Present Situation – 7 November 1945.” *BMA File 54/45*. Singapore National Archive, 7 November. 2.

²⁸⁶ British Military Administration. *Report on the BMA of Malaya, September 1945 to March 1946*, 450.

²⁸⁷ Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, eds, 425. 1983. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. . Harvard: Cambridge.; McLellan, David. 1980. *The Thought of Karl Marx*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; Miliband, Ralph. 1988. “Marx and the State.” In *Interpretations of Marx*, by Tom Bottomore, 284. New York: Blackwell.

fig leaf for dictatorship:

*You will see from the paper (secret BMA HQ instructions) that the council is in no way executive. It is merely a representative cross section of your community whom you can consult when you wish. You can disregard them when you wish and you may change the composition as and when you wish. In other words, we are in a state of authoritative military government and we do not delegate our authorities or power to anyone else.*²⁸⁸

The composition of the SCAO's advisory were made by appointments which meant that dismissals were tools for control. There was no time specification for tenure, and any member who proved troublesome to the government could be left out of the invitation list for the next meeting – the meetings were not fixed, therefore there was no right of formal representation on any matters unless the BMA decided to hear the opinions of the council members. There were dismissals in Johore, Kelantan, and Penang.²⁸⁹ In Kelantan the SCAO wrote:

*The first two meetings (of the Advisory Council) were held shortly after my arrival largely as a means of publishing the objects and intentions of the BMA in this region. The local leaders of the KMT and the AJA were present and it was obvious to me that, possibly for that reason, a considerable atmosphere of constraint existed and also the committee was being made use of largely for propaganda by these two parties. I therefore discontinued the meeting until last month when a newly constituted committee met and a considerable amount of useful discussion took place.*²⁹⁰

In a memorandum by the Secretary State for the Colonies, George Henry Hall, a former militant Welsh miner turned pro-Imperialist, communicated to the Cabinet the following in reference to the BMA and its eventual civil replacement, the Malayan Union:

Publicity in any detail about our Malayan policy commits us to the fulfilment of that policy. This means that we cannot allow ourselves to be deterred by an obstinate attitude on the part of any or all of the Malay Rulers with whom Sir Harold MacMichael will have to deal in his forthcoming mission.

I regard it, however, as very essential, quite apart from the matter of publicity, that His Majesty's Government should now affirm their intention to carry through, in spite of obstruction on the part of any particular Malay Ruler, the policy which they have approved."

²⁸⁸ 1946. "Letter dated 10 January 1946." MU Secretariat File 170/46. 10 January.

²⁸⁹ n.d. "See letter from Office to Civil Affairs BMA (M). Muar, to SCAO Region 6, ." BMA. MU Secretariat File 200/46.

²⁹⁰ 1946. "Letter date 6 January 1946." MU Secretariat File 201/46 . 6 January.

*All our plans for the Malay States depend upon the success of Sir Harold MacMichael's efforts to secure jurisdiction in each and all of the States. It is essential that his hand should be strengthened by the firm assurance that he can, if necessary, make it clear to any recalcitrant Sultan that we intend to carry our policy through.*²⁹¹

The British, desperately in search for new allies, were eventually forced to 'manufacture' one in the form of resurrection of the pre-war Anglo-Malay alliance. It is clear on the point on recalcitrance and obstruction, and its disregard for agreements *Vi Coactus*. Then it says;

"I attach as an Annex to this paper an explanatory memorandum, which I propose that Sir Harold should hand to each Sultan on opening discussions. It will be seen that this Memorandum leaves no doubt of His Majesty's firm intention to carry their plans into effect. This, then, is the first point on which definite assurance needs to be given."

And from the Annex;

"(7) In proposing the early inception of a programme of publicity, I am influenced by very recent information as to the present political state of affairs in Malaya. This information indicates that politically the most difficult body of Chinese in the Peninsula (the main group of the Resistance Movement and largely Chinese "Communists") have set before themselves a goal which corresponds in very many respects with our own policy."

Note here the part of; "... (the main group of the Resistance Movement and largely Chinese "Communists") have set themselves a goal which corresponds in very many respects with our own policy." Which it then ends with; "It is not too much to say that the whole of our relations with the Chinese population of Malaya may be fundamentally affected by a timely statement of our intentions." Finally, in summing up, he recommends;

"I recommended— (a) that we should affirm His Majesty's Government's intention to carry through the policy which they have approved, in spite of possible obstacles in the form of, for instance, recalcitrance by any or all of the Sultans."

Further in the Annex it outlines some of the following;

²⁹¹ Ibid. Hall took a hereditary peerage in 1946.

“Apart from the Governor, the three principal officers of Government will be the Chief Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Financial Secretary. The position of the British Residents or Advisers in each of the States should be modified...Before the war, the status of these officers was higher than that of any other officials save the High Commissioner, but with the establishment of the Union Government their importance will diminish and they should be made subordinate to the Chief Secretary of the Union Government. It is proposed that these officers, as well as the officers at the head of the two Settlements, should be uniformly styled ‘Resident Commissioners’.”

Then it continues to speak of the future;

“When Military Administration ceases and the new Civil Government is established in the Malay Peninsula, it is likely to be impracticable, even if it were desirable, to complete the formal instruments necessary to set up a Legislative Council immediately. To cover the interregnum between, the end of the Military Administration and the setting up of a Legislative Council, the new Constitution should specifically provide for the Governor alone to be responsible for legislation, and for the establishment of an Advisory Council to assist him in this task.”

It did not seem of course that these machinations reflected the every day realities of the Malayan people, and even then,

“The Governor would normally consult this Advisory Council before enacting Legislation. But would not be bound to accept the Councils advice. The instrument should not specify the precise number of official and unofficial members, but the Governor should be instructed to guide himself as far as possible, when making appointments by the intended composition of the Legislative Council as set out...”

The commitments outlined here amounted to further disaffection between a Malayan population which did not necessarily desire a roll-back into pre-war arrangements unless they had their arm twisted.

4.3 A SPECTRE AND A SHADOW COME TOGETHER

During this period, the people’s democratic fortress with MCP at its core was the strength of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial peace-democratic process. More than 10,000 former MPAJA members, experienced through the anti-Japanese war, spread out to workers unions, agricultural associations, Democratic Youth Leagues, Womens’ Unions, students’ unions and teachers unions. They were the backbone of these organisations and were on the

front lines of anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle. The hundreds and thousands of mass labourers and agricultural workers were organised into the core strength of the democratic struggle. After the world war ended, Tionghoa bourgeoisie in the peninsula and Singapore were mainly hoping for Tionghoa 'rights' that were reasonable. They broadly lent active support toward the struggle to fight for democracy and autonomy in Malaya. Indian labourers who suffered oppression and extortion were also active participants in the local labour movement, whereas the nationalistic spirit amongst Malays also grew rapidly after the world war ended. The feudal system, which relied on an infusion of religion and tradition with authority, influenced the majority of farmers and urban dwellers as well as causing a relative rise in the narrow nationalist sentiment among the upper echelons of society. In the name of strategic interests, the British would rather choose the feudal Malay system over reasonable democratic demands of the people. British military rulers continued conducting mass arrests on anti-Japanese fighters and citizens.

Abdullah, in a second memoir (published in 1998), called these arrangements for the "Malayan Union" a countermeasure to delay independence and extend colonial rule.²⁹² By October 1945, on the 10th, or known locally as the 'double-ten' day, thousands of Chinese Malaysians celebrated China's 'National Day' with processions and mass meetings orchestrated by the Communists. During this mass gathering, the MCP founded its first newspaper, *New Democracy*,²⁹³ which it would then use as an instrument to continue calling for immediate independence. From the point of the British return to Malaya, the MCP insisted on a broad front, inter-communal strategy, which is why the party also poured funds into the Malay language newspaper *Suara Rakyat* and backed and coordinated with the Malay Nationalist Party. On the other hand, the renewed colonial government were at the moment ready and willing to meet continued resistance with its power.

It was the arrest of Soong Kwong, a prominent Communist, on 12 October that provoked the first serious confrontation between the colonial authority and the people. A British military court had convicted him of intimidation and extortion, but the legality of the proceedings was suspect. It was alleged that at the beginning of September, Soong Kwong had abducted a rich Chinese merchant called Chan Sau Meng, a notorious collaborator, and demanded \$300,000 on pain of death. In order to save his life, the terrified gentleman had

²⁹² See Che Dat, Abdullah. 1998. *Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

²⁹³ An editor of the *New Democracy*, Chen Yu-chiu, was detained under the banishment ordinance for the infringement of the 1938 Sedition ordinance by the British in 1946.

written a promissory note for the sum demanded and handed over jewellery and cash worth some \$32,000, however, the gentleman would later retreat from the deal and had instead gone to the police. Soong Kwong was immediately arrested. All of the above had happened before 12 September, the date on which the BMA had officially taken over and agreed to a kind of statute of limitations concerning offences committed during the interregnum, and thus Soong Kwong should never have been arrested in the first place for this reason. Subsequently, Soong Kwong's trial proceedings began on 1 November when he appeared before a court presided over by a BMA official, who sat with two local assessors, both of whom found the defendant innocent. The BMA official disagreed and ordered a re-trial before a new bench. At the second trial, Soong Kwong was again found innocent by two local assessors and guilty by the BMA court president. A third trial was decreed – and this time, the British-loaded bench maintained that the locals were too scared and fearful to declare a guilty verdict. The three BMA officers found Soong Kwong guilty as charged and sentenced him to four years imprisonment.²⁹⁴ The *Modern Daily News* felt that the case was “yet another patent proof of the subtle use of ‘freedom’”, where “after two trials in which the assessors were unanimous that he was not guilty, the presiding judge purposely exercised his ‘freedom’ by turning down the verdict of the assessors.”²⁹⁵

In response, on 15 October, the MCP organised a mass protest in central Kuala Lumpur to demand comrade Soong Kwong's release. Three days after the Soong Kwong affair hit the headlines, a massive demonstration was held in Kuala Lumpur's central *padang* ('field' / 'public space'). The core issues were the BMA's intimidation and selective justice. The BMA's position was rejected by the people; in the weeks that followed, protests, meetings, rallies, strikes and minor skirmishes erupted in towns across Malaya such as in Perak, where a crowd of at least 3,000 demonstrated in Ipoh.

Both Abdullah C.D. and Chin Peng recall that on 21 October 1945, some 7,000 wharf labourers led by Bizar Ahmad went on strike in the Tanjung Pagar docklands. They were demanding increased wages as well as boycotting handling ships that were carrying arms for Dutch troops fighting nationalist forces in the Dutch East Indies by throwing cargo over board consequently causing the ships to be stranded at port. This strike was followed by a staggering show of labour strength when on 23 October, more than 20,000 workers attended

²⁹⁴ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

²⁹⁵ *Modern Daily News*. 1946. "Where is Freedom." January 10.

the inauguration of the Singapore General Labour Union (SGLU), who claimed to represent a further strength of 200,000 workers. At the meeting, the SGLU declared unity with the dockyard workers and the freedom movements in the Dutch East Indies and Indo-China. Concurrently, hunger marches were held in Malaya, tin mine and plantation labourers took to the streets demanding jobs and higher wages and the number of participants in each demonstration increased with time. Instead of focusing on tackling these grievances, Chin Peng argues, the British were satisfied with simply employing brutal crowd control measures to quell the grievances.

Another crowd of 30,000 in Sungai Siput and 100,000 in Ipoh took to the streets on 21 October 1945, and BMA troops were sent in.²⁹⁶ The result were clashes ending with the British troops firing into the crowds and demonstrators suffering ten deaths in Sungai Siput and three in Ipoh. Chin Peng, in his memoirs, underscores the events of this day. He argues that the real killings;

“...began on 21 October 1945...when British troops were called in to disperse large demonstrations involving tens of thousands in Sungei Siput, Ipoh, and Batu Gajah...in Sungei Siput and Ipoh, troops were ordered to fire directly into the crowds...ten demonstrators were shot dead in Sungei Siput, and three in Ipoh...in Batu Gajah, emotions were high until British Civil Affairs Officer was cornered in the Court House, surrounded by 500 furious demonstrators, and troops had to come to rescue him.”

Historians writing on the Emergency, he claims, frequently begin their account with the killing in June 1948 which, to him, is convenient and expedient but historically inaccurate. Even Tan Kah Kee, a prominent pro-KMT and Chinese community leader, was shocked by the callousness of British troops. He berated the BMA for “brutal action against peaceful, unarmed demonstrators” in the response to the events in October.²⁹⁷ He maintained, quite correctly, that the use of tear gas would have been sufficient to subdue crowds. It was not the first time, historically, that British troops fired into crowds of demonstrators, nor would it be the last. They were later to use very similar tactics in Palestine, Aden and Northern Ireland.²⁹⁸

Chin Peng argues in his memoir;

²⁹⁶ 24. *Min Sheng Pao*. 1945 October .

²⁹⁷ n.d. *Malayan Union Secretariat File 20/46*.

²⁹⁸ Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.; Hughes, Matthew. 2009. "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939." *English Historical Review* 124 (507): 313-54.; Porch, Douglas. 2013. *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Undoubtedly, an underlying racial factor was inherent in the killing...the men who aimed into the crowds, their commanders and, ultimately, the BMA, believed themselves to be superior and regarded Asian lives as considerably less significant...For British troops to be called out to fire into white unarmed demonstrators demanding better living conditions, say in Yorkshire or Cornwall, would be unthinkable. That they could readily take such action against Asians in far-away Malaya and regard the tactics as not only acceptable, but required, reveals much about the frame of mind of the returning colonials.”

Subsequently, in the same October month, efforts had begun to evict the MCP, MPAJA and the General Labour Union (GLU) from some premises without compensation.²⁹⁹ A second incident on the path of rebellion occurred, according to Chin Peng, during this period. It occurred during the following month in Kampong Koh, South of Setiawan. Prior to the return of the British, MCP had occupied the Chinese Association building in the township and set up an MPAJA office. By November, the local KMT group moved to evict the MCP and take over the Kampong Koh premises. The KMT had the support of BMA and their troops. A showdown ensued between the KMT who demanded the MCP to vacate their premises. Understandably the MCP members refused and decided to stand their ground which resulted in the BMA despatching troops to be brought in on the side of the KMT to resolve the confrontation.³⁰⁰

In November 1945, the BMA then went on to close down two newspapers – Shih Tai Jit Pao based in Ipoh and Pai Ma Tao Pao based in Taiping. The North Malaya News based in Ipoh and Age also in Ipoh were closed down.³⁰¹ Subsequently, 209 associations and guilds of Selangor wrote to Admiral Mountbatten on 10 January 1946, informing him that:

*The ‘Guidance’, Taiping and Sze Tai Jit Poh, Ipoh were banned. Manager and staff member of Sze Tai Jit Poh, Publisher and editor of Min Sheng Pau, Kuala Lumpur were sentenced to three years imprisonment. Freedom of speech and publication restricted and jeopardised creating public uneasiness and feeling of dismay. We earnestly request you to effect lifting of ban on relative presses and release of imprisoned pressmen so as to safeguard freedom of speech and publication and soothe public feelings.*³⁰²

On 10 January 1946, Victor Purcell, one of the Colonial Office’s ‘China Hands’ and then Chinese Affairs Officer of the BMA (he later went on to lecture in Far Eastern History

²⁹⁹ n.d. MU Secretariat File 20346.

³⁰⁰ Peng, C. 2003.

³⁰¹ 1945. *Nanyang Siang Pao*. 5 November.

³⁰² 1946. “Letter from two hundred and nine associations and guild of Selangor to Admiral Mountbatten.” 1957/0572511. 10 January.

at the University of Cambridge) wrote to the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer to weigh in on the conviction of these newspaper editors.³⁰³ His intervention was not to defend the freedom of the press or free speech. The Perak Newspapers, the ‘Age’ of Ipoh and the ‘Guidance’ of Taiping, he claimed published articles ‘detrimental’ to the BMA in October and the editor and proprietor were prosecuted and convicted under Proclamation provisions. In November, similar prosecutions were instituted in the case of the proprietor and editor. Purcell claims that “The prosecution of the Ipoh papers was undertaken after I had specifically advised this course. I think the conviction was right but that the sentences were much too heavy.” He also made the case that “the article “Remove the Mask of a Gentleman” was sufficiently “detrimental” to warrant the prosecution” as he reasons that “The article appeared during a period when there was no civil disturbance whereas the Ipoh articles were a direct incitement to the MPAJA to oppose the troops: the former contained no such direct incitement”. A SCAO wrote about the period between the end of 1945 and the New Year:

*It is my firm opinion that the slightest sign of weakness on the part of the BMA will cause for ignition to the already smouldering ember of underground political activity. Furthermore, I contend that it is merely on account of a strong line being taken that there has been no recurrence.*³⁰⁴

The situation of the returning British power was felt by locals as the use of military power as leveraging business power:

*Today, some of our former friends whom we know as accountants, lawyers, planters, and miners in the pre-war days are...in our midst as administrators or officials of the BMA, dressed in all the pomp and glory of military attire. Soon they will lay down their battle dress, rub off their war paint and settle down to their pre-war professions. Meanwhile they have begun organising their pre-war business in addition to administering the country - they find this an ideal combination. When they want to run about Malaya on their private business they use the military jeeps, it saves money. Whenever they want to do a bit of private business, they put on the Burma Star - it gives them authority. And business becomes a pleasure.*³⁰⁵

We get a similar sense of the corruption on the British side from the lamentations of one of the BMA’s own:

³⁰³ 1946. “Conviction of Chinese Newspaper Editors, etc.!: Letter from Victor Purcell to Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer BMA.” 1957/0572511. 10 January.

³⁰⁴ 1946. “Letter from SCAO (Perak) to DCCAO, Malaya.” MU Secretariat File 347/46. 13 January.

³⁰⁵ 1946. “Malayan Post.” MU Secretariat File 364/46. 21 January.

*The more I see this set up, the downright corruption that is going on, the more I am ashamed with it (BMA). I am beginning to have very grave doubts about a number of those who are wearing red tabs, etc. Of high ranking, a lot of them are very poor specimens and their integrity is, to say the least, questionable.*³⁰⁶

By 5 February 1946, the MCP declared to “...unite democratic war front of all races to defeat Imperialist Reactionary Policies and to fight for the realisations of democratic freedom and happiness of living of the people of Malaya.”³⁰⁷ In their “Letter to the Brethren of All Races in Malaya from the Central Executive Committee of the Malayan Communist Party on the Realization of the Compendium of Democracy”; having witnessed the BMA machinations over the months, they had concluded that:

*...they (the British Imperialists) stringently carried out despotic military administration, under which name they re-enforced all the machinery of the government for the purpose of enslaving Colonial peoples, such as the Police, the Intelligence Service, the Courts and the Prisons; they re-enforced and proclaimed all reactionary laws and ordinances, thus monopolizing all rights of government; with armed might they threatened the peoples who put reasonable requests for the attainment of democratic freedom and improvement of living; with shooting, killing, arrest and imprisonment they answered the righteous actions of the people fighting for the realization of the United Nations Charter and for the preservation of racial existence; they openly destroyed cultural organizations and public opinion, and imprisoned bonafide staff of the Press, authors and anti-Fascist elements, who criticized the Government in good faith; they totally monopolized the Malayan peoples’ anti-Fascist attainments, insisted on the establishment of a Colonial Government and on the enslavement of the people, thus continually depriving the 5,000,000 people of the attainment of democratic freedom and the safeguard of the safety of the person.*³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ 1945. “Letter dated 24 October 1945.” MU Secretariat File 356/46. 24 October.

³⁰⁷ Gamba, Charles. 1962. *The origins of trade unionism in Malaya: a study in colonial labour unrest*. Michigan: D. Moore for Eastern Universities Press.

³⁰⁸ 1946. “On The Realization Of The Compendium Of Democracy.” *Letter To The Brethren Of All Races In Malaya From The Central Executive Committee Of The Malayan Communist Party*. 5 February.

Further they observed that;

...they speeded up the looting of the material resource of Malaya and the control of all trades, with the result that the brethren of all classes generally suffered serious exploitation; at the lowest possible cost they utilized the labouring power of the Malayan peoples, which reactionary policy created a serious economic crisis of the Malayan races and caused great unemployment and starvation among the masses...And, what is more, they declare to the Nations of the World that the peoples of Malaya are living a life of New Democracy, co-operating with them, and that Malaya is getting more prosperous day by day, thus attempting to cover up all reactionary policies they are adopting in Malaya and to blockade the news of the Malayan people uniting together in the strife for democratic freedom and improvement of living. These two reactionary policies of the British Imperialists have already been fully laid bare to the 5,000,000 brethren of Malaya. Not only has this policy of monopolizing the peoples' anti-Fascist attainments failed to deceive and suppress the people, but, on the contrary, it has brought about a steady increase in the strength of New Democracy in Malaya.

It ought to be noted that the MCP had earlier, on 7 November 1945, wrote to persuade the BMA by pointing out that the re-enforcement of Imperialist Colonial Policies by Britain on her return to Malaya was a “...total violation of the spirit of the anti-Fascist war; of respect for racial independence and democratic freedom; it is in open opposition to the United Nations righteous charter for preserving world peace, for recognising the self-determining will of the races; for generally establishing democratic systems, and promoting improvement in the livelihood of the peoples.”³⁰⁹ In the same Manifesto, the MCP, in good faith, persuaded the British Imperialists to put a timely stop to their reactionary policies in this new age of history, because the continuation of the enforcement of such reactionary policies in Malaya during the first four months had already given rise to serious consequences.

In Singapore, the BMA had inspired widespread discontent. A Eurasian, English-educated intellectual called Gerald de la Cruz established, in early 1946, a radical non-communist party, the Malayan Democratic Union. He called for full democratic government for a united Singapore and Malaya in the British Commonwealth. In these times of hardship, the MCP continued to maintain its position toward the BMA, continuing the same line they had maintained since the late 1930s - placing their local struggle in Malaya within the wider anti-colonial struggle globally. In the February letter mentioned earlier, this proves to be the case as they went on to:

³⁰⁹ Gamba, Charles. 1962. *The origins of trade unionism in Malaya: a study in colonial labour unrest*. Michigan: D. Moore for Eastern Universities Press.

...pay the noble respects of racial emancipation to all the brilliant heroes who so bravely sacrificed their lives for the cause of racial emancipation under the rule of the Fascists. We wish also to pay the enthusiastic and loving respects of racial emancipation to the millions of labourers and farmers, young people and the learned, who unite together in the strife for democratic freedom and racial existence, and also to the revolutionary parties and cliques which, with a view to saving the races from disaster, lead the masses in opposing colonial policies, fighting for democratic freedom and in striving for the realization of racial emancipation.

Then, in January 1946, the President, Vice President and the Secretary of Perak General Labour Union were arrested and another test of strength presented itself.³¹⁰ Notwithstanding the events prior to the new year which we have noted earlier, McKerron, the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, describes what occurred during this month:

The first real clash between the Administration and these organisations occurred on the 28 and 29 Jan 46 when a general strike was proclaimed with the sole object of forcing the Administration to release certain prisoners who had been tried, convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment by Courts in the Peninsula. The strike was a success. There was a complete stoppage of work in Singapore. Even when household servants disappeared or, if they worked, did so behind closed doors for fear of the consequences if they were seen working by the henchmen of the strike organisers.

The above and subsequent excerpts pertaining to McKerron are found in tranche eight of the migrated archives, among discussion of events surrounding a later shooting that had occurred at a procession which was held in response to events of February 1946. However, with regards to those already detained as outlined above, McKerron also comments:

Although the decision to release some of the prisoners had been reached prior to the strike, the fact that they were released shortly after the strike had been called off was regarded as a victory by its organisers. Their hands were strengthened by their apparent success. They undoubtedly considered themselves all-powerful and believed that they had only to make demands for the Administration to concede them. They were determined, if these were not considered immediately, to force that concession by threats to use the general strike weapon.³¹¹

In response to the events in October 1945 and January 1946, the full powers which the British would later use to full effect during the shooting war from 1948 were, in 1946,

³¹⁰ 1946. *Min Sheng Pao*, 10 January.

³¹¹ 1946. "Shooting incident in Singapore in 1946": Letter from Brigadier Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (McKerron), Singapore." FCO141/14380 *Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police*, 15 February 1946.

already being brandished and used to deal with strike-action.

4.4 PERSISTING OPPRESSION OF THE MALAYAN PEACE AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

On 15 February 1946, a mass march to commemorate the day of the Japanese invasion was organised in all major cities. On this fourth anniversary of the fall of Malaya and Singapore to the Japanese, rallies and marches erupted in cities across Singapore and Malaya. The police and army were deployed to suppress the people, and in the aftermath, five students were shot to death and dozens others were injured in Singapore. Lin Ah Lian, Singapore MCP representative, was apprehended along with 100 other civilians, and ten more including Lau Cheng and Chen Rujiu were exiled.

On 12 February, the SACSEA Headquarters wrote to the offices in Chungking informing that an “...official hand-out which has been issued to the PRESS on 12 February by BMA (M) is passed to you for information in case the Chungking papers should print it.”

³¹² It begins:

Since it was established in MALAYA more than five months ago, the BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION has not only allowed but encouraged full freedom of speech of the Press in line with the Civil Governments of the United Nations, who fought and won a war to preserve liberties of this kind.

The Administration, however, had little intention of allowing advantage to be taken of such a day, or that civil disturbances be fermented, hatred of the Administration aroused, or the just processes of the law impeded in any way. The people of Malaya have given their full support to the Administration’s policy of freedom of expression; and the Administration is assured of their support in the action it is proposed to take to prevent recurrence of this recent abuse of this freedom. Crucially it ends with (this final part is also reproduced in Malayan Tribune 13 February 1946):

³¹² 1946. “Letter from SACSEA to Chungking on 12th February 1946.” FCO141/14380 *Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946.*

“The BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION wished to give full warning that it will not tolerate pressure by any elements; either with a view to using the strike weapon or in an attempt to interfere with the course of the law; or to endanger the peaceful living conditions of the population at large, by extortion, intimidation or other illegal means.

The Administration will use its full power to suppress actions of this kind, from whatever quarter they may come. Persons. Guilty of such conduct will be arrested and prosecuted and, if aliens, may be repatriated to the country of their birth of citizenship.” Ends.

What followed, McKerron recounts, was that:

Since 29 January the Administration and the public have been kept in a continual state of suspense by repeated rumours of further strikes and dictation by the apparent victors of the 28/29 Jan. These threats culminated some days ago in the demand by the organisation calling itself “The Malayan Communist Party” that the 15th February should be declared a Public Holiday throughout Malaya. This was the day in 1942 when the British Empire suffered its greatest defeat and Singapore was surrendered to the Japanese arms. The day was unquestionably chosen and the demand made with the sole object of degrading the Administration and bringing it and the Empire into contempt.”³¹³

The General Labour Union had requested for a holiday on 15 February 1946, while concurrently the MCP requested for permission to stage a mass rally and a procession in order to commemorate their experiences during dark days of the Japanese occupation. This second general strike was called and coincided with the fourth anniversary of Percival’s surrender to Yamashita. A ban was imposed on 15 February and two days before the strike, the SEAC Supremo issued a public decree banning processions and meetings. Those who considered challenging the authorities were liable to deportation. Within hours of Mountbatten’s official statement, the BMA followed through with its threats. Further raids were carried out in the headquarters of the MCP, GLU, and New Democratic Youth League (NDYL) where 24 Communists allegedly involved in a strike plot were rounded up. The venue of the Party’s main anti-British demonstration was the open ground opposite St Joseph’s Institution along Bras Basah road in Singapore. The protest went ahead. In dealing with strike-action in Singapore – “two” were shot dead, and 19 wounded. The context of the events is given further light by McKerron’s comments:

³¹³ 1946. “Shooting incident in Singapore in 1946”: Letter from Brigadier Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (McKerron), Singapore.” FCO141/14380 *Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946.*

In Singapore the demand that 15th Feb 46 should be declared a Public Holiday and the subsidiary requests for permission to hold public rallies and processions were refused. The demands were repeated and order were then issued prohibiting all public rallies and processions that day. The reply of "The Malayan Communist Party" to this was a call to the public to hold a rally and procession and to cease all work on the 15th February. This "call" was communicated to the press in a statement issued by one LIN AH LIANG (the ostensible leader of "The Party") in the name of the "City Committee of the Malayan Communist Party" and was published in all the Chinese vernacular newspapers on the 14th of February. There can be no doubt that the deliberate flouting and provocation of the authority of the Administration was intended and, since there were clear indications that an attempt would be made in Singapore to hold the proposed rally and procession and to stop all work, arrangements were made to prevent the rally taking place and to preserve public order by all peaceable means possible.

The British thinking is also reflected in a FCO 'Press Notes' document:

The organisers had previously sought permission of the Commissioner of Police for this demonstration "to remind ourselves of the dark days during the Japanese occupation and to work for a better Malaya". For this purpose they had chosen February 15th, the date of the temporary triumph of the Japanese in Singapore of the British defeat. Permission was declined and the Commissioner of Police in his reply stated - "The reason you give for wishing to hold a mass rally followed by processions on February 15th is that you wish to commemorate the fall of Malaya which occurred on that date. The Supreme Allied Commander, whilst expressing fullest sympathy with the desire to commemorate the fall of the Japanese fascists feel certain that you will agree that the most appropriate date would be September 12th, which was the date of the formal surrender of the Japanese in Singapore." In spite of this statement and of the prohibition of the police, the organiser persisted in their intention and efforts were made to call a "public holiday".³¹⁴

The rally aimed to draw public attention to the need for territorial self-reliance. It was meant to display that the natives were standing up for self-government, and defending their own interests and their own territory. They wanted to be in a position to do so themselves, and wanted the public to be reminded of how they managed on their own, despite difficulties.

The organisers of the protests reminded the people that the suffering they underwent for three and a half years were due to the betrayal of the British government which carried on the "obstinate and reactionary imperial colonial policy".³¹⁵ It was argued that Britain had

³¹⁴ 1946. "Press Notes." FCO141/14380 *Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946.*

³¹⁵ n.d. "Summary of a Manifesto of the Selangor Public on the Occasion of February 15, by the preparatory committee of the Selangor People Commemoration of the Fourth Anniversary of February 15." BMA File PR 3/2.

re-established her colonial rule and if the people did not want to endure sufferings of the Japanese period again, they had no choice but to fight for the establishment of a democratic state and the overthrow of imperial rule.³¹⁶ The politics of the day took hold of the youths whom it was courting. The militarisation of youth throughout the war years was difficult to undo. In this period, in its strongholds of Penang and Singapore, the SMCY Youth Corps was grouped into regiments which drilled with dummy rifles, while the MPAJA Ex-Comrades Association, whose membership overlapped with that of the NDYL continued military training. API³¹⁷ was also a cause for concern as API regularly conducted drilling and manoeuvres, especially around Malacca.³¹⁸

4.5 **BRASH RESPONSE AT BRAS BASAH**

The events surrounding what occurred in February is interesting with regards to the use of force. We can perhaps shed further light on what occurred, given the data we have discovered. The following is found in tranche eight of the recently revealed British “migrated archives”

At first glance, the description of events of the shooting gives us an impression of a fairly standard operation in action on the day leading to a fairly standard resolution of suppressing an illegal protest. However, this seemed in conflict with the newspaper ‘Express’³¹⁹ that reported harsh violence toward protestors including that of a boy. A letter sent by the Singapore City Committee of The Malayan Communist Party, on 16 February 1946, to Admiral Mountbatten³²⁰ relaying condemnation of the shooting, followed.

On 12 February 1946 – Mountbatten writes to Chief of Staff at the Cabinet Office stating that:

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ API’s membership also included many former members of PETA.

³¹⁸ It had created a new system of life based on ‘regimented forces’ in Malacca.

³¹⁹ 1946. *Express*. 15 February; Also in *FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946*.

³²⁰ 1946. “Letter from the Singapore City Committee of the Malayan Communist Party to Admiral Mountbatten on 16th February 1946.” *FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946*.

The general strike in SINGAPORE and JOHORE has collapsed. But sets of clemency by the Military Administration towards the GLU and ex-AJA members, which had been decided upon before the strike, although only implemented after it was over, are being claimed as a success for the strike weapon... Since this claim may be the prelude to renewed strikes, intended to interfere with the course of law, it is considered that unless the Administration takes action to forestall these, public opinion, which is at present against the use of strikes for purely political ends, will be antagonised by the apparent inability of the administration to prevent them.³²¹

Mountbatten stresses that:

I am hoping to be in a position to take the action proposed before 15th February, as we have reliable information that a few extremists are preparing to arrange celebrations for that day and there may be consequent disturbances.

And he reasons and cautions against 'obvious' British humiliation:

The reason for selecting this day appear to be that it is the anniversary of the fate of the fall of SINGAPORE and this has been made clear in the applications already made by these extremists for the 15th Feb to be a public holiday. It is obvious that this small minority is trying to embarrass us by every means and is hoping to arouse contempt for the administration. We must clearly resist such efforts.

On 19 March 1946, a letter addressed to the Supreme Allied Commander Admiral Mountbatten was sent from eight Chinese arrested under the terms of the Banishment Ordinance after the recent disturbances.³²² The eight were held, at the time, in Outram Road Jail Singapore on expulsion warrants.

The undersigned, were Chia Tien, Han Ah Choon, Chin Ju Chiu, Boi Siew, Lo Seong, Chan Tuan Fook, and Ong Boon Shi. They were arrested one after another since 14 February and were imprisoned in the Outram Road Civil Prison. Their petition reads:

From Outram Road Civil Prison, SINGAPORE. Dated 2/3/1946

To: Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief, SEAC, Singapore.

My Lord,

³²¹ 1946. "Civil Affairs Division 12 February 1946, 'FOR CHIEF OF STAFF FROM MOUNTBATTEN, FROM SACSEA TO CABINET OFFICERS.'" FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police.

³²² 1946. "Letter from Outram Road Jail Singapore." FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police.

We, the undersigned, were arrested one after another since 14th February and were then imprisoned in the Outram Road Civil Prison. Notice was not served before our arrests and after being arrested and imprisoned, nature of offence was not explained to us.

This action has not only trampled on the inviolability of civic rights as regulated in the United Nations Charter, it has also impaired the democratic spirit of Great Britain. Since February 1942 after Malaya was completely occupied by the Japanese forces, we, being unbearable to see the onslaught of Allied subjects by Japanese, participated in the Anti-Japanese campaign and started armed resistance against the enemy at the rear.

Risking our lives, we assisted Allied troops and the British armies in their proposed counter attack of Malaya. Though we suffered hardships and bitterness, yet we did not in the least take them to heart since we felt that it was our duties.

Since British troops had peacefully re-occupied Malaya last September, BMA had repeatedly declared allowing people to have freedom of speech, publication, assembly and procession. The words are still ringing in our ears. However, very unexpectedly, since January, many innocent citizens were unlawfully arrested and out into prison. When mentioning this, we feel heartsick.

Our duty was to see a realisation of democracy, our personal safety are, therefore put out of our minds. We are only afraid that such a BMA's measure which goes against wishes of the public would invite a reaction of feeling from peoples of Malaya. Such will not affect us very much, but dissatisfaction towards Government will incessantly increase. In the course of rehabilitation of Malaya and to maintain its prosperity, it is not a wise measure. We venture therefore to request you to release us unconditionally so as to quell public resentment.

The official position of the Government in response to the “allegations of extreme harshness and, in some cases, brutality” that “had been made against members of the police force who were dispersing a crowd of demonstrators” on the 15th was to make clear that “NO DISTURBANCES of the peace, whether organised or organised, will be tolerated”, according to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, Southeast Asia.³²³ It continues by reporting that an “immediate and searching enquiry” was “at once ordered” to investigate the events of the day.

To further this discussion, we consider the final report by the DCCAO which was subsequently used to form the Government position in the public space which hinges on

³²³ 1946. *Straits Times*. 18 February. Also in FCO141/14380 *Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946*.

several ‘facts’ that had been relied on by the DCCAO in making in his conclusions, facts we can now call to question.³²⁴ McKerron’s official report of the incident is as follows – the important ‘facts’ of the shooting incidents are:

(1) At 1050 hours a report was received that a number of Chinese carrying subversive banners were gathering in the open ground opposite St. Joseph’s Institute. This open space is about half a mile from the headquarters of the “Malayan Communist Party”. (2) A mixed body of 45 police, consisting of 20 Malay constables, 10 Punjabis, and 15 Malay Marine Police, 9 of whom were armed with rifles, moved to the scene in three trucks under the command of Maj J H Davies. They arrived shortly before 1100 hours and found a crowd of about 250 persons being harangued by the party leader, LIN AH LIANG....(3) The police, who were greatly outnumbered, were being rapidly overwhelmed. Maj DAVIES ordered one round to be fired from 9 rifles. This resulted in a slightly withdrawal of the crowd but the attack on the police was renewed and the order to fire one further round was given. As a result, the crowd rapidly dispersed. (4) One Chinese was killed, one was shot through the leg, and one was wounded in the ankle. After the dispersal the police were reformed, the area was cordoned off and a number of arrests were made. Those arrested were placed under police guard to lie down.

However, there is the matter of arrests and the nature of force which was used to make these allegedly legal arrests. For further inspection on this matter, we turn to several principal eye-witnesses reporting on these ‘arrests’. Arriving on the scene at 11.00am, G Kingsford-Smith of the London “Daily Express” reports; “(1) A number of men (I later counted them to be 17) were lying in a heap. Some appeared to be unconscious and one had a severe gunshot wound to the knee. (2) Malay police repeatedly hit them forcibly with large batons (at least 30 inches long) and one man groaning badly was beaten each time he stirred. I am certain that several bones were broken while I watched. Another constable was grinding the butt end of a stave into the neck of a man on the ground”. He stresses that, “At no time during the period I was there was there any crowd in the vicinity, nor was there any threat to the safety of the police”, perhaps in consideration to the severe force which was being employed.

³²⁴ 1946. “Shooting incident in Singapore in 1946: Letter from Brigadier Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (McKerron) - Part II, Singapore.” *FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police, 15 February 1946.*

Then Kingsford-Smith witnessed, firstly, "...a man was seen running into St. Joseph's Institution. Major Davies shouted an order and police chased him. He was caught and while being dragged back to the road by two police was heavily beaten with batons on the shoulders, head and shin by another constable". Secondly, he witnessed "...a man lying in a pool of blood about 50 yards away. I walked away over to see him, and consider he was still alive. He had been shot in the throat and was blowing blood bubble from his mouth as he tried to breathe". Thirdly, he witnessed that "The man shot in the throat and the man wounded in the knee had received no attention during the twenty minutes that I watched and they were not protected from the sun".

Crucially, he witnessed "Of those removed in a lorry (16) one was a boy who appeared about 11 years, and all but one were Chinese. I consider that most of them had been seriously injured by their treatment from the police.

Interestingly, both R. R. Broome who was the Political Advisor to the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officers as well Lieutenant Colonel J A E Morley, the Acting Chief Staff Officer to Patrick McKerron Morley witnessed these arrests. Morley reports that; Then they witnessed the abuse during these arrest when; "A few of the people picked up, received rough handling from the police". Morley claims; "In one case Colonel Broome and I intervened; in another case an officer of the police intervened and a third case the rough handling ceased before we could do anything about it". He then makes it clear that; "In my opinion the rough handling, though excessive was certainly not all of a vicious nature, and consisted mainly in striking the backside of the offending with truncheons...As for the beating up which took place afterwards, this was certainly most irregular, but in view of the fact that the police are comparatively untrained and that this was very likely to be the first civil disturbance in which they had taken part, I do not consider that their reactions were unexpected or unrestrained."

D S Kennard's account brings up an interesting point on 'viciousness' in British responses. He had arrived on the scene with a one Leicester Cotton.³²⁵ On our point of 'viciousness', Cotton reports; "On the grass there was a heap of men lying on their stomachs, about sixteen in all. Half a dozen police stood by. Every time one raised himself slightly or shifted he was set on to, and hit savagely with batons. On at least two occasions I saw policemen kicking the figures on the ground. Cotton goes on further; "Almost without

³²⁵ 1946. "Statement on the affray in Bras Basah Road February 15 1946 - Sd Leicester Cotton." *FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police.*

exception the men brought in were subjected to what appeared to me to be needless savagery. I have seen a number of similar round-ups in various countries, but none as ruthless as this". And finally; "When the police van and the ambulance arrived, none, as far as I could see, was able to climb unassisted. Several were covered in blood. One, with a smashed leg was lifted by stretcher into the ambulance. I also saw a dead man taken away from the far corner of the field".

Also on viciousness, the following report had been made to by McQ. Wright of the U.P of America, who was also a principal eye-witness of the events as well and was present alongside Kingsford-Smith.³²⁶ Upon arriving on the scene he witnessed; "...one fellow, a Chinese apparently, who was lying to the left at the corner of the plot as you face Cathay Building and one policeman was dragging one fellow by the heels, across the plot. We understood he was dead". Later on, in his report, Wright claims; "Kingsford-Smith and I walked over to see the "dead" man and found that he was shot through the throat and was still breathing, frothing at the mouth. Wright continued; "As we approached we saw four or more policemen around the group and from time to time they would hit one of the men on the ground with staves in their hands or with the butt of a rifle"

Mr. Noel Monks, the correspondent for the London Daily Mail in South East Asia was also present alongside Kingsford-Smith and Wright when they addressed 'the Major'. Monks reports; "I complained about the beating to a British Major in charge but he told me it was no affair of mine. I then remonstrated with one of the policemen as he was beating unconscious a Chinaman whose leg was hanging off as a result of a shot wound and he made to swipe me instead." Monks arrived on the scene at 11.20 am, and firstly witnessed, "Many hundreds of people were gathered around the sports green where 15 Chinese were being unmercifully beaten by the police as they lay on the ground.". On viciousness as well, he reports that "The beating continued for at least 15 minutes with thick wooden truncheons in full view of spectators until every one of the Chinese was unconscious." In the least, these testimonies (from individuals of different backgrounds - official sources, principal eyewitnesses, etc.) serve to conclude that some vicious force was involved given that the evidence points to similar conclusions.

³²⁶ 1946. "Statement by McQ. Wright." *FCO141/14380 Singapore: shooting of Chinese demonstrators by the police.*

4.6 A SUPREMO OF MANY NAMES

The civil government, prior to 1 April was bolstered further with wide military powers. It was designed to give the military authorities “certain powers of search and arrest, not normally held by military authorities under a civil administration”. On 27 March 1946, Headquarters Malaya Command had issued the following to their forces. The subject of the instruction was ‘POWERS OF ARREST UNDER THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT’.

Enclosed was a proclamation to confer certain powers of the Police upon members of the armed forces. The proclamation was proclaimed before the civil government takes over the administration on 1 April. It was emphasised that the civil police are primarily responsible for law and order and these powers have only been conferred in order to assist the police forces in the establishment of the civil administration. Mountbatten’s tenure as Supremo SEAC ends in April 1946 and with regards to the proclamation to confer powers to the armed forces, a proclamation ‘...TO CONFER CERTAIN POWERS OF THE POLICE UPON MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES’ was announced.³²⁷ The Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Malaya Peninsula, “...in exercise of the authority conferred upon” him, and “...by Warrant under the Military Administration (Delegation of Powers) Proclamation, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM AND ORDER” that:

Any member of the Armed Forces in uniform of or above the rank of sergeant shall have all the powers conferred upon an Officer of the Police not below the rank of Inspector by the provisions of section 62 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Federated Malay States and by the provisions of section 9 of the Customs Enactment, 1936, of the Federated Malay States whenever such member of the Armed Forces is acting in the course of such duties as he may be called upon to perform in assisting any lawfully constituted police force to maintain law and order or in assisting the Customs Department in carrying out the provisions of the Customs Enactment, 1936, of the Federated Malay States, whether or not any member of such police force or any officer of Customs is present when such powers are exercised.

Additionally:

³²⁷ British Military Administration. 1946. “Proclamation No. 76 issued by the British Military Administration, MALAYA.” Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 27 March.; This Proclamation may be cited as the Powers of Search and Arrest (Armed Forces) Proclamation.

Every member of the Armed Forces in uniform shall have the powers conferred upon police officers by section 23 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Federated Malay States and by Section 9 of the Customs Enactment, 1936, of the Federated Malay States whenever such member of the Armed Forces is acting in the course of such duties as he may be called upon to perform in assisting any lawfully constituted police force to maintain law and order or assisting the Customs Department in carrying out the provisions of the Customs Enactment, 1936, of the Federated Malay States:

Provided that any member of the Armed Forces who arrests any person under the provisions of this section shall without unnecessary delay make over the person so arrested to the police officer or in the absence of a police officer take such person to the nearest police station, whereupon if there is reason to believe that such person comes under the provisions of section 23 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Federated Malay States a police officer shall re-arrest him or if there is no such reason the person shall be released.

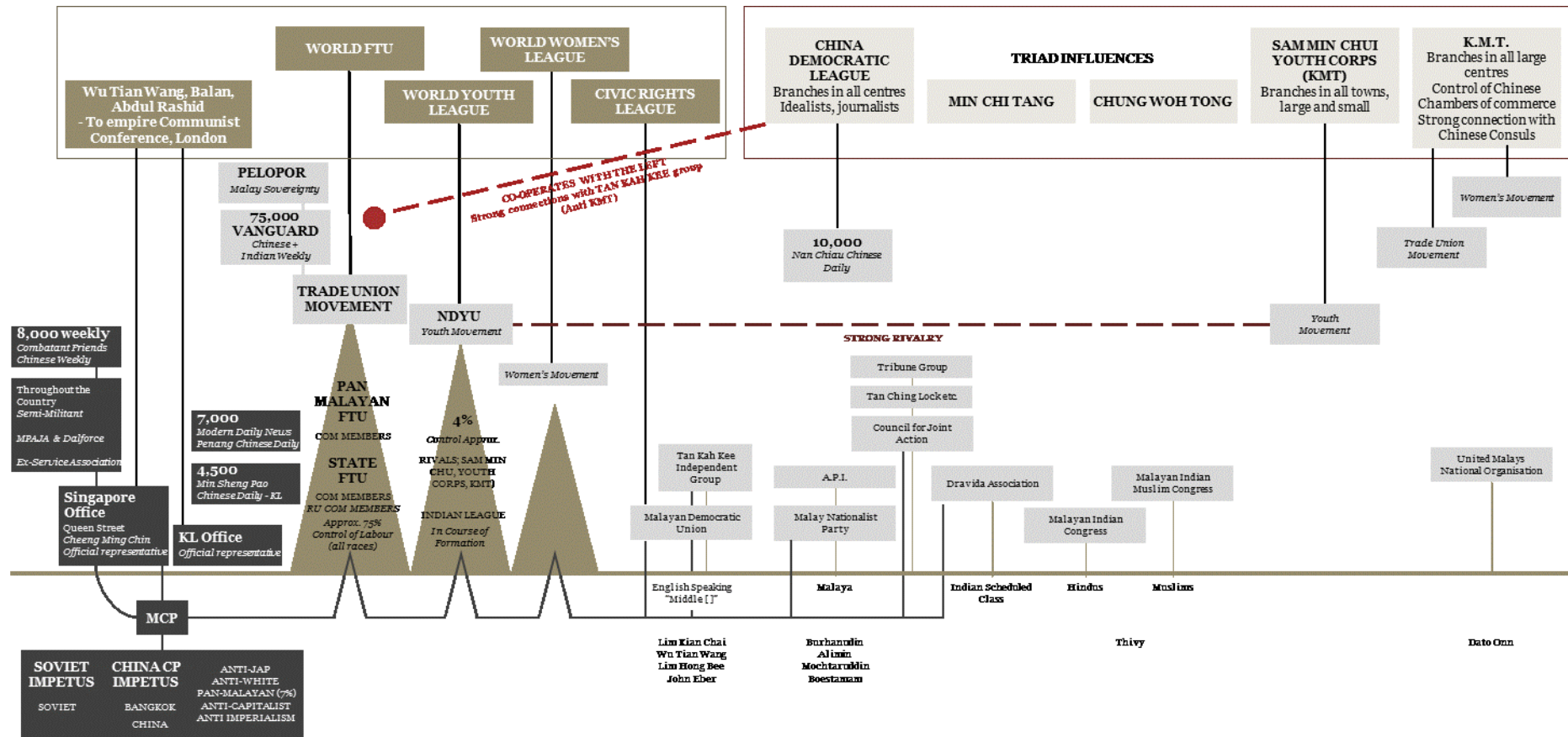
At Labis, an incident erupted where at least 15 were killed, and 48 wounded. A large crowd had gathered to listen to speeches delivered by two former MPAJA members – Ong Koon Sam and Chong Swee. The British army, called in to disperse the rally, fired into crowds.³²⁸ Three months later, at the trial for both individuals; Magistrate JU Webb, handed down punishments of 6 months in jail and a \$200 fine each, citing them instead responsible for “the loss of life” which “must be taken into consideration” over the entire incident. While in Mersing, as demonstrators protested against the killings in Singapore and Labis, 7 were killed and 26 wounded. The MCP was said to have called for a series of strikes throughout 1946 and that further from going around instigating trouble, the MCP only brought focus to existing and genuine grievances and demands from workers.

Abdullah C.D., around this time, was promoted within the ranks of the MCP to be a part of the Central Committee’s Jabatan Kerja Melayu (Malay Division). He was to be assisting Che Nan to form co-operation with PKMM and give assistance and support to them as well as organising Malay labourers and peasants a whole. The MCP would later organise a training school for all Malay cadres with veteran Alimin as the teacher. Adding to the description of events in 1946, Abdullah C.D. recounts the establishment of the Kongres Buruh Melayu (‘Malay Labourers Congress’) on 1 May 1946. Its establishment was the coming together of various Malay unions – labour, transport, and actors among others – across the peninsula. It was also attended by the PKMM. As of March 1947 – within a year of its establishment - it purportedly had 3,000 members, and when the Emergency was

³²⁸ n.d. *Malayan Union Secretariat File 20/46*.

declared in 1948, it had 6,000 members with 60 branches peninsula-wide. Abdullah continues to explain the formation of the multi-racial Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions with its leadership positions shared between Malay, Chinese, and Indian representatives. The PMFTU with an eventual number of 400,000 members went on to incorporate Malayan General Labour Union (MGLU) and the Singapore General Labour Union (SGLU), along with the Malayan Malay Labour Union which Abdullah C.D. helped to establish. Awareness for *Merdeka* among the female Malay population was also mobilised by PKMM when it established AWAS that stood for equality for women. Figure 6, adapted from an unmarked file from the Colonial Administration Records (Migrated Archives) - 8th Tranche (Malaya), illustrates the overall dynamics of the political situation during the period leading up to 1948.

Figure 6: The Political Situation in Malaya leading up to 1948



Source: Unmarked file from the Colonial Administration Records (Migrated Archives) - 8th Tranche (Malaya)

Table 1: Chinese Publications in Malaya (Accompaniment to Figure 6)

No.	Name of Publication	Readership / Circulation	Comments
1	Sin Chew Chinese Daily	30,000	Owned by the Tiger Balm tycoon, Aw Boon Haw, and was also KMT-inclined.
3	Sin Pin Chinese Daily, Penang	-	-
4	Nan Yang Chinese Daily	30,000	Edited by Wang Ching Kwang, a dominant figure in the SMCY Youth Corps, and controlled by Hokkien businessmen such as Lee Kong Chian, his brother George E. Lee and Tan Lark Sye.
5	Chung Shing (S) Chinese Daily	5,000	-
6	Kung Pho Evening Chinese Daily	3,500	-
7	Hwa Chao Evening Chinese Daily	1,000	Was reorganised and brought closer to the KMT in early 1947 and its circulation slowly rose.
8	China Press KL	5,000	-
9	Perak Chinese Daily News (Ipoh)	15,000	-
10	Sim Seng, Kwong Wah, Sin Po, Penang Dailies	5,000 (incomplete)	-
11	Modern Daily News	7,000	Penang based
12	Penang Chinese Daily	4,500	-
13	Min Cheng Pao Chinese Daily	-	Kuala Lumpur based

Source: Unmarked file from the Colonial Administration Records (Migrated Archives) - 8th Tranche (Malaya)

4.7 THE LEAD-UP TO THE 1948 SHOOTING WAR

'Double-ten' day of 1946 did not pass without incident. The government; a year apart since their clashes on the same date; continued to act in a biased manner in administering standards of law which should have otherwise been carried out uniformly. On 20 October 1946, Chai Pak Cheong, a representative of MCP, wrote to Governor Gent.³²⁹ He summarises the events of 10 October:

Trade Union, the Women's Union and other Associations of Sitiawan together held a meeting in Sitiawan to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Chinese Republic. On this day and the days following it several persons were beaten up and abducted by a gang of hooligans.

On October 10 at 12 noon, the Simpang Ampat Provident Association, the Sitiawan Women's Union and other Associations jointly held a meeting to commemorate the 35th, anniversary of the Chinese Republic at Nam Chiao Theatre, Simpang Ampat. The meeting was conducted in a peaceful atmosphere.

Later on 29 October, Yuen Pang Foong, the Chairman of the combined meeting of public institutions in Sungei Siput, Perak wrote to the Governor of the Malayan Union on behalf of the New Democratic Youth Corps, Sungei Siput; the Women's Union, Sungei Siput; the Sago Labourer Union Association, Perak; the MPAJA Ex-service Comrade Association Sungei Siput Branch; the Rubber Estate Workmen's Association Sungei Siput, Sungei Siput District Committee of the Perak Labour Union, and the All workers United Association Sungei Siput. They converged in claiming as Chai Pak Cheong did³³⁰, that:

Since the 10th of October, cases of assault abduction disturbing societies and associations, searching and intimidation have scoured one after another. The desperadoes who gathered in groups were armed with knives, sticks and bottles, and acts of violence were committed by them for a few days without a break in Sitiawan, Simpang Ampat, Kampong Koh, Ayer Tawar, Simpang Tiga, Lumut and Beting Lual. It was due to negligence of duty to maintain peace and order by the local Police force that left the place under a reign of terrorism and violence by the desperadoes.

Chai Pak Cheong then presents his allegations on the matter:

³²⁹ 1946. "From Chai Pak Cheong the representative of C.P.M to Governor Gent." *Malayan Union* 7949/46 1957/0620922. 20 October.

³³⁰ n.d. "Acts of violence committed by desperadoes in Sitiawan, From Yuen Pang Foong to Gent." 1957/0620922 *Translation of a Chinese Petition addressed to the Governor, Malayan Union.*

These incidents were reported to the police station at Sitiawan but little has been done by the police to check the dastardly sets of these hooligans, who encouraged by the apparent unconcern of the police have intensified their activities.

Consequently, the people of the town have come to the conclusion that the Officer-in-charge of the police force at Sitiawan is screening such acts.

We urge that it is the responsibility of the British Administration to preserve law and order in this country and to arrest and punish those responsible for the above-mentioned outrages, thus ending the reign of terror that now prevails in Sitiawan. Besides it is a shameful admission of failure if the British Administration cannot protect the lives and property of the people.

Thus, they submitted to His Excellency's notice, the following suggestions; (1) to request His Excellency to urge the Resident Commissioner of Perak to take drastic action to check such disturbance of the peace; and (2) to request the arrest and punishment of these hooligans. It had been alleged further that the police were conspiring against victims through abstaining from taking action in their aid.

The core of the matter at hand was highlighted by combined meeting of public institutions led by Yuen Pang Foong in their plea:

The people are afraid. Those who have been abducted by the desperadoes have disappeared and until now they are not to be found. The desperadoes still continue to act violently and they have no respect for the law. It will be remembered that the Government is well known for its administration of law. We earnestly hope that Your Excellency will take a serious view of such cases of violence and order the local authorities who are in charge of law and order to punish the desperadoes severely. By doing so, law shall be imposed and peace and order shall be maintained, and fears of the people shall be cleared. We pray for your well-being.

The Tanjong Malim New Democratic Youth Corps wrote to the Governor informing him that in connection with the unprecedented riots committed by gang desperadoes at Sitiawan and Dingdings in Perak, that these desperadoes being armed with knives and sticks, assaulted the inhabitants resulting in severe injuries on three persons; eight persons of the democratic institution were abducted and damages caused to the Labour Association and Women Association premises.³³¹ They pleaded for protection:

³³¹ 1946. "Translation of a Chinese letter dated 3.11.46 addressed to H.E. The Governor, Malayan Union." 1957/0620922. 3 November.

These people would not stand to reasons but take the law into their own hands, thus they are a menace to the safety of society, causing fear to the inhabitants. Because of the fact that the police officer in that area is unable to maintain peace and order, the desperadoes have turned from bad to worse. They defied the laws of the British Government. The repetition of riots caused by these desperadoes will affect the good name of the Government. The harm done to the Overseas Chinese in that area of Sitiawan and Dinding is by no means slight. The people are very much concerned in the matter. The British Government is responsible for the maintenance of peace and order; if drastic steps are not taken to curb the riots in time, I do not know what will happen to the Malayan society in the future.

By 30 October, several members of all the associations and Chinese clubs of other localities had also submitted petitions to the Government. These included, among others, the combined meeting of all associations and Chinese clubs of Tanjong Malim including Loh Yen Pin of the Labour Union, Tanjong Malim; Fu Aik of the MPAJA Ex-Comrade Association, Tanjong Malim Branch; the New Democratic Youth Corps, Tanjong Malim; and Wong Phin of the Overseas Chinese Women Association, Tanjong Malim.

The BMA is certainly not unique in its methods. The incoming administrations replacing the BMA displayed similar behaviour. Chin Peng describes the Malayan Union administration in action;

As our successes grew on the labour front, so did the strike-breaking efforts across our picket lines. Labour was supplied through special contractors who, in turn, hire gangsters to intimidate and crush our demonstrations. By taking no action against the contractors or the gangsters, most of who were drawn from Chinese secret societies, the colonial British signalled their tacit approval of strong-armed tactics against our unions...The MCP leadership was convinced, I think rightly so, that any move on our part to confront gangsterism with gangsterism would only provide the Government with the tailor-made excuse necessary to suppress and ultimately ban the Party.

Later, on 1 February 1948, as the Federation of Malaya³³² government - the replacement to the Malayan Union administration - was announced, and Gent's title of Governor would simply change to High Commissioner; Ah Dian³³³ a senior MCP lieutenant amidst the artillery booms of Gent's official installation ceremony not too far away from MCP's Klyne Street (now Hang Lekiu Road) premises, alluded to the sense of

³³² The Federation of Malaya Agreement was signed on 21 January 1948 at King House by the Malay rulers, and by Sir Edward Gent as the representative of HMG

³³³ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters

interchangeability of these constantly revised circumstances:

"I feel we have tried our best. We have used every peaceful means to further the cause of the masses. We have set up united front organisations. We have, in effect, the entire plantation workforce of the country under our control. It is the same situation in the mines. It is the same situation on the wharves, in the public transportation companies and with all essential services. Yet we had no impact whatsoever on even a single clause of the Constitution (referring to The Federation of Malaya Agreement) which is coming into force at this very minute."

Early 1947 witnessed pressure mounting on the colonial government throughout the year, with the colonial government occupied with demonstrations and gatherings across the country which were experiencing increasing native support. It was estimated that there were 291 major strikes, resulting in the loss to management of an estimated 696,036 man days in 1947. Chin Peng confirms, by pointing to 300 separate strikes erupting in Malaya and Singapore throughout the year, that near 700,000 man days were lost to strike action, creating extensive disruption to economic life. In July, Abdullah C.D. along with Rashid Maidin, Kamarulzaman Teh together with several other Malay leaders established the Barisan Tani Malaya whom on the eve of the Emergency had around 30,000 members. It was also in the same month that API was banned by the colonial government. Short makes mention that conditions in 1947 were probably nowhere near as anarchical as some estate owners made out but in 1948, the volume of industrial unrest grew. The pattern and form of violence was also changing. It was now more widespread and did not stop short of murder. The disputes developed through a pattern of series of affrays, strikes and lockouts; subsequently the government tightened its union regulations and in turn intensified the open challenge to its authority. Banditry was also rife during this period; where gangsters were operating with ruthlessness and near impunity, the police were unable to control the waves of crime from occurring.

The murder of Archibald Nicolson at 10pm on 6 October 1947, according to Chin Peng, would later become an emotional rallying point for the European planting community and would hasten the political polarisation between the expatriate planting, mining and business circles on one hand and the colonial administration on the other. Nicolson, a manager of the Gunong Pulai Rubber Estate, was murdered as he was driving home with his wife along the Skudai-Pontian road in the southern part of British Malaya. Allegedly, after losing control of his car and crashing due to an improvised roadblock at a double bend in the road, four masked men approached the car and one of them wrestled a gold watch from the

wrist of his wife, who unlike her husband had survived. When a second bandit demanded her diamond ring, she refused to hand it over and was hit on her head with the butt of a Sten gun.

There was also supposedly a rift growing between the Special Branch in Malaya and the regular police led by Commissioner Langworthy – the former urging for mass arrest of known Communists operating in towns and cities while the latter taking a less alarmist position. The death of Archibald Nicolson eventually led to the colonial government allowing all planters residing in remote and isolated areas to bear arms as well as for military patrols working with police in dangerous areas to be increased. Efforts at strikebreaking grew alongside the successes of the labour front. Chin Peng explains that employers as standard practice would employ gangsters from Chinese secret societies to intimidate strikers. The colonial British gave their tacit approval by not moving against these strong-arm tactics while, Chin Peng maintains, the MCP refrained from confronting these gangsters with similar methods fearing that it would turn into an excuse for the government to suppress them in return. It was to be the case that the MCP were convenient scapegoats for everything wrong during the period.

The year 1947 also saw the Malayan Union encountering Peninsula-wide Malay opposition, and the British were considering replacing it with a scheme favourable to the Malays. Negotiations were held only with representatives of the Malay rulers as well as of UMNO in 1946 to 1947 and resulted in the Federation of Malaya agreement on 1 February 1948. During the period of the Anglo-Malay negotiations, many non-Malay leaders, as well as Malay leaders outside of UMNO, especially those of the MNP, thought that their interests had been neglected. The British, who at the time were considering replacing the failed Malayan Union with a different arrangement, sought out only to negotiate with representatives of the Malay rulers as well as UMNO and thus a committee of four British representatives, six Malay civil servants, representatives of the Sultan and UMNO were convened to work behind closed doors on the Federation of Malaya plan. The Consultative Committee, chaired by H.R. Cheeseman, sounded the opinions of leaders of non-Malay communities and others who had not been represented in the earlier discussions. This committee reported to the Governor at the end of March and its recommendations were discussed first by the Anglo-Malay Working Committee in April and finally, by a plenary session of representatives of the

Malayan Union government, the rulers and UMNO.³³⁴

On 11 May, Gent forwarded the agreed scheme to the Colonial Office. After further exchanges between London and Malaya,³³⁵ Creech Jones submitted it to Cabinet.³³⁶ Cabinet then approved the revised constitutional proposals on 3 July, and on 21 July, a parliamentary paper announced a federation substantially similar to what was outlined in the Anglo-Malay Constitutional Proposals for Malaya.

In the same month, the PUTERA-AMCJA coalition produced the People's Constitutional Proposals. Published in English, Malay, and Chinese, this pamphlet advocated a common nationality and democratic self-government.³³⁷ The AMCJA was established in 1946 by those concerned about the prospects of the disestablishment of the Malayan Union, which had come into being on 1 April that year. The discontented groups met on 19 November 1946, to discuss the formation of a united front. Present at the meeting were; representatives of the MCP, the Communist-controlled newspaper Democrat, the MNP, and two other non-Malay leaders.³³⁸ The group agreed to form a united front and Tan Cheng Lock was invited to lead it.

On 14 December 1946, Tan Cheng Lock and John Eber, a Singaporean lawyer, jointly sponsored the founding of a Council of Joint Action (CJA) in Singapore with 3 basic principles; (1) The inclusion of Singapore in a united Malaya, (2) A self-governing Malaya based on a wholly elective central legislature, (3) A citizenship granting equal rights to all who made Malaya their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty. And then on 22 December 1946, other organisations in the Peninsula were embraced by the CJA, and was renamed Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Actions (PMCJA)³³⁹; AMCJA being the final iteration of this organisation. The new body was an umbrella organisation for a wide range of other

³³⁴ 1947. "Federation proposal": minute 7 of the 5th governor-general's conference in Penang about the consultative process." *CO 537/2165, ff 19-21*. 19 January.

³³⁵ 1947. "[Federation Proposals]: inward telegram no 160 from Mr M J MacDonald to Mr Creech Jones." *CO 537/2142, no 110*. 29 May.; 1947. "[Federation proposals]: outward telegram no 738 from Mr Creech Jones to Sir E Gent." *CO 537/2142, nos 111-112*. 11 June.

³³⁶ 1947. "Malayan Policy": Cabinet memorandum by Mr Creech Jones. Annex: citizenship proposals." *CAB 129/19, CP(47)187*. 28 June.

³³⁷ 1947. "Reactions to constitutional proposals: Counter proposals by PUTERA-AMCJA." *CO 537/2148*;

³³⁸ Present at the meeting were; Liew Yit Fun and Chai Pek Siang of the MCP, Gerald de Cruz representing the Communist-controlled newspaper Democrat, Ahmad Boestamam and Musa Ahmad of the MNP, and two other non-Malay leaders H.B Talalla and Khoo Teik Ee. The assemblage agreed to form a united front and Tan Cheng Lock was invited to lead it.

³³⁹ The PMCJA was a council made up of a number of trade unions, Communist organisations, and chambers of commerce as well as the Malayan Indian Congress and the Malayan Democratic Union. Members included; (1) Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions (PMFTU), (2) Malayan Indian Congress (MIC), (3) Malayan Democratic Union (MDU), (4) Malayan New Democratic Youth League (MNDYL), (5) Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army Ex-Service Comrades Association (MPAJA), (6) Women's Federation (W's Fed)

bodies campaigning against the cooperation between colonial officials and UMNO who argued for a united Malaya, including Singapore, with a common citizenship and generous provisions extended to non-Malays. Generally, the AMCJA found some common ground with the Malay radicals, although the MNP was faced with criticisms from UMNO that it had sold out to non-Malay interests however, at its core, both groups were hostile and unsympathetic to the exclusionary brand of UMNO nationalism.

To persuade the MNP to drop its demands for chair, the following principles, intended to appeal to the Malays, were added to the programme: (1) the Malay rulers should become fully sovereign and constitutional rulers responsible to the people through democratic institutions, (2) Islam and Malay customs should be solely under the control of the Malays, and (3) advancement of the Malay community should be given special consideration. The MNP, believing these principles insufficient to convince the Malays that the party was not sacrificing their interests, decided not to participate in the PMCJA, and on 22 February 1947, formed its own united front called PUTERA. AMCJA's partner; PUTERA consisted of the Malay Nationalist Party (MNP)³⁴⁰, Peasants Union (Barisan Tani Se-Malaya - BATAS), Angkatan Wanita Sedar (AWAS), and Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API).

Within its 60 pages, among others, were proposals for; (1) a common citizenship (with all citizens to be called Melayu); and (2) Malay as the sole official language; (3) equal rights and opportunities for all citizens irrespective of race, creed, colour, or sex; (4) the incorporation of Singapore into the Federation of Malaya; (5) election of all members of the legislature; (5) retention of the Malay rulers as constitutional monarchs; (6) control of Malay customs and Islam by institutions to be set up by the Malays themselves; (7) establishment of a council of races with power to delay for three years any legislation having racial implications.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ Locally known as Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM)

³⁴¹ The People's Constitution contained the following major proposals: 1. There shall be established a federation, to be called the Federation of Malay, or Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, consisting of 9 Malay states...and of Singapore, Penang and Malacca. 2. There shall be established a citizenship of Malay. This citizenship shall be a nationality, to be termed "Melayu", and shall carry with it the duty of allegiance to the Federation of Malaya. 3. All citizens of Malaya, regardless of race, creed, colour, or sex, shall enjoy equal fundamental rights and opportunities in the political, economic, educational, and cultural spheres. 4. There shall be a Federal Legislative Assembly...composed of representatives of the people directly elected by secret vote by citizens of the age of 18 and above not subjected to legal incapacity. 5. There shall be a Council of Races...consisting of two members of each of the following communities: Malay, Chinese, Indian, Eurasian, Ceylonese, Aborigine, Arab, European, Jewish and others...Every bill passed by the Assembly shall be sent to the Council, which shall thereupon consider whether or not such Bill is discriminatory. 6. There shall be a Conference of Rulers consisting of the High Commissioner as the representative of his Majesty the King, and their Highnesses the Malay Rulers...The Conference of Rulers symbolizes the Federation of Malay based on the partnership of His Majesty with Their Highnesses the Malay Rulers as sovereign constitutional monarchs. 7. All matters pertaining to the Muslim religion and custom of the Malays shall be outside the control and jurisdiction of any of the institutions created by...this Constitution or any other institutions which may hereafter be

The British paid no heed to the proposals put forward by the AMCJA-PUTERA coalition. When ignored, the coalition resolved to following the South Asian tradition, on 20 October 1947, to mount a ‘hartal’, or ‘mass strike’, or ‘peaceful stoppage of work’ following in the example of Indian freedom fighters. The date 20 October 1947, was also the day of the opening of the British parliament.³⁴²

Hartal is a term in many South Asian languages for strike action, first used during the Indian Independence Movement.³⁴³ A hartal is a mass protest often involving a total shutdown of workplaces, offices, shops, courts of law as a form of civil disobedience. In addition to being a general strike, it involves the voluntary closing of schools and places of business.³⁴⁴ This hartal, contrary to the suggestion of the unpopularity of the ‘left’ and their demands for *Merdeka*, led to the complete shutdown of Malaya, which perhaps struck fear into the British government. By late November 1947, the Secretariat, of the Malayan Union was circulating instructions to all Resident Commissioners, Commissioner of Police Secretary for Chinese Affairs, Director, C.I.D, Registrar of Criminals, and the Attorney General explaining the catch- all and wide-ranging nature of the orders that “...action under the Banishment Enactment or Banishment Ordinance applying to the State or Settlement concerned may be instituted against any person falling within the language of the appropriate section of that Enactment or Ordinance. For example, in any of the States which were formerly Federated³⁴⁵, action may be instituted “whenever it appears to the Resident Commissioner... after such enquiry or on such written information as he may deem necessary that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the banishment from the State of any person in the State is conducive to the good of the State or of any other Malay State...”³⁴⁶ It noted that, in particular, banishment action may be instituted against habitual criminals, persons convicted of violent crime irrespective of their length of residence in Malaya and persons falling within any of the

created by legislation, other than such institutions as may be created by, or at the instance of, the Malays for such purposes, and shall be the sole concern of the Malays. 8. The language to be used in the various institutions set up by [this constitution] shall be Malay, provided that any member of such institution may address such bodies in any other language, if he so desires.

³⁴² 1947. “[Federation proposals]: despatch no 119 from Sir E Gent to Mr Creech Jones.” *CO 537/2142, no 103*. 11 May.; 1947. “[Federation proposals]: despatch no 11 from Sir E Gent to Mr Creech Jones.” *CO 537/2142, no 104*. 11 May.

³⁴³ 1947. “[Chinese demand for constitutional review]: inward telegram no 367 from Mr M J MacDonald to Mr Creech Jones.” *CO537/2144, no 264*. 8 November.; 1947. “[Chinese demand for constitutional review]: inward telegram no 1185 from Sir E Gent to Sir T Lloyd.” *CO 537/2144, no 267*. 8 November.; 1947. “[Chinese demand for constitutional review]: outward telegram (reply) no 652 from Mr Creech Jones to Mr M J MacDonald.” *CO537/2144, no 271*. 12 November.

³⁴⁴ 1947. “[Federation proposals]: despatch no 119 from Sir E Gent to Mr Creech Jones.” *CO 537/2142, no 103*. 11 May.; 1947. “[Federation proposals]: despatch no 11 from Sir E Gent to Mr Creech Jones.” *CO 537/2142, no 104*. 11 May.

³⁴⁵ 1947. “Ref. No. (105) in M.U. Secret 9/46 Vol. II.” *1957/0577647*. Kuala Lumpur: Arkib Negara Malaysia, 17 November.

³⁴⁶ The appropriate sections for the other States and for the Settlements are:- Johore – S.3(1) of the Banishment Enactment (Enactment No. 14), Kedah – S.2 of Enactment No. 9 (Banishment), Kelantan – S.3 of the Banishment Enactment 1913, Perlis – S.2 (1) of the Banishment Enactment 1350 as amended by the Banishment (Amendment) Enactment 1356, Terengganu – S.3(1) of the Banishment Enactment (Cap.22), Malacca and Penang – S.4 of the Banishment Ordinance (Cap.25) as amended by Ordinance No 52 of 1941

following categories; whether the person concerned has been convicted or not, and irrespective of his length of residence in Malaya; murderers, abductors, kidnappers; extortioners, particularly extortioners who put persons in fear of death or grievous hurt; gang robbers and robbers, including persons who make preparations for committing or assemble to commit, robbery or gang robbery; housebreakers by night, criminal intimidators, persons who carry fire-arms (including grenades, ammunition or explosives), coiners or counterfeiters; persons trafficking in deleterious drugs, including opium, *chandu* or *Bhang*; persons trafficking in women or girls or who live wholly or in part, on the proceeds of prostitution; persons concerned in the promotion of unlawful gaming, members of a Triad society and persons who manage or assist in the management of any unlawful society (S. 13. Societies Ordinance M.U. Ord. No.11/47); persons who attempt to commit, or abet the commission of, any of the above offences; members of gangs or societies which commit any of the above offences, persons who unlawfully return from banishment. Action may be instituted by the Resident Commissioner without reference to the Governor, and may proceed as far as the issue of a warrant of arrest and detention or of detention (as the case may require) and the Banishment Enquiry may be ordered by the Resident Commissioner and completed. Without prior reference of the Governor, no action is to be taken in regard to the banishment of persons for undesirable political activities only.

The account from Chin Peng provides an insight into what transpired that led to the directive for an armed struggle - if any was issued at all. Between March and December 1947, Chin Peng claimed to be busy handling the aftershock of Lai Te's disappearance. He needed to restore MCP morale and explain the Lai Te saga to the rank and file of the Party. He took roughly four months to collect and consolidate feedback from State Committees as to how best to deal with the incident. Western historians, he claims, would assert that Chin Peng used this period to agitate for armed struggle, however Chin Peng - although he did not reject the inevitability of an armed struggle - at this time, thought that there was no need to transfer MCP's approach from what it had been doing in the past few years to the cause of an armed struggle. The MCP controlled labour unions throughout the land and its political influence and following was never stronger. In the final weeks of 1947, he claims, the Party estimated that there would be an eight to ten-year time frame before the MCP would launch into guerrilla warfare or, in his own words, "plans to rush into armed struggle couldn't have been further from our minds". As far as Chin Peng was concerned, the official recognition of MCP as a legal Party was a fundamental goal and it had been committed to this goal for some time

now, establishing open offices, abandoning secret residences and making officials readily identifiable in hopes of making it more convenient for the MCP to be contacted in case of any official business.

In March 1948, the Central Committee convened a meeting to decide once and for all whether the Party should continue a peaceful and constitutional politics, or revert to an armed struggle. Chin Peng would go on to explain that it was the attendance and the opinion of Laurence Sharkey, the leader of the strong Communist Party of Australia, who would heavily influence the thoughts of the members present at the meeting and the outcome of it all. The meeting discussed questions such as – how long a war with the British would last and what form would it take. The meeting again made no specific commitment to an armed struggle, but it did commit to a toughening of MCP position against strike-breakers, particularly the hired thugs. A directive was approved for the targeting and elimination of strike-breakers and all contractors employing thugs. The blunder, it was to be, was that MCP failed to define precisely who the intended target for eliminations were and as the directive went down to Party members, it opened the room for loose interpretations of the directives.

A follow up meeting on 5 May was convened concurrently in two separate locations for security reasons. It was at these meetings that the Central Committee decided to (1) set up state- by-state a guerrilla force nuclei, (2) analysed the best means of inserting them into the jungle, (3) decided on how to best retrieve weapons and ammunition from the secret jungle caches, (4) how to retrieve hardware into the hands of the guerrillas and (5) the problem of sustenance for the units spending lengthy periods in the jungle terrain. They also (6) decided on how to withdraw the Party's civilian cadres from towns and cities into rural areas that would be turned into bases similar to those that were supporting the anti-Japanese fighters. Party offices and newspaper and printing office of the party it was decided, would only retain skeleton staff sizes. Unfortunately for the MCP, the biggest mistake of the entire Emergency was made at this meeting when they wrongly estimated that the Party still had several months to spare before the British made their move – their earliest estimate was that the British would make a move on them in September. The deliberations for warfare was postponed and scheduled for another meeting in August to completely finalise everything – however as we know it today, this never materialised and the British instead made their move in June when they declared the Emergency.

Then on 1 May 1948, May Day rallies were carried out despite strong restrictions

from the police. In the same month, Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam met to revise strategy and decided that the old method of struggle is no longer effective, with the former preferring a less robust approach, while Boestamam felt that *Merdeka* ought to be achieved through blood, and an arm struggle. They had agreed that the British had embarked on a new strategy of side-lining the leftists and engaged with only the Sultans and UMNO. This change meant that the road for peaceful struggle would no longer be effective. Both Abdullah C.D. and Ahmad Boestamam would later share each other's position in deeming an armed struggle as necessary. Similarly, Chin Peng reports that the MCP politburo had convened a meeting to draw up a new Party position towards Federation. At the meeting, where comrade Ah Dian was first to suggest that every peaceful means have been exhausted, and that despite all of their influence among the common people, they had not been able to influence any part of the forming of the Federation or been at all consulted. It was only agreed in principle, at this meeting, of the principle of taking to the jungle.

Both Rashid Maidin and Abdullah C.D. received instructions from the Central Committee in June 1948 to make preparations for politico-military training of all their Malay cadres. It was Kamarulzaman Teh who would be placed in charge of preparing for this training. Both Rashid Maidin and Abdullah C.D. offer accounts as to what transpired during the training period. It was attended by all of MCP's Malay cadres and they were warned that they would be called to fight as soon as the British made their move. A leadership structure was then placed to help organise the Malay section of the MCP further. The training camp that lasted roughly two weeks was then followed up by what most modern accounts of the Emergency would consider as the start of the Malayan Emergency.

From the events exposed in this chapter, we conclude that the force which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war 1954 was regarded as 'exempted' force wrapped in a grand narrative despite the on-the-ground reality for the people. It will find that, there was more to just winning 'heart and minds' by way of ample use of force and coercion in turning the outcome of the war especially between 1948 and 1952. By using a more nuanced reading of native sources, this chapter has taken to task the simplistic grand narrative of the use of force, through looking at earlier iterations of the Supremo offices which were while not out rightly as such, yet exemplified the spirit behind the use of force in the full context of the people of Malaya and the Malayan Emergency. It has shown that there had existed a strong tendency toward strong centralisation for Malaya several years before the Emergency which led to several earlier episodes of violence with consequence that bleeds

right into the Emergency years (1948-1954). Any analysis of the Malayan Emergency which does not take into consideration these earlier events, and begin their analysis with the aforementioned June 1948 killings “as if the violence only began there” will inevitably result in a convenient but historically inaccurate narrative with ‘foul’ murder as the start point.

CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

This chapter will proceed from the previous chapter to show further that the force used in the conduct of COIN operations in order to conclude the shooting war 1954 were harsh. It will show that the overall apparatus, it seemed, to the native Malayan was indeed an apparatus of toughness and strong measures. The strong tendencies for centralised authority passed through the BMA, then to the Malayan Union, and finally into the Federation of Malaya government. From the events exposed in this chapter, we conclude that the ‘force-infrastructure’ which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war in 1954 is a type ‘exempted’ force couched in a grand narrative. The British colonial apparatus became less and less subjected or obliged to adhere to common sense principles which they were familiar with, but in the end gravitated away from. By using a more nuanced reading of native sources, this chapter has taken to task the use of force, through looking at the conduct of organising the COIN campaign in Malaya. This chapter will also present its findings on the Batang Kali Massacre in a section dedicated to deepening the discussions concerning the massacre. As mentioned in Chapter One, this research was able call to interview two of the only three known remaining living victims/witnesses of the infamous Batang Kali massacre - Mr. Oi, 71 and Mrs. Chong Koon Ying, 74. This section will present their experiences as well as conclude on several points of evidence of the incident which has thus far come to light. Amongst other things, they recounted what had happened on the day and recounted the conduct of the British officers. While a final judgement cannot yet be made over the overall inquiry of the massacre, the new points of evidence argued in this section will help increase our appreciation of the relative experience of ordinary and innocent men and women caught in the tragedy of the Malayan Emergency.

As mentioned in Chapter One, on 16 June 1948, Arthur Walker, estate manager of Elphil Estate in Sungei Siput, was murdered and 30 minutes later on the Sungei Siput Estate, 12 comrades besieged its main plantation office, raised the estate’s rubber stocks, and proceeded to murder John Allison and Ian Christian. A third attack saw a MCP killer squad kill a KMT foreman. Except for Ian Christian, the rest had a history of strikebreaking. Within hours, a state of emergency was declared in several districts in Perak and Johore which was later expanded to cover all areas of Perak and Johore and within 24 hours extended to the

whole of the peninsula.³⁴⁷

On 18 June 1948, when the Emergency was proclaimed for all Malaya; all leftist organisations were declared illegal and banned; the MCP, PKMM, PETA, AWAS, BTM, Hizbul Muslimin, NDYL, and other labour organisations were proscribed. Then, on 20 June 1948, the British undertook massive arrests of all comrades or members of leftist parties and organisations. They were either incarcerated, tortured, sentenced to death by hanging or exiled. Three important Malay MCP leaders were arrested; Kamarulzaman Teh on 20 June 1948, Abdullah C.D. on 10 July 1948, and Rashid Maidin also in July 1948; who later was sentenced to hang in 1951, but was pardoned to serve life in prison. The following Malay leaders were also arrested; Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al-Baqir, Cikgu Sabrun, Osman Bakar, Cikgu Muda, Cikgu Hamid, Ustaz Yahya Nasim, Taharuddin, Kamaruddin, Bizar Ahmad, Sutan Djenain, Khatijah Ali.³⁴⁸ We will return and delve further into the point of detention in Chapter Six.

On 21 June, the police launched a peninsula-wide coordinated raid on houses, estates, mines and offices suspected of housing any progressive leftists whether they were from the MCP, labour unions or among the Malays. An estimated 600 arrests were made and following this, progressive parties, labour unions and organisations were closed down. It was estimated that there were around 301 trade unions in June 1948 and this number had reduced to less than 100 by September the same year. Abdullah C.D. describes these arrests and claim that many MCP, PKMM, PETA, AWAS, and BTM members were arrested while others ran to the jungle to form guerrilla units. Incidentally, Chin Peng and PKMM leader, Dr. Burhanuddin managed to avoid arrest; however, individuals like Rashid Maidin, Ahmad Boestamam and Ishak Haji Muhammad were all detained. Under the Emergency regulations, according to Abdullah C.D., UMNO was the only Malay Party that was allowed to operate while the MCP, PKMM, PETA, AWAS, BTM and the Hizbul Muslimin were all proscribed. In his memoir, Rashid Maidin describes in detail his experience of getting arrested and his eventual encounter with the likes of Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ustaz Abu Bakar Al Baqir and other leftist leaders from MCP, PKMM and the rest. This dramatic and unexpected turn of events is best described by Chin Peng when he

³⁴⁷ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998 1998) CD: *Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.

³⁴⁸ Che Dat, Abdullah. 1998. *Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

disputes in his memoirs the suggestions that the killings of June 1948 gained the MCP an advantage. It must be kept in mind as well that Chin Peng claims to be in a disadvantageous position himself when the Emergency was declared as he had not planned nor had notice that the killings were going to take place and was subsequently clamouring for safety himself when the authorities came for him shortly after the declaration. The killings, he claims, pre-empted MCP's plans and undermined their efforts to withdraw cadres into well-organised underground networks and guerrilla armies into secret jungle bases. It disrupted the Party's efforts to consolidate essential links with their civilian supporters and what was basic to MCP's projections was the need to create a substantial element of self-sufficiency for both the military and civilian arms of the revolutionary movement before the armed rebellion could begin. Rather than give advantage to the MCP, the events of June 1948 instead forced the Party at the outset to be on the defensive and it would be some time before the initiative was to be seized by the anti-British movement.

The final three years before the Emergency really set the pace for what was to happen in 1948. The years between 1945 and 1947 proved to be watershed, witnessing an escalation of the labour situation in Malaya. To properly understand 1948, Abdullah C.D. offers to explain the developments within the labour movements in Malaya. According to Abdullah C.D., due to the strategy of the British, the proletariat class which emerged from Malaya initially came not from the Malays, but from the immigrant communities of the Chinese and Indians brought in by the British. These communities would be supplied by different arrangements; Chinese brought in through the Kuli Tienchin arrangements with the feudal Chinese government in China, while the Indians were supplied from questionable sources like British prisons and detentions camps. Traditionally, the British would maintain segregation among the races with the Malays excluded from being involved in the British industrial economy and reserved to farming, traditional agriculture and craftsmanship. The Chinese, on the other hand, were heavily involved in the tin mining industry, while the Indians kept to estates, railways and ports. However, World War Two appeared to have accelerated nationalism through unity in the anti-Japanese efforts.

In the immediate post-war period, Chin Peng claims that the British failed not only at finalising a status for the MCP, but also at clarifying if the pre-war Societies and Banishment Ordinance, which they never repealed, could be used against the MCP or any other movements. The 1940 Trade Union Bill required all unions to be registered and comply with strict regulations meant to create 'responsible' and 'non-political' unions that would not

challenge British colonial rule. It should be remembered that unions were gaining strength before the outbreak of World War Two. Abdullah C.D. goes on to elaborate that when the Japanese surrendered, the British took the opportunity to establish 'yellow' Malay labour unions in an effort to seize control of Malay labour unions. When the PKMM moved their offices from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur, the British had already formed the 'yellow' labour union in Selangor membered by civil servants of lower pay grade such as peons, clerks and teachers. However, this attempt at a controlled union failed as Abdullah C.D. eventually was able to reach a leadership position in the union and take the union in a different direction. This was a busy period for Abdullah C.D. who, at this point, was working on setting up Malay labour unions to encourage Malay participation. In Sentul, for example, Abdullah C.D. was able to convince the multi-ethnic labour population there to unionise and sympathise with the PKMM; the same occurred in Kuala Kubu Bahru. And as it was custom, labour unions everywhere were encouraged to join the General Labour Union, which in turn made the GLU a multi-ethnic organisation. At the same time, the PKMM was active in organising the Malay masses to support the cause for *Merdeka* through, among others, their official mouthpiece *Suara Rakyat*.

As the Cold War developed and the Chinese communist victory moved to a conclusion in China in 1949, the British repositioned their struggle for control in Malaya squarely within Cold War counter-communism, and thus despite all the developments outlined in the previous chapter, as well as the general dynamics of dissent, Gurney in 1949, while employing classic British demonising terminology of referring to anti-colonial resistance as "banditry", also insisted on a struggle against Communism interpretation.³⁴⁹ In mid-April 1949, Henry Gurney told Creech Jones that:

*...the lesson has not apparently yet been generally learnt that the answer to Communist terrorism equipped with modern arms is not the soldier but the policeman...It is of immense political advantage in restoring confidence if the inhabitants of this country can be organised and led to put their own security house in order, rather than have the impression that it is being done for them by troops on whose inevitable departure there will be no guaranteed of peace.*³⁵⁰

Gurney suggested that all military forces in any counterinsurgency campaign be "at the disposal of the Commissioner of Police and operated under his general directions."

³⁴⁹ Che Dat, Abdullah. 1998. *Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

³⁵⁰ 1949. "[Security situation]: Despatch (reply) no 4 from Sir Henry Gurney, British High Commissioner in Malaya, to Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies." CO 537/4751 no 80. 11 April.

Military commanders would, of course, determine tactical issues, but there could be no debate that ultimately the police commissioner was responsible for overall security operations. To facilitate the smooth operation of such civilian control, in the spring of 1949 Gurney had instituted a weekly conference attended by the army's GOC, the air officer commanding (AOC), the Chief Secretary, and the Naval liaison officer. The Malayan Secretary of Defence had also established an internal security committee whose membership included representatives from the police force, the military service, and various civilian departments. On 12 January 1950, Gurney wrote to Creech Jones, asserting that:

The enemy in Malaya is Communism, with all its implications, and is not merely some 3000 bandits.

On 23 February 1950, in a telegram to Creech Jones, Gurney suggested a radical departure in British counterinsurgency strategy in Malaya. He noted that he had for "some time" considered appointing a single civilian officer to "plan, co-ordinate and generally direct the anti-bandit operations of the police and fighting services." Gurney found himself in a complicated position; for political reasons, he could not allow the army to direct the campaign, but for practical reasons, the police had become unsuitable for the task at hand. How would a Police Commissioner direct against a "protracted guerrilla warfare"? It would require a civilian with the authority and respect to give directions to both the army's general officer commanding.

He, therefore, recommended that the government send to Malaya a high-ranking military officer, preferably retired, who would be appointed in a civil post with the following duties: (1) responsible for the preparation of a general plan for offensive action and the allocation of tasks to the various components of the security forces, (2) in consultation with heads of the police and heads of fighting services, he would decide priorities between these tasks and general timing and sequence of their execution, (3) exercise control through heads of police and fighting service who would work directly under the British High Commissioner and within the framework of the policy laid down by the Government, and (4) would be in close touch with civil authorities responsible for essential features of the campaign, such as settlement and control of squatters, propaganda, immigration control and settlement of labour disputes, and would have the right to make representation to the High Commissioner

in such matters affecting the conduct of the anti-communists campaign as a whole.³⁵¹ This person was Lieutenant General Harold Briggs.

Gurney pointed out that it had “been the practice in the past to hand to the military authorities the unpleasant job of restoring law and order,” the result often being martial law. Although, Gurney would have had in mind his experiences in Palestine, and argued that “the withdrawal of the civil power and substitution of military control represent the first victory for the terrorists,” as the civil administration would necessarily appear “too weak to carry on”. In 1946, Gurney was appointed Chief Secretary to Palestine, serving until the end of British rule there in 1948. Gurney was heavily involved in forming and executing British policy during the Jewish insurgency in Palestine. The result of his rearranging, remains, that a civil authority wielding in their hands emergency powers wields the same amount of force as a non-civil authority of any kind, in the same way the firepower of a gun remains the same whoever pulls the trigger. Our problem with contemporary apologists for empire, as Newsinger has pointed out, is their reluctance to acknowledge the extent to which imperial rule rests on coercion, on the “policemen torturing a suspect and the soldier blowing up houses and shooting prisoners”.³⁵²

Even in February 1949, Gurney reported that the British Security Forces were “killing bandits at the rate of 3 or 4 a day, and arresting about 50 a day,” with a corresponding “steady flow” of surrendered arms.³⁵³ The Colonial Office likewise reported that by 1 February 1949, 468 Communist insurgents, 457 of whom were ethnically Chinese, had been killed in the operations, at the cost of 371 civilian casualties, 258 of whom were Chinese, with the civilian kill rate at 44 per cent.³⁵⁴ On 4 January 1949, the Times published figures in the wake of the Batang Kali official press statements that from 16 June 1948 until the end of the year, 409 ‘bandits’ had been killed and 268 captured. Civilian casualties, of which more than two-thirds were Chinese, consisted of 330 killed and 194 injured; 24 Europeans were killed and 14 wounded. A Memorandum by the Colonial Office on the Security Situation in Malaya as of April 1949, provides statistics that since the armed attacks of the Malayan Communist Party began in June 1948, the number of fatalities included 386 civilians and 197 members of the

³⁵¹ 1950. “Telegram from Sir Henry Gurney, British High Commissioner in Malaya, to Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies.” FO 371/84477. 23 February.

³⁵² Newsinger, John. 2006. *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. London: Bookmarks, 13; See also Newsinger, John. 2002. *British Counterinsurgency From Palestine to Northern Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁵³ 1949. “Letter for Sir Henry Gurney, British High Commissioner in Malaya, to Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies.” CO 537/4750 no 35. 28 February.

³⁵⁴ 1949. “Notes on Recent Developments in the Federation of Malaya.” *Colonial Office Memorandum No. 27*. Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Macmillan Papers, February.

“security forces”,³⁵⁵ noting that in September 1948, it was estimated that “bandit strength in Malaya was between 3,000 and 5,000”, that security forces had “killed or captured 800 of the enemy” and “more than 10,000 persons had been arrested, detained or deported”.³⁵⁶

Between 1 July 1948, and 30 November 1949, they had killed 942 insurgents, wounded 303, captured 569, and accepted the surrender of 241.³⁵⁷ Of those captured, the government had tried and hung 77. The security forces had also seized 3,600 rifles, 45 machine guns, 1,488 hand grenades, and 565,000 rounds of ammunition.³⁵⁸

5.1 FIRST STAGES OF ORGANISING DEPORTATIONS AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

During 1948 to 1949, in over a year of the Emergency, the Government had rounded up and housed in detention camps all those who were in areas where they might be susceptible to guerrilla demands for aid, assistance and support.³⁵⁹ By 6 July 1948, the Chief Secretary had issued 892 orders permitting detention without trial.

The main tool of the security forces was the use of detention and banishment which Gurney described as a ‘relatively ruthless operation’, and that it involved:

*...wholesale arrest and detention and possible repatriation of all persons found residing within certain areas in which the bandits are and have been living among and on the population*³⁶⁰

Between June and December 1948, the British had essentially passed further repressive legislations, uprooted thousands of squatters, destroyed their crops, burned their homes, herded them to any convenient and practicable location disregarding the human cost of the act, and cramped into detention camps all those detained, prior to shipping them back

³⁵⁵ 2012. CO 1827/2011. 8 May.

³⁵⁶ On 4 January 1949 the Times published figures in the wake of the Batang Kali official press statements that from 16 June 1948 until the end of the year 409 ‘bandits’ have been killed and 268 captured. Police service and [military] casualties were 482 killed and 404 wounded. Civilian casualties, of which more than two-thirds were Chinese, were 330 and 194 injured. Twenty-Four Europeans were killed and 14 wounded

³⁵⁷ Grob-Fitzgibbon, B. 2011. *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire (Britain and the World)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Gurney, Henry. 1949. “Federation of Malaya, ‘Speech to the Legislative Council’, 29 September 1949.” In *Communist Banditry in Malaya: Extracts from the Speeches of Sir Henry Gurney, October 1948 to December 1949*, by Henry Gurney. Federation of Malaya: Department of Public Relations.; 1948. “Gurney to Lloyd.” CO 537/3758, 8 October.

³⁶⁰ 1949. “Law and order in the Federation.” *Annexure A to Minute of British Defence Co-ordinating Committee (Far East), 16th Meeting*. CO 537/4773, 1949 January.

to their country of origin.³⁶¹

In the beginning, the Government employed detention and deportation tactics to deal with the squatter problem. To accommodate these uprooted people prior to deportation or release, prisons were emptied of their 'legitimate' inmates. Former immigration depots – for example, Pulau Jerjak, Penang and St. John's Island, Singapore – were also converted to meet this purpose. They were ran to capacity and to further release the pressure on the system, detention or concentration camps were constructed in Malacca, Johore and Perak (we will discuss detention further in Chapter Six). However, carrying out the policy of detention and deportation to its logical conclusion would entail the removal of the entire squatter population, approximately 300,000 persons, as almost every one of them was supposedly a 'willing or unwilling' helper of the guerrillas, a task that was nothing short of monumental.³⁶² Further, the Chinese ports, after 1949, were closed and they were no longer a viable destination for deportation.³⁶³ By February 1953, just under 40,000 people had been detained for more than 28 days, and by March 1953 more than 29,000 Chinese had been sent to China, with peaks of 10,262 in 1949 and 8,719 in 1951. By 1955, more than 31,000 had been 'repatriated' to China. The affected squatters would typically experience excessive hardships through separation of families and loss of crops and chattels due to the process of deportation. The result was a stiffening in attitude among the squatters and increasing resentment and hostility toward the Government. Thus, a more constructive plan based on examination of the situation of the squatter problem was necessary.

As early as in December 1948, a "Squatter Committee", under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary, Sir Alec Newbould, was set up to examine the facts of the squatter problem and to make recommendations for its solution. The Committee's report was completed in January 1950.³⁶⁴ Its principal recommendations were: (1) wherever possible squatters should be settled in areas already occupied by them, (2) where this was not possible, they should be resettled in an alternative suitable area, (3) any squatter refusing settlement or resettlement should be repatriated, (4) Emergency measures to deal with the security problem of certain areas should be supported by administrative measures designed permanently to re-

³⁶¹ 1951. "Squatter Report, pp. C 535-539; pp. B 90-91." *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1950/1951)*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.; n.d. "Paper No. 24." *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1955/54)*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. 6-18.; 1951. *Federation of Malaya Communist Banditry in Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur. 29-120.

³⁶² Ibid

³⁶³ 1949. "Federation of Malaya Annual Report." 210-211.

³⁶⁴ 1951. "Squatter Report, pp. C 535-539; pp. B 90-91." *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1950/1951)*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers

establish the authority of Government, (5) legal means should be introduced to provide for the eviction of squatters by summary process. Newbould's 'Squatter Committee' and their recommendations became the forerunner to the 'New Village' plan.

The first organised resettlement scheme was located at Mawai, in Kota Tinggi District, and was to cost M\$422,000 with a capacity for 2000 families, each with three acres of agricultural land. Mawai received its first batch of settlers on 27 October 1949. There was an earlier transfer of squatters in Perak from the Sungei Siput area, in October 1948, to an unprepared site in Pantai Remis. However, it was more for the clearance of a battle ground rather than a relocation of a section of the community.³⁶⁵ Johore's lead was followed by the other States, and 20 squatter settlement and resettlement schemes were planned or begun between 1949 and 1950. Furthermore, with the exception of Johore, the MCA had difficulty in raising funds, so that most of the schemes did not pass beyond the planning stages, or at most the teething state. Ten of these schemes were abandoned; the remainder were later expanded into New Villages under the Briggs plan. The Mawai scheme in Johore had to be abandoned in 1952, mainly due to poor security. Nonetheless, by 1952, more than 500,000 out of Malaya's population of 5-6 million in 1948 were in resettlements or New Villages.³⁶⁶ The majority of those resettled were from the 38 per cent of the population who were Chinese, a percentage slightly outstripped by the largest single category of Malays. A further 600,000 rural workers (including Malays and Indian rubber tappers) had been 'concentrated'.

5.2 ORGANISING THE COUNTERINSURGENCY

In a memorandum to the Cabinet, the Secretary on 19 July 1948, instructed that the regular police force be expanded by 3,000 local and other ranks and 85 officers, most of whom will be looked for from the Palestine Police. Further, a considerable additional force of Special Constabulary was being raised consisting of voluntary part-time constables, and paid full-time constables. The strength of the Special Constabulary was between two and three thousand: the ultimate target will be in the region of six thousand. This plan will require up to 500 Palestine constables for training and inspection. In Singapore, the Governor was to recruit twenty-five additional commissioned police officers, of whom one would be a

³⁶⁵ PFLC 1948/9 – Perry Robinson, p. 85.

³⁶⁶ Hack, Karl. 2015. "Detention, Deportation and Resettlement: British Counterinsurgency and Malaya's Rural Chinese, 1948–60." *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43 (5): 611-640.

Gurkhali-speaking officer, four locally promoted Asiatic inspectors, and twenty officers selected from Malaya, with the Secretary “...endeavouring to obtain as many as possible from among the ranks of the former Palestine Police”.³⁶⁷ In his memoir, Abdullah recognises that in the month of September 1948, the Federation of Malaya government appointed “an undertaker involved in the killing of Palestinians during his tenure as Secretary to a colonial regime, replacing Gent; with N.G. Gray who had Palestinian blood on both his hands, replacing Chief of Police Langworthy, along with police officers with experience in Palestine.”³⁶⁸

However, was this simply a problem of a ‘Communist menace’? Consider that the PUTERA-AMCJA was created to continue to demand for independence and counter the Federation of Malaya Agreement which had the effect of extending the presence of the colonial regime for another 12 years until 1957. It was also instructed that as these additional police and other locally recruited forces become operational, two Battalions of the Malay Regiment and one Squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment (Malaya) at the time employed on static guard duties, can be released for operational roles. In addition, some 1,000 Gurkha troops now used as guards at strategic points could be returned for further training. In addition to that, 600 special constables and a considerable number of unpaid part-time volunteers were raised in Singapore. The choice of the Palestine Police Force is indicative – Britain had failed miserably to assert its will there. These were likely to be hardened officers, willing to take a tough line. In the context of a tired post-war Britain, if the official position of the Malayan Government was that those bandits were operating and enjoying support on the fringes of Malayan society, then it had surely mobilised rapidly to ready itself as if to meet a more sizeable or formidable enemy, unless, of course, it simply mobilised to demonstrate overwhelming force.

In August 1948, three Regiments of the Guards Brigade arrived: the Coldstream Guards, the Grenadier Guards, and the Scots Guards. The British military deployed additional units in 1949 and 1950, including the Green Howards and the Suffolk Regiment. In January 1949, the police had been increased from its June 1948 composition of 9000 from all ranks to 245 officers (chief inspectors and above), 237 inspectors, 500 British sergeants

³⁶⁷ 1948. “The situation in Malaya Copy No.31.” *Secret CP. (48) 171 Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*. 1 July.

³⁶⁸ See Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998 1998) CD: *Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.

(no Malays were authorised to hold this rank), and 14, 291 constables.

The build-up of the security forces was on such a large scale that the British Survey of June 1952 stated that:

“...in some areas there is an armed man to police every two of his fellows, and more than 65 for every known terrorist.”

Since the state of emergency declaration over Malaya on 18 June 1948, while regarded as essentially a civil operation, the overwhelmingly Malay police mushroomed in the three years following 1948 from about 10,000 to a force of approximately 160,000 (including special constables, part-timers and home guards).³⁶⁹ Oliver Lyttelton, in a Cabinet memorandum, proposed a shake-up of the police, including changes at the top, and in January 1952, Colonel W. N. Gray was replaced by Colonel Arthur Young, Commissioner of the City of London Police, who also later served as Commissioner of Police in Kenya during the Mau Mau rebellion.

In April 1950, General Harold Briggs, who had jungle warfare experience in Burma, was appointed as Director of Operations to replace Boucher (we will discuss Briggs further when we discuss New Villages). From then on, the British with their loyal UMNO elites took military action. This led to a dramatically increased army presence (Malayan population at the time was roughly only 5 million) of 400,000 soldiers, 77,000 police officers, 320,000 reservists including Auxiliary Police. There were – three Australia, three New Zealand, eight Gurkha, one Kenya, one North Rhodesia, one Nyasaland, one Fiji, and 50 British battalions in Malaya.³⁷⁰

The scale of ‘force-infrastructure’ which Briggs intended to put into place is illustrated in Directive No. 1 and Directive No. 2. The outline of future anti-bandit policy in the Federation of Malaya is contained in the paper reference number T.S. 27/1/50/1A,³⁷¹ and the purpose of Directive No. 1 of 16 April 1950 was to “initiate action to implement this policy”.

Among other things, a Federal War Council was to be formed with the following composition: the Director of Operations, the Chief Secretary, the General Officer Commanding, the Air Officer Commanding, the Commissioner of Police, and the Secretary

³⁶⁹ 1951. “Malaya: Cabinet memorandum by Oliver Lyttelton. Appendices I-XV.” CAB 129/4, C(51)59. 21 December.

³⁷⁰ See Ghows, Muhammad Azzam bin Muhammad Hanif. 2006. *The Malayan Emergency Revisited 1948-1960s*. AMR HOLDING Sdn Bhd.

³⁷¹ 1950. “Director of Operations Malaya: Directive No 1.” CAB 21/1681. 16 April.

for Defence, with a Secretariat in the Office of the Director of Operations, Federal Secretariat, Kuala Lumpur. It should be noted that in October 1950, the High Commissioner assumed the chairmanship of the council and the council was expanded by the addition of two Malay ‘unofficials’ (Keeper of the Ruler’s Seal and Dato’ Onn), a Chinese unofficial (Dato’ Tan Cheng Lock) and a European unofficial (Mr. G D Treble, a Pahang planter). Moreover, both State and Settlement were to set up a State War Executive Committee with the following composition: the *Mentri Besar* (or ‘Resident Commissioner’), the British Adviser, the Chief Police Officer, and the Senior Army Commander.

A permanent Executive Officer was appointed by the State or Settlement Committee who then set a full time Secretary to have the particular task of co-ordination of manpower under the direction of the Committee. Each Committee will appoint its own Chairman. On the civilian side, it was considered that the better course would be for the British Adviser to concentrate his efforts solely towards the prosecution of the campaign, since the *Mentri Besar* would have to administer the State and be responsible for making State resources available to the War Committee. State Executive War Committees was to refer all matters of Emergency policy direct to the Federal War Council (Office of the Director of Operations, Federal Secretariat). Other matters were taken up directly with Heads of Federal Departments concerned, with copies, where appropriate, to the Director of Operations.

The permanent Executive Office was attached to the Police and will normally work in or alongside the Police operations room. All secret correspondence and documents handled by the War Executive Committee was, for convenience, to be channelled through the Police headquarters. It was the responsibility of the Federal War Council to produce policy and to provide the State and Settlement Executive Committee with all the resources that they require that can be made available.

It was the responsibility of the State and Settlement Executive Committees to wage the “war” in their own territories. Everything possible would be done to ensure that they are in no way hampered and can be really executive in nature. State and Settlement Governments had to make available to them such money as can be made available from projects non-essential to the Emergency and should make available to them the full resources of the State or Settlement including manpower. The State or Settlement Governments would not hesitate to state their further requirements to the Federal Government so that through them allocation of all necessary funds may be made without delay. State Executive War Committees should

ensure that all their manpower resources are harnessed to reinforce the Administration and the Police and to relieve executive officers as much as possible from routine matters to enable them to concentrate their whole time on Emergency matters.

Similar bodies were set up in Districts or Police circles (which cover several Districts), but while their composition varies, the basic membership includes the District Officer, the Officer Commanding the Police and the local Military Commander. Collectively, the War Executive Committees provided a direct chain of command from the Director of Operations down to District level.

With regard to tactics, Directive No. 1 instructs that the aim was firstly; (a) to dominate the populated areas and to build up a feeling of complete security therein which will in time result in a steady and increasing flow of information coming in from all sources. Secondly, (b) to break up the Communist organisation within the populated areas. Thirdly, (c) to isolate the bandits from their food and information supply organisations which are in the populated area, and finally (d) to destroy the bandits by forcing them to attack us on our own ground.

To these ends, (a) the police force was to give top priority to fulfilling their normal functions in the populated areas, (b) the Army was to maintain a permanent framework of troops, deployed in close conjunction with the police, to cover those populated areas which the police cannot themselves adequately cover entailing a series of strong posts whereon patrols will be based, and that (c) the Civil Administration was to strengthen to the maximum extent possible their effective control of the populated areas by increasing, duplicating or trebling as necessary, the number of District Officers and other executive officers “in the field” and stepping up to the maximum extent possible in all areas where they are needed for the provision of the normal social services that go with effective administration; e.g. Schools, medical and other essential services, etc.

Super-imposed on this framework, the Army was to provide striking forces whose first priority task will be to dominate the jungle up to about five hours journey from potential bandit supply areas. This was to entail Army units establishing their headquarters in the populated areas, and thereby increasing the sense of security in those areas, and with their sub-units deployed and living in the fringes of jungle up to a distance of about three hours march from the roads and main jungle paths. These sub-units were to, by patrols and ambushes, dominate the tracks the bandits would have to use to make contact with their

information and supply organisations and thereby kill or capture the bandits or force them to leave the area.

These Army striking forces were put into each State or Settlement in turn, on agreed order of priority. It was important that the Civil Administration and the Police network, supported by the permanent framework of troops, should remain strong to ensure that, when the Army striking forces move on in due course to other areas, bandits cannot return to their old haunts with impunity. The “populated areas” referred to in the above paragraphs include the labour lines of estates, mines, etc. and squatter areas and it is imperative that plans for regrouping, resettling or removing these areas to ensure that their inhabitants can in fact be brought under effective administrative and police control are proceeded with the greatest drive and energy and that steps are taken to ensure that considerations of finance and land problems do not delay them.

Priority for operations was given firstly to Johore (maximum), and Negri Sembilan, and then Pahang. Later in Directive No. 2, on ‘Allotment of Security Forces to States and Settlements - Priorities’, Briggs notes that priority allotment of troops to permit full domination of States in turn has been issued by the General Officer Commanding Malaya District, as follows; by 1 June, 1950 - Johore, by 1 August, 1950- Negri Sembilan. Once sufficient security has been assured in Johore and the Civil Administration and Police are sufficiently established there to ensure against any further recrudescence of banditry, reserves from that State will be super-imposed on the “framework” troops in Selangor and Pahang. He notes; “Speed is a very vital factor as there is a danger that troops may be required elsewhere in emergency and the fullest use must be made of their presence in Malaya.”

On a concluding point, Directive No. 1 ends with “Matters now under consideration”, and amongst the matters now under active consideration were; “(1) Revision of penalties for crimes affecting the Emergency, for example, death penalty for bandit food agents and money collectors, imprisonment, without any option; in addition to fines for stealing rubber, tin, copra, etc. and severe penalties for carrying unauthorised identity cards. (2) Control of night movement and of all unauthorised movement. (3) Registration of households and surprise checks. (4) Surprise checks of passengers on trains and buses including effective examination of identity cards. And, (5) control of food including the control of tapioca.” Malay radicals who were arrested and found guilty of the possession of firearms and ammunition or of having committed serious acts of violence against the security forces were not spared the sentence of

death by hanging.³⁷² Directive No. 2 of 12 May 1950 gives us a further sense of the scale of operations.³⁷³ Harold Briggs instructs in paragraph 17:

The intention is for the Security Forces to dominate the populated and potential bandit supply areas. Those, apart from established villages, include uncontrolled squatter areas, unsupervised Chinese estates and timber kongsis, with emphasis on the jungle fringe extending to about five hours march from these areas.

Later in 1953, the British High Commissioner, General Sir Gerald Templer, would come to admit that:

*...main weapon in the past four years has been ... the sevenfold expansion of the Police and the raising of 240,000 Home Guards and of four more battalions of the Malay Regiment.*³⁷⁴

As for the Police Force, Directive No. 2 makes clear that; “The Police Force (consisting of Regular Police, the Special Constabulary and Auxiliary Police) is Government’s principal instrument for the maintenance of Civil Authority.” Their main responsibilities are; (1) the protection of life and property. (2) The enforcement of the laws of the Federation. (3) The prevention, detection and prosecution of crime. (4) Quick action in order to quash any anti-Government or criminal activity. (5) The informing of Government promptly on all matters affecting the internal security of the Federation, whether subversive, political or criminal. (6) Close co-operation with other organisations dealing with intelligence matters affecting the Federation.

The ‘method’ in which the police force are to ensure the above are as follows; (1) the domination of the populated areas is the primary task of the Police. They will be deployed into these areas to the maximum extent compatible with their safety. In principle, no populated area of any size or importance is to be left without police or military protection. (2) New Police Stations or posts will be established in villages, squatter areas and other populated areas in which police are not at present established. The location of these new Stations will be co-ordinated with civil plans for squatter resettlement. And (3) new Stations or Posts will be established in populated areas in the following order of priority: villages without police, squatter areas which are to be concentrated in their present areas by the civil

³⁷² 1950. ““Bandit Hanged”,” *The Straits Times*. October 1.; n.d. “Death Of Prisoners & Detainees – Report Of 1948 & 1949.” 1957/0305268. Arkib Negara Malaysia.; Muhammad, Ishak Haji. 1996. *Memoir Pak Sako: Putera Gunung Taban*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

³⁷³ 1950. “Director of Operations, Malaya. Directive No 2.” *CAB 21/1681/MAL(50)10*. 12 May.

³⁷⁴ 1953. “*The Protection of Estates and Mines, Director of Operations Malaya*.” 8 May.

authorities, and finally ‘other’ populated areas.³⁷⁵

Police Station complements in villages will comprise Regular Police and Special Constables. Briggs also instructs the establishment of a volunteer force as *Kampong* Guards (‘Village Guards’). The establishing, arming and training of *Kampong* Guards is a police task. Where necessary, a proportion of the personnel in each squad may be issued with rifles, the proportion to shot guns not exceeding five to one. In cases where rifles are issued, a police post must be formed in the *kampong* with a complement of about five Special Constables to ensure unrelaxed supervision of weapons while owners are at work. Where practicable, the Special Constables so appointed should be of the local *kampong*; and the squads considered within the police framework. Initially, this can apply fully in Johore and Negri Sembilan but it would be extended to other States and Settlements as arms, etc. become available.

As for security measures, maximum pressure must be exercised where necessary by use of the following security measures; (1) Curfew of towns and villages. (2) Closure of roads and waterways to all traffic at night. (3) Rigid enforcement of Emergency – Registration of Labour – Regulations, 1950. (4) Closure of timber cutting *kongsi* (a ‘Kongsi’ is Chinese for a barrack-like communal dwelling made of bits of wood and atap, lalang or zinc, bare laterite roads and incomplete drains). (5) Erection of improvised fences and barricade around villages, *kongsi*, labour lines and police stations. (6) The Emergency Regulations (L.N 70/1950) for restriction of movement of foodstuff. (7) The Emergency Regulation for the restriction of Residence and exclusion of individuals from an area. (8) The detention of persons under Emergency Regulations 17(1).

As for the Army, they are operating in support of the civil power. The priority task of the Army “...is to dominate the jungle fringes in areas in which the bandits are being maintained with food and money”. Briggs instructs; “To this end, Army units will normally be sited with their headquarters and mobile reserves located in the populated areas, thereby assisting Police in their primary task, and with their sub-units based in the jungle up to a distance of about three hours march from the potential bandit supply areas and from those

³⁷⁵ New police station or posts will be established in villages, squatter areas and other populated areas in which police were not at the time of the directive present. The location of these new Stations will be co-ordinated with Civil plans for squatter resettlement. New stations or posts will be established in populated areas in the following general order of priority; (1) Villages without police. (2) Squatter areas which are to be concentrated in their present areas by Civil authorities. (3) Other populated areas. (4) Police stations complements in villages will comprise regular police and special constables. (5) Kampong Guards – the establishing, arming and training of Kampong Guards is a police task – where necessary; proportion of the personnel in each squad may be issued with rifles.

bases to dominate, by ambushes and patrols, all the tracks in their vicinity.”

Directive No. 2, after outlining the financial situation, also notes that the “War Executive Committees should know that there is no shortage of Secret Service Funds for payment of rewards”. It instructs that rewards should be according to results, and in proportion to the real risk ran. The aim of operations was now framed with the object of making the obtaining of information easier, more abundant and with less risk, and this should be given serious consideration in view of the fact that the reduced amounts for the future may be difficult.

Finally, and crucially, on a legal point, he notes what those in the legal profession consider as the ‘spirit’ of the law that “Magistrates are being informed of such offences as are deemed due to the Emergency to be ones where leniency is inadvisable”. With regards to their legal position he instructs that; on 1 June 1950, the mandatory death penalty for anyone who demands, collects or received supplies for bandits will be introduced. A further, imprisonment (we will visit the issue of detention in Chapter Six), without option of a fine, is being considered for the offence of stealing such items as rubber, copra and tin.

In general, by 1950, the British had totally militarised Malaya and geared itself for a ruthless suppression of any resistance, communist or otherwise. Regular police force tripled in size from 9,000 to 31,164 by 1952.³⁷⁶ The Emergency Regulations also allowed the authorities to recruit three additional native Emergency Forces: Special Constables, Auxiliary Police and Home Guards. The Special Constables police reached their peak figure of 44,117 in 1953. The numbers of auxiliary police and home guards came to 86,000 in 1951 and nearly 250,000 in 1953, respectively.³⁷⁷

After their essential basic training, these new police and other forces were used primarily for guard duty. Assuming that each policeman or paramilitary had at least two dependants—and many married men would have had more—then in 1953 perhaps one in every seven or eight people among the approximately five million inhabitants of Peninsular Malaya (including the Straits Settlements) would have owed some or all of their livelihood, directly or indirectly, to the securitisation policies of the Emergency. This is, in some part, due to what a Special Constable could be paid for his salary and allowance varied from state

³⁷⁶ See Grob-Fitzgibbon, B. 2011. *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire (Britain and the World)*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁷⁷ 1948. *Federation of Malaya Annual Report*. Kuala Lumpur: Federation of Malaya, 183-184.; 1951. *Federation of Malaya Annual Report*. Kuala Lumpur: Federation of Malaya.

to state, between 95 and 150 dollars per month. Most Malay auxiliary police were actually “*Kampong Guides*” who worked on a part-time voluntary basis.

And finally, we must discuss the 500,000 individuals herded into barbed-wired encircled concentration camps euphemistically termed by the British as ‘New Villages’ (we will discuss New Villages at further length in Chapter Six). There is a tendency when writing about the Emergency to conflate the so-called ‘Briggs Plan’ and the plan for ‘New Villages’. Briggs’s “Federation Plan for the Elimination of the Communist Organisation and Armed Forces in Malaya” did include the resettlement of Malaya’s rural population involving two processes – ‘relocation’ and ‘regroupment’. But the Briggs’s Plan was a much larger framework for control, and the so-called ‘New Villages’ were the tip of that spear. In Directive No. 1, Briggs instructed with regards to the ‘Chinese’ who at the time were the collective ‘enemy’, that “There will be a requirement for very considerable manpower in connection with Squatter regrouping and resettlement which must be given the highest priority”, and “All reliable Chinese speakers should be co-opted and used to best advantage.”³⁷⁸ The need to dominate not just the people, but the narrative of those people, is crucial. Then, in Directive No. 2, Briggs instructed for “Resettlement and Regrouping” and wrote that; “To assist the problem of civil administration and the effectiveness of the tasks of the Security Forces, Chinese squatter resettlement and regrouping must be urgently speeded up, priority being given to those areas which prove the most difficult to dominate with Security Forces. These resettlement areas will require: (1) protection, (2) road communications adequate for security purposes, (3) resettlement long huts, (4) reception and administrative control organization, and finally as well as crucially, (5) intelligence agents placed among the people.”

It also instructs, as early as 1950 as shown, for ‘Chinese Village Guards’, stating that “The time has come when selected Chinese should be recruited as Auxiliary Police” and that

³⁷⁸ “The Emergency Chinese Advisory Committee, through the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, will be invited to represent the views of the Chinese population to the War Council. Similarly the War Executive Committees should maintain close contact with Chinese Advisory Boards, and it is the opinion of the War Council that the Chinese population would welcome direction through this channel and would carry out instructions willingly where they would not be willing to act voluntarily.” With regards to Chinese assistance, instructs that there will be an immediate need at State and District level for English or Malay speaking Chinese Officers to assist the State and Settlement Governments in the administration of Chinese village and squatter areas. Such Chinese officers will need to be closely associated with the Chinese Affairs Department and to a lesser degree with the Department of Education and the Registrar of Societies. They will constitute an important link between the Administration and the Chinese rural areas. At State level they will be known as Chinese Affairs Officers and will be under the direct control of the State and Federal Secretary for Chinese Affairs. At District level they will be known as Junior Chinese Affairs Officers and will be under the control of the District Officer and the State Secretary for Chinese Affairs. One of their most important duties will be the organisation of elections to choose committees and Chinese headman for the village and squatter areas. It is essential that the local headman and Committees understand as early as possible the responsibilities of their posts in order that information may be passed quickly to the proper quarter. A feeling of self-confidence and of responsibility towards their adopted country will be of the greatest value in countering political pressure from the M.C.P.

“where necessary armed with shot guns to take their share in anti-bandit operations” as “These have already proved effective in some States”. These selected Chinese were of course ‘good’ Chinese, rather than ‘bad’ ones. Collaborating Chinese Home Guard units were formed and trained in every New Village in order to perform duties such as household registration of inhabitants and visitors, assisting in the supervision of food control measures and guarding the surrounding barbed wire fences. Chinese New Village males between 18 and 55 could be conscripted into Home Guard units under the Emergency Regulations.

The only provisions for welfare were provided in the final section for ‘Administration and Social Amenities’. To make the plan effective, administration must follow the domination of the Security Forces immediately. This must include: (a) frequent visits by District Officers and where possible by Agricultural officers, (b) establishing of Police posts, (c) establishment of simple local schools built by the settlers in which Malay and the simple duties of a citizen should be taught, (d) establishment of dispensaries or visits by travelling ones, (e) introduction of simple propaganda including mobile cinemas, (f) election of village committees, and (g) a measure of village responsibility in which permanent titles to land and arrangements for co-operative marketing might act as a reward and stoppage of their trade might act as a punishment. Where these items cannot be immediately available, the intention should be expressed with the proviso that the well behaved areas will be given priority. It was strongly stressed that steps recommended in the preceding paragraph must operate equally in the Malay *Kampongs* as in Chinese areas. Chin Peng would state in his memoir:

...with its ‘New Villages’ was introduced in the latter part of 1950...In the early stages of the Briggs Plan I still felt we could survive on the support we enjoyed from the masses...However, as more and more people were herded into the new villages with their high cyclone wire fencing, their barbed wire, flood lights, police guards, and constant searches, frequent interrogations and general restrictions on movement, we realised we were facing nothing less than a crisis of survival.³⁷⁹

5.3 **BATANG KALI MASSACRE**

In the pursuit of the greater good of the British Empire, the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney³⁸⁰ defined the struggle in Malaya as a ‘state of exception’ in a speech at a Press

³⁷⁹ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

³⁸⁰ Sir Henry Lovell Goldsworthy Gurney (1898); career colonial servant; formerly Chief Secretary in Gold Coast and Palestine, before replacing Gent as High Commissioner in Malaya in 1948. Oversaw the early stages of the Emergency until his assassination by the communists on the way to the hill station of Fraser’s Hill in October 1951.

Club dinner on 29 November 1948:

*The second point is that it is a paradoxical but nonetheless true that in certain circumstances any authority charged with the duty of maintaining law and order must itself break it for a time....In other words, innocent people who now remain inactive are bound to suffer because we have to act quickly.*³⁸¹

In yet more strident terms, the High Commissioner sent a memo to London on 28 January 1949 on “Law and Order in the Federation” in which he argued:

*It is in fact impossible to maintain the rule of law and fight terrorism effectively at the same time.*³⁸²

He noted that the police and military forces broke the law ‘every day’ and later insisted that shows of force were necessary to defeat the insurgents. He added:

*...it is most important that police and soldiers, who are not saints, should not get the impression that every small mistake is going to be the subject of a public enquiry or that it is better to do nothing than do the wrong thing quickly.*³⁸³

Further, the prevalent attitude to the general approach is even more pronounced in particular cases when we consider the directive from the High Commission as to the line to take with the matters under discussion, reflective of what became the institutional position on how massacres, such as that of Batang Kali were dealt with. This case concerns the killing of 24 unarmed civilians by British soldiers from the Scots Guards at Batang Kali in Malaya on 11 and 12 December 1948.³⁸⁴ The official account of the massacre was that the victims were arrested as ‘bandits’. They were shot because to do so was necessary to prevent their escape, and ‘running away’ was the mark of unambiguous guilt or at least, improbable innocence.

This is notwithstanding that the former soldiers, when they later came to be formally and properly interviewed, reported that the killings were in the nature of an intentional extra-judicial execution. The majority interviewed under caution by the police, admitted that the

³⁸¹ Gurney, Henry. 1948. “*Speech to Press Club Dinner, Kuala Lumpur.*” 29 November.

³⁸² 1949. “CO 537/4753: Statement by the High Commissioner for Malaya, Annexure ‘A’ to minutes of the 16th meeting of the BDCC (FE).” CO537/4753. 28 January.

³⁸³ 1949. “Memo from Sir Henry Gurney.” CO 537/4773. 28 January.

³⁸⁴ Batang Kali is south of the main town of Kuala Kubu Bharu in the district of Ulu Selangor, approximately 45 miles north-west of Kuala Lumpur, all within the historic Malay Kingdom of Selangor, which by 1948 had become a British protectorate as part of the Federation of Malaya. It is part of Malaysia today.; ‘Japanese Brutal Acts Again Staged in Kuala Kubu’ (Freedom News 1, 15 January 1949). The report covered the activities of a 14-man patrol from G Company, 2nd Battalion Scots Guards, at Sungei Remok Estate, in Batang Kali district, on 11 and 12 December 1948.

killings amounted to murder. The incident has over the years been called a slaughter, or massacre. On any view (even the official position), grossly unreasonable force was used; a crime at common law and a war crime.

The killing of a large group of ‘bandits’ was the official story. The description of the villagers as ‘bandits’ was announced and recorded and has never been retracted. These killings were added to the record of ‘bandits’ killed by the military forces; and there they have stayed:

*One of the difficulties of this situation is that we have a war of terrorism on our hands and are at the same time endeavouring to maintain the rule of law. I would also point out that it is an easy matter from ones office and home to criticise action taken by security forces in the heat of operations and working under jungle conditions but not so easy to do the job oneself. Rightly or wrongly, we feel here that we must be conservative in our criticism of the men who are undoubtedly carrying out a most arduous and dangerous job and it must be remembered that when persons are picked up by the security forces under such circumstances until they are screened at headquarters it is impossible for the security forces to know whether they may be members of ‘killer squads’ or to what extent they are involved. Furthermore, although some of the killed were rubber tappers it is our experience that such persons are frequently rubber tappers part time and bandits the rest of the time and that their arms are normally hidden in the neighbourhood and not found with them. Moreover, we feel that it is most damaging to the morale of the security forces to feel that every action of theirs, after the event, is going to be examined with the most meticulous care.*³⁸⁵

Enquiries made with the regiments involved in the massacre by the Metropolitan

³⁸⁵ 1948. “Telegram to Sir Alec Newbould: ‘Incident at Batang Kali on 12th December in which 25 Chinese were killed.’”- 31 December.; Surviving telegram correspondence between the Colonial Office and the High Commission between 31 December 1948 and 1 January 1949 deals with the results of an ‘investigation’ and demonstrates the context in which the official version of events was enshrined in Malaya and Britain during the following weeks. On 31 December 1948, John Higham, Assistant-Secretary and head of South East Asia Division at the Colonial Office sent a telegram marked “Confidential” to Sir Alec Newbould in the High Commission, regarding “INCIDENT AT BATANG KALI ON 12th DECEMBER IN WHICH 25 CHINESE WERE KILLED”. The telegram indicated “REPLY REQUIRED URGENTLY”. It informed Sir Alec that the *Daily Mirror* in Britain was about to publish a report from a correspondent in Malaya concerning the killings at Batang Kali, “stated to be the most reliable detailed account of this incident with reference to the agitation in the press”. The Report was said to maintain that “the men appear not to have been bandits, but merely suspects detained for questioning and that [an] enquiry is to be held” and “that there is public uneasiness about the behaviour of the police and army in security operations generally”. In view that the journalist (“one of the more responsible press men”) had agreed to hold off publication in order for the Colonial Office to comment, the High Commission was asked to telegraph by tomorrow “information available on the incident itself and the general line Government are taking with the press with any comments you may have on general”. The telegram ends by noting that the incident has also been the subject of representation by an MP and refers to telegram by the Secretary of State (presumably Sir Arthur Creech-Jones) dated 30 December 1948. This telegram has not been found at the National Archives, neither has it been disclosed. Sir Alec replied by telegram to John Higham the following day. The telegram is headed: “Incident at Batang Kali on 12 December”. Inexplicably, the available copy starts at paragraph 10. Further in the document it refers to paragraphs 1-9 –The available text from paragraph 10 reads as follows (emphasis added): “The above [i.e. the missing paras 1-9] is narrative elicited by an investigation into the incident conducted by a Federal Counsel on the instructions of the Attorney General. Everyone who has visited the spot including the Attorney General is satisfied that the soldiers, who had been posted with the object of protecting the clearing from external attack, did everything that it was possible for them to do to stop the escaping Chinese before resorting to force. Moreover, one Chinese had been shot the previous day during an attempted escape and the others had been warned of the danger to them should they attempt to follow his example.”.

police in 1970 relating to Batang Kali confirmed that this was the military mind-set: "...that it was accepted as a military necessity to burn down villages of bandit sympathisers and to remove the inhabitants to other areas where control could be more easily exercised".

Batang Kali was not the first instance of reprisal; in Kerchau, a village in Selangor, for example, 61 houses were burned and 400 people were made homeless on 2 November 1948.³⁸⁶ Burnings and destruction of farmhouses and businesses were classic British counterinsurgency tactics, from the Boer Wars, to Ireland, to Palestine. Inevitably, as Newsinger explains; "Once a country was conquered, imperial rule was maintained by force" and thus, "whatever the particular architecture of imperial rule, it always rested in the end on the back of the policeman torturing a suspect."³⁸⁷

The question of circumvention, is present even in the early period of the Emergency. There were documented concerns as to incidents of unjustifiable shooting of civilians and the mass destruction of property. The Chief Police Officer in Johore wrote a memo querying the legal justification under the normal laws or the Emergency for shooting people unless the incident occurred in a 'protected place' or during curfew hours. He was particularly concerned about "the possibility that suspects were being shot while attempting to escape", that there were cases where "a small number of rounds of ammunition were planted on the bodies afterwards to justify the shootings", and that "some major scandal might result".³⁸⁸

By December 1948, various Emergency powers were in place providing for a right to use lethal force where a person enters 'protected places' or 'special areas' and, within them, refuses to stop when challenged.³⁸⁹ First, on 31 July 1948, the government gazetted Regulation 27, conferring police powers on the military. Second, Regulation 24, enacted on 16 October 1948, allowed arrest on suspicion and detention without trial for up to 14 days. For example, ER18A and B of 13 November 1948 made it legal for an Officer in Charge of Police District (OCPD) to order any property used by, or in support of, bandits to be seized or if not amenable to being held, to be destroyed.³⁹⁰ Batang Kali however was neither a 'protected

³⁸⁶ Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.; Coates, John. 1992. *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.; and Bayly and Harper, Bayly, Christopher, and Tim Harper. 2010. *Forgotten Wars Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press.

³⁸⁷ Newsinger, John. 2006. *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. London: Bookmarks. 17.

³⁸⁸ Ibid

³⁸⁹ See Emergency Regulation 10 and 10A; On 30 November 1948 the Federation created Regulation 10A stipulates that a chief police officer could declare any location a 'special area'. The regulation permitted the security forces to arrest anyone in the area who failed to stop and submit to a search when called upon to do so. If necessary to effect the arrest, force could be used, which could 'extend to the use of lethal weapons'.

³⁹⁰ Regulation 18B Clause four retrospectively legalised any prior destructions.

place' nor a 'special area' at the time of the massacre. Thus, by virtue of Regulation 27, the British Armed forces enjoyed the same powers of search, arrest and detention, but they did not yet enjoy greater or special powers with regard to using lethal force on civilian suspects not engaged in combat.³⁹¹

An amendment to Regulation 27A was made on 20 January 1949 made by Sir Alec Newbould to the emergency powers pursuant to the Emergency (Amendment No. 6) Regulations 1949. This made the provision under a new Regulation 27A for arrests to be effected of any person who was reasonably suspected as having been concerned with the unlawful possession of firearms or ammunition, consorting with a person concerned with unlawful possession of firearms, or consorting with or harbouring a person known to intend to or have acted in a manner prejudicial to public safety or order.

Lethal force could be used to effect the arrest of such a person, or to prevent an escape, provided that a loud warning was given first.

(1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any written law, it shall be lawful for any officer in order:

a. to effect the arrest of any person whom he has, in all the circumstances of the case, reasonable grounds for suspecting to have committed an offence against Regulations 4, 5 or 6A; or;

b. to prevent the escape from arrest or the rescue of any person arrested as aforesaid, to use such force as, in the circumstances of the case, may be reasonably necessary, which force may extend to the use of lethal weapons.

(2) Before any lethal weapon may be used to effect the arrest of a person an officer shall call upon him, in a loud voice, to stop and the person so called upon shall be given a reasonable chance to stop and submit to arrest...

As well as:

(4) For the purposes of these Regulations "officer" means any police officer or any member of His Majesty's Navel, Military or Air Forces or of any Local Forces established under any written law.

³⁹¹ Bennett, Huw. 2009. "A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32 (3): 415-444.

Finally, Regulation 27A (6) provided retroactive provisions:

Any act or thing done before the coming into force of this Regulations which would have been lawfully done if this Regulation had been in force, shall be deemed to have been lawfully done under this Regulation.

With the sixth provision, we infer, that Regulation 27A was, rightly or wrongly, designed to ‘accommodate’ the official account of the Batang Kali killings. These amendments certainly provide some answers to several criticisms which appeared in an article published in the Straits Times on 11 January 1949, entitled ‘The Criminal Procedure Code’. In the article, the author quoted Section 15(iii) of the Criminal Procedure Code, that;

Nothing in this section gives the right to cause the death of a person who is not accused of any offence punishable with death or penal servitude.

He goes on to quote section 86(ii) of the same Code relating to action by the military and specifically to dispersal and arrest of unlawful assemblies, that;

Every such (military) officer shall obey such requisition in such manner as he thinks fit, but in doing so he shall use as little force and do as little injury to persons... as may be consistent with... arresting and detaining such persons.

The author concludes by asking,

How then can the GOC justify the wanton killing of these people? After all the present disturbances are civil disturbances; hence the employment of civil police. I have not heard that these sections of criminal procedure have been abrogated.

The answer to “How?” is perhaps – reasoned out as being for the greater good - Regulations 27A (6). Hannah Arendt justifies violence as being “rational only to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end which must justify it”. However, it would also be reckless to immediately assume that only ‘terrorists’ are capable of making the calculated utilitarian sacrifice of harming the innocent few for the greater cause of the many.

Cheung Hung’s 1948 account of the Batang Kali shooting on 12 December is as follows. The gentleman in question is the third witness who gave statements in 1948. From the period before the lorry came, Cheung Hung was told by a soldier (and not the police) to hide in a Yam patch. He explained that a group of villagers was led away by soldiers, rather than running off themselves:

Before the firing I saw some of the assembled people walking from the place where they were assembled in a direction between the store and the smoke house. The soldiers waved them to go in that direction and 3 or 4 soldiers were escorting them. After they had gone some distance the firing started. I saw six of the people from the kongsi pass. I could not see exactly where they came from because my view was obstructed by a fowl house. I had a clear view only in the direction of the store and the corner of the smoke house nearest the store. Between those two points the six people passed. I could not see any of the people from the kongsi when the shooting started. I could not see a single one of them. The firing started from the direction in which the six people from the kongsi had been taken by the soldiers. I saw no soldiers come back by that route...After the shooting the soldiers seemed very pleased, they were talking to each other and smiling. I was about 10 or more of them in several groups. Some of them were smiling but not all.³⁹²

Moreover, when he was interviewed again, in a further statement, he again provided an account to the effect that he saw a group of six men led away by soldiers before the sound of shooting broke out:

I heard one single shot about one minute before the main firing began. It sounded as if it came from the direction of the river.³⁹³

On the day of the murders, Cheung Hung was relied on for the information he gave to the two interrogating police officers. He told each of them, that there were armed bandits from outside the village who had occasionally visited at night to take food from the village. Subsequently, guards were placed around the perimeter that night. The argument for doing so was that food brought by the *kepola* (for the villagers) was being taken by bandits and was sustaining them. Cheung Hung told each of the officers that the villagers were not bandits. The bandits were armed people who came from elsewhere. This information was communicated to the sergeants in command of the patrol. There are contemporaneous written statements which record this.

On the other hand however, the article in The Straits Times on 13 December 1948 is particularly notable because it indicates a more detailed official account than documented by either Far East Land Forces (FAREL) or the War Office.³⁹⁴ The source for that statement was Mr.H.G. Beverly, the Chief Police Officer of Selangor.³⁹⁵ The front page gives the

³⁹² 2012. CO 1827/2011. 8 May.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ A similar report appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 13 December 1948

³⁹⁵ 2012. CO 1827/2011. 8 May.

following details derived from a source from the previous day

The biggest success occurred in the Batang Kali area where a patrol of police and Scots Guards numbering 14 shot dead 25 Chinese who they surprised yesterday morning and rounded up and who then attempted to escape early this morning. Moving through the jungle yesterday afternoon the patrol spied two armed Chinese in uniform, but lost them. [Under the sub-heading Food Lorry] Soon afterwards they found a kongsi inhabited by men and women. Before any alarm could be raised the patrol had surrounded a large hut. The men surrendered. There were 26 of them with a number of women and children. A police officer said tonight: The kongsi was searched and under a mattress was found a large quantity of ammunition. One Chinese attempted to escape and was shot dead. The patrol learned that food was expected at the kongsi early the following morning. They decided to wait. A guard was placed during the night, but there was little sleep. At 5.30 this morning the sound of a motor was heard and very soon a lorry came into view. It was halted, surrounded and discovered to be carrying a large quantity of food. As the lorry was brought towards the kongsi guards were once again put out at strategic points. Most of the guards were hidden from view of the men in the kongsi. They could see only three sentries. Suddenly the 25 men made a break running in all directions. A police officer said: "The Guards had been well placed and the running men just ran into their guns. Every man was killed."³⁹⁶

A further document from the High Commission headed "Supplementary Statement" was released to the local press on 3 January 1949, and published the following day in The Straits Times, and The Times in London. It declared (emphasis added):

(1) "Police had reliable information that there were concentrations of communists in the area west of the main road between Rasa and Sungei Tapayan.

(2) After discussion with the military it was decided to send a platoon, divided into two sections – one commanded by an officer and, no other officer being available, the other commanded by a sergeant. Each section was accompanied by guides and some police personnel.

(3) The object of the patrol was to obtain information, search for arms and ammunition and to detain and bring back to Kuala Kubu Bahru for interrogation any suspicious characters.

(4) The general order was that if any detained person tried to escape, he was to be chased and recaptured but under no circumstances to be allowed to escape.

³⁹⁶ It is apparent that the report was cabled from Kuala Lumpur on Sunday (which was 12 December 1948) to the Singapore publishers. It describes the killings as if they happened that morning (i.e. 12 December) and events the previous day (i.e. 11 December); A similar explanation was reported in the Times on the same day.

(5) The section in question consisted of a sergeant in command and 13 other ranks. It had no vehicles and no wireless or other easy means of communication with headquarters, which was a considerable distance away from the area of operations.

(6) The Section patrolled a wide area, including rubber estates and jungle, during which bandits were spotted and fired at.

(7) The sergeant feared that these bandits would carry information regarding the section to other concentration of bandits and his section might be trapped.

(8) He decided to press on, eventually arriving at the clearing where shooting took place the following day.

(9) In the clearing were three kongsi houses and few other huts and shacks. The occupants of the kongsi houses were interrogated and some Sten-gun ammunition discovered hidden in one of the houses.

(10) Information from the interrogation was that armed bandits were in the habit of visiting the area and used it for obtaining supplies and that such supplies were brought in every morning by a lorry which was employed to bring in food for the tappers and others who occupied the clearing.

(11) If attacked the clearing was a death- trap to the section and the sergeant therefore posted three groups to cover the three entrances to the jungle.

(12) These groups were put out of sight of persons in the clearing. This took place on the afternoon of December 11.

(13) The Chinese men found in the clearing were placed in a room in one of the kongsi houses for the night, under guard.

(14) The following morning they were brought out of the room by two sentries who were on the verandah of the kongsi house in which the room was situated. The only other soldier in sight was the sergeant in command who was standing on the ground a little beyond the kongsi house, ready to receive the Chinese as they came off the verandah.

(15) When all the Chinese had reached the ground from the verandah, one of them shouted and they thereupon split up into three groups and made a dash for the three entrances to the jungle.

(16) There is no doubt that they were under the impression that the only troops that they had to compete with were the two soldiers on the verandah of the kongsi house and the sergeant.

(17) The attempted escape was obviously pre- arranged because there was no hesitation in the formation of the three groups and the shout was no doubt the pre-arranged signal for putting the plan into effect.

(18) The sergeant and the two soldiers on the verandah immediately shouted calling upon them to halt. They could not use their arms because to do so would have endangered the lives of their comrades who were posted out of sight but in the line of fire. The men in the three groups covering the entrances heard shouting but did not know what was happening until they saw the Chinese running through the bush and jungle past where they were posted. They thereupon shouted the Malay word for halt to which no attention was paid by the escaping Chinese. The men of the three groups gave chase, continuing calling upon them to halt and, as they failed to do so, the soldiers opened fire”.

A number of points are immediately striking about this ‘Supplementary statement’:

(1) It does nothing to support the idea of the villagers as bandits. Indeed, the reference to bandits is that “armed bandits were in the habit of visiting the area”.

(2) Groups to “cover the three entrances to the jungle” overnight were described as concerned with external visitors.

(3) No “arms” were said to be found. The “bandits” who had been “spotted and fired at” had run away. There is now no reference to “information ... regarding the suspects”.

(4) It describes an objective to “detain and bring back to Kuala Kubu Bahru for interrogation any suspicious characters”. Regulation 24 (3) authorised arrest for the purposes of bringing suspects to a police station for questioning.

(5) It speaks, inexplicably, of unlocking the *kongsi* and bringing all of the men out on to the verandah (“brought out of the room by two sentries”), ready to be received by the sergeant in command (“to receive the Chinese as they came off the verandah”).

(6) It makes no mention of the killing on the first evening; nor of any warning of the danger to the villagers should they attempt to escape.

(7) It makes no mention of the women and children who were also detained overnight. There was no account of what had happened to them, including why they had been separated on to a lorry in the morning and for what purpose the men were

kept behind rather than removed to the police station.

(8) Contrary to Harry Miller's account published in *The Straight Times* on 13 December that has been commended by General Boucher as "extremely accurate", a previous description of "a large quantity of ammunition" being found was replaced by a reference to the finding of "some" stem gun ammunition. The reference to "a large quantity of food" had disappeared completely.

(9) Now, rather than it being said that "the running men just ran into their guns" as reported on 13 December (which would have caused them all to be shot in the front) it was suggested that the "running men ran past the guns" (which would have caused them all to be shot in the back).

(10) Moreover, in circumstances where the legality of shooting without prior warning had been ventilated publicly, there was heavy reliance on shouted warnings: no fewer than three sets of warning were now being relied on. By the sergeant and the two soldiers on the verandah; by the soldiers near the entrances before giving chase; and by those soldiers again in giving chase and before opening fire.

By 22 December 1948 there had been an intervention by the British owner of the Sungei Remok Estate, Thomas Menzies. He was also the Chairman of the Selangor's Estates' Owners Association. Menzies claims that all those killed by the Scots Guards had been employed by the plantation contractor, Lim Chye Chee, with whom Menzies had been associated with for 20 years.

There was a permanent labour force living on the Estate that totalled 26 males. Nearly all were Cantonese. It was explained that the labourers had established a long record of good conduct. There had never been a strike nor had there been any problems of any nature. Of the victims, four had been on the estate for 18 years, six for 14 years, ten for ten years and the remainder for at least three and a quarter years. Menzies identified one of the dead as his plantation *kepola* and another as his estate clerk. He emphatically denied that the lorry coming from Ulu Yam Bahru was connected to the insurgency. Rather than carrying food for bandits, it was bringing the daily supplies to Batang Kali (60 cattie of rice and 10 cattie of sugar); all in strict conformity with Emergency rations. This was the evening, and they were

at home with their families. They were unarmed. Many of them were older men. None of them fought.

Then, on 2 December 1969, an ex- Scots Guard, William Cootes, voluntarily appeared in person to The People offices in Manchester to give information about the killings at Batang Kali.³⁹⁷ In providing the paper with a graphic account of the massacre, he also explored the possibility of payment for his story. In the next two months, the paper would make contact with a number of the other members of the patrol who participated in the killings. None of them would request or obtain payment for the accounts they gave.

On 1 February 1970, The People published material including extracts from sworn statements made by four members of the patrol which shot the villagers in Batang Kali and the interview of another: They were Willam Cootes, Alan Tuppen, Robert Brownrigg, Victor Remedios, and George Kidd. At the same time, The People published the denials of the patrol commanders, Charles Douglas³⁹⁸ and Thomas Hughes, both of which included incriminating statements. They said in essence that the villagers had not been trying to escape and the patrol had simply been ordered to walk them away from the *kongsis* in groups and shoot them. The account was much closer to the statement of Cheung Hung in 1948 that referred to groups of prisoners being taken away by the soldiers before the shooting started. Some of those who gave statements indicated that this was a planned response in the nature of a retaliation to the insurgency. It was also said that they had been ordered to shoot the women and children of the village, but had refused to do so. Members of the 1948 patrol repeatedly and emphatically stated that the victims of Batang Kali were shot in cold blood and without any cause.

Subsequent Metropolitan police interviews concluded that of those interviewed, the majority contend that the killings were arranged and systematic, rather than a reaction, spontaneous or otherwise, to an escape attempt. Out of the known eleven members of the patrol, six supported an account of a massacre: Tuppen, Cootes, Brownrigg, Kidd, Remedios and Wood. Two maintained there had been an escape attempt: Gorton and Porter. No interviewee suggests the villagers were armed, or that they dressed or behaved in a way that suggested they were combatants, or that they offered any resistance, let alone violence, to the British troops. Six out of the eight witnesses interviewed under caution ended up

³⁹⁷ For a summary of *The People* investigation, see the report of DCS Williams.

³⁹⁸ 1948. *Straits Times*. December 14.; 1948. *Straits Times*. December 13.

corroborating an account that the residents of Batang Kali were killed unlawfully. While some of them criticised The People newspaper for inaccuracy and failure to advise them that they could be prosecuted, these six witnesses clearly supported a conclusion that the killings amounted to murder.

Some of the witnesses, particularly Cootes, Tuppen and Kydd, accepted that they were personally involved in pre-arranged executions; at the point they made these admissions under caution, there could be no question of ulterior motive, or lack of understanding of the content of what they were saying. In fact, no such suggestion has ever been made. Of those interviewed, only Gorton and Porter suggested that the killings were a necessary act to prevent an escape, and only Porter fully supported the official account in terms of the Chinese running past the guns before they were shot. Finally, even those who contest that they were involved in a murder have referred to the shooting of wounded villagers on the first night and the second day, in order to ‘finish them off’.³⁹⁹

The story evolved further and got perfected. “Running into the guns” became “running away from the guns”, in circumstances where it was known that the villagers had been shot in the back rather than in the front. A story involving no shouting – recorded by both police officers – became a story about repeated shouted commands, in circumstances where attention was being drawn to the legal pre-condition to use of lethal force under the Regulations, where they applied. They did not, so a retrospective Regulation – premised on the same prior-warning narrative – was speedily introduced.

Is it reasonable to rest with the fact that all the men that day ran away. They kept running, until they were shot down – all of them. They ran, all of them, despite a supposed warning the evening prior; that anyone who tried to escape would be shot dead. Allegedly, every single person ran, including the older men, like the 70-year old and those in their 50s and 60s. These men are all the employees of Tom Menzies, a British plantation owner. We know that most MPAJA fighters who were fighting the British against the Japanese were under 25, this group then went on to become the core of the MCP’s fighting force in 1948. Keeping in mind that the massacre happened in December 1948 (only approximately 6 months from the declaration of the Emergency), now look at the list of the 24 shot on the day of the massacre. The average age of this group is nowhere close to what the typical age of an MCP

³⁹⁹ Hughes on the first V/2/J/6-8 and L/191; and Don Houlston’s account of what he was told by Keith Wood as regards the second day [Met File]

fighter would have been at the time. In this village, at least nine of them were in their 50s, at least two in their 60s, and one was aged 70.

And they supposedly all kept running, notwithstanding a shouted command from the Sergeant leader and his two sentries, notwithstanding further shouted commands from soldiers at the periphery, and notwithstanding yet further shouted commands from soldiers in pursuit. None of those involved on the day even bothered or thought to stop and give themselves up.

Table 2: Batang Kali massacre: Individuals reported to be shot on the day

No.	Name	Age / Profession
1	Choo Wong	70 year old rubber tapper
2	Chan Chee	64 year old labourer
3	Chan Ying	60 year old machine operator
4	Chan Kai	55 year old tapper
5	Chong Sin	54 year old labourer
6	Ng Kong (Ng Yeng Kui)	55 year old labourer
7	Chen Ching	55 year old
8	Ho Leon (Ho Leong)	55 year old
9	Ho Choy	53 year old machine operator
10	Ho Heong	50 year old tapper
11	Chan Kee:	50 year old tapper
12	Chong Voon (Chong Man)	50 year old tapper
13	Wong Hing	48 year old machine operator
14	Tien Min (Teng Min)	47 year old labourer
15	Mok Sau	47 year old tapper
16	Lim Har	46 year old labourer
17	Loke Sang	45 year old tapper
18	Wong Yan	42 year old estate clerk
19	Lim Tian Sui (Lam Kow; Lim Kow)	40 year old kepola
20	Wong Teck Foong	38 year old tapper
21	Lim Sang	35 year old tapper
22	Wong Sep	20 year old machine operator
23	Chong Sep (Ah Sap Chai)	19 year old

Source: 2012. CO 1827/2011. 8 May.

Even if it were assumed that the terrified males ran into the jungle, the public pronouncement of 3 January 1949 suggests that there were three sets of soldiers in unseen defensive positions adjacent to three paths into the jungle, who rationally allowed the escapees to run past “the guns” (to quote the pronouncement of 3 January 1949) and then shoot all them fatally from behind.

Furthermore, the Attorney-General who investigated the circumstances and was “quite satisfied” said in 1970 that he realised there had been a “bona fide mistake”, and that everyone realised there had been a “bona fide mistake”. But that cannot be so, if it is the case that the villagers ran despite warnings and the shooting was necessary to prevent their escape. On that version of events, where is the “bona fide mistake”? What did the soldiers do that was in error?

The official version, endorsed by the Attorney General, was that the shootings were necessary; he had been satisfied that the suspects would have escaped if the soldiers had not opened fire. If this was right, there was no bona fide mistake taking place. And if there was a mistake, then the official version is contradicted.

The soldiers had been in pursuit of bandits. They had engaged two bandits, in uniform, who had run away. Those bandits were not among the villagers. The police were in a position to identify any suspected bandits, and scrutinise the day-workers; but there were none.

Subsequently, when the village was wiped out and burned to the ground, the source of any food rations being taken from by bandits was removed. No bandits had been identified; none appeared in the night, nor with the lorry in the morning. The lorry was intercepted by the soldiers, but it did not contain “a large amount of food”. It was observed as containing a modest amount of food, for the villagers and in accordance with their emergency rations, otherwise the villagers were vulnerable to the theft of their emergency rations, by armed bandits from outside.

Searches in the evening uncovered no weapons or ammunition. No weapons were ever said to be uncovered. A single and small amount of ammunition – but not a large amount – was reported as ‘found’ by the Sergeant the following day, under the bed of a named and weaponless individual. The sole person who personally claims to have found ammunition is Sir Stafford, who says that he found some spent shell casings (but not a substantial quantity

of ammunition, or a box of rounds) amongst the ashes of the *kongsi* huts.⁴⁰⁰ There is no statement from a soldier in the patrol that personally recounts finding ammunition before or after the killings⁴⁰¹; no weapons nor insurgents were ever shown to emanate from this particular tapper community.

Then, there are these points. The previous night, the villagers had been terrorised by the soldiers and police; men, women and very young children were interrogated at gun point; mock executions were conducted; villagers were aware that a youth had been shot and regardless of whether he had tried to escape, they were told that was the reason he was killed; they were also the admitted victims of mock executions, such that they could not be expected to differentiate the motives of their captors.⁴⁰² A UK High Court judgement accepted that one Chinese had been shot the day before, that there had been mock executions, and that one further Chinese had told soldiers that bandits had visited and one more been trucked off in a poor state, before 23 Chinese were shot on. On 10 May 2012, I was able to secure an interview with two of the only three known remaining living victims/witnesses of the Batang Kali massacre at the time. I would have been able to speak to all three of them, however, on the day, one of them was taken ill. However, I was able to spend an entire day with two of the three of them, Mr. Oi, 71 and Mrs. Chong Koon Ying, 74. It had occurred to me that it may have been my last chance to speak to the three of them, considering that they were in their 70s at the time, and that I should seize the opportunity to collect primary data. I am fortunate to have been able to meet all three of them in the course of this research. Sadly, at the time of writing (2016), two of the three individuals have now left us. Amongst other things, they recounted what had happened on the day and recounted the conduct of the British officers. According to them, as part of their story, those who were shot on the day were innocent rubber tappers. The women and children were later hauled unto a lorry and were transported away to Ulu Yam. Their houses were also raised. They were only brought back to the rubber estate they were living on by British officers five days after the massacre to collect the bodies of their husbands, fathers and sons. Those who had no family reclaiming them were all buried in one grave.

⁴⁰⁰ Save for Foster Sutton, who says he found shells at the scene (where several men had been shot dead) several days later

⁴⁰¹ This includes Douglas and Hughes in their interview with *The People* (V2/L/3 and V2/J/6-7). Porter only recalled Hughes showing him shells, but did not say when (V1/E/175)

⁴⁰² Mr. Loh Ah Choi; 71, and Mrs. Chong Koon Ying; 74, interview by Meor Alif. 2012. (10 May).



Pictured above: Author with Mr. Loh Ah Choi, 71 (left) and Mrs. Chong Koon Ying, 74 (right). Interview in London, 2012.

This photo, Author outside the Supreme Court after final day of Batang Kali hearing, has been removed as permission from subjects of the group photo could not be obtained.

Pictured above: Author outside the Supreme Court after final day of Batang Kali hearing

After this night of terrifying treatment, where they were deliberately kept outside of institutional police station supervision, the women and children were placed on a lorry and the men were kept back, with no evidence that the interpreters or anyone else informing them as to why they were being kept and/or what would happen. The women knew that the British had shot dead a group of men who were labourers on the plantation; husbands, sons,

brothers.

To these points, it can be added that Foo Moi, a survivor who said she could see from the lorry, gave evidence that the men were led in groups to be shot. Remedios admitted to The People, and had confirmed that the lorry was still close by when the shooting began, with the women and children then screaming. Surviving children recalled hearing the shooting before the lorry began to move.⁴⁰³

Finally, there are the points that Cheung Hung, when probed, described villagers walking under escort in a group. That Jaffar Bin Taib, when a statement was eventually taken from him, admitted that he was told to look the other way. That police officers saw nothing but heard only shooting. And that soldiers, when eventually interviewed under caution in 1970, admitted that these had been executions in cold-blood. That this was murder, unless of course all those interviewed were working concertedly on a lie that was made up amongst them. The official account however, contrary to these findings continues to be maintained.

It appears from the above that in some instances legitimate trade-offs can be made between efficacy and morality in war and conflict, and the legitimacy of these trade-offs emanates from the fact that it was carried out by the state, however in terms of consequences there is very little to separate indiscriminate violence that is employed by terrorists, guerrillas or insurgents with that employed by the state.

The UK Supreme Court delivered a judgment on 25 November 2015 holding that the British Government remains legally responsible for a controversial series of events in December 1948 when Scots Guards killed 24 unarmed civilians in Batang Kali, Selangor, but need not hold a public inquiry to establish the truth. One of the five judges, Lady Hale, dissented and concluded that refusal of an inquiry was a decision no “reasonable public authority could reach” (para 313). One of the majority Justices, Lord Kerr, described the case as “shocking” adding that the “overwhelming preponderance of currently available evidence” showed: “wholly innocent men were mercilessly murdered and the failure of the authorities of this state to conduct an effective inquiry into their deaths” (para 204). Another, Lord Neuberger, commented “the evidence which first came to light in late 1969 and early 1970 plainly suggested that the Killings were unlawful” (para 75) and “a war crime may have been committed” (para 136). Lord Kerr’s judgment concluded by expressing regret at the

⁴⁰³ Ibid

majority's decision. He added (para 285): "the law has proved itself unable to respond positively to the demand that there be redress for the historical wrong that the appellants so passionately believe has been perpetrated on them and their relatives. That may reflect a deficiency in our system of law. It certainly does not represent any discredit on the honourable crusade that the appellants have pursued." The families of those killed and supporters from the Action Committee Condemning the Batang Kali Massacre expressed that they were considering petitioning the European Court of Human Rights, but renewed their pleas to the government for a compassionate and dignified solution including an apology, withdrawal of the official account in Parliament and funding for a memorial to the massacre victims. The families' lawyer, John Halford of Bindmans LLP has said: "Our courts have decided there is no legal right to that explanation. But they have been able to acknowledge the innocence of those killed, the failures to investigate and the 'overwhelming' evidence of mass murder. Just as importantly, Britain has been found responsible. All of this creates the clearest of moral imperatives on the British government to apologise, withdraw the false account given to Parliament and to compassionately address what has been done, including by funding a memorial."⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ 2015. "*Judgment Keyu and others (Appellants) vs Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and another (Respondents)*." [2015] UKSC 69.

CHAPTER SIX: NEW VILLAGES, CONCENTRATION CAMPS AND DETENTION

The Emergency, for some people in Malaya, did not begin in June 1948 but began affecting them only after being either forcefully displaced, relocated or resettled. Therefore, the perspective of natives in different parts of Malaya would differ substantively from the perspectives of the British colonial government in their experiences of the Emergency.

A total of 19 operations involving the uprooting of some 40,000 squatters, including dependents, took place between 1949 and 1952. 16 of the 19 operations were conducted in 1949.⁴⁰⁵ Of these, some 26,000 people, 24,000 Chinese and 2,000 Indians and Indonesians, were deported.⁴⁰⁶ The approximate total area occupied by squatters was estimated to be about 70,000 acres in 1949.⁴⁰⁷ In 1950, it was estimated that there were about 150,000 Chinese squatters in total across the peninsula.⁴⁰⁸ It was only in 1952 that Sir Gerald Templer, the third High Commissioner of the colony, decreed that these “resettlement camps/areas” should be termed “New Villages” (NV). In total, the colonial government succeeded in relocating half a million rural inhabitants into more than 400 compact villages between 1949 and 1954.⁴⁰⁹

A total of 573,000 persons were transferred into New Villages during the Emergency.⁴¹⁰ Approximately, 300,000 of these were squatters, the vast majority of whom were Chinese.⁴¹¹ The remaining 273,000 legitimate land occupiers some of whom were tenant farmers, were also largely Chinese. Of the total population of the New Villages it was estimated that; 86 per cent were Chinese, 9 per cent Malay, 4 per cent Indian, 1 per cent

⁴⁰⁵ 1951. *FLCMCP (1950/51)*. B90-B95.; 1951. “Federation of Malaya Communist Banditry in Malaya.” Paper No.24. Kuala Lumpur. 29-120.

⁴⁰⁶ 1951. “Squatter Report, pp. C 535-539; pp. B 90-91.” Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1950/1951). Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers; n.d. “Paper No. 24.” Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers (1955/54). Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. 6-18.; 1951. *Federation of Malaya Communist Banditry in Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur. 29-120.

⁴⁰⁷ Gurney, Henry. 1949. “Federation of Malaya, 'Speech to the Legislative Council', 29 September 1949.” In *Communist Banditry in Malaya: Extracts from the Speeches of Sir Henry Gurney, October 1948 to December 1949*, by Henry Gurney. Federation of Malaya: Department of Public Relations.; Squatter Committee, pp. C 554-5

⁴⁰⁸ Robinson, J B Perry. 1956. *Transformation in Malaya*. London: Secker & Warburg.

⁴⁰⁹ See Dobby, E.H.G. 1953. “Recent Settlement Changes in South Malaya.” *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*.; King, John Jerry. 1954. “Malaya's Resettlement Problem.” *Far Eastern Survey* (23): 33-40.; Markandan, Paul. 1954. *The Problem of the New Village in Malaya*. Singapore: Donald Moore.; Corry, W C S. 1954. *A General Survey of New Villages- Also filed as B/C File: 487/55 (Malaysian National Archives)*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.; Stead, Ronald. 1955. “The “New Villages” in Malaya.” *Geographical Magazine* (27): 642-652. Sendut, Hamzah. 1961. “Rasah - a resettlement village in Malaya.” *Asian Survey* 1 (9): 21-26.; Sandhu, KS. 1964. “Emergency resettlement in Malaya.” *Journal of Tropical Geography*.; Nyce, Ray. 1973. *Chinese New Villages in Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute LTD.

⁴¹⁰ Sandhu, KS. 1963. “The saga of the 'squatter' in Malaya: a preliminary survey if the causes, characteristics and consequences of the resettlement of rural dwellers during the Emergency between 1948 and 1960.” *Journal of Southeast Asian History*. 187.

⁴¹¹ 1951. *FLCMCP (1950/51)*. B102.

Others ('Others' were almost all Siamese, Javanese and Orang Asli).⁴¹²

Various estimates of the number and population of NVs have been made. They vary in number from 439 to 600 and in population from 458,000 to 600,000.⁴¹³ An early official report revealed that when resettlement was completed by 1954, an estimated 543,555 people had been resettled in 451 NVs. Overall, the population would represent 29 per cent of the total Chinese community in the Federation of Malaya in 1947.⁴¹⁴

Not unexpectedly, the distribution of NVs reflected that of the Chinese in each state (Table 3). According to the 1947 census, three-quarters of the Chinese lived in the states of Perak, Selangor, Johore and Penang. Most of the NVs are therefore found in these West Coast states. Perak, formerly the world's tin-mining centre and a major producer of rubber, has the largest number of NVs in the country. Perak alone accounted for a third (36.4 per cent) of the initial population in New Village. Next is Johore, another agricultural state that is most accessible to the urban centre of Singapore. Johore had a fifth (21.6 per cent) of the NV population. Selangor and the Federal capital city of Kuala Lumpur also featured prominently, notably in the number of large NVs with 17.9 per cent of the New Village population. In all, they accounted for three-quarters of the entire NV population.

NVs are generally identified with the Chinese community,⁴¹⁵ but this is a misapprehension fed by the British narrative of the conflict as one against 'Chinese Communist Terrorists'. Some, however, were multi-racial. Some were entirely Chinese while some were wholly Siamese, Malay, Indian or Orang Asli - for example, Padang Pusing (Kedah), Sungei Buloh (Negri Sembilan), Bedong (Kedah) and Kg. Aur (Pahang) respectively. Among the Chinese population, almost all of the Chinese dialect groups present in Malaya were represented, though the proportion varied from state to state. In Johore, for example, two-thirds of the Chinese in the New Villages were Hokkiens and Hakkas, the rest being Cantonese, Hainanese, Tiechius, Hockchius, Kwongsai and others, in order of numerical importance.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.

⁴¹³ Sandhu, KS. 1963. "The saga of the 'squatter' in Malaya: a preliminary survey of the causes, characteristics and consequences of the resettlement of rural dwellers during the Emergency between 1948 and 1960." *Journal of Southeast Asian History*. 187.

⁴¹⁴ Corry 1954: Appendix A). The federal Ministry of Housing and Local Government, in a compilation in 2002, shows a list of 452 NVs under its charge Sin Chew Daily, 4 March 2002

⁴¹⁵ Loh, Francis Kok Wah. 1988. *Beyond the Tin Mines: Coolies, Squatters, and New Villagers in the Kinta Valley, Malaysia, C. 1880-1980*. Michigan: Oxford University Press.

⁴¹⁶ Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.

The Malays were not spared as well.⁴¹⁷ In Kelantan, all except one were Malay New Villages. Of the 333 NVs for which statistics are available, 26 were exclusively Malay NVs and in 22 others, the Chinese made up less than half the inhabitants.⁴¹⁸ Contrary to common perception, only 53 out of 333 NVs, or 16 per cent of the total, were completely Chinese.⁴¹⁹

A parallel resettlement measure was the regroupment of isolated Malay and Orang Asli settlements (we will explore regroupment shortly). Most of the Malay Regroupment Areas involved little or no planning. Malay regroupment normally meant the movement of dispersed *kampong* dwellers closer to main roads, usually to an area where police 'protection' or control was available. This kind of resettlement is largely overlooked in the British narrative.

In Kelantan alone, there were 25 Malay Regroupment Areas, while in Johore there were 13. These two States contained more than half the known number of Malaysian Regroupment Areas. The Malay Regroupment Areas, like the Labour Regroupment Areas tended to be small, with populations of 100 to 500 people.⁴²⁰ The Malays, however, were usually consulted before resettlement and when they refused to move, their wishes were respected unless immediate security measures warranted their removal. Those moved were paid M\$100 upheaval compensation.⁴²¹

The outstanding difference between the Malay Regroupment Areas and the Labour

⁴¹⁷ W C S. 1954. *A General Survey of New Villages- Also filed as B/C File: 487/55* (Malaysian National Archives). Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.; Dobby, E. H. G. 1952. "Resettlement Transforms Malaya: A Case-History of Relocating the Population of an Asian Plural Society." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 1 (3): 163-189.; Dobby, E.H.G. 1953. "Recent Settlement Changes in South Malaya." *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*.; Fell, H. 1957. *1957 Population Census of the Federation of Malaya: Report No.14*. Population Census, Kuala Lumpur: Department of Statistics.; Sendut, Hamzah. 1961. "Rasah - a resettlement village in Malaya." *Asian Survey* 1 (9): 21-26.; King, John Kerry. 1954. "Malaya's Resettlement Problem." *Far Eastern Survey* 33-40.; Voon, Phin Keong, and Soo Hock Khoo. 1986. "The New Villages in Peninsular Malaysia." *Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography* 36-55.; Markandan, Paul. 1954. *The Problem of the New Village in Malaya*. Singapore: Donald Moore.; Newbould, A T et al. 1949. *Report of the Committee Appointed by His Excellency the High Commissioner to Investigate the Squatter Problem*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Press.; Nyce, Ray. 1973. *Chinese New Villages in Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute LTD.; Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.; Sandhu, KS. 1963. "The saga of the 'squatter' in Malaya: a preliminary survey of the causes, characteristics and consequences of the resettlement of rural dwellers during the Emergency between 1948 and 1960." *Journal of Southeast Asian History*.; Stead, Ronald. 1955. "The 'New Villages' in Malaya." *Geographical Magazine* (27): 642-652.; Voon, Phin Keong, and Soo Hock Khoo. 1980. "The expandable core house and the lower income groups in Peninsular Malaysia." *Malaysian Geographers* 2: 37-60.; Lim, Hin Fook, and Wan Ying Soong. 1996. *50 Years of Chinese New Villages*. Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies.; Voon, Phin Keong. 2009. "The Chinese New Villages in Malaysia: impact of demographic changes and response strategies." *Journal of Malaysian Chinese Studies* 12: 73-105.

⁴¹⁸ Kementerian Pembangunan Negeri dan Luar Bandar, Malaysia (Ministry of National and Rural Development, Malaysia). 1986. *Maklumat Demografi Kampung Baru Malaysia, 1985 (Demographic Information on New Villages in Malaysia, 1986)*. Kuala Lumpur: Unpublished data.; 1985. "New villages: comprehensive plan for development." *New Straits Times*. 20 September.; 1985. "Editorial: New villages, old ghosts." *New Straits Times*. 24 September.; 1986. "MCA proposes 15-yr plan for new villages." *New Straits Times*. 12 May.; 1986. "Editorial: new villages." *New Straits Times*. 13 May.; Voon, Phin Keong, and Soo Hock Khoo. 1986. "The New Villages in Peninsular Malaysia." *Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography* 36-55.

⁴¹⁹ Official statistics compiled in 1986 confirmed this generally overlooked aspect of ethnicity.

⁴²⁰ Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.

⁴²¹ Markandan, P 1955, *The Problem of the New Villages in Malaya* (Singapore 1954) p14

Regroupments and the New Villages was that while the latter two were fenced, the former was usually not, and the inhabitants were free to go out to till fields, which they usually did only during the day. Security for these areas were in the hands of Home Guards.

In a number of cases the Home Guards were inadequate protection for the Malay Regroupment Areas and it became necessary for many of them to be re-regrouped or relocated in New Villages. In Kelantan, 21 Malay Regroupment Areas, of a known total of 25, were relocated in the NVs. Since the end of the Emergency almost the whole of the regrouped Malay population has returned to the original settlement locations.⁴²²

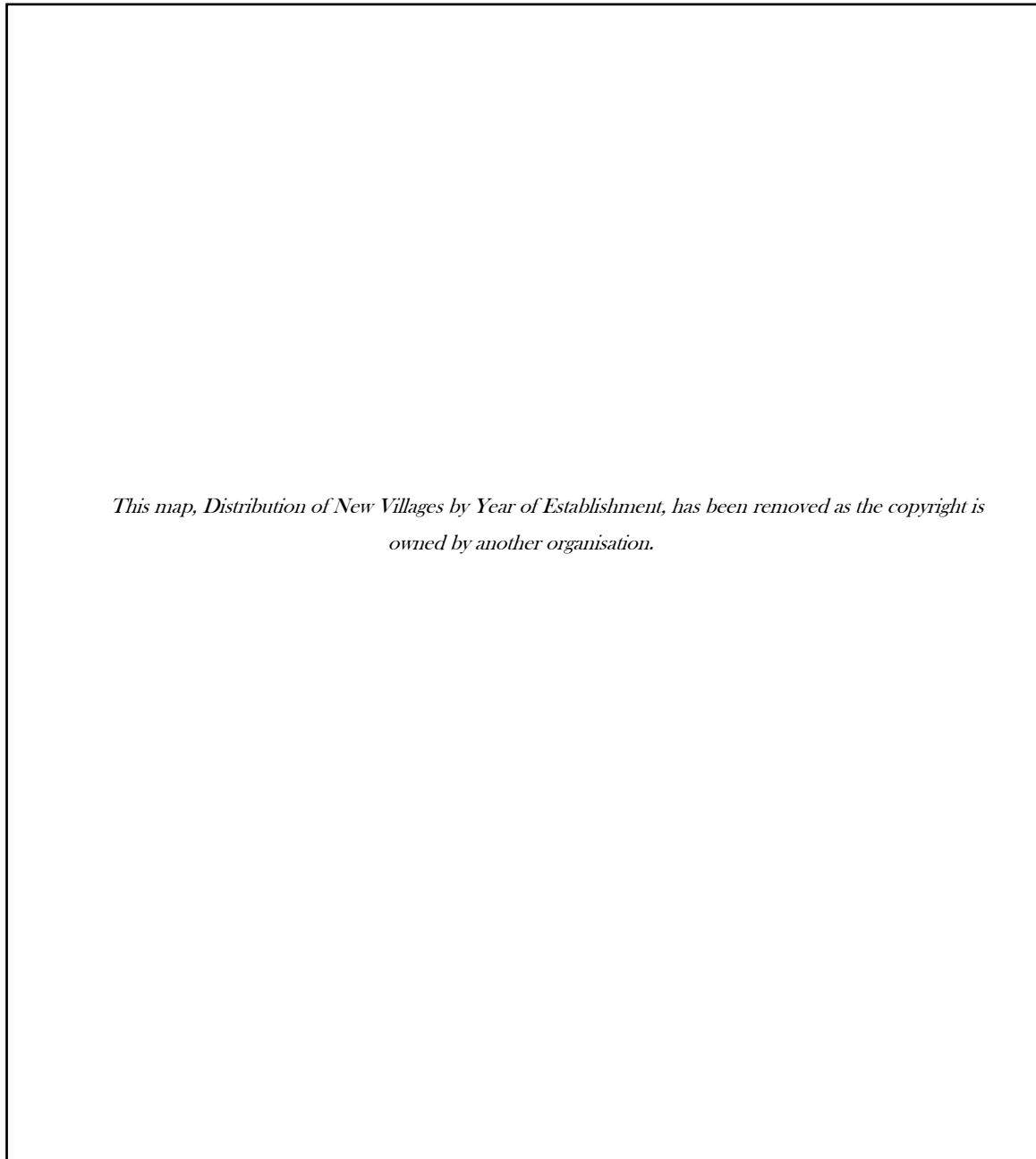
Table 3: Population of New Villages, 1954 and the Federation of Malaya, 1947

State	Number of New Villages	Population of New Villages (1954)	As % of Chinese Population in the State	Population of Chinese (1947)	As % of Chinese Population in Malaya
Johor	88	117,281	33.1	354,770	18.8
Kedah	34	21,162	18.3	115,928	6.1
Kelantan	14	11,680	-	22,938	1.2
Melaka	17	9,555	9.9	96,144	5.1
Negeri Sembilan	37	29,040	25.4	114,406	6.1
Pahang	67	46,444	47.7	97,329	5.2
Penang	9	12,221	4.9	247,366	13.1
Perak	124	198,109	44.6	444,509	23.6
Perlis	1	500	4.2	11,788	0.6
Selangor	46	97,112	26.8	362,710	19.2
Trengganu	2	451	2.8	15,864	0.8
Total	439	543,555	28.8	1,884,534	100.0

Source: Corry 1955; Fell 1960

⁴²² On the other hand the Malay Regroupment Areas were said to not enjoy the amenities of the New Villages. Community centres, schools and good roads were rare in the Malay Regroupment Areas. These centres did not "qualify" for Government or MCA aid with regard to the provision of amenities like piped water, schools, electricity, roads, etc. Similar to the concentration of mining and estate labour, was the regroupment of dispersed timber, sawmill and factory workers and isolated Malay and Orang Asli (Aborigine) settlements. Apart from differences in security arrangements, the Malay and Orang Asli settlements were in the same class as the other regrouped areas.

Figure 7: Distribution of New Villages by Year of Establishment



Source: Voon and Khoo 1986

As mentioned previously, in December 1948 a “Squatter Committee”, under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary Sir Alex Newbould, was set up to examine the facts of the squatter problem and to make recommendations for its solution.

The year following the adoption of the Squatters Committee’s recommendations saw

no substantial progress with regard to resettlement.⁴²³ The situation, it was believed, required not only a comprehensive scheme intended for an entire country as well as funds to finance the efforts, but also a man able to invigorate the colonial apparatus in 'extraordinary' action. Thus in May 1950, General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed.⁴²⁴

Under Briggs, the resettlement programme became the responsibility of the Federal Government. Four basic aims were identified for a new resettlement programme. These were to (1) insulate the 'Communist gunmen' from their main source of supply and to protect the squatters from coercion; (2) to establish a degree of security that would give people the confidence to supply information about the enemies; (3) to break up the cells and organizations of the enemies, and (4) to force them to attack security forces on the latter's ground.⁴²⁵

The "Federation Plan for the Elimination of the Communist Organisation and Armed Forces in Malaya" that instructed for the resettlement of Malaya's rural population involved two processes - 'relocation' and 'regroupment'.

'Relocation' is the shifting of dispersed rural dwellers, whether squatters or legitimate settlers, to prepared and fortified sites, often remote from their existing homes. It entailed the abandonment of holdings, crops and in consequence, usually a change from the previous mode of life. In addition, every New Village to which these individuals were relocated to was expected to have basic amenities supplied to them such as electricity, roads, a school, piped water, community hall, as well as wherever possible and necessary, new farming land and facilities were made available near to them, and so on. These were to be funded from the Federal Government and Malayan Chinese Association.

A subset of 'relocation' is 'close-settlement', It is the concentration of squatters into an 'existing' village accomplished in two ways; (1) If the squatters were living adjoining a village, their houses were not removed, instead the perimeter fence surrounding the village was extended to enclose the squatter houses; (2) If the squatters were some distance away from a nearby village, enclosure was accomplished through the 'removal' of their houses to

⁴²³ 1953. *Federal Legislative Council Minutes and Council Papers 1952/53*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers. B312, 320, 317, 328.

⁴²⁴ Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, KCIE, CB, CBE, DSO, was a retired regular British Indian Army officer. He was commissioned at Sandhurst in 1914 as an infantry officer, and had served throughout his career as a British officer in the Indian Army. He had thirty-four years' experience of soldiering and warfare in India, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. His last army appointment was Commander-in-Chief Burma in 1948.; 1952. "Resettlement and Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya." *Government White Paper No.33*.

⁴²⁵ Stead, Ronald. 1955. "The "New Villages" in Malaya." *Geographical Magazine* (27): 647

the nearby village. Theoretically, through this measure, squatters would not lose the use of their existing holdings nor were they forced to change their usual place of work. Furthermore, members of the pre-existing villages were eligible for all the amenities given to the squatters who were resettled in the normal way. In other words, there were those (1) which were entirely new; (2) those which built around and absorbed small existing villages; and (3) those established as appendages to towns or large villages while maintaining a distinct identity of their own. Nearly one third of the New Villages were of the first class and a further one quarter of the second class.⁴²⁶

The New Villages, whether entirely or partially new, were very much similar in appearance. Many of them were not more than close-packed shanty encampments with small houses or large Kongsis all fenced in with barbed wire and imposed on the landscape in a regular pattern, equipped with the necessary number of armed guards.

The standard New Village was a microcosm of the country in general and would be erected with the following specifications. The entire area of a New Village would be wrapped by double fences – between thirty-five to forty-five feet apart, whereby the outer fence consisted of eight-foot barbed wire cross mesh with twelve-inch spacing and the inner fence, a six-foot barbed wire double apron fence.⁴²⁷ Watchtowers sat at the edge of the village meant to protect villagers but invariably functioned as an instrument of surveillance to monitor villagers' movements. There were two main gates, guarded by Malay auxiliary Constables, who controlled the movement of people and vehicles in and out of the village. Further, (1) it will contain within its fences facilities such as a police-post with adjacent quarters. The police post was located either in the centre of the New Village or else placed on higher ground to facilitate surveillance of the villagers and their daily activities. (2) Other government buildings, such as community halls, schools, dispensaries, as well as shop-houses and markets, were situated close to the police station.⁴²⁸ The living areas occupied by the relocated squatters were normally designed symmetrically along horizontal and perpendicular lines in a grid pattern. These well-confined, and well-defined spaces, the British colonial authorities were able to, among others, watch, control and discipline for obedience. The colonial machinery took the form of colonial officers, institutions, organisations and, as discussed above, a variety of

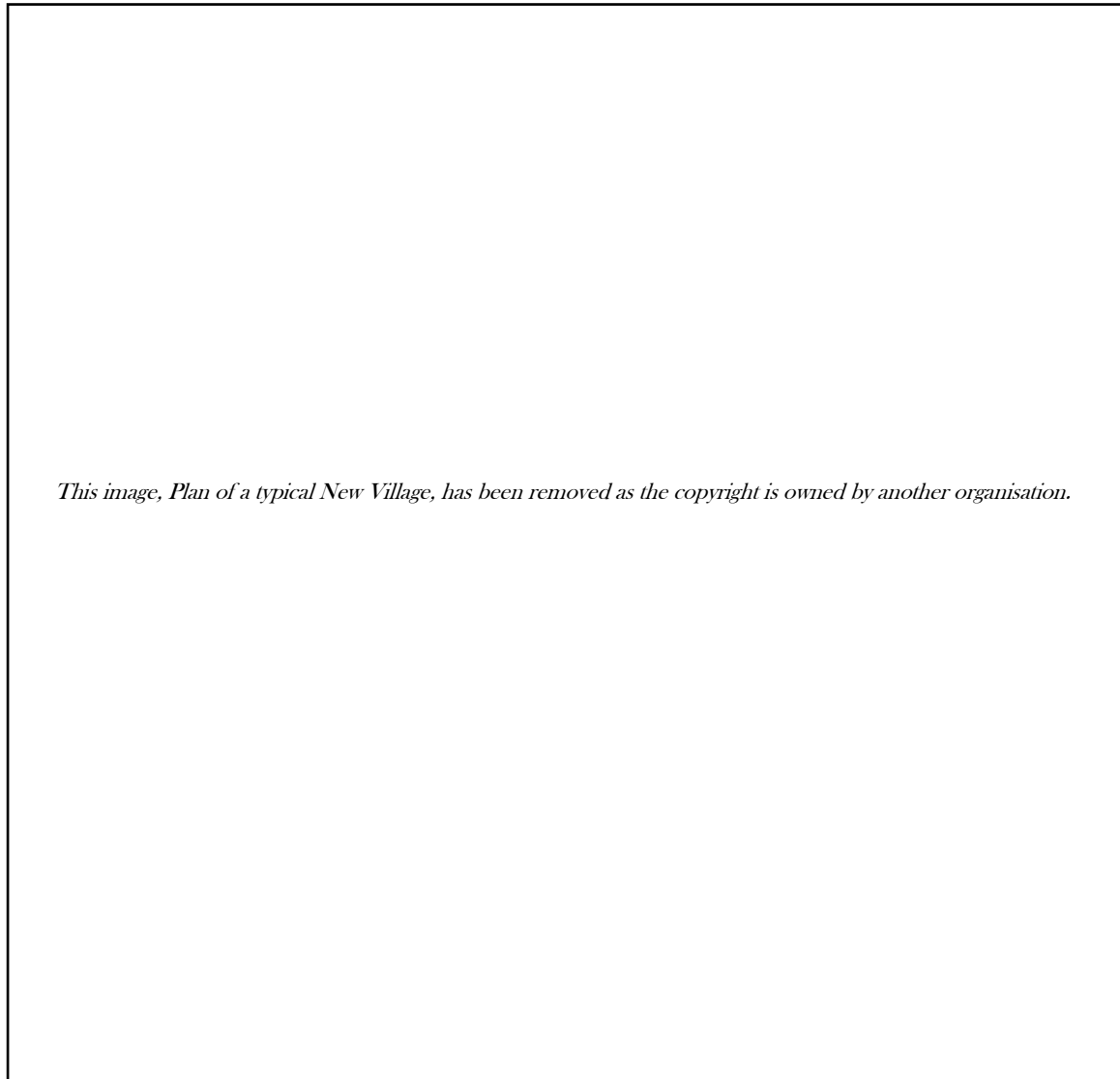
⁴²⁶ See Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.

⁴²⁷ 1956. "Emergency Operations Council Directive No.6." *Emergency Directives and Instructions*; Vegetables and crops were to be grown between the fences, provided they were not more than two feet high, but under no conditions were tapioca, yams, tobacco, cereals, climbing beans and cucumber to be grown

⁴²⁸ Nyce, Ray. 1973. *Chinese New Villages in Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute LTD.

control techniques. The infrastructure of the New Village is then reinforced by the human-dimension of the unending presence of ‘loyal’ Resettlement Officers, Assistant Resettlement Officers, Chinese Affairs Officers, Assistant Chinese Affairs Officers, Security Forces, Constables and Village Headmen.

Figure 8: Plan of a typical New Village



Source: Adapted from Nyce 1973.

Within this confined space, the New Villagers were made to put-up and endure regular screening. All adults could be ordered to gather at the *padang* (‘field’ / ‘public space’), and then walk, individual by individual, past a small ‘van’. In the vehicle, there would be

hidden a collaborator such as ‘surrendered enemy personnel’ or any Special Branch informants. If the collaborator, hidden from view and identity preserved, knocked or signalled as someone passed by, the police guards would escort the person away for further interrogation.⁴²⁹

In the earlier phases of the relocation programme, the New Villages were sited across and astride main roads in order to give maximum accessibility to security forces in case of attack. However, as the New Villages were fenced and the entrances guarded, they interrupted normal road traffic. Hence, in the later phases the New Villages were sited along only either side of a road. The New Villages were typically sited on flat land near a stream or river and away from highlands as a safeguard against being overlooked. In these circumstances, many New Villages came to be located on sandy *lalang* (‘thatch’) colonies, swamp, tin tailings and other, safe-from-bandit but inhospitable areas. Such were the circumstances of, for example, the poor siting; of Batu Rakit/Pulai (Terengganu), located on a sandy wasteland; of Jemaluang (Johore), sited on lode tin tailings; of Kg. Abdullah (Johore), sited in an area which is regularly inundated; of Kg. Paya (Johore), built in an intermittent fresh water swamp and; of Mahsan (Negri Sembilan) where settlers were left to forage and farm for food on a *lalang* waste.⁴³⁰

In terms of basic amenities, not every New Village was well-established in the beginning. With such a large number of New Villages constructed in such a short period of time, sites generally suffered because of poor location and planning due to a lack of qualified administrative staff, money and resources. In many New Villages, key services such as drainage and other public works were only established years later. Furthermore, a large number of New Villages did not have dispensaries or schools until the late 1950s. With limited public piped water, residents, including elderly people would have to line up for hours in a day for basic necessities such as water. Perhaps, understandably, electricity was mainly directed to the police station, the community hall and, most importantly, the floodlights at the watchtowers. In certain areas with suspected MCP movement and activities designated as ‘bad’ areas, fences were also electrified for security purposes.

Furthermore, there were various techniques of social control embedded in the formal regulation and organisation of the New Villages. As mentioned earlier, for instance, the colonial government implemented a policy of national registration in Malaya in July 1948. It

⁴²⁹ Mr. Chai, Tras New Village, 28 November 2007

⁴³⁰ See Sandhu, KS. 1964. “Emergency resettlement in Malaya.” *Journal of Tropical Geography*; Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.

was made mandatory for all persons over 12 years to register and hold identity cards which carried a person's photograph and their thumb-print which matched a kept security force database. Failure to produce these cards when instructed would make one highly suspicious and thus deserving of further government action. All the households in a village were registered and the household registration form, which listed the names, ages and occupation of family members, was to be displayed on the wall for security purposes.

In addition, two kinds of curfews were enforced. Gate curfews, limited residents to the confines of the village between 7pm and 6am; house curfews meant villagers had to remain indoors in their home. These curfews, designed to limit villagers' movements, varied from area to area. In certain extreme cases, such as in Tanjong Malim in Perak and Permatang Tinggi in Penang, the British Government imposed 22-hour house curfews as a form of collective punishment for the villagers' 'non-cooperation'.⁴³¹

Another enforcement policy was food control. Food distribution was used to reward and punish. Each household kept a rice ration card, which allowed a purchasing quota of a small amount of rice per week per adult male, adult female and child respectively.⁴³² Other controlled items included sugar, salt, cooking oil, dried fish, tapioca, flour and flour products, as well as tinned food. These restrictions led to situations where many labourers who were allowed to commute for work every day to places like their rubber estates, were not allowed to carry their lunch with them and had no choice but to endure working in a chronically malnourished state for several years. In 'bad' areas, the government introduced another form of food control known as the "central cooking kitchen scheme" in order to prevent the leakage of rice to Communists. The very first central kitchen was set up in the Bahau district of Negri Sembilan in May 1954. Under these orders, a chief cook will, at a pre-determined time, collect uncooked rice from the store and carry it to the central cookhouse under security escort. After cooking, the families will then come to the distribution centre and collect carefully portioned cooked rice to take back home for consumption. The circulation of only 'cooked' rice in a village is crucial as cooked rice goes bad much quicker than uncooked rice which may last a considerable amount of time if stored properly, and is bulky and messy to

⁴³¹ The Tanjong Malim incident occurred on 25 March 1952. The MCP guerrillas ambushed a public works department party repairing a water pipeline and killed twelve men. For further details, see Miller, *The Communist Menace in Malaya*, pp. 206-08; In the case of Permatang Tinggi, a Chinese resettlement officer was murdered in a coffee shop at the New Village in August 1952. See Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or Free?* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1954), pp. 90-91.

⁴³² Approximately 2.5, 2 and 1.75 kilos

smuggle in and out.⁴³³

To prevent villagers from taking any food outside the village, the government also implemented daily body searches. Each morning, men and women had to queue up in two rows to be searched by guards at the main gate. These checkpoint body searches were felt to be an act of gross indignity by many local people.⁴³⁴ In one famous case in Semenyih New Village at Kajang in Selangor, women complained that people could look into the booth where they were forced to undress for a female searcher to check their bodies.⁴³⁵

Theoretically, every site was chosen after an examination of the soils, water potential, employment possibilities and accessibility. However, in practice, these preliminaries were generally ignored as speed was the driving force and there was neither the time nor the staff in the context of Malaya during this period for such procedures. The resettlement programme was essentially a security measure and as such, the overriding consideration in the choice of a New Village site appeared to be defence.

Squatters were distinguished by the following; (1) Those who possess Temporary Occupation Licence (TOL) or were otherwise in lawful occupation of the land and who were situated in areas round towns and villages where they could be policed and controlled; many who have been on their holdings for years;⁴³⁶ (2) Those holding TOL in more remote areas not at present under proper administrative control; (3) Those who had settled within easy access of towns but without any legal title to the land occupied by them; (4) Those in remote areas who were occupying plots of land in jungle felled during the occupation; (5) Those occupying similar areas where the Administration through lack of adequate staff had failed to stem their advance. The final two constituted the problem for the Government.

Those resettled were (1) Farmers dependent for their livelihood on the growing of

⁴³³ See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998 1998) *CD: Penaja dan Pemimpin Regimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Fakeh, Shamsiah. 2004. *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari AWAS ke Regimen Ke-10*. Bangi: Penerbitan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.; Mohd Kassim, Abu Samah. 1996. *Sejarah dan Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

⁴³⁴ In addition to the strict regulations surrounding resettlement, the British established various organizations in the New Villages. For instance, MCA branches were set up in almost every New Village. Missionaries were encouraged to build churches and mobile clinics organised by the British Red Cross Society and Saint John's Ambulance Brigade formed part of the Government effort to implement "after-care" policies. The Government also set up home guard units, Boy Scout and Girl Guides Associations and village committees in the New Villages. Attempts to mould "loyal citizens" included establishing civic courses, campaigns such as "Anti-Bandit Month," or Good Citizens' Committees, as well as holding local council elections.

⁴³⁵ Federation of Malaya. 1956. *Report on the Conduct of Food Searches at Semenyih*. Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press.

⁴³⁶ Types of squatters as distinguished by ACA Perak – five groups.

food, chiefly vegetables and the keeping of pigs and poultry; (2) Persons engaged in tin mining, rubber growing or other crops, who were forced to live in the sanctuary of the New Villages; (3) Wage earners, working in the neighbourhood in tin mines, rubber plantations, etc. and; (4) Shop-keepers. The first two were the dominant groups, and formed about three-fifths of the total population.

There was also a practice whereby houses were marked to ensure that fellow villagers would be effectively separated and distributed during the resettlement process so as to not end up in the same New Villages.⁴³⁷ The procedure of transferring people to New Villages differed from case to case. In some localities, the relocation operation was carried out suddenly, usually at dawn, with no prior warning. After the layout plans of a New Village had been finalised, notices of removal were served to the people to be removed. After sufficient time had lapsed and the intended relocation had been explained, the move was effected and the abandoned settlement destroyed. The people were theoretically paid a small sum as upheaval allowance and given assistance, mainly in the form of materials to erect new dwellings. This assistance was a loan, which had to be repaid, but in practice were written off as part of the resettlement costs.⁴³⁸

The process of relocation is described to have generally taken place in the following manner. Firstly, notices of relocation were handed out and explained by local field officers and the Chinese village headman to the squatters. On the day of relocation, government trucks would arrive, escorted by security forces, and wait while squatters prepared their bare minimum belongings for loading. The squatters would then be forcefully transported to their resettlement camps. In 'bad' areas, the security forces, as a matter of tactical advantage, would often raid at dawn, with no prior warning, to prevent squatters from fleeing. Such a move was meant to prevent the escape of able-bodied men who disappeared whenever a warning of intended relocation would be given. Security Forces would surround the area before sunrise and officials from various Government departments went in and told the inhabitants to take whatever movable possessions they could and get into the waiting transport. The extreme

⁴³⁷ Mrs. Chong Koon Ying; 74, interview by Meor Alif. 2012. (10 May).; Fong, Tian Yong, interview by Meor Alif Meor Azalan. 2014. (June 27).; See Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters., Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: daripada perjuangan bersenjata kepada perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development., Che Dat, Abdullah. 2015. *Memoir* (CD, Darurat dan Kemerdekaan 1948-1998 1998) *CD: Penaja dan Pemimpin Rejimen ke-10*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; 2005. *Memoir Abdullah C.D.: Zaman pergerakan sehingga sekarang 1948*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.; Fakeh, Shamsiah. 2004. *Memoir Shamsiah Fakeh: Dari AWAS ke Rejimen Ke-10*. Bangi: Penerbitan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.; Mohd Kassim, Abu Samah. 1996. *Sejarah dan Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*. Hong Kong: Nan Dao Publisher.

⁴³⁸ Short, Anthony. 1975. *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*. London: Muller.

‘ambushing’ nature of such a planned manoeuvre meant that what otherwise would have been traumatising enough on its own – which is the forced uprooting of these individuals – was amplified further by the fact that these villagers were given such a limited window to even prepare themselves, mentally and physically, for relocation. The crops and houses left behind were burnt to the ground by government soldiers so they could not be used by the Communists.⁴³⁹

In general, once the squatters arrived at their destination and are herded into the barbed-wired encampment, they had to build their own houses within the fences on assigned lots of land primarily using whatever materials they could find, typically beginning with the dismantled and salvaged materials from their previous home – if at all available. In certain remote areas, villagers were allegedly reduced to collecting branches and palm leaves from nearby jungles. While building their new houses, some slept in communal attap-ed ‘long-houses’ provided by the government. Others made do with relatively basic sheltering which were often no more than sad shanties covered with attap.

In several extreme cases, the New Villagers experienced forced relocation more than once. Tras New Village is one such case. Tras is located at the bottom of Fraser’s Hill, a small colonial resort 120 km from Kuala Lumpur, surrounded by a thick jungle area. The rural inhabitants were first rounded up in late 1950s and then attached to a hundred year-old town called Tras, in the Raub District, in the state of Pahang. On 8 October 1951, the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, was ambushed and killed by Communists on his way to Fraser’s Hill.

One month later, the entire population (2,121 people) of Tras village were sent to Ipoh Detention Camp, where they were incarcerated and interrogated from between six months to one year. Even when they were released in batches, they were resettled to other New Villages (such as Sempalit and Sungai Chetang New Villages in Pahang) and were only allowed to return to Tras after it was declared a “white area” (cleared of Communists) in the late 1950s.⁴⁴⁰

The Pulai Hakka Chinese had been settled in Ulu Kelantan for more than three centuries. They were vegetable and paddy growers. Pulai remained in Malaysian Races

⁴³⁹ “They [the British] have guns, what else can you do?”, Mr. Ong, Tras New Village, 21 November 2007.

⁴⁴⁰ 1956. ““Ghost Village will open again after five years”” *The Straits Times*. 25 July.; 1951. ““Terror’ Town To Be Moved”” *The Straits Times*. 8 November.; Mr. Chai, Tras New Village, 28 November 2007.

Liberation Army (MRLA) hands until 7 August 1948 when it was captured after a combined British Army-Air Force operation. For their alleged collaboration with the MRLA, the Pulau Chinese were expelled from Kelantan and sent to detention camps in various parts in Malaya. About 400 of them were transferred to Batu Rakit Village in the neighbouring state of Terengganu. The village was sited in uncultivable land, and had to be abandoned. The settlers were then resettled at Pulau Bahru (Gajah Mati) in Kelantan on 31 May 1953. Repeated attempts to grow vegetables, paddy, sweet potatoes, and tapioca ended in failure due to poor soils and recurrent flooding. Faced with starvation and without alternative employment, many of the settlers moved a third time, in 1956, to Batu Lima New Village in the state of Selangor.⁴⁴¹ This was located in a better agricultural area recently vacated by Malay settlers who had been prompted by the improved security situation to return to their own *kampongs*. The Pulau Chinese had had the distinction of being resettled three times. Most New Villages, in spite of being unfavourable sites, remained where they were.

The biggest New Village in Malaya was Jinjang, Selangor, which in 1954 had a population of 13,000 in an area of 468 acres. The smallest was Labu Besar, Kedah, with a population of 44 persons living on a few acres. On average, the New Villages tended to be small with a population of about 100 to 1,000. More than half of the New Villages were of this type. Of the remainder, 169 had between 1,000 - 5,000 persons, 10 had 5,000 - 10,000 persons. Two New Villages had populations of more than 10,000, and twelve New Villages had less than 100 inhabitants.⁴⁴²

The relocation work was done rapidly; it began in Johore in June 1950 and was almost entirely completed by the end of 1952. After this date, only a few New Villages were created, mainly in Kedah and the interior of the country. Altogether, 480 New Villages were established in Malaya during the Emergency; 80 per cent of these New Villages were in Western Malaya, nearly half of them in Perak and Johore.

An often ignored group in the analysis of Briggs' relocation programme are those who were affected by 'regrouping'. 'Regrouping' was the transfer of dispersed labourers and their families and dwellings to a fortified point of concentration either on the property of the employer or close to an employer's property. What was crucial for the employer was that the families, as such, would continue to have access to their usual places of work, at least during

⁴⁴¹ 1955. "Report of Chinese Affairs Officer, Terengganu, 1/12/55, typescript." Kuala Terengganu.

⁴⁴² Sandhu, KS. 1964. "Emergency resettlement in Malaya." *Journal of Tropical Geography*.

the hours of daylight.

Figures for the number of Labour Regroupment Areas are incomplete for the whole of Malaya, however one may get an estimate by looking at the number of places of employment which exceeded the number of New Villages. There were 5,200 places of employment in Malaya in 1948. Of that number, 575 were estates of more than 1,000 acres and of the remainder 500 were mines.⁴⁴³ A total of 650,000 persons are estimated to have been 'regrouped'. About 71.5 per cent of them were on estates and 21.5 per cent on mines;⁴⁴⁴ the remainder in factories, sawmills and timber Kongsis. The majority of the estates' workers were Indian, who formed 50 per cent of the population affected by regroupment. The rest of the breakdown is as follows; Chinese - 29 per cent, Malays - 16 per cent, Javanese - 5 per cent. This population structure differed from that of the New Villages where the Chinese formed the largest group and the Indians the smallest. The Chinese were, however, the dominant group in the mining regroupment areas.

Estate labour regroupment was organised in two ways: (1) Internal/domestic regroupment. Dispersed labour lines were concentrated at one point – the factory site. Labour lines were transferred to a central fortified area within the estate. In the large estates, two or more such concentrations were not uncommon. This was done to avoid disruption of work. On the smaller estates all labour lines were concentrated at the factory. Domestic regroupment consisted of neatly laid out labour lines and other buildings. The additional labour lines were either those removed from their dispersed locations or new ones built according to Governmental specifications (the additional accommodation was obtained either by transferring the buildings from the old sites, or by the construction of new buildings). The whole settlement was fenced and guarded by special constables, most of whom were Malays.

Then, (2) there was external/extra-estate regroupment. Labourers from some of the Asian medium-holdings and small estates without resident managers were regrouped on a large, usually European, estate together with its own labour force. The number of medium-holdings and the small estates thus affected is unknown for the whole of Malaya, but it would have been substantial. External regroupment areas consisted of an amorphous collection of wooden and atap houses, the haphazard arrangement of which contrasted with the nearly laid out labour lines and other buildings of the estate itself. Some of the smaller properties which

⁴⁴³ Federation of Malaya. 1949. *Annual Report of the Labour Department 1948.* Kuala Lumpur, 50-1,55.

⁴⁴⁴ Nyce, Ray. 1973. *Chinese New Villages in Malaya.* Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute LTD.

were transferred simply dismantled their buildings and re-erected them in the regroupment area. Others put up temporary shacks. The abandoned lines were either "wired up" or destroyed. The security arrangements for these centres were similar to those of the domestic regrouping.

In Johore alone, 450 such properties were affected and their labour force transferred to 47 regroupment areas on large estates. Squatters on estates were also resettled in the regroupment areas. This generally applied only to squatters who provided the particular estate with casual labour. Cases of squatters from outside being resettled on estates were rare. Regroupment areas were generally small in size compared to New Villages. Most of them had a population of between 100 and 500 persons. There was little or no planning in the regroupment of the labour from the medium-holdings and the small Asian estates. No provision was made for health or water facilities and the people were left to fend for themselves. They relied on receiving estate facilities which were already strained owing to the regrouping of their own labour.

On the mines, most of the mining labour were relocated in New Villages. This was especially the case with Chinese mines. Many of the European mine owners, on the other hand, relocated their labour within the mining sites which entailed wiring in the existing living quarters and providing a few guards. The regroupment of timber, sawmill and factory workers was on the same lines as the mining regroupment, especially in the latter two cases where the main additions were a wire fence and security guards.

6.1 DETENTION AND 'REHABILITATION'

An interesting aspect of 'regroupment' were the measures taken to 'rehabilitate' the civilian detainees and the surrendered guerrillas. 'Rehabilitation' camps were set up for adult detainees at Morib (Selangor), Majeedi (Johore), Taiping and Ipoh (Perak), while children were sent to the Henry Gurney Approved School at Telok Mas, Malacca.

Why imprisonment is relevant to the case of COIN in Malaya will be seen in how it was used by the Government. When the Secretary of State for the Colonies visited Malaya at the end of 1951, he described the position as "intolerable"; 200,000 persons had been detained for less than twenty-eight days and 25,000 had been detained for twenty-eight days or more, of whom less than 800 had been prosecuted. "Even after deducting the numbers of

those who had been released or deported to China, there were at this time still 6,000 persons detained without trial”.⁴⁴⁵ The prison population grew rapidly, from 3,497 in 1947 to 9,879 in 1954, resulting in severe over-crowding. The ratio of prisoners to warders during 1948 to 1954 was one to more than four hundred prisoners.⁴⁴⁶

In the government’s report over inquiries from the World Federation of Trades Unions, it had the following to say about detainment:

With regard to the allegations relating to emergency regulations and camps, the Committee noted from the Government's reply that these camps have been established as places of confinement for persons detained under the Emergency Regulations against whom there is reasonable evidence of having aided, abetted or consorted with the terrorists and that only 7,951 persons, against whom there was such reasonable evidence, were detained in the camps by December 1951. It considers it highly probable, as the Government suggests, that when the complainants allege a figure of 300,000 they are referring mistakenly to the number of persons moved to resettlement areas for their own protection.

It also explains the detainment structure:

By the end of December 1951; 7,951 people were detained in the camps. All practicable steps have been taken to secure that the conditions in these camps are satisfactory. In quoting the figure of 300,000 workers in connection with these camps, the W.F.T.U are clearly confusing the detainees mentioned above with the far larger number of residents in remote rural areas of Malaya whom it has been necessary to move to resettlement areas in order to bring them within the orbit of settled administration and protect them from violence and intimidation on the part of the terrorists. This has involved the creation of entirely new communities, with all the necessary public services, to cater for some 440,000 people.

John D. Leary, who had served in the Malayan Scouts (later 22 Special Air Service Regiment) from 1950 to 1955, along with Anthony Short explains:

*British behaviour during the Emergency was disgraceful...They treated their prisoners as common criminals, and tried and hung thousands of them [at this point Anthony Short interjected: “hundreds, not thousands”] after very farcical trials.*⁴⁴⁷

Perhaps the atypical colonial prison is ran with a combination of debasement and

⁴⁴⁵ Lyttelton, Oliver. 1964. *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos*. London.

⁴⁴⁶ Malaya, Federation of. 1948-1954. *Report of the Prisons Department*. Taiping: The Department; 1948-1957. *Annual Report: Singapore Prisons Department*. Singapore: G.P.O.

⁴⁴⁷ Chin, C.C., and Karl Hack. 2004. *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 239.

deprivation. Newspaper reports at the time, and across the several memoirs show that the condition of the prison cells that were allocated for political prisoners were, among other things; badly-lit, overwhelmed by the stench of latrines and infested with bed bugs and rats, which ensured that the prisoners had minimum rest. The prisoners were required to relieve themselves in the cells where they were not provided with any water, and they could only dispose of filth every morning. They were also deprived of reading and writing materials and were forced to squat while consuming their meals.⁴⁴⁸

After verifying their identities, political prisoners were ordered to strip naked *en masse* for routine inspection and were made to shower in an open bathing area. The experience of “public nudity” particularly affected the Malay radicals because their cultural and religious beliefs required that they “must not expose their private parts in public” and to avoid such sins.⁴⁴⁹ Subsequently, new prisoners were subjected to a period of isolation during which they were forbidden to communicate with other prisoners. Political prisoners were moved first from one prison cell to another and later on, from one prison to another. In the process of transfer, prisoners were chained or handcuffed in rows of three to twelve and when they were transferred between prisons they were made to march through public areas visible to all onlookers.⁴⁵⁰ Those arrested in Peninsular Malaya were first placed in a lockup within the confines of a local police station before being moved to a state prison and then to a detention camp at either Tanjung Beruas in Malacca, Taiping, Ipoh, Seremban, Pulau Jerejak off Penang Island, or the infamous Pudu Prison in Kuala Lumpur for men and the prison for women at Batu Gajah. At each stage, they were given the impression that the next cell would be worse than the one before. In the case of Samad Ismail, who after experiencing physical suffering in various cells fell into a psychosis, running hysterically around his cell, shouting his wife’s name repeatedly and knocking his head against the wall until he bled, was placed in a ‘recalcitrant house’ at Outram Prison in Singapore that was designated especially for dangerous criminals prior to being held in a solitary cell.⁴⁵¹ Samad was then moved to a high-security prison on St. John’s Island, about six kilometres south of Singapore. Malay radicals who were reputed to wield enormous influence in society were placed in solitary cells for as long as 100 days, while those of lesser social status were placed in cells where the

⁴⁴⁸ 1950. “M.N.P protests on camp detainees.” *The Singapore Free Press*. 13 April.; 1958. “Probe sought on treatment of detainees.” *The Straits Times*. 27 July.; Ismail, A. S. (1993). Ismail, A. Samad. 1993. *Memoir A. Samad Ismail di Singapura*. Bangi: UKM Press, 176.

⁴⁴⁹ Muhammad, Ishak Haji. 1996. *Memoir Pak Sako: Putera Gunung Taban*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 197.

⁴⁵⁰ Maidin, Rashid, 39; Salleh, Abdul Majid, 147.

⁴⁵¹ Ismail, A. Samad, 175-177.

prisoners were often suspicious of others as threats to their security or position. The more recalcitrant Malays were also required to wear black uniforms to signify that they were dangerous and resistant to reform. Prisoners wearing grey uniforms were seen as less dangerous and were required to undergo frequent counselling at a rehabilitation centre.⁴⁵²

Interrogation sessions for political prisoners were repeatedly conducted. These sessions were designed to obtain information about certain persons and groups or to uncover any plans or preparations that had been made among the prisoners which were hostile toward the colonial state. Aside from having to answer the same set of questions while trying not to contradict themselves or reveal information that could jeopardise their organization and movement, the Malay radicals were deprived of food and drink and subjected to verbal assaults in sessions that could last for several hours at a time.⁴⁵³ The Malay radicals detested being treated like ‘common criminals’ when for instance provided with only basic rations, and being made to clean the latrines of their crowded cells.⁴⁵⁴

The political prisoners opposed of serving their time in prisons simply as cheap labourers and engaging in hard labour as instructed by prison authorities. Their circumstances as supposedly political prisoners, meant they maintained that their guilt had not yet been legally established thus ought to distinguish and exclude them from the obligatory tasks assigned to convicted criminals. Verbal abuse of political prisoners was also commonplace, especially by Sikh warders who were well known for their unflinching loyalty towards the colonial state. The warders would brand the Malay radicals as “communists”, “dreamers” and “fools”.⁴⁵⁵ The Malay radicals also embarked on a series of strikes to demonstrate their discontent with the prison authorities and to signal to the other prisoners that the struggle for their autonomy within the prison walls continued to be waged. One of the most highly-publicised strikes was a combined hunger strike and work stoppage that occurred on 23 November 1949 at Tanjung Beruas Camp in Malacca. Led by allegedly leftist leaders and supported by more than 90 Malay prisoners, the strike broke out in reaction to poor sanitary arrangements.⁴⁵⁶ Another incident involved close to 300 male and female prisoners at Batu Gajah Camp in Ipoh on 14 June 1955. As the hunger strike was underway, “the women detainees in the camp created a row. They tore down the walls of some of the

⁴⁵² n.d. “Malay Rehabilitation Centre for Malay Detainees.” *PRO/CO 1022/151*.

⁴⁵³ Muhammad, Ishak Haji, *Memoir Pak Sako: Putera Gunung Tahan*, 204.

⁴⁵⁴ Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.

⁴⁵⁵ 1957. “Sufferings of Malay detainees.” *Arkib Negara Malaysia*.; Salleh, Abdul Majid., 147.

⁴⁵⁶ 1949. “Hunger strike by Malays.” *The Singapore Free Press*. 23 November.

huts, banged on the zinc roofs and shouted as the men were taken away.”⁴⁵⁷ There were two types of strikes; (1) the hunger strikes that could last for more than three days at a time, with prisoners refusing to eat and warders resorting to force-feeding them and; (2) a “go-slow” work strike. Political prisoners would abandon their tools or refuse to finish the tasks assigned to them.

The latest available prison population figures for the Federation of Malaya, taken from the 1948 census show that the population of Malaya as of 1948, stood at 4,867,491 (Male - 2,575,885; Female - 2,291,606).⁴⁵⁸ The total number of persons imprisoned for 1948 was 19,732, with the final daily average analysis shows an increase of 1,121 over 1947 figures. The daily average figure for 1947 stood at 3,497 while in 1948 it was 4,618. From the total number of those committed to prisons, 5,767 were imprisoned under “Emergency Regulations”.

Any prison system is transformative, and especially under an anti-colonial context. At present, the literature on detention and incarceration during the Emergency typically do not rigorously focus on the imprisonment dimension of the Emergency, and regard the prison as being merely transitory experiences for anti-colonial participants seen as ‘criminals’ which was further underscored by the conventions of regarding them as bandits and so on. Colonial prisons are of course crucial sites for the resumption and continuation of an ongoing conflict, where disorder and resistance were managed toward the submission and obedience to the colonial state on the one hand, and where anti-colonials sought to assert their political status, on the other.⁴⁵⁹

To safeguard their political hierarchy, the prisoners attempted to forge close relationships with the prison warders and staff of different prison departments. The most sympathetic of these warders would, among others, assist the political prisoners by allowing them to secretly conduct political classes and organise their elections. Some would go so far as to smuggle banned newspapers and relay information about the progress of anti-colonialist activities, and even smuggle manuscripts written by the detained Malay radicals to political activists outside the prison walls.⁴⁶⁰ Ahmad Boestaman, for example, related how two prison

⁴⁵⁷ 1955. “312 Rebel Detainees Moved to Jail.” *The Straits Times*. 14 June.

⁴⁵⁸ 1952. *Report on the Prisons of the Federation of Malaya for the year 1950*. Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press.

⁴⁵⁹ Adam, Ramlah. 2004. *Gerakan Radikalisme di Malaysia, 1938–1965*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.; mention of prisons or prison experiences of former members of the “Malay left” are absent.

⁴⁶⁰ Maidin, Rashid. 2005. *Memoir Rashid Maidin: Daripada Perjuangan Bersenjata kepada Perdamaian*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information Research Development.

warders named Yusuf and Husain assisted in sending his manuscripts to editors of Malay newspapers, such as *Utusan Zaman*.⁴⁶¹ Radicals who gained the trust of the senior prison officers were permitted to publish magazines for the reading pleasure of fellow prisoners. One of these magazines was named *Siasat* ('Investigate') and another was called *Cempaka*. Handwritten on old school exercise books, these magazines were between sixty and a hundred pages long. Each issue was filled with commentaries on politics, social affairs, short stories and poems written by voluntary contributors from across the prison complex. Once completed, the magazines were passed from one prisoner to another until a whole block of prisoners had the opportunity to read them.⁴⁶²

The Malay radicals were aware of espionage work carried out by other self-proclaimed Malay anti-colonialists planted among the prisoners by the British. Groups of prisoners made plans to beat these spies before their 'release'. Men in hoods would corner the spies in an unguarded place and beat them up. As expected, there were no enquiries into these beatings, because the identities of the victims would thereby become known to all.⁴⁶³ Referred to by prison inmates as *hantu* ('ghost') or *musang-musang berbulu ayam*⁴⁶⁴ (translating to 'wolves in sheep's clothing' referring to spies who solicited information from the Malay radicals) were ostracised by other prisoners, who would often discover their duplicity through informants among the warders.

The realities of imprisonment under colonial rule is complex. Prisons are an important element of the spatial ordering of the colonies. Any particular colonial prison in the empire typically faced problems of shortages and overcrowding but crucially are also essentially reflections of, rather than models for, colonial societies in general. Furthermore, the location of these prisons mirror the position of the detainees to society. Typically, the colonial prisons in Malaya were located in the fringes of the urban and rural environment, often erected inhospitably near graveyards, wastelands, mortuaries, asylums, and other uncommonly visited areas. These isolated prison compounds became fertile grounds in helping shape anti-colonial sentiments among inhabitants.

Persons detained under the Emergency Regulations were sent to different prisons in accordance to the places in which they were first arrested and the sentences they received

⁴⁶¹ Boestamam, A. (1979), 327 and 344.

⁴⁶² Maidin, R. (2005), 45.; Boestamam, A. (1979) 305.; Muhammad, I. H. (1996), 212.

⁴⁶³ Boestamam, Ahmad, 308-309, 323.; 1957. "Sufferings of Malay detainees." Arkib Negara Malaysia.

⁴⁶⁴ Civet-like animals with chicken feathers.

thereafter. There were a total of 15 prisons that housed the detainees who were convicted for a period of three months to a maximum of twelve years. These prisons were located in Singapore, Taiping, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johore Bahru, Kelantan, Alor Star, Trengganu, Batu Gajah, Seremban, Malacca, Kuantan, Kuala Lipis, Kangar and Sungei Patani.⁴⁶⁵

As for the men, ‘inter-racial’ contact was disallowed to minimise the spread of Communist propaganda and the coming together of leaders from the different racial groups to form a united front in the prisons. The ‘divide’ principle of divide and rule was applied to encourage co-operation and to prevent the creation of troublesome cliques within the ranks of the political prisoners. The prisoners were ‘racially’ segregated, with Malays, Chinese, and Indians locked up in the separate blocks. The prisoners were then divided into groups incarcerated in different cells, usually based on the time when they were arrested.⁴⁶⁶ The division of the cells and buildings across racial lines was meant to reflect the wider colonial policy of divide and rule for increased control, and the assumption that each of these ethnic groups had their own distinct set of problems and needs.⁴⁶⁷

The Secretary of State for the Colonies from 4 October 1946 to 28 February 1950, Arthur Creech Jones, was a Labour icon of his time, a conscientious objector during World War One and a ‘protégé’ of The Right Honourable Ernest Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs who was once himself the general secretary of the powerful Transport and General Workers' Union from 1922 to 1940, and Minister of Labour in the war-time coalition government.⁴⁶⁸ As early as July 1948, in his memorandum to the Cabinet dated 1 July, Creech Jones argued that although the present trouble is largely instigated by the Chinese, a “...word must be said about the other two main communities in Malaya, the Malays and the Indians”. The Malays, it was argued, have been largely preoccupied with the constitutional negotiations which led to the modification of the Malayan Union proposals and the shaping of the present constitution. The Malays are satisfied with this and “...have so far been very little concerned in the present disturbances”. There were “nevertheless a number of Malays in the Malayan Communist Party” and there are Malay organisations thoroughly permeated with Communist influences. The Indians provided “...many of the overt leaders

⁴⁶⁵ Chinese prisoners made up at least half of the total prison population, with the remaining prisoners divided into ethnic categories such as the Malays (33 per cent), the Indians (12 per cent) and the rest were categorised as “others” which included the Europeans, Eurasians, Arabs and other minorities. This breakdown remained fairly constant throughout the Emergency years from 1948 to 1960.

⁴⁶⁶ Boestamam, Ahmad, 293.

⁴⁶⁷ 1948–1956. *Report on the Prisons of the Federation of Malaya, 1949–1954*. Kuala Lumpur: The Government Press.

⁴⁶⁸ 1948. “The situation in Malaya Copy No.31.” *Secret CP. (48) 171 Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*. 1 July.

of the Communist Party and its satellite organisations” because, “being British subjects”, they have not been treated, since the reoccupation, as liable to deportation under the law in force in the Malay States. The Indian leaders are, however, suspected to be “...mainly men of straw, and the real organisers are Chinese who have gone underground. Indian community is “...largely employed as estate labour, and is traditionally passive and unaggressive, but easy prey for agitators.”

The Secretary also felt necessary to mention the position of the trade unions in Malaya. The trade unions were stated to be “...still young and poorly organised owing to the fact that the majority of workers are unsophisticated and illiterate”. Encouragement had been given to the growth of trade unions but unfortunately “...a large number of the existing unions have been infiltrated by what may be called professional organisers” whose main object is to turn the trade unions into “...a profitable source of income and political advantage for themselves.” It is in the British colonies that one sees fully revealed the antipathy of supposed leading icons of the Labour party to trade unions and workers’ rights.

As in some other countries, these ‘organisers’, he argued, were influenced and often controlled by the Communist Party and that “...the evils have not stopped short at mere unscrupulous use of union organisation for ends other than the workers’ advantage”. Allegedly, there had been physical intimidation of workers on a large scale. And Indian estate labour in some areas had been organised into “...disciplined bands, sometimes uniformed, armed with lathis and knives”. And in Singapore an illegal ‘strong-arm’ force (the “Workers’ Protection Corps”) had been organised by the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions (a Communist-dominated body) for purposes of intimidation and extortion.

The British anti-Communist insurgency was, in fact, as much a war against organised labour, although ironically it was being presided over by a Labour government in London. In “Definitive Report - Report No 4, 1953, Case No 30 (United Kingdom) - Complaint date: 01-SEP-51”, we observe the World Federation of Trade Unions claim the following:

“The complainants’ allegations; the complainants make the four following allegations: (1) According to legislation in force, the Government is empowered to decide whether a trade union is duly registered or not, and has the right to examine the membership lists and to watch over the accounting and administration of trade unions; the utilisation of trade union funds for political purposes is prohibited and Government employees are deprived of the right to trade union membership. (2) The Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions was dissolved in 1948 on the pretext that it was not a duly registered organisation. Its 11 affiliated associations, although duly registered, were also dissolved. (3) Many trade union leaders were arrested, prosecuted, deported or killed. In particular, in 1946, the trade union leader, Liu Ah Liang, was sentenced to 18 months’ imprisonment and was so badly treated in jail that he died there as a result. In the same year, Mr. Lu Chang, president of the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, and seven other leaders of the organisation were deported without trial. In 1948, Mr. Tan Kan, president of the Johore Union of Workers in the Rubber Industry, and the secretary of the Mineworkers’ Union were shot by the police. In 1949, Mr. Ganapathy, president of the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, and his successor, Mr. P. Veerasenan, were both done to death. (4) By virtue of a series of emergency orders, the Government can make arrests and imprison persons without trial. Public meetings must first be authorised, persons suspected of seditious activities may be detained without trial and without being charged with any offence, and concentration camps have been set up. It was recently stated that 300,000 plantation and tin-mine workers were going to be put in these camps.”

“In consequence of the Government’s policy it is claimed that while there were 301 trade unions in June 1948, there were less than 100 in September 1948. While the P.M.F.T.U had 463,000 members in 1948, the Government-sponsored unions now existing have only 40,000. Thus 90 per cent of the workers who formerly belonged to trade unions have no longer the opportunity to exercise their trade union rights.”

In the Analysis of the Reply and Supplementary Reply we see the reasoning for replacing one “power behind the throne”, presumably, with another non-hostile “power behind the throne”:

(1) *The United Kingdom Government, in a letter of 16 February 1952, replied to these allegations in the following terms. The allegations of the World Federation of Trade Unions have to be considered against the background of the conditions which have existed in the Federation of Malaya since the end of the war. During this period the Federation of Malaya has been engaged in a fight against militant communism, and with a systematic campaign of murder and crime designed to overthrow the Government by force. In these conditions, the normal growth of a healthy trade union movement has necessarily been attended by special difficulties. Immediately after the end of the war in 1945, the communists in Malaya set out to capture the key posts in the trade unions, which they used to organise political agitation and strike action on the slightest pretext. This policy was notably pursued by the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and in the State Federations, all of which were under communist control; and as their efforts were intensified in the following years there was increasing resort to violence and intimidation. During the many strikes that occurred, however, neither the police nor the military were used, nor did they act as strike breakers but confined themselves to the action necessary to maintain public order.*

(2) *When, in February 1948, two British trade unionists, Mr. S. S. Awberry, M.P, and Mr. F. W. Dalley, visited Malaya, they reported that the Federations called strikes but paid no strike pay or similar benefits; framed demands, but carried out no negotiations, preferring to remain in the background and to act as the "power behind the throne", while pushing forward union leaders whom they interfered with and often intimidated; and that they claimed to give unions advice and help, but in practice, they left the officers of the affiliated unions to do the negotiations, and then prevented any settlement being made when, as is usually the case, they disagreed with the provisional agreement arrived at.*

(3) *The Government was, therefore, faced with a position in which either the trade union movement would be dominated entirely by the Malayan communist party, or special measures had to be taken to encourage the establishment and development of responsible industrial or occupational trade unions, free of the militant communist control and direction which deliberately aimed at the economic disruption of the country through strike action. In May 1948, for example, no less than 178,500 man-days were lost through disputes and stoppages.*

(4) *Referring more particularly to the first allegation, the Government goes on to state that the Trade Union Law was, accordingly, amended. The enactment of 1940, to which the World Federation of Trade Unions refers, had provided for the registration and supervision of trade unions, to ensure that unions were properly constituted for the principal objects for which they existed, and that their rules and finances conformed to a reasonable standard and afforded a measure of protection for union members against speculation or misappropriation by unscrupulous officials. Regulations made under the law allowed Government employees to join unions which catered for them exclusively. The amendments made to the law in 1948 provided that, with the exception of the secretary, office bearers in trade unions had to be persons with a minimum of three years' experience in the industry concerned, and that no person was eligible to bear office who had been convicted of extortion, intimidation or other serious crimes. The federation of trade unions, otherwise than on an industrial or occupational basis, was prohibited.*

(5) *The Government then explains the*

circumstances surrounding the dissolution of the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions, which forms the subject of the second allegation, stating that the communist-controlled unions made no attempt to comply with the above provisions, despite the fact that repeated advice was given as to how they might bring themselves into conformity with the law. In fact, the communist leaders at this stage decided to embark upon an armed revolutionary movement. The communist officials of the trade unions disappeared, often taking the union funds with them, and went into the jungle as part of the terrorist forces. It was known that of the 289 trade unions on the register at the beginning of 1948, rather less than 100 were free from communist domination or infiltration. By the end of September 1948, most of the communist-controlled unions had ceased to exist, and were removed from the register on this account, or because they had failed to comply with the provisions of the new Ordinance: the bodies dissolved included the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and the 11 State Federations. A few unions were dissolved at their own request: two unions exercised their right of appeal which, in each case, was upheld. The result was the reduction of estimated trade union membership in Malaya by more than half, to a figure of approximately 75,500. This indicates the extent to which the communist party had gained control of and exploited the movement. There remained, however, a hard core of independent unions, inspired with genuine trade union sentiment and determined to carry on with the development of a sound and responsible movement: and the Government made plain its intention of encouraging and promoting this development. By the end of 1948, despite the disappearance of the communist organisations, the movement had recovered to the extent of 162 unions on the register, with 25 applications for registration pending.

Then it goes on to justify the Government's justifications for using force:

"With regard to the third and fourth allegations the Government states that, in view of the outbreak of terrorism and the armed challenge to orderly government, the Government had in June 1948, declared a state of emergency. The Malayan communist party was banned. Regulations were published, giving wide powers to the Government, and imposing heavy penalties for assisting the bandits, including the death penalty for carrying arms. These powers included the right to order detention, to control movement on the roads, and to disperse assemblies. The power of arrest and search without warrant was also increased."

“The W.F.T.U refer to a number of communist trade union leaders who were arrested, imprisoned or, in some cases, shot. These men suffered, not because they were trade unionists or because of their trade union activities, but because they resorted to violence and terrorism. Ganapathy, for example, was arrested carrying arms which he attempted to use. He was tried by the courts, found guilty and executed in accordance with the emergency law which makes the death penalty mandatory in such cases. Veerasenan took part with other bandits in an action against security forces during which he was shot. The camps mentioned by the W.F.T.U have been established as places of confinement for persons detained under the emergency regulations against whom there is reasonable evidence of having aided, abetted or consorted with the terrorists. Provision is made under the regulations for appeals against such detention to be heard by Advisory Committees.”

Adding to the above, we can turn to other evidence that would give us a sense of the full scale of the detainment structure and apparatus. Arrests were made often in the most unusual places, at the most capricious times and by persons they once regarded as close associates. Arrests were made in the dead of night, in the midst of working in farms and plantations, while boarding and alighting from buses, while shopping in the market, while relaxing with families and friends and even as they were leading the daily prayers. The sense of disillusionment with the anti-colonial cause grew even deeper when the radicals saw familiar Malay faces among the men who were responsible for their arrest. Many of the Malay policemen who were working undercover disguised themselves as “loyal” members of anti-colonial movements.⁴⁶⁹

Ahmad Boestamam, for example, reminisced that he was suffering from a high fever when “a lorry load of policemen” arrived at his house to arrest him.⁴⁷⁰ Although he was known for his bravery as shown in his sharp critiques of the colonial state and his militant nationalism, he was nevertheless deeply shaken by the impending separation from his family. Similarly, Ishak Haji Muhammad described the day of his detention as an event that he “will not forget until the day I die.” He was arrested at his home by Malay officers of the Special Branch in the midst of experimenting with cooking some new dishes.⁴⁷¹ It was clear to him at the very outset that life in prison would be hard and mortifying and that Malayan independence was not the highest priority in his life at that moment. Khadijah Sidek’s experience was far more trying as she was seven months pregnant when she was arrested. Already informed of the

⁴⁶⁹ Salleh, Abdul Majid, 145.; Comber, Leon. 2008. *Malaya’s Secret Police 1945–60: The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency*. Clayton: Monash Asia Institute.

⁴⁷⁰ Boestamam, Ahmad, 261-262

⁴⁷¹ In Malay: “Sampai mati pun saya tak boleh lupa”, p. 195. Muhammad, Ishak Haji, *Memoir Pak Sako: Putera Gunung Tahan*, 195.

arrests of the spouses of other female activists, Khadijah was detained during her husband's absence. She was very anxious about the effect that her imprisonment might have on the health of her unborn child, as well as the fact that she would have to give birth behind bars.⁴⁷² There is, at minimum, a trauma of being suddenly detained at a moment's notice when one least expects it, or when one is in a vulnerable situation with no way to evade capture.

Item numbered SEL. SEC 1971/1948 is from a state-level file, specifically, the state of Selangor – which in it concerns the town of Jenderam. The content of the files are substantially in the Malay language. From it we learn that on 26 November 1948, Zainab binti Hj. Hassan wrote to the Dato' Menteri Besar Selangor ('Chief Minister of Selangor'; a Malay), concerning her husband, one Abdul Latif bin Arshad. At the time, she was staying at a relative's house.⁴⁷³ The language and way Zainab writes in Malay (she is Malay) is consistent with, and perhaps also reflects, her socio-economic background/position in which she herself describes. When translated into English, the sentences mirror her own writing and sentence structure instead of abiding too much by our familiar rules.

From the same file, there are several other letters from wives and relatives writing in for their husbands and family members. The majority is writing in the Malay language using the *Jawi* abjad ('Arabic alphabet'). The bulk of it appears to have taken the most apologetic and pathetic way of inquiring so as to indicate obedience and subservience in order to gain sympathy and traction for the application, or perhaps done so genuinely in fear. Zainab's letter is, on the other hand, as you can see, a bit more pointed, honest and very aggressive compared to the rest. Perhaps, entirely upset by her predicament, she was more willing to be frank about the truth of the matter. The petitioner reported police beatings and home invasion occurred during arrest. The level in which all these letters explicitly demean themselves, bar Zainab, in more ways than just 'customary' grovelling is consistent with the atmosphere of subservience and obedience. Unlike other petition letters of the time, Zainab's exposition does not begin with the typical long winded salutary portions that seek to demean and humiliate one's self and recognise one's lower position before the receiver who is of 'position'. It begins instead with Zainab directly stating her intentions:

⁴⁷² Sidek, Khatijah. 1995. *Memoir Khatijah Sidek: Puteri Kesateria Bangsa*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

⁴⁷³ 1948. "Petition for early investigation into the detention of Che' Abdul Latif bin Arshad under the Emergency Regulations." SEL. SEC. 1971/1948. 26 November.

Dato, with respect I refer to you Sir concerning my husband named Abd. Latif bin Arshad who had been detained under the Emergency Regulations since 22/10/1948 in Jenderam whereby I have thus far been unable to comprehend the reason and the alleged charge for his detainment.

Then Zainab proceeds to explain that both herself and her husband were not harbouring Zainab's cousin, a one Abu Bakar bin Jali who was wanted by the police. Instead Abd. Latif bin Arshad, Zainab's husband, was forcibly made by the police to admit to harbouring and hiding Abu Bakar. Zainab reasons that they had no means to do so, even if they wanted to, considering their own dire situation with their child:

Before he was arrested, there had been several occasions where our home had been visited by Police inquiring about the whereabouts of Abu Bakar bin Jali who is a cousin of mine who was wanted by the Police and ever since Abu Bakar has been wanted by the Police has never come by to our house why has my husband been forced to admit to harbouring and hiding Abu Bakar when we ourselves find it difficult to even feed our own children and only managing to feed them enough to stay alive how could we have supported another man?

Zainab presses on by describing how her husband was beaten up by the police:

When my husband was arrested that night the Police's men were also asking about Abu Bakar and it was at that moment that the Police and their men started beating my husband and although I was not allowed to see him getting beaten up but I heard clearly the sound of hitting accompanied by the sound of my husband screaming and wailing in pain...

Then defiantly interrogates the government herself:

...is the Police authorised to do such an act like that? I read the newspapers and I have never even once seen anything which allowed Police Officers to hit anyone they arrest and I think such behaviour is like a type of poison which these Police officers have injected and could lead to the Malay people in this village hating the government in the future. Allah preserve us from Malays who have such character.

Zainab ends her request with the following, and persisted to sign off, with "From me who is despicable and low"

Therefore it is my hope to the government that with haste my husband is investigated and tried so as to determine any wrong doing or otherwise, if he is to be found guilty and there is evidence of his for his guilt I readily accept (redha) for him to be punished so that I obtain closure and my heart at ease. Please do not leave him detained without any reason and cause but left to receive punishment from the Police and their men. That is all I have to inform you Dato, and I apologise with a thousand apologies with it.

On 28 December 1948, approximately two months from the date of arrest, and about a month after the petition was submitted, the reply provided by the Chief Police Officer Selangor to the State Secretary of Selangor, who had requested for further details of the case, was short and succinct.⁴⁷⁴ All it said was; “This man was arrested as a Communist. Communist literature was found in his house. He should not be released.” This was then communicated to Zainab who had to continue in the lurch.

Contrary to popular belief, the Malays were not spared from the long arm of the British security apparatus. While there have been no known instances where any of the ‘traditional elite’ in Malaya in the form of UMNO senior leadership have come under any form of internment by the British Colonial apparatus, ‘common’ UMNO members appear to have not been spared by arrests. On 5 April 1949, Ma’arof bin Haji Marzuki wrote in petition to the High Commissioner on behalf of his brother.⁴⁷⁵ Maarof was a Technical Assistant attached to the Electricity Department, Kuala Lumpur and has been in service of His Majesty’s local Government for more than eighteen years.

Ma’rof was petitioning on behalf of Mohamed Idris bin Haji Marzuki who was detained in Pudu Gaol at the time. The named detainee was his older brother who up to the date of detention, 21 August 1949, was holding the post of Head Teacher in the Government Vernacular School at Sungei Lui in the District of Ulu Langat in the State of Selangor. At the time of Mohamed Idris’ detention, he was approximately 45 years of age, and had about 25 years of service in the Education Department. The petitioner, Ma’arof writes:

⁴⁷⁴ 1948. CPO Sel. 28/12/1948. 28 December.

⁴⁷⁵ 1949. “SELSEC 1002/1949 Petition for early release of Mohd Idris bin Haji Marzuki who was detained under the Emergency Regulations.”

Your humble petitioner's brother, the detainee above named, was taken into custody by Government authorities on the 21.2.1949 while he was on duty at his school at Sungei Lui since which date he has been under detention in the Pudu Gaol, Kuala Lumpur. Your humble petitioner believes that he was detained under the Emergency Regulations and in that case I most respectfully beg to submit the following facts for the kind and merciful consideration of Your Excellency.

Then Ma'arof states their defence. From the description which follows, we are able to place the arrestee, and thus by extension the arrestor in question, in context:

"Your humble petitioner and his brother, the above named detainee, are the only two sons of our family and our parents are still alive and are residents of Ulu Langat District. As described above, both your humble petitioner and his brother are serving the Government, each having been put in more than 18 years' service, the one in the Electricity Department and the other in the Education Department and as Government service goes, the appointments now held by us are classified as senior in such service."

"As a person of some standing in the locality, by virtue of his holding the post of Head Teacher in the Malay School, the detainee commanded a certain amount of respect from our own community as well as members of others communities residing there."

"As Secretary of the Kampong Co-operative Society, your humble petitioner's brother the detainee above named was continuously in touch with tuan Haji Mohamed Yusof of the Government Co-operative Department, Kuala Lumpur. As a teacher, your humble petitioner brother's conduct may be verified from the Visiting Teacher of Ulu Langat District as well as from the Malay Assistant Inspector of Malay Schools, Selangor under whom he has served."

Then he stresses the point crucial to our discussion, that Mohamed Idris himself was a staunch UMNO member:

He was also the local representative of the United Malay National Organisation and Secretary of the Kampong Co-operative Society. In his capacity as a representative of U.M.N.O. for Sungei Lui, Ulu Langat, he attended meetings of that Organisation held at Kajang and at Kampong Bharu, Kuala Lumpur under the presidency of the District Officer, Ulu Langat, who knows him personally.

Furthermore, Mohamed Idris had a record of cooperating with the Malay Section of the Special Branch. This fact, however, did not seem to insure him against detention by the colonial state. In Mohamed Idris' defence, his younger brother continues to write in informing the High Commissioner:

Since the Emergency your humble petitioner's brother had furnished much information to Enche' Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Latiff, the then Officer-in-charge of the Malay Section of the Special Branch. I would humbly submit that if reference is made to any or all of the officers named above, they will certainly be able to vouch for the character of your humble petitioner's brother...

...and as such your humble petitioner is of the opinion that the arrest and detention of the brother must be the result of vindictiveness due to personal ill-feeling and jealousies of those, in the community or inhabitants in the village or surroundings, who while outwardly showing respect to my brother because of his social, official and economic position must have clandestinely worked for your humble petitioner's brother's downfall, at least for a time to satisfy their jealousies and vindictiveness.

From the description of their socio-economic background, the Haji Marzuki brothers were not from a section of the community one would perhaps conventionally expect trouble or disorder from. However, it begs the point of the nature of the detention apparatus that was in place at the time and what type of threat the Haji Marzuki brothers, and many others like them, constitute, if at all, toward the colonial state. The Haji Marzuki brothers were average and dutiful citizens, and Ma'arof writes:

"Our family own between 40 to 50 acres of rubber and padi lands we have our own bungalow where our parents live and we possess our own motor cars. In addition, we, the two brothers are in receipt of handsome salaries from the Government for whom we work, and on which we have been able to live comfortably."

"Being thus happily endowed, we and all the members of the family have reasons to be quite contented with our present lots, and there is absolutely no reason whatever why any member of our family should have anything to do with any subversive elements or work against the Government or the community more especially when the whole family profess the Muslim Faith and we are the sons of the soil and most important of all is the fact that we, two brothers, are servants of the Government holding senior posts."

Finally, before signing off as having "...the honour to remain" His Excellency's "most obedient servant", Ma'arof pleads:

Your humble petitioner therefore prays that the case of his brother may be investigated in the light of what your humble petitioner has said above, and as your humble petitioner and his parents and all other members of his family are confident that the arrest and detention of your humble petitioner's brother must be the result of suspicion caused through false information furnished by person who may have axe to grind, and being equally confident that the benign British Government will meet our proper and effective justice to your humble petitioner's said brother, the above detainee, may be released at an early date and if need be, your humble petitioner's parents are most willing and prepared to furnish such reasonable security for his release as may be required Your Excellency.

The detention procedures were indiscriminate perhaps even to those who were members of royal families. On 18 July 1948, Raja Musa Raja Jaafar was arrested. He had been detained for 232 days when a petition was received. From his detention camp in Seremban, he wrote to His Highness the Sultan of Selangor on 7 March 1949 to petition his wrongful detention and state his case that he was wrongly arrested under Emergency offences.⁴⁷⁶ At the mature age of 45 at the time, the detainee, Raja Musa was himself Malay, an UMNO member in Kajang, and was a member of the Selangor Royal Family.

Contrary to popular belief, Malays, and specifically 'disloyal' Malays, both males and females, were arrested as eagerly as their 'Chinese bandit' counterparts. In the case of the village of Jenderam, several Malay members of this predominantly Malay village were detained. Writing to Chief Minister Tengku Raja Uda of Selangor, the District Officer of Ulu Langat informed him of the predicament of these detainees, all under Emergency Regulations, and their dependents. These detainees were, he described, "poor and without much ownership of any wealth and are unable to provide for the dependents they have left behind who were dire and unable to fend for themselves". These detainees, at the time of these letters were written, had been in detention for roughly a year. The dependents were at the time "relying solely on the charity and kindness of fellow villagers to survive". The District Officer ends by noting that he is "pleading with tears" that the matter be looked into. His correspondence to the Chief Minister of Selangor came attached with further details of the thirty-four individuals at the time.

There is a way to think of the type of distinction employed by the Colonial state to distinguish among the natives of the time. One of Deng Xiaoping's most famous maxims, referring to a more pragmatic approach to the market, reads; "It doesn't matter whether a cat

⁴⁷⁶ 1949. "SELSEC 901/1949 Petition from Raja Musa bin Raja Jaafar regarding his detention under the Emergency Regulations."

is white or black, as long as it catches mice". In the case of Malaya, it did not matter whether the rat was Malay, Chinese, or Indian as long as that British cat 'catches' the 'Communist' 'rats', the catch-all term for all anti-colonials.

The rest of these accounts, alongside other preserved data concerning the period in question, in toto, allow us to understand the intricacies and complexities of the interplay of 'truth-values' and its relation to history and the use of force. As we have seen so far, the evidence uncovered suggests that in the case of Malaya, the notion of an overall substitution of force with 'persuasion' is entirely unreliable.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MALAYA'S MONOMYTH AS A 'MODEL' FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY

As mentioned from the outset, in Chapter One, this research intends to remain in-step with academics who with their research have thus held the fort for 'nuances' with distinction. These works have championed the idea of a people's history of counterinsurgency which is a type of history which should avoid resurrecting a simplistic grand narrative and should instead bring together more nuanced perspectives from individuals with expertise in particular areas of the world. Thus, the previous six chapters have strengthened the argument, with an emphasis on Malay and Jawi language sources, that; (1) through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two. And that (2) force which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war in 1954 was regarded as 'exempted' force wrapped in a grand narrative despite the on-the-ground reality for the people. The previous chapters have shown that (1) the post-war climate both in Malaya as well as in the metropole in London was anything but uncomplicated contrary to what is claimed by the aforementioned COIN grand narratives in previous chapters. We have investigated the build-up to the Emergency years to conclude that unnuanced explanations, or lessons, from this period gives rise to the acute need for a more balanced understanding of 'historical' COIN. Through the accounts of native actors, both Malay and Chinese, it has shown that the Malayan Emergency is an artefact of the earlier anti-Japanese experience during World War Two; (2) That there was more to just winning 'heart and minds' by way of ample use of force and coercion in turning the outcome of the war especially between 1948 and 1952. We have investigated at earlier iterations of the 'Supremo' offices, in the BMA, and then with the Malayan Union, which were while not overtly as such, but still exemplified the spirit behind the use of force in the full context of the people of Malaya and the Malayan Emergency. We have shown that there had existed a strong tendency toward strong centralisation for Malaya several years before the Emergency which led to many earlier episodes of violence with consequence flowing into the Emergency years. We concluded to this point that any analysis of the Malayan Emergency which does not take into consideration these earlier events, and begin their explanations with the aforementioned June 1948 killings will inevitably result in a convenient and expedient, but historically inaccurate narrative as the start point. And (3) we have shown that the overall apparatus, it seemed, to the native Malayan

was indeed an apparatus of strong measures with tendencies for centralised authority passing through the BMA, then to the Malayan Union, and finally into the Federation of Malaya government. From the events we have looked at, we conclude that the ‘force-infrastructure’ which was used in the conduct of concluding the shooting war in 1954 is a type of ‘exempted’ force couched in narrative language with the British increasingly becoming less and less subjected to common sense principles which they were familiar with but finally gravitated away from. By using a more nuanced reading of native sources, we have taken to task the use of force, through looking at the conduct of organising the COIN campaign in Malaya and weighed the findings on the Batang Kali Massacre in order to deepen the discussions concerning the massacre. In Chapters One, Two, and Six, we have also investigated the length and breadth of counterinsurgency, the Malayan Communist Party, as well as the point of New Villages. Thus, this concluding chapter intends to invite more nuanced perspectives from individuals with expertise in different areas by extending our observations over the Malayan Emergency in such a way that it can be shared by more academics in the future. It does so by analysing the Malayan Emergency and general notions of rebellion and insurgencies. This thesis, having been allowed to walk through a door held ajar by others, now hopes to hold this door open through the efforts in this chapter so that we can attain a richer understanding of the pursuit of our endeavours on this subject.

There is a tendency of the grand COIN narrative to paint a simplistic picture of potential allies—the local ‘people’ whose hearts and minds are supposed to be central to winning a counterinsurgency campaign. As we have seen in the previous chapters the scene among the native consisted of a richer experience, both on the ground and in ideology, of the Malayan Emergency. Insisting on a natural alliance between a ‘good’ population and British counterinsurgency forces against a ‘bad’ insurgency, the British COIN narrative fails to acknowledge this more nuanced dynamic.

This tradition of a vocabulary suitable for campaign and conflict purposes is expected because being able to say ‘Chinese is bandit’ or ‘MCP is enemy’ is crucial to campaign efforts. Thus, COIN language is not just victor’s language but also the language for victory. And therefore, this research is not an attempt to diminish the victory of any parties, but rather to investigate the explanations for eventual campaign success.

The monomyth of a COIN operation, where the peoples, be it Britain, Japan or Malaya embarks on the ‘hero’s journey’, follows the common template of a broad category

of tales that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisive crisis wins a victory, and then comes home changed or transformed. Our investigations in all the previous chapters have shown that the British experience at COIN in Malaya can only be called a monomyth, and nothing but. Such a pattern in narrative Edward Taylor declared as the monomyth structure in 1871. Narratology is the study of narrative and narrative structure and the ways that these affect our perception. The origins of narratology lend to it a strong association with the structuralist quest for a formal system of useful description applicable to any narrative content, by analogy with the grammars used as a basis for parsing (analysing) sentences in some forms of linguistics.

It is the process of analysing a string of symbols, either in natural language, computer languages or data structures, conforming to the rules of a formal grammar, and COINdinistas have today parsed their conclusions to remain in-step with a grand narrative. They have their *fabula* which is the ‘raw material’ of a story, and their *syuzhet* which is the ‘way a story is organised’. The employment of narrative and the chronological order of the events contained in the story amount to a consistent grand narrative of conclusions. As an exercise, it maintains and consolidates a given structure. And at any given moment in ‘peace time’, the State functions just like any other system, and thus we can also accept that “every system attempts to establish...the belief in its legitimacy”.⁴⁷⁷ The very highly privileged group develops a myth of superiority. Under the conditions of stable distribution of power that myth is accepted by the negatively privileged strata”.⁴⁷⁸ An insurgency is a breakdown in this myth among the people. The insurgents call into question Weber’s “charismatic”, “traditional” and “legal-rational” legitimacy of the Government and seek to carry forward their own. It has been argued that one cannot envision to achieve *herrschaft*, an institutionalised authority inducing obedience, without legitimacy, because “every genuine form of domination implies a minimum voluntary compliance, that is, an interest in obedience”.⁴⁷⁹

In managing the memoirs dealt with in this research, it was vital to invest time in examining these memoirs with the awareness for intensional and extensional meaning so as to bridge the language gap between one system, or ‘game’, of language in one locality, with the native system/game in another, far-flung, locality.

If a successful COIN is the opposite of a successful Insurgency. From this point, I

⁴⁷⁷ Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University California Press. p.212-213

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid p.953

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid p.53

demonstrate that COIN forces therefore must accept the terms of combat; where the ‘enemy’ and ‘enemy strength’ must include all ‘people’.

There are several ways of conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign, as the literature will suggest, and perhaps winning hearts and minds is a way to do so, but at the core of it, a counterinsurgency campaign is still some form of combat. There are those who argue that insurgency – which is a descent into arms - is in fact a situation where everything but combat has been exhausted. If a COIN campaign is a form of combat, then the following axiom is what all military action is based upon.

The axiom of ‘combat’, according to Mao, is the “Conservation of one's own strength; destruction of enemy strength”.⁴⁸⁰ This law of conservation is consistent and underscores another more familiar formulation related to the conduct of war. It is impliedly present in the exclamation that the strongest camp usually wins; hence Napoleon’s known axiom, “Victory goes to the large battalion”. The maxims that follow this first law also adheres to the conservation of one’s own strength, as well as Galula’s claim that; “...if the contending camps are equally strong, the more resolute wins...If resolution is equally strong, then victory belongs to the camp that seizes and keeps the initiative, and surprise, according to the fourth law, may play a decisive role.”⁴⁸¹

The statement “Conservation of one’s own strength, destruction of enemy strength” is a statement which expresses the relationship between two variables. The two variables have an inversely proportional relationship between one and the other. Combat (with physical force) in other words, therefore, is precisely this relationship.

Similarly, the statement “Victory goes to the large battalion” displays an identical inversely proportional relationship. One could, therefore, say that combat is a ‘zero-sum’ game precisely because in a zero-sum game variables behave inversely proportionate to one another. Further, the modern notion of a mutually assured destruction (MAD) does not violate the principles aforementioned. Parties are guaranteed mutual destruction because the conserved strength of both parties is effectively brought to zero by each taking to the fullest extent efforts at destroying the enemy’s strength. The total strength of an army can be divided and arranged in any manner in the pursuit of victory against an enemy, but defeat and victory

⁴⁸⁰ Tse-tung, Mao. 1937. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Vol. IX.

⁴⁸¹ See Galula, David. 1964.

is determined by the axiom above.

Now consider that in the British tradition of COIN, there exist an insistence on a natural alliance between a good population and British counterinsurgency forces against a bad insurgency. What is then the enemy? Is the enemy a single or a composite? Wittgenstein has the following to say:

*If a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written in the thing itself...It would seem an accident if it turned out a situation would fit a thing that could exist entirely on its own...(if) I can imagine objects combining in state of affairs, I cannot imagine them excluded from the possibility of such combinations...It is impossible for words to appear in two different roles; by themselves and in propositions...(if) I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in state of affairs. The possibility of it occurring in state of affairs is the form of an object.*⁴⁸²

The definition ‘enemy’ is crucial even in our contemporary times. In contemporary Russian ‘non-linear warfare’, an opponent is never in any knowledge of what the ‘enemy’ is up to, and this is achieved by destabilising perception in order to manage and control it.⁴⁸³ Hence, in conflict, the advantageous position to be in is to be able to obtain a type of ‘ceaseless shapeshifting’ that because undefeatable and unstoppable because of the indefinable nature of the enemy that in turn undermines ‘old’ forms of power.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, it would be prudent at this time to consider the question; what is ‘enemy strength’, so we get a sharper picture of the expression “Conservation of one's own strength; destruction of enemy strength”? A demonstration from Mao is salient, if one considers that Chin Peng had at one time in Malaya, declared that the MCP should seize power by the ‘Yenan Way’.

Consider the following; in Mao’s On Guerrilla Warfare, he unequivocally insists his reader take keen example from the practices of The Eight Route Army”.⁴⁸⁵ In these passages, he underscores the point that there ought to be a “unity of spirit that should exist between troops and local inhabitants”. He goes on to painstakingly outline the code which had been put to practice by The Eighth Route Army. This code, known as the “Three Rules and the

⁴⁸² Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2017. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus Side-by-side-by-side Edition*. London: Kegan Paul. <http://people.umass.edu/klement/trlp>.

⁴⁸³ A “Non-linear” war according to Natan Dubovitsky is ‘how states are likely to fight each other in future—if they do not already’. Individual regions or cities will form temporary coalitions, only to split apart in mid-fighting and find new allies. Each force has its own aims, and these too can be fluid. The war has many components, of which battle is only one element. It is also the understanding that the war to be part of a process and ‘not necessarily its most important part’.

⁴⁸⁴ Pomerantsev, Peter. 2011. “Putin's Rasputin.” *London Review of Books*, 20 October.

⁴⁸⁵ Mao, Tse-tung. 1937. *On Guerilla Warfare*. Republic of China.

Eight Remarks”, are listed below:

Rules:

- (1) All actions are subject to command.
- (2) Do not steal from the people.
- (3) Be neither selfish nor unjust.

Remarks:

- (1) Replace the door when you leave the house.
- (2) Roll up the bedding on which you have slept.
- (3) Be courteous.
- (4) Be honest in your transactions.
- (5) Return what you borrow.
- (6) Replace what you break.
- (7) Do not bathe in the presence of women.
- (8) Do not without authority search those you arrest.

Mao then goes on to elucidate his most famous passage on insurgencies. The quote is replicated again here, to help us observe in sharper detail the point which Mao is making:

“Many people think it impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy's rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water the latter to the fish who inhabit it. How may it be said that these two cannot exist together? It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element cannot live.”

These two parts are interesting because they help explain what Mao means by “unity of spirit”. “How may it be said that the two cannot exist together?”; it is to him the unity between insurgents and the people. This goes a long way in explaining why but for 3 of the 11 statements above, the rest are, by Judeo-Christian standards, mores to a normal citizen in peacetime. The people are the insurgents, and the insurgents are no different than the people, therefore nothing ought to change in their interaction. This is the case of “All P(eople) are I(nsurgents), All I are E(nemies), Therefore All P are E”.

7.1 CHINESE IS BANDIT, MCP IS ENEMY

Suppose we accept Mao, and accept that the enemy must include the possibility built into itself, and speak instead, of an enemy strength. Now, if enemy strength may constitute “All of P” by definition, then in order to honour the rule of conservation in combat, while keeping in mind what constitutes a successful insurgency, COIN forces must accept this definition. Remember a point made earlier that a successful insurgency is an insurgency which is able to reach its maximum potential/strength. Victory is the fruition of all its strength concurrently. And in following directly from Mao, victory is when the insurgents coincide exactly with the people.

We submit that COIN forces must believe the form of combat that the insurgents have chosen for themselves. This is what constitutes ‘an enemy’ or ‘the’ enemy. The enemy defines itself and forces those terms to the reacting force which is obliged to accept those terms. Therefore, COIN forces must believe like the insurgents that “All People are Allies”, therefore accepting that “All P are E”. Failing to recognise this means a failure to recognise what enemy strength means by its own definition.

We will submit further in the course of this volume that there is no option where “the people” are entirely ignored, and that there is no option where ‘the people’ are spared from the use of force entirely. Consider the practical implications of recognising that “All P are E” from the following passages. Mao holds that:

From one perspective, the revolutionary forces are “strategically encircled by the enemy,” in another, “if one considers all the guerrilla base areas together,” the revolutionaries “surround a great many enemy forces.”⁴⁸⁶

In certain instances the lines are blurred, such as with the American experience in Vietnam where Marine Lieutenant General Victor Krulak echoed Mao in saying of the Vietnam War, emphasising that the situation had no front lines, and crucially that the battlefield was in the minds of 16 or 17 million people. Further, the authors of FM 3-24, one of whom is General David Petraeus, writes:

⁴⁸⁶ 2004. *Selected works of Mao Tse-Tung: On Protracted War*. www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm.

*Of the many books that were influential in the writing of Field Manual 3-24, perhaps none was as important as David Galula's Counterinsurgency Warfare (University of Chicago edition). Galula's Counterinsurgency Warfare has come to be known in this decade as the gold standard for the population-centric style of COIN campaigns, a theory which recognises a "unity".*⁴⁸⁷

The above are all "All P are E" passages. And from the above, the relationship between the State, COIN forces, insurgents, and the people can be restated and illustrated as the following, through the rules of Weiqi.

7.2 MALAYA'S BLACK AREAS, AND WHITE AREAS

Boorman proposes that the methods of warfare chosen by the Communist Chinese during campaigns against the Nationalist Chinese and Japan, particularly after the rise of Mao Zedong and the Long March, are based upon the same concepts as Weiqi. Boorman enumerates seventeen specific structural characteristics of Maoist revolutionary war, among these are: (1) the struggle is a protracted one covering many years; (2) the most valuable areas in the early stages are the periphery (corners and then sides); (3) victory is determined by controlling the majority of the territory rather than specific locations; (4) areas of comparable size/value are interchangeable; (5) many simultaneous deployments in which larger number of smaller units are more effective than a smaller number of larger, more powerful units. (6) These characteristics are applied to at least two coexistent boards: the geographical and the social. Of these the social is significantly more important and ensures inevitable victory on the geographical board.⁴⁸⁸

A more direct evidence of value of Weiqi as a strategic decision model of Chinese Communist insurgent strategy is to be found in the presence of significant comparisons between the strategy of the game and that of the revolution in the writings of Mao Tse-tung. In May 1938, in his important essay Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War against Japan, Mao wrote:

⁴⁸⁷ There are two versions, 2006 and an update in 2014.

⁴⁸⁸ Boorman, Scott. 1971. *The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Lai, D. (2004). Lai, David. 2004. *Learning from the stones : a Go approach to mastering China's strategic concept, Shi*. Carlisle, PA: Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute.

“Thus there are two forms of encirclement by the enemy forces and two forms of encirclement by our own—rather like the game of wei-ch'i. Campaigns and battles fought by the two sides resemble the capturing of each other's pieces, and the establishment of strongholds by the enemy and of guerrilla base areas by us resembles moves to dominate spaces on the board. It is in the matter of "dominating the spaces" that the great strategic role of guerrilla base areas in the rear of the enemy is revealed.”

Weiqi is a game for two players, Black and White, who take turns placing a ‘stone’ (game piece) of their own colour on a vacant point (intersection) of the grid on a Weiqi board. The State is the *dà pán*; the board, the playing surface on which to place the stones. Each board, regardless of size, will have intersecting horizontal and vertical lines. These intersections create ‘points’ on the board, and the sum total of these intersection/points, in this comparison, represent the sum total of the population in a State. On an empty board, all intersections can be said to have ‘neutral’ (no stones, not Black or White) liberties. In Weiqi, the rule of ‘liberty’ is fundamental – the rule of liberty states that every stone remaining on the board must have at least one open ‘point’ (an intersection, called a “liberty”) directly next to it (up, down, left, or right), or must be part of a connected group that has at least one such open point (liberty) next to it. Stones or groups of stones which lose their last liberty are removed from the board.

When taking a turn, a player then places a stone of a defined colour, in an act which we can describe as colouring the ‘neutral liberties’ of the point. On that particular point where the stone is played, we can say that, there are no longer neutral (not Black and not White) liberties in play. There are now only liberties quantified as either Black liberties, or White liberties on that particular point, through that particular stone. We now notice a pattern; first, that any given intersection on the board must be first ‘coloured in’ by a stone. If we imagine each stone as the representation of single detachable units for the forces of each side; insurgent and counterinsurgent, then it would be logically consistent to derive that each stone in itself inherently has four Black or White liberties intrinsic to it, because these are single detachable units who themselves must be coloured to at all be a playing-stone. If a unit were to be sent out to capture a particular thing, it would be common sense to assume that the ones who we send fully subscribe to our purpose; that being either Black or White. Hence, these stones must have four liberties at any given time, however, when they are played on the board, if they are not able to maintain four black liberties on any point, then they are ‘losing’ the point. If a unit were to be sent out to ‘capture’ a population in any sense, then to ‘fully capture’ would mean to render the four uncoloured liberties of that point into an

unchallenged four Black liberties. If we were to send a guerrilla detachment to capture a population, and it does, these population points would then be made to adhere to the liberties as defined by our guerrilla cause. If our cause is Black, then we construct in these population points ways to liberty adhering to the 'Black' principles.

The use of the stones in a game of weiqi brings out the particular point on the delivery of force. At its basic, a player must secure four liberties to dislodge one stone, and thusly appears rather underwhelming that up to four times the effort is needed to capture a point. However, the inverse is also true, as by extension, any one point occupied by a stone is also four times more resistant. To be able to even speak of these stones and liberties must be a quantum; the minimum amount of any physical entity involved in an interaction. The size of the packet that is needed to dislodge one stone, contains in it four stones. Any other packet size of three or under, will never dislodge a stone. To borrow an expression, the frequency of the packet must be to the value of four. Increasing the intensity of a packet, but not the frequency of a packet will not have an effect. No matter how many times one sends a packet that contains three, two or one stone(s), it will never be sufficient to displace another stone. The force ratio states that only a packet of 'four' will displace one stone. It can be appreciated that it requires more effort to produce packets of four, than it is to produce packet of threes or under. There is thus a game to be played precisely because of these reasons. This begs the question of whether these things we speak of are naturally quantified and comes naturally in units of which we are describing it as they are, or, if war-games, and board games like chess or weiqi are no way of capturing and expressing complex phenomena in the social world. The interaction of force and liberties stand-in for the many different ways we deliver force; it is always delivered in some quantum, either through a soldier or through a Hellfire, in packets which aim to displace, dislodge, and capture.

In Weiqi, two general types of scoring system are used. Both systems almost always give the same result. 'Territory scoring' counts the number of empty points a player's stones surround, together with the number of stones she or he captured. Area scoring counts the number of points a player's stones occupy and surround. This is perhaps because, as we will observe later in the course of this volume), any groups of people (points) must necessarily occupy a space, a territory.

We can think of the notion of liberties, shared liberties, as well as the scoring dimension to Weiqi in the real-world context as being akin to Thompson's inevitable

acknowledgment of the necessity of the practice of prioritising securing the more built-up or developed areas over the more remote rural villages in the earlier stages. We have already understood that when a stone is placed vertically or horizontally adjacent to another stone of the opposite colour, it takes a liberty away from the other stone, and that when all the liberties of a stone have been taken by the opposite side and not liberties are left, the stone cannot remain on the board, however, the rule of ‘shared liberties’ states that when a stone is placed vertically or horizontally adjacent to another stone of the same colour, the stones are connected and form a single unit, and their liberties are counted together.

In his fourth law, Galula argues: “...the efforts cannot be diluted all over the country but must be applied successively area by area”.⁴⁸⁹ The more secure areas normally hold the largest concentration of the population and they should be the starting point for the government’s expansion as these areas are relatively easier to control. We can observe the correlation between this and the ‘Ink spot’ approach used with our discussion of liberties. The importance of avoiding over-extending the counterinsurgents’ ability to influence the population and isolate the insurgents, while avoiding getting their own forces isolated and cut-off from the COIN force’s support and supply line is crucial. The guerrilla and the counterinsurgent is engaged in what Colonel (later General) Joseph Gallieni, called the *tache d’huile*, or oil spot. Gallieni argued that as each “spot”, each village or district was secured, it would merge with other spots until the whole country was under control.

What Thompson describes as his “stages”, especially stage one and stage two, illustrates our earlier discussion on the notion of creating liberties. Thompson describes the four distinct stages: clearing, holding, winning and won.⁴⁹⁰ “Clearing” is conducted to remove the guerrillas out of an area that is to be secured. This is a joint military and police action using extensive intelligence in order to force the guerrillas out of a set zone. A clearing operation is not conducted unless the hold stage is ready to be executed. The next stage is the “hold” stage. Its main aim is to re-establish governmental authority and provide a security framework. As described by Thompson, the hold involves: “the creation of strategic hamlets, the formation of hamlet militia and the imposition of various control measures on the movement of both people and resources”.⁴⁹¹ These measures are planned and enacted to provide protection to the people, to neutralise the political cadre as well as to isolate the

⁴⁸⁹ See Galula, David. 1964. *Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New York: Fredrick A. Praeger.

⁴⁹⁰ Thompson, Sir Robert Grainger Ker. 1966. *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*. London: Chatto and Windus. 111

⁴⁹¹ Ibid, 112

guerrillas from the population. On the other hand, among the step-by-step procedures that is derived from Galula's laws, especially Galula's fourth law;⁴⁹² "Intensity of effort and vastness of means are essential" mirrors Thompson's principles:⁴⁹³ (1) Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent's comeback in strength, install these troop in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives; (2) Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas. Then in understanding the convertibility quality of 'neutral liberties' we observe that Galula extols; (1) Destroy the local insurgent political organisations, and (2) replace softs and incompetents, and give full support to the active leaders.

In the case of Malaya, Thompson argued that in order for an effective counterinsurgency campaign to be successful to defeat the insurgents, one must abide by five principles, all of which we submit to be in line with the notion of securing liberties. Thompson argues that (1) the government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable; (2) that the government must function in accordance with the law; (3) that the government must have an overall plan; (4) that the government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrilla, and finally (5) that in the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.⁴⁹⁴ The government, or the counterinsurgent that supports the government, must have a plan that not only aims at neutralising the insurgents, but one that also addresses all the other issues in a comprehensive approach since the insurgents are not the only issue. In other words, all liberties must be constructed to be the same colour, again, suppose our cause is Black, then we construct in these population points ways to liberty adhering to the black principles. Essentially, each area has to be 'coloured-in' to a point where all points are 'coloured-in', when Thompson argues for securing the more built-up or developed areas are to be prioritised over the more remote rural villages in the earlier stages. We must also have in mind that during the Malayan Emergency, the official designation of a "white area", as the name suggests, is of an area considered cleared of Communists. The Emergency Regulation ER17D for example, allowed for the collective detention of all the residents of any area that was deemed to have been assisting the bandits or withholding information on them. If the government were unable to separate insurgent

⁴⁹² First Law: Support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as for the insurgent.; Second Law: Support is gained through an active minority.; Third Law: Support from the population is conditional.; Fourth Law: Intensity of effort and vastness of means are essential.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 74-79

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, 50-57

and civilian in the worst areas, they would prefer the radical step of removing the residents to camps, or to China in order to ‘sterilise’ these areas, while at the same time acting as warning to deter other areas.

In his Directive No. 1, General Briggs instructs that the Army was to provide striking forces whose first priority task will be to dominate the jungle up to about five hours journey from potential bandit supply areas. The Army is to be “super-imposed” on a larger “framework” of control. This was to entail Army units establishing their headquarters in the populated areas, and thereby increasing the sense of security in those areas, and with their sub-units deployed and living in the fringes of jungle up to a distance of about three hours march from the roads and main jungle paths. These sub-units were to dominate, through patrols and ambushes, the tracks used by the bandits to make contact with their information and supply organisation and thereby presumably killing or capturing the bandits or force them to abandon the area.

These Army striking forces were put into each State or Settlement in turn on agreed order of priority. It was important that the Civil Administration and the Police network, supported by the permanent framework of troops, should remain strong to ensure that when the Army striking forces move on in due course to other areas, bandits cannot return to their old haunts with impunity. The ‘populated areas’ referred to in the above paragraphs include the labour lines of estates, mines, etc. and squatter areas. It was crucial that that plans for regrouping, resettling or removing these areas in order to bring them under effective administrative and police control, were carried out with the greatest drive and priority.

In the example of weiqi, there are no preferred ‘just causes’ (no preferred liberties), and instead, only there is only a recognition of its interaction. There is no moralising of multiple just causes. This view places any COIN force into context. On the point of remaining within the law, Thompson argues that all of the government’s actions must remain within the law. He believes that a government that does not remain within the rule of law will not only fuel the insurgency, but is also morally wrong. However, as we have seen earlier, the point on what it means to ‘remain within the laws’ is wholly dependent on the what it means to adhere to either ‘Black’, ‘White’ or ‘Neutral’.

Fanon, in explaining the colonial situation, indirectly elucidates the dynamic of opposing ‘liberties’, as he believes the relationship between the ‘settler’ and a ‘native’ both

regard one another as “the enemy of values”, and both in this sense are each other’s absolute evil. To the colonial, the native “is a corrosive element, disfiguring all that comes near him; he is deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind force”.

If a “neutral point” has liberties which are of a convertible quality, it would then be consistent to extol, like Mao that; “...if one considers all the guerrilla base areas together and in their relation to the battle fronts of the regular forces, one can see that we in turn surround a great many enemy forces”,⁴⁹⁵ and like Krulak⁴⁹⁶ in summing up the American dilemma in Vietnam that; “It has no front lines. The battlefield is in the minds of 16 or 17 million people.” A COIN force (if Black) therefore, fights against any particular one “neutral point” either from being itself (neutral) or from being a White.

The notion that each population point has to be constructed “around something”, and “in some way” which adheres to common “principles” also begs the question of convertibility. In the game; the colour of the liberties of each point are, as mentioned earlier, transferrable. However, whether the liberties are black, white, or neutral has no bearing to the form in which these liberties must take. This form it must take, remains a constant regardless of which colour liberty occupies it, that is – that some kind of liberty exists, and it is of some colour. This begs the question of whether a ship would remain the same if it were entirely replaced piece by piece, and what is created if the original planks of that ship were gathered up after they were replaced and used to build a second ship? For Theseus’ and Hobbes’ ship, the notion of some kind of floating vessel remains a constant, while the conception of which ship is the, as it were, ‘right’ ship is unanswerable without making any a priori assumptions. Regardless of what the colour a liberty will be at any given time, it does not take away from the fact that, at any given time, these liberties must all be of identical colour - whether that may be white, black, neutral, and so on - and are arranged identically accordingly. To achieve and maintain victory – that is to arrive at a situation where one’s colour occupies the most points on the board (ideally all points) - a framework of coercion and control for the purposes of ‘converting liberties’ must remain, regardless of the colour of liberty that are being made to be identical.

⁴⁹⁵ 2004. *Selected works of Mao Tse-Tung: On Protracted War*. www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm.

⁴⁹⁶ See ‘Ship of Theseus’

Fanon acknowledges violence as the highest form of political struggle. He also says that it is only reasonable, if you are talking about fundamentally changing the colonial society, which to him, means making the last first, and vice-versa, to expect to use violence. In other words, similar to Chairman Mao, he acknowledges the fact that it is naïve to rely on the ‘good sense’ of imperialism to expect that exploiters are going to abdicate their seat peacefully, in other words, forego their own colour of liberty for another.⁴⁹⁷ Before that, men, as Churchill insist “shall go to the end” and “shall fight on the beaches...the streets...and the hills...and shall never surrender”.⁴⁹⁸

Therefore, in our analyses; while it would appear at first glance that the State is itself the COIN force in a COIN campaign, but in theory, COIN forces are divisible from the State, as the State is only the playing board. A winner in the game of Weiqi, is the Government. This, as we see, gives rise to a very different dynamic than chess – the game between one kingdom and another. Similarly, we concluded that COIN forces must hold in mind that “All P are E”.

7.3 **FIGHTING THE INSURGENTS, FIGHTING THE WATERS**

Now suppose a world where Mao never uttered his teachings on how to effectively conduct an insurgency and win. In this world, Mao engages in one round of combat with the government – and can either win or lose – the combat does not end until a winner or loser can be determined. There is only one round of combat, or rather, one coin to flip because insurgencies can only have one chance at “outbreak”. Galula recognises this, and says the following:

⁴⁹⁷ Fanon, Frantz. 2004. *The Wretched Earth; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox*. New York: Grove Press.

⁴⁹⁸ We Shall Fight on the Beaches is a common title given to a speech delivered by Winston Churchill to the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom on 4 June 1940. This was the second of three major speeches given around the period of the Battle of France, with the others designated as the Blood, toil, tears, and sweat speech of 13 May, and the This was their finest hour speech of 18 June. In this speech, Churchill had to describe a great military disaster, and warn of a possible invasion attempt by Nazi Germany, without casting doubt on eventual victory. He also had to prepare his domestic audience for France's falling out of the war without in any way releasing the French Republic to do so, and wished to reiterate a policy and an aim unchanged – despite the intervening events – from his speech of 13 May, in which he had declared the goal of “victory, however long and hard the road may be”.

“...until the insurgent has clearly revealed his intentions by engaging in subversion or open violence, he represents nothing but an imprecise, potential menace to the counterinsurgent and does not offer a concrete target that would justify a large effort. Yet an insurgency can reach a high degree of development by legal and peaceful means, at least in countries where political opposition is tolerated. This greatly limits pre-emptive moves on the part of the counterinsurgent.”

In this world, he could also theoretically engage in one round of combat with “the people” (anyone not a party member) if he wished to, and he would theoretically have an even chance to either win or lose as well.

In fact, in this world, Mao could also attempt to engage both the government as well as the people together at the same time by behaving in a way which assumes the population to be enemies rather than allies, hostile rather than useful – in this scenario, he also has an even chance of winning against “everyone else” in a single combat.

The above would all be true as well if we were to replace “Mao”, with “the Government”. In all scenarios, including the third scenario, only in the opposite form, where the government engages both the insurgent and the people together at the same time by behaving in a way which assume the population to be the Government’s enemy rather than allies and so on – even chances will be present.

In an outstanding research, RAND abides by the following steps to decide the winner of any given insurgency; they assume that there is a Government at the beginning of the insurgency. If at the end of the insurgency:⁴⁹⁹

- (1) The original government stays in power - (G is G) – and that the Government retains itself intact despite the insurgency – they clock it as a Government-win and an Insurgent-Loss.
- (2) If the insurgent group is in power at the end of the insurgency, and the government at the beginning of the observation has been replaced by the insurgent, or if they are now the government of a recognised separatist state - (G is I) – then they clock it as an Insurgent-win, and a Government loss.
- (3) However, if the Government remains the government at the end of the insurgency

⁴⁹⁹ Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan. 2013. *Paths to Victory*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

but has accepted major concessions, then these are clocked as mixed-wins which depends on the qualitative information within these cases to be determined arbitrarily by the researcher as either win or lose. They are undecidables and can be either a Government-win or an Insurgent-win. These undecidable Win-Lose and Lose-Win situations are therefore mixed situation where the potential for a win still present.

While what now appears to be Mao trading in the chance of absolute win from 50 per cent any instance of combat for a 25 per cent chance of absolute win in a two-front combat, what he has also underscored is the more salient point of his insistence that he now has a 75 per cent chance of avoiding total defeat, instead of a 50 per cent of avoiding total defeat. This two front coin flip is consistent with RAND's recent findings. RAND has discovered from a core of 59 cases:

- (1) Insurgents have won 31 of those cases.
- (2) Further, 44 of 59 cases of COIN employs "Iron Fist" strategies; strategy which focuses solely on the insurgent, where it is a single coin flip with a single entity.

Consequently, 27 of the 44 cases registered as an Insurgent-win. Insurgents win more than half of the cases where COIN forces opt for the single front single coin game. However, COIN forces who opt for the two-front single coin game and believe in Mao's shape of combat, does have a higher trend of success. Of the 15 "mixed-focus" cases where the COIN force focuses on winning both against the insurgent as well as the people their propensity of losing drops, COIN forces employing "mixed force" lost only in 4 instances.⁵⁰⁰

As demonstrated above, we have displayed consistently that playing a game on two fronts affords a 75 per cent chance of winning and 25 per cent chance of losing – and losing four cases, is approximately 25 per cent demarcated loss cases. At this juncture, none of the above, and hence, none of Mao's modifications have contradicted the general axiom of conservation in combat. Perhaps Mao was not making a modification, but rather, enumerating a consistency which was unseen due to the way it was spoken of. Including a third group, the people, into a situation would give any side a greater chance of avoiding complete, and absolute defeat as any prolonging or delay in victory for an incumbent is the preferred situation of every insurgents. Finally, from the above, we now know that both the

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid

insurgents and the COIN forces are, so to speak, awaiting a consecutive pattern to appear where both parties are in search of a win against the insurgents, as well as a win against the people. Absolute defeat would be to lose on both fronts. Thus we can ask further; what is the average waiting time for a specific pattern of Win-Win (WW) or Lose-Lose (LL) to appear in a long sequence, or a series, of consecutive combat? The average waiting time for Win-Lose or Lose-Win, in general is always shorter than the average waiting time for a WW or LL.

The notion of a centre of gravity, which has perhaps in the recent years gained increasing familiarity through manuals such FM 3-24 is not an entirely modern conception as “Centre of gravity” is the English translation of an old concept in German military writing—older even than Clausewitz, who made it famous. Clausewitz, the German 19th century war theorist argued that:

*...For Alexander, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII, and Frederick the Great, the center of gravity was their army...In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of gravity is generally the capital...in popular uprisings it is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion.*⁵⁰¹

Hence, Galula’s and other counterinsurgents’ emphasis on isolating the insurgent from the population is simply the flip side of Mao’s insistence that the insurgent draws his support from the people.

Although it may be impossible to anticipate outbreaks - as the government might not yet distinguish the various signs of a subversive movement or it might be in denial of the movement’s very existence - we know that COIN forces are warned to expect this instance of outbreak and often encouraged to even go further than their starting position by “Accepting, therefore, that prevention is better than cure, and that the government must be positive in its approach.”⁵⁰² For an effective counterinsurgency campaign to be successful to defeat the insurgents, Thompson through the case of Malaya offers five principles. Item number four is crucial, as the subversion which is meant is an occurrence among the ‘people’ as the government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrilla.⁵⁰³

We have discussed these principles in a previous section, especially on the point of

⁵⁰¹ Clausewitz, Carl von. 2012. *On War*. Vol. 8. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

⁵⁰² Thompson, Sir Robert Grainger Ker. 1966. *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*. London: Chatto and Windus, 50.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 50-57.

governance and law. Much of these lessons function in the foreground of his analyses, however, there is a consistent theme which ties his prescriptions together that is operating in the background. Thompson's fourth principle, again begs the question what is the enemy, and how ought we to deal with an enemy?

Thompson cautions potential COIN forces that a 'government' must strive to defeat the insurgency at the earliest possible moment prior to it developing into a full-fledged guerrilla war. All necessary efforts should be made to defeat the insurgents and eliminate the shadow governance cadre before they gain any traction, or better yet, during their build-up. The isolation of the insurgents and their political cadre from the population and support bases is the ultimate aim.

7.4 MALAYA THE COLONIAL POSSESSION

Perhaps, the point here is about regime type. Democracies are disadvantaged. What matters is that there need to be a supreme authority. In principle that could be democracy. But democracies are poor at reaching decisions and maintaining a meeting of minds or a consensus ad idem. Often democracies are faced with situations where the act of instituting a particular legal order cannot be legal, within the order itself (we will return to this point later). In *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, Gil Merom argues that essentially democratic strong actors are unable to win small wars because the state is constrained by society to avoid the sacrifice – both in the form of sustained and inflicted casualties – necessary to win. The argument reduces to the claim that, in small wars, insensitivity to friendly casualties and a willingness to maximise violence against an opponent are necessary for victory; and that modern democracies are structurally constrained in both categories.

My argument is that democracies fail in small wars because they find it extremely difficult to escalate the level of violence and brutality to the level to that which can secure victory. They are restricted by their domestic structure, and in particular by the creed of some of their most articulate citizens and the opportunities their institutional make up presents such citizens. Other states are not prone to lose small wars, and when they do not fail in such wars it is mostly for realist reasons.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁴ Merom, Gil. 2003. *How democracies lose small wars : state, society, and the failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*. Cambridge, UK New York: Cambridge University Press.

Merom adds that:

*“Essentially, what prevents modern democracies from winning small wars is disagreement between state and society over expedient and moral issues that concern human life and dignity...and achieving a certain balance between...the readiness to bear the cost of war and the readiness to exact a painful toll from others – is a precondition for succeeding in war”.*⁵⁰⁵

Further, assuming that there are even real difference in the capabilities of authoritarian and democratic actors in the capabilities of authoritarian and democratic actors in war, we can still ask, why assume that regime types stay constant in war? Most democratic actors in war become more conservative in war, restricting many of the civil liberties that define them as democracies, one can think the fate of Japanese American in the United States after 1941.

The conventional argument states that authoritarian actors fight wars better than democratic actors.⁵⁰⁶ If authoritarian regimes fight better than democratic regimes, and if fewer strong actors over time have been authoritarian, then this explanation could explain both the fact of strong actor failure - democratic strong actors lose asymmetric conflicts - and the trend - fewer tough authoritarian actors mean fewer strong actor victories. It therefore is not the regime type, rather, the authority that any institution wields that resolves a war. The more complete the authority, and the closer one become to victory, the more ‘liberties’ one secures on the board, the closer one is to victory.

Von Neumann showed in his ground-breaking 1944 book, *A Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* (written with economist Oskar Morgenstern), that one should bluff with your worst hand. In other words, in a situation where a player is ‘going to lose anyway’ as he is placed in a desperate situation as a result of holding a weak hand; the player with the weakest hand has to make a maximalist ‘bluff’ to force the opposite player to fold from an untrue signal.

The reasoning is as follows; a modest hand may beat another modest hand, hence it would be worth holding out for a low-stakes showdown. However, the crucial point is that a bad hand will only win anything if the opponent folds, and thus ‘bad hands’ should be played aggressively or not at all. Asymmetric warfare (or asymmetric engagement) is war between

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁰⁶ For comprehensive introduction to the question of regime type and military effectiveness, see Desch (2002 5-47). For pessimistic view of the military effectiveness of democratic regime types at war, see e.g.: Waltz (1967); LeMay and Smith (1968 vii-viii); Blaufarb and Tanham (1989); and especially Ikle (1991: xiv)

belligerents whose relative military power differs significantly, or whose strategy or tactics differ significantly. This is typically a war between a standing, professional army and an insurgency or resistance movement. In other words, insurgents are always assumed to have been dealt a 'bad-hand' due to the nature of asymmetry in power. Hence, from all the above, here we can conclude, that any COIN campaign must involve "the People" as an enemy.

We surmise that; Counterinsurgency succeeds by winning hearts and minds, where winning hearts and minds includes the deliberate use of force, and therefore, counterinsurgencies succeeds, always by some deliberate use of force. If we were to assume that we can universally speak of COIN campaigns and accept a definition of its existence, and assert the present day atypical argument from the field of COIN that; 'It is true, that no COIN uses force (because COIN is won only through non-force)', then using the square of opposition, the following implication must hold; (1) it must be true that some COIN do not use force, (2) it must be false that some COIN use force. (3) but most importantly, it must be false that all COIN uses force.

Malaya, as Thomas Mockaitis correctly points out, is when a coherent British approach (at COIN) only really came into being as a result of the 'lessons' of the Malayan Emergency.⁵⁰⁷ Both, Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson, the two most experienced and best known practitioners were able to commit the lessons of their experiences to paper. The current British Armed Forces counterinsurgency doctrine is largely an expansion of the ideas of Sir Robert Thompson and General Sir Frank Kitson based on their extensive experience in British counterinsurgency campaigns post-1945. However, as argued by Ashley Jackson in his article in the *British Army Review*:⁵⁰⁸ "...the commendable use of British counterinsurgency experience in developing military doctrine and education needs to be more firmly tethered to broader historical context if it is to form valuable guidance for future operations." Thus, consider briefly at this point as to what is meant by the term "hearts and minds" as the British themselves have gained a reputation for winning "hearts and minds", however this phrase is unstable. Hew Strachan argues that "When we speak about 'Hearts and minds', we are not talking about being nice to the natives, but about giving them the firm smack of government. 'Hearts and minds' entails authority instead of appeasement, and that political and social reform may just accompany firm government. Thus it should not be

⁵⁰⁷ Mockaitis, Thomas R. 1990. *British Counterinsurgency 1919-60*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵⁰⁸ Jackson, Ashley. 2006. "British counter-insurgency in history: a useful precedent?" *BRITISH ARMY REVIEW*-LONDON-MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

thought as to entail taking a soft approach when dealing with the civilian population.⁵⁰⁹ Ashley Jackson argues that ‘hearts and minds was equally about creating fear.’⁵¹⁰ The use of “minimum force” is not without controversy as it also does not equate to the images of soldiers “building playgrounds for smiling children, diverting personnel and resources from their proper task of fighting wars”.

Minimum force may mean what is appropriate for the situation, and this may range from martial law to conventional warfighting in a counterinsurgency context. While it is true that the key is in changing the nebulous ‘mind-set’ of the target audience however we observe that quite often this requires tough measures and a hard approach such as mass movement of the population, riot control, curfews and direct military action. As these hard measures are instituted, and as the people’s ‘mind-set’ is managed, acts of support alongside managing the way in which government security forces interact with the population, combined with an effective information operations campaign, manages over their ‘hearts’. On this point, Jackson describes that “often used methods more likely to be found in a police state or feudal monarchy than a liberal democracy”. He argues that “far from minimum force being the keynote of British victory in colonial counterinsurgency campaigns, it can be argued that victory was won by the availability, and sometimes the application, of overwhelming force”.⁵¹¹

7.5 THE STATE BY MANY NAMES

John Nagl once admitted in a lecture that his scholarship “is very practical”⁵¹², which gives us some insight to why he borrowed what he borrowed from, and why he borrowed it. Nagl’s famous “Organisation learning theory” borrows from the study of business organisations. It follows that because we rarely face an adversary, we get hooked in a way which become stagnant, so when the war comes, we are ready to do it the old way. Hence when it comes to war, organisations involved in the conduct of war need to be learning organisations who are not resistant to adaptation. Nagl argues that commercial businesses compete every day and they are able to determine at the end of the day how they are doing in relation to their competitors; whether they are selling or outselling as such. This allows

⁵⁰⁹ Strachan, Hew. 2007. "British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq." *Royal United Services Institute Journal* 152 (6): 8.

⁵¹⁰ Jackson, Ashley. 2006. "British counter-insurgency in history: a useful precedent?" *BRITISH ARMY REVIEW*-LONDON-MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

⁵¹¹ Mockaitis, Thomas R. 1990. *British Counterinsurgency 1919-60*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵¹² Discussion Counterinsurgency with John A. Nagl - Conversations with History. 16 April 2015. University of California. See also Nagl, John A. 2002. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. Chicago: Chicago Press.

them to innovate every day. Armies unlike businesses, only do what they do on a big scale, perhaps once a generation as they do not have immediate feedback that businesses do.⁵¹³ To mitigate that problem, armies simulate an environment, but they write their own rules, and devise their own enemy. They often face mirror-image armies in simulation. However, they need to adapt their practices almost ad hoc to how a situation develops, and must be willing to be flexible in the pursuit of victory. If the study of COIN can borrow from the field of business studies, then it would be an act of a similar genus to look at how other fields resolve the issue of reconciling observations. Hack's explanations have also emanated from seemingly unrelated fields. His adapted terms, such as, 'structural violence' has borrowed explanation power from fields such as human rights, development studies, 'peace medicine' or ethnography, in analysing the Malayan Emergency. It is not any more unusual to turn to the discipline of physics than it is to turn to business studies, or 'peace medicine' for guidance.

In the following, we submit that if the State is "*Gewaltmonopol des Staates*" (GWMDS) by which we refer to a fundamental reliance on force as a central explanation; then by definition the State cannot possess the only absolute narrative to events. Saying that the State is GWMDS, precludes the State from having the only absolute narrative, and also precludes it from never engaging in the use of force altogether. Weber's "*Gewaltmonopol des Staates*" is as follows; the State is the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force. It is the only source of legitimacy for all physical coercion and adjudication of coercion. In *Politics as a Vocation* he writes that a necessary condition of statehood is the retention of the monopoly over force

"The state is seen as the sole grantor of the 'right' to physical force. Therefore, 'politics' in our case would mean the pursuit for a portion of power or for influencing the division of power whether it is between states, or between groups of people which the state encompasses."

*"(something is)...a 'state' if and insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds a claim on the 'monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force' in the enforcement of its order."*⁵¹⁴

Therefore, if we accept Weber's definition of the 'State', then force is indissoluble from COIN campaigns and operations. And hence, COIN, which is the exercise of resiliently avoiding revisions and maintaining status quo, is inseparable from the use of force because what it aims to achieve is only the effective management of it. This resilience to revision also

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ See Weber, Max. 2013. *Politics As a Vocation*. Isha Books. p.136; Weber, Max, Talcott Parsons, and A M Henderson. 1964. *The theory of social and economic organization*. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

characterises decolonisation, as decolonisation is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation.⁵¹⁵

Now consider if the sentence ‘One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’ is the same as the sentence, “This sentence is false”? Or consider that Fanon argues “...it is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation, the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil”. In Malaya, Chin Peng claims that ‘the British were the real terrorists’ having executed prisoners (around 200 captured insurgents), retried people who were initially not convicted, and allowed decapitation of corpses⁵¹⁶ for identification purposes. A State; a monopolised situation of violence; represents a system. Any statements which you can make inside a system should explicitly either be true or false – mathematicians call it ‘complete’. According to Gödel; any system of sufficient complexity to add numbers together, necessarily contained statements like this which are undecidable.⁵¹⁷

In Weber’s *Gewaltmonopol des Staates*, it is the State which disentangles the heap paradox for us. It is the COIN forces who delineates for the population as to who is the ‘terrorist’ and who is the ‘freedom fighter’, as if the State were to instruct that “In this ‘frame of reference’ all these things must mean all these other things in this particular war. And thus there must be no violations of these parameters”. Consider the simple case in Malaya; where this power of manipulating the frame of reference take very practical form. The term “Emergency” was adopted in order that the London commercial insurance rates on which Malayan commerce and industry relied (would not be adversely affected, as they would have been if the conflict has been described as a “war” (we have discussed in further detail in a previous chapter).⁵¹⁸ The High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya suggested to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that such emotive terms such as ‘war’, ‘enemy’ and ‘rebellion’ should be avoided, and names such as ‘banditry’, ‘thugs’, ‘terrorism’ and so on be

⁵¹⁵ See Fanon, Frantz. 2004. *The Wretched Earth; Translated from the French by Richard Philcox*. New York: Grove Press. 1-2.

⁵¹⁶ Decapitation of enemy corpses to remove their heads from deep jungle for identification purposes, and display of corpses and their images for additional propaganda purposes, were normalised for long stretches of the campaign. The latter was used after some kills in deep jungle, and banned in 1952 on Cabinet instruction, following publication of photographs in the Daily Worker. But corpse photographs continued to play an important part in propaganda. CO1022/45: Hack, ‘The Malayan Emergency as Counterinsurgency paradigm’, pp. 405-9.

⁵¹⁷ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 2013. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems*. 11 November. Accessed 2016. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/goedel-incompleteness/>.

⁵¹⁸ n.d. “No 3, Secret Despatch No 5, Para 16, ‘Insurance’, 30 May 1949 from Sir Henry Gurney to Secretary of States for Colonies.” CO 537/4773.

used instead.⁵¹⁹ They tell us if these ‘others’ are either ‘bandits’, or ‘Communists Terrorists’ as they are demonising and delegitimising terms. Communists in Britain, such as Harry Pollitt, campaigned in support of Malayan independence. Pollitt wrote the pamphlet, *Malaya – Stop the War!* in which he set out his forthright views.⁵²⁰ He outlined the size of the security forces and their repressive use against the Malayan people by the administration. Then Pollitt went on to claim that “...all this, we are told, “against a handful of bandits”! This must surely be the biggest and most persistent handful that has ever existed in human history.” Pollitt continued:

“The British lads who are being sent thousands of miles away to Malaya are not defending Britain or safeguarding democracy. They are there to defend the corrupt colonial system under which two-thirds of the children receive no schooling, the workers’ own trade unions have been suppressed, and real wages are only a third of their pre-war starvation level. Despite all the official propaganda about Malaya being the most prosperous British colony, for the Malayan people conditions are appalling.”

“... This is the degraded Police State for which the Tories want to sacrifice more British lives. Already hundreds of British lads have lost their lives in Malaya. It is time for the British people to put an end to this cruel and ghastly war. ... For the Tory rubber and tin profiteers there is plenty to gain, but for the British people the only dividends are death, more taxation, cuts in social services, and attacks on wages and working conditions.”

The British Defence Secretary then issued a directive stating that those called ‘bandits’ should now be referred to as ‘communist terrorists’ (CTs). Pollitt’s *Stop the War* campaign had more positive effects, with even the establishment paper, *The Times*, in its edition of 30 November 1951, stating that: “Together with the usual colonial suspicions is a growing belief, hastened by the statements of rubber producers, that Malaya is regarded first as an investment area to be made safe for British capital.” And guarding that capital were young British soldiers, often doing their national service, fighting someone else’s war in a foreign land.

Jackson and Mockaitis point out further that acts by British forces; these include rough interrogations, internment without trial and different rules of engagement for different ethnic populations, which enabled them to achieve certain objectives, by today’s standards would not have been condoned despite being a significant factor in the conduct of British campaigns. Minimal force is determined by tactical circumstances and the strategic objectives,

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Pollitt, Harry. n.d. *Malaya Stop The War!* London: Communist Party of Britain.

and will not necessarily be the lowest force option.⁵²¹ These seemingly “hidden fine prints” are often glossed over, and are hidden in plain sight. The argument of benevolence softens the edges of something otherwise quite hard, and unequivocal.

Whatever it may be, the relevant conclusion for the moment is uncomplicated. Whatever was said, or is currently being said, and what will be said, the crucial point is that the MCP was defeated by 1952 and was done so with the use of force. Chin Peng, the then veteran anti-colonialist, admitted that the ‘New Villages’ introduced in the latter part of 1950, which amounted to herding “more and more” of the people into “high cyclone wire fencing” with “barbed wire, flood lights, police guards, and constant searches, frequent interrogations and general restrictions on movement” amounts to a crisis of survival for any cause of a peoples.⁵²² Inevitably, what Chin Peng calls a ‘crisis of survival’ was the historical turning point, of which if it had been otherwise by his own admission, would have led to either defeat or victory – the ‘Cleopatra’s nose’ for the MCP as it were.

All the above also tells us that what we say of an event, is separate from what the cumulative force-balance of that situation is. That is to say, we can justify and convince many to rally around our reasoning whatever our actions are, but interaction through force remains unaffected by its expression in language. This is why in the way we speak about war or conflict, we can have all lives to be assumed equal, yet eventually yield to the fact that some lives are more equal than others. You can shoot your rifle and say any conceivable, relevant or irrelevant things about, concerning, or accompanying your act, but one either fires a shot or one doesn’t. Hence, we conclude that any interaction can be justified, but interaction by force is unaffected by interaction by language. It remains a process of interaction of its own separate from language. If weiqi remains doubtful, this is perhaps what the famous chess grandmaster Jose Raul Capablanca had in mind when saying; “You should think only about the position, but not about the opponent... Psychology bears no relation to it and only stands in the way of real chess”.⁵²³

⁵²¹Jackson, Ashley. 2006. “British counter-insurgency in history: a useful precedent?” BRITISH ARMY REVIEW-LONDON-MINISTRY OF DEFENCE; Mockaitis, Thomas R. 1990. *British Counterinsurgency 1919-60*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵²² Peng, Chin. 2003. *Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters.

⁵²³ Wall, Bill. n.d. *Bill Wall's Chess Page The World's Largest Online Chess Collection*. Accessed December 30, 2017. <http://billwall.phpwebhosting.com/articles/capablanca.htm>.

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