'Our Achilles' Heel' – Interagency Intelligence during the Malayan Emergency.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Roger Christopher Arditti

Brunel Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies

September 2015

'Our Achilles' Heel' – Interagency intelligence during the Malayan Emergency.[1]

Abstract

The Malayan Emergency is often considered the defining paradigm for a successful counter-insurgency campaign. The effective collection and management of intelligence by Special Branch dominates this paradigm. However, the intelligence architecture during Emergency was much more complicated than the simple Special Branch-Army nexus upon which existing studies focus. Other components of the intelligence included the Malayan Security Service (MSS), Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), the Joint Intelligence Committee / Far East (JIC/FE), the Royal Air Force (RAF), the Army, and the mainstream police. Each component adapted to the challenge of insurgency in different ways – the civilian elements faring far worse than the military.

Britain struggled to adapt to the post-war intelligence challenges in the Far East. Key intelligence components and capabilities were constituted in haste with overlapping and ambiguous remits. Consequently, there was bitter infighting at a number of levels, particularly between the various civilian intelligence agencies. In contrast, the Army and RAF demonstrated an instinctive ability to work in a 'joint' environment from the very beginning of the Emergency. In particular, the RAF took a leading role in creating a joint theatre-level intelligence apparatus which included establishment of a Joint Operations Room in Kuala Lumpur and the Joint Intelligence Photographic Intelligence Committee / Far East. However, the military were unable to provide the comprehensive human intelligence or strategic leadership necessary to make the broader apparatus effective. This could only come once the apparatus led by the civil agencies – chiefly the uniformed police as well as Special Branch – had learnt to adapt to the demands of waging a counter-insurgency campaign.

Given that the British intelligence organisations had learnt to function in a *joint* manner during the Second World War, it is remarkable how much had apparently been forgotten in the three years preceding the outbreak of the Communist

---

[1] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya, from April 1950 to November 1951, by Sir Harold Briggs.

insurgency in Malaya and how long it took to create an effective method of coordinating intelligence during subsequent Emergency.

Contents

Abbreviations.

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

DALCO	Dalley's Company
DCM	District Committee Member CPM
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DMO&I	Director of Military Operations and Intelligence
DoI	Director of Intelligence
DSO	Defence Security Officer
DWEC	District War Executive Committee
EIS	Economic Intelligence Section
EIS	Emergency Information Service
FARELF	Far East Land Forces
FEAF	Far East Air Forces
FECB	Far East Combined Intelligence Bureau
FELF	Far East Land Forces
FIC	Federal Intelligence Committee
FMS	Federated Malay States
FOES	Future Operations Enemy Section
FSS	Field Security Service / Section
FWEC	Federal War Executive Committee
GLU	General Labour Union
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOS II (Int)	General Staff Officer II (Intelligence)
HD(S)E	Home Defence (Security) Executive
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
INA	Indian National Army
ISLD	Inter-Service Liaison Department
ISIC	Interservice Intelligence Committee
ISTD	Interservice Topographical Department
JAPIB	Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board
JAPIC	Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre
JIB	Joint Intelligence Bureau
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JID	Joint Intelligence Division

JIO	Joint Intelligence Organisation
JIS	Joint Intelligence Staff
JOC	Joint Operations Room
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
KMT	Kuomintang
LDC	Local Defence Committee
LIC	Local Intelligence Committee
LSO	Local Security Officer
MCA	Malayan Chinese Affairs
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MEF	Middle East Force
MEIC	Middle East Intelligence Centre
MELF	Middle East Land Forces
MI5	Security Service
MI6	Security Intelligence Service (SIS)
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
MDU	Malayan Democratic Union
MNLA	Malayan National Liberation Army
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MPABA	Malayan People's Anti-British Army
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
MSS	Malayan Security Service
NDYL	New Democratic Youth League
OC	Overseas Control
OCPD	Officer-in-Charge Police District
OPSUM	Operational Summary
OSPC	Officer Superintending Police Circle
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
Photinit	Photographic Intelligence
PIAW	Political Intelligence Arab World

PIJ	Political Intelligence Journal
PMFTU	Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRO	Public Records Office
PWE	Political Warfare Executive
PWS	Psychological Warfare Section
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
SAS	Special Air Service
SB	Special Branch
SAC	Supreme Allied Commander
SACSEA	Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia
SC	Special Constable
SEAC	Southeast Asia Command
SEIO	State Emergency Information Officer
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel
SFTU	Singapore Federation of Trade Unions
SIFE	Security Intelligence Far East
SIME	Security Intelligence Middle East
SIS	Security Intelligence Service
SLO	Security Liaison Officer
SOE	Special Operations Executive
SOVF	Special Operations Volunteer Force
SRC	Situation Report Centre
SWEC	State / Settlement War Executive Committee

Dramatis Personae

Boucher, General Sir Charles (1898-1951)

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

Bourne, General Geoffrey (1902-1982)

Commissioned in the Royal Artillery in 1923. Bourne served as a member of the Joint Planning Staff between 1939-41. He was posted to the Joint Staff Mission in Washington in 1942. He then commanded the 152nd Field Regiment in Italy and was a member of the General Staff Airborne Corps fighting in Belgium. After a number of staff appointments, Bourne was appointed General Officer Commanding Malaya between 1954-56. He retired from the Army in 1960.

Bower, General Sir Roger (1903-1990)

Educated at Sandhurst, Bower was commissioned into the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in 1923. He served in India and Hong Kong in the inter-war years. During the Second World War Bower took part in Operation Market Garden. After the war, he served in Palestine and Germany. Bower served as General Officer Commanding and Director of Operations for Malaya between 1956-58. He retired from the Army in 1960.

Briggs, General Sir Harold Rawdon (1894-1952)

Born in Pipestone, Minnesota, USA in 1894. Briggs attended Sunburst and was subsequently attached to the 4th Bn Kings Regiment, fighting in France in 1915. In the following year he transferred to the 31st Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army, seeing action in Mesopotamia and Palestine. In the inter-war period he saw action on the

North-West Frontier. During the Second World War, Briggs saw action in Eritrea, North Africa and Burma, including the battle for Kohima. In April 1946 he was appointed General Officer Commanding, Burma before retiring from the Army when Burma obtained independence in 1948. He subsequently served in a civilian capacity as Director of Operations in Malaya between 1950-52. He died in Limassol on 27 October 1952.

Chin Peng (1924-2013)

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

Dalley, Lt. Col. John (dates unknown)

Was a police officer in the Federated Malay States Police Force. Following the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese, Dalley created a guerrilla network called Dalforce, which numbered some 4,000 fighters. Dalforce was disbanded in 1942, following the British surrender. Dalley was subsequently captured and spent the rest of the war a captive of the Japanese. After liberation, Dalley returned to Malaya and was appointed Head of the Malayan Security Service (MSS). However, the MSS was disbanded in 1948 and Dalley played no further part in the Malayan Emergency.

Gent, Sir (Gerard) Edward James (1895-1948)

Born in Kingston, Surrey. Enlisted with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in August 1914 and served in Flanders and Italy, winning the MC and DSO. Gent then entered Colonial Office as an assistant principal. He spent much of the 1930s in the Far Eastern department and was its head from 1939-42. In 1945 he was appointed as Governor of the Malaya Union, declaring a state of emergency in June 1948. Shortly after Gent was recalled to London for talks. The aircraft in which he was returning crashed with

another on approach to Northolt airport on 4th July 1948, killing Gent and all other passengers and crew.

Gray, Col. Nicol (1908-1988)

Was educated at Trinity College, Glenalmond and qualified as a chartered surveyor in 1939. Joined 2nd Battalion of the Royal Marine Brigade and served in North Africa and the Middle East. Landed in Normandy on D-Day, as second-in-command of 45 Commando. Fought through France and Low Countries to Germany. Between 1946-8 he was Inspector-General of Palestine Police. In 1948 he was appointed Commissioner the Federation of Malaya Police Service. He retired and returned to Britain in 1952.

Gurney, Sir Henry Lovell Goldsworthy (1998-1951)

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

Hayter, Sir William Goodenough (1906-1995)

Born on 1 August 1906 in Oxford, where he was subsequently educated. In 1930 he joined the Diplomatic Service and was posted to the League of Nations, Vienna, Moscow, and Shanghai. He was posted to Washington as first secretary in December 1940. He returned to London in May 1944, and was promoted to Assistant Under-Secretary of State in February 1948. He was chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee between 1948-9. Hayter was then posted to Paris and served as ambassador to Moscow between 1953-57. After his posting to Moscow, Hayter accepted the wardenship of New College, Oxford. He died in Oxfordshire in 1995.

Jenkin, Sir William (dates unknown)

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

Liddell, Guy (1892-1958)

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

Lyttelton, Sir Oliver (Viscount Chandos) (1893-1972)

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

MacDonald, Malcolm John (1901-1981)

Born at Lossiemouth, Scotland, on 17 August 1901. In 1931 he was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Dominion Office. Between 1935-40 he held various cabinet offices, including Secretary of State for the Colonies and Secretary of State for the Dominion Affairs. He served in Churchill's government as Minister of Health and then in 1941 he was appointed High Commissioner to Canada. In 1946 MacDonald was appointed Governor General, Far East Asia, at post which became known as the Commissioner General, Far East Asia in 1948. In 1955 he was appointed

High Commissioner to India. In 1963 he became Britain's last Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Kenya. MacDonald died in 1981.

MacGillivray, Sir Donald Charles (1906-1966)

Born in Edinburgh on 22 September 1906. He attended Oxford University before entering the Colonial Service in 1928. His first posting was as a District Officer in Tanganyika. In 1938 he went to Palestine, serving as Private Secretary to Sir Harold Macmillan, a District Officer, and Under-Secretary to the Palestine government. Between 1947 and 1952 he was Colonial Secretary in Jamaica. In 1952 MacGillivray was sent to Malaya, serving as deputy High Commissioner to Templer. He succeeded Templer in 1954, and was the Federation's last High Commissioner. He retired from the Colonial Service when Malaya gained independence in 1957.

Morton, Jack

Prior to his appointment as Director of Intelligence in 1952, Morton was a senior officer in The Security Service, running Security Intelligence Far East.

Mountbatten, Louis, first Earl of Mountbatten of Burma (1900-1979)

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

Petrie, Sir David (1879-1961)

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

Ritchie, General Sir Neil Methuen (1897-1983)

Born in Essequibo, British Guiana on 29 July 1897. Ritchie attended Sandhurst and in 1914 was commissioned into the Black Watch, and saw service in France and Mesopotamia during the First World War. In 1938 he took command of the 1st Bn King's Own Royal Regiment and served in Palestine. In 1939 he was appointed to the General Staff of 2nd Corps, commanded by Alan Brooke. In 1941 Ritchie was sent to North Africa, taking command of the Eighth Army until dismissed by Auchinleck the following year. He subsequently commanded 12th Corps through the campaign in North West Europe. In 1947 he was promoted to General and took the post of Commander-in-Chief Far East Land Forces. His final post was in 1950 to head of the British Army staff in the joint service mission to the USA. He retired to Canada in 1951.

Scrivener, Sir Patrick (1897-1966)

Born in 1897, Scrivener became a career diplomat. Between 1941-47 he was Head of Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office. Subsequently appointed Minister to Syria in 1947. Served as Deputy Commissioner-General, South-East Asia between 1948-9 and chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East). Also served as ambassador to Switzerland between 1950-53.

Sillitoe, Sir Percy Joseph (188-1962)

Born in Tulse Hill, London on 22 May 1888. In 1908 he became a trooper in the British South Africa police. He transferred to the Northern Rhodesia police in 1911. He took

part in the campaign in German East Africa and was a political officer in Tanganyika from 1916-22. He returned to the UK and became Chief Constable of Chesterfield, East Riding, and Sheffield successively. In 1931 he was appointed Chief Constable of Glasgow, a post he held for twelve years. In 1943 Sillitoe was appointed Chief Constable of Kent. He was appointed Director General of MI5 in May 1946. He retired from MI5 in 1953.

Templer, General Sir Gerald (1898-1979)

Born in Colchester, Essex on 11 Sept 1898. Commissioned into the Royal Irish Fusiliers and saw service in France during the First World War. Templer subsequently served in Persia, Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine. In 1938, as a brevet Lieutenant Colonel, Templer became a GO2 in intelligence. He saw active service in France in 1940 and Italy in 1943 where he was wounded. In 1945 Templer was appointed Director of Civil Affairs and Military Government in Germany. In March 1946 he was appointed Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) and then in 1948 as Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS). He served in Malaya as High Commissioner between 1952-4. After Malaya, Templer became Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) and was appointed Field Marshal in 1956. Templer retired from the Army in 1958.

Young, Sir Arthur Edwin (1907-1979)

Born on 15 February 1907 in Eastleigh, Hampshire. Young joined Portsmouth police in 1923 and by 1938 he was the Chief Constable of Leamington Spa. In 1941 he was appointed as Senior Assistant Chief Constable for Birmingham; in 1943 he was selected to establish a training school for police officers who would maintain law and order in liberated axis territories; ten weeks later he was Director of Public Safety in the allied government in Italy. After the war, Young was posted as Chief Constable of Hertfordshire; Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police; and Commissioner of the City of London Police. He was appointed as Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya police service between 1952-4. He subsequently left Malaya to be Commissioner of the Kenya police service in 1954. He then returned to the City of London police but went to Ireland in 1969 to implement the Hunt Report. Young died on 20 January 1979.

Timeline

January 1945	*The Intelligence Machine,* A report by Denis Capel-Dunn released.
July 1945	Clement Attlee became Prime Minister.
September 1945	Start of the British Military Administration (BMA) in Malaya.
March 1946	Governor Sir Edward Gent arrived in Malaya.
April 1946	Start of the Malayan Union.
	Malcolm MacDonald appointed Governor General.
	Sir Franklin Gimson appointed Governor of Singapore.
	Creation of the British Defence Coordinating Committee / Far East (BDCC/FE).
	Col. John Dalley appointed head of the reconstituted Malayan Security Service (MSS).
	C. Dixon appointed head of the newly constituted Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE).
	Sir Percy Sillitoe appointed Director General of the Security Service (MI5).
June 1946	Field Marshall Sir Bernard Montgomery appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS).
October 1946	Arthur Creech Jones appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies.
November 1946	Malcolm Johnston replaced Dixon as Head of SIFE.
1947	Creation of the Joint Intelligence Committee / Far East (JIC/FE).
April 1947	General Sir Neil Ritchie appointed Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces (FELF).
November 1947	*Review of Intelligence Organisations, 1947,* by Sir ACM Douglas Evill released.
January 1948	Start of the Federation of Malaya.
February 1948	William Hayter appointed chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (London) (JIC (London)).

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

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

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Malayan Emergency was a struggle between two competing visions for the future of Malaya: the British aspiration for a managed transition to self-government and the Communist's desire to create a new order in their own image. The state of Emergency was declared in June 1948, following a rise of Communist-inspired violence against Malaya's economically vital rubber and tin mines, which the Malayan authorities believed was the start of an armed insurrection. The British government, the Malayan authorities, the Malay rulers, and various Commonwealth allies conducted the Emergency against the Communist insurgent forces, which were drawn largely, but not exclusively, from Malaya's Chinese community. Many of the insurgents, including its leader Chin Peng, were former members of Force 136 (the Far East division of Britain's Special Operational Executive) and only three years before the declaration of Emergency had been fighting a guerrilla war against the Japanese alongside their British allies.[1]

The Emergency was a highly violent affair: 1868 security force personnel, 2473 civilians and 6697 insurgents were killed between 1948 and 1960.[2] At the height of the campaign, the Malayan government had twenty-three battalions of troops, fifty thousand police officers and six squadrons of strike or bomber aircraft pitched against some three and half thousand insurgents.[3] Yet, by its nature, the Emergency was not a *war*. The military were acting in support of the civilian authorities and the police remained the lead agency responsible for the restoration of internal security. Although the armed wing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) wore uniforms and were organised along military lines, their supply wing (the Min Yuen) and supporters within the Chinese squatter community and towns did not. The Emergency was thus a struggle not necessarily for territory but the allegiance of Malayan's population. At a minimum, the MCP needed the active support of only a small proportion of Malaya's communities and the acquiescence of the majority to undermine the government. Conversely, the government needed to collect and assess a sufficient amount of information,

---

[1] See C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars – the end of Britain's Asian Empire* (2008), p. 31; A. Hoe & E. Morris, *Re-enter the SAS* (1994), p. 14; B. Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame – Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (2011), p. 105. See also Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History* (Singapore 2003).
[2] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya* (London, 1975), Appendix, pp. 507-8.
[3] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956 by the Director of Operations, Malaya; M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (London 1992), Annex L – Air Forces Order of Battle – Squadrons Available 1948-60.

from aerial photographs or captured documents but, ideally, from informers, to identify, arrest or kill the insurgents. Intelligence was thus central to the prosecution of the Emergency.

The conventional wisdom, as posited by Leon Comber and Anthony Short, is that intelligence during the Emergency revolved around the Special Branch of the Federation of Malaya's police service.[4] The prologue to the establishment the Special Branch in 1948 was the abolition of the Malayan Security Service (MSS) due to its failure to forecast the start of the Communist insurgency. From this difficult start, it is held that the Special Branch grew rapidly into a model intelligence agency, and subsequently provided the basis for key post-war counter-insurgency theories.[5] By the early 1950s Special Branch was able to map most of the Communist forces ranged against it. Under the auspices of the Briggs Plan, it successfully targeted the Min Yuen, the Communist supply network, which forced the MCP to change strategy dramatically. Later, from 1952, Special Branch switched its attention to targeting key MCP leaders. At each stage it worked in close cooperation with the military, via a committee structure implemented by General Sir Harold Briggs, the Federation's first Director of Operations. Prevailing understanding suggests the military played an important but secondary role in relation to intelligence, predominantly relating to the exploitation of intelligence provided by Special Branch, rather than collection or analysis. Thanks to the efforts of Special Branch, supposedly the back of the insurgency was broken by 1952.

However, the manner in which the authorities collected, assessed and organised intelligence during the Emergency was broader, more complex and divided than the conventional understanding would suggest. For instance, the first key premise upon which all existing accounts are built is that declaration of Emergency reflected the failure of the MSS to forecast the Communist insurgency. However, the MSS did provide clear strategic warning of both the intention and capability of the MCP to threaten Malaya's internal security. In fact, it was abolished not because of an intelligence failure but due to the interagency 'turf' war that was

---

[4] L. Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945-48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18:3 (2003), pp. 128-153; Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60 – The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (2008); G. Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': the rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948-1955", *Intelligence and National Security*, 26:4 (2011), pp. 465-67.
[5] R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam* (1966); F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (1977); Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations – Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (1971); T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60* (London 1990).

being waged between Col. John Dalley, head of the MSS, and Sir Percy Sillitoe, the Director General of the Security Service (MI5). Special Branch did play a critical role in the Emergency but its impact has been overstated. Indeed, its fortunes were tied to the wider police force, which, until 1952, followed a paramilitary strategy entirely incompatible with the generation of intelligence. Although this strategy changed under General Sir Gerald Templer, the legacy remained. Indeed, the civilian agencies that were concerned with intelligence in Malaya – the police, the Security Service, and the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC(FE)) - were riven by inter and intra-organisational strife for long and critical periods of the Emergency. Hence, as late as 1955, the Army's own analysis attributed the relative lack of success in hunting down the insurgent forces in the jungle to the limited operational human intelligence being provided by Special Branch. That said, the military had a far more prominent role in the intelligence campaign in Malaya than previously thought, not least through the photographic intelligence provided by the Royal Air Force (RAF), which was directed by the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre / Far East (JAPIC/FE), and the assessments provided by the Joint Operations Centre. Indeed, the RAF and the Army showed from the very beginning of the Emergency an instinctive ability to work together, for instance, forming operations rooms far earlier in the campaign than previous thought.

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

The myth of intelligence during the Malayan Emergency

Perhaps because the Malayan authorities were the first to resist successfully a Maoist inspired insurgency, that it was a truly 'all-of-government' effort, or that in the British victory appears pyrrhic because they had to accelerate significantly their plans for decolonisation, the Emergency has attracted a rich historiography. Thus, the Emergency has been viewed through the lenses provided by imperial historians, military historians, Malayan nationalists, Cold War historians, counter-insurgency theorists, and decolonisation specialists, including new a sub-set of revisionists who focus on the use of force. However, a survey of this material shows that while intelligence is a common theme no author has provided a detailed and considered assessment of how intelligence was collected, assessed, used or organised. Nor has anyone defined or explored fully the scope of the Malayan intelligence apparatus or how the various agencies evolved and interacted under the intense pressure of the Communist insurgency.

Despite the diverse range of commentators drawn to the Emergency, most accounts begin with an acceptance that the Malayan authorities failed to forecast the Communist insurgency and, as a consequence, the Malayan Security Service was abolished shortly after the declaration of Emergency. However, only Leon Comber and, to a lesser degree, Georgina Sinclair, have provided detailed analysis of the actions of the Malayan Security Service in this failure.[6] Both authors provide a brief introduction to the pre-war origins of the MSS and some of its operational difficulties. Comber discusses the events that led to the declaration of Emergency and argues that the MSS was disbanded because of the "dissatisfaction with the performance of MSS as the government's main intelligence agency and its perceived failure to warn the Malayan government in good time of the CPM's uprising."[7] Comber and later Sinclair also echo Sir Percy Sillitoe's argument that the MSS was "set-up unsound."[8] However, their assessments suffer from some significant omissions. Neither considers the process that led to re-constitution of the MSS in its post-war iteration; the organisational relationship between the MSS and Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), the Security Service's regional hub, is overlooked; the role of Sillitoe in the abolition of MSS is not fully explored and the fact that

---

[6] Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945-48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18:3 (2003), pp. 128-153.

[7] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 43.

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

the MSS was providing clear strategic warning of the threat posed by the MCP is ignored. A review of the evidence will show that the MSS was disbanded not due to any perceived failure but because of an unequal inter-organisational rivalry with the Security Service. This therefore challenges a fundamental premise which underpins the existing orthodoxy of intelligence during the Emergency.

Leon Comber's MSS article provides the basis of the opening chapter in his monograph on the history of the Malayan Special Branch.[9] This is fairly considered to be an important addition to the historiography of the Emergency, not least because he provides "the most detailed account of how Special Branch was organised, trained, operated, and informed the counter-insurgency effort."[10] Indeed, as the only study dedicated to this dominant aspect of intelligence in the Emergency, Comber has effectively 'cornered the market.' Unfortunately, however, there are some limitations. Anthony Stockwell suggests that Comber has danced rather lightly across the issue of the use of violence to obtain intelligence.[11] Kumar Ramakrishna has noted some "slightly embarrassing gaffes" such as stating that Dato Abdul Razak was Malayan prime minister in 1959.[12] Furthermore, Comber mistakenly suggests that the secretary of the Joint Intelligence Committee had the right of direct access to the Prime Minister.[13]

However, there are some more significant methodological problems associated with *Malaya's Secret Police*. Perhaps understandably, given that Comber was a Special Branch officer during the Emergency, he presents a fundamentally whiggish assessment of how his former organisation met the challenges of the insurgency, in which claims of success verge on hyperbole. For instance, he suggests that due to the effectiveness of Special Branch "it was possible to eschew the 'rifle and bayonet' approach – relying on the use of force alone to fight the Communist terrorists and control the local population – and defer to the Special Branch's

---

[9] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945*.

[10] R. Taylor, Review of *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* by Leon Comber, *Asian Studies Review*, 35: 1, p. 117.

[11] A. Stockwell, Review of *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* by Leon Comber, *Asian Affairs*, 40: 3 (2009), pp. 478-9.

[12] A. Stockwell, *Review of Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* by Leon Comber, *Asian Affairs*, 40: 3 (2009), pp. 478-9.

[13] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police,* p. 32.

more subtle methods of fighting the war by the use of human intelligence, which required time and patience, and empathising with the local population."[14] A reassessment of the evidence will show that such statements are, at best, myopic.

Moreover, Comber's thesis fails to locate Special Branch within the wider intelligence apparatus engaged in the counter-insurgency effort. Hence, there is only passing mention of SIFE and the JIC (FE), and the manner in which Colonial Office gained a place on the metropolitan JIC is misrepresented.[15] Without providing the context in which the Special Branch operated, Comber provides a sterile account of its organisational development, a model suggesting operational autonomy rather than integration. This indicates that the relationship between Special Branch and the wider police service was either non-existent or unimportant. In reality, Special Branch was highly dependent upon the wider policing organisation to identify potential sources of information. A failure to acknowledge this critical dynamic compromises Comber's assessment of Special Branch significantly.

Given the mutual dependency between Special Branch and its uniformed colleagues, there is surprisingly little written about policing in the Emergency. The key work remains a chapter written by Anthony Stockwell for David Anderson and David Killingray's *Policing and Decolonisation.* Stockwell argues that "during the Malayan Emergency the police force was largely Malay while the police problem was fundamentally Chinese."[16] He traces the initial response of the police to the Communist violence and its subsequent lurch towards a para-military style under Commissioner Lt. Col. William Nicol Gray. He then discusses the switch back to 'normal' police under Col. Sir Arthur Young who arrived in Malaya, with a reforming agenda, two weeks after Sir Gerald Templer in 1952. Finally Stockwell considers how the Malayan police prepared for decolonisation. This important work provides a useful broad sweep of policing during the Emergency and is complemented by Sinclair's study of colonial

---

[14] Ibid., pp. 282-3.
[15] R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies – British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013), p. 29; R. Cormac, "A Whitehall 'Showdown'?: Colonial Office – Joint Intelligence Committee Relations in the Mid-1950s", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 2 (June 2011), pp. 249-267.
[16] A. Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in D. Anderson & D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police* (Manchester 1992), p. 110.

policing in the post-war era.[17] Nevertheless, policing, particularly in relation to intelligence, is an understudied aspect of the historiography of the emergency. Many issues remain unconsidered, such as the use of violence, the relative merits of consensual and coercive policing in an intelligence context, the awareness of police officers of intelligence – as both 'users' and 'producers', the use of home-guards and militias, and the challenges of inter and intra-communal policing.

The most comprehensive history of the Emergency is Anthony Short's *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*.[18] It was written at the behest of the Malayan government who afforded Short full access to its archives but subsequently withdrew support for political reasons. Short's account begins with events leading up to the declaration of Emergency and the problems that affected the government's ability to restore law and order in the early phases of the campaign. It portrays the Emergency as a struggle for effective governance waged between the Malayan authorities and the MCP. One of Short's key arguments centres upon the importance of the murder of Sir Henry Gurney, which occurred at a time when the government's campaign was stalling, and the subsequent arrival of Sir Gerald Templer, who energised the Emergency effort. Contemporary reviews indicate the impact of Short's work. For instance, Richard Clutterbuck suggests "it is undoubtedly the most comprehensive account that will ever be written of a conflict of considerable significance."[19] Similarly Richard Stubbs argues that Short provides "a meticulously detailed yet lucid exposition of the British colonial administration and its security policies during the period of the Emergency."[20]

The Communist Insurrection is a history of the Emergency and does not purport to focus in upon intelligence. Inevitably, however, the topic arises during the general narrative. Short is highly critical of the MSS which he suggests was as much "clairvoyant organisation" as an

---

[17] G. Sinclair, *At the end of the line – Colonial policing and the imperial endgame, 1945-80*. (Manchester 2006), p. 4. See also Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': the rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948-1955", *Intelligence and National Security* 26:4 (2011), pp. 460-477; S. Hurst, "Colonel Gray and the armoured cars: The Malayan police 1948-1952", Monash Asia Institute, Working Paper 119, 2003.

[18] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*.

[19] R. Clutterbuck, "Review of The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60", *Modern Asian Studies*, 11:1 (1977), pp. 149-152.

[20] R. Stubbs, Review of "The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60", *Pacific Affairs*, 49: 4 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 742-744.

intelligence service.[21] He is particularly disparaging about the the leadership of Lt Col John Dalley (H/MSS), who he suggests was fixated on the threat posed by Malay and Indonesian nationalism and who produced verbose and ambiguous intelligence reports. Despite access to the Malaysian government's records, no mention is made of SIFE, JIC (FE) or the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East) (BDCC (FE)). Short also offers only brief assessments of the two Directors of Intelligence and the military's use of intelligence.

Despite its undoubted excellence, questions have been raised about the perspective of Short's account. For instance, Roger Kershaw notes that it was largely a tale of British achievement.[22] Richard Stubbs posits that Short's reliance on official sources may have encouraged a narrowness of scope that led to 'fleeting' references to "considerations that one might reasonably expect in such history." Perhaps, however, the biggest critic of *The Communist Insurrection* is Karl Hack who takes issues with two key issues. First, he suggests that the "British narrative Short spins misreads Gurney's policy, ignores the extremely complex interplay of tension and cooperation (which continued under Templer), and misses the way Asian nationalism, British policy and the Emergency were interacting." Second, he disputes the 'stalemate theory' and Templer's 'transmogrifying' abilities.[23]

However, Richard Stubbs has supported Short's interpretation of events. In *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948-60*, Stubbs sets out to place the shooting war in "the broader context of the social, political, and economic aspects of life in Malaya."[24] As such he proposes that two distinct policies were used to tackle the Communist forces. The first was one of 'coercion and enforcement'. This was used to maintain government and allow the security forces to re-group. The second was one of 'hearts and minds'. This reflected "the socioeconomic nature of the conflict and the consequent link between the guerrillas and a sympathetic population."[25] These two phases are aligned with the administrations of Sir

---

[21] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, pp. 82–3.
[22] R. Kershaw, Review of *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960* by Anthony Short, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 52: 2 (April 1976), p. 309.
[23] K. Hack, "British and Communist Crises in Malaya: A Response to Anthony Short", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31: 2 (September 2000), pp. 392-395. See also a letter from Anthony Short in the same journal pp. 390-1.
[24] R. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (Singapore 1989), p. vii.
[25] C. Lockard, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 49: 3 (August 1990), pp. 709-711.

Henry Gurney and Sir Gerald Templer, respectively, although Stubbs nuances his argument by suggesting that the economic impact of the Korean War began to take effect in 1951 which laid the foundation for the subsequent 'hearts and minds' strategy.[26]

The argument articulated by Stubbs is not without its detractors. For instance, both Gordon Means and Cheah Boon Kheng have argued that Stubbs has misunderstood the socio-political aspects of the hearts and minds phase. In particular, the former, who was conducting research within a New Village during the Emergency, argues that the "no book on the war has been able adequately to replicate the complex tangle of personal response mechanisms and emotional trauma of those caught in the midst of a guerrilla struggle."[27] The latter suggests that the "major preoccupation in this book is with the 'hearts and minds approach in the counter-insurgency measures adopted by the British government against the Communist insurgents; a preoccupation that at times seems rather excessive because the 'hearts and minds approach was not the end-all or be-all of the Emergency." Indeed, Cheah Boon Kheng argues that repressive measures were still used by the Malayan authorities during the 'hearts and minds' phase of the Emergency, and thus that it might be more appropriate to call this the 'carrot and stick' approach.[28] Furthermore, perhaps understandably, intelligence is not at the forefront of Stubbs' analysis. Stubbs provides useful material in relation to intelligence-gathering opportunities afforded by resettlement, but *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare* takes a much broader sweep at understanding the Emergency. Nevertheless, it is a vital adjunct to *The Communist Insurrection* in the historiography of the Emergency; together Short and Stubbs provide the bedrock of what has become known as the 'stalemate' theory, emphasising the static nature of the campaign under Gurney and its transformation under Templer.

In 1999 Karl Hack released a series of articles that reassessed the 'stalemate' theory. Of particular relevance is his discussion of intelligence. Like Comber and Short, Hack highlights the failures of the MSS and its Special Branch successor to generate intelligence useful for the

---

[26] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare*, p. vii.

[27] G. Means, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 23: 4 (December 1990), pp. 813-14.

[28] Cheah Boon Kheng, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 22: 2 (September 1991), pp. 428.

Army during the 1948-49 phase (what Hack calls the 'counter-terror' phase). He also explores the appointment of Sir William Jenkin as intelligence advisor in May 1950 and rightly notes that Special Branch was beset with the operational difficulties, such as lack of Chinese speakers in the police and the strains that affected the core executive in this period.[29] While acknowledging organisational improvements under Templer, Hack suggests "the effectiveness of intelligence at any one time cannot be gauged by its organisational condition alone." Instead, he suggests that the transformation of intelligence during the Emergency occurred incrementally and concludes, "the insurgency was successfully undermined by a British campaign and intelligence apparatus working well below peak efficiency, and still suffering serious leadership problems."[30]

Hack uses his assessment of intelligence to reflect upon wider issues of causation and timing. He argues that the MCP's 'October 1951' Directives prove that coercion and population control had forced the MCP into scaling down their insurgency prior to the arrival of Sir Gerald Templer in 1952. [31] He supports this view by arguing that the Malayan government's counter-insurgency campaign "succeeded in 'screwing down' Communist supporters, rather more than wooing 'hearts and minds.'" This was possible because of the ethnic, social and political structure of post-war Malaya allowed the large-scale deportation and relocation of the Chinese squatter community. As result, the pivotal point in the Emergency, according to Hack's thesis, was not the arrival of Templer in 1952 but "the switch from poorly directed counter-terror and coercion in 1948-49, to tightly organised population control from 1950." He rejects "the traditional view that the leadership and policy changes of one British general (Templer) were both necessary and sufficient to transform the campaign." Instead, "the critical conditions [for counter-insurgency success] had existed before Templer and 'hearts and minds', and that in the most important polices there was, and was always likely to be, continuity not change around 1952."[32]

---

[29] K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124-155.

[30] Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4, pp. 211-241.

[31] Ibid, pp. 124-155.

[32] K. Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99-101. A. Short, "Letter from Short", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 31: 2 (September 2000) and K. Hack, "British and Communist Crises in Malaya: A Response to Anthony Short", 31: 2

Hack's work forms an important element of the historiography of the Emergency and has been supported by a number of other commentators.[33] Despite its initial allure, Hack's argument wanes under scrutiny in relation to his consideration of intelligence. In the first instance, there is a fundamental flaw in his thesis in relation to cause and effect. His primary argument is that population control led to increased intelligence, and Hack seeks to use the publication of the October 1951 Directives and the subsequent decline in terrorist related incidents, security force and civilian casualties, and an increase of terrorist surrenders in 1952, as proof of effect. However, there are a number of difficulties with this, not least the fact that twenty-two battalions of troops and heavy bombers still engaged in active counter-insurgency duties in the year after Templer left Malaya. Moreover, why did the authorities repeatedly report to London between 1954-7 that the Emergency had either reached a stalemate or that the insurgents continued to pose a significant threat to the government of Malaya?[34] Indeed, if resettlement so greatly changed the battle space in favour of the Malayan authorities, why did active counter-insurgency operations continued for at least another six years and the Emergency last a further three years after that?

However, perhaps the key flaw in the various iterations of Hack's thesis is that it never defines its use of the term 'intelligence'. The concept has many different connotations: the most obvious referring to 'information', 'process', 'organisation', or 'an-end product.' There is an assumption within the Hack thesis that intelligence was produced by coercion and population control – it was thus 'information.' Hack largely ignores any other interpretation of intelligence. There is an implicit assumption that the intelligence organisation could gather this information and process it via assessment, analysis and dissemination into an intelligence

(September 2000). For a further restatement of the Hack thesis, see Hack, 'The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383-414; K. Hack, 'Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699.

[33] H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3, pp. 415-444; D. Mackay, *The Domino that Stood – The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (London 1997); R. Popplewell "Lacking Intelligence: Some reflections on recent approaches to British counter-insurgency, 1900-1960," *Intelligence and National Security*, 10:2 (April 1995), pp. 336-52.

[34] For instance, see WO 208 3219, Director of Operations, Malaya, "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954"; WO 216/885, Bourne to Harding, 3 June 1955; WO 208/5356, Director of Operations, Malaya, "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956".

'product' which would allow the security forces to prosecute the insurgents and, as a consequence gather information to re-start the cycle. To borrow a legal concept, Hack makes a 'presumption of automation' within the broader intelligence machine, that is, it simply worked – as information was fed-in, it was assessed and intelligence products were churned out that led to effective operational outcomes and the generation of further intelligence. And yet he makes no attempt to describe the full scope of the Malaya intelligence machine and appears content to accept a binary Army / police nexus. There is no consideration of whether there were any other supporting components, or how these may have interacted.[35]

Together the 'stalemate' explanation (as espoused by Short and Stubbs) and 'incremental' explanation (as championed by Hack) form the main trunk of the historiography of the Emergency, but there are a number of specialist branches. For instance, a small number of scholars have focused upon the origins of the Emergency. Questions of whether the insurgency was orchestrated with or without external assistance, if the colonial administration's action against the trade unions provoked the MCP into retaliatory action or whether the murders of the three planters which promoted the declaration of Emergency were spontaneous, local, events remain contentious. Initial assessments by commentators during and immediately after the Emergency supported the government's assertion that the MCP's actions were directed by the Soviet Union and communicated via the Calcutta conferences held in February 1948.[36] However, Anthony Stockwell's influential 1993 article rebutted this theory. He argued that there is insufficient proof to hold-up the contention that the Emergency was a "result of a widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow government in Malaya." Nor, however, can the counter claim of a 'colonial conspiracy' be substantiated. Instead, Stockwell suggests that ministers took the decision to ban the MCP in July 1948 "not because they had irrefutable proof of a Communist plot nor because they had

---

[35] See also S. Smith, "General Templer and counter-insurgency in Malaya: hearts and minds, intelligence and propaganda", *Intelligence and National Security*, 16:3 (2001), pp. 60-78; K. Ramakishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: the impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952-54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79-92.

[36] Hack, "Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40: 3 (October 2009), p. 473. For a useful, if dated, discussion about the differences in the MCP's urban and rural strategies see, R. Clutterbuck, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945-1963* (London 1973).

an interest in concocting one, but as an attempt to restore confidence in the colonial regime."[37]

Understanding of the events leading to the declaration of Emergency were given a further dimension following the emergence in 1989 of Chin Peng, the Secretary General of the MCP, from the jungles of southern Thailand where he had been in hiding since the end of the Emergency. He subsequently engaged with a number of journalists and historians, publishing his memoirs and the transcripts and supporting papers which resulted from a conference with leading historians including Anthony Short, Richard Stubbs, Karl Hack and Leon Comber held in Australia in 2000.[38] The result of this conference was a broad agreement that there was no definitive, externally directed, strategy for the MCP to start an insurgent struggle in June 1948. However, according to Hack, "the MCP did develop a plan of action, though not a map of the precise means to carry it out, for staged preparations for revolt."[39] Instead, both he and Stockwell suggest that the MCP was caught off-guard by government's attempts to dismantle the Communist's front organisations, particularly the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and then by the declaration of Emergency itself.[40] Moreover, the consensus among these commentators is that Chin Peng's explanation that the murders in Sungei Siput that prompted the declaration of Emergency were spontaneous acts conducted by local cadres without Central Committee authority is credible.[41] This raises fundamental questions about the opprobrium heaped upon the MSS for failing to forecast the outbreak of Communist violence in 1948.

The role of psychological warfare in generating intelligence is another facet of the Emergency which has yet to be explored fully. Susan Carruthers provides a useful, if brief, chapter on the Malayan Emergency in her monograph that explores the relationship between media and

---

[37] A. Stockwell, "'A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21, 3 (Sept. 1993), pp. 66-88.
[38] C.C. Chin & K. Hack, *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore 2004).
[39] Hack, "The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40: 3 (2009), p, 495.
[40] A. Stockwell, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 3: 16 (2006), p. 286. See also P. Deery, "Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9:1 (Winter 2007), pp. 29-54.
[41] Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History* (Singapore 2003), pp. 212-19; Chin & Hack, *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*, pp. 134-38.

Britain's post-war counterinsurgency campaigns.[42] Kumar Ramakrishna makes a more substantial contribution to the understanding of psychological warfare in the Emergency. In an article published in 1999 article he examined how the government's surrender policy developed and led to the mass surrender of MCP personnel in 1958. He suggests that the effectiveness of the policy depended upon three factors: "the content of the policy, the credibility of the government in the eyes of the terrorists, and the strategic and political context."[43] This was followed-up by an article published in 2002 which was intended to focus on the closely related subject of the use of rewards for information. This aim, however, appears to have been lost, and Ramakrishna was drawn back to explaining the 1958 surrenders.[44] Nevertheless, through these articles and a subsequent monograph, Ramakrishna provides a useful basis for understanding the role of psychological warfare in the Malayan Emergency, albeit one very much orientated towards the 1958 surrenders.[45] The origins, development and integration of this component of the Malayan government's intelligence machine, particularly under Gurney and Briggs, requires further exploration.

Given that the Emergency is perceived as one of Britain's most significant wars of decolonisation, in which some eleven thousand lives were lost, there is a surprising lacuna in the literature concerning the role of military intelligence.[46] An early attempt to address this was made by the Rand Institute on behalf of the United States' Department of Defense. Thus, in the autumn of 1964, Rand published five 'research memoranda' which assessed different aspects of the British campaign in Malaya, including, organising counter-insurgency, resettlement and food control, hearts and minds, Army operations and 'anti-guerrilla' intelligence.[47] Riley Sunderland, author of all five reports, notes that he was given access to

---

[42] S. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-insurgency 1944-1960* (London 1995).

[43] K. Ramakrishna, "Content, credibility and content: Propaganda government surrender policy and the Malaya Communist terrorist mass surrenders of 1958", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 242-266.

[44] K. Ramakrishna, "'Bribing the Reds to Give Up': Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency", *War in History*, 9: 3, (2002), pp. 332-353; Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-58* (2001).

[45] See also Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-58.*

[46] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, Appendix, pp. 507-8.

[47] R. Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948-1960* (Rand 1964). See also by the same author; *Organising Counterinsurgency in Malaya* (Rand 1964); *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-60* (Rand 1964); *Resettlement and Food Control in Malaya* (Rand 1964); *Winning the Hearts and Minds of the People in Malaya* (Rand 1964). See also R. Komer, *Organisation of A Successful Counterinsurgency* (Rand 1972).

British classified records and was able to interview key participants. As a result, Sunderland produced some useful initial surveys of key aspects of the Emergency. Moreover, their utility has somewhat faded over time. There are three reasons for this. First, it is clear that Sunderland had limited access to primary sources. For instance, he notes that he did not have access to Special Branch records. Second, Sunderland did not attempt to write a history of the Emergency – he was more interested in teasing out themes. Thus, the chronology within his reports is confused. For instance, the section dealing with the treatment of Surrender Enemy Personnel simply does not site the methodology being discussed within a particular timescale. This implies, erroneously, that government policy was static and did not evolve or change during the course of the Emergency. Third, particularly in relation to the paper on intelligence, Sunderland's discussion is limited to the Army – Special Branch nexus, without consideration of any other aspect of the Malayan intelligence machine.

The main narrative works provided by Short, Stubbs *et al* feature some discussion of the key military developments in the campaign – the initial cordon and sweep operations, the development of population control strategies and long-range jungle patrols – but these are dealt with in broad brush strokes. Richard Clutterbuck's *The Long Long War* provides a little more detail.[48] Clutterbuck, a former participant in the Emergency, "uses the backdrop of the history of the Emergency period to discuss the practical application of some of the fine points of counter-insurgency technique."[49] He pays particular concern to resettlement and population control, not least in relation to the intelligence opportunities such stratagems afforded. *The Long Long War* is a vehicle for Clutterbuck to explore counter-insurgency theory as much as the military history of the Emergency. As such he analyses the modes and techniques of insurgency, and the appropriate antidotes.[50] The result is a useful introduction to the more 'kinetic' aspects of counter-insurgency in Malaya but which overlooks inter and intra-organisational development. More useful are the two chapters on Malaya in Tim Jones' *Post War Counter-insurgency and SAS*. This is an exceptionally well-researched work, which illuminates how the Army developed its counter-insurgency response in the first four years

[48] R. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War - The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-60* (Michigan 1966).
[49] M. Leifer, Review of *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* by Richard Clutterbuck, *International Affairs*, 43: 4 (October 1967), pp. 790-791.
[50] C. Wolf, Review of *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* by Richard Clutterbuck, *International Journal*, 22: 4, (Autumn 1967), pp. 683-685.

of the Emergency.[51] Also of significant utility is Malcolm Postgate's *Operation Firedog,* which provides an introduction to the role of airpower in the Emergency.[52] Drawn predominantly from what were at the time of writing classified files, Postgate supplies a useful overview of the RAF's role in providing transport, photographic intelligence, offensive air support, and in the government's psychological warfare operations.

There are a small number of biographies that add a further level of detail to the military history of the Emergency. For instance, Arthur Campbell's *Jungle Green*, Joseph Durkin's *Malaya Scouts SAS*, and John Chynoweth's *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle*, provide vivid accounts of infantry operations in Malaya.[53] These are supplemented by J. Moran's fictionalised narrative of his time as police lieutenant during the Emergency.[54] There are also useful biographies and autobiographies ranging from individuals such as Boris Hembry, a planter and Home Guard leader and John Davies, the founding member of the 'Ferret Force', to Sir Gerald Templer.[55] These works provide a level of visceral detail which official documents simply cannot. In particular, the three accounts provided by the infantry soldiers and Moran's account of policing during the Emergency convey the near impossibility of locating the insurgent gangs without accurate and timely intelligence.

The Emergency also features within a number of broader studies of the security services. For instance, Richard Aldrich contributes useful, if brief, narratives about the key intelligence developments during the Emergency – in *GCHQ* focusing on SIGINT and in *The Hidden Hand* adding an extra dimension by considering the Emergency in relation to growing American

---

[51] T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945-1952 – A Special Type of Warfare* (2007). See also Hoe & Morris, *Re-enter the SAS* (1994).

[52] M.Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (London 1992). See also S. Ritchie, *The RAF, Small Wars and Insurgencies: Late Colonial Operations, 1945-1975* (Air Historical Branch, undated), accessed via http://www.airpowerstudies.com/RAF%20and%20Small%20Wars%20Part%202.pdf (30 September 2013); J. Corum and W. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars – Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (2003); A. Mumford and C. Kennedy-Pipe, "Unnecessary or Unsung? The Strategic Role of Air Power in Britain's Colonial Counter-Insurgencies", J. Hayward (ed.), *Air Power, Insurgency and the War on Terror* (2009), p. 77.

[53] A. Campbell, *Jungle Green* (1953); J. Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle* (2007); J. Durkin, *Malayan Scouts SAS – A memoir of the Malayan Emergency, 1951* (2011). See also F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (1977); M. Burton, "The Malayan Emergency: A Subaltern's View", *Asian Affairs*, 42: 2 (2011), pp. 251-260.

[54] J. Moran, *Spearhead in Malaya* (1959).

[55] J. Cloake, *Templer – Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985); H. Hembry, *Malayan Spymaster* (2011); M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (2007). See also R. Thompson, *Make for the Hills* (1989).

concerns about Vietnam.[56] Christopher Andrew also provides a brief overview of the Emergency within his official history of MI5.[57] Of particular interest is the short section alluding to tension between Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) and Malayan Security Service but, unfortunately, this is not developed.[58] Indeed, an obvious lacuna in this branch of the literature is the absence of consideration of the roles of SIFE and JIC (FE) in relation to the Emergency.

Calder Walton's *Empire of Secrets* threatened to address these issues.[59] A former research assistant to Andrew, Walton set out to examine the role of intelligence at the end of Britain's empire, and he places much store on the use of recently declassified files to aid this task. *Empire of Secrets* was well received by broadsheet reviewers, *The Telegraph* noting that it "fairly rips along, summoning in places the verve of a good spy novel."[60] Closer examination does, however, reveal limitations, particularly in relation to the thrust of Walton's argument. Whilst *Empire of Secrets* covers a broad time span and numerous insurgencies, there is little clear sense of a thesis. This is also true in relation to his chapter on Malaya, which begins with a rather conventional and derivative explanation of the 'specular' failure of the MSS to forecast the Communist insurrection. This is followed by a brief and largely orthodox re-telling of how the Briggs plan provided fresh tactical intelligence opportunities. Given that Walton's work appears to be concerned primarily with the role of the intelligence agencies, his discussion of SIFE is disappointing: there is no exploration of its origins or relationship with the other components of the local or regional intelligence apparatus; there is some discussion of the MI5 run interrogation centre but not how the Security Service adapted to the demands of the Emergency, nor how it operated in relation to other components of the Malayan intelligence apparatus. Walton does provide a useful outline of MI5's role in preparing Malaya for independence but this is of less direct relevance to management of intelligence during the campaign against the MCP.

---

[56] R. Aldrich, *GCHQ* (London 2011); Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006).
[57] C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London 2010).
[58] Ibid., pp. 448-50.
[59] C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets* (London 2013).
[60] D. Jones, "Empire of Secrets by Calder Watson", *The Telegraph*, 30 January 2013.

Far more successful is Rory Cormac's monograph that focuses upon the role of the metropolitan Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in the management of four colonial insurgencies between 1948 and 1975.[61] He posits a persuasive argument that the JIC was able to adapt over time to the changing nature of threat and demand, whilst balancing Cold War, geo-strategic, concerns with the eruption of violence in the colonies and the blurring of intelligence assessment and policy. Cormac's discussion of the Malayan Emergency remains focused on the role of the JIC (London), which he suggests had a limited role in the counter-insurgency campaign, because it "had little input in colonial affairs and held no formal responsibility for overseas territories."[62] Yet, the JIC (London) did have an overarching coordination and advisory function for the 'satellite' JICs across the globe, including that in the Far East. Cormac does not set out to explore the JIC (FE) but in the course of his discussion of its metropolitan facsimile does provide some particularly useful material. Ultimately, however, the question of why the JIC (FE) so singly failed to perform in relation to the Emergency rests on the twin premises that the MSS failed to supply intelligence to the committee and that it lacked the explicit remit to provide a warning function.

The historiography also encompasses a rich collection of work focused upon identifying what lessons might be drawn from the Emergency. One of the first and most influential is Sir Robert Thompson's *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.[63] First published in 1965, this work is based on his experiences as a member of the Director of Operation's staff during the Emergency and then as Head of the British Advisory Mission to South Vietnam. Thompson argues (like Briggs and Templer) that insurgency is fundamentally a political, not military, phenomenon. Through his participation in, and reflection on, the Malayan Emergency and Vietnam war, he formulated five principles which he considers vital for a state to confront successfully a Communist insurgent challenge; specifically the state must have a clear political aim; it must function in accordance with the law; it must have an overall plan; it must give priority to

---

[61] R. Cormac, *Finding a Role: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Counterinsurgency at the end of Empire*, PhD Thesis, King's College London, 2011; Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies – British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency*. Michael Goodman's recently published official history of the Joint Intelligence Committee provides the definitive analysis of this committee, but provides surprisingly little information about its regional counter-parts. See M. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1* (Oxford 2014).
[62] Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies*, p. 30.
[63] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam*.

defeating political subversion and it must secure its base areas first. Of particular relevance to this thesis is Thompson's albeit brief chapter dedicated to intelligence. He argues that the aim of an intelligence organisation is not just the penetration of the insurgency organisation but '"the total eradication of the threat." Clearly drawing upon his experiences in Malaya, he suggests that there should be "one single organisation responsible for all security intelligence within the country" and that the organisation best suited for this "is the special branch of the police force." Thompson posits that the intelligence organisation should use measures such as the movement of people and supplies to target "the contact points between the Communist subversive organisation, working in the villages and towns, and the guerrilla units outside the population."[64]

Thompson's five principles of counter-insurgency have held sway among theorists since publication and remains influential, for instance, being taught to junior officers at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. What criticism there is of *Defeating Communist Insurgency* tends to suggest that Thompson's theory of counter-insurgency is drawn too directly from Malaya.[65] More recently Douglas Porch and David French have argued persuasively that "Thompson must be read as a didactic, aspirational treatise rather than a state of fact."[66] Indeed, his chapter on intelligence is, in effect, a description of the 'mature' Malayan intelligence model. Unfortunately, Thompson does not consider whether this model was always in existence, if and how evolved during the course of the Emergency or if it is a retrospective construct. Thus, the baseline c. 1948 is ignored, the key components, other than Special Branch not mentioned and the deeply troublesome task of creating co-ordination machinery omitted. Whilst highly influential, Thompson's work is therefore of limited utility for those wishing to understand the gestation and maturing of the Malayan intelligence machine.

---

[64] Ibid., pp. 84-90.

[65] C. Woodhouse, "Review of Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam", *International Affairs*, 43: 1 (1967), pp. 183; J. Mc Alister, "Review of Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam", *American Political Science Review*, 61: 3 (September 1967), pp. 773-775. For an assessment of how Thompson's theory relates to the campaign in Afghanistan see, J. Pritchard & M. Smith, "Thompson in Helmand: Comparing Theory to Practice in British Counter-insurgency Operations", *Civil Wars* 12: 1-2 (2010), pp. 65-90.

[66] D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency – Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge 2013), p. 247.

Another key counter-insurgency theorist is General Sir Frank Kitson, who based his observations upon his experiences in Malaya, Kenya, Oman and Muscat and Cyprus. His thoughts on intelligence during these campaigns tend to mirror those of Thompson, both stressing the importance of maintaining effective government, operating within the law, of developing intelligence, and developing a political programme to undermine the insurgent cause.[67] However, Kitson outlines a potentially vital aspect in relation to intelligence by arguing that, "it is important to make the distinction between the sort of information which the intelligence organisation is required to produce in normal times, and that which it will have to get after subversion has started." He suggests, "the first sort of information might be described as political intelligence, and second sort as operational intelligence."[68] As a result, Kitson posits that intelligence organisations, when confronting an emerging insurgency, have not only to expand to meet the threat but develop new methods to embrace both types of intelligence.[69] This is a critical suggestion but one that, unfortunately, Kitson does not develop in any of his works.

The historiography of the Emergency was fairly stable up to the new millennium. However, two events upset this equilibrium. The first was the attacks on America on 11 September 2001, and the subsequent 'war on terror', which injected a new dynamic and momentum into the debate about the nature of insurgency. Lt Col John Nagl was key to this. In 2005 he wrote an innovative work entitled *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife and Fork* which compared the experiences of the British Army in Malaya to that of the United States in Vietnam.[70] Nagl focuses upon a comparison of the organisational cultures of the British and US armies. He suggests that the British Army developed a successful counter-insurgency strategy in Malaya because of its success as a 'learning institution.' He therefore offers a whiggish assessment of

---

[67] F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977).

[68] Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations – Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London 1971), p. 72.

[69] See also T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60* (London 1990). Mockaitis examined a number of campaigns, including Ireland, Palestine, Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus. He argued that these campaigns were based not on formal doctrine but three broad principles: minimum force; close civil-military cooperation; and small unit tactics.

[70] J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002). This is not, of course, the first US based attempted to understand the implications of the Emergency. Most notable was a series of Rand monographs produced in the 1960s for the Department of Defencse. Whilst not based on primary source documents, they did benefit from interviews from some key participants in the Emergency. See FN. 32 above.

Britain's counter-insurgency, which in many respects is in sympathy with Comber's assessment of the centrality of Special Branch and, potentially, Hack's incremental thesis.

Yet Nagl's contribution to the historiography of Malaya is broader than *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife and Fork* because he was a key author of the US Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual, *FM 3-24*.[71] This document, which was written at the height of the Iraqi insurgency against the US and coalition countries, refocuses upon the lessons of previous 'classical' counter-insurgency campaigns. Whilst the writing of the French counter-insurgent Gualua is widely acknowledged to provide the main philosophical inspiration for *FM 3-24*, the footprints of the Malayan campaign are discernible throughout the manual.[72]

However, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife and Fork* and FM 3-24 have attracted significant criticism. For instance, commentators have suggested that Nagl places excessive emphasis on the perceived lessons found in the comparing two very different campaigns, not least because the MCP was not supported by an external force while the Viet Cong were; the colonial government had the advantages of exploiting the racial divided between native Malays and Chinese, and was also able to use decolonisation to reduce the appeal of the Communist propaganda. Others, such as the influential David Kilcullen, have suggested that the 'neo classical' understanding of counter-insurgency has little relevance to the new form of 'global insurgency' being waged by Al-Qaida and its affiliates.[73] In terms of this thesis, the assessment of intelligence within *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife and Fork* is buried within a wider discussion of the Emergency and is limited to two substantive pages. As such, neo counter-insurgency theories, as represented by Nagl's work, are more important to understanding

---

[71] US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago 2007).

[72] D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare – Theory and Practice* (2006). The campaigns in the Iraq and Afghanistan have prompted a significant increase in works reviewing the Emergency and British counter-insurgency in general. For instance, see D. Branch, "Footprints in the sand: British colonial counter-insurgency and the war in Iraq", *Politics and Society*, 38: 2 (2010), pp. 15-34; A. Mumford, "Sir Robert Thompson's lessons for Iraq: bringing the 'basic principles of counter insurgency' into the 21st century", *Defence Studies*, vol. 10 (2010), pp. 177-94.W. Ladwig, "Managing Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Malaya", *Military Review*, May to June 2007, pp. 56-66; D. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story", *Defence Studies*, 10: 01-02 (2010), pp. 13-39; J. Hamby, "Civil-Military Operations: Joint Doctrine and the Malayan Emergenc", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn 2002, pp. 54-61.

[73] See, for instance, D. Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency *Redux*", *Survival*, 48: 4 (2006), pp. 111-130; D. Jones & M. Smith, "Whose Hearts and Whose Minds? The Curious Case of Global Counter-Insurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 33:1 (2010), pp. 81-121; F. Hoffmman, "Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency", *Parameters* (Summer 2007), pp. 71-87.

contemporary security challenges and less the management of intelligence during the Emergency.

The second issue to disturb the previously settled historiography of the Emergency has its origins not in Malaya but Kenya. In 2005 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (F&CO) received a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from lawyers acting on behalf of a number of ex Mau Mau insurgents who were attempting to claim damages for mistreatment from the British government. This request prompted the discovery of over fifteen hundred files relating to decolonisation (the so-called Hanslope files), including Malaya, that had not been released to The National Archive (TNA).[74] The government's apology and settlement of damages, plus the release of the previously hidden files, led historians to question whether the reality of the Malayan Emergency reflected the paradigm of minimum force that the classical counterinsurgency theorists (Thompson, Kitson and Mockaitis) and their neo-classical successors (such as Nagl) have previously maintained.[75]

There followed a number of articles examining Britain's use of force in Malaya, and other post-war counter-insurgency campaigns. For instance, Paul Dixon has argued "the phrase 'hearts and minds' does not accurately describe Britain's highly coercive campaign in Malaya. The British approach in Malaya did involve high levels of force, was not fought within the law and led to abuses of human rights."[76] Huw Bennett has focused upon the 'counter-terror' phase in the initial eighteen months after the declaration of Emergency, positing that the Army pursued "a deliberately formulated counter-terror strategy until circa December 1949, aimed to intimidate the civilian Chinese community into supporting the government. Mass arrests, property destruction, and forced population movement, combined with loose controls on lethal force, created a coercive effect."[77] In *The British Way*, David French

---

[74] C. Elkins, "Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire and the High Court of Justice", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 5 (2011), pp. 731-748; M. Banton, "Destroy? 'Migrate'? Conceal? British Strategies for the Disposal of Sensitive Records of Colonial Administrations at Independence", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40: 2 (June 2012), pp. 321-335.

[75] M. Hughes, "Introduction: British ways of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), p. 580; I. Beckett, "British counter-insurgency a historiographical reflection", *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* 23: 4-5 (2012), p. 788.

[76] P. Dixon, "'Hearts and Minds'? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), p. 355.

[77] Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), p. 415.

considers Malaya alongside ten British counter-insurgency campaigns conducted between 1945-67 with the intention of assessing whether the reality of those campaigns matched the perceived lessons as articulated by Thompson. He suggests "there were significant divergences between those theories and British practices." Indeed, French's main contention is that the British "commonly employed a wide variety of coercive techniques to intimidate the civilian population into throwing their support behind the government rather than the insurgents."[78]

The only real attempt to balance the current trend in the literature that focuses upon violence and coercion in Malaya is provided by Anthony Short. He has examined the Batang Kali 'incident' in which members of the Scots Guards shot some twenty-five Chinese squatters. Interpretations of this event vary: the High Court ruled in September 2012 that there was evidence to support the contention that there was a deliberate execution of the civilians at Batang Kali. Short suggests that there is little evidence of a deliberate policy of counter-terror. On the contrary, there was a 'non-policy' and that sporadic acts of violence were the product of the police and Army simply not knowing "what to do or how to deal with enormous numbers of rural Chinese, many of them living in what were regarded as enemy areas virtually under Communist control."[79]

Arguably the most interesting aspect of this debate is that no author has tackled fully the relationship between violence, intelligence and the consequent effectiveness of counter-insurgency. Walton considers briefly the use of torture to exact intelligence from suspects. He concludes "there were incidents when British interrogators tortured detainees in Malaya, but there is no evidence that torture…was institutionalised. It is not possible to come to any generalised conclusions about how and why torture occurred."[80] Huw Bennett suggests that operational and cognitive intelligence failures in the period 1948-9 led the government to

---

[78] D. French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67* (Oxford 2011). In an emotively entitled article, Hack has also considers the role of violence in the Emergency. He argues that it is artificial to characterize the Emergency as one in which 'hearts and minds' and minimal force or counter-terror and repression dominated. Instead, he restates his core thesis concerning the centrality of population and spatial control which, he suggests, encompasses both paradigms. See K. Hack, "Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699.
[79] A. Short, "The Malayan Emergency and the Batang Kali Incident", *Asian Affairs*, 41; 3 (2010), p 352.
[80] Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, p. 188.

devise a deliberate coercive strategy aimed at the Chinese population. Unfortunately, he does not examine what caused these failures.[81] David French posits "an effective domestic intelligence service was imperative if the security forces were to use force with discrimination against the 'guilty' few, while sparing the 'innocent' many. But at the outset of most insurgencies colonial governments found themselves dangerously handicapped by a lack of just such intelligence."[82] In relation to Malaya, he argues, in line with the broader 'stalemate' thesis, that the intelligence machine remained in this parlous state until the appointment by Templer of Jack Morton as Director of Intelligence and the creation in 1952 of joint operations rooms.[83] Despite these efforts, the link between a dearth of intelligence and the systemic use of violence and abuse has been neither conclusively proved nor refuted.

Perhaps because of the fragmented nature of the coverage of intelligence within the historiography of the Malayan Emergency, strong themes are not easy to identify. There is, however, a near universal acceptance that the concept of intelligence, both as an activity and organisation, was pivotal to the prosecution of the Emergency.[84] For instance, Short has said that "it is obvious that that key to counter-insurgency in Malaya was intelligence"[85]; Aldrich believes that Malaya was "a war of intelligence"[86]; Kitson and Thompson stress the importance of the intelligence machine[87]; Miller says that the "intelligence system which the Special Branch created in 1952 basically won the war"[88]; and Stewart says that "...the eventual victory over the Malayan Communists owed much to intelligence."[89] Moreover, the sub-set of the historiography focused around Hack's work does not refute the importance of intelligence but instead attempts to redefine the nexus between population control, hearts and minds, and the generation of information. Even the recent works that have focused upon

---

[81] Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444.

[82] D. French, "Nasty not nice: British counter-insurgency doctrine and practice, 1945-67", *Small Wars and Insurgencies,* 23: 4-5 (2012), p. 746.

[83] French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67*, pp. 27-9.

[84] For a broader consideration of the relationship between intelligence and British counter-insurgency see, D. Charters, "Counter-insurgency intelligence: The Evolution of British Theory and Practice", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 29 (2009).

[85] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60*, p. 502.

[86] Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence*, p. 494.

[87] Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, p. 286 and Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 84.

[88] H. Miller, Jungle War in Malaya, fn 90, p. 90.

[89] B. Stewart, "Winning in Malaya: An intelligence success story", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 267-283.

the coercive aspects of the Emergency have not directly questioned the role of intelligence, but rather the value of intelligence obtained by duress.

And yet, there is not one single overall study of development, management and impact of intelligence during the Emergency. The strongest attempt to do so is Comber's monograph of Special Branch but, as discussed above, this has significant limitations in relation to accuracy, methodology and assessment. Indeed, intelligence during the Emergency encompassed far more than the work of Special Branch. Little is known about why the MSS was abolished or what it actually said about the threat posed by the MCP. Understanding of how the police force contributed and supported their Special Branch colleagues is not fully developed. The role of SIFE, either as an intelligence-gathering organisation or as intelligence clearing-house, remains opaque. The role of the JIC (FE) in relation to the Emergency is simply absent from the existing historiography. The intelligence functions undertaken by the Royal Air Force are given only cursory consideration and generally dismissed as inconsequential. Similarly, the manner in which the Army attempted to generate and use intelligence is underdeveloped and often simply incorporated into the wider theories of how the Emergency developed. Nor is there one coherent exploration of the relationship between the Army operations and intelligence. More fundamentally, there is a lack of clarity of how the Malayan authorities attempted to integrate these individual components into a coherent and efficient intelligence machine.

The language of the Emergency

The interpretation of the past via contemporary concepts and language is a perennial challenge for historians. Although these issues pose fewer problems for scholars interested in the Emergency than, say, medieval or ancient historians, there are still difficult issues to confront. One of the most interesting is the way in which British documents refer to their Communist foes. For instance, within British documents Chin Peng's party is consistently called the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). However, in his biography, Chin Peng used the term the Community Party of Malaya (CPM) which has subsequently been adopted by some commentators such as Leon Comber.[90] Undoubtedly this is due to the vagaries of translation,

---

[90] Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History*.

however it provides an indication of the complications which intelligence analysts encountered during the Emergency and which may still trip up historians.

The issue of language is complicated by the deliberate policies applied by the British and Malayan authorities to describe the Communist forces. For instance, Phillip Deery has argued that although not a new appellation, the British authorities chose to label the Communist insurgents in Malaya as 'bandits.' This was, he suggests, a deliberate attempt "to deny the legitimacy of the opponents." However, the 'bandits' proved to be a tough opponent and within two years Colonial Office officials were beginning to question whether the term was underplaying the magnitude of the challenge posed by the Communist forces. As a result in May 1952, the terminology was changed from 'bandit' to terrorist.'[91] To avoid falling foul of prerogative terms, this thesis will use the word 'insurgent' rather than 'bandit', 'terrorist' or indeed 'guerrilla', unless commenting upon or quoting direct primary source evidence.

Moreover, the self-describing nomenclatures used by the Communist forces in Malaya varied considerably. The Malayan Communist Party's armed wing was based on the wartime resistance force called the Malaya People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Very quickly after the end of the Second World War, this force went back into the jungle and renamed itself the Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army (MPABA). Once the Emergency was declared, the Communists' armed wing became known as the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). Subsequently it became apparent that this term was a mistranslation of the Chinese for Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA).[92] Moreover, throughout the Emergency the Communist's armed wing was supported by the Min Yuen. There are, therefore, numerous terms to describe the various components of the MCP, and these terms changed overtime and according to translation. Unfortunately, the barrage of acronyms continues when one considers the intelligence agencies in existence during the Emergency, not least the Security Service (MI5); the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6); the Joint Intelligence Committee

---

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

[92] K. Hack & C.C. Chin, 'The Malaya Emergency', C.C. Chin & K. Hack, *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party,* pp. 3-5; Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife,* pp. 61-3; Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police,* p. 14.

(JIC); Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). British Defence Coordinating Committee / Far East (BDCC/FE) and the Malayan Security Service (MSS). In harmony with stance outlined above, the discussion will employ the terms most frequently found in the documents. A significant caveat, however, is that the terms JIC (London) or the metropolitan JIC will be used to differentiate it from other regional JICs.

Arriving at suitable language to codify British counter-insurgency strategy during the Emergency is also problematic. This is because counter-insurgency is a highly complex undertaking, involving numerous arms of government, each of which might operate according to different doctrine and organisational concepts. The issue is compound by time. For instance, counter-insurgency, particularly against an enemy following a Maoist-inspired strategy, was a new development for both the Malayan and British authorities. This was recognised within months of the declaration of Emergency by the Colonial Secretary, James Griffiths, who instructed the Malayan High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, to review the campaign thus far so that other colonial territories might prepare themselves for outbreaks of similar, Communist, insurgencies.[93] Gurney's subsequent report, *Secret Despatch No. 5,* has become a superlative treatise on counter-insurgency that emphasised that it was fundamentally a civilian activity.[94] Moreover, it forced the authorities to reconsider doctrine, particularly in relation to policing and the role to be played by the armed forces in irregular warfare, something they had to do whilst conducting the counter-insurgency campaign against the MCP forces.

Time also offers the temptation of using contemporary concepts of doctrine to understand the counter-insurgency campaign in Malaya. However, this is problematic, not least because the military in Malaya did not use terms such as 'tactical', 'operational', and 'strategic' - terms that will be familiar to contemporary counter-insurgents - with any precision or uniformity. This is because terminology has changed overtime and the current doctrine is relatively new. For instance, Huw Strachan has demonstrated how the concept of 'strategy' has changed since it first entered European military discourse in the mid 18th Century. In particular, he has

---

[93] CO 537/6403, Note by J. Morgan, entitled, 'History of Circular Despatch of Commentary on Sir Henry Gurney's Despatch No. 5 of 1949', 21st June 1950.
[94] Ibid., Despatch No 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30th May 1949.

argued persuasively that the concept became conflated with the notion of 'policy', leading to the term 'grand strategy'.[95] Similarly, John Kiszely remarks, the idea of an 'operational level' did not feature in British military doctrine for almost 40 years after the [Second World] War."[96] For example, the Royal Air Force Doctrine published in 1957 explained that 'the Tactical Air Force' was 'closely associated with operations on land…and is normally part of a theatre air force.' In this document, the terms 'tactical' and 'operations' are often conflated.[97] Moreover, the 'bible' of British military operations in the Emergency, *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya*, simply does not mention ideas of tactical, operational or strategic levels of warfare.[98]

This reflects the fact that the military were acting in support of the civilian authorities throughout the Emergency and organised themselves predominantly upon the civilian administrative structures. However, even this principle was not entirely clear. For instance, in 1949 The War Office produced the manual of *Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power* which superseded pre-war doctrine. It stated that the "the sole object of military intervention in civil disputes…is the restoration of law and order by military means when other methods failed, or appear certain to fail." Critically, the manual then said, "once a request has been made for military assistance of any kind, the military commander, irrespective of his rank, is entirely responsible for the form which the action shall take and the amount of force used…" In relation to the Emergency, the tone of these instructions was at odds with both Gurney's *Secret Despatch No. 5* and the report by the Colonial Secretary's adviser on policing. For instance, Gurney claimed, "military forces to the aid of the civil power should be at the disposal of the Commissioner of Police and operate under his general direction."[99]

---

[95] H. Strachan, *The Direction of War – Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 26-46.

[96] J. Kiszely, "The British Army and Thinking About the Operational Level", Bailey, Iron & Strachan (eds), *British Generals in Blair's Wars*, p. 121.

[97] Royal Air Force, *Manual – Operations AP1300* (Air Ministry, March 1957).

[98] Federation of Malaya, *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya* (3rd edition 1958, reprinted in St. Petersburg, Florida, 2006)

[99] WO 21/2193, Despatch No 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30th May 1949. See this file also has a copy of *Imperial Policing and Duties in Aid of the Civil Power 1949* (War Office, 13 June 1949).

In reality, the military in Malaya operated at the behest of civilian authorities and very often were organised along the Federation's administrative lines of demarcation (i.e. District, State/Settlement and Federal levels). As a result, this thesis will defer to these administrative constructs, rather than the more abstract contemporary doctrinal concepts of 'tactical', 'operational' and 'strategic' levels of war which would have been unfamiliar to those engaged in restoring law and order to Malaya. There is one critical exception, however. While the military organised itself at District and State/Settlement levels, it also created a theatre-level intelligence structure which effectively networked multiple individual struggles to restore law and order at a District and State level. Moreover, the theatre-level structures, which took the form of the Land/Air Operations Room (which, later in the Emergency, was renamed the Joints Operations Centre) and the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre (Far East), linked each of this local-level struggles with theatre-based resources, most notably the photographic reconnaissance. This is a layer of Malayan intelligence apparatus which has largely escaped the attention of previous commentators but, as will be seen, will be discussed at length in chapter 7.

Methodology

While terminology presents some interesting challenges, the manner of constructing a coherent analysis of events which took place half a century ago in a different country is significantly more problematic. The selection of a point to start and end the analysis is the first hurdle. John Lewis Gaddis has argued that historians tend to identify the 'state' which they wish to explain and then work backwards.[100] In the case of the intelligence apparatus in Malaya, the 'state' is not attached to a precise date. However, it is logical to conclude that 1957 marks a point in time when the progress of the Emergency was sufficient to allow transfer of power from Britain to newly independent Malaya and thus the intelligence structures at that point were both mature and functioning. However, it is not logical to argue that June 1948 marked the start of the problems with Malaya's intelligence apparatus. Rather, it marks the point when the Federation felt unable to tackle the emerging law and order problem without recourse to Emergency legislation. Some historians have already recognised this point – for instance, by Anthony Short and Leon Comber discuss what they

---

[100] J. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (Oxford 2002), p. 98.

consider the failure of the MSS in the eighteen months prior to the declaration of Emergency. However, the problems in Malaya's intelligence apparatus were much broader than the MSS. Although one could work backwards ad infinitum, the origins of the failures in the apparatus stem from the legacy provided by South East Asia Command (SEAC) and the transition from war to peacetime in the region. This, therefore, marks an appropriate point of departure for the analysis.

Perhaps the fundamental issue to consider when embarking upon an historical analysis is that not all of the past is recoverable, indeed often only a tiny fraction is available.[101] As a result, as Richard Evans explains in his book *In Defence of History*, a "dispute arises when some theorists believe that the selection is largely determined by the narratives and structures which occur in the past itself, and those who think it is imposed by the historian."[102] One approach to tackle this conundrum would be to create a chronological narrative. This would, in effect, provide a series of snapshots of the state of the intelligence apparatus, with the exposure determined either on a year-by-year basis or some other chronological construct, such as 'phases' of the Emergency or tenure of High Commissioner.

However, this approach has some inherent difficulties, not least that the intelligence agencies during the Emergency did not operate to the historian's arbitrary time frame. Nor did they change or develop at the same rates. As such, there is a danger of creating a Procrustean bed in which issues and events are forced into particular phases, determined by years, tenures of High Commissioners, or arbitrary times frames labelled 'counter-terror' or 'stick and carrot'.[103] This relates to a methodological problem which has exercised historians for many years. In his exposition of historiology, John Lewis Gaddis, has argued persuasively that history does not "proceed at a steady rate; rather, long periods of stability are 'punctuated' by abrupt and destabilising changes."[104] Indeed, key events in the evolution of the Malayan intelligence apparatus do not necessarily align - for instance, the declaration of Emergency affected the

---

[101] G. Elton, *The Practice of History*, p. 20.

[102] R. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London 1997), p. 142.

[103] For instance, see Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444; Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60.*

[104] Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, p. 98.

MSS dramatically but not the JIC/FE or SIFE; the Briggs Plan affected the uniformed police and Army significantly but less so Special Branch; the reforms introduced by Templer changed fundamentally the way the police operated but not necessarily the Army or Royal Air Force. As Evans reflected about his own work, "there could never be any question of presenting a 'simple' chronological narrative…because there were far too many events and processes going on at the same time. Arranging it all purely in terms of chronology would have delivered a chronicle with no explanatory power whatsoever."[105]

An alternative to the strict chronological method is to discuss each of the key component parts of the intelligence apparatus in turn. After all, as Marc Bloc has argued "each type of phenomenon has its own particular dimension of measurement and, so to speak, its own specific decimal."[106] The obvious advantage is that this approach will allow a concentrated analysis of each element, one which should not be diluted by an excessive discussion of the wider Emergency. Moreover, this methodology would provide a natural chronological structure – for instance, discussion of SEAC naturally leads to that of the JIC (FE), SIFE and the MSS. Moreover, in the years leading from the end of the Second World War to the declaration of the Emergency, these key intelligence agencies operated in relative isolation, which further suggests that separate discussion of these bodies is appropriate.

However, the situation becomes more complicated in relation to the analysis of how the intelligence apparatus developed after the declaration of Emergency. In the first instance, the pre-Emergency intelligence bodies tended to fade, albeit at different rates, from the counter-insurgency context in the aftermath of the Emergency. They were replaced in prominence by the Army, Royal Air Force, and the Police, collectively known as the security forces. From the earliest stages of the Emergency, the security forces began to organise themselves in committees broadly aligned to the Federation's existing basic administrative structures, at a District and State/Settlement level. By 1950 the newly appointed Director of Operations, General Briggs, mandated the creation of District and State/Settlement War Executive Committees, thus formalising what had emerged spontaneously. The military adapted to this structure with relative ease – for instance, the senior military commander for each district

---

[105] Ibid., p. 147.
[106] M. Bloc, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester 1952), p. 152.

became a member of the relevant DWEC (which were always chaired by the District Officer, reflecting the fundamentally civilian nature Emergency operations). Critically, however, the there was until 1952 lingering absence of an effective Emergency coordination apparatus, particularly in relation to intelligence, at a Federal level.

The position was further complicated by the structure of the Malayan Police Service. Rather than being aligned to the administrative structure of Malayan Federation, the police service consisted of ten 'contingents', each commanded by a Chief Police Officer (who was answerable to the Commissioner of Police). With the exception of Kedah and Perlis, which shared a contingent, each State was policed by one contingent. Each contingent was divided into Police Circles, which were supervised by Officers Superintending Police Circles (OSPC). These Circles were sub-divided in to Police Districts, commanded by Officers Commanding Police Districts (OCPD). In practice, however, the senior police officer of the district attended the DWEC, and this was mirrored at State / Settlement and Federal level.

Despite the slight incongruity of the police structure in comparison to the Federation's core administrative structures, the critical point is that the key intelligence agencies during the Emergency were both aligned to, and integrated in, the DWEC and SWEC structure. As such, it would near impossible to disaggregate the roles of the Police, Royal Air Force and Army during the Emergency because the two military organisations, in particular, were highly integrated from the outset of the Emergency. For instance, police jungle patrols performed the same role as Army platoons; RAF intelligence officers operated on the ground in a similar way to Army intelligence officers; and police and military personnel conducted joint food denial and resettlement operations. This was in marked contrast to the siloed manner in which the civilian intelligence agencies operated prior to the Emergency.

However, there are two further complications that militate against a straightforward assessment of intelligence during the Emergency at District, State and Federal level. The first complication is that the construction and operation of the intelligence apparatus at State / Settlement level was very much a mirror image of what was taking place within the Districts and vice versa, the main points of differentiation being primarily the seniority of staff and

amount of resources at hand. This therefore suggests that it would be appropriate to consider the organisation of intelligence at District and State-level in the same chapter.

The second complication is that the military had an organisational tier, which was not aligned to District, State or Federal levels and which has been largely overlooked by historians. This was the 'theatre-level'. This related to the way the military operated in a joint manner to coordinate intelligence and resources across multiple states and took the form of the Land / Air Operations Room and Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre, both based at Kuala Lumpur. These were not constructs designed to forge policy. Nor were they confined to a singular District or State. Nevertheless, the importance of both the JOC and JAPIC (FE) to the intelligence campaign should not be underestimated – they linked the security forces prosecuting the Emergency with both a strategic collection and assessment capability, and extra combat and logistical resources when appropriate to act upon intelligence. This suggests that a separate chapter considering 'theatre-level' would be appropriate.

Thus, the first chapter of this thesis will establish the organisational context in which the post-war Malayan intelligence apparatus developed. This context was shaped by Britain's experience during the war, in particularly the development of the metropolitan JIC, the template provided by Middle East Command and the experiences of SEAC during the Emergency. While the metropolitan JIC and Middle East Command (MEAC) developed key organisational structures and principles to manage intelligence, SEAC struggled to implement them in the Far East. As a result, British efforts to create intelligence structures suitable for post-war Malaya were based on infirm foundations. This chapter acts as a 'prequel' for the subsequent discussion.

The first substantive section of the thesis consists of three chapters which outline the failure of three embryonic civilian intelligence agencies in region concerned with Malaya following the abolition of SEAC, namely the JIC/FE, SIFE, and the MSS. The JIC /FE was very much an isolated element of the wider regional intelligence apparatus, when it should have been a coordinating, even moderating, influence. It was created in haste, was under-resourced and lacked sufficient confidence to fulfil its responsibilities. Similarly, SIFE was a new organisation. Despite its counter-part in Middle East providing significant organisational precedent, SIFE

struggled to understand and adapt to the evolving security intelligence context in the Far East. In particular, there were insufficient lines of demarcation between it and the MSS. Moreover, SIFE simply lacked the resources and capabilities to became the all-encompassing regional security intelligence organisation that its metropolitan masters initially hoped. The MSS was created at the same time as SIFE. Its remit was relatively clear but it too suffered from a lack of resources, particularly Chinese-speaking officers. Moreover, its director, Col Dalley, was a divisive character who alienated other actors, not least the Director General of Security Service, Sir Percy Sillitoe. It was perhaps inevitable that SIFE and MSS would quickly descended into a debilitating organisational conflict. However, it would be incorrect to assume that the failure of the Malayan authorities to forecast the Communist insurgency was due to the MSS. There was a much broader structural failure of the intelligence apparatus in the region. In fact, the MSS did provide clear and repeated warning of the intent and capability of the Communist to threaten Malaya's internal security. Elements of the discussion in these chapters progress beyond 1948, particularly to explain why SIFE failed to become a key actor in the Emergency. The primary purpose of this section of the discussion is to establish that the civilian intelligence apparatus in Malaya was in a state of significant of turmoil even before the pressures of the Emergency rendered them asunder.

The second section of the thesis also consists of three chapters. These outline how the authorities in Malaya rebuilt an intelligence apparatus suitable for tackling the Communist insurgency. The first chapter of this section considers how this was done at a local level – that is within the Federation's Districts and States / Settlements. The Police and Army were already operating jointly against 'bandit' gangs, including Communist gangs, in a number of districts before the declaration of Emergency. As soon as the government invoked Emergency powers, there is clear evidence of local officials (District Officers, Police officers and Army officers) organising themselves to tackle the MCP. As the Emergency progressed, these efforts were formalised in the form of District and State Executive War Councils. By 1952, the pattern of operations and the systems at a District and State-level to manage intelligence were largely established but were ultimately restricted by the lack of human source intelligence being generated by Special Branch.

The next chapter of this section considers how the authorities developed and coordinated intelligence at theatre-level. Two of the most critical organisational constructs within the intelligence apparatus are the least known about. Within weeks of the declaration of the Emergency, the RAF established a joint HQ with the Army in Kuala Lumpur, known as the Land/Air Operations Room. This included a supporting intelligence apparatus and formed the nucleus of the joint operational planning and intelligence mechanisms throughout the Emergency. Similarly, by the end of 1948, the RAF and Army had established joint mechanisms for the tasking, assessment dissemination of photographic intelligence. This played a valuable, but little-known role, in the collection, assessment and coordination of operational intelligence throughout the Emergency. Theatre-level intelligence provided a significant degree of support to those forces attempting to contain and prosecute the insurgents with the Federation's Districts and States / Settlements. However, there was a limit to what the military could achieve, both in relation to intelligence and the wider conduct of the Emergency because of the shortcomings of the police and the lack of coordinated intelligence policy in a Federal level.

The last chapter will explain the fundamental limitations of the key civilian elements of Malaya's intelligence machine (the Uniformed and Special Branches of the Police and the Director of Intelligence) in the critical first six years of the Emergency. It will explore the relationship between the Special Branch and the wider intelligence apparatus, how Special Branch was dependent upon its uniformed colleagues and how the development of joint coordinating structures at a Federal level reflected the inability of the Special Branch to manage intelligence during the critical years of the Emergency. It was only when the police had assumed a more consensual style of policing, that Special Branch was decoupled from the mainstream CID, and that a Director of Intelligence, independent from Special Branch, had been appointed, that an effective intelligence apparatus emerged to complement those structures at District / State and theatre- levels.

Unfortunately, all of the key actors within the Malayan intelligence machine are now deceased.[107] Therefore, this thesis is built upon archival primary sources, the vast majority of

---

[107] The author was fortunate, however, to have the opportunity to speak with a former junior infantry officer and an officer who worked within JAPIC/FE.

which are drawn from The National Archives (TNA) in Kew, London. Colonial Office records (CO series) have been particularly useful because they contain correspondence between London and Kuala Lumpur, often with supporting reports and minutes which illuminate the thought-processes of officials in London. These files have been supplement by the recent release of the 'Hanslope' files (FCO 141 series), which emerged into the public domain following the court case brought by former Mau Mau prisoners against the British government. Although few relate directly to the Emergency, useful information was found in those files relating to Singapore. This is perhaps not that surprising because the Commissioner General for South East Asia, like the head of MSS and SIFE, was based at Phoenix Park, Singapore. In particular, valuable material about the creation of the MSS was found within the 'Hanslope' files. The War Office files (WO series) and Air Ministry (AIR) files offer a similar level of commentary on policy relating to the use of the military but also often contained reports relating to specific operations and weekly intelligence digests. These files provide an additional level of granularity in understanding the internal security situation in Malaya and the work of the security forces during different phases of the Emergency, complementing the policy-driven documents in the CO and FCO files. Similar value was again from accessing the Ministry of Defence files (DEFE series). In contrast, the Cabinet Office files (CAB series) provide a more strategic level of material in relation to the Emergency, not least via the papers of the Cabinet Malaya Committee.[108]

However, not all of the components of Malayan intelligence apparatus can be readily situated within a particular class of the archives at Kew. Indeed, it appears that much of the JIC (FE) material was either destroyed or was not shipped back to the UK after decolonisation. However, the JIC (London) papers within the CAB series does provide valuable commentaries about its Far East facsimile, including reports of mutual visits, lists of JIC (FE) projects and the rare JIC (FE) document. Traces of the JIC (FE) can also be found in Colonial Office files. In contrast nearly all the archival material held on SIFE is confined to Secret Services files (KV series), some of which remain heavily redacted, particularly in relation to the work

---

[108] Freedom of Information Requests were used to release four files, specifically CO 537/6403-6. This provided vital information about Gurney's Despatch No.5, the metropolitan view of how best other colonies could prepare for a potential Communist insurgency and the potential conflicts between the lessons identified by Gurney and existing doctrine.

undertaken by MI6 within SIFE and also how the unit was wound-up. Nevertheless, it was possible to piece together a understanding of the roles played by both the SIFE and JIC (FE) in the Emergency, crossing checking were possible with other sources such as the Colonial Office, the 'Hanslope' files and the rare secondary source which discussed the topic.

Whilst invaluable, the sources in The National Archive are by no means complete. For instance, the Colonial Office files hold the volumes of the Malayan Security Service journal that were sent to London between January and July 1948. These are critical documents that are enriched by the incisive, unguarded and at times pithy comments of officials as recorded in their minutes. However, the MSS produced fortnightly journals from its inception in April 1946, but only started to send them to London in January 1948. Thus, the collection of journals in The National Archive is incomplete. Fortunately, an entire and unmolested set of MSS Journals is contained at the Rhodes House Library, Oxford and is essential reading if one is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how the MSS's assessments developed and changed over time. Similarly, The National Archive has comprehensive reports about specific Army operations in the first two years of the Emergency, but these appear to fade as the Emergency progressed. However, individual regimental museums provide supplementary sources. For instance, the Gurkha Museum in Winchester, has a detailed collection of operational reports and diaries of each of its battalions that fought during the Malayan Emergency. Moreover, the Intelligence Corps Museum provided valuable and previously unpublished material on the campaign.

That the primary sources used for this thesis tend to be 'official', often originally classed as 'secret' and not written originally for public consumption does not mean they are "any less subject to errors or falsehoods than the others."[109] For instance, an obvious example of acquiescence bias is found in SIFE's reports back to MI5 in relation to MSS – it is clear that the H/SIFE was simply repeating and confirming Sillitoe's views. On a wider scale, the Malayan authorities tended to provide overly optimistic progress reports to London, particularly in the first two years of the Emergency, the regular protestations of improvement and success are

---

[109] M. Bloch, *The historian's craft* (2010), p. 51.

at odds with operational summaries written by individual units.[110] Thus, the need to assess the provenance and probative value of historical sources used in this thesis is just as important as it was for the officers in Phoenix Park considering intelligence reports during Emergency.

---

[110] See H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444.

Chapter 2 - Status Quo Ante: The Flawed Foundation of South East Asia Command's intelligence Apparatus

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

However, the concepts which underpinned the post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East were not new. In fact, they were based upon the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) which had developed in London during the Second World War and which policy makers developed in various iterations across the globe during the conflict, not least the Middle and Far East. The nomenclature 'JIO' is used to describe the cluster of intelligence organisations, committees and boards concerned with the collection, assessment, and dissemination of intelligence.[1] Regardless of regional variations, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) always formed the nucleus of this cluster. The original JIC evolved in London from the mid-1930s as a means of managing the inter-departmental intelligence requirements of the Chiefs of Staff. Through the course of the Second World War it developed responsibility for assessing intelligence and producing assessments, coordinating intelligence requirements and considering "measures needed to improve the intelligence organisation of the country as a whole."[2] Orbiting, and linking in with, this committee were various bodies such as the

---

[1] P. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in the Britain and the United States, Vol. 2: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara 2012), p. 13.
[2] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16th March 1964.

Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB), the Joint Aerial Photographic Intelligence Committee (JAPIB), the Security Service (MI5), and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6). The constellation was not fixed; intelligence bodies were drawn into the JIC's gravitational pull, and others burnt up. The constant, however, was the JIC.

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

Perhaps less well known, however, is that the concept of the JIO, with the JIC at its heart, was exported across the world during the Second World War, including Cairo, Washington, West Africa, and Singapore.[7] The wartime JIOs in the Middle and Far East are of particular relevance to the study of the Malayan Emergency because they

---

[3] F. Hinsley *et al*, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Five Volumes* (London 1979-91).
[4] P. Cradock, Know Your Enemy – How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World (London 2002).
[5] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in the Britain and the United States, Vol. 2.*
[6] M. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Vol. 1: From the Approach of the Second World War to the Suez Crisis* (Oxon 2014).
[7] For JIC (Washington), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC,* pp. 100-1. For JIC (Germany) see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC,* pp. 278-9. For JIC (Middle East & West Africa), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC,* pp. 112; P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London 2005), p. 193; R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58", *Intelligence and National Security,* published online 5th May 2015, p. 15; For JIC (FE), see Goodman, *The Official History of the JIC,* pp, 215-28; Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying*, p. 193; R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies – British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013), pp. 23-64.

provided the conceptual and practical foundations upon which Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East was based. The origin of the JIO in the Middle East can be traced to the rather humble foundations provided by the office of the Security Service representative in Cairo, which became known in 1939 as Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME).[8] This quickly evolved into a sophisticated joint collection and assessment apparatus, incorporating the three military services, the Security Service (MI5) and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS – aka MI6), covering a significant portion of the Middle East from Tripolitania in the west, to Palestine, Syria and the Balkans in the north, and Persia and Iraq in the east. This operating area encompassed the twin strategic hubs of Egypt and Palestine, both of which had experienced considerable internal unrest before the Second World War and officials feared that nationalist forces, perhaps after prompting by Axis agents, would rise again. Hence, the SIME apparatus had from the beginning of its existence a focus both upon defence and security intelligence. In 1943, London instructed the Middle East Defence Committee to create a Joint Intelligence Committee (Middle East), subsuming the JIC (Algiers) which had been created to support the allied invasion of North Africa. This added an extra 'top-tier' to the intelligence structures in the Middle East. The combination of SIME and the JIC (ME) proved a highly effective joint intelligence apparatus, an analogue of which officials attempted to recreate in the Far East after the Second World War.

However, if the Middle East provided the vision for Britain's post-war intelligence structures in the Far East, Mountbatten's South East Asia Command (SEAC) provided the practical foundations upon which this vision would be based. Like the structures established to service the Middle East Command, SEAC's intelligence structures developed within its own operational microcosm and largely without metropolitan influence. Unlike the situation in the Middle East, however, only a very small proportion of SEAC's operating area (Ceylon and parts of Burma) was under British

---

[8] R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58)", *Intelligence and National Security,* published online 5th May 2015; C. Hashimoto, "Fighting the Cold War or Post-Colonialism? Britain in the Middle East from 1945-58: Looking Through the Records of the British Security Service", *The International History Review*, 36: 1 (2014), pp. 19-44.

control and thus security intelligence was of little concern to Mountbatten and his intelligence staff. Indeed, SEAC's intelligence structures were a reflection of its primary task of defeating the Japanese military in the region and were centred around the Director of Intelligence, who chaired a JIC, and his two deputies, all three of whom were military men. The JIC (SEAC) was narrowly constituted, composed only of the heads of the intelligence staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief, the Chief Political officer and Head of the Economic Intelligence Section. Hence there were two significant failures in the SEAC intelligence apparatus: the omission of a fully established security intelligence apparatus and a limited interpretation of a JIC. These problems were to prove highly damaging for the Federation of Malaya's efforts to combat the activity of the Malayan Communist Party in the build-up to, and aftermath of, the declaration of emergency.

The Joint Intelligence Committee System

The JIC was (and remains) the bedrock of the British intelligence apparatus. Its origins can be traced to the growing realisation in the mid-1930s that Britain was facing a tangible threat from a resurgent Germany and the consequent acceptance of the need to devise a process to manage the growing intelligence demands across key streams of government.[9] The problem was compounded because individual government departments had grown and become more professional during the inter-war years but this process tended towards stove-piping and potential duplication.[10] In October 1935 the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (DMO&I) highlighted the need for some form of central machinery to coordinate intelligence. The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) considered the issue and agreed in January 1936 to the formation of a new inter-Service Intelligence Committee (ISIC). Later in year, the committee's functions were expanded to support the Joint Planning Committee, was renamed the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, and became answerable to the Chiefs of Staff.[11]

---

[9] M. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence,* 21: 1 (2007), pp.40-1. See also See Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee,* pp.18-36.
[10] Ibid.
[11] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16th March 1964.

The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee comprised of the Deputy Director of Naval Intelligence, the Head of MI 1 (War Office) and the Deputy Director of Intelligence, Air Ministry. It was thus entirely a military body, which lacked a drafting staff and was largely ignored by the Foreign Office.[12] As a result, in the pre-war period, "the JIC played little part in co-ordinating the available intelligence and still less in analysing its implications."[13] The limitations of the committee were highlighted during the Easter of 1939 when, as Christopher Andrew explains, "the Admiralty took seriously wholly unfounded intelligence reports of Luftwaffe plans to attack the Home Fleet in harbour, while the Foreign Office dismissed accurate warnings of the invasion of Albania..."[14] The problem was that there was no means of assessing intelligence, both military and political, swiftly. Thus, in April 1939, in a tacit recognition of the limitations of the committee and in response to demands of the Chiefs of Staff, the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence established the Situation Report Centre (SRC), which was charged with "collating intelligence from abroad and of issuing daily situation reports."[15] This body was chaired by the Foreign Office and comprised of the Service Directors of Intelligence. The result was, as Phillip Davies identifies, that two nearly identical intelligence-coordinating bodies, the JIC and SRC, performed nearly identical tasks.[16] This situation was untenable and within two months of its creation the SRC, the senior body, recommended its amalgamation with the JIC.[17] This was agreed and took effect in July 1939, with the new body retaining the title of 'Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee'.[18] The Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee took on responsibility for issuing daily summaries and weekly commentaries which had been previously issued by the SRC but also,

a) assessing and co-ordinating intelligence from abroad in order to ensure that any common action was based on reliable and co-ordinated information;

---

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

[13] Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War, Volume 1*, p. 38.

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

[15] Ibid., p. 209

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

[17] Ibid.

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

b) co-ordinating intelligence required by the Chiefs of staff or the Joint Planning staff; and

c) considering any measures needed to improve the intelligence organisation of the country as a whole.[19]

Until 1939 the War Office had chaired the JIC, with the exception of one meeting. However, in 1938 it became apparent to its new chair, Brigadier Fredrick Beaumont-Nesbit that it was necessary for the committee to the make the distinction between 'military' intelligence and 'political' intelligence. This was because the Services were able to provide intelligence about foreign military capability but not the intention to use it. As the official history of the JIC explains "in essence the problem, as the JIC Chairman saw it, was that although FO reporting was sent to the Services, they did not know how best to assess it."[20] The Chiefs of Staff subsequently agreed to Beaumont-Nesbit's suggestion that the Foreign Office should provide a representative to chair the JIC, primarily to address this issue but also to prevent some of the broader disputes between the three services at this time affect the work of the committee.

Thus, by the beginning of the Second World War the JIC's structure and key responsibilities had been set. However, it was an immature body. Kenneth Strong suggests, "even in 1940 no one seemed to understand its functions or have any ideas about the process by which it should perform its role."[21] Nevertheless, the JIC matured further under the unrelenting pressure of the war. Four developments were central in its development. First, in May 1940 the JIC agreed that the heads of the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, MI6) and Ministry of Economic Warfare's Intelligence Directorate should become full members. Thus, the committee broadened its focus to encompass a more diverse range of intelligence needs and expertise. Moreover, as the official history explains, "the introduction of MI5, SIS, and the Ministry of Economic Warfare as permanent members, also strengthened the

---

[19] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16th March 1964.
[20] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1*, p. 23.
[21] Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p. 114.

Committee's position as the central co-ordinator for intelligence."[22] Second, through the iterations of the Future Operations Enemy Section (FOES), the Axis Planning Staff (APS), and finally the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS), the JIC gained its own dedicated drafting staff.[23] This professionalised the assessment process. Third, as Phillip Davies explains, during the war "the JIC really became the locus of national coordination. This was chiefly by default, and in this role the JIC really acted more an independent arbiter and vehicle of binding mediation than overarching authority."[24] The result was that, over the course of the Second World War, the "JIC's… stature rose immeasurably."[25] Finally, under the JIC a number of inter-service bodies "grew-up during the war, such as ISTD [Interservice Topographical Department], CSDIC [Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre], and CIU [Central Interpretation Unit]."[26] Hence, with the JIC as its centre of gravity, a Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) emerged.

Given that the JIC answered to the Chiefs of Staff and that its formative years were spent supporting the war against Germany, it might natural to conclude that the committee focused upon defence intelligence, at the potential expense of security intelligence. However, this was not the case. For instance, Michael Goodman explains that as early as May 1937 the Security Service referred the matter of foreign agents to the JIC "to allow a more senior committee to look into the subject…" The following month a Security Service report included a supporting Secret Intelligence Service intelligence report that "was distributed by the JIC as the optimum means of circulating its contents throughout the Service departments."[27] These examples are critical because they demonstrate the Security Service, which at the time these

---

[22] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1*, p. 84.

[23] Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p. 114. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence,* 21: 1 (2007), p. 49.

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

[25] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1*, p. 147.

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

[27] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1*, pp. 49-50.

reports were considered was not a signing member of the committee, was able to 'push' intelligence to the JIC, rather than wait for it to be 'pulled.'[28]

The relative position of security intelligence within the orbit of the JIC became a little more opaque in June 1940 following Neville Chamberlain's decision to establish the Home Defence (Security) Executive (HD(S)E), chaired by Lord Swinton. [29] John Curry explains that this decision was prompted by concerns that the Security Service was unable to tackle the perceived 'fifth column' presence in the UK. As such, the Security Service came under the direction of the HD(S)E. [30] In turn, the Executive answered "to the Home Secretary on civilian matters, the Secretary of State for War on services ones."[31] Phillip Davies also recognises that the HD(S)E was more concerned with strategic policy rather than operational management of security intelligence, and "was effectively, a counterpart to the JIO concerned with domestic security…"[32] The JIC remained positioned, however, to consider security intelligence matters. Regardless of the creation of the HD(S)E, the Security Service remained charged with investigating counter-intelligence and security investigations within the UK and across her overseas possessions.[33] Moreover, the Security Service had been since May 1940 full members of the JIC, "though they signed those reports only that they had helped to write."[34] Furthermore, the post-war review of Britain's intelligence by Denis Capel-Dunn emphasised that the JIC had a responsibility to consider a broad range of intelligence, not least security intelligence. The first paragraph of Capel-Dunn's report, *The Intelligence Machine,* stated that "'intelligence' in the military sense, covers all kinds of information required for the conduct of war. By extension, it has come to cover security…" Moreover, "with the coming of total war, the meaning of warfare has been extended to cover a wide area, embracing such fields as those of economic

[28] For a discussion of 'push' and 'pull' intelligence dynamics see P. Davies, "SIS's Singapore Station and the Role of the Far East Controller", *Intelligence and National Security,* 14: 4 (October 1999), pp. 105-129.
[29] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States, Volume 2*, p. 101-2.
[30] J. Curry, *The Security Service, 1908-45* (Kew 1999), p. 49 & p. 146
[31] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States, Volume 2*, p. 101. See also P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying*, p, 147.
[32] See Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States, Volume 2*, pp. 101-2 and p. 112.
[33] Curry, *The Security Service,* p.7.
[34] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, 16th March 1964.

warfare, political and psychological warfare and deception. Those responsible for these latter forms of warfare no less than those directing our main operations at sea, on land and in the air, require intelligence." It was thus clear in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War that all forms of intelligence, not least security intelligence, remained firmly within the remit of the JIC system.

The JIC had, as Michael Goodman explains, "a good war, moving form a relatively obscure and distrusted position one of influence and respect."[35] As Capel-Dunn concluded, the JIC had evolved into "a forum of discussion of all matters of common 'intelligence' interest to its members, and thus into a kind of Board of Directors laying down inter-service intelligence and security policy at home and abroad."[36] A key indication of official confidence in the concept of a JIC was that it was gradually exported to different parts of the world under British influence. This started in 1943, when it was decided to create a JIC in Washington, which consequently prompted the United States to create its own equivalent organisation, the American Senior Joint Intelligence Committee.[37] A year later the decision was made to create a JIC (Middle East) to serve the Middle East Defence Committee. The JIC (ME) was chaired by Mr C. E. Steel, a Foreign Office official, and included representatives of the Political Intelligence Centre (Middle East), the Ministry of Economic Warfare, the services and the head of Security Intelligence Middle East. It was charged with the "organisation, co-ordination and dissemination of all types of the intelligence produced within the Middle East Military Command."[38] In fact, the JIC (ME) was largely a 'bolt-on' to an already sophisticated interagency intelligence apparatus in the region that developed largely in parallel with the metropolitan JIO. Ironically, the intelligence apparatus in the Middle East managed to combine defence and security intelligence in a much more cogent manner than the JIO in the UK or SEAC and proved to be model to which planners aspired to replicate in the post-war Far East.

---

[35] Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume*, p. 147.
[36] CAB 163/6, The Intelligence Machine – Report to the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 10 January 1945.
[37] Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence,* 21: 1 (2007) pp. 49-50.
[38] WO 204/8564, Charter for Joint Intelligence Committee (Middle East), March 1944.

Intelligence Management in the Middle East[39]

The origins of the British intelligence apparatus in the Middle East can be traced to September 1939 when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) who dispatched the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI), Colonel Elphinstone, to review intelligence in the Middle East.[40] Already in existence was the Middle East Intelligence Centre (MEIC), a tri-service intelligence collation centre serving the GOC-in-C, General Archibald Wavell. However, the MEIC had only been in existence for a matter of weeks and there were concerns that it would not be in a position to meet the intelligence demands in the event of conflict in the region. In particular, MEIC's charter did not provide it with any executive authority. Moreover, the issue of jurisdiction loomed large: MI5 retained responsibility for security within the Empire and MI6 had authority for collection of intelligence in foreign territories but was not authorised to take counter-measures. The matter was further complicated as any future wartime operational area within the region was likely to span both British and foreign territories, and thus encompass both organisations. Both Elphinstone and Wavell thus recognised that there was no coordinating body competent to deal with axis penetration in the Middle East or the means to take appropriate countermeasures.[41]

The discussions between Elphinstone, Wavell and Colonel Maunsell (the MI5 representative in Cairo) outlined a number of difficult issues, not least how to provide the GOC-in-C with suitable interservice intelligence; how to develop the counter-espionage capability in region (particularly outside of Imperial territory); how to secure Allied lines against subversion; and how to coordinate the wider security intelligence function. Wavell was particularly anxious to inject a focus upon what was termed Preventative Intelligence in the Arab World (PIAW), that is counter-subversion in the region. He therefore proposed to the War Office that a I(b) security section be formed under MEIC, and that Maunsell should be made available by MI5 to coordinate

---

[39] Much of this section has been taken from R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58", *Intelligence and National Security,* published online 5th May 2015, pp. 1-28.
[40] KV 4/305, Maunsell to Petrie, 26th September 1939.
[41] Ibid., Conference at War Office, 1st November 1939.

this section, in addition to his core DSO duties. Wavell argued that the "section would strengthen and supplement existing security organisation with which it would work closely without in any way interfering with the present relations between MI5 and its local representative."[42] Without waiting for discussions with London, Wavell asked Maunsell to coordinate security work in the Middle East via the new intelligence section. Maunsell provisionally agreed, pending MI5's approval.

Wavell's proposals did not receive universal acceptance. However, a compromise was reached quickly. The War Office suggested that the MEIC would be retained in a coordinating role. However, they sanctioned the creation of a separate security intelligence section within GHQ Middle East. This section was formed upon the DSO Cairo office, under Maunsell (who was seconded from MI5 to the GOC Middle East, as GSO1) who answered to the Director of Military Intelligence, Middle East. To get around the thorny issue of running agents in non-imperial territories in the region (and perhaps the equally problematic issue of consultation with SIS) it was arranged for an SIS officer to work as a GSOII under Maunsell. A third officer, Captain Sholto-Douglas, was provided by the War Office to coordinate security intelligence in the Middle East, other than in foreign countries.[43] The new security section was tasked:

a) To watch and report on the general effect in the Middle East of the activities of hostile agents whether of enemy nationality or working under enemy influence.

b) To ensure that adequate liaison is maintained with the Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, the G.H.Q. India, as regards enemy agents working in Afghanistan, also North West frontier of India and Sinkiang.

c) To formulate plans for the organisation of Security Intelligence Services in the Middle East and for the improvement and coordination of the existing machinery.

---

[42] Ibid., GOC-in-C (ME) to War Office, 27th September 1939.
[43] KV 4/306, *Organisation of the Middle East Section (I.B.)*, 22nd November 1939.

d) To act as a co-ordinating centre for the various organisations referred to in paragraph (c) above and to co-ordinate measures to be taken to counteract the activities of enemy agents.

e) To produce a periodical report of hostile activities and progress made in counteraction for submission through the MEIC to the Joint Intelligence Committee of the War Cabinet, also drafts for inclusion in MEIC Intelligence Summaries and appreciations.[44]

Thus, within three months of the War Office's initial enquiries in September 1939, significant progress had been made. First, MEIC's remit had been scaled down but London recognised that need for coordinated inter-service intelligence and posted a GSO1 to run the unit. Second, the DSO's office had been given responsibility for PIAW, and in effect had become the controlling station for MI5 representatives throughout the region. Third, Wavell created an overarching I(b) security intelligence section, charged with identifying and countering enemy espionage activities which was to become known as Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME). The latter was not, however, a truly joint organisation from its inception: it was staffed overwhelmingly by Army Officers and NCOs who ultimately answered to GHQ Middle East; even Maunsell who, at heart was an MI5 officer, was given a wartime commission. Nevertheless, under the immense pressure of preparing Britain's Middle East territories for war, the military, MI5 and MI6 devised a practical formula without precedent – the Cairo DSO office became a de facto regional hub; MI5 officers in the region were specifically charged with obtaining and acting upon PIAW; and SIME was able to run agents both within and without imperial borders. It was a model that was to remain, with little alteration, for the duration of the war.

Despite the haste of its conception and hybrid nature, at least from MI5's perspective, SIME quickly evolved into a highly effective construct. For instance, in a letter to Maunsell, dated 27 October 1941, Petrie congratulated him for the progress he had made. He alluded to the difficulties experienced by SIME caused by Italy's entry into

---

[44] Ibid., Appendix B, 22nd November 1939.

war, the less than helpful attitude of the Egyptian government and populace, and the "various so-called neutral diplomats who were only too willing to help the Axis; and the Japanese who were enemy in both thought and deed." Nevertheless, Petrie suggested to Maunsell that he should congratulate himself for getting to a "position that is so satisfactory and in which you feel you have got a measure of German Intelligence as well."[45] Moreover, a succession of visitors from London over the course of the Second World War reported favourably upon SIME. For instance, an initially sceptical T. A. Robinson concluded a review by stating that "Security in the Middle East is in the best possible hands…the organisation is not only a very good one, but most importantly, is run, in my humble opinion, on the best lines."[46]

That senior figures were able to comment so favourably about SIME is more remarkable when one considers the scale of the organisation's operational area. In 1942 Robertson noted that it had responsibility "from the Western Desert in the West, to the borders of Persia and Afghanistan in the East; from the Black Sea in the North, to the Gulf of Aden in the South." It was, he noted, "a formidable area".[47] Within that area, SIME had two key functions: civil security (which included intelligence on political, tribal and minority activities of a subversive character and subsequent executive action) and counter-intelligence (including the investigation, detection, penetration and prosecution by all means of enemy espionage, sabotage, and propaganda organisations).[48] To fulfil these responsibilities there was a network of DSOs across the area, linked to SIME HQ in Cairo. SIFE also undertook communications intercept work, 'Ports' security (including the issuing of passes and permits), and registry work. Moreover, the headquarters' staff liaised with Middle East Command (via head of MEIC, the three service directors of intelligence, and the DMI), and the head of SIME was "in constant touch with the Embassy over political matters."[49] The

---

[45] Ibid., Petrie to Maunsell, 27th October 1941. Petrie also said "I have often told SIS that they badly required one clearing-house at Singapore and another at Cairo, and of the latter ISLD represents, I hope, at least some kind of foundation. I would gladly see its MI5 counterpart established, although I rather doubt if this would be practical politics during war."
[46] KV 4/234, Report on Visit to Egypt by Major T.A. Robertson, 20th March – 17th April 1942.
[47] Ibid.
[48] KV 4/307, Charter: Security Intelligence Middle East, 21st January 1943.
[49] KV 4/234, Report on Visit to Egypt by Major T.A. Robertson, 20th March – 17th April 1942.

breadth of SIME's responsibilities was extraordinary, perhaps even more so if one considers its humble origins and relatively few members of staff.[50]

A key feature of SIME's apparent success was its ability to work with MI6, in effect switching the orthodox metropolitan line of demarcation between MI5 and MI6 based on territory to a new regional norm based upon function. It will be recalled that SIME was conceived with an MI6 officer as a GSOII. However, this was not initially realised, perhaps because local circumstances did not warrant it. MI5's first review of SIME, which was conducted by Robinson between March-April 1942, noted the close liaison between SIME and the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD – SIS's regional cover name). This was attributed to the close friendship between the heads of the two departments and to the co-location of their offices.[51] The arrangement in Cairo stimulated co-operation and the free exchange of information between the two organisations occurred throughout the region.

However, the cordial local relationship between SIME and ISLD was threatened shortly after Robinson's report. A change of accommodation put physical distance between the two organisations. Moreover, Maunsell discovered that MI6 had despatched an officer to the Middle East to "coordinate counter espionage in what MI6 please to call 'their' territories." Maunsell took exception to this, arguing that all countries in the Middle East should be controlled by SIME on behalf of the Commanders-in-Chief.[52] A further factor in this equation was 'A Force', a military organisation run by Lt. Col. Dudley Clarke created specifically to run deception operations in the Middle East. Maunsell recognised that A Force had a keen interest "in the running of double agents from the C.E. point-of-view" and that "Colonel Dudley Clarke's organisation should

---

[50] This was an issue identified by Dick White during his visit in 1943. As a result, extra staff were drafted into SIFE HQ, which itself was reorganised. Moreover, White and Petrie recognised that rather than SIME operating in isolation, as a near autonomous body, it was important that London strengthen its Middle East section and increase the flow of information to Cairo, in particular ISOS material. See KV 4/240, Minute from White to Petrie, 29th March 1943.

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

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

either be represented in the Section or should have close touch with it."[53] These issues had the potential to generate a sense of competition rather than co-operation between SIME and ISLD and the manner of its resolution is illustrative of the practical, collaborative, nature of the intelligence services in the Middle East at this time.

Maunsell called a meeting in Cairo in March 1942, during which the relationship between counter-espionage (conducted by MI5 / SIME) and the use of ISOS/ME and Special Agents (conducted by ISLD) was discussed. Maunsell, an unnamed ISLD officer and Clarke concluded that counter-espionage, the management of ISOS and deceptions operations were component elements of one problem and therefore "not logically divisible."[54] As a result Maunsell proposed the creation of a Special Section to reconcile and coordinate the interests and activities of ISLD and SIME. The head of the counter-espionage section of ISLD would run the Special Section, but the Special Section itself would form an integral part of SIME, and thus commanded by Maunsell. The Special Section would have two subsections; one managing Special agents and headed by an MI5 officer; the other managing ISOS material and officered by ISLD personnel. A central registry would service these subsections. Reflecting the close and collegial relationships between the key actors associated with SIME, it was agreed "that the decision as to whether any MI5 or SIS agent should be operated as a double agent and handed over to the Special Section should be made by Captain [unnamed ISLD officer], Lt. Col. Maunsell and Lt. Col. Dudley-Clarke."[55] Consequently, Maunsell informed London "we have therefore arrived at satisfactory position of having formed a joint MI5-MI6 organisation to deal with the matters above."[56]

A further opportunity to foster inter-service co-operation was the formation of the Thirty Committee "for the co-ordination of the activities of Advance H.Q. 'A' Force, SIME Special Section, and 'B' Section, I.S.L.D. for the purpose of GALVESTON [the

---

[53] KV 4/197, Note of a meeting between Robertson, Maunsell and unnamed ISLD representative, 30th March 1942. For more on 'A' Force see Hinsley & Simkins, *British intelligence in the Second World War, Volume 4*, pp. 153, 189; C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets* (London 2013), p. 41.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] KV 4/307, Maunsell to Petrie, 4th July 1942.

codename for A Force].” More specifically, the Committee was tasked “a) to establish and maintain channels for passing false information to the enemy through the medium of special agents, b) transit information to the enemy on the instructions of Comd. ‘A’ Force or his representative.” SIME served the Thirty Committee by developing potential deception channels, providing advice on reliability of channels and running agents. This model proved successful and was effectively ‘franchised’ to local DSO’s who were encouraged to create their own Special Sections, and regional ‘Thirties’ committees in Beirut and Baghdad.[57]

Maunsell also exported the DSO system into Iraq and Persia, the latter being under the command of the Air Ministry, the former being an independent country in which no British intelligence organisations were operating.[58] In November 1942 Maunsell visited both countries and concluded that the Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq (CICI), which answered to the authorities in Baghdad was not functioning properly. Despite being armed with authority from the Minister of State to disband CICI, Maunsell shrewdly choose “to preserve good relations” by aligning it to SIME. Thus CICI took direction “from SIME in matters of counter-intelligence in the same manner as the Defence Security Officers now forming an integral part of SIME organisation.”[59] It would be too simple to suggest that this was an easy relationship; indeed, there were subsequent concerns that SIME strayed from strict counter-intelligence into aspects of Persia’s ‘political security’ and that CICI should report directly to the Defence Committee.[60] Moreover, there was some friction between CICI and MI6. For instance, in May 1944 Colonel Wood (H/CICI) complained to Petrie that the MI6 representative in Tehran was ‘plundering’ CICI reports to answer requests from London.[61] Petrie wrote a reassuring reply to Wood but suggested that he should not worry about duplication of effort because “some day CICI may fade out of Perisa and,

---

[57] KV 4/240, Report by Mr White on visit to the Middle East, Appendix XX, “Thirty Committee Charter”.
[58] KV 4/223, A note from General Allen to Petrie, 22nd January 1944. The CICI originated as in the aftermath of the 1941 rebellion in Iraq, see KV 4/223, History of the Combined Intelligence Centre, Iraq and Persia, June 1941-December 1944.
[59] Ibid., Memorandum on Counter-Intelligence in the Middle East Area with Special Reference to Iraq and Persia, SIME, 4th June 1943.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., Wood to Petrie, 8th May 1944; see also Wood to Spencer, 10th October 1944.

if that should happen, the MI6 representative will be on his own."[62] Maunsell seized upon this comment. He suggested that B Section of ISLD "were not trained to carry out the tasks we require" and that it would be disastrous if the security components of CICI (i.e DSO's Persia and Iraq) were dissolved either in the near future or after the war." Maunsell recognised, however, that this issue was "part of the greater problem which would have to be decided as to whether we shall be able to maintain the coordination of counter-intelligence after the war on the same satisfactory basis as it is now coordinated."[63]

The speed of its inception, crossed organisational lines, broad remit and vast geographical reach all would lend an impartial observer to suggest that SIME was based on such infirm foundations that its early demise was inevitable. And yet SIME worked remarkably well. Points of tension, such as its initial allegiance to MEIC, the operational boundaries with ISLD, and its relationship with CICI were dealt with a very real sense of collegiality. This is clearly illustrated by the first H/SIME - referring to SIME's considerable disquiet at being shackled to MEIC, Maunsell later noted that they "just got on with our jobs", a task made easier for Maunsell because the head of MEIC was his best friend.[64] The common sense solutions at which the key actors arrived were ground-breaking, the integration of officers from the three services, MI5 and MI6 within SIME HQ, and the cross deployment of these officers across the region on functional rather than territorial lines being the most notable achievements. Furthermore, the creation of the JIC (ME) in 1943 added a degree of strategic oversight, in preparation for the post-war settlement in the region. It is not surprising therefore that officials looked to SIME for the inspiration when planning the post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Unfortunately, however, planners were forced to create this apparatus upon the far less effective foundations provided SEAC's intelligence structures

---

[62] Ibid., Petrie to Wood, 26th May 1944.
[63] Ibid., Maunsell to Petrie, 7th June 1944.
[64] Imperial War Museum (IWM), 80/30/1, Brigadier R. J. Maunsell, *Security Intelligence in the Middle East 1914-34 and 1934-44.*

Intelligence in the Far East

Like that in the Middle East, the intelligence apparatus in the Far East developed in its own microcosm. Unlike SIME, which catered for both defence and security intelligence, the intelligence apparatus in the Far East was very much military-oriented and focused upon the allied effort to drive the Japanese from the region. The fact that the intelligence architecture in Far East evolved in a different manner from that in the Middle East or London is a reflection of the decision taken during the Quebec conference in August 1943 to appoint a Supreme Commander for South-East Asia. The idea had been raised three months earlier. It was most vociferously championed by Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India, who considered General Archibald Wavell, the Commander-in Chief, India, a 'spent force.' Winston Churchill considered the military situation in the region as particularly difficult. The British had been evicted from Burma in April 1942, the Indian Army was inadequately equipped, poorly trained and demoralised, and the RAF was in a similarly weak position. In addition, the intelligence apparatus in the region had largely disintegrated. Churchill bemoaned the fact that his commanders in the region seemed determined to "magnify the difficulties, to demand even larger forces and to prescribe far longer delays." He therefore championed the appointment "of a young, competent soldier, well trained in war, to become Supreme Commander and to re-examine the whole problem of the war on this front as to infuse vigour and authority into the operation."[65]

The appointment of Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander (SAC) was announced on the 24th August 1943. Mountbatten was excited that it had fallen to him "to be the outward and visible symbol of the British Empire's intention to return to the attack in Asia." However, Mountbatten's task was enormous. His command included Burma, Ceylon, Siam, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, all of which other than Ceylon and small parts of Burma was in enemy hands. Moreover, Mountbatten's command not only encompassed British interest but also China, France and those of the United States (which, via the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), had a considerable intelligence presence in the region).

---

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

Lieutenant-General Joseph Stillwell, the Chiang Kai-Shek's American chief of staff, was appointed Mountbatten's deputy, a decision that reflected the not insignificant interests of the United States in South East Asia. However, SEAC's command senior command structure proved highly complicated, with the three Service Commanders-in-Chiefs working to multiple reporting lines. For instance, Admiral Somerville, Commander of the British Eastern Fleet, was only under SEAC in matters concerning the security and support of land campaigns and amphibious operations. Otherwise, he was under Admiralty control.[66] Moreover, each of the service chiefs had their own planning staff, in addition to the Supreme Allied Command in South East Asia (SACSEA) HQ's War Staff and Combined Operations Sections. This inevitably led to friction between the different planning bodies.[67]

The provision and management of intelligence in such circumstances was particularly difficult. An initial briefing document which considered the potential intelligence structure for SACSEA noted that "in the new set-up the Supreme Commander, the Viceroy in his capacity as Minister of State, and the C. in C. India will all need to a greater or lesser extent, common intelligence and that they will all be considered in general intelligence policy." Although Mountbatten's task was to inject momentum into the allied campaign in the Far East, SEAC's intelligence provision would be, to some degree, tied to existing "static and semi static organisations such as CSDIC [Combined Services Intelligence Centre]" which were based in India. The problems of coordinating these interests were compounded by a "great shortage of skilled intelligence personnel with qualifications suitable for Far East Intelligence."[68]

Mountbatten's initial proposal was to build up the intelligence organisations at Delhi, during the time that his Headquarters were there, so that when SEAC moved to a new forward location as the war in the Far East progressed, "the necessary additional staffs

---

[66] E. Stewart, *British Intelligence and South East Asia Command, 1943-1946,* Unpublished MA Dissertation, Brunel University, September 2014.
[67] See appendix A, *The Ballad of the CINC and SACs.*
[68] The India Office Library, L/WS/1/1274, Note on the intelligence layout for the supreme command in South East Asia (author unclear).

would available to provide the organisations that he would require, and at the same time leave what was necessary at Delhi."[69] However, Mountbatten also invited the JIC (London) to "prepare a paper for him, giving their proposals for the intelligence organisation for the South-East Asia Command."[70] The subsequent JIC report, which was produced in September 1943, emphasised that its proposals were consciously based upon "our own experience of the intelligence organisation centred in Whitehall as it has developed during the present war and also out of knowledge of the experience gained in the establishment of other inter-Service and inter-Allied intelligence organisations…"However, the JIC noted that the new allied command in the Far East would differ in "important respects from any of the existing models"; that their recommendations were only 'tentative', and that Mountbatten would have to make his own assessment of the existing intelligence organisations in Delhi and his future requirements when he arrived in India. The JIC report was indeed 'tentative'. It outlined the need for "the maintenance of separate operational intelligence sections by each Service", but the "integration on an inter-Service basis wherever possible of all other intelligence sections, each under one hand, who may belong to any Service." The committee also stressed the need for cooperation with the Americans. However, it did not provide any fully defined intelligence models for Mountbatten's consideration.[71]

Upon arrival in India, Mountbatten followed the JIC's advice and conducted a review of the existing intelligence machinery. In November 1943 he reported to the War Office that it was probable that that SEAC HQ and 11 Army Group would require a intelligence staff of about 150 officers and 170 clerks, a third of whom should be Americans.[72] In January 1944, he proposed the Inter Service Topographical Department (India) should "be reorganised and transferred to SEAC."[73] If nothing else, Mountbatten was clearly doing all he could to ensure sufficient numbers of

---

[69] WO 203/5038, JIC (43), Minutes of the 44th Meeting, 31st August 1943.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., "The Intelligence Organisation in South-East Asia Command", a report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 14th September 1943.
[72] Ibid., Air Ministry Special Cypher Section (for Cabinet Offices) from SACSEA 13th November 1943.
[73] Ibid., 4th January 1944.

intelligence staff for his organisation. He advocated a "senior officer should be appointed to the staff of the Supreme Commander charged with the general control and development of intelligence in both India and East Asia commands and, with it the provision of the necessary strategic and overall intelligence for the Supreme Commander, the Viceroy and the C-in-C India Command. He might be known as the Director of Intelligence [DOI]." It was proposed that the DOI would be supported by "a small interallied and interservice staff, including the heads of the Naval, Army and Air intelligence staffs. The latter with representatives of the civil organisations such as OSS [Office of Strategic Services], OWI [Office of War Information], SOE [Special Operations Executive], PWE [Political Warfare Executive] coupled when necessary should form a JIC to advise the D of I, prepare appreciations etc." Moreover, a deputy DOI would oversee the 'static' intelligence organisations based in India, and "meet the 'I' requirements of the Viceroy and the C in C India as far as purely Indian aspects are concerned."[74] The DOI would be responsible for taking "decisions on intelligence policy and approve draft appreciations in a 'D of I's Meeting.'" A Joint Intelligence staff (JIS) would be formed, consisting of "the senior Naval, military and Air Force staff officers (British and American) on the staff of the Director of Intelligence, a staff officer representing the Chief Political Advisor and one from the US Army Forces, CBI. A representative of the EIS (Economic Intelligence Section) will be co-opted for the JIS as necessary."[75]

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

  a) For all joint and combined intelligence regarding the war against Japan.
  b) For the organisation, co-ordination and supervision of all inter-Service and inter-Allied intelligence agencies and activities.

---

[74] L/WS/1/1274, Note on the intelligence layout for the supreme command in South East Asia. See also WO 203/5038, Proposed Intelligence Organisation South East Asia Command, by General Charles Lamplough, Director of Intelligence.
[75] WO 203/5038, headquarters, South East Asia Command, Secretary Plans, SAC (44), 38/1, 5th February 1944.

c) For communicating to the Heads of the Intelligence Staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief any policy or priorities laid down by the Supreme allied Commander in connection with (a) and (b).[76]

There were two deputy directors of intelligence, known as DDI (A) and DDI (B). The former was responsible to the D of I for all operational intelligence. This was a broad portfolio. A note by the JIC (London) explained that the DDI (A) had "under him the Navy, Army, Air and Economic Intelligence Sections and Intelligence Section (Operations). He is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Inter-Service Target Section, the Photographic Reconnaissance and Models Board and the Enemy Logistic Committee. He is also responsible for liaison with the Chief Political Advisor and the clandestine organisations through P Divisions, with Command Units and with Signal Intelligence. He is also Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Staff." The DDI (B) was responsible for all counter-intelligence and counter-espionage, for censorship and for supervision of the Counter-Intelligence Co-ordination Board." He was also responsible for the Command Units and the Intelligence Division. Furthermore, the Director of Intelligence (India) acted as a Deputy Director of Intelligence to HQ SACSEA. The Heads of Section within the SACSEA intelligence machine had a dual responsibility, both to their own section and to the D of I.[77]

The breadth of the SACSEA intelligence machine was significant. For instance, the two deputy directors of intelligence had responsibility for a total of fifteen different sections, for which there were two key means of coordination. The first was via the SACSEA Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), which was chaired by the D of I and was composed of the Heads of the intelligence staffs of the Commanders-in-Chief, the CPA [Chiefs Political Advisor], Head of the EIS [Economic Intelligence Section], the DDI (A) and, when required, the DDI (B). The primary function of the JIC was "to submit joint intelligence appreciations covering all aspects of the enemy situation to the Supreme

---

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

Allied Commander and to keep under review the whole intelligence machinery of SEAC." Like other JIC models in operation throughout the empire during the Second World War, the SEAC JIC was supported by a JIS which was tasked to "keep the enemy situation in all its aspects under continuous review and, jointly, to submit appreciations on particular aspects to the Joint Intelligence Committee for consideration." It was also "required to keep constant touch with the JPS [Joint Planning Staff] and, on its own level, provide answers to specific questions of a joint intelligence nature."[78]

The Priorities Division (P Division) provided the second means of coordinating intelligence within SEAC. This originated because Mountbatten was determined to keep some form of operational control over the myriad of different intelligence organisations operating within his area of command. He therefore issued a directive in December 1943 which stated that British and America 'quasi military' and irregular forces within SEAC would not operate without his authority. Nor would any secret services operate into South East Asia from other areas without his authority. Importantly, Mountbatten insisted that no operations could take place without clearance by Priorities ('P') Division.[79] Thus, while the JIC (SEAC) maintained a strategic oversight of intelligence matters in the region, P Division was charged with refereeing the various and often-conflicting demands of the various intelligence agencies in South East agencies. Reflecting SEACs Anglo-American nature, P Division was chaired by Captain G. A. Garnons-Williams, RN, supported by Lt Commander Edmond Taylor of OSS as deputy. Although P Division met as a committee, Richard Aldrich suggests that the key decisions were made by Garnons-Williams outside of this structure, "after innumerable liaison meetings with other sections of SEAC."[80]

---

[78] Ibid. See also WO 203/5606, a letter from Elser Dening, 1st October 1944. The D of I's meetings appear to have 'morphed' into a JIC SACSEA in June 1945. The reason for this change was to "emphasise the overall responsibility of all concerned in the production of joint intelligence for this headquarters. See WO 203/5038, Reorganisation of the Intelligence Division, SACESA, 22nd June 1945.
[79] R. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan – Politics, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge 2000), p. 179-80.
[80] Ibid., p.182

Whereas the co-location of the key intelligence agencies in the Middle East encouraged co-operation, the more siloed nature of the component parts of SEAC's intelligence apparatus fostered competition. For instance, as Richard Aldrich notes, "SIS and SOE in Asia were in continual competition for scarce air transport to allow the insertion of their agents and also to re-supply them."[81] While there were clear, if unconventional lines of demarcation between SIS and MI5 in the Middle East, those between SIS and SOE in Asia were, at best, blurred. Indeed, Phillip Davies has noted that "separating the direction of clandestine paramilitary action from covert HUMINT collection being conducted in the same theatre was bound to create an assortment of overlaps and rivalries."[82] Moreover, as the war progressed, General WIlliam Slim, commander of the 14th Army, pushed SIS into providing tactical intelligence, a role for which it was not prepared and when SOE had the more extensive network of agents capable of providing political intelligence. Against this background, P Division struggled to contain the centrifugal forces that threatened to fracture SEAC's intelligence apparatus and, perhaps only did so, due to the efforts of Garnons-Williams.[83]

The one exception to this prevailing dynamic appears to be the Counter-Intelligence Combined Board (CICB). This was established in April 1945 with responsibility for "collecting, collating and evaluating information from all sources within South-East Asia and from appropriate agencies in other theatres of war on the Japanese Intelligence Services and all subversive, sabotage or espionage organisations operating on behalf of the Japanese or against the Allied Forces within South-East Asia and for assessing their degree of danger."[84] The CICB was, according to Richard Aldrich, "a very diverse body with staff from MI5, SIS Section V (counter-intelligence), OSS X-2 and SEAC Intelligence Division's own counter-intelligence staff."[85] The CICB

---

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

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

[83] Aldrich, 'Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia during the Second World War', *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (1998), p. 217.

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

[85] Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, p. 370. Aldrich notes that, amongst other responsibilities, the CICB tasked Intelligence Assault Units – see HS 1/329 and WO 203/5050. See also

does offer a tantalizing glimpse of the kind of 'joint' intelligence that was possible and formed the foundation for its post-war successor, Security Intelligence Far East. However, the CICB was strangely dislocated from the mainstream SEAC intelligence apparatus. For instance, it answered to the Deputy Director of Intelligence (B) and was not represented, directly or indirectly on the JIC (SEAC).[86] This is indicative of the relative lack of importance placed upon security intelligence by SEAC. Moreover, it was in existence for less than a year before it was subsumed by SIFE.[87] It is, therefore, at best a curious outlier.

The Abolition of SEAC

The rapid end of the Second World War in the Far East brought, in turn, rapid change to Britain's presence in the region. Initially, SEAC fought to keep a 'Supreme' Command in South East Asia. This was supported by the Commanders-in-Chief, and Colonial Office and Foreign Office officials in region, who thought this would "ensure the retention in peace of the minimum framework of Supreme command necessary for strategic planning and for smooth transition from peace to war."[88] Nevertheless, the Chiefs of Staff concluded that when "our commitments in the Netherlands East Indies have been liquidated, the appointment of Supreme Command in South East Asia shall be abolished."[89] Accordingly, SEAC was abolished in December 1946.

The magnitude of change from war to peace for the British and colonial interests in the region should not be overestimated. As a paper by the Joint Planning Staff later noted, "at the end of the Japanese War the Supreme Allied Commander was the only co-ordinating authority for all matters in South East Asia. Subsequently, his responsibilities in other than military matters were progressively handed over to the

---

WO 203/5038, 'Control and Organisation of the Security Service in Overseas Theatres', HQ SACESA to Secretary, C of S Committee, 2nd January 1946.

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

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

[88] WO 203/6236, An alternative organisation Should Supreme Command not be accepted in South Asia, 1st July 1946.

[89] Ibid., SAC (46) 77, Future Intelligence Organisation in South East Asia, 17th August 1946.

various civil authorities." [90] Moreover, in contrast to the rigid, hierarchical, military nature of SEAC, the immediate post-war settlement for British interests in the Far East was notably diffuse, a reflection of the re-establishment of various administrations across the Far East. Moreover, as Philip Davies has commented, "the governmental situation in the region was somewhat confused as the region included both British-governed colonial possessions (which fell within the remit of the Colonial Office) and an assortment of independent 'native states' such as Burma and Thailand (strictly the concerned of the Foreign Office)." [91] To provide some form of coordinating machinery in the region post-SEAC, Mountbatten recommended that a Defence Committee be created, an idea that was subsequently incorporated in a broader paper that advocated the creation of zones of strategic responsibility for the Commonwealth as a whole. This paper stated that: "the machinery for co-ordinating military and civil requirements in each zone should take the form of a defence committee consisting of the representatives of the civil administrations and military authorities within the zone." [92]

Consequently the Defence Committee in South East Asia was established in June 1946, and was subsequently became known as the British Defence Coordinating Committee (Far East) (BDCE (FE)). It had a narrow composition, consisting only of the Governor General, Malcolm MacDonald, who was the chair, the Special Commissioner, Lord Killearn, and Mountbatten, whose place on the committee was filled, after the abolition of SEAC, by the Commanders-in-Chief. The committee was designed to act "as a forum for the discussion and coordination of all current and future defence activities… to furnish co-ordinate advice and recommendations on local matters to London and through London to other Commonwealth Governments, [and] preparing strategic studies against a background provided by London." [93] It will be noted that these responsibilities implied a significant *intelligence* component but, critically for

---

[90] L/WS/1/734, JP (47) 68 CoS, Joint Planning Staff – British Defence Committee in South East Asia, 26th July 1946.

[91] D. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying (2005)*, p. 192-3.

[92] L/WS/1/734, JP (47) 68 CoS, Joint Planning Staff – British Defence Committee in South East Asia, 26th July 1946.

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

future events in Malaya, the committee was focused on matters of defence and preparation for a future conventional war against Communist forces in the region – the prospect of irregular warfare passed the BDCC(FE) by.

In the negotiations that followed the decision to abolish SEAC, General Ronald Penney, the Director of Intelligence, advocated strongly for the retention of a Central Intelligence Staff (CIS), compromised of an integrated service staff under his leadership, rather than rather than the adoption of a JIC model, congruent with the London and Middle East models. Penney argued in favour of the CIS model for four reasons:

a) A nucleus of central Inter-Service Intelligence Staff would thus be proved capable of rapid extension when war is imminent.

b) Manpower would be saved because all information from foreign countries (other than information on foreign armed forces) would be collated and presented by one inter-Service Staff instead of by three separate Headquarters (as it would be under the JIC system).

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

d) The necessary close liaison between the Heads of SIFE, Signal Intelligence and Service Intelligence is best conducted through a Director of Intelligence than through three Heads of Intelligence at three separate Headquarters.[94]

Lord Killearn (the Foreign Office's Special Commissioner in South East Asia), Malcolm MacDonald and the Commanders-in-Chief approved this proposal and in October

---

[94] WO 203/6236, DOI – Future Intelligence Organisation in South East Asia, 17th August 1946.

1946 a revised Directive was issued to the Central Intelligence Staff. The DOI continued to have a broad portfolio of responsibilities: he was answerable both to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee and the British Defence Committee in South East Asia as a whole, and its members individually; he was "to ensure the closest possible liaison is maintained between the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore, and all other British and Commonwealth Intelligence Organisations in South East Asia and the Far East; he was responsible also for keeping the JIC (London) and JIB (London) "informed on all matters of interest to them arising in South East Asia."[95]

Although Penney had argued successfully against a JIC system, as the Director of Intelligence, he was also the permanent chair of a joint intelligence committee. Just as the JIC (SEAC) was fundamentally a military committee, focused upon issues of intelligence generated from the prosecution of the war against Japan, the first post-war iteration of the JIC was heavily defence-orientated. For instance, a directive stated that the aspects of intelligence which were of primary concern to the CIS were: "a) the study of the internal situation in foreign countries which could possibly affect the defence or security of this theatre; b) the assessment of over-all readiness and capacity for war of potential enemies; c) the appreciation of the military intentions and strategic plans of foreign countries; d) the study of economic and political situations in foreign countries and the assessment of their influence on world trade and relationships."[96]

It is understandable that Penney advocated the retention of a Central Intelligence Staff, rather than the JIC model. After all, officials in London were struggling to decide how they could retain the best elements of the wartime intelligence structures, whilst meeting demands for economy and adapting to the rapidly emerging Cold War threat. The retention of a tried and tested concept, and one which could serve as a nucleus for war expansion and to serve a Supreme Command in a future conflict, appears eminently sensible when officials were so concerned about the intentions of the

---

[95] Ibid., Directive to the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore.
[96] Ibid.

Chinese Communist Party towards Hong Kong.[97] Moreover, at this time the exact nature of Britain's post-war political structures in the region were embryonic. It was not clear how the roles and responsibilities of the Governor-General and Special Commissioner would develop, nor what intelligence demands they would have.[98] However, as will be seen in the next chapter, the CIS model was undone within the space of year on the instruction by the Chiefs of Staff to create a Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East).

Conclusion

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

The most obvious difference is in relation to how the JICs in London, the Middle East and Far East approached security intelligence. The metropolitan JIC has rightly been characterised as an overtly military body. However, it was always chaired by a member of the Foreign Office and included representatives of the civilian intelligence agencies. Moreover, it was complemented by the HD(S)E. It thus had the potential to consider security intelligence matters. In contrast, JIC (SEAC) was an unadulterated military body – it was chaired by the Director of Intelligence and ultimately answerable to the Supreme Commander. While the Chief Political Advisor provided a token civilian presence on the JIC, the Security Service, Interservice Liaison Department (ISLD, the cover name for MI6) nor the Special Operations Executive (SOE) were represented. Thus the focus of the JIC (SEAC) was upon the coordination of intelligence for the war effort against the Japanese.

---

[97] L/WS/1/174, Cabinet Offices to SEAC, December 1946
[98] Davies, *Machinery of Spying*, p. 192; C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars – the end of Britain's Asian Empire* (2008), p. 216 and 279.

The contrast between the Middle and Far East is, arguably, even greater. Although SIME was nominally a military body, it was based upon a nucleus of Security Service officers, albeit it with wartime commissions, to which service intelligence officers and representatives of the Secret Intelligence Service were attached to form a cohesive joint collation and tasking centre. Moreover, the JIC (ME), which was chaired by a Foreign Office official and answerable to the Middle East Defence Committee, was far more akin to the metropolitan model than its namesake that operated within SEAC.

Arguably SIME provided the definitive regional model for the collection and appreciation of defence and security intelligence. Whilst the collation function was confined to SIME's headquarters in Egypt, it had both overt and covert intelligence officers drawn from the services, MI5 and MI6, distributed throughout its area of operations. In contrast, the intelligence structures serving SEAC were far more stovepiped – each intelligence agency, including the OSS, worked predominantly autonomously, being drawn together only via P Division for practical tasking and coordination. P Division struggled to contain centrifugal forces that constantly threatened SEAC's intelligence structures. The functional contrast between SIME and SEAC's wartime experiences illustrates the poor foundations for Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Put simply, there was little recent institutional knowledge or legacy of managing security intelligence (that is intelligence pertaining to subversion or internal security) as opposed to defence intelligence, or running an effective JIC as constituted on metropolitan lines.

Appendix A – The Ballad of the SACK and SINK[99]

"At a time when the difficulties between the 'SAC's Planners' and the 'C IN C's Planners' were at their height the following Ballard was written. It is reproduced here as a warning against trying to run two separate Joint Planning teams.

Oh Sinks are Sinks and Sacks are Sacks,

And each of the other must think

That they ought to be ruthlessly pruned with an axe,

Or be drowned in an ocean of ink

The Sinker's work will never win

The war, say Sacker's planners;

It just consists of throwing in

Obscure logistic spanners.

And so their plan are oft repu

diated by the Sackers

(Who, in the Sinker's humble view,

are definitely crackers).

Such Sacker's work that sees the light

of day is handed back;

This is the reason for the trite

expression "cul de Sac"

Oh, many and fruity the jokes to be cracked

and many the toasts to be drunk

Before the Sinkers are finally sacked

---

[99] WO 203/6193, Headquarters, Supreme Allied Command South East Asia, 'The Organisation and Working of the Joint Planning Staff in SEAC', SAC (46) 8, 1st February 1946, Appendix B.

Or the Sackers are totally sunk.

An end to levity let us see;

Let sacks and sinks be link'd;

And let their future effusions be

Brief, lucid and sac-sinct."

Chapter 3 - The role of The Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) and the Malayan Emergency

Introduction

The creation of the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) in 1946 was a significant element in the attempt by policy makers to create an intelligence apparatus in the Far East capable of managing regional intelligence requirements in harmony with the metropolitan system. The JIC (FE) was charged with the "coordination of all intelligence activities within the region…and the exchange, discussion and appreciation of intelligence."[1] Theoretically, therefore, the committee should have acted as an arbiter of the interagency disputes in the region, particularly between the Security Service (MI5) and the Malaya Security Service (MSS), and been aware of the growing Communist threat to the Federation. However, it failed in both respects, with significant consequences for the subsequent prosecution of the Emergency.

Given its position as Britain's primary post-war intelligence assessment and coordination body in the Far East, a surprisingly small amount has been written about the JIC (FE) or its role in the Malayan Emergency. It is simply not mentioned by the key secondary accounts of the Emergency such as those provided by Richard Clutterbuck and Richard Stubbs.[2] None of the seven articles by Karl Hack on the Emergency consider the role of the JIC (FE).[3] Anthony Short does make reference to the JIC (FE) but it is fleeting.[4] Of those with a primary interest in the Emergency, Leon Comber makes perhaps the most substantive attempt to place the JIC (FE) into some form of context. However, this is limited for two reasons. First, while his discussion is of greater depth than that provided by other commentators, it is limited to two

---

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

[2] R. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War: the Emergency in Malaya 1948-60* (London 1966); R. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (Singapore 1989).

[3] For instance, K. Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 211-241; Hack, "British Intelligence and counter-insurgency in the era of decolonisation: the example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 2 (1999), pp. 125-155; Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383-414.

[4] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60* (London, 1975).

paragraphs within his history of Special Branch. Second, his discussion contains some significant inaccuracies: for instance, the JIC (London) was not part of the British Cabinet Office at the time the Emergency was declared in Malaya, rather it came under the Ministry of Defence. Nor did the Colonial Office self-nominate a permanent position on the JIC (London) in 1948.[5] Moreover, the influence, or otherwise, of the JIC (FE) upon events in Malaya is simply not considered

The JIC (FE) is also given little attention by those historians whose primary interest is orientated towards broader intelligence issues of the time. For instance, discussion of the committee is limited to footnotes in Richard Aldrich's *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-5*.[6] Calder Walton notes the debate about position of the Director of the Malayan Security Service (MSS) on the JIC (FE), but provides little substantive discussion about the committee itself.[7] Phillip Davies provides a brief but useful assessment of the relationship between Secret Intelligence Service (SIS - MI6) and the JIC (FE), and of the other regional JICs within the context of a wider discussion of the Joint Intelligence Organisation.[8] Similarly, the recently published official history of the JIC (London) provides a brief discussion of the spread of regional facsimiles and how the JIC (FE) subsequently provided a means of awaking concern about Communism in the region.[9]

However, perhaps the most valuable contribution to our understanding of the JIC (FE) is as a by-product of a chapter in Rory Cormac's recent study of the role of the metropolitan JIC in various post-war counter-insurgencies, including Malaya. [10]

---

[5] L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60* (2008), pp. 96-7.

[6] R. Aldrich, *British Intelligence, Strategy, and the Cold War, 1945-*51 (1992). See also M. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence,* 21: 1 (2007), pp. 40-56.

[7] C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets* (2013), p. 166.

[8] P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London 2004), p. 193. See also P. Davies, *Intelligence and Government, Volume 2 – Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Sana Barbara 2012).

[9] See M. Goodman, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1* (Oxford 2014), pp. 217-18, 328-331.

[10] R. Cormac, *Finding a Role: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Counterinsurgency at the End of Empire,* Phd, King's College London, 2011; Cormac, "'A Whitehall 'Showdown'? Colonial Office – Joint Intelligence Committee Relations in the Mid-1950s", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:2 (2011), pp. 249-267; Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies – British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013).

Cormac argues that in the aftermath of the Second World War the JIC (London) struggled to find a peacetime role. In relation to Malaya, he suggests the JIC (London) was hampered by the "lack of Colonial Office influence in the central intelligence machinery of Whitehall." Even when the Colonial Office joined the metropolitan JIC there remained a degree of dislocation, at least until General Sir Gerald Templer's 1955 report on colonial security.[11] Although the JIC (London) is the primary focus of his study, Cormac makes some interesting points about its counter-part in the Far East. He suggests that the both the metropolitan JIC and the JIC (FE) were troubled with structural 'issues' and 'bureaucratic confusion' which further limited their performance in relation to the violence in Malaya. The JIC (London) provided guidance to the JIC (FE) but the latter had freedom to initiate its own reports. However, it was not a collection body and was a hostage to the quality of information it received. He argues that the information the JIC (FE) received in relation to Malaya was particularly poor and, therefore, it was understandable that the JIC (FE) failed to forecast the Emergency. Moreover, he suggests it had no explicitly defined warning role enshrined in its charter. [12]

Contrary to Cormac's analysis, there is, however, a strong argument to suggest the JIC (FE) *should* have provided warning to London of the rise in violence which led to the declaration of Emergency and went onto pose a direct threat both to the Federation of Malaya and British strategic interests in the region. As discussed in the previous chapter, the JICs in London and the Middle East both had Security Service representation for a number of years – in the case of JIC (London) since 1941 and from the inception of JIC (Middle East) in 1943. Given that the Security Service had the clearly defined remit of tackling, amongst other things, subversion, the JICs in London and Middle East provided a precedent for the inclusion of security intelligence within the heart of the JIC system.[13] Indeed, both the head of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) and the Malayan Security Service (MSS) were members of the JIC (FE). Hence,

---

[11] R. Cormac, "Organising Intelligence: an introduction to the 1955 Report on colonial security", *Intelligence and National Security*, 25: 6 (2010), pp. 800-22.

[12] Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies*, pp. 32-39.

[13] Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm* (London 2010), pp. 129-30. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States – Volume 2*, p. 21.

the committee had not only the wartime precedent to draw upon, it had the regional intelligence security experts within its midst.

Moreover, the 1945 Capel-Dunn Report emphasised the need for JICs to assess all types of intelligence, rather than just military intelligence.[14] London expressly asked the JIC (FE) to use the remit already adopted by its counter-part in the Middle East, which stated the committee would direct "the organisation, co-ordination and dissemination of all types of intelligence produced within the Middle East Military Command."[15] Subsequently, the JIC (FE)'s charter confirmed that it had responsibility, among other things, "to coordinate all intelligence and security intelligence activities, and to allocate priorities….[and] furnish the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East), and Commanders-in-Chief Committee (Far East), or individual Commanders-in-Chief, with joint intelligence reports and appreciations."[16] It is interesting to note that the JIC (FE)'s charter specially included the term 'security intelligence' before the JIC (London)'s charter was amended to include the same term in 1948.[17]

However, at the time of the declaration of emergency, the JIC (FE) was an immature body, beset with practical administrative problems and more profound existential doubts. And yet it had the wartime precedents of the JIC (London) and JIC (ME), the presence of regional security intelligence experts, and a charter that expressly stated it was responsible for the coordination of security intelligence and providing relevant appreciations. Thus, the fundamental question is why did the JIC (FE) so singly fail to provide any of the relevant authorities with an appreciation of the deteriorating security situation in Malaya and the potentially significant impact upon Britain's strategic interests in the region?

---

[14] CAB 163/3, "The Intelligence Machine", Report to the Joint Intelligence-Committee, 10th January 1945. See Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States – Volume 2*, p. 123.
[15] WO 204/8564, Joint Intelligence Committee Middle East, Charter, March 1944.
[16] CO 537/2653, JIC (48) 10, Review of the Intelligence Organisation in the Far East – Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee: Annex – Draft Charter for the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East), 15th June 1948.
[17] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States – Volume 2*, pp. 142-3.

Exporting the JIC system to the Far East

In 1946 the JIC (London) was forced urgently to consider the intelligence machinery in Far East. This was prompted by the abolition of South East Asia Command (SEAC) and the consequent changes in areas of responsibility of the Commanders-in-Chief (CoS). The future intelligence architecture in the region was further complicated by the creation of the Security Service's regional network called Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), which will be discussed in the next chapter, and the Secret Intelligence Service's Far East Controlling Station.[18] There was, therefore, an urgent need to create a new management structure to reflect the Britain's changing presence in the region to coordinate the various intelligence bodies and ensure "the most effective Intelligence service to the Commanders and Civil authorities there, and to our intelligence organisation as a whole."[19]

The JIC (London) considered but dismissed the idea of continuing some form of Central Intelligence Staff (CIS), preferring instead to export a model based on their own image. As noted in the previous chapter, this was not without precedent. Thus, the JIC (London) explained to SEAC that the Joint Intelligence Committee / Joint Intelligence staff system had a proven track record in war and peace, was economical in manpower and avoided the "duplication of work, which appear inevitable in the case where a Central Intelligence Staff exists in addition to the Service Intelligence Staffs." Pre-empting concerns about how the intelligence needs of the Governor General and Special Commissioner's offices might be met, the JIC (London) suggested that "the necessary Colonial Office and Foreign Office representatives are included on the Joint Intelligence Committee for the purposes of political intelligence, and the necessary full-time Colonial Office and Foreign Office representatives can be made available for the Joint Intelligence Staff."[20]

---

[18] P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the far east controller: Secret intelligence structure and the process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

[19] India Office Library, L/WS/1/734, JIC (46) 105, Organisation of Intelligence in South East Asia – Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 9th December 1946.

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

The tone of these early exchanges is illuminating. Under the Evill Report, the JIC (London) had a mandate to "supervise the Intelligence Organisation as a whole" and "to advise the Chiefs of Staff of what changes are deemed necessary."[21] This clearly gave JIC (London) a responsibility to oversee the broader intelligence machine but it relied upon the Chiefs of Staff for authority. JIC (London) was therefore in a difficult position, particularly in relation to the Far East where the military administration was being dismantled in favour civil structures dominated by the Colonial Office, which itself was not permanently represented in the metropolitan JIC at this time. Thus, there was both a geographical and cultural distance between JIC (London) and JIC (Far East), and the language used between the two was diplomatic and considered, favouring persuasion rather than instruction. This dynamic endured throughout the critical phases of the Emergency.

Reflecting the lack of direct instruction from London, the JIC (FE) was created in 1947, but without a formal charter. Christine Warburton, the secretary to the JIC (FE), later noted that this caused general uncertainty as to the structure of the committee.[22] This was addressed in November 1947 when JIC (London) requested their Far East franchise adapt a charter based on that already agreed with the JIC (Middle East). Subsequently the JIC (FE) defined its function as "to provide a medium for:-

a) The co-ordination of all intelligence activities within [an area coterminous with the British Defence Coordinating Committee, Far East];
b) The exchange, discussion and appreciation of intelligence.[23]

The self-defined responsibilities for the JIC (FE) included the provision of advice to the British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Far East (BDCC (FE)) on all matters of intelligence and counter-intelligence policy, organisation and coordination; and providing both the BDCC (FE) and JIC (London) with intelligence reports and

---

[21] CAB 163/7, The Evill Report, 6th November 1947.
[22] CO 537/2653, Note by JIC Secretary entitled, *Composition and Functions of JIC (Far East)*, Appendix A, JIC (FE) to JIC (London), 17th January 1948.
[23] Ibid.

appreciations. It was to be chaired by the Deputy Special Commissioner in South East Asia and included the intelligence chiefs for the three services, the Head of SIFE, the head of SIS (FE), a representative from the Joint Intelligence Bureau (Singapore) and the Australian Commissioner in Malaya, by invitation, as an observer.[24]

However, prior to sending the draft charter to London, the chair of the JIC (FE) approached the BDCC (FE) to seek their approval of the draft charter. Subsequently, the BDCC (FE) decided the JIC (FE) should be responsible to them and not the Commanders-in-Chief. Mrs Warburton explained to London that the BDCC (FE) considered this appropriate as the JIC (FE) had to deal with civil as well as military matters and should thus report to a joint civil-military body. This appeared rational as the Commanders-in-Chief also sat on BDCC (FE) as well as the purely military C-in-Cs committee. The BDCC (FE) also argued that there was "no parallel in this respect with the defence organisation of the UK…" and therefore it was wrong to force the full JIC model upon the structures in Far East. This was a curious argument to make because the parallel structure in the UK was in fact the newly created Defence Committee: either the BDCC (FE) was not cognisant of the body (perhaps due to distance and the difficulties of communicating effectively between London and Singapore) or did not realise its significance. Both explanations illuminate the dislocation of the JIC (FE) and BDCC (FE) from London. Furthermore, the BDCC (FE) instructed that the heads of SIFE, SIS (FE) and JIB were to be observers and not full members of the JIC (FE), contrary to London's proposals.[25]

The Colonial Office supported the BDCC (FE)'s suggestion that JIC (FE) report to them. A.B. Acheson, assistant secretary in the Colonial Office, believed that it reflected accurately the administrative structures in the region, particularly the existence of the BDCC (FE) for which there was no parallel body in the UK. He therefore argued that "it is a misconception to suggest that it would be a departure from the model of the JIC., London that the JIC., Far East, should be made responsible to the BDCC., Far East." However, by imposing the JIC (London) model directly upon the existing

---

[24] Ibid., Appendix B, Draft JIC (FE) Charter, 5th January 1948.
[25] Ibid., Appendix A, JIC (FE) to JIC (London), 17th January 1948

administrative structures in the Far East, Acheson saw the potential for duplication, whereby "intelligence appreciations which the BDCC require would have to be considered twice over by the Commanders-in-Chief – first sitting separately as Commanders-in-Chief Committee and secondly sitting with their Chairman as the BDCC." Acheson's solution was that the JIC (FE) should have a joint responsibility to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee and the BDCC, a situation which he felt would become a reality, regardless of the 'paper position.'[26]

The JIC (London) took an opposing view. They highlighted that the Chiefs of Staff had already decided that JICs abroad should be modelled on the metropolitan model. Also the JIC (FE) was already part of the Joint Staff serving the Commanders-in-Chief. Furthermore, they were also concerned about the potential for dual lines of reporting. A briefing note for the Chiefs of Staff indicated it would be "most undesirable if the JIC in London, were, for instance, to report direct to the Defence Committee since the Government would then receive advice on intelligence from the JIC as well as the Chiefs of Staff Committee who are their military advisers. Such a system might work smoothly in the Far East where the machine of government is very much smaller but, although the difference in fact may not amount to much, the difference in principal is considerable."[27] A further significant point of departure between London and Far East was that the former's conception of what a JIC should do differed significantly from the BDCC (FE), and suggested, "it should deal in civil matter [sic] only in so far as they affect Defence in the Far East." Indeed, JIC (London) posited, "the subject matter of certain reports prepared by JIC (FE) indicates that they are at present called upon to examine problems which have no connection with Defence."[28] This was a key issue, which ran unresolved through the formative years of the JIC (FE).

Sir William Hayter, the chairman of JIC (London) discussed the situation with Malcolm MacDonald, the Governor General of South East Asia, when he returned to London

---

[26] Ibid., Note by Acheson, 19th February 1948.
[27] Ibid., draft minute from the MoD to Colonial Office, 17th April 1948.
[28] Ibid., JIC (48) 10, *Review of Intelligence Organisation in the Far East* – a draft report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 13th February 1948.

for talks in April 1948. Hayter clearly disagreed with the compromise proposed by the Colonial Office that the JIC (FE) should be responsible to both the BDCC (FE) and Chiefs of Staff. He explained that "although the Joint Intelligence Committee [London] considered intelligence matters relating to political as well as to military subjects, nevertheless, their reports were channelled through the Chiefs of Staff and there was no danger of the Government receiving advice from two separate bodies." MacDonald, in turn, argued that the situation in the Far East was not comparable to that in London: the BDCC (FE) was predominantly military in character and the Commanders-in-Chief had the opportunity to discuss issues when they met; in contrast, in London "the Defence Committee was composed primarily of civilian members and that, therefore, it was necessary for the Chiefs of Staff to prepare reports for consideration by Committee prior to a meeting." Underlying MacDonald's rebuttal was the belief that the JIC (Far East) had to consider intelligence issues which were broader than purely defence matters. He argued that already the JIC (FE) "considered questions covering a wide field many of which the Commanders-in-Chief Committee were themselves not sufficiently well informed to advise." He added "as the Joint Intelligence Committee, Far East, dealt with a variety of problems on which the Commanders-in-Chief could give no independent advice it would be more appropriate for the British Defence Coordinating Committee to be accepted as the parent body of the Joint Intelligence Committee."[29]

The issue was escalated to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, which MacDonald addressed when it met on 21 April 1948. Despite the robust arguments previously put forward by the JIC (London), the CoS unanimously agreed that the JIC (FE) should report to the BDCC (FE), with the caveat that "intelligence matters of purely military concern were submitted in the first place to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee. Lord Montgomery (Chief of the Imperial General Staff - CIGS) said it was "immaterial whether the Joint Intelligence Committee Far East, reported to the Commanders-in-Chief, or to the British Defence Co-ordination Committee. The decision as to which it should report should be made in Singapore." Perhaps recognising that he had been

---

[29] Ibid., Extract from JIC 48), 34th Meeting, extract from minutes, 16th April 1948.

out-manoeuvred, Hayter changed tack, suggesting the issue was "of minor importance…more theoretical than practical", and agreed to allow Singapore to decide.[30]

The CoS decided the chain of command for the JIC (FE), and thus its character, with deceptive ease. Yet the episode provides important illumination of the nature of both the JIC (London) and its counterpart in Far East. The most obvious issue is that the JIC (London) was not supported by the CoS in this issue, the latter apparently persuaded by the arguments of the Colonial Office. The language used in the minutes suggests that the CoS considered the point of discussion relatively trivial. And yet the decision served to undermine the JIC (London)'s responsibility, enacted in its charter, "to supervise the intelligence Organisation as a whole."[31] Indeed, despite all the forthcoming problems with the intelligence organisation in the Far East, the JIC (London) did not attempt to guide, let alone supervise, the JIC (Far East) until the Templer Report of 1955.[32] The second issue is one of distance, both conceptually and physically. The conceptual distance between London and Singapore related to the fundamental vision of what a Joint Intelligence Committee should do: London felt that it should be limited to all intelligence matters relating to defence; Singapore had a broader vision which encompassed civil matters. As will be discussed below, Singapore won the argument about to which body the JIC(FE) should report, but they took on London's view regarding the scope of its remit which proved to isolate the JIC (FE) from the Emergency. The physical distance between London and Singapore and the problems in communicating in an age without satellite telephones and secure internet connections is also emphasised in these debates. It is noticeable how the pace of debate accelerated with the arrival of Malcolm MacDonald for talks. Without this catalyst, the issue may well have been unresolved for a good deal longer. As it was, it took eighteen months for the JIC (FE) to define its charter and, in the meantime, the intelligence machine in the region was adrift and desperately in need of an anchor.

---

[30] Ibid., COS (48) 55th Meeting, extract from minutes, 21st April 1948.
[31] CAB 163/7, The Evill Report, 6th November 1947.
[32] Cormac, "Organising Intelligence: An Introduction to the 1955 Report on Colonial Security", *Intelligence and National Security*, 25: 6, (2010), pp. 800-22.

JIC (FE) and the Declaration of Emergency in Malaya

Despite taking eighteen months for the JIC (FE) to have a charter, there was a clear expectation that it would coordinate intelligence and counter intelligence activities in the region; after all, this was a key principle of the JIC 'template', which was subsequently confirmed as a key tenet of the JIC (FE)'s self-defined charter. Yet in the context of single biggest challenge to confront the JIC (FE) – that is Malaya's descent into a state of insurgency – it singly failed to co-ordinate, supervise or oversee intelligence within the region. This can be attributed to the structural problems within the committee; that the JIC (FE) became embroiled by the dispute between the MSS and SIFE; and its adherence to a strategic agenda shaped by London.

Guy Liddell's diary hints at metropolitan frustration with the JIC (FE) prior to the declaration of Emergency: his entry for the 23rd May 1947 states that the secretaries and chairman of JICs abroad should experience how the JIC (London) operated; in June 1947 he notes the "untidy" and "wooly" state of JIC (FE); and in December he informed the JIC (London) about the "somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs in the JIC (FE).[33] An internal SIFE document highlighted a number of structural concerns about the JIC (FE). For instance, it was felt to be too 'bulky' – Alec Kellar, the head of SIFE, noted that the area of the British Defence Committee (Far East) had been broadened and he questioned how the governors of Malaya and Singapore, H/MSS or the Australian representative of the JIC/FE could be "in a position to contribute anything useful on the conditions in China." Kellar also argued that the 'top heavy' nature of the JIC/FE made it difficult to discuss matters of a top-secret nature.[34] There was particular concern about the position of John Dalley, H/MSS, on the committee. This concern echoed that of Sir Percy Sillitoe, Director General of the Security Service, and was a symptom of a wider conflict about respective roles of the MSS and SIFE.

Sillitoe questioned whether the head of the MSS should have a permanent position on the JIC (FE). Acheson wrote, on behalf of Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner

---

[33] KV 4/468 & KV 4/469 Diaries of Guy Liddell.
[34] KV 4/422, Kellar to Sillitoe, 18th August 1948.

General, to Sillitoe in April 1948. He explained that the composition of the JIC (FE) had been discussed whilst MacDonald was in London for talks (when Sillitoe was visiting Australia). He outlined the case for streamlining the JIC (FE), but noted that whilst MacDonald "appreciate the logic of this argument he did not feel that in practice it should prevail in relation to the Director of the Malaya Security Service." This was because MacDonald believed that "security considerations in Malaya were of such general importance to defence arrangements in the regional as a whole that the Director of the Malayan Security Service ought to be a full member of the Committee."[35]

Sillitoe's response to MacDonald's rebuttal was swift. It took the form of a summary of the JIC (FE) history. He noted that as originally constituted "it had not only the intelligence representatives of the three Services, the JIB, the Governor General and the Special Commissioner, but also the Director of Malayan Security Service and certain other officials in Singapore." The members of the JIC (FE) had little experience of the JIC system "and occasionally appeared to desire to bring with their Charter, subjects which could not strictly speaking be regarded as matters of concern to a Joint Intelligence Committee." Moreover, the JIC/FE, argued Sillitoe, concentrated almost entirely upon matters of purely local Malayan concern. Indeed, he considered it "illogical that the Director of the Malayan Security Service, who can only be concerned with a small position of the territories covered by the JIC (FE), should a full member of a JIC whose area of responsibility extends from Burma to Japan."[36] It is interesting to note that Sillitoe deliberately made the point that the issue of MSS representation was not one instigated by the Security Service. George Seel, the first Colonial Office representative on the JIC (London), reviewed Sillitoe's argument and conceded that he made rather a strong case. Consequently, Seel advised MacDonald that he was unlikely to get the support of the JIC (London) and that his best tactic might be to seek their approval to resolve the matter locally (it will be recalled this was the tactic used

---

[35] CO 537/2653, Acheson to Sillitoe, 28th April 1948. The realisation that local issues might adversely impact Britain's wide strategic interests in the region was not new. See WO 203/6236, Directive of the Central Intelligence Staff, Singapore, 26th October 1946.
[36] Ibid., Sillitoe to Acheson, 7th May 1948.

to resolve to whom the JIC/FE was responsible).[37] Seel's views may have been influenced by Hayter who sided strongly with Sillitoe, suggesting that the inclusion of the H/MSS in the revised charter for the JIC (FE) would "tend to divert the attention of the Committee away from its main purpose of considering strategic matters towards parochial affairs."[38] JIC (London) agreed for the issue to be decided locally and, despite MacDonald's support for Dalley, the military component of the JIC (FE) could not be persuaded of the need to accommodate the H/MSS on a permanent basis.[39] MacDonald was out manoeuvred.

While Hayter and MacDonald were trading points on the future direction and shape of the JIC (FE), and Sillitoe and Dalley were swopping blows overs the position of the MSS in the regional intelligence apparatus, Malaya was descending rapidly into violence. This led the government of Malaya to declare a state of Emergency on 17 June 1948. Rory Cormac suggests that, "a striking feature of the declaration was that violence took the government by surprise."[40] Certainly, the JIC (FE) failed to forecast Malaya's descent into violence. In the aftermath of the declaration of Emergency, Hayter defended the JIC (FE), blaming "the poor intelligence organisation of the Malayan Police."[41] It now seems that this is a weak argument. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journals produced by the MSS exposed as early as 1946 that the MCP intended to overthrow the government in Malaya. Moreover, they also demonstrated the growing capability of the MCP to turn their aspirations into reality.[42] The distribution list of the Journals show that, amongst others, the High Commissioner of Malaya, Governor of Singapore, the Governor General, Colonial Secretary of Singapore and Chief Secretary of Malaya, the Defence Security Officer (Singapore), the three Services intelligence chiefs, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Malaya, and the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB), Singapore,

---

[37] Ibid., Seel to MacDonald, 19th May 1948.

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

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

[40] Cormac, *Confront the Colonies,* p. 30.

[41] Ibid., p. 33.

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

representative all received these reports. Moreover, Dalley sat on the JIC (FE), as did his SIFE counter-part. The issue was not a lack of intelligence but that the JIC (FE) was not listening.

In the absence of clear documentary evidence or oral testimony from JIC (FE) members it is difficult to attribute with any degree of certainty why the committee failed to realise or act upon the growing threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party. Some commentators have criticised the style in which the MSS reports were written. They were undoubtedly both detailed and wide-ranging. At times they were verbose and tackle multiple potential threats to the Malayan administration.[43] But to imply that the members of the JIC (FE) might have been unwilling, deterred or unable to appreciate the MSS reports because of the style in which they were written is do them a disservice. That said, Dalley was clearly a polarising character: Sillitoe and SIFE, on one hand, appeared to have demonised him; MacDonald and Gimson on the other considered him as an intelligence expert worthy of a place within the regional intelligence machine long after the decision to disband the MSS had been taken. The views of the other members of the JIC (FE) are not known, but it is plausible that the committee was as split by Dalley just as much as the wider executive. Certainly we know that SIFE considered itself as the only organisation that could "provide the Defence Committee or the JIC (FE) or any other authority, with coordinated advice and information on Security or Counter Espionage matters."[44] If the JIC (FE) believed this argument, they would naturally place less weight on the MSS. Moreover, the debates about the JIC (FE)'s charter and composition must have been both unsettling and a distracting – indeed, perhaps the obvious questions are that if it could not regulate and manage itself, how could the JIC (FE) either pay full attention to the implications of deteriorating security in Malaya or coordinate intelligence across the region?

---

[43] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-60* (London 1975), pp. 82–3.
[44] KV 4/422, Assessment of the value of SIFE and the DSO Points in the Far East, undated - believed to be c. January 1948.

Capability of JIC (FE)

Although the JIC (FE)'s charter was approved in April 1948, some eighteen months after the committee was first conceived, fundamental problems remained. For instance, in September 1948 the JIC (FE) wrote to London to clarify its responsibility for the 'collection' and 'collation' of intelligence. In response the JIC (London) stated "arrangements for collection and collation of intelligence would be the responsibility of the [military] Headquarters intelligence in Singapore, subject to any direction which they JIC (FE) might wish to give them."[45] This exchange is notable for two reasons: first it confirms the military perspective of JIC (London). They did not, for instance, mention the intelligence collection capabilities of SIFE, SIS (FE) or the local Special Branches. Second, it is astonishing that the JIC (FE) required clarification of such a basic issue.

A key reason for the on-going problems with the JIC (FE) was the experience and capacity of its members. Guy Liddell's diary provides a degree of illumination on the latter point – in the previous year he suggested to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Edward Bridges, that the JIC (FE) chairman and secretaries lacked experience of JIC working and that perhaps "they should get some experience of the workings of the JIC in this country."[46] Indeed, it was not until mid 1949 that the issue of the experience and capability of the JIC (FE) Chairman was resolved. Hayter visited the Far East at the beginning of the year and reported back to the JIC (London) that the BDCC (FE) lacked confidence in the JIC (FE). He posited that this was because the JIC (FE) had failed to provide warning of the "Communist revolt in Malaya." Whilst he maintained that this was not the fault of the JIC (FE), Hayter reported that the BDCC(FE) were 'pressing' for a full time chairman of the JIC (FE). [47] In fact the BDCC (FE) reported to the Chiefs of Staff in January 1949 that they were in the process of "reviewing the whole fields of intelligence in the Far East in view of the vital importance in the present Emergency of an efficient intelligence organisation at all levels." A key concern was the capacity of the JIC (FE) chairman to devote sufficient energies to intelligence. They explained that the chairman was also the head of the "Foreign Side of Commissioner-General's

---

[45] CAB 159/2, JIC (48), 103rd Meeting, 22nd September 1948.
[46] KV 4/469, Diary of Guy Liddell, 23rd May 1947.
[47] CAB 159/5, JIC (49) 36th Meeting, 1st April 1949.

and as such responsible for advising the Commissioner-General on Foreign Policy questions in the area." Moreover, he was also the link "between Commissioner-General and his economic organisation and therefore responsible for advising Commissioner General on such business of the organisation as he requires…" The BDCC (FE) argued "whatever the position may have been a year ago it is now a physical impossibility for, which as Chairman [sic] himself maintains, him to devote sufficient time to pure intelligence."[48] The matter was further complicated by MacDonald's wish to appoint an advisor to produce more political intelligence and combine this post with that of JIC (FE) chairman.[49] This was not perhaps as controversial as it suggests – after all the chairman of JIC (London) was a Foreign Office official and the chairman of the JIC (FE) was 'on the Foreign Side.' What was deeply controversial, however, was MacDonald's hope to employ Dalley in this role. If this came to pass, Patrick Scrivener, chairman of the JIC (FE), informed Lloyd that "he might as well pack up and leave S'pore [sic]."[50] Fortunately for Scrivener, the Colonial Office persuaded MacDonald that Dalley might become an embarrassment and this aspect of the proposal was dropped.

Nevertheless, the BDCC (FE) and MacDonald pursued their primary request for a full-time chairman. Hayter was initially firmly against the idea. He informed the BDCC (FE) that he felt "a full-time Chairman would carry less weight than the Foreign Office Deputy to the Commissioner-General" and that "there was a danger that a full-time Chairman with no definite province of his own might either build one up necessarily or encroach on someone else's." Despite his belief that the proposal was fundamentally unsound, Hayter recognised the depth of feeling shown by the BDCC (FE) and recommended that the JIC (London) accept the proposal, which they did.[51]

---

[48] FO 371/1691, BDCC (FE) to CoS, 19th January 1949. See also WO 21/2193, Extract from minutes of 9th Conference held under the Chairmanship of His Excellency the Commissioner-General for the UK in SEA, 22nd & 23rd January 1949.
[49] Ibid., MacDonald to the Foreign Office, 21st February 1949.
[50] Ibid., minute by Lloyd, 27th January 1949.
[51] CAB 159/5, JIC (49) 36th Meeting, 1st April 1949.

There were similar problems with Joint Intelligence Staff (Far East) (JIS (FE)) during the opening phase of the Emergency. Whilst on a visit to London in September 1948, Scrivener explained that due to a lack of manpower, the JIS (FE) functioned on a part-time basis.[52] Alex Kellar, H/SIFE, also drew attention to this during a JIC (FE) meeting in November 1948. He noted the great 'burden' being placed on the part-time JIS staff by the number of papers they were expected to prepare. As a result, he said, "the quality of the papers suffered and some of them did not reach the high standard normally expected." The other members of the committee echoed his views: Captain Evans (Royal Navy) said that the bulk of JIS work was being done by the Naval and Army representatives; Mr Goodwill (Joint Intelligence Bureau (Singapore)) suggested that the JIC (FE) "make fuller use of the principle of calling for specialist papers from individual services or departments, as for example by SIFE."[53] Thus, the picture that emerges is of a JIC (FE) that struggled to understand its raison d'etre, that was staffed on a part-time basis for much of the opening and most critical phases of the Emergency, that failed to appreciate the reports being produced by one its key intelligence agencies in the region and which was reliant upon its metropolitan masters for guidance.

The Metropolitan Influence and perceptions of the threat

The JIC (London) may not have won the debate over to whom the JIC (FE) should report, but it continued to exert its influence over its agenda. At a time when Malaya was rapidly slipping into the first conflict of the Cold War in the Far East, London was concerned that the JIC (FE) was too parochial and neglecting "subjects of military importance which would be of greater interest to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee (Far East) and to London." As a result it was decided to give guidance to all JICs "abroad to enable them to plan ahead and allot the necessary effort to subjects regarding which they might be called upon by London, and sometimes at short notice, to furnish appreciations."[54] To support the regional JICs in meeting this task, the JIC

---

[52] CAB 159/4, JIC (48) 103rd Meeting, 22nd September 1948. Scrivener also mentioned that the Foreign Office and Colonial Office representatives on the JIC (FE) had insufficient time to "devote their whole attention to intelligence problems."
[53] CO 537/2654, JIC (FE) 91st Meeting, minutes, 29th November 1948.
[54] CAB 159/2, JIC 48) 56th Meeting, 9th June 1948

(London) made arrangements for the JIS (FE) to be 'indoctrinated' in the latest top-secret sources.[55] An update from the JIC (FE) in October 1948 about the progress of its work-in-hand is illuminating: titles included 'Possible Repercussions in the Far East of the Pan Islamic Movements in the Near and Far East', 'The ability of the Soviet Union to Wage War in the Far East Before the End of 1948 and its Initial Strategy', 'The Development of Soviet Influence in the Far East', 'Communism in the Far East', 'The Advantages of Suppressing the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong', and 'Intelligence Organisation for War in the Far East.'[56] Four months after the JIC (London)'s guidance, two things stand out from this list of reports: first, perhaps aside from the report relating to Hong Kong, there was little that could be considered parochial; second, none of the reports specifically related to the Emergency in Malaya. The JIC/FE's focus was very clearly on strategic intelligence issues across the Far East.

A corollary of London's attempts to focus the JIC (FE) towards more strategic topics was the desire to disaggregate civil or political intelligence, about which they were less interested, from purely military matters. For instance, a briefing note for the Chiefs of Staff argued that "although the JIC (FE) may be required to examine problems which are predominantly civil in character…they should not be required to examine problems which are of not defence interests. (There have been instances of this in the past.)"[57] Similarly, during the discussions held by the Chiefs of Staff about to whom the JIC (FE) should report, Sir John Cunningham stressed the need "to ensure that the Joint Intelligence Committee, Far East, was not asked to perform tasks which should more correctly undertaken by the Security Intelligence, Far East." In this instance, MacDonald agreed "it was important to avoid overloading the Joint Intelligence Committee, Far East with matters that were more correctly the responsibility of Security Intelligence, Far East." [58] However, the dividing line between defence and security intelligence was not so much blurred as completely undefined.

---

[55] Ibid., Confidential Annex 11th June 1948.
[56] CO 537/2654, JIC (FE) Progress Report, 2nd October 1948.
[57] CO 537/2653, A briefing note for the Chiefs of Staff, entitled *Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) – Channels of Responsibility,* April 1948.
[58] Ibid., COS (48) 55th Meeting, extract from minutes, 21st April 1948.

The debate about the division and ownership of political and intelligence was more intense in Singapore, not least because the issue became linked with the conflict between the MSS and SIFE. For its part, the JIC (FE) took a broad interpretation of the issue and attempted to secure as much relevant information as it could, regardless of the distinction between political and defence intelligence. For instance, in a discussion about the flow of information from British and British-controlled territories within the region, Ralph Horne, MacDonald's deputy, explained to Acheson that "at one time there was a disposition to regard such information as not, in the strictest sense, 'intelligence'." Nonetheless, the flow of such information was deemed "desirable" and Horne, on behalf of the JIC (FE), instructed regional administrations to ensure they provided regular updates.[59] In contrast, the JIC (London) had little interest in the more 'political' aspects of information being sent to the JIC (FE) as a result of Horne's instruction. Hence, when Patrick Scrivener visited the JIC (London) in October 1948, the discussion of the JIC (FE)'s problems in obtaining military and economic intelligence on areas under US control in the region, particularly Japan, took precedence over discussion of the intelligence organisation in Malaya – indeed, the minutes do not record Scrivener providing JIC (London) with any form of security or intelligence update about the Emergency.[60]

The potential for the unrest in Malaya to have a fundamentally destabilising influence upon Britain's regional position (whether fiscally, in terms of damage to Malaya's dollar earning potential; the opportunity cost of fighting a protracted insurgency; or to Britain's credibility) appears to have been largely overlooked in the build up to, and aftermath of, the declaration of a state of Emergency. This is surprising, not least because there was an acknowledgement from the earliest days of the British Military Administration (BMA), that events in Malaya could have an impact upon Britain's wider interests in the region. For instance, a SEAC paper written in July 1946 noted "the collapse of law and order in any given area…would imply a threat to British interests in the area as a whole."[61] Also, by the time the authorities had declared a

---

[59] Ibid., Hone to Acheson, 22nd May 1948.
[60] CAB 159/2, JIC (48) 103rd Meeting, 22nd September 1948.
[61] WO 203/6236, Survey of Co-ordination within the Territories of South East Asia, 18th July 1946.

state of Emergency, the MSS had been providing fortnightly updates to relevant parties about the intent and capability of the MCP to destabilise Malaya.[62] Moreover, the JIC (FE) charter charged it with the responsibility of the exchange, discussion and appreciation of intelligence.

However, it should be noted that the commentary from the MSS on the threat posed by the MCP took place against a 'white noise' of general criminality, labour disputes, the spectre of Malay and Indian nationalism, and a divisive internal conflict between the MSS and MI5. As a result the message became diluted. In mid-1948 there was a lack of certainty amongst the Malayan executive and colonial authorities on the exact cause of the violence that led to the murder of three British planters in June 1948 and the subsequent declaration of Emergency.[63] Thus, in that month a senior Colonial Office official minuted that he was not clear whether "the present outrage was the work of gang robbers, or of gangsters employed by political groups."[64] This state of complacency was exacerbated by how the Colonial Office chose to describe the MCP and its military wing, the Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army. In June 1948, the Colonial Office created an office of the Information Research Department (IRD) in Phoenix Park, Singapore, which assumed responsibility for how the Communist insurgents were portrayed.[65] By November it had been "decided that the criminal elements engaged in acts of violence in Malaya should be referred to as 'bandits.' On no account should the term 'insurgents', which might suggest a genuine popular rising, be used."[66] Moreover, as Cormac and Bennett have suggested, the 'underplaying' of the threat posed by the MCP was perpetuated by "a tendency to

---

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

[63] Stockwell, "'A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (1993), pp. 66-88.; Stockwell, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 3: 16 (2006), p. 286. See also P. Deery, "Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9:1 (Winter 2007), pp. 29-54.

[64] CO 717/172, Minute by O Morris made whilst drafting a brief for Creech Jones, in preparation for his meeting with a delegation representing European business interests to discuss Malayan lawlessness and Gent's counter-measures, 22nd June 1948.

[65] P. Deery, "The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34: 2 (June 2003), pp. 231-247.

[66] CO 534/4762, 'Designation of bandits in Malaya', Minute by Higham to Blackburne, 12th November 1948, quoted by ibid., p 236.

justify the authorities' own performance and on-going strategy."[67]   As such, in the earliest phase of the Emergency, the relatively low-level and local nature of the violence did not make the subjective thresholds necessary to trigger concern from JIC (FE). In other words, the JIC (FE) was concerned with identifying potential conventional threats to British interests in the region, particularly from China and Russia, rather than apparently low-level 'bandit' activity.

The dynamic between the metropolitan and Far East JICs was constrained by competing priorities. JIC (London) was primarily concerned with intelligence about the defence of British interests across the Far East and intelligence relating to 'single-issues' rarely appear to have stimulated their interest. The JIC (FE) predominantly took their lead from London, as reflected in periodic progress reports of the assessments upon which they were working. In contrast, the Colonial Office, as represented by MacDonald, was more interested in political and territory specific intelligence, and enlisted the drafting skills of JIS (FE) to support this, but their work did not become JIC (FE) papers. Moreover, as Templer was later to highlight, the Colonial Office considered that the object of intelligence was "to serve the Colonial Governments, on whom the responsibility for action falls in the first place; London is consequently regarded as an 'information' rather than an 'action' addressee."[68] The flow of intelligence from the Far East to London was further hindered because the Colonial Office was only represented on the JIC (London) from October 1948 and was not a signatory of the JIC charter, nor an issuing authority of JIC reports. Thus, the effectiveness of the flow of intelligence about the Emergency between the Far East and London depended upon the JIC (FE) having the freedom and inclination to set its own agenda and JIC (London) being receptive to the product that was sent to it (backed up by a clear line of communication *within* the Colonial Office). Yet, in the first two years of the Emergency and arguably not until after the 1955 Templer report, the

---

[67] R. Cormac, *Finding a Role: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Counterinsurgency at the End of Empire,* Phd, King's College London, 2011, p. 5; H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444. See also Deery, "The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 2 (June 2003), pp. 236-245.
[68] CAB 21/2925, 'Report on Colonial Security by General Sir Gerald Templer', April 1955.

intelligence dynamic between the Far East and London was stymied: JIC (London) was focused on strategic intelligence, JIC (FE) followed suit, and, the Colonial Office lacked the influence to alter these priorities.

Local Intelligence Committee – the missing committee?

This chapter has thus far argued that the JIC (FE) should have taken action to manage the disparate and fractured intelligence apparatus in the Far East, not least Malaya. It should be noted, however, that it did attempt in the year after the declaration of Emergency to take remedial action by proposing that territories in the region create Local Intelligence Committees (LICs). However, the JIC (FE) failed to influence the High Commissioner of Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney, to do so. The origins of this proposal can be traced to late July 1948 when the JIC (FE) expressed to the BDCC (FE) frustration regarding the delays in obtaining local intelligence from Malaya. There was similar concern in London. For instance, in August 1948 the Director of Naval Intelligence received minutes of five JIC (FE) meetings held between 1st July and 3rd August. Having read them, he felt that the "the lack of an adequate intelligence organisation at Kuala Lumpur should be brought to the attention of the JIC with a view of all possible action being taken to remedy this state of affairs."[69] In the following month, Patrick Scrivener, chairman of the JIC (FE) took the opportunity afforded by a visit to London to propose to the CoS that each British territory in the Far East should create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC).[70] The proposed LICs would not have any executive powers – their key functions would be:

a) To advise the Local Defence Committee on all matters of policy and organisation concerning intelligence and security intelligence;

b) To co-ordinate all intelligence and security activities within the area of responsibility;

---

[69] CO 537/2653, DNI to JIC Secretary, 23rd August 1948.
[70] CAB 159/4, JIC Minutes, JIC (48) 103rd Meeting, 22nd September 1948.

c) To furnish the Local Defence Committee (or individual members of the Local Defence Committee on request) and the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) with joint intelligence reports and appreciations.[71]

The JIC (FE)'s proposal overlapped with a wider review of 'local organisation for defence' in the colonies. This included a request by Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, for local administrations to consider creating Local Intelligence Committees.[72] The BDCC (FE) discussed the matter in August. Sir Alexander Grantham, governor of Hong Kong, informed his colleagues on the BDCC (FE) that his territory had set-up a LIC in 1946 but it did not work well and was allowed to lapse. He expressed strong resistance to the idea of resurrecting the idea, arguing that the "the setting up of a committee might impose a delay without any practical compensating advantage." As such he though the idea "unnecessary, and it might be positively harmful." MacDonald attempted to reassure Grantham by suggesting "it could be laid down that it was no function of the local intelligence committee to edit the reports from the Special Branch, or to produce information on its own, but simply be responsible for producing joint comments and appreciations on the information available." In contrast to Grantham, Sir Franklin Gimson, governor of Singapore, informed the BDCC (FE) that the LIC in his colony was flourishing. He "found a joint intelligence committee essential for maintaining liaison and pooling information, and was sure that it was necessary in times of quiet so that it could function as soon as an Emergency arose." Perhaps because Sir Alexander Newbolt was only administering the interregnum in Malaya between Sir Edward Gent and Sir Henry Gurney, he expressed only limited opinions on the idea.[73] This was a missed opportunity and the idea lay dormant until Sir Henry Gurney referred to LICs in his influential fifth despatch, a year later.

---

[71] CAB 176/19, BDCC (FE) to CoS, 18th August 1948.
[72] CO 537/4306, Extract from Minutes of 10th Meeting of S'pore [sic], Local Defence Committee held on 7th September 1948.
[73] CO 537/2653, Extract from minutes of 11th Meeting of the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East), 7th August 1948.

Gurney resisted strongly London's calls to create a LIC.[74] He justified this position by arguing that a fixed committee "may appeal to the tidy mind, but is not so useful in practice as a flexible system of conferences and the appointment of a correspondent whom the Joint Intelligence Committee can approach when they need a paper or information."[75] At the heart of the debate were two fundamental issues: how the Federation (and every other colonial territory in the region) collected and collated political and security intelligence, and how the JIC could be "enabled to carry out its key task by being given proper backing by Colonial territories." Gurney argued that Special Branch should collect and collate "all sources of civil intelligence." If the Special Branch was working effectively, there was no need for a LIC.[76] Moreover, the Colonial Office felt that the JIC (FE) was unsuitable "for the handling of certain political intelligence matters."[77] Indeed, Gurney noted that the "Joint Intelligence Committee contains no representative of the Governments or Police Forces of the Colonial Territories in its area." As a result, *security* concerns could not be adequately monitored by the JIC (FE). The High Commissioner was also concerned that a LIC "would naturally be subordinate to the Local Defence Committee which may include unofficial representation", and thus pose a threat to security.[78]

In the subsequent discussion the JIC (London) noted that Gurney appeared to misunderstand the position of LIC within the wider intelligence machinery: rather than answering to the Local Defence Council, a LIC should, they posited, work alongside the JIC (FE), "two bodies maintaining a close correspondence and an exchange of information with each other."[79] The JIC (FE) argued that the advantages of creating a LIC far outweighed any disadvantages, in particular:

---

[74] See CO 537/4306, Gimson to Creech Jones, 7th October 1948.

[75] DEFE 11/33, Despatch No. 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30th May 1949.

[76] WO 21/2193, note to file, folio 24, unsigned.

[77] Ibid, Guidance to Colonial Governors on Preservations of International Security, note by Colonial Office, August 1949.

[78] DEFE 11/33, Despatch No. 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30th May 1949.

[79] CAB 159/6, JIC (49), minutes of the 93rd meeting, 16th September 1949.

a) The Governor of a Colony receives reliable information from a permanent body who are constantly assessing intelligence and are also able to obtain advice on any particular subject experts, and

b) By exchanging intelligence with a JIC, the LIC is able to keep the Governor informed on matters outside the immediate purview of his particular colony, and the JIC is able to keep the commanders-in-chief and BDCCs, where they exist, advised when necessary on matters affecting the individual colony.[80]

However, the Colonial Office was not convinced by this argument – indeed, it appears that the arguments put forward to justify the creation of LIC could have been deployed to justify the existence of the JIC (FE). The real benefit of a LIC in the context of the Malayan Emergency would have been as a local focal point for all key actors within the intelligence machine, a forum for coordination and discussion of all forms of intelligence in relation to defence and *security* issues. There were never more perfect conditions to justify the creation of LIC and yet neither the JIC (London), JIC (Far East), nor the BDCC (FE), were able to influence the Colonial Office sufficiently to overcome the objections of the High Commissioner. Although the debate continued in London into 1950, it gradually faded without resolution until General Templer created the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC) in 1952. This situation reflects the ineffective nature of the strategic coordinating bodies, not least the JIC (FE), to coordinate intelligence as much as it does Sir Henry's obstinacy on the topic.[81]

Conclusion

The JIC (FE) was the natural medium through which intelligence about the deteriorating security situation in Malaya and the subsequent state of emergency should have been coordinated. Indeed, the potential for the JIC (FE) to shape Britain's

---

[80] WO 21/2193, notes associated with the draft memorandum of commentary on Despatch No 5 dated 30th May 1949.

[81] Briggs did create a Joint Intelligence Advisory Committee, but it was not the coordinating body that counter-insurgency campaign so clearly needed and failed both to prevent relations within the Federation's core executive disintegrate to the point of near failure in 1951 or stimulate the attention of the JIC (FE). It was not until 1956 that the Colonial Office required all colonies to establish a LIC. See Comac, *Confronting the Colonies*, p. 61; D French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945-1967 (2011)*, p. 21.

intelligence apparatus in Far East, and thus influence the management of intelligence during the Emergency was significant. Yet it failed to do so and the involvement of the JIC (FE) in the Emergency is a hitherto untold story of local and metropolitan ineptitude and missed opportunities. It could and, arguably, should have reviewed the intelligence apparatus in the region when it was first created for there were already signs of friction and overlap between SIFE and MSS; it should have intervened when this dispute degenerated and the MSS was abolished; it appears not to have supplied meaningful appreciations of intelligence relating to Malaya at any time during the first four years of the Emergency; it did not advise the Federation when London was advocating that all administrations in the region create a Local Intelligence Committee.[82] At the heart of the JIC (FE)'s failures in relation to Malaya are two intertwined problems: its structure and its relationships.

There were a number of key factors that contributed to the JIC (FE)'s structural flaws. The first, and perhaps most critical, relates to its raison d'etre. The JIC (FE) was conceived as a regional facsimile of its metropolitan counter-part to replace the wartime intelligence structures of SACSEA. In 1947, the year in which the JIC (FE) was created, the charter of the JIC (London) was under review. Nevertheless, there was unanimity between the JIC's 1939 Charter and the recommendations of the Evill Report that the JIC (London) would have responsibility for "assessing and co-ordinating intelligence" and "considering any measures needed to improve the intelligence organisation of the country as a whole."[83] Similarly, the charter for the JIC (ME), upon which the JIC (FE) was asked to model its own charter, contained provisions for the tasking, assessment and the overall organisation of intelligence within the region. Inherent within the JIC system, therefore, was a 'management' function. Yet, this aspect of the JIC (FE)'s self-defined charter was weak: it provided that the JIC (FE)'s function was as "a medium for the coordination of all

---

[82] Instead of reviewing the intelligence failure the presaged the declaration of Emergency in 1948, the JIC (FE) conducted a review for its metropolitan counterpart of the intelligence apparatus in the Far East during the Second World. See CAB 176/19 & JIC/1461/48 *Lessons of the Organisation of Intelligence in the Far East*, 5th August 1948.

[83] CAB 163/8, History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation, p. 2.

intelligence…the exchange discussion and appreciation of intelligence."[84] As a result, during the period under discussion, the JIC (FE) attempted to co-ordinate intelligence but not improve, organise or manage the intelligence structures responsible for the production of such intelligence across the region. Hence, it failed to make any meaningful contributions to debate about the MSS, the future of Dalley, the development of SIFE, or the introduction of a LIC in Malaya.

A further structural issue revolved around the competence, training and capacity of the JIC (FE) to fulfil its responsibilities. While only one, and a potentially subjective source, Guy Liddell was concerned about both the original JIC (FE) chairman and secretary's lack of experience of the JIC system. Indeed, he suggested that they should return to London for familiarisation. Anxiety about staff continued at least until 1950, particularly in relation to the capacity of the JIC (FE) chairman to devote sufficient time to his role as well serving as the Governor General's advisor on Foreign Affairs, and also the JIS (FE). The overall impression is that JIC (FE) was struggling to achieve the level of professionalism and competence demonstrated by its metropolitan colleagues.

The final structural flaw relates to the JIC (FE)'s line of responsibility. The Commissioner General won the dispute with the JIC (London) to ensure that the JIC (FE) answered to the BDCC (FE), which he chaired, and not the Commanders-in-Chief. Ostensibly this was a sensible acknowledgement of the unique administrative set-up in the Far East and a way to reduce the burden on the Cs-in-C who sat on the BDCC (FE). Ironically, having taken on the JIC (London), MacDonald was unable to persuade Gurney to establish a LIC. The effect was a subtle devaluing of the JIC (FE)'s stock. For instance, the JIS (FE) got sided-tracked into drafting political intelligence reports for the Commissioner General. Indeed, the Colonial Office was a non-signatory member of the JIC (London) and the perception of its relatively lowly status was extended to the JIC (FE) because of its line of responsibility to the Commissioner General rather than the Cs-in-C.

---

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

The JIC (FE)'s relationship with London was also ambiguous. Officials in Singapore prevailed in the dispute with Hayter over the chain of command and the position of the JIC (FE) chairman, which suggests a degree of autonomy and self-assurance. However, the JIC (FE) progress reports and the limited number of their papers that survive show that the Committee followed London's lead in relation to topics for assessment. Rory Cormac suggests "that information on Malaya was less detailed than on other countries is indicative of the lack of substantial input from the Colonial Office into the JIC machine, which was limited to monthly reviews and *ad hoc* structural arrangements preventing full integrated discussion."[85] Certainly, the JIC (London) did not attempt to 'pull' intelligence assessment from Singapore in relation to the MCP's insurgency – they were focused on a broader, regional level and the lack of Colonial Office influence on the metropolitan committee must have been a factor. But, conversely, the JIC (FE) does not appear to have had an 'independent conscience.' There is little evidence of it 'pushing' intelligence about the potential threat to British interests in Malaya to JIC (London) even during the periodic visits by Scrivener to London or Hayter to the Far East. A further important consideration is that the metropolitan JIC was in a state of flux at beginning of the Emergency, not least in 1947-8 as a result of the Evill Report.[86] Hence, its ability to guide its Far East facsimile was diminished.

The role of the JIC (FE) in the Malayan Emergency, particularly during the build-up to, and immediate aftermath of, the declaration of Emergency, is as important for the omissions and failures as much as any positive action. The result of this strategic intelligence vacuum was that additional pressure was placed upon Security Intelligence Far East, the Malayan Security Service and, subsequently, Special Branch. Moreover, all three were immature bodies and all three struggled significantly to respond effectively to Communist insurgency.

---

[85] Cormac, "'A Whitehall 'Showdown'? Colonial Office – Joint Intelligence Committee Relations in the Mid-1950s", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:2 (2011), p. 252.
[86] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States – Volume 2*, pp. 142-3.

Chapter 4 - The Security Service and Malayan Emergency

Introduction

While the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) should have provided the mechanism to produce strategic intelligence assessments and coordinate the wider intelligence set-up in the region, the Security Service (MI5) had a responsibility to support the JIC (FE), the colonial governments in the region and its metropolitan masters by collecting and assessing intelligence relating to subversion and counter-intelligence within each territory. To do this, the Security Service created in the aftermath of the Second Word War a regional hub based at Phoenix Park, Singapore, called Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). This was established to collect, collate and disseminate "to interested and appropriate Service and Civil Departments all Security Intelligence affecting British territories in the Far East." This included "any political or subversive movement, whether indigenous or foreign, which is a danger or potential danger to British security."[1] Thus, the potential threat posed by the Communist forces in Malaya was firmly within SIFE's jurisdiction.

And yet SIFE barely features within the current assessments of the Security Service in the early cold war era. For instance, SIFE is relegated to an albeit useful footnote in Christopher Andrew's *Defence of the Realm*.[2] Nigel West refers to SIFE as the "Combined Intelligence Far East" but does not expand upon this.[3] In *The Hidden Hand*, Richard Aldrich makes a brief mention of SIFE's assessment of Communism in the region just prior to the outbreak of the Malayan Emergency but does not provide any more detail about its structure, other than to say that SIFE worked closely with officers from the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka MI6) tasked with counter-intelligence in

---

[1] KV 4/421, Charter for the Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 6th August 1946; Memorandum of Instruction for Colonel C. E. Dixon, Head of Security Intelligence Far East, 6th August 1946.
[2] C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm* (London 2010), p. 937, Fn. 42.
[3] N. West, *MI5, 1945-72 – A Matter of Trust* (London 1982), p. 20.

neighbouring countries.[4] The same author provides a little more detail about SIFE in *British Intelligence, Strategy and Cold War*.[5]

Calder Walton's recently published monograph, *Empire of Secrets*, sets out specifically to examine the role of intelligence at the end of empire.[6] Making use of a number of recently de-classified Security Service files, Walton provides a useful discussion of the Combined Services Intelligence Centre (CSDIC) and Special Branch training school, both of which the Security Service helped to establish in Malaya during the Emergency. Overall, however, his discussion of SIFE is disappointing. For instance, there are some factual inaccuracies, such as his assertion that SIFE's counterpart in the Middle East did not have a collection role.[7] More importantly, there is no exploration of SIFE's origins, its relationship with the other components of the local or regional intelligence apparatus, or its role within the counter-insurgency in Malaya effort if, indeed, it had one.

Moreover, SIFE simply does not feature within the existing historiography of the Emergency. This can be partly explained by the scarcity of primary sources which are largely limited to the KV series in The National Archive (TNA), supported by some material in the CO series. But perhaps more saliently, despite the remit of SIFE and the lofty ambitions of its metropolitan masters, the Security Service in the Far East simply failed to make a substantial contribution to the Malaya authorities' counter-insurgency efforts. An exploration of why this was the case is critical to establish an accurate understanding of why the broader Malayan intelligence apparatus struggled so significantly in the build up to, and aftermath of, the declaration of Emergency.

---

[4] R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006), pp. 99-101.

[5] R. Aldrich, "Secret Intelligence for a post-war world: reshaping the British Intelligence Committee, 1944-51", in R. Aldrich (ed.), *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War 1945-51* (Cambridge 1992).

[6] C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets* (London 2013).

[7] Ibid., p. 172. See R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58", *Intelligence and National Security,* published online 5th May 2015.

SIFE was one of three structures created by officials to manage Britain's intelligence requirements in the Far East in the aftermath of the Second World War, the others being the JIC (FE) and, in the case of Malaya, the Malayan Security Service (MSS). All three organisations were 'stood-up' in 1946 and SIFE remained operational until the late 1950s – a time period thus spanning the bulk of the conflict between the colonial authorities and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). SIFE *should* have had a key-supporting role in this conflict. It was created to be the analogue of its more established counter-part in the Middle East (Security Intelligence Middle East – SIME). It was thus the natural medium through which the Security Service could fulfil its responsibilities in relation to subversion and counter-intelligence within British territories in the Far East in the post-war era, not least in Malaya.

However, the lines of demarcation between SIFE and other agencies, particularly the MSS, were ambiguous and, from its inception, SIFE was engaged in inter-organisational conflict. This was compounded by the failure of the Security Service to establish clearly whether SIFE's key function was the collection or assessment of intelligence, or a combination of both. Nor was the issue of whether SIFE was concerned with 'political' intelligence ever resolved satisfactorily. This was largely due to SIFE having two masters – the Secret Service in London and the colonial authorities in the Far East, both of whom had differing demands. These fundamental, structural flaws, inevitably distracted SIFE's officers from identifying threats to British interests in the Far East in general and, more specifically, detracted from their ability to support the colonial authorities in Malaya attempting to counter the insurgent threat posed by the MCP.

As a result of these problems, SIFE changed significantly over its relatively short-existence. It originated as the Security Service's intelligence hub, for which its metropolitan masters had ambitions to develop both collation and assessment functions, with an emphasis on both security and counter-intelligence. However, it evolved into a joint Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service assessment centre that concentrated upon counter-intelligence – a very different organisation from that initially envisaged. As SIFE evolved, it moved further away from a stance designed to

tackle subversion. Ultimately, the story of SIFE's involvement in the Emergency is one of inter-organisational squabbling, missed opportunity and under-performance. Its historical importance in relation to the counter-insurgency campaign in Malaya relates not to its contributions but its failures, and the consequent impact upon the rest of the intelligence apparatus concerned with restoring security to the Federation.

The Origins of SIFE

The origins of SIFE can be traced to the creation in late 1940 of the Far Eastern Security Section (FESS) which was established in Singapore "to collect, co-ordinate and pass to the authorities concerned reports of anti-British activities in the area covered by the Pacific Naval Intelligence Organisation."[8] However, the events of early 1942 in the Far East effectively destroyed the immediate need to focus upon security and counter-intelligence – it was the allies who were acting as subversives and insurgents against the occupying Japanese forces, rather than the other way around. This meant, as was discussed in chapter two, that South East Asia Command (SEAC) lacked at the end of the Second World War an operationally mature intelligence security apparatus, akin to that in the Middle East. This was to have a significant and adverse impact upon the eventual preparedness of the officials to tackle the threat posed by Communist forces to Malaya that became apparent very quickly after the return of the British to the colony in 1945.

Nevertheless, the period between the fall of Singapore and restoration of the British in Malaya in 1945 witnessed a significant amount of soul-searching in London about the nature and shape of the eventual post-war security intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Even before Singapore fell in February 1942, Brigadier Harker, A/Director General of MI5, realised the importance of planning how best to create the Security Service's post-war network in Far East.[9] The pre-war 'link' system had been based upon on personal contact between his predecessor, Sir Venon Kell, and the governors

---

[8] FO 371/24715, Telegram from the Foreign Office to various UK territories in the Middle East, dated January 1941.

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

of the Colonies who acted as 'correspondents'. However, many of Kell's original contacts had moved or retired, and successors had not been 'recruited'. Hence by 1941 the 'link' system was in state of disrepair. As a result Harker suggested that the Security Service develop a direct working relationship with the colonial police as the first point of contact, rather than the governors.[10]

The Security Service's Overseas Control (OC) also recognised the need for change.[11] A 1943 report stated that "once we have won the war, we have still got to win the Peace, and in my opinion the Security Service, particularly overseas, will play a very large part in this latter phase." The unnamed but prescient author realised that the pre-war system of having key figures within colonial government to act as 'links' for MI5 was ineffective. Instead, the author suggested professionalising the Service's overseas representation, by abandoning the "pre-war policy of employing officers with private means on low salaries" in favour of making the "Security Service… a career to which the right type of man will be attracted by the terms of service, as well as the interest of the work." The report posited that despite inevitable post-war austerity, it would be possible to maintain Security Service officers, known as Defence Security Officers (DSOs), in fortress areas (Gibraltar, Malta and Singapore) and any vulnerable areas (such as Egypt), supplemented in all other colonies and Dominions with "an active correspondent or Link who is known personally to us."[12]

A further paper by OC in 1943 expanded upon some of these ideas, and repeated the conviction that the pre-war arrangements, "which were governed largely by finance were most unsatisfactory." The report stressed that each Defence Security Office, required "at least one DSO and Assistant DSO, rather than being comprised of temporary assistants being recruited from local regiments, who, in most cases, left as soon as they were of value." Instead, the Security Service should recruit "men of the

---

[10] See KV 4/442, a note by A.S. Jelf, 13th November 1940 and an unsigned letter by Harker, 21st January 1941.
[11] KV 4/18. In July 1941 the Security Service decided to raise the status of Section A. 5, which dealt with Overseas Administration, to that of a section responsible directly to the Director of A. Division.
[12] KV 4/442, Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8th June 1943 on the Development and Future needs of Overseas Control.

world, attracted by reasonable terms and conditions", who would work on four or five year postings across the empire, broken by a sojourn of a year's posting in London. Finally OC suggested "within the next 12 months we should endeavour to place trained DSOs and A/DSOs if they are not there already, in all our potential post-war stations." While officers could be considered for places such as Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar and Jamaica, the author of the report somewhat laconically noted, "Singapore can wait."[13]

Geoffrey Denham, the Secret Intelligence Service's Far East controller, developed the idea of Britain's overseas post-war intelligence organisation.[14] One can first see the idea of a series of regional out-stations being articulated in correspondence between Denham and Sir David Petrie, who succeeded Harker as Director General of the Security Service, written in the end of 1943. Denham suggested that if "we have to 'police the world' after war, the first point of consideration is where our 'pools' should be situated. London is naturally the headquarters of the Organisation, but various centres all over the Empire must be selected as the correct places where Intelligence can be collated and disseminated to connected Branches." Denham proposed regional centres in Accra, Cairo, Johannesburg, Singapore, Melbourne, Jamaica, and Ottawa.[15] However, his report was not accepted uncritically. An unsigned minute to the Deputy Director General (DDG) took exception both to Denham's presumption that Great Britain would be policing the post-war world and his suggestion that DSOs should be posted to the Dominions.[16]

Nevertheless, Denham's report proved pivotal in the philosophical origins of SIFE, particularly in relation to the future role of the Security Service in tackling post-war

---

[13] Ibid, untitled report by O.C., dated 25th October 1943.
[14] Geoffrey Denham was businessman with interests in Java. In May 1941 he was despatched to Singapore to under a review of SIS organisation in the Far East and subsequently became the first SIS regional director. See R. Aldrich, "Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia during the Second World War", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1, (1998), p. 188; P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (2004), p. 130; P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the far east controller: Secret intelligence structure and process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), p. 113.
[15] KV 4/442, Denham to Petrie, 22nd December 1943.
[16] Ibid., Draft minute to the DDG, undated.

colonial subversion. For instance, it helped shape the approach of Petrie to Sir George Gater, Permanent Under Secretary for the Colonies, on the subject.[17] The Director General said that "it is reasonable to suppose that for a few years after the war our DSOs and link will not need to spend much time and energy on counter-espionage, and it seems probable that one of their main uses might be to investigate subversive tendencies, some of which may be cloaked by political movements." Whilst Petrie acknowledged that some of these movements might be of purely local interest, "others may have world wide ramifications, and it will therefore be necessary for the Security Service to keep adequate record of all such movements and to take active interest in advising our DSOs and links on all matters of mutual interest." Petrie also said that there "was a possibility that some form of federation may take place in these areas which might necessitate the formation of a Security Intelligence Bureau either directly under, or working in close consultation with the Security Service on the lines of SIME in Egypt and the Middle East."[18]

However, three difficult issues arose during the wartime planning. Despite the best efforts of Petrie and Gater, these issues remained largely unresolved, plaguing the organisation for which they were planning. The first was constitutional. Gater recognised that the end of the war was likely to accelerate the progress of the colonies towards self-government. However, by 1944, this was proving a source of difficulty in Ceylon, where the police service was under the administrative and financial control of ministers and Gater predicted that similar difficulties were likely in the near future in such as places as Malta and Jamaica. There was, therefore, a need to find a mechanism to ensure Security Service officers posted to the post-war colonies remained directly under the control of London.[19] The position of the Dominions was a further complication. Denham "felt strongly that in order to establish a proper Security Service throughout the Empire, the Dominions should come into the scheme."[20]

---

[17] Sir David Petrie was Director General of the Security Service from 1941-6.
[18] KV 4/442, Petrie to Gater, 17th February 1944. See also Note of Lord Swinton's discussion with Sir George Cater, 1st August 1944. See also Extract from personal letter to the Director-General from Lt. Col. G. J. Jenkins, DSO Egypt, dated 22nd September 1944.
[19] Ibid., Gater to Petrie, 17th July 1944.
[20] Ibid., A report by Mr Denham entitled, 'Post-War MI5 Organisation,' 22nd December 1943.

However, the Colonial Office was less convinced - Gater informed Petrie that he was "doubtful whether the problems which will exist in peace time are sufficiently great to justify the appointment of a whole time liaison officer to any of our Dominions."[21] Moreover, the Dominions Office moved quickly to distance the Dominions from such planning.[22] It was therefore agreed that the Dominions would not feature in future 'link' planning, but that the "already excellent liaison" would be "strengthened by a more frequent interchange of visits between Security Service representatives and representatives of the Security organisations in the Dominions concerned."[23]

The second issue was the operational context in which any potentially refashioned Security Service presence in the colonies would function. Initially Overseas Control envisaged a system in which the DSOs would be supported by a dedicated colonial police officer whose primary focus would be internal security and who would report directly to the Commissioner of Police or Head of CID. In this way the DSO could focus entirely on the needs of the Security Service while the police officer could concentrate on the specific local needs of his colony. Moreover, this system had the advantage that the police officer could take over the files and card indices in the event that the DSO was removed from the territory after the war due to any cost-saving measures.[24] Petrie realised that whatever form the Service's post-war presence would take, it would be reliant upon the Colonial Police. He therefore suggested to Gater that the Colonial Office should review "at an early date the facilities which Colonial Police Forces have at present for carrying out of general local security duties." He acknowledged that "this is entirely a Colonial Office matter, but since our own efficiency is so dependent on the Police, it seems essential that we should raise the point."[25] While this point was raised, it was not resolved. This proved to have profound implications for SIFE throughout much of its existence.

---

[21] Ibid., Draft minute to the DDG, undated.
[22] Ibid., Sir John Stephenson to Petrie, 22nd March 1944.
[23] Ibid., Draft letter from Petrie to Stephenson, 13th February 1946.
[24] Ibid., Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8th June 1943 on the Development and Future needs of Overseas Control.
[25] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 17th February 1944.

The third problem, that of finance, also hung heavily over SIFE. The 1943 Overseas Control report noted that "there is no doubt that finance will preclude having a large number of DSOs and we shall therefore require to have really first class material."[26] Petrie admitted to Gater in February 1944 that "there are a great many imponderable factors, not least being the amount of money made available. The only thing one can say, with almost complete certainty, is that it is bound to be very material reduced."[27] This raised the thorny problem of how to pay for MI5's post-war overseas presence. Vernon Kell's 'links' system operated on good-will. However, wartime planners recognised that this was not sustainable – intelligence was an increasingly expensive commodity that demanded more than good-will. Yet, the Security Service did not have funds to supply the future 'links' and the Colonial office was not in the position to supply secret funds.[28] In a rather confused minute on the subject, Petrie acknowledged his dislike of the "proposal that we should get mixed up in the administration of any funds other than those from SS [Security Service] sources." However, he agreed, "if a 'link' requires funds for expenditure which is primarily in our interest, we should supply them."[29] Clearly conscious of the inevitable post-war struggle with the Treasury, Petrie moved to secure a united front with the Colonial Office.[30] As a result, Gater said he "had no hesitation in giving you the assurance for which you ask …we attach importance to the continuance of the DSO system and are ready to support any application that you may make to the Treasury for the necessary funds to maintain it."[31]

By 1944 the Security Service had concluded that the pre-war concept of 'Links' was redundant and was determined to develop a more structured, professional system. In order to "provide a centre where all intelligence concerning espionage, sabotage and other subversive and illicit activities is pooled", Petrie realised that he needed to cover

---

[26] Ibid., Extract from Report by O.C. to D.G dated 8th June 1943 on the Development and Future needs of Overseas Control.
[27] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 17th February 1944.
[28] Ibid., Minute 88, OC to DG, dated 16th December 1944.
[29] Ibid., Minute 93, DA to DDG, dated 21st December 1944; minute 94 from DDG to DG, dated 21st December 1944; and minute 95 from DG to DDG, dated 22nd December 1944.
[30] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 22nd June 1944.
[31] Ibid., Gater to Petrie, 17th July 1944.

the Empire "effectively with a series of out-stations." Due to the potential expense, he did not suggest having Security Service officers in all of the Colonies and "in any case, we do not want to plant our officers in places where there is no need for them." Instead, he proposed to "'wire' the whole Imperial area in such a way that we can 'plug in' just when and where we want to." Petrie made a distinction between the fortresses (Gibraltar, Malta, Singapore, Hong King and Egypt) and the Colonies. He grouped the latter into four groups: West Indies (Jamaica and Trinidad); East Africa (Kenya and the Rhodesias); West Africa (Accra) and, potentially, Ceylon. One DSO, supported by an assistant and a small office staff, would cover each of these territories. Moreover, Petrie asserted that it was "desirable to set-up at least two regional centres in the way of clearing houses for information, so that only the refined product from Security Intelligence Reports would come through them to Headquarters." He proposed that the Security Service offices at Cairo and Singapore should perform this function.[32] Hence, the seed of the concept of SIFE was sown.

The Establishment of SIFE

The issue of the Security Service's overseas representation was not developed further until the end of the Second World War when, as Petrie explained to Gater, "the business of examining the post-war requirements of this organisation has naturally assumed more immediate importance…" Petrie consulted with the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), and it was confirmed that the Security Service would assume responsibility for security intelligence in both the Middle East and Far East. Post-war re-organisation in the Middle East was a relatively straightforward affair – the Security Service took over from the military the direction and control of Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME), which was, in fact, "a war-time expansion on a large scale for the discharge of the functions that formerly pertained to our Defence Security Officer in Egypt."[33] In the Far East, however, the issue was less clear.

---

[32] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 2nd June 1944.
[33] Ibid., Petrie to Gater, 20th April 1946. See also R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58", *Intelligence and National Security,* published online 5th May 2015.

Ostensibly there was no equivalent to SIME in the Far East during the Second World War, certainly not in name. There was, however, recent precedent for inter-organisational co-operation in security intelligence in the region. At the outbreak of war, Captain Wylie (RN), established the Far East Combined Intelligence Bureau (FECB). This was a tri-service organisation, drawing information from "Military and Air intelligence; SIS [Secret Intelligence Service]; French Intelligence Service; Defence Security Officers; Diplomatic and Consular Officers; Information from Naval sources which is obtained from the whole area embraced by PNIO." The Far Eastern Security Section (FESS) was located within the FECB and was responsible for establishing "a comprehensive picture of the persons and organisations working against British security in the Far East and to convey this picture to the various organisations who are in a position to make use of it."[34]

Whilst the FECB disappeared in the wake of the Japanese invasion of Singapore, in 1945 South East Asia Command (SEAC) formed the Counter-Intelligence Combined Board (CICB) to perform a similar function.[35] This was a joint intelligence organisation, run by Colonel C. E. Dixon and Courtney Young, who oversaw a staff of intelligence officers drawn from MI5, SIS, OSS Office of Strategic Services [OSS] and SEAC.[36] The CICB "made a specialised study of the Japanese Intelligence Services and was responsible for collecting, collating, and disseminating information in this field." To support this, CICB "had teams of Counter-Intelligence specialists attached to formations and composed of members of MI5, SIS and selected Army officers."[37]

However, the end of the war against Japan also signalled the end of CICB. Mountbatten subsequently suggested, "the South East Asia theatre security

---

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

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

[36] Little is known about Dixon. However, Courtenay Young had distinguished career in the Security Service, not least as the first SLO with ASIO, H/SIFE, and the head of 'B' Section.

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

organisation might well be modelled on that approved for the Middle East."[38] This was in harmony with Petrie's thoughts on the subject and it was decided to use the CICB as the basis of a much broader civil organisation which would act as Britain's regional security intelligence hub, run by the Security Service, to be known as Security Intelligence Far East. Whilst SIFE was to be commanded by a Security Service officer (and, like SIME, move from military to civilian control), Petrie envisaged it to be a 'joint' unit, comprising not just of Security Service officers, but staff drawn from the three services and with potential representation from the Australian Security Service and the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India.[39] SIFE was thus 'stood-up' in early 1946 and included four staff officers drawn from Allied Land Forces South East Asia (ALFSEA), two Royal Navy officers, two Royal Air Force officers, and a still classified number of MI5 and MI6 officers. Dixon, former head of CICB, was retained to lead the new unit.

Sir Percy Sillitoe, Petrie's successor, issued SIFE's Charter on 6 August 1946.[40] This stipulated that SIFE's primary responsibility was "the collection, collation and dissemination to interested and appropriative Service and Civil Departments of all Security Intelligence affecting British territories in the Far East.[41] More specifically, Sillitoe indicated that SIFE should provide "interested and appropriate departments with information and advice upon the following subjects: -

a) Any foreign Intelligence Service whose activities are directed against British territory in the Far East or inimical to British interests or security.

b) Any political or subversive movement, whether indigenous or foreign, which is a danger or potential danger to British security.

c) Arrangements for the detection of illicit signals and other clandestine means of communication.

---

[38] Ibid.,
[39] KV 4/442, Petrie to Gater, 20th February 1946.
[40] Liddell's diary suggests that SIFE was already in place by January 1946, with the JIC (London) recommending the establishment of staff on 20th February 1946.
[41] KV 4/421, Charter for Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 6th August 1946.

d) Coordination of Security policy relating to Travel Control of arms and explosives, the protection of vital installations and the prevention of sabotage.

e) Information from SIFE records which assist the DSOs or appropriate bodies in checking the credentials and back history of doubtful aliens, residents and visitors."

In addition, Dixon was given the responsibility to coordinate and supervise the work of the representatives of the Security Service – Defence Security Officers (DSO) – in Burma, the Malayan Union and Hong Kong. In its set-up and remit, SIFE was thus near identical to its highly successful counterpart in the Middle East.[42]

However, SIFE's lines of command were tortuous. In the first instance, Dixon was primarily responsible to the Director General of the Security Service in London.[43] However, Dixon was also responsible to the regional service chiefs via the 'Defence Committee'.[44] The 'Defence Committee' (subsequently known as the British Defence Coordinating Committee (Far East)) was formed two months before SIFE. It lacked executive powers but was charged with coordinating both civil and military defence activities, providing information and advice to the Chiefs of Staff in London, and preparing strategic studies for the defence of the area.[45] The situation was further complicated by the creation of the JIC (FE), which had responsibility for all intelligence and counter-intelligence activities in the region.[46] H/SIFE was a contributory but non-signatory member of JIC (FE).[47] Moreover, a SIFE officer was seconded to the

---

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

[43] There were at least six H/SIFEs: C. Dixon (August – November 1946); M. Johnston (November 1946 – c. August 1948, died in service); A. Kellar (August 1948 – May 1949); J. Morton (May 1949 – April 1952); C. Young (May 1952 – August 1955); R. Thistlewaite (August 1955 – unknown).

[44] Ibid.

[45] IOLR, L/WS/1/734, Chiefs of Staff Committee, 'South East Asia: Secretariat for Defence Committee', 26th November 1946

[46] L/WS/1/1050, 'Organisation of Intelligence in Far East Asia', report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee', 9th December 1946. It is interesting to note that the early memoranda from the Cabinet Officers regarding the creation of JIC(FE) mentions the importance of Colonial Office and Foreign Office representation on the Committee and within the Joint Intelligence Staff. It appears over time, because of SIFE's co-location with the Commissioner General's staff at Phoenix Park, SIFE became dragged into an increasing amount Chancery work, realising one of the initial concerns about the creation of the JIC (FE). See L/WS/1/734 Cabinet Offices to SEAC, 26th November 1946.

[47] Ibid. See also P. Davies, *Machinery of Spying,* p. 193.

committee's Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS).[48] Initially the JIC (FE) was responsible to the Chiefs of Staff Committee. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Joint Planning Staff (JPS) proposed in early 1948 that this was changed to the British Defence Coordinating Committee (BDCC(FE)), on the basis that CoS dealt with purely military matters while the BDCC(FE) was a joint military-civil structure and therefore more reflective of matters with which the JIC (FE) dealt.[49] Therefore, in addition to its Security Service masters, SIFE had regional reporting lines both to the BDCC (FE), the JIC (FE) and ultimately to the Governor-General, Far East Asia, Malcolm MacDonald.[50] In addition, it was subject to multiple separate tasking processes, via the Security Service, the Service Chiefs, the BDCC(FE) and the Governor General's office.[51]

SIFE was thus bisected by local and metropolitan responsibilities. This was reflected in the relationship between the DSOs (based initially in Singapore, Burma and Hong Kong), their respective colonial governments and SIFE.[52] For instance, Dixon's Memorandum of Instruction stated that he was responsible for ensuring that the DSOs passed "to SIFE all relevant security information." This responsibility was considered not to be in conflict "with the local responsibilities of Defence Security Officers to their respective Governors and to Service Commanders as defined in their respective memoranda of instructions."[53] Nevertheless, events were to prove that maintaining the balance of responsibilities was to be a source of significant and unresolved tension for the duration of SIFE's existence.

---

[48] See KV 4/421, Memorandum of Instruction for Colonel C. E. Dixon, Head of Security Intelligence Far East, 6th August 1946. Also, L/WS/1/734, Chiefs of Staff Committee, 'South East Asia: Secretariat for Defence Committee', 26th November 1946; L/WS/1/1050, Composition and Functions of the JIC (Far East), Note by the Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Intelligence Committee, Annex A, 26th January 1948.

[49] IOLR, L/WS/1/734, "South East Asia: Secretariat for Defence Committee", report by the Secretary for Chiefs of Defence Committee, 26th November 1946. See also L/WS/1/1050, See 'Review of intelligence Organisation in the Far East', note by the Secretary of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 24th April 1948.

[50] The term 'Governor-General' was to be replaced with 'Commissioner General' when the Malayan Union was scrapped in favour of the Federation of Malaya.

[51] For an interesting parallel with the MI6 position in the Far East see P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the Far East Controller: Secret Intelligence structure and process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

[52] Hence, Petrie ensured that the Colonial Office were consulted on their "Memoranda of Instruction' for issue to the DSOs. See KV 4/442, Draft letter from Petrie to Gater, 13th February 1946.

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

Regional Relations

Unsurprisingly, SIFE was beset with problems from the outset. Within weeks of its creation, Dixon fell out with Sillitoe. This appears to stem from Dixon's complaint that SIFE's dependence on the Army for accommodation, transport and logistical support was compromising security.[54] Sillitoe felt it necessary to remind Dixon that "SIFE and its DSOs constitute an overt Inter-Service Intelligence Organisation and will be in a similar position to the Intelligence Bureau India which is quite openly recognised as a department of the Government. The existence of an organisation called SIFE must naturally become generally known in view of the numerous Service and civilian contacts its numbers will have to make."[55] It seems quite remarkable that the head of the Security Service had to remind his theatre head that SIFE was not a covert organisation. Within months Malcolm Johnston, formerly of the Delhi Intelligence Bureau, replaced Dixon as H/SIFE.[56] Whilst it seems that the recruitment of Johnston was not connected with Dixon's confusion about SIFE's security status, it is clear that SIFE did not have an auspicious beginning.

Johnston soon found fault with intelligence environment in which SIFE was operating. In particular, the felt that various local police and intelligence forces upon which SIFE depended, including the MSS, were not providing SIFE with sufficient information. Johnston explained to Sillitoe that "when the local intelligence organisations were [sic] insufficient to cover any particular aspects of Security Intelligence to extent required, it will be the duty of SIFE to supplement those resources with its own."[57] The Director General actively supported Johnston's recommendations and began the process of transforming SIFE from being a primarily collating and assessment organ to an operational headquarters for intelligence *collection*.[58] Hence, in November 1947, the LSO in Burma, and DSOs in Singapore, Malaya, and Hong Kong were tasked to start

---

[54] Ibid., Dixon to Sillitoe, 29th July 1946.
[55] Ibid., Sillitoe to Dixon, 12th August 1946.
[56] Ibid., Dick White (MI5) to Bates (Colonial Office), 13th August 1946.
[57] KV 4/421, SLO Singapore to DG, 17th February 1947.
[58] Sillitoe also envisaged SIFE and the DSOs having a broader "intangible" but "essential function" of providing a means of inciting the local security authorities to do their job efficiently, akin to Inspectorate, KV 4/422, Assessment of the value of S.I.F.E and D.S.O Points in the Far East.

collecting "basic intelligence data…in respect of organisations which are operating clandestinely."[59] This move placed SIFE in direct conflict with the regional governments, the Commissioner General and Colonial Office, the most significant being that with the MSS which will be discussed at length in the next chapter. However, it is important to recognise that it was not just the MSS that SIFE seemed to clash. For instance, Johnston's successor, Alec Kellar experienced fractious relations with the Commissioner General and the Commissioner of Police in Hong Kong (whom the H/SIFE suggested was "the touchiest of mortals"), due to SIFE's criticism of his force's inability to undertake "the total commitment of secret postal censorship." Relations were even worse with Gimson, the Governor of Singapore. Kellar reported to Sillitoe that he had, "quite frankly, the poorest opinion of Gimson who, apart from his muddle-headedness, is behaving in an entirely partisan way."[60]

At the heart of these problems was a fundamental tension in the balance between metropolitan, regional and local intelligence requirements and expectation. SIFE, as its charter highlighted, was MI5's regional centre for the collection, collation and dissemination of Security intelligence, that is intelligence relating to those individuals and organisations that might have been engaged in espionage or subversion in the various British territories in the Far East.[61] However, the problems with its regional partners prompted London to redefine three key functions for SIFE: Security Intelligence; Counter Espionage and Preventative Security. The latter two terms were relatively simple, but the former proved both contentious and ambiguous.[62]

Security intelligence - that is information concerning such subversive, illegal or secret activities as may be detrimental to the defence of the realm as a whole - was seen as central to SIFE's role. Indeed, it was this aspect of SIFE's remit which ensured the

---

[59] Ibid., SIFE to DSO Singapore, Malaya Union, Hong Kong, and SLO Burma, 25th November 1947. The term Defence Security Officer was used to describe Security Service officers stationed in colonial territories, while the term Local Security Officer *or* Security Liaison Officers was used to described officers stationed in independent countries.
[60] KV 4/423, Kellar to MacDonald, 19th December 1948.
[61] KV 4/421, Charter for Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 6th August 1946.
[62] KV 4/422, Winterborn to DSO Hong King, Singapore, Malayan Union and Burma, 12th January 1948. Winterborn was Acting H/SIFE.

organisation had a continued responsibility to the officials in Malaya attempting to combat the threat from the MCP. However, Sillitoe sought to disaggregate the concepts of security and political intelligence. The reason why he chose to do this are not easy to understand, particularly when there can be such a fine level of distinction between political intelligence (for instance, relating to the ideological development of MCP) and security intelligence (for instance, information which indicated that the MCP aspired to overthrow the colonial regime in Malaya). Potentially Sillitoe's attempt to distinguish between security and political intelligence may have been a ploy to allow his scant resources in the Far East to focus upon the wider threat posed by international Communism but this explanation is largely undermined by the regular criticism made by SIFE that the MSS was failing to share local intelligence with them. Sillitoe appears to have wanted it both ways – to be provided with intelligence by local police or intelligence agencies but not to have any responsibility for this intelligence unless it related to the security of the United Kingdom (rather than individual territories in the region). This was clearly in conflict with SIFE's core responsibilities. [63]

While these debates were taking place, Malaya was descending into near anarchy. By June 1948 the Federation considered that it was unable to halt of Communist violence using normal legislation and declared a state of emergency. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Malayan government and subsequent historians apportion blame to the MSS for failing to forecast the Communist insurgency. It could equally be argued, however, that it was clearly within SIFE's remit to identify subversive groups which threatened Britain's interests, including those in Malaya, but they did not do so in relation to the MCP. Illustrative of SIFE's apparent lack interest in events taking place in Malaya was the organisation's response to the declaration of emergency. Alec Kellar, the newly appointed H/SIFE, requested that Sillitoe send out a registry expert to support the recently created Special Branch of the Malayan Police. It was Kellar's view that it was "of the utmost importance to our future relations with newly created Malayan Special Branches [sic] that we impress on the latter our willingness to spare no effort to assist them in the formative stages. In no way can we demonstrate this

---

[63] Ibid.

more effectively than in matter of registry technique and practice where lack of local experience is fully recognised."[64] Whilst useful, this was hardly a comprehensive response from SIFE to the first Communist insurgency to be encountered by the Empire. Even worse, Sillitoe refused to accede to this request. Eventually a registry expert from the Metropolitan Police was sent out from London to Kuala Lumpur instead.[65] Not only was this a missed opportunity to build SIFE's working relationship with officials in Malaya, it demonstrates SIFE's ineffective response to the very pressing internal security situation in the country.

Dissatisfaction with SIFE's response to the declaration of Emergency prompted Malcolm Macdonald, the Commissioner General, to write three telegrams to the Colonial Office.[66] MacDonald never intended the telegram to be passed to SIFE, but Kellar received copies via the Chiefs of Staff. One of the key views expressed by the Commissioner General was that the H/SIFE should have local knowledge, which clearly stung Kellar.[67] There followed a 'frank' meeting between Kellar, MacDonald and his deputy, Ralph Hone. Kellar's report of the conversation suggests that he made a vigorous defence of SIFE, arguing that he was "not prepared to see SIFE used as a whipping boy by Governors who were dilatory in training their Special Branches into effective units."[68] Moreover, he rebutted the charge that SIFE lacked local knowledge by arguing that whilst desirable, "qualities of leadership, organisational ability and technical efficiency were more important provided he had a nucleus of officers with local knowledge."[69]

The broader criticism made by MacDonald was that SIFE was simply ineffective. Kellar felt that at root of this suggestion was a was "very considerable confusion of thought regarding the functions and purposes of SIFE and its Defence Security Officers and

---

[64] Ibid., Kellar to Sillitoe, 16th August 1948.
[65] See CO 537/4322.
[66] KV 4/423, MacDonald to Lloyd, 13th December 1948. Unfortunately, it appears copies of these telegrams are not on record, but they were subsequently referred to in telegrams and minutes, both within the Security Service and between the Security Service and the Colonial Office, allowing the reader to ascertain the criticisms made.
[67] Ibid., Kellar to DG, 19th December 1948.
[68] Ibid., Kellar to DG, 12th December 1948.
[69] Ibid.

their relations vis-à-vis Colonial Police Forces." He thus explained the role of the DSO was "to ensure…that all Security Intelligence flowing into Security Service channels and bearing on the intelligence problems of the Colony to which he is accredited, is made available to that Colony and, as a corollary, to ensure that Intelligence of a regional interest obtained within the Colony is in turn passed back to SIFE to be collated and appreciated for theatre purposes against a wider background."[70] Kellar emphasised that it was of the utmost importance to establish beyond all doubt, and at the earliest possible moment, the direct responsibility of the Police for the collection and collation of their own local intelligence."[71] This clear *volte face* from the expansionist drive of 1947-8, appears to stem from the wider discussions in London between the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service about their respective roles and lines of demarcation and also a growing realisation that SIFE simply did not have the resources to undertake widespread collection duties in the region.[72]

The disclosure of MacDonald's 'thinking aloud' telegrams caused concern both in London and the Far East: the Chiefs Of Staff took umbrage that MacDonald had criticised a unit which was at least in part responsible to them; the Security Service felt that MacDonald was meddling in matters which he did not understand fully; while the Colonial Office took a surprisingly conciliatory line with the Security Service.[73] There was some discussion that the Chiefs of Staff might order a complete reassessment of the intelligence apparatus in the Far East. Sillitoe was anxious to instigate such a review and offered to visit the region.[74] In hindsight, this may have been the best option. However, both SIFE and the Governor General withdrew from the brink. MacDonald retreated, claiming that the telegrams expressed tentative, embryonic, views intended only for discussion with the Colonial Office. Kellar did not

---

[70] KV 4/423, Kellar to MacDonald, 19th December 1948.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., Kellar to DG, 2nd March 1949. See also "Functions of Security Liaison Officers", 21st April 1949. Note that DSOs in the region were seemingly arbitrarily renamed Security Liaison Officers (SLOs) on 11th May 1949. See also FO 1093/393, Liddell to Sillitoe, *Relations between the Secret Service (SIS) and Security Service*, 29th April 1949.
[73] KV 4/470, diary entries for 14th and 29th December 1948; KV4/423, Kellar to DG, 22nd December 1948.
[74] KV 4/423, Mac Donald to Lloyd, 13th December 1948.

deploy the big guns, advising Sillitoe not to visit the region for fear of allowing the Colonial Office to imply that it was only SIFE that required review. Instead, Hone, MacDonald and Kellar attempted to resolve their difficulties locally through a series of meetings in which three key issues were considered: the relationship between SIFE and the local police forces; SIFE's remit; and the role of MI6 in the region.[75] The relationship between SIFE and local police forces was arguably the most pressing matter, largely because it was so poor.

A number of practical initiatives resulted from the crisis in relations between SIFE and its Colonial 'customers.' For instance, over a series of talks, including the Regional Intelligence Conference held in Singapore in April 1949, it was agreed that Special Branch officers would begin attachments with SIFE and a joint Special Branch / SIFE unit was created in Singapore (the former providing the resources, the latter the planning and coordination function).[76] SIFE also create a bespoke training course for all existing senior Special Branch officers that reflected an emphasis "upon counter-intelligence work as opposed to the mere collection of information." The course comprised "instruction on counter-intelligence methods, on Communism, both generally and in Malaya, practical instruction in tradecraft of various descriptions and in addition lectures on various other aspects of the Government with which from time to time a Special Branch Officer must become involved."[77] Moreover, as mentioned above, Morton, as H/SIFE, helped Special Branch establish a dedicated interrogation centre in Malaya. However, there is no evidence available that SIFE either collected any intelligence or provided any assessments of the Communist threat to the Federation, surely the most pressing and dramatic manifestation of Communist

---

[75] Ibid., Lloyd to Sillitoe, 31st December 1948.

[76] For the attachment of Special Branch Officers to SIFE see KV 4/423, Extract from Minutes of Governor's Conference held on 22nd-23rd January 1949; for the interrogation unit see KV 4/423, Kellar to DG, 10th May 1949 and KV 4/424, Young to DG, 17th May 1949; for the joint operations Unit in Singapore see KV 4/423, SIFE to DG, 16th October 1948 and SIFE to DG, 10th November 1948 – while this unit pre-dated the 'thinking aloud' telegrams, and relations between SIFE and Gimson remained fractious, the unit provided an example of local collegiality upon which future working could be based.

[77] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, The Young Papers, A review of developments in 1952, undated. See also, C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, p. 191.

subversion in British territories in the Far East at this time.[78] Indeed, SIFE's practical involvement in the Emergency was limited to these activities and was very far from the omnipotent security intelligence presence envisaged by Sillitoe.[79]

One of the Commissioner General's complaints in his 'thinking aloud' telegrams, was that neither MI5 nor SIS were working effectively. This proved to have far reaching consequences for SIFE's raison d'etre. As a result of the complaint, Guy Liddell held negotiations with SIS "in order to obtain their agreement to the secondment of one of their officers to SIFE in order that all reports on security intelligence can be co-ordinated on the same basis as those in the Middle East."[80] This again caused some considerable discussion both in the Far East and London. MacDonald raised the issue of why the Security Service had a Security Liaison Officer (LSO) in Burma, a non-Colonial country, therefore more normally within the jurisdiction of the Secret Intelligence Service. Kellar explained in this case "technical considerations" had been waived by both intelligence agencies "to meet the clearly expressed wish of the Burmese to have overt liaison on security matters." Moreover, the Security Service had overt representation in the Middle East and "liaison with the French and Belgians in West and Central Africa."[81] The lines of demarcation between MI5 and MI6 were thus, in places, already blurred.

Liddell noted that Kellar was in favour of having Security Service representation in countries adjacent to Malaya "owing to the fact that there are several organisations in each of these counties handling CE [counter-espionage] matters, and that this difficulty can only be overcome by local representation." However, SIS offered

---

[78] The Far East Military Attaches' Conference in 1950 provides an example of SIFE's priorities. Morton gave a detailed briefing to the Conference at GHQ FARLEF about Communism in the Far East, while the presentation about the counter-insurgency campaign in the Federation was left to a relatively junior intelligence officer from HQ Malaya District. See WO 208/4835, Report on Far East Military Attaches' Conference Held at GHQ FARELF, Singapore, 21st-23rd March 1950, 'SIFE' by J.P. Morton Esq, OBE, Head of SIFE.

[79] Arguably, it was also far from being the hub of Britain's intelligence interests in the Far East, as suggested by Leon Comber. See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police,* p. 96.

[80] KV 4/470, Kellar's diary entries for 29th December 1948. See also DG to Lloyd, 31st December 1948, explaining that as a result of MacDonald's telegrams MI5 and MI6 had formed "a small representative committee to examine this and other points concerning the relationships of our two organisations."

[81] KV 4/423, Kellar to Sillitoe, 2nd March 1949.

"precisely the opposite argument."[82] There followed complex discussions with SIS on the nature of counter-espionage and more mundane conversations within the Security Service about resourcing, personnel and accommodation.[83]Although the final detail of these deliberations are not clear, a subsequent briefing note stated that "when the Communist threat from China developed and fanned out over Asia, it became apparent that there was a great deal to gain from having a single CI organisation to meet the threat of espionage, sabotage and subversion. Thus by 1950 it was decided to amalgamate SIFE's Intelligence Division with MI6's regional apparatus to form a Joint Intelligence Division [JID]."[84] Moreover, SIFE took over the R5 [Counter-intelligence] functions of MI6.[85] By 1952 SIFE was considered as a joint Security Service / SIS Office.[86] It is thus somewhat ironic that one of the key effects of Macdonald's 'thinking aloud' telegrams was to prompt a renaissance in relations between MI5 and MI6 which significantly shifted SIFE's role away from security intelligence and thus the Emergency. Indeed, in the period between its inception and amalgamation with SIS, the Security Service's perception of its role in the Far East changed significantly.

Terminal Decline.

At the same time that Courtney Young, who succeed Morton as H/SIFE, was building upon his predecessors work to improve relations with local Special Branches, he began to doubt the very basis upon which his organisation existed. The germ of this doubt may be traced to a meeting he had in July 1952 with Alan Dudley, the new Deputy Commissioner General. After hearing Young's explanation of SIFE's role, Dudley asked "why could not all the work of SIFE headquarters be done in London?" This question appears to have taken Young by surprise – he noted in his subsequent report to London that "this is in fact the first time as far as I know this question has ever been asked." In response Young gave three reasons why SIFE's headquarters were in the

---

[82] KV 4/470, Kellar's diary entry for 23rd February 1949.

[83] Ibid., Kellar's diary entries for 27th April, 2nd May, 20th June, 24th July, 13th October 1949.

[84] KV 4/427, Brief for the visit to the Far East of JIC (London) Delegation, December 1955. See also WO 208/4835, Report on Far East Military Attaches' Conference Held at GHQ FARELF, Singapore, 21st -23rd March 1950, 'SIFE' by J.P. Morton Esq, OBE, Head of SIFE.

[85] KV 4/424, J. Collard (Acting H/SIFE), Note on SIFE Organisation and Function, 6th May 1952.

[86] KV 4/425, Young, The Basic Problems of SIFE Area Ports, 25th September 1953.

Far East. First, that its location provided greater contextual understanding to regional issues. Second "as long as there was a Commissioner General's Office and a BDCC, so long they would require an organisation to provide them with Security Intelligence and advice." Finally, "as long *as* the Foreign Service restricted the SIFE representation in foreign posts to one, so long would it be impossible for the outstation in foreign territory to produce satisfactory collated and appreciated reports."[87] Young's attempts to justify his organisation appear flimsy.

As a result of this conversation with Dudley, Young produced an eloquent and incisive report into SIFE, which articulated the organisation's structural weaknesses in a manner that its various critics in the Colonial Office tried but failed to do over the previous six years. Young highlighted flaws in SIFE's Security Liaison Posts on both British colonial and foreign territory, as well as SIFE headquarters. In relation to SIFE's Liaison Posts on colonial territory in the region, he explained that the local Special Branches were responsible to the Colonial government for almost all matters on which the Security Liaison Officer [SLO] is called to advise. They also held almost all the intelligence which the SLO had instructions to collect. Therefore "if the SLO advises the government that any aspect of its security machine is at fault he is, at least by implication, criticising the department on which he depends for his information." Indeed Young explained, "the very fact that he [the SLO] holds a position of independence is a restraint upon frankness, exemplified by the fact that to this day no SLO in the area is allowed unrestricted access to Special Branch files."[88]

Unfortunately, much of Young's comment on the state of SIFE's Liaison Posts on foreign territory remains heavily redacted. It is possible to discern, however, that he felt that there was a clear difference in working practices between SIS and Security Service officers. SIFE headquarters expected SLOs to undertake their own appreciation [assessment] process. However, Young believed that SIS officers performing this role were 'short-termist' and excessively operationally focused, neglecting the appreciation aspect of their work. According to Young, this was contrary to the

---

[87] KV 4/425, Young to DG, 25th July 1953.
[88] KV 4/424, SIFE Review of Security Intelligence in the Far East, 12th May 1952.

concept of SIFE which envisaged SLOs "making their post a self-contained local intelligence unit, able to feed in processed reports ready for collation." This led to an imbalance in the registry and, in relation to B Division (counter-subversion) work, "the trend has been for the more pressing calls of 'steerage' to take precedence over long-term study and collation."[89]

However, perhaps the greatest problems, according to Young, related to the functioning of SIFE HQ. There were two main issues. First, the integration of SIS officers into SLO posts had increased production of intelligence, but "at the cost of turning SIFE away from a regional outlook towards a territorial one." Consequently the tasking process was out-of-balance, and acquisition of information had become an end in itself.[90] Second, Young identified that the continuing ambiguity between political and security intelligence was having a serious and detrimental impact upon the work of SIFE. He acknowledged that the point of demarcation between the two concepts was near impossible to draw and that it was inevitable that SIFE would be drawn into political problems. However, the result was not only that "officers' time is spent on comment and reports which could be made equally well elsewhere but that political information is deliberately collected and studied for this purpose.[91] Young's solution was dramatic. He proposed that SLO posts in colonial territories in the region be closed, and their responsibilities be assumed by Special Branch; that the division of work between field posts on foreign territories and SIFE HQ be re-balanced (although to remain resourced on a joint MI5/ MI6 basis); that B Division of SIFE HQ be re-structured by function, rather than territory (thus shifting from a territorial to regional focus), and creating more section heads (providing greater supervision).[92]

Young's report raised issues of "fundamental, not to say revolutionary, importance" and, not surprisingly, prompted considerable debate in London.[93] However, it struck

---

[89] Ibid.

[90] See also KV 4/426, for a further, more developed report by Young entitled 'Reorganisation of SIFE Headquarters and Outstations in Foreign Territory', 11th November 1953.

[91] KV 4/424, SIFE Review of Security Intelligence in the Far East, 12th May 1952.

[92] Ibid.

[93] KV 4/425, minute 262, DOS to DG, 2nd October 1953.

a chord with Dick White, Sillitoe's successor.[94] This was partly due to the economies which re-structuring or complete disbandment might afford. Moreover, White was uncomfortable with the amount of 'political' work SIFE was doing for the Commissioner-General's office, which he felt should not be considered a high-powered regional policy-making body. Indeed, he admitted, "if it had not been for the war, and its aftermath, the SIFE regional headquarters would probably never have come into existence."[95] White felt that SIFE headquarters was 'top heavy' and recommended that the position of deputy H/SIFE be abolished. Moreover, he thought there was too much centralisation in Singapore and thus proposed "devolving more of the strength at present held in Singapore to the outstations, both in British and foreign territories."[96] Indeed there had already been a degree of decentralisation, such as the deployment of Security Service officers to research sections inside Special Branches of the Federation and Singapore, and the redeployment of staff in SIFE headquarters to individual territories.[97]

However, Dick White was not quite ready to let go of his Far East organisation completely. During the course of discussions in Singapore in February 1954, the 'Ransome' or 'Third Force Plan' was proposed as an alternative to the Young Plan. This involved the scaling down both of SLO posts (with SIS taking up a greater number of regional deployments in the region) and headquarters, leaving the latter to act "as a sort of super SLO." At the same time, Security Service officers would be attached to the regional Special Branches for a transitional period. Perhaps conscious that plans were afoot for the withdrawal of the Commissioner-General's office, White was drawn to the 'Third Force Plan' because it would allow the "status quo …to be maintained for another year with the weight being put into the field as the posts fell vacant and the post of Deputy H/SIFE abolished."[98]

---

[94] Sir Dick White succeeded Sir Percy Sillitoe as DG in 1953. In 1956 he was appointed head of SIS ('C') until retirement in 1968.
[95] KV 4/426, Notes of meeting held in DG's room on 5th January 1954.
[96] Ibid., DG to 'C', 29th March 1954.
[97] KV 4/425, 'Research Section of Singapore Special Branch', 10th September 1953 and KV 4/426, DG to 'C', 29th March 1954.
[98] KV 4/426, Extract from paper discussed by DG and H/SIFE on visit to Singapore, February 1954.

The 'Third Force' Plan was implemented but the pace of change in the Far East, particularly Malaya, showed it to be rather redundant. Indeed, there was further pressure for change in the following year. As early as January 1955 (i.e even before the first local elections had been held in Malaya[99]), the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, indicated to Dick White that the Commissioner General's Office, which provided much of the raison d'être for SIFE, would likely to remain in existence for not much more than a year. White formed the view that, whilst there was no immediate demand to wind up SIFE, they needed to plan for "the disappearance of the Commissioner General's organisation...and the general proposition that as much collation as possible should be done in London."[100] There were also further indicators of the imminent need for change originating from Singapore. Thistlethwaite, Young's successor as H/SIFE, reported to White that "it is clear to everybody...from the Secretary of State who has just begun out here, to the meanest shop-keeper that a new era has begun in Singapore and the Federation. There are the beginnings of self-government in both and there will be a snowball of demand for complete autonomy which it may be possible to guide, but not to resist."[101] This pace of change forced the Security Service to confront the need to reconfigure their regional presence for a post-colonial world, one where the new nations were unlikely to be receptive to an overt British intelligence presence.[102]

Much of the deliberation focused upon SIFE Headquarters, and how much of the work of the Joint Intelligence Division (JID - the combined SIS/MI5 assessment and analysis centre) could be conducted by individual regional stations.[103] Thistlethwaite was keen to reduce his JID to one collating member of staff. This caused concern in London. For instance, Bill Magan (the former H/SIME[104]) noted that while he did "not

---

[99] See A. Stockwell, "British imperial policy and decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13:1 (October 1984), pp. 68-87.

[100] KV 4/426, Extract from note of discussion between DG and Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick on 13th January 1955.

[101] KV 4/427, H/SIFE to DG, 26th August 1955.

[102] Ibid., 'Brief for visit to Far East of JIC (London) Delegation.'

[103] Ibid., DG to H/SIFE, 6th December 1955; H/SIFE to DG, 16th December 1955. For the background to the JID see 'Brief for visit to the Far East of JIC (London) Delegation, undated in the same file.

[104] W. Magan, *Middle Eastern Approaches – Experiences and Travels of an Intelligence Officer 1939-1948* (Norwich 2001).

underestimate the great value of velocity, and it may be that it is the first need in South East Asia at the moment, but that is not a sufficient reason to abandon the - albeit slow – conventional British Secretariat machinery."[105] Whilst Magan was concerned that things were moving at too great a pace, a former SIFE intelligence officer simply had doubts about the wisdom of reducing to one officer.[106] The pace of change aside, the debate in London essentially revolved around the question of where the analytical process should take place. Both SIS and the Security Service had accepted that outstations had to do their own collation. There were clear benefits of the appreciation (assessment) processes being done 'in theatre', not least local understanding and expertise, and to standardise the method of carding (each of three regional Special Branches used different methods to record Chinese names).[107] Yet, moving the process to London would reduce cost and create scaled-down intelligence presence in the region, appropriate for the looming post-colonial world. Ultimately the latter view prevailed.

The nature of SIFE's death's throes remain frustratingly obscure – the Secret Service files released in The National Archive simply cease with the last entry being 30 July 1956, at which point SIFE remained in existence. Moreover, the previous two files relating to SIFE remain heavily redacted. However, they do indicate a clear move to a post-colonial stance in the Far East. For instance, SLOs were reintroduced into Malaya and Singapore because White realised that the post of Director of Intelligence (which had acted as SLO for the two territories since 1954) was fragile and not viable in an independent Malaya. SLOs were retained in the existing SIFE areas and agreement was made with the Foreign Office over SIS coverage in non-colonial territories. Moreover, the remit of JID was changed to focus upon short-term collation and operational matters, with longer-term appreciations either done by the Security Service in London or the Foreign Office. While the exact date of its termination is not available, it is clear that by 1955 the preparatory work had been done – all that was required to move to the post colonial model of British intelligence in the Far East was to replace any

---

[105] Ibid., minute 337, by W. Magan, dated 24th November 1955.
[106] Ibid., minute 336, by W. Oughton, dated 23rd November 1955.
[107] Ibid., H/SIFE to DG, 21st December 1955.

lingering Security Service SLOs with SIS staff, and to withdraw the JID in favour of a SIS regional station.[108]

Conclusion.

Without doubt the original idea of SIFE was sound. Britain expected to return to her Far East territories after the defeat of Japan and thus required some form of Security Service presence more efficient than the pre-war 'link' system. Decolonisation in the region was seen as a distinct possibility but limited to self-government rather than full independence, and over a protracted time period. Therefore, the Security Service would require an intelligence hub, collating regional trends, particularly in relation to the twin threats of Communism and nationalism which were of concern to London, and supporting both the colonial governments in the Far East and Commissioner-General to identify and manage any subversive movements in British territories.

SIFE's remit placed it at the forefront of Britain's intelligence apparatus in the region, not least in relation to threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party. And yet between conception and delivery, SIFE went significantly astray. In the first instance, there was a fundamental failure to clarify SIFE's working practices. This is reflected in the numerous re-drafts of SIFE's charter and memorandum of instruction for its DSOs and SLOs. The uncertainty about SIFE's function was borne out by Sillitoe's drive for SIFE to develop a collecting function. Moreover, discussions about the distinction between political and security intelligence reoccur at almost monotonous regularity in the available files covering SIFE's existence. This issue was at the heart of Sillitoe's vision of SIFE's strategic position in the region, the subsequent debates about the integration of SIS officers into the SIFE and the fate of the JID and the support it provided the Commissioner General's office. However, the Security Service's ideas appear not to have been fixed – Sillitoe was rabidly against SIFE becoming involved in political intelligence, yet SIFE officers complained that SIS colleagues were too

---

[108] For more information on SIS's Far East station see Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the Far East controller: Secret intelligence structure and process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

operationally focused and neglected the political context. Moreover, as SIFE matured, its headquarters staff in the shape of the JID became, in effect, the Commissioner General's Chancery (ironically providing a key reason to prolong the life of SIFE). It is surprising that, throughout these debates, the suggestion that political intelligence might be integral to security intelligence was not raised.

SIFE was based upon the practical foundations provided by the CICB and the conceptual foundations provided by SIME. Yet from what were, particularly in relation to SIME, key examples of 'jointry', SIFE became an organisation that enjoyed fractious relations with nearly all its partners. There was a real lack of understanding by the Security Service of the existing local (colonial) security arrangements and how SIFE might co-exist, let alone integrate with them. This was exacerbated by the variable diplomatic skills demonstrated by the various heads of SIFE – Percy Sillitoe and Alec Kellar made a particularly combative pair. In contrast Jack Morton and Courtney Young appear to have been far better at working with partners across the region. Nevertheless, it is clear that key actors, including the Director of the MSS, the Commissioner for the Hong Kong police, the Governor of Singapore and the Commissioner General struggled not only with Sillitoe and Kellar, but with the broader concept of SIFE and its relationship to their spheres of interest. Conversely, the warmth and candour in communications between the various H/SIFE and London indicate that despite what might be on paper, SIFE owed its allegiance primarily to London, at the expense of relationships with regional partners.

SIFE's responsibility for dealing with subversive threats to British territories in the Far East was enshrined in its remit. However, despite this, it contribution to the Emergency in Malaya was very largely negative. It suffered from a lack of resources – not least people on the ground – and, in relation to Malaya, was hostage to the MSS and subsequently the newly re-constituted Special Branch, for intelligence. There is no evidence that it collected evidence against the MCP in the build-up to, or aftermath of, the declaration of emergency. Nor did it provide any meaningful assessments in the same time period about the Communist threat to Malaya. Moreover, SIFE's place, both within the Malayan intelligence apparatus and wider regional intelligence ambit,

was ambiguous. Questions of whether SIFE should be a collection or assessment agency and whether political intelligence equated to security intelligence remained unclear for large periods of time. These issues undoubtedly significantly blurred SIFE's operational focus. Moreover, as a result of the inter-agency disputes and metropolitan restructuring of the intelligence services, SIFE evolved in the period 1946-52 quickly from an embryonic security intelligence-clearing house to a far more strategic counter-intelligence regional headquarters for both MI5 and SIS. As it did, SIFE quietly moved away from the intelligence debacle taking place in Malaya. However, SIFE's primary effect upon the counter-insurgency effort in Malaya has thus far not been explored. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Sir Percy Sillitoe and SIFE actively subverted and finally destroyed the one organisation which had accurately forecast the threat posed by the MCP to the existence of the Malayan Union from as early as 1946. The implications of this act were evident for many years and had a fundamental impact upon the course of the Malayan Emergency.

Chapter 5 – The Malayan Security Service[1]

Introduction

The disinterest of the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC (FE)) and ineffectiveness of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), meant that the Malayan Security Service was left alone to safeguard the Federation's internal security. While the JIC (FE) and SIFE have nearly entirely escaped the attention of historians, the MSS has been roundly criticised as an organisation that was set up 'unsound', with a limited pool of raw intelligence sources and an equally poor output in terms of finished intelligence. Its director, Lt. Col. John Dalley, is characterised by contemporaries (such as Sir Percy Sillitoe, Director General of the Security Service) and historians (such as Leon Comber and Antony Short) as a maverick, preoccupied with the largely illusionary threat from Malay and Indonesian nationalism rather than the MCP. Indeed, the MSS appears to have failed to forecast the launch of the MCP's insurgency in June 1948. As a result, at the height of the government's confusion and when they needed their intelligence apparatus working at full capacity, the unprecedented decision was made not just to replace Dalley but also to disband the entire MSS.

However, this picture is not wholly accurate. Despite undoubted operational difficulties, the MSS identified the MCP as a credible threat to Malaya's security as early as 1946. Moreover, the MSS highlighted throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, factors which indicated that the MCP's potential to destabilise the Federation was growing significantly, to the extent that it is difficult to understand why the violence of June 1948 came as a surprise to the Malayan authorities. It is accepted that the MSS did not predict the acts of murder that prompted the declaration of Emergency simply because these were likely to have been spontaneous acts, but it did provide clear medium-term warning of both the intent and capability of the MCP to challenge the Malayan government.

---

[1] A version of this chapter has been published as a journal article. Please see R. Arditti & P. Davies, "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946-8", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292-316.

Not previously fully appreciated in existing narratives is the degree to which the MSS had to contend not only with Malaya's deteriorating internal security but the machinations of Sir Percy Sillitoe, the head of the Security Service (MI5). Whilst this may well have had a personal edge, the primary cause of the conflict between the two men was Sillitoe's agenda for the role and status of MI5's regional headquarters, Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE). Indeed, Sillitoe effectively subverted the MSS within the corridors of Whitehall and the verandas of Singapore before the state of Emergency had even been declared. Indeed, a reassessment of the MSS suggests the Malayan Emergency began not only with the Federation's primary intelligence agency on the brink of abolition, but with the wider inter-agency intelligence apparatus fractured and dislocated.

The implications for our understanding about origins of the Emergency, the role of intelligence during the campaign and the subsequent formation of doctrine are significant. From the earliest days of the Emergency commentators have speculated that the authorities either knew about the impending Communist campaign or used the declaration of Emergency as a pre-emptive strike.[2] However, the MSS could not have forecast the exact timing of the start of the Communist campaign but did provide adequate warning of an impeding crisis. These warnings fell on deaf ears, not because of a poor intelligence product but because the wider intelligence apparatus was dysfunctional. There is no credible evidence to support the theory that the government acted proactively against the MCP. The MSS was abolished because of inter-agency discord, not because of its performance. The result was that the Malayan authorities were forced to tackle the MCP threat whilst reconstituting its intelligence structures, a process which took at least four years to complete.

---

[2] A. Stockwell, "'A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency'", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (Sept. 1993), pp. 66-88; K. Hack, "The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40: 3 (2009), pp. 471-496; P. Deery, "Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9:1 (Winter 2007), pp. 29-54.

Historiography and Mythology of the MSS

Despite the resurgence of interest in the Malayan Emergency in recent years, the MSS has largely escaped the detailed attention of historians. Most who have considered the MSS do so as part of the preamble to wider discussions of the Emergency and instinctively link its demise directly to the failure to forecast the outbreak of MCP's insurgency.[3] Commentators attribute this failure to a combination of three key factors: the structure of the MSS, the operational difficulties it faced, and the leadership of Dalley.

Anthony Short, author of perhaps the definitive account of the Malayan Emergency, has also mentions Dalley's impact upon the work of the MSS, in particular his apparent pre-occupation with Malay nationalism and Indonesia, rather than the MCP. Short is highly critical of the intelligence reports by the MSS suggesting that Dalley "hedged his bets", and presided over an organisation which made "lurid forecasts", one of which contained "the most astonishing series of errors from what was an intelligence rather than a clairvoyant organisation."[4]

Leon Comber has provided the most comprehensive examination of the MSS thus far.[5] He highlights the practical difficulties faced by the MSS, in particular the lack of intelligence officers, Chinese-speaking staff and human sources within the MCP. Comber also discusses the apparent inadequacy of the MSS's key intelligence product, the fortnightly *Political Intelligence Journal*, the information in which he considers to be "diffuse and spread over a wide range of topics, without necessarily singling out

---

[3] A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-60* (London 1975); D. MacKay, *The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 - The Domino that Stood (London 1997);* R. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare - The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (Singapore 1989); H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444. See also K. Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (2008), pp. 211-241.

[4] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, pp. 82–3.

[5] Leon Comber's 2003 article, replicated in *Malaya's Secret Police*, is the only work dedicated to history of the MSS. Unfortunately, it is largely narrative in nature and fails to explain fully why the MSS was abolished. See L. Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945-48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18: 3 (2003), pp. 128-153; Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60* (Singapore 2008).

the CPM [Communist Party of Malaya] as the main target."[6] He also alludes to Dalley's difficult personality, and the antagonism between him and Sir Percy Sillitoe. The latter aspect is also mentioned by Christopher Andrew in his survey of the Security Service but neither author develops this theme.[7] Georgina Sinclair's recent article on Special Branch also provides a further perspective about our understanding of the MSS. She reintroduces a view first expressed by Sillitoe some sixty years ago that the MSS was structurally unsound. This leaves unanswered the question of why not simply reform the MSS rather than disband it entirely when confronting a major deterioration in internal security which was possibly externally orchestrated?[8]

Thus, the prevailing view of the MSS is of an organisation that was operationally challenged, with few, if any, reliable human sources within the MCP. This was compounded by Dalley's preoccupation with the potential threats posed by Malay and Indonesian nationalism, rather than that from the Communism. Moreover, Dalley is portrayed as an irascible, indeed belligerent, man who antagonised his peers, not least the head of Security Service. But above all, the MSS simply failed to forecast the Communist insurrection and was disbanded as a direct consequence. However, the prevailing view has three significant limitations. First, it does not explain why Dalley, having apparently failed to warn the Malayan government of the Communist insurgency, retained a significant body of support within the regional core executive. Indeed, primary sources show that Sir Frank Gimson[9], Governor of Singapore, and Malcolm MacDonald[10], Commissioner-General for South East Asia, valued the intelligence provided by the MSS and continued to hold Dalley in high regard, and

---

[6] Ibid., p. 39
[7] C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London 2010).
[8] G. Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': the rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948-1955', *Intelligence and National Security,* 26:4 (2011), pp. 460-77.
[9] Sir Franklin Gimson (b. 1890 – d. 1975) served with the British Ceylon Civil Service between 1914-1941. He assumed the post of Colonial Secretary of Hong Kong in 1941. He spent the duration of the Second World War as a prisoner of war. He was Governor of Singapore from 1946-52.
[10] Malcolm MacDonald (b. 1901 – d. 1981) Labour MP, was Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1935 and again between 1938-40, High Commissioner to Canada between 1941-6, Governor General, Malaya and Borneo 1946-48, and Commissioner General for South East Asia 1948-55.

advocated the need to integrate Dalley within the new intelligence apparatus.[11] This support appears incongruent with the current view that the failings of the MSS were linked directly to Dalley's leadership.

Second, one can detect within the current historiography a layering pathology in which the alleged deficiencies of MSS reports are accepted without critical review. Without doubt the fortnightly *Political Intelligence Journal* became increasingly voluminous, considered potential threats from multiple quarters and tended to focus on Malaya nationalism. However, a close reading of the material produced by the MSS clearly indicates that their intelligence reports recognised that the MCP threat was growing, that were was increasing Communist-inspired unrest developing amongst Malaya's tin mine and rubber plantation, and that this was building to a crescendo. This is not readily acknowledged in the existing literature.

The third limitation of the existing understanding of the MSS is, as Comber appears to acknowledge, the continued difficulty to answer the central question relating to the organisation's short history; that is why did the colonial authorities take the dramatic and operationally counter-intuitive decision to abolish the MSS entirely, rather than simply remove Dalley and reform the organisation he had built?[12] Intelligence failures were hardly new to the UK's security forces, but abolishing an entire agency in peace time was virtually unprecedented.[13] This article will suggest that a more coherent explanation for the rise and fall of the MSS can be found in an examination of its interagency relationships as much as its alleged failures.

The Origins of the MSS

The origins of the MSS can be traced to its establishment in September 1939 by Arthur

---

[11] Less is known about the views of Sir Edward Gent, High Commissioner of Malaya, largely because he died on in an aircraft crash on 4th July 1948, whilst being recalled to London for talks about the security situation.

[12] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, pp. 45-6.

[13] Wartime agencies such as the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) were, of course, wound up at the end of hostilities but largely because their establishment had been the result of a temporary crisis-driven expansion of activities that could be absorbed elsewhere in government during peace. See, e.g. P. Davies, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London 2004) pp.199-210; W.N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockage* (London 1959) pp.628-629.

Dickinson, the Inspector General of the Straits Settlements Police.[14] The idea of a Pan-Malaya intelligence organisation was conceived to address the fragmented pre-war structures where the Straits Settlements' Special Branches (formerly the Political Intelligence Bureau), and the Federated Malay States' Police Intelligence Bureau had responsibility for political intelligence in their respective territories. However, as Dalley later explained to Sir Ralph Hone (Secretary General in the Commissioner General's office), the great drawback "to all this was that there was no co-ordination between the Intelligence Bureau in the F.M.S and Special Branch in the Straits Settlements, and at the same time there was no organised coverage of the 4 Unfederated States." Thus, in an effort to remove the difficulties of co-ordination between the unwieldy collection of Straits Settlements, Federated and Unfederated Malay States, the MSS was formed in 1939 with responsibility for political and security intelligence across the entire Malayan peninsula and Singapore.[15] The MSS was established as a non-executive 'co-coordinating' body and was separate from the Police. However, the war with Japan meant the pre-war incarnation of the MSS was short-lived.

Recently released papers clearly show that the MSS was re-constituted afresh in 1946, mirroring the creation of the Malayan Union. The basic premise of a non-executive, pan-Malaya, intelligence organisation remained the same however. The new agency started work on 1st April without a substantive director or, more importantly, a clearly defined remit or formal charter, both of which subsequently became subject of significant negotiation.[16] As will be discussed below, matters were significantly complicated by the parallel creation of SIFE and the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East), with whom the MSS had a responsibility to maintain a close liaison. As such, Short has described the MSS as being "designed as a sort of super intelligence

---

[14] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, pp. 26-7.

[15] Rhodes House Library, MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13th July 1948. See also CO 537/2647, Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17th December 1947. See also the introduction to the first Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journal, 01/46 (30th April 1946), MSS Ind. Ocn. S251. These documents cast doubt on Comber's assertion, which is echoed by Sinclair, that the MSS was formed before the Second World War.

[16] See FCO 141/14360 and the discussion below. These papers are part of the fifth tranche of such materials recently migrated from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to The National Archive.

organisation", which shared key organisational characteristics with its metropolitan equivalent, MI5.[17] In more understated terms, the MSS was actually typical of the kind of joint-service intelligence coordinating and analytical centre that had become increasingly common practice for the UK defence and intelligence communities throughout the Second World War.[18]

Dalley may not have been a former intelligence officer but had relevant professional background in other significant respects. Prior to capture and spending the much of the war as a Japanese prisoner of war, Dalley had been a member of the pre-war Federated Malay States' Police Force and then an active combatant in irregular warfare against the Japanese Army. At the outbreak of hostilities with Japan he assembled Dalley's Company (Dalco) which was an irregular, all volunteer, guerrilla force. He later formed Dalforce, which comprised Chinese civilian irregulars. When Singapore fell, a significant element of Dalforce retreated into the jungle and merged with the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA).[19] Thus Dalley came to the post with substantial prior experience of Malaya and experience of guerrilla warfare, the latter engendering what even Comber acknowledges was considerable intelligence experience.[20]

Throughout the MSS's short existence, Dalley struggled with a significant shortage of staff. For instance, in the weeks prior to its disbandment, the MSS was short of four Local Security Officers (LSOs), fourteen assistant LSOs, fourteen enquiry staff and five

---

[17] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, p. 80.

[18] See, e.g., P. Davies *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States: a Comparative Approach* (Santa Barbara 2012). Examples would include the Joint Intelligence Organisation, the Inter-Service Topographical Department (ISTD) and its postwar successor the Joint Intelligence Bureau in London, the Middle East Intelligence Centre (MEIC) and Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME) in Cairo and P Division of Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) in Kandy.

[19] At the end of the War the MPAJA, Dalley's own former unit, reformed itself into the Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA). See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 48 (fn. 23); D. Mackay, *The Domino that Stood - The Malayan Emergency, 1948-60* (London 1997), p. 31; M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (London 2007), pp. 17, 27-8.

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

translators.[21] This staffing gap resulted in no permanent MSS presence in Trengganu and Kelantan. Moreover, only one LSO could speak Chinese – clearly a huge obstacle, as this was the primary language of nearly forty percent of the population of Malaya.[22] Dalley was so concerned about the lack of qualified staff, that he asked the two Commissioners of Police in Malaya "to supply suitable staff for Malaya Security Service from their strength to bring M.S.S up to establishment. This requirement was never fully acceded to…" Similarly, he explained to Hone that "repeated requests have been made for suitable rates of pay, but even today a translator in the M.S.S., - who handles very secret documents and has available to him information of a highly secret nature – is paid less than a translator in the Chinese Secretariat where, at most, they handle confidential information."[23] Although these comments were written when Dalley had learnt from a third party that his organisation was about to be disbanded, his frustration at not having sufficient and well-remunerated staff is clear.

Dalley also made clear his frustration with the lack of executive powers. Like MI5, its metropolitan cousin, the MSS depended upon the police service for powers of search and arrest. The MSS did pass "much detailed information to various authorities in Malaya, including the Police, most of which recommended action." However, Dalley felt it "unfortunate that in many cases no action was taken and that in a large measure has led to the present situation of Malaya." He further stated "much of this information has been wasted by no action or no proper action being taken in so many cases." He illustrated this claim by making reference to failure of the police either to heed the MSS's warning to guard the village of Jerantut or to make coordinated searches of subversive organisations and the arrest of leading personalities. Despite being the primary intelligence body in Malaya, Dalley bemoaned the fact "there has

---

[21] MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13th July 1948. Dalley quotes figures for actual vs approved establishment for 1st May 1946. Comber provides similar figures for 1948, see Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 32.
[22] Ibid., p. 34.
[23] MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13th July 1948.

been and there still is, no machinery whereby the M.S.S. can co-ordinate action. All that M.S.S. can do at the moment is to recommend action."[24]

The Police should have been both "a prolific source of information" and executive arm for the MSS.[25] However, Malaya was in a near anarchic state and it is not surprising that the Police struggled to support the MSS. The Fortnightly Reports from HQ Malaya for 1946-7, paint, in the words of one official, "a grim picture." The cost of rice had risen from $1.50 per month before the war to $20 in 1946. Serious crime was at alarming levels – there were 78 recorded murders in January 1946 and 109 'gang robberies.'[26] Throughout this period, industrial unrest caused the Police great concern, as did deterioration in Sino-Malay relations, links between Malay Nationalist Party and Indonesian nationalists, and activities of Chinese KMT gangs.[27] Little wonder, then, that Dalley stated that because the Police "have been so absorbed in the investigation of criminal activities the amount of information received…has been negligible."[28]

Moreover, the Police Service was in parlous state. Stockwell explains how the European contingent of the Police force had been decimated by war and internment, and those who survived were in ill-health and low spirits. 'Old Malayan hands' mistrusted newcomers from other dependencies. The normally steadfast Indian element of the Police force suffered similar deprivations by the Japanese and some had joined the anti-British Indian National Army.[29] In addition, many Malay constables were tainted by wartime collaboration with the Japanese and were subject to post-war reprisals by the MPAJA.[30] As a result, there were very few skilled officers to tackle such problems. For instance, the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) in the state

---

[24] Ibid. See also C. Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald – Bringing an End to Empire* (1995), pp. 293-4.

[25] Ibid.

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

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

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

[29] A. Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism and decolonisation", in D. Anderson and D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics Nationalism, and the Police, 1917-65* (Manchester 1992), p. 108-9.

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

of Perak was staffed with only two detectives, one Malay and one Chinese.[31] Even if the Police were free from their primary responsibility to maintain law and order to concentrate fully upon supporting the MSS, engagement with the Chinese community, which constituted 38% of Malaya's population, was near impossible.[32] Bennett points that just 2.5% of the 9000 strong Police were Chinese and only twelve British Police officers could speak a Chinese dialect. Moreover, the legacy of the *Kempetai* meant that the idea of agents and intelligence was tainted particularly for the Chinese community.[33] The concept of the MSS depended upon the Police both for the use of executive powers and as a conduit for information. Yet the Malayan Police struggled to fulfil their core responsibility to maintain law and order and were in no position to offer the MSS the level of support Dalley required.

The Political Intelligence Journals

It was against this background of operational difficulty that the MSS had to produce intelligence assessments, not only about the Communist threat but those posed by labour unrest, different strands of Malay and Indian nationalism, and potential Indonesian expansionism. The organisation's intelligence reports have been roundly criticised by commentators.[34] Yet, Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner General, felt that the MSS gave adequate warning of the Communist threat, and that the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, simply did not react effectively.[35] Whilst the MSS reports did attract some criticism from the Colonial Office for being too detailed, there is good evidence that key 'consumers' were content with the service provided by the MSS, even in the aftermath of the declaration of Emergency.

---

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

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

[33] Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (2008), p. 213; see also Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945-48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18: 3 (2003), p. 133.

[34] Short, *The Communist Insurrection*, pp. 82–3; Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 139; Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2009), 32: 3, p. 423.

[35] Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald – Bringing an End to Empire*, pp. 292-3.

The first Political Intelligence Journal (PIJ) was produced in April 1946, the month that saw the inauguration of both the MSS and the Malayan Union. For the first eight months of the MSS existence, the Journals were signed off L. Knight (A/Director) or N. Morris (D/Director) because Dalley was on home leave.[36] The initial distribution list included senior MSS officers, the Police Commissioners of Malaya and Singapore, Chief Police Officer for each settlement, the Governors of Malaya and Singapore, the Governor-General of Malaya, the DSO Malaya.[37] Of note, is that neither the MSS nor the Malayan government sent copies of the Journal to the Colonial Office in London until 1948.[38] Whilst copies of the Journal were sent to Special Branch in Calcutta (the Tamil labour force being one of the common points of interest between the two intelligence agencies), it is clear that the Journal was a parochial product.

The structure of the Journals reflected the chaotic state of post-war Malaya. Each issue was divided into two sections: the first provided a brief summary of the general situation; the second providing more detailed discussion "of various subjections and organisations which appear to be of interest."[39] The first section invariably featured comment about the Communists, the Kuomintang, union / labour affairs, Indian politics, Sino-Malay relations and Malay nationalism. The subject of the second section of the Journals depended upon what was topical and, during 1946, not every issue provided a second section. Topics that were covered included reactions to the Malayan Union, Labour Day, the Malayan General Labour Union, political parties of China, Youth Movements, Invulnerability Cults, the Angkatan Pemuda Yang Insaaf (API lit. Youth Justice Group, a Malay leftist organisation)), and Indonesian National Movements.

The Journals overseen by Knight and Morris were relatively succinct, averaging eight pages of typed foolscap paper per issue. Just over ten percent of their content was

---

[36] For a brief biographical note for Nigel Morris see L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60,* p. 51, fn. 37.
[37] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 4/46.
[38] See CO 537/3751, minute by Mr Seel, 20th February 1948.
[39] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 1/46.

devoted to the Malayan Communist Party.[40] During 1946 one can trace the MSS moving from relative complacency about the MCP to one of growing concern. Initially, they believed that Communist activities had been "considerably sobered by the expulsion on the first day of the new government of ten leaders of the General Labour Union."[41] Also the MCP appeared to be so financially weak that it had been forced to close down all of its branches in Malaya, except the two headquarters at Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The MSS did, however, caution that the MCP felt "it could exert sufficient influence throughout the country through their subsidiary organisations, the NDYL [New Democratic Youth League] and GLU [General Labour Union]."[42] Indeed, the Journals convey a sense of relief that the May Day celebrations passed off without significant incident. However, the MSS's concern that the MCP might manipulate labour disputes to raise its profile seem to be confirmed by an outbreak of strikes in Malaya and Singapore in July. In the following month the MSS noted two parallel lines of concern about Communism: the fact that the GLU was under the direct control of the MCP and the rise of radical rhetoric from the MPAJA. Indeed, the latter aspect was emphasised by a report, albeit from a KMT source, that the MPAJA in Pahang were making preparations in case they decided to take up arms again. Thus, the situation in relation to Communist activity upon Dalley's return to Malaya at the end of 1946 was tense: the MCP was believed to be financially weak, but retained the control over the GLU; Singapore continued to be plagued by GLU-instigated strikes; MPAJA propaganda was becoming increasingly radical and sporadic reports were appearing relating to the discovery of arms dumps.[43]

The nature and tone of the Journal changed once Dalley assumed responsibility for the MSS. The most obvious change is the length of each issue - in 1946 the average length of the journal was eight-pages but this increased over threefold in 1947 to an average of just over twenty-six pages. The editorial tone also changed. Neither Morris

---

[40] By paragraph count, roughly analogous to counting column inches in the content analysis of print media reporting.

[41] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 1/46. In contrast, under Dalley the average page count increased from eight to twenty-seven pages per Journal, some 13% of which was devoted to Communism.

[42] Ibid., 9/46

[43] Ibid., 01/47.

nor Knight drew strong inferences from the facts that they reported. In contrast, Dalley made an effort not only to assess the capabilities and intentions of the reports' subjects but also to forecast based on those assessments, attempting something more akin to genuine intelligence analysis. For instance, in February 1947 he asserted "the progress of the MCP programme for the control of labour through labour unions, infiltration into and control of the policies of nationalists movements and the discrediting of the Malayan governments is gathering momentum." He continued to state "when they have sufficiently consolidated their position, and this is a period of consolidation, the Communist Party intends to proceed with the next part of its programme which is the other overthrow of the Malayan government and the establishment of a Communist state in South East Asia."[44] It is impossible to now know whether Dalley's forthright analysis can be attributed to an attempt to assert his leadership over the MSS or perhaps to demonstrate a prescient and authoritative understanding of the MCP threat. What is clear, however, is that as early as January 1947 he chose to portray the MCP as a clear and present danger to Malaya.

A review of the subsequent twenty-one Journals produced by the MSS in 1947 highlights four key themes in relation to threat posed by the MCP. The first is the belief that the MCP was attempting to broaden its appeal to different races in Malaya. For instance, in his first Journal, Dalley suggested that Malay extremists were receiving strong support and encouragement from both Indonesian revolutionaries but also the MCP. In April it was reported that the MCP's central committee was trying to "play down Chinese influence, not only to attract more Malays and Indians to the Party but also in order to be able to give support to Malay and Indian political associations without those associations being accused of enlisting alien support."[45] The Journals of the spring of 1947 noted that the MCP had been trying to influence Indian labourers in Kedhah [sic] and Johore but were struggling to "exact full and continuous discipline."[46] In May the MSS suggested that the MCP would not "provoke" Indian labour to strike again "unless and until they are in a position to employ its tendency

---

[44] Ibid., 02/47.
[45] Ibid., 05/47 (based on a translation of *Freedom Press*). See also 06/47.
[46] Ibid., 03/47.

to violence."[47] Nevertheless, later in the year the MSS reported that R. Balan, the MCP's Indian delegate to the Empire Communist Conference in London, entered a prolonged power struggle for control for rural labour in Perak, pitching the Communist-controlled Perak Estate Employees union against the Estate Workers Union.[48] Dalley also remained concerned about the MCP's intentions towards the Malay community. For instance, in September, whilst noting that the Communists had been "subdued of late", he reported that "its underground activities continue and are particularly noticeable among the Malays." The MSS also highlighted the MCP's apparent links with the API.[49] In October the MSS asserted that the "Communist Party is increasing its efforts to obtain control of left-wing Malay organisations."[50]

The second theme within the Journals for 1947 is the MCP's internationalist outlook and ambitions, upon which Dalley placed as much if not more emphasis upon than its links with Malay nationalism. There appears to be a reasonable evidence base upon which these judgements were based. For instance, in early 1947 Dalley commented upon five members of the China Communist Party, who had entered Malaya with a "definite mission."[51] In the summer, the MSS found a distribution list for the MCP's *Freedom News* which showed that it had links with the Communist parties in Burma, Cyprus, Australia, India, Palestine, Canada and the Soviet Union.[52] Other seized documents showed the MCP were distributing pamphlets extolling the virtues of Lenin and the 'Reg Flag.'[53] A further document disclosed that the MCP intended to establish "a Republic of Malaya; the re-organisation of the MPAJA into a regular Army of the Republic of Malaya, and unity with Russia and China in a campaign to help all oppressed nations in the Far East to set up their independent governments."[54] Dalley was also concerned about Soviet activity in South East Asia, in particular its use of propaganda, aimed at weaken 'Western Democracies' in the region. The final Journal

---

[47] Ibid., 07/47.
[48] Ibid., 8/47.
[49] Ibid.,16/47.
[50] Ibid.,19/47.
[51] Ibid.,04/47.
[52] Ibid.,13/47.
[53] Ibid.,16/47.
[54] Ibid.,17/47.

of 1947 makes note of a proposed secret meeting of Communists somewhere in South Asia and travels of Lee Soong (a New Democratic Youth League member) from the World Federation of Youth Conference at Prague to Calcutta for the Far Eastern Youth Congress, due to be held on 15th February 1948. Thus, while Dalley shared neither evidence nor opinion during 1947 that the MCP would launch a campaign of externally directed insurgency (largely because such a plan did not exist), it is nevertheless evident that the MSS believed the MCP to be a distinct threat, made all the more concerning because of its expansionist Communist agenda, international links, and widespread use of propaganda.

The third theme within the Journals is the continued unease about the MCP's influence upon labour, both in Singapore and Malaya, throughout 1947. For instance, in his first Journal, Dalley stated that the MCP's programme for the control of labour unions was gathering momentum.[55] Whilst the majority of Dalley's concern was directed towards the industrial unrest in Singapore, there are frequent indicators within the Journals that the MCP also had aspirations to stimulate unrest in Malaya's rubber plantations and tin mines. As discussed above, the MCP had flirted with Indian labours in Kedhah and Johore but was believed to have pulled back for fear of not being able to control any unrest. Nevertheless in April, labourers, most of whom belonged to the Indian Estate Workers Union, on two hundred and forty estates in Selangor submitted demands to managers. In August the Pan Malayan Rubber Estate Worker's Union held a one-day strike. More presciently, also in August, the MSS highlighted the vulnerability of Chinese squatters to "the propaganda of the MCP and its satellite, the New Democratic Youth League who have taken every opportunity to propagandise amongst these unfortunate people."[56] Thus, the Journals provide evidence of a developing awareness during 1947 within the MSS that the MCP threat was not confined to Singapore.

The fourth discernible theme is the increasing reference to the activities and confrontational outlook of the Ex-Comrades Association. The MSS received increasing

---

[55] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 02/47.
[56] Ibid., 14/47.

numbers of reports during 1947 about arms dumps being found across Malaya. This was perhaps not surprising given that most were the remnants of arms supplied by the British to support the MPAJA during the war.[57] However, the reports generated concern because of the political, vehemently anti-British and pro-Communist, nature of the post-war MPAJA.[58] In October 1947 Dalley admitted that he was not certain to what extent the MPAJA was taking part in the lawlessness in parts of Malaya. However, "it was known that it is the Communist Party's intention to make the public lose their confidence in Government, and one of their methods is to create such a state of lawlessness as will induce a general feeling of personal insecurity."[59] There is little doubt that, by the latter half of 1947, Dalley had identified the MPAJA as the MCP's guerrilla Army in-waiting, and one which had ready access to a significant amount of weapons.

One of the most significant methodological problems with the PIJs was that the intelligence reports did not benefit from a formal, systematic analytical process or the level of drafting professional practice that had been taking shape elsewhere in the UK intelligence community. It is relatively clear, however, that the fortnightly journals provided sufficient information during the course of 1947 to suggest that the MCP posed a credible threat to Malaya's internal security: MCP propaganda, captured documents and apparent links with international Communist highlighted its intent to overthrow the British administration; its influence over labour gave it a potential to impact Malaya's economy, while control over the MPAJA clearly posed a risk to it internal security.

Hack suggests that "the MSS had little new to say about Communist plans in the first three months of 1948, for the simple reason that Malayan Communist Party (MCP) strategy had changed little over the previous year."[60] Yet, to accept this statement is

---

[57] It should be noted that Chin Peng takes an alternative view – he suggests that the vast majority of MPAJA weapons were taken from Japanese during and immediately after the War. See Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History* (Singapore 2003), p.118.

[58] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 06/47.

[59] Ibid., 17/47.

[60] K. Hack, "The origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40: 3 (October 2009), p. 471.

to ignore the possibility that the Party was developing a momentum. Indeed, the PIJs in the first half of 1948 did provide further clear indicators that the threat 'vector' posed by the MCP was growing rapidly. For instance, the MCP's financial position had improved signifcantly. In the aftermath of Loi Tak's disappearance with a significant proportion of the Party's funds in early 1947, the MCP launched a widespread and rather desperate attempt to secure additional money. It appealed to other leftist organisations, such as regional trades unions, for donations and used the MPAJA to sell commemoration cards.[61] This generated a significant flow of money back into MCP funds. For instance, the 'special contribution week' held in Singapore in July raised $11,000 and the sale of memorial cards by the Singapore MPAJA raised about $8,000.[62] Perhaps the most significant aspect was not so much the state of the MCP's finances but that it was able to tap into various sources of support to obtain meaningful contributions at a time of acute economy difficulty.

The ability of the MCP to reach the wider leftist organisations within Malaya was partly a function of what the MSS saw as their tightening grip on labour. For instance, the Journal for 31st January 1948 stated "a close study of the activities of known Communist agents, the organisations which they control, and their manoeuvrings, indicates renewed efforts to gain control of all organised labour in Malaya by infiltrating into and disrupting trade unions not yet under the control of the Communist Party…the indications are that through these methods and by implied intimidation, they will gain sufficient control to be in a position to disrupt the economy of the whole of Malaya. There are indications that an effort will be made through these Communist Party-controlled labour unions to create labour unrest throughout Malaya during this coming year."[63] In April the MSS reported that there had been "indications that the Communists, working through labour unions have been preparing for some important event. Whether they were merely preparing for May Day, or whether they were working to fit in with a wider world pattern (the Italian Elections, events in Berlin, events in Burma) is not yet known…" The Journal explained

---

[61] MSS Ind. Ocn. S. 251, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 10 & 11/47.
[62] CO 537/3751, MSS Political Intelligence Journal, 2/48.
[63] Ibid., 2/48.

that the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions had been attempting to organise a series of strikes, culminating in disorder during the mass rally and procession planned for 1st May. Due to "two tactical errors" made by the SFTU, the Singapore government was able to ban both the rally and possession, scoring a significant propaganda victory. Nevertheless, Dalley warned that "although recent events in Singapore resulted in the defeat of their immediate plans, it is unlikely that the Communists will accept it as total defeat."[64]

The MSS remained conscious that the MCP was likely to remain focused on mobilising labour in Singapore. Yet the Journals in the first half of 1948 did reveal increasing reports of Communist activity in Malaya's rubber estates and tin mines. For instance, on 15th April 1948 the MSS again reported "in Perak the Communist BALAN is planting his agents on rubber estates in all areas and it looks as if he may be successful in gaining control over a number of important labour unions in that area."[65] Again on the 30th April Dalley stated that Balan, had obtained control of rubber estate labour over such a wider area, we can anticipate strikes and perhaps disorder in that area." In the same Journal, Dalley said "there are indications that the Communist Party may now do as they did last year – turn their attention to Indian rubber estates and incite them to strikes and riots.[66] In the following Journal, the MSS reported that "Balan has extended his activities to Parit…some 2000 Indian and Chinese labourers struck work on 3rd May." The strike at Parit was not an isolated incident – at the beginning of May there had been "trouble brewing on the Brooklands Estate, Banting, Selangor since April; strikes involving intimdation were taking place at the Loong Sin Tin Mine, Salak South, and at the Killinghall, Hong King and Ipoh tin dredges in Selangor; at the Fook Heng Rubber Works, Menglembu, Perak; and a riot at the Bing Seng Rubber Milling Factory which resulted in arson causing one million dollars worth of damage. Moreover, the Johore State Worker's Union were engaging in violence, including an attack on a Police patrol at Bikit Sorempang."[67] Thus, the rise in Communist-

---

[64] Ibid., 8/48.
[65] Ibid., 7/48.
[66] Ibid., 8/48.
[67] Ibid., 9/48.

orchestrated, agitation and violence in rural areas were events that were not uncommon in the months prior to the murders in June that prompted the declaration of Emergency. Indeed, it is hard to conclude that an increase in rural violence, as experienced in June 1948 and which prompted the government to declared a state of Emergency, would come as a shock.

A reassessment of the Political Intelligence Journals show that the MSS identified the MCP as a real and credible threat to Federation, repeatedly expressing the belief that the MCP had both the means and intention to destabilise the Federation. Rather than having nothing new to say in the first months of 1948, the Journals clearly tracked a change in Communist activity – whilst the focus remained on industrial trouble in Singapore, the levels of striking, intimidation and violence on Malaya's tin mines and rubber plantations was escalating rapidly. And yet, the MSS failed to forecast that the MCP was to turn from inciting urban and industrial unrest, to a rural-based campaign of insurgency. One explanation of why the MSS failed to do this revolves around the disappearance in early 1947 of the chairman on the MCP, Loi Tak. Loi had, in fact, been the MSS's primary source of human intelligence on the MCP's leadership. Whilst this episode has been covered sufficiently already in the literature, it is important to note that Dalley was left without an alternative source within the heart of the MCP. [68] Hence from spring 1947 the Journals rely more prominently upon documents and lower level informants. [69] However, whilst significant, the Loi Tak episode does appear to be a false trail. As Stockwell explains, historians have long since abandoned the view the MCP mounted its insurgency following orders from Moscow. [70] Indeed, since the

---

[68] Y. Akashi, "The Malayan Communist Party, Lai Teck and the Japanese Period: 1942-5", in C.C. Chin & K. Hack, *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore 2004), p. 252-5; Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng*, pp. 149-195; L. Comber, "'Traitor of all Traitors' – Secret Agent *Extraordinaire*: Lai Teck, Secretary-General, Communist Party of Malaya (1939-1947)", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 83: 2 (2010), pp.1-25.

[69] Yuen Yuet Leng, a former Special Branch officer during the Emergency, has suggested that "British intelligence and Special Branch's skillful handling of triple agent Lai Tek…thwarted and contained possibly more extensive CPM success.' See Yuen Yuet Leng, *Nation Before Self – And values that do not die* (Kuala Lumpur, 2008), p28.

[70] A. Stockwell, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, series 16: 3 (2006), p. 284. See also, Hack, "The origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40:3 (October 2009), pp. 471-496; P. Deery, "Malaya, 1948 – Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9: 1 (Winter 2007), pp. 29-54.

publication of Chin Peng's memoirs in 2003 the consensus is that the MCP Central Committee did not trigger the murders in June that prompted the declaration of Emergency.[71] Hence, even if Dalley had a source akin to Loi Tak within the MCP's politburo, he would be unable to forecast the events of June 1948.

The Journals are by no means polished examples of intelligence analysis. Reflecting the turmoil, indeed near anarchy, of post-war Malaya, the fortnightly consideration of the MCP is immersed in competing threat vectors. Commentators have made much of Dalley's concern about Malay and Indonesian nationalism and these topics do occupy a large proportion of each Journal. Moreover, the Colonial Office officials, who began to receive the Journals in early 1948, expressed some difficultly in disentangling the various commentaries, one suggesting that it "was rather difficult to see the wood from the trees."[72] That said, the information about the MCP, is clear: the Party's strategic intent remained fixed, and its capability was growing quickly (not least because of the groundswell of rural unrest). The only missing element within the MSS's understanding of threat from the MCP was how the Party intended to pursue the struggle. Thus, what appears to have been reasonably good performance as an operational and analytic entity serves only to deepen the mystery of the MSS's seemingly untimely demise.

Sillitoe and SIFE

Without compelling evidence that the MSS was the kind of failure as an intelligence agency that the conventional wisdom claims, it becomes necessary to look further afield for causes, specifically at the MSS's interagency environment within the British machinery of government in Southeast Asia and London. On these fronts, Dalley faced a far more insidious and ultimately dangerous threat from a surprising quarter, namely a campaign of back-briefing by Percy Sillitoe, the Director General of MI5, which effectively subverted MSS within the Colonial Office and Malayan executive. The

---

[71] A contrary view is that murders were the logical outcome of the May 1948 Central Executive Committee to intimidate and kill 'scabs'. However, appears a dislocation of a quantum nature between an order of this kind, effectively aimed against native labour, and the murder of the ex-patriot *British* planters.
[72] CO 537/3751, minutes by Mr Seal, 24th February and 1st March 1948.

origins of this dispute relate to overlapping remits between SIFE and the MSS, but hinged upon Sillitoe's desire to secure hegemony for his Far East intelligence apparatus.

The original MSS charter stated that it would undertake the following tasks:

1. To collect and collate information on subversive organisations and personalities in Malaya and Singapore.
2. To advise, so far as they [sic] are able, the two Governments [Malaya and Singapore] as to the extent to which Internal Security is threatened by the activities of such an organisation [sic].
3. To keep the two Governments informed of the trends of public opinion which affect, or are likely to affect the Security of Malaya.
4. To maintain a Central Registry of Aliens.
5. To maintain a close liaison with other Security Intelligence Organisations, and the Defence Security Officer.[73]

However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Security Service also created in 1946 SIFE to operate as an "interservices organisation responsible for the collection, collation and dissemination to interested and appropriate Service and Civil departments of all Security Intelligence affecting British territories in the Far East."[74] From the inception of SIFE and the reconstitution of MSS, there was concern from both London and Singapore about potential overlap. Although the 'Pan Malayan Intelligence Bureau', as the MSS was occasionally known in its infancy, was 'stood-up' on 1 April 1946, the details about its remit were still to be decided in the weeks and months following that date. Similarly it was not until August 1946 that the Charter for SIFE, and memorandum of instruction for the Head of SIFE and the Defence Security Officers arrived in Singapore for discussion. It is during this time that the Secretary of

---

[73] MSS Ind. Ocn. S254, memorandum from Dalley to Ralph Hone, 13th July 1948. See also CO 537/2647, Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17th December 1947 for the former's interpretation of the first draft and final drafts of the MSS charter.
[74] KV 4/421, Charter for the Security Intelligence Far East (S.I.F.E), 6th August 1946; CO 537/2647, Briefing note for Malcolm MacDonald, January 1947.

State for the Colonies passed on to the governors of Malaya and Singapore the Security Service's concern that "any proposals put forward will be related to and co-ordinated with the functions of existing Security Organisation in Far East." Similarly, MacDonald informed Gimson "it seems to me that in a matter of this sort we need the best advice available and that any security organisation that is set up is properly dovetailed into other security organisations which might exist."[75] There followed, throughout the autumn of 1946, a series of discussions between SIFE, the Police and MSS about their roles and responsibilities in relation to security and political intelligence.

The initial reaction Knight, the Acting Director of the MSS, to the Charter for SIFE was "fairly strong", because he considered "that a normal reading would inevitably lead to the understanding that a separate (and rival) organisation was about to be set up, and the MSS was to be by-passed." Moreover, he admitted, "a first reading…gave me the impression of a sort of a Gestapo organisation" whose DSO would encounter such "antagonism in certain specialist departments that he would be seriously handicapped in carrying out his duties." However, Knight discussed the documents "point-by-point" with H/SIFE and came to a better understanding of how the two organisations would co-exist. [76] In September, it was agreed that "SIFE could function adequately in Malaya according to its charter if the MSS were suitably organised." As a result, initial proposals for the CID to be expanded to take on political security were dropped and the MSS responsibility was limited to internal security; the Commissioner of Police for Singapore explained that "a meeting held on 2 September "was unanimously of the option that the former proposal would not work as it would tend to create three smaller security services instead of one."[77] Whilst discussions effectively removed the Police from security intelligence, it is not clear how SIFE and MSS intended to work 'as one.' It is clear, however, from these discussions that the establishment of SIFE and

---

[75] FCO 141/14360, Gimson to MacDonald, 24th July 1946

[76] Ibid., L. Knight, *Commentary on Instructions to DSO Malayan Union*, 27th August 1946.

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

reconstitution of the MSS was ad hoc, lacking central coordination and dependent largely upon the ability of key practitioners to establish informal working arrangements to work around the ambiguity of their formal remits.

SIFE was initially overseen by Col. C. E. Dixon, who was the 'theatre head' of the Security Service in the Far East and answerable to Sillitoe.[78] In addition to producing intelligence about "any foreign intelligence service whose activities are directed against British territory in the Far East or inimical to British interests of security", Dixon was charged with advising about "any potential or subversive movement whether indigenous or foreign, which is a danger or potential danger to British security…"[79] A briefing document for MacDonald written in January 1948, indicates that whether SIFE choose to keep representatives (Defence Security Officers[80]) 'on the ground' depended on the territory. If so, their primary task was to work with the local Police and security organisations, acting as liaison officers. In relation to Malaya, this liaison should have been easier because both the SIFE and MSS had their headquarters in Singapore.[81] Indeed, the Governor General's office stated that there was no reason, "given goodwill and a spirit of co-operation", why the SIFE and MSS should not work harmoniously."[82] Nonetheless, there was an obvious potential for overlap between local and regional intelligence organisations. This was highlighted in a letter written in August 1946 by Lt Col Young about SIFE's links with the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in the region. Young suggested that the "only way in which the D.S.O can justify his

---

[78] In a letter written to Sillitoe on 29th July 1946 (received on 7th August) Dixon expressed disagreement with the former's suggestions around some administrative / logistical arrangements for SIFE. On 9th August, Sillitoe sent Dixon a telegram stating that he will be replaced by Malcolm Johnston from the Delhi Intelligence Service to the Security Service. A letter from Dick White to D. Bates of the Colonial Office written on 13th August states that Sillitoe made an "urgent application to transfer" Johnston to the Security Service.

[79] KV 4/421, Charter for the Security Intelligence Far East (S.I.F.E), 6th August 1946.

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

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

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

position as 'security adviser to the Governor' is to be able to present the large picture of subversion, and SIFE should be the source of this through MI6." Rather presciently Young warned that "for the DSO to set up an agent network in competition to M.S.S. would only end in tears."[83]

However, it was not SIS that would clash with the MSS, but the Director General (DG) of MI5, Sir Percy Sillitoe. Sillitoe was something of an anomaly amongst his peers in the UK intelligence community. A career uniformed Police officer, he was not well received by the senior staff at the Security Service, his own Deputy, Guy Liddell, dismissing Sillitoe's appointment as a 'mistake' which 'generally down-grades the office [MI5]'. Sillitoe was no less uncomfortable with the appointment and the ethos of his new organisation, deriding the career intelligence officers he led in his memoire as 'Oxbridge' 'long-haired intellectuals'.[84] Despite a successful track record against organised crime in the 1930s and heading Kent regional Police Service during the threat of imminent German invasion during the war, Sillitoe had little or no direct experience of intelligence either as an operational activity or an institutional environment.

As early as November 1946, even before Dalley had returned to Malaya, Liddell concluded that the "Malayan Security is usurping the functions of SIFE."[85] A year later this same concern prompted Sillitoe to write to the Colonial Office. He alleged that Dalley claimed "he was, and is, in a position to run agents into Siam and the Netherlands East Indies, and he also maintains liaison with representatives of foreign intelligence organisations in Singapore, as for example the Dutch and Americans."[86] Sillitoe did not provide any evidence that Dalley's claims were valid. Indeed, given the staffing difficulties discussed above, it is near impossible to consider that the claims were anything more than hyperbole, if indeed they were made at all. In fact, six months later, a Colonial Office official noted that on the question of the MSS running

---

[83] KV 4/421, Extract of a letter from Lt. Co. Young (SIFE), 19th August 1948.
[84] C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London 2010), p.322.
[85] KV 4/470, Diary of Guy Liddell (D/DG MI5), November 1946.
[86] CO 537/2647, Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17th December 1947.

agents into foreign territory it "does not seem in fact to have done to any substantial extent."[87]

Sillitoe acknowledged the potential of being seen to "interfere in what is obviously primarily a matter for the Colonial Office, and local Governments concerned." Nevertheless, he continued to suggest that the root of the problems were due to "the curious position of the Malayan Security Service", its "unsound set-up", "and from a lack of any clear definition as to the division or work between them and SIFE and of their intelligence functions."[88] Within a month, Sillitoe reinforced his complaint. He claimed that in addition to running agents in foreign territories, "the S.I.F.E., through the DSCO [sic] is not receiving from the M.S.S. the information about internal subversive activities in the Malayan Union and Singapore which it has a right to expect." Moreover, there were reports of "serious friction between the head of S.I.F.E (Major Winterborn) and the head of M.S.S. (Mr Dalley)." As a result Sillitoe offered to stop in Malaya, on his way to Australia, to look into the matter.[89] However, Guy Liddell's diaries make it clear that Sillitoe had already determined to "concentrate on getting the organisational set-up changed, namely, the division of the M.S.S. into two Special Branches, one for the Singapore Police and other for the Malayan Police."[90]

Ostensibly Sillitoe's visit to Malaya was a success. Gent reported to Lloyd, permanent under-secretary in the Colonial Office, that "we had it out with Dalley and S.I.F.E, and I hope that we have cleared up the personal troubles which were responsible for what was mainly a bickering but might have got worse, if not checked. I shall keep a watch on it with Gimson."[91] However, Comber suggests that the meeting with Dalley and Sillitoe was particularly difficult, not least as it started with the Director General of

---

[87] Ibid., Seel to Lloyd and Williams, 22nd May 1948.

[88] Ibid., Sillitoe to Lloyd, 17th December 1947.

[89] Grimson offers an interesting counterpoint. He welcomed Sillitoe's visit to discuss the relations between the MSS and SIFE. He informed the Colonial Office that "I have too been worried about these relations, as I fear that there is a tendency on part of the U.K. Security Service stationed in Singapore to fail to appreciate the knowledge which our Security Service has of local conditions and the ability of this Service to view any data at their disposal against an oriental background." See CO 537/2647, Gimson to Lloyd, 3rd February 1948.

[90] KV 4/470, Diary of Guy Liddell (D/DG MI5), 23rd January 1948.

[91] CO 537/2647, Gent to Lloyd, 7 May 1948. One practical measures result from the meeting was a redrafting of instructions for Defence Security Officer for the Federation of Malaya and Singapore.

MI5 questioning whether the Director of the MSS had called him a "Glasgow corner boy."[92] Despite Gent's optimism, the animosity between MI5 / SIFE against Dalley appears to have grown stronger after Sillitoe's visit to Malaya. For instance, an internal SIFE telegram in which Keller states "the difficulties as regards the relationships between S.I.F.E, D.S.O's and M.S.S lies principally in the personality of its Director Mr. J. Dalley, who is an Empire builder and not content with his proper function of producing Security information regarding M.U. and Singapore, is attempting to cover a wider area."[93]

Undoubtedly there was a significant element of personal antagonism which fuelled Sillitoe's campaign against the MSS. However, this was an aggravating factor, not the *casus belli*, which appears to be Sillitoe's ambitions for SIFE. The Director-General contended correctly that SIFE was the only organisation which could provide the Defence Committee or the JIC (FE) with coordinated advice and information on security or counter espionage matters. He warned that if "if S.I.F.E. did not exist the whole attitude and action towards such matters would revert to the pre-war position. Then such matters were studies in local and in semi-watertight compartments by local Police or local service authorities, acting independently of each others." As we have seen, this role was already bring fulfilled by the MSS. It was not the principal of having such a fusion centre to which Sillitoe objected, but that the task was being performed by an agency other than his own. It was on this basis that, upon his return to London, Sillitoe continued to push the prospect of disbanding of the MSS in favour of bringing it "within the general structure of the Police Departments, on the lines of the Special Branches in this country and a number of colonies."[94]

However, Sillitoe clearly had a vision for the role of MI5's presence through SIFE that clashed substantially with the presence and role of the MSS. There was also a local initiative to promote SIFE's status within the regional intelligence community. On the one hand, this involved a move to shift the organisation from its original role as a

---

[92] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 43. See KV 4/470, Liddell Diary, 13th April 1947.
[93] KV 4/422, SIFE (Keller) to DG Security Service, 16th August 1948.
[94] CO 537/2647, Seel to Gimson, 10th June 1948.

collating agency to one that collected intelligence as well while on the other there was an effort to give it a more central position in the interagency apparatus. Both at local and headquarters levels, therefore, MSS stood in the way of MI5's view of its role in Southeast Asian intelligence and security arrangements.

Dismantling the MSS

Despite what might be considered an ambient, medium-term warning of a growing threat from the MCP, the murder of three planters in the Sungei Siput area of Perak on 16 June 1948, appeared to come as a shock to both the Malaya executive and colonial officials. For instance, Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces, General Sir Neil Ritchie, recalled that it was not until the evening of 22 June that he was informed "by the civil authorities of the conditions of unrest existing in Malaya." Ritchie had "just returned from a brief visit to the UK where I had told the then CIGS that in my view Malaya could be regarded as the one relatively stable area in an otherwise disturbed South East Asia."[95] It is interesting to note the change in tone in the Colonial Office minutes accompanying the PIJs received in London. In mid June, a month after calling Dalley a 'genius' and suggesting that the MSS reports were invaluable to the Malayan government, Williams noted "I have no wish to be over-critical of the Malayan Security Service, but I think it is right to draw attention to this rather remarkable lack of foresight shown on the present Report, since a defect in Intelligence (in the technical sense) seems to be of the great weaknesses in Malaya today."[96]

Nevertheless, Dalley clearly retained the support of his regional colleagues in the Malayan core executive. For instance, a letter from Ralph Hone to the Colonial Office

---

[95] WO 106/5448, General Sir N. Ritchie, Report on Operations in Malaya, June 1948 - July 1949. However, recent historiographical developments, particularly the memoirs of Chin Peng, indicate that the rise in rural violence was also a shock to the MCP because it was spontaneous and thus largely unpredictable series of events. See Chin & Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*; Hack, "The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40: 3 (2009), pp. 471-496; Derry, "Malaya 1948: Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9: 1 (2007), pp. 29-54; Stockwell, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 16: 3 (2006), pp. 279-97.
[96] CO 537/3751, minutes by Mr Williams, 22nd June 1948. See also CO 537/3753, minutes by Mr Morris, 18th June; Mr Williams, 22nd June; Mr Seel 23rd June 1948.

alludes to the difficulty of persuading Gent to accept Sillitoe's proposal to disband the MSS.[97] Moreover, in a conference on 13 July 1948 (i.e. after the Emergency was declared), MacDonald unequivocally stated that he "had been much impressed with the political intelligence produced by the M.S.S. They proved to be the only source from which reliable information had been obtained. The difficulty appeared to be that much of the information that they had circulated had not been acted upon or fully understood." He went to say that Dalley was "an exceptionally able man in this class of work and there were many people who had a good deal of confidence in him."[98] Moreover, in October Gimson informed Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that he had been "entirely satisfied with the Security Intelligence information which I received from the former Malayan Security Service as organised and directed by Dalley." He said he had the highest regard for Dalley's "almost uncanny flair for security work."[99]

Regardless of the support shown in particular by MacDonald and Hone, the swell of opinion in official circles, which had been whipped-up by Sillitoe, meant that the MSS could not survive. Sillitoe's machinations, in particular relating to apparent structural problems with the MSS, had already taken effect amongst metropolitan officials prior to the declaration of Emergency, and combined with a local sense of urgency to address the demands of the Emergency. A little less than a month after the declaration of Emergency, Sir Alec Newboult persuaded MacDonald to accept the need to reallocate responsibility for intelligence from the MSS to the Malayan and Singapore Police Special Branches, a proposal which was accepted on 13 July 1948.[100]

The decision to disband the MSS led to a debate within both colonial and metropolitan circles about what form the new intelligence machine should take. Running large through this debate was the on-going friction between Dalley and Sillitoe. However,

---

[97] Ibid., Hone to Seal, 26th July 1948.
[98] CO 537/2647, minutes of the Governor General's Conference, 13th July 1948.
[99] CO 537/4306, Grimson to Creech Jones, 7th October 1948.
[100] CO 537/2647, Minutes of the Governor General's Conference, 13th July 1948. Sir Alec Newboult was Chief Secretary in the Federation of Malaya's administration. He was Officer Administrating the Government (OAG) in the interregnum between High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent's death on 4th July 1948 and the arrival of Sir Henry Gurney on 13th September 1948.

the substance of the discussion is also indicative of the wider confusion within the executive about the differences between political, criminal and security intelligence, and their respective *place* within the administration. Newboult, who had been particularly swayed by Sillitoe's previous briefing against the MSS, believed that that "political and criminal intelligence were inextricably mixed up and it seemed to him necessary to integrate the staff which worked on political intelligence with that of the CID."[101] Keller, Sillitoe's representative in the region, supported this argument and also made the distinction between political intelligence (which he felt Dalley was interested in) and security intelligence (which he felt Dalley was not). Both Sillitoe and Keller were very clear that SIFE should not become involved in political intelligence. Indeed, Keller argued that Dalley misunderstood the distinction between security and political intelligence and that the latter aspect "was no part of the business of SIFE."[102] In retrospect, the distinction between political and security intelligence appears rather artificial. Given that there was grave concern both locally and in London that the MCP's insurgency was part of a wider Communist plan, the demarcation between what was political intelligence (i.e. local and within the remit of Special Branch) and security intelligence (i.e. which had a wider bearing upon the defence of the realm and thus within the remit of SIFE) was, at best, ambiguous. Moreover, events were to prove an incongruence between 'criminal' and 'political' intelligence.[103]

Whilst officials debated the semantics of intelligence, Sillitoe proved determined to remove any possibility of Dalley influencing the new intelligence apparatus. This led to continuing conflict with regional colonial officials who supported Dalley. Although MacDonald and Hone had reluctantly accepted Sillitoe's argument that the MSS had to be disbanded, both men pushed hard for a meaningful role to be found for Dalley, even suggesting that his local knowledge would make him ideal to head SIFE. Keller strongly recommended against this proposal on the basis that Dalley's "personality

---

[101] CO 537/2647, Minutes of the Conference held under the chairmanship of his Excellency, the Commissioner General for the UK in SEA, at the Cathay Building, on 13th July 1948.

[102] CO 537/4322, Minutes of the Conference held under the chairmanship of his Excellency, the Commissioner General for the UK in SEA, at the Cathay Building, on Monday, 9th August 1948.

[103] This was a distinction identified by the Secretary of State for the Colonies but which appears not to have been followed up. See CO 537/4306, a minute by the Colonial Secretary, Singapore, 30th September 1948.

and qualifications were not such as would in my opinion make him satisfactory H/SIFE."[104] The Colonial Office was also against this, concerned that Dalley might become an "embarrassment" to MacDonald and suggested he be found a role in the Federal Secretariat.[105] Sillitoe was aghast at the prospect of Dalley being offered *any* position in SIFE, and on receipt of Keller's telegram, moved swiftly to offer the position of H/SIFE to Keller himself.[106] As a result no suitable role for Dalley was found within any of the new intelligence structures and the MSS headquarters staff were divided amongst the two Special Branches.[107]

Conclusion

Sillitoe's manoeuvring deprived the British colonial authorities in Malaya of a viable intelligence capability at precisely the moment they most needed it, with lasting and serious consequences for the conduct of the Emergency. In fairness, Sillitoe's objections to the MSS as an organisation that duplicated the role of MI5 and its Far East presence SIFE were consistent with the institutional arrangements that prevailed in London. A Cabinet Secretariat Secret Service Committee review in 1931 had formally declared MI5 *Imperial* Security Service, thus including all of Britain's colonies and dominions within its operational jurisdiction.[108] Indeed, with its network of SLOs and DSOs abroad MI5's international presence was almost as extensive as that of SIS.[109] Colonial Special Branches were expected to work with those representatives in a fashion analogous to the Metropolitan Special Branch and MI5's headquarters in London. Thus Sillitoe's argument that the intelligence apparatus in Malaya needed to be brought into line with existing practice elsewhere in empire was based on the idea that all of the various Special Branches across the empire were expected to work with MI5 as the *imperial* rather than just mainland UK Security Service.

---

[104] KV 4/422, Keller to Sillitoe, 17th August 1948.

[105] CO 537/2647, Seel to Hone, 9th August 1948.

[106] KV 4/422, Sillitoe to Keller, 18th August 1948.

[107] For Keller's reaction to the news that Sillitoe had blocked all moves to relocate Dalley within the SIFE structure see KV 4/423, Keller to Sillitoe, 5th November 1948.

[108] F.H. Hinsley and C.A.G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War Volume Four: Security and Counterintelligence* (London 1990), pp.8; J. Curry, *The Security Service 1908–1945: The Official History* (London 1999), pp.102.

[109] From 1946-1949 SIFE officers were termed Defence Security Officers. This changed in May 1949 when the DSOs in Singapore, Malaya and Hong Kong were renamed Security Liaison Officers. Officers stationed in foreign territories in the regional appear to have remained DSOs.

Prior to taking up the post of Director of the MSS, Dalley visited Guy Liddell, the Deputy Director General of the Security Service. Liddell noted in his diary that Dalley hesitated in accepting the position, partly because he "originally conceived the idea of the MSS on the lines of SIFE but in view of the establishment of SIFE, he thought the position was unsatisfactory." Instead, Dalley told Liddell that "either there should be an Inspector General to cover all Malayan Police forces and to stimulate SB activities, or the MSS should…collate information received from Police Special Branches."[110] Ironically, therefore, in November 1946, it appears that there was some commonality of thought between Dalley's position and that which Sillitoe would develop over subsequent eighteen months. However, during this period, Sillitoe's views diverged rapidly from Dalley's.

To be sure, the desire to disaggregate the remits of SIFE and the MSS appear justified in principle, but Sillitoe was not a product of the collegiality and joint operational ethos that one contemporary commentator has described as 'symptomatic' of the UK's defence and intelligence communities.[111] Rather than pursuing the kind of collaborative solution adopted in other theatres, he took advantage of the post-war turmoil to aggressively expand the role of his organisation in the Far East. Sillitoe envisaged SIFE and the DSOs having a broader "intangible" but "essential function" of providing a means of inciting the local security authorities to do their job efficiently.[112] Part of this entailed shifting SIFE from being a purely collating and assessment organ to an operational headquarters for intelligence collection. Hence, in November 1947, the LSO in Burma, and DSOs in Singapore, Malaya, and Hong Kong were tasked to start collecting "basic intelligence data…in respect of organisations which are operating clandestinely."[113] A SIFE official explained to Sillitoe that "this action was rendered necessary by the fact that M.S.S. have never attempted any collation of the information of their omnibus files except for the papers allegedly written by D/M.S.S.,

---

[110] KV 4/468, Diary of Guy Liddell, 20th November 1946.
[111] M. Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge 1996), pp.728.
[112] KV 4/422, Assessment of the value of S.I.F.E and D.S.O Points in the Far East, undated.
[113] Ibid., SIFE to DSO Singapore, Malayan Union, Hong Kong, and SLO Burma, 25th November 1947.

the majority of which pertain to subjects and territories lying well outside the M.S.S. charter."[114] A parallel attempt to enhance the MSS' position in the administrative hierarchy July 1948 led to the Head of SIFE, Winterborn, coming into conflict with the British Defence Co-ordination Committee over a clumsy attempt to engineer a more influential position on the JIC (FE).[115] Hence, the MSS was not the only organisation to find itself in conflict with Sillitoe's MI5.

In the last analysis, Sillitoe was more concerned with winning a bureaucratic turf war than defeating a colonial insurgency. The implications of this interagency conflict were significant. The current evidence clearly shows that the authorities had an effective intelligence agency in hand at the time of the outbreak of the First Emergency. As a result the immediate effect of Sillitoe's campaign to eliminate the MSS was to deprive the British authorities of established and effective intelligence support on the Malayan peninsula at a critical juncture. The decision also meant that responsibility for Emergency intelligence was moved from a single pan-Malaya, non-executive body, to a sub-set of Criminal Intelligence Department (CID) within two separate Police forces. As a result, the intelligence machine in Malaya was dislocated and, arguably, dysfunctional, during the first four critical years of the Emergency. It would be left to the military to 'hold the ring' whilst the civilian intelligence organisations regrouped.

---

[114] Ibid., SIFE (Alexander) to DG Security Service, 10th January 1948.
[115] KV 4/422, SIFE (Winterborn) to DG Security Service, 17th July 1948.

Chapter 6 – The Evolution of a Local Intelligence Apparatus

The situation in Malaya in the autumn of 1948 was parlous. Groups of insurgents intimidated and attacked Malaya's vital infrastructure, not least her tin mines and rubber plantations: local workers were terrorised, expatriate managers were murdered and plant was destroyed. This was fundamentally local activity, with violence breaking out in various districts across Malaya. However, individual groups of insurgents merged and throughout 1948-9 there were multiple reports of 'gangs' of up-to three hundred armed men operating in the open, with the intention of creating liberated areas.[1] In addition, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) worked towards the creation of a parallel governmental system, effectively undermining the Federation from within.

Moreover, the Federation's intelligence apparatus was in crisis: the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC(FE)) was struggling to define itself; Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) lacked any meaningful resources 'on the ground' and its headquarters staff were also preoccupied with their terms of reference; and the Malayan Security Service (MSS) – which offered the most substantial intelligence capacity, however imperfect, to the beleaguered Federation - was about to be abolished in favour of a hastily re-constituted and wholly unprepared Special Branch of the Police Service. Furthermore, key actors within the apparatus were already in deep dispute with each other. As such, the state of Emergency was declared while the Federation's intelligence apparatus was deeply fractured, with the civilian agencies being ripped apart by centrifugal forces and no realistic prospect of any quick fixes.

Recognising that the situation 'on the ground' was rapidly getting beyond their control, British officials chose to enact emergency legislation.[2] The few previously identified MCP activists who had not already taken to the jungle were quickly arrested.

---

[1] For useful accounts of the situation 'on the ground' in Malaya, prior to and after the declaration of Emergency see B. Hembry, *Malaya Spymaster* (Singapore 2011); M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (Stroud 2007); C. Bayly & T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars – The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London 2007).

[2] DEFE 11/11, Despatch No. 5, Gurney to Creech Jones, 30th May 1949.

The biographies of some planters suggest that 'locals' either knew or suspected those to be orchestrating the violence and some intelligence reports named ringleaders.[3] But these opportunities quickly dried up because the Police lacked any form of meaningful presence on the ground, let alone a decent network of informers. More fundamentally, Malaya's communities, particularly the Chinese, lacked confidence in the government's ability to restore law and order and feared reprisals for providing information.[4] As General Sir Harold Briggs, the future Director of Operations, later noted, "our information must come from the population or from deserters and, until we can instil confidence by successes and security among the population, our information will be worse than that of the Communists."[5] However, it was not until the mid 1950s that the authorities were able to generate this level of confidence amongst the people of Malaya.

In the meantime, the military and Police had to tackle the violence breaking out across the Federation. Counter-insurgency, from the beginning of the Emergency was a joint activity. Indeed, there is clear evidence that the Police enlisted the support from the Army in a number of large operations against Communist 'bandits' months before the formal declaration of Emergency. The Police, however, were very much the weak link. The scale of the violence associated with the MCP's insurgency forced them to adopt a paramilitary strategy. Whilst necessary in the short-term, this strategy had an adverse effect upon the ability of the Police to secure human intelligence. Until then, the security forces had to make the most of other forms of intelligence, for instance from captured documents, captured or surrendered insurgents, aerial surveillance and photographic reconnaissance. It was apparent from the earliest stages of the Emergency that it was necessary to coordinate these various streams of intelligence at a local level. Subsequently, the Commissioner General, Malcolm MacDonald,

---

[3] For instance, see B. Hembry, *Malaya Spymaster*. See also the collection in Rhodes House, Oxford of Political Intelligence Journals issued by the Malayan Security Service between 1946-8.
[4] Karl Hack has argued that the Chinese population were caught between two repressive regimes, the British and Communist, "liable to support whoever subjected them to greater pressure." See K. Hack, "Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", Small Wars and Insurgencies, 23:4-5 (2012), p. 681.
[5] AIR 20/7777, Report by Sir Harold Briggs on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951.

sanctioned the creation of intelligence committees at District level. These committees were supported by similar constructs at State / Settlement level and a broader, theatre-level apparatus which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Together, they formed the bedrock of the security forces' intelligence apparatus for the duration of the Emergency.

However, this apparatus was, until the mid-1950s starved of information, particularly human intelligence (humint). In lieu of this intelligence, the security forces were forced to fall back upon 'jungle bashing', often using battalions of troops, supported by airpower and artillery, to cordon and search areas suspected of insurgent activity, simply in the hope of generating a 'contact' and thus the opportunity either to develop intelligence or neutralise some insurgents. It was not until the rest of the Malayan intelligence machine, particularly the uniformed Police and Special Branch, was in the position to increase the flow of intelligence that the security forces were able to develop more efficient operational methods. In the interim, during the first half of the Emergency, the military managed to contain and gradually erode, but not eliminate, the Communist insurgency.

The Precursor to Emergency Operations

The conventional wisdom is that the start of the Communist insurgency caught the Malayan authorities by surprise. The Commander-in-Chief, Far East Land Forces (C-in-C FELF), General Sir Neil Ritchie, recalled that it was not until the evening of 22 June that he was informed "by the civil authorities of the conditions of unrest existing in Malaya." Ritchie had "just returned from a brief visit to the UK where I had told the then CIGS [Chief of the Imperial General Staff] that in my view Malaya could be regarded as the one relatively stable area in an otherwise disturbed South East Asia." According to Ritchie, the Commander-in-Chief Far East Air Force (C-in-C FEAF) had also expressed the same view to the Chiefs of Staff (CoS) and "the GOC Malaya District was equally in the dark regarding the internal situation."[6] Perhaps the exact timing of the murders that led to the declaration did indeed come as a surprise. However, as

---

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

discussed in the previous chapter, there can be little doubt that the authorities expected some form of confrontation with the MCP, not least because the MSS had been providing clear warning about the Communist's capability and intent to stimulate a revolution within the country for the previous eighteen months.

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

   i.   their distinct reluctance to being engaged by an armed force
   ii. their superior knowledge and mobility in the jungle
   iii. their excellent warning system.[7]

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

---

[7] WO 268/584, Quarterly Historical Report of North Malaya Sub District, Quarter 1 APR – 30 JUN 48, Appendix C, Report on Op Haystack, 23th Apr – 25th May 1948.

attacked at dawn 26 May to find that the camp had been vacated a possible two days previously. Abundant material evidence was found which established the fact that parties of armed men had been in occupation over a period of time and that the controlling organisation was Communist. The camp was destroyed, while a party of Police searched nearby squatter areas and made several arrests."[8] *Haystack* and *Pathan* were but two of a number of operations undertaken by the Army against 'bandits' prior to the declaration of Emergency. They are important for two reasons. First, in terms of chronology of the campaign, they show troops engaged in internal security operations months prior to the formal declaration of Emergency. This casts further doubt on the theory that the rise of Communist-inspired violence in the late spring of 1948 came as a surprise to the Federation. Second, *Haystack* and *Pathan* indicates that, acting on intelligence, the Police were in a position to call in military support to create and execute a joint operation – the basis of joint counter-insurgency operations were in place prior to the declaration of a state of emergency.

A note by Mr J. Miller, the British Adviser in Perak provides a fascinating glimpse into how the Emergency evolved, at a local level, in response to local evidence, and relationship between the Police and civilian authorities.[9] On 1 June 1948 the Chief Police Officer (CPO), Perak informed Mr Millar that a representative of the planters in Sungei Siput had expressed concerns about unrest among their workers and requested Police protection. The representative was Boris Hembry who, in his autobiography, provided an account remarkably similar to Miller's. Hembry also notes that he ran a de facto network of informers to gain advance warning of labour unrest, which was very likely passed back to the MSS because Hembry and John Dalley, Head of the MSS, were close friends.[10] Certainly the area appeared volatile: Police had already recently raided the premises of the Federation of Estate Worker's Union, Sungei Siput and the Rubber Worker's Union, Chemor. Moreover, there were strikes on the Kamuning and Sungei Krudda Estates, and a further one was threatened on the

---

[8] Ibid., HQ Malaya District, Report on Operation 'Pathan', 28th May 1948.
[9] WO 268/584, Note by British Adviser, Perak – Movement of Military to SUNGEI SIPUT at the request of Police in general support of law and order, 2nd June 1948.
[10] Hembry, *Malaya Spymaster*, pp. 308-322.

Lee Hin Estate.[11] The CPO explained that there were insufficient Police officers to provide adequate protection and recommended enlisting military support. Coincidently, Dalley was visiting Miller at the time and confirmed that the planters' concerns were valid. Miller visited the 'Mentri Besar' [sic – First Minister], who had already signed a warrant for the arrest of a chief MCP activist, Mr Balan, and agreed to the use of the Army to protect the rubber plantations in the area.[12] Miller reported, "the Mentri further suggested that with every contingent of Military patrol in troubled areas there should, if possible, be a member of the Police Force to effect arrests." As a result, "it was decided on behalf of the State Government to give the recommendation the fullest support."[13]

However, the deployment of the Army across plantations in Sungei Siput (as well as other areas of Malaya) had limited impact. On the 16th June three European planters were murdered by members of the MCP on the Elphil and Phin Soon Estates in Perak. In the previous month one European mining superintendent, twelve Asian managers and a foreman were also murdered.[14] Police were able to ascertain from witnesses that the murders of the Europeans on the 16th June were committed by a gang of twelve Chinese men armed with Sten guns, and that the attacks in general displayed "certain common characteristics, viz. They are the work of gangs of well armed gun men moving from scene to scene; they are confined to villages and isolated bungalows in remote country areas; and they are directed against the managerial staff of estates, leaders of KMT parties, and witnesses in intimidation cases."[15] The clamour for action from the expatriate community was fierce and the High Commissioner, Sir Edward

---

[11] In the first half of June there were 19 murders and attempted murders, 3 arsons, and armed attacks on isolated police stations in Pahang, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Johore, as well as Perak. See L. Comber, Malaya's Secret Police, 1945-60 (Singapore 2008), p. 36.

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

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

[14] Bayly & Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 426.

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

Gent, had little choice but to declare a state of Emergency in Perak and in parts of Johore, and quickly extended this across the whole of the Federation.

The months of leading-up to the declaration of Emergency illuminate two critical aspects to the Army's role in the subsequent counter-insurgency. First, it is clear that at least the battalions that took part in Haystack and Pathan were already comfortable in taking part in joint operations and had informal networks with the Police and planters in the area. Second, and perhaps most obviously, the Army were very much a reactive force, dependent on the Police for intelligence and the civil authorities for direction. For instance, operations Haystack and Pathan were clearly initiated on the behest of the Chief Police Officer, and the deployment of Gurkha to protect plantations in Perak originated from had similar origins.[16]

The Consequences of Police Failure

The primary responsibility for the Federation's response to the Communist insurgency lay with the Commissioner of Police, Col. W. Nicol Gray. The Federation's Local Defence Committee (LDC) reported that the immediate task for the Police was "to protect the public against bandits…[and] to operate against bandits, either by purely police methods with a view to bring them to justice or by police or police and armed forces operations."[17] The Police – specifically the Special Branch - was also charged with obtaining "all possible information relating to bandits and their activities." The key to achieving this was by engendering "confidence amongst the civilian population to such an extent that adequate information may be forthcoming from them and that they refuse to harbour bandits."[18] As Anthony Short explains, the Police's initial response to breakdown in law and order was threefold: "first, the establishment and

---

[16] Of course, the Army could not constitutionally act unilaterally and the need to act in support of the civilian authorities was upheld in every subsequent notable review of the Emergency. See WO 106/5448, General Sir N Ritchie, Report on Operations in Malaya, June 1948 - July 1949; WO 21/2193, Federation of Malaya, Dispatch No. 5, 30th May 1949; AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs; AIR 20/10377, Director of Operations Malaya, *Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957.* More broadly, for a discussion within the Colonial Office in 1950 about military aid to civilian powers, see CO 537/6403-6 which were released following a Freedom of Information Request made by the author in February 2014.

[17] CO 537/3688, Local Defence Committee, Federation of Malaya, 16th Sept 1948.

[18] Ibid.

maintenance of viable Police stations in order to dispute territory with guerrillas and their local supporters. Second to adapt its normal peacetime role so as to provide a major striking force. Third, to train the vastly expanded numbers of the regular and ancillary police."[19] Moreover, the Police (supported heavily by the Army) were used to enforce Emergency powers, particularly those of detention and banishment, with the intention of rendering powerless known Communists or sympathisers who had not yet taken to the jungle.

In absolute terms, the number of Police officers available to tackle the insurgents equalled or exceeded the number of troops. For instance, Richard Clutterbuck has explained that an infantry battalion in Malaya had about seven hundred men, of which roughly four hundred would be available to be put into the field. General Aston Wade, GOC Malaya, had approximately four thousand soldiers, perhaps less if one takes into account the chronic shortages in the battalions in Malaya in 1948, to combat roughly a similar number of insurgents.[20] In addition, at the outbreak of the insurgency, the Federation had some 9000 Police officers attempting to restore law and order. This pattern continued as the Emergency progressed: in 1951 there were twenty-four battalions engaged in counter-insurgency operations, compared to some 60,000 regular and special constabulary Police officers.[21]

Despite the numerical superiority over the insurgents, the number of counter-insurgents available to the Federation in the first four years of the Emergency was barely sufficient, not least because the limited number of insurgents could easily take refuge in Malaya's plantations or in squatter areas, blending into the jungle or the local Chinese population. For example, at the beginning of the Emergency, the state of Johore (which had an area of 7,300 square miles and a population of 730,000) was

---

[19] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60*, p. 131.

[20] R. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War – The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-60* (Michigan 1966)*,* p. 43; J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002)*,* p. 63. Sunderland has a higher estimate: he suggests there were some 7784 fighting troops and 5660 administrative troops in Malaya in Malaya. Either way, Wade did not have a surfeit of troops. See, R. Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948-1960* (Rand 1964), p, 24-5.

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

protected by a squadron of the RAF Regiment, three companies of Seaforth Highlanders, three platoons of Ghurkhas, and a reserve of 100 men.[22] The security forces were soon thus engulfed by vast tracts of swap, jungle, rubber plantations and mountains, "looking for a very vicious needle in a very unpleasant haystack."[23]

Moreover, both the uniformed and Special Branches of the Police were in a particularly poor position to meet the demands placed upon them. The Second World War had a devastating impact upon the Malayan Police – many of its experienced and knowledgeable European officers were killed or interned and many of the Asian members of the force were forced to work with the Japanese occupying powers.[24] The result was twofold. First, the military were drafted in to support the Police. General Charles Boucher (who succeed Wade as GOC, Malaya, in the same month that state of Emergency was declared) planned, in the first instance, to use the Army to secure static positions, and "regain control and stability in certain areas." Once "information" became available Boucher planned to release forces from the static role "to go out and hunt and kill the bandits."[25] Second, it fell to Nicol Gray, who was appointed Commissioner of Police in August 1948, to convert a Police force "which had been competent to deal with pre-Emergency conditions, into one well fitted to deal with the very different situation created by the organised efforts of well-armed terrorists to disrupt the civil life of Malaya."[26] To meet this challenge, Gray recommended to Creech Jones the rapid "strengthening of Malayan Police force with recruits from the recently disbanded Palestine Police and recruiting an additional sixty experienced Police officers to act as assistant superintendents, many of who would be brought from Palestine where they had experience in counter-insurgency techniques."[27] Creech Jones agreed and consequently the size of the Federation's Police force

---

[22] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, p. 114.

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

[24] A. Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in D. Anderson & D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police* (Manchester 1992), p. 108.

[25] AIR 24/1924, AQH Malaya, Operational Order No, 24/48, 30th June 1948; WO 268/9, Lt-Col. Shepheard, GSO I, FELF 'Lessons from Operations', 8th November 1948.

[26] Ibid.

[27] B. Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame – Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke 2011), p. 110.

swelled dramatically from 12,767 men in early 1949 to a peak of 36,737 by 1953. Moreover, the Malayan Special Constabulary rose from 10,000 in August 1948 to 44, 878 in mid-1952. The influx of over five hundred former Palestine Police officers, including Gray himself, injected a battle-hardened core to Malaya Police which was still struggling to recover from the horrors of Japanese occupation.

Consequently, the Police, under the influence of the ex-Palestine officers, rapidly became a paramilitary force. This is most clearly seen by the creation of the Police Jungle Squads, which performed virtually the same role as the regular Army platoons patrolling the squatter camps and jungles that surrounded them.[28] This attracted much criticism from the 'Old Malayans' who accused Gray of 'Commando style' or 'Gendarmerie' policing. Such criticism was supported by the findings of the Policing Mission and the Johnston report (which will be discussed in chapter 8).[29] However, as Hurst argues, "this was not a situation within the experience of a policeman. This was a war, and a chaotic and peculiar war that demanded unusual expertise. Gray was not picked by accident, or because he was a likeable chap….Gray was not appointed as a diplomat, nor even as a policeman, but as a solider taking command of a gendarmerie that was in grave danger of losing control."[30]

The task of going on the offensive with a rapidly expanded Police force had widespread implications for the intelligence war.[31] In particular, as will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, Gray's paramilitary strategy had a significant and adverse effect upon the willingness of the Malaya's Chinese community to provide information about the insurgents. More immediately, however, it quickly became apparent that "the Federation Police were not sufficiently well organised, or equipped nor in sufficient strength to play their full role as the leading partner." This necessitated "the Army having to take the lead in planning and control of operations

---

[28] J. Moran, *Spearhead in Malaya* (London 1959).

[29] See CO 537/5440, Report of the Police Advisor to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, December 1949; MEPO 2/9710, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.

[30] Hurst, "Colonel Gray and the armoured cars: The Malayan Police, 1948-152", *Centre of Southeast Asian Studies,* Working Paper 119, (Monash 2003), p. 7.

[31] R. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Rand 1972), p. 26.

at all levels."[32] In the weeks after the declaration of Emergency, "the C.s-in-C, and particularly the G.O.C Malaya, complained bitterly of the serious lack of battlefield intelligence in the Federation, and the lack of co-ordination between the intelligence staffs of the Army, Air Force, MSS and CID."[33] As a result, Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General of South East Asia directed the creation of a Combined Intelligence Staff (CIS), located at Kuala Lumpur.[34] This was replicated within each State or Statement, where local intelligence centres were established "under a suitable officer answerable to the Chief of Police of the State of Settlement. The officer normally responsible for intelligence to the Chief of Police would be the MSS officer in the State or Settlement." Moreover, within each State or Settlement the Colonial Office reported that there would be a number of local 'Report Centres' (the District level committees, comprised of a triumvirate of the District Officer, senior Police and Army officers in the area), "which would be collecting agencies for the all local intelligence, which was then to be passed to the State or Settlement centre, where it would be screened and evaluated and, if appropriate, passed to the Central Intelligence Centre at Kuala Lumpur."[35] The committees at "Police Office / Coy Comd [Company Commander] level' often had representatives from all other local authorities concerned and from local unofficial organisations such as Planter's associations etc."[36] Thus, as early as August 1948, each of the Malay states had formed an intelligence committee on an interservice-civilian basis.[37] By 1949 Ritchie reported that these Committees have been "created on the level of all military Sub-Districts and in some cases on unit level as well…" and were charged with "making use of available intelligence reaching them from their own local resources and from superior Headquarters."[38]

---

[32] WO 268/9, Lt-Col. Shepherd, GSO I, FELF 'Lessons from Operations', p. 8th November 1948.
[33] Ibid.
[34] T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS* (Oxon 2007*)*, p. 86.
[35] CO 537/2647, Hone to Seel, 26th July 1948.
[36] WO 268/9, Lt-Col. Shepherd, GSO I, FELF 'Lessons from Operations', p. 8th November 1948.
[37] Sunderland, *Organising COIN in Malaya*, p. 27
[38] WO 106/5884, General Sir Neil Ritchie, 'Report on Operations in Malaya: June 1948 to July 1949, 6th September 1949.

Intelligence Impasse

It is often posited that the intelligence structures in Malaya at the beginning of the Emergency were fundamentally flawed.[39] At least at a local level, this does not seem to be the case. The authorities quickly organised local committees and began working collectively from the beginning of the Emergency. However, after an initial flurry of activity when Police, with Army support, arrested known Communist activists and targeted the armed bands of up-to-three hundred insurgents that were roaming the countryside, intelligence began to 'dry-up'.

As a result a number of planters and civil servants, who were ex-Force 136 members, considered how best to identify and neutralise the MCP forces. John Davis, Richard Broome, Noel Alexander and Robert Thompson advocated creating an irregular force, modelled on Force 136, "to break down the bandit's feeling of ownership of the jungle by *ferreting* them out from their cover." Davis believed the Ferret Force would be "the best and perhaps only method of coping with Communist terrorists once they get into the jungle."[40] Their discussions coincided with the authorities realising the need for some form of specialist or irregular counter-insurgency force, because "the value of large and elaborate sweeps is doubtful."[41]

Both Ritchie and Charles Boucher, GOC Malaya, saw the need for such force - indeed, the former claimed the initial idea for the force was his, while Robert Thompson subsequently attributed the genesis of the force to the latter. The decision to create a "special jungle guerrilla force" was made by Boucher in July 1948. The force consisted initially of four Ferret Groups, each consisting with eight men, half of whom were civilians on three-month contracts.[42] Malcolm MacDonald, explained in a radio broadcast that "for jungle warfare against guerrilla bands, squads of jungle fighters are necessary. These will be formed and trained, partly from existing troops and partly

---

[39] See for instance, H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), p. 421.
[40] M. Sheenan, *Our Man in Malaya – John Davies, SOE Force 136 and Postwar Counter-insurgency* (2007), p. 156.
[41] Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS*, p. 102.
[42] Ibid., p. 91.

from volunteer newcomers who are familiar with the wild forest paths along which many pursuits and engagements will take place. [43]   The first two groups started operations at the end of July. The force consisted of British, Malay and Gurkha units led by their own officers, but commanded by ex-members of Force 136. By September five groups, each comprised of sixty men plus interpreters, guides and two hundred Dyak trackers flown in from Sarawak, had been established.

Whilst the work of the Ferret Force was considered a "considerable success", the Malay Regiment Quarterly Historical Report for period ending 31st December 1948 noted with some frustration the difficultly in sharing intelligence among the different organisations involved with the counter-insurgency effort. He noted,

> …information which the Army had was not always at the disposal of the Police and <u>Vice Versa</u>, while information which the District Officers and Penghulus [Headman] had was not passed to anybody. This was even more vicious in the case of the planters, many of whom have excellent and reliable sources of information not available to the Military or Police.[44]

To help mitigate this problem, the authorities sanctioned the creation of Civil Liaison Corps (CLC), which consisted of a European Officer, Chinese and Malay interpreters and sometimes a tracker. The purpose of the formation of the Corps "was to assist units operating against the bandits in:-

a) Gaining information. By gaining a close contact with the inhabitants of the country, i.e. local Government officials, Police, Planters, Miners and the squatters themselves.
b) Having available advisers on local conditions and on government policy.
c) Having a means of breaking down the barriers of different languages.[45]

---

[43] AIR 20/8876, Commissioner General South East Asia to Foreign Office, text of the Commissioner General's broadcast, 7th July 1948.
[44] WO 268/647, RHQ The Malay Regiment Quarterly Historical Report for Period Ending 31st Dec 48.
[45] Ibid.

The fact that the Ferret Force was disbanded at the end of 1948 might imply that it was inconsequential to Boucher. John Davies was certainly left fuming. He later said that "the end was almost indecently hastened by our jack-in the-box little general, who got over-excited about us in the beginning and then decided to write us off after only six weeks because we had not won his war for him."[46] Davies's attitude is understandable, not least because the Ferret Force appeared to unearth valuable intelligence about the insurgents.[47] However, the decision to terminate the Ferret Force experiment should not be viewed as Boucher and Ritchie's disinclination to develop intelligence-led operations. Both men were concerned about the development of 'private armies' but, more pertinently, the Ferret Force was never going to be a viable long-term option to tackle the scale of the problem presented by the MPAJA.[48] Instead, Boucher wanted the lessons and ethos of the Ferret Force to be inculcated to all front line units. Indeed, he stated, "all coys [companies] will be regarded as ferrets."[49] To achieve this, he ordered Colonel Walker, the Ferret Force's training officer, to establish the Far Eastern Land Force Training Centre (FTC).[50] This was a measure designed to institutionalise and embedded the lessons learnt from the former Force 136 / Ferret Force into the wider Army.[51]

Although primarily a consumer of intelligence, the Army did have a small, dedicated, intelligence-gathering capability. Upon the reoccupation of Malaya, the Intelligence Corps established the Field Security Service (Malaya Command). This was commanded by Major Peter Leefe (GSO II) and comprised of eight Security Sections, each with small number of NCOs – for instance, the detachment at Ipoh was consisted of a Captain and sixteen others, including six interpreters. The main task of the Field Security Service (FSS) was to round up people on the black and grey lists which had been

---

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

[47] A. Hoe & E. Morris, *Re-enter the SAS* (London 1994), p. 41.

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

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

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

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

prepared in New Delhi well before the invasion, as well as to intern the members of the India National Army (INA) which had been formed by the Japanese.[52] An unpublished history written by the Intelligence Corps suggests that in May 1946 the FSS (Selangor) turned its attention from investigating war crimes to "internal problems of Communism and secret society activity." Unfortunately, the history does not provide much detail but does state that locally employed interpreters "were utilised extensively in war crime investigations, working long hours and often interrogating Japanese prisoners of war themselves. Later, they were also used to report the results of Communist meetings, which were at this time held openly as the Communist Party was legally recognised." Interestingly the history suggests that the FSS gave indications as early as June 1946 of an armed MCP movement in Johore but "apparently the civilian authorities were either unwilling to take to take any action, or not interested, and nothing further was heard of the matter."[53] The similarities with the unheeded warnings provided by the MSS, as discussed in the previous chapter, are clear. Little further is known about the work of FSS, particularly between 1948-53, but it does appear that in the first five years of the Emergency the FSS were not attached to the various battalions of line posted to Malaya and worked independently.

Despite the efforts of the Ferret Force, Jungle Training School, and the Intelligence Corps, the authorities struggled to obtain humint of good quality and in sufficient quantities and the counter-insurgency campaign laboured significantly. A key reason for this was that the Police, which should have been the primary generators of humint, were the primary enforcers of draconian Emergency legislation, including the power to arrest on suspicion and detention without trial for fourteen days; the power for a Chief Police Office to destroy or authorise the destruction of any suspect building or structure; the power of deportation; and the power to nominate 'special areas' in which the security forces could arrest, using lethal force if necessary, anyone who failed to stop and submit to search when called to do.[54] Indeed, the functions of the

---

[52] Intelligence Corp Museum, Acc No. 576/2 – Notes on the Intelligence Corps in South East Asia, undated, believed to be mid-1953.
[53] Ibid., Acc 882 – A History of the Intelligence Corps in Malaya 1945-70.
[54] Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009).

Malayan Police Service underwent a significant and rapid transformation in the first four years of the Emergency. As the Police Mission report subsequently identified,

> in jungle operations the functions of a policeman are similar to those of a soldier; in ordinary police work they are dissimilar…the functions of a policeman in ordinary times are to preserve the peace and in doing so to use the minimum force: he must avoid the use of force if possible, and if force is unavoidable, he must use no more than is necessary. While he must be firm and resolute, he must be cautious and not impulsive…the contrast between that bent and the attitude of mind required for war-like objectives is such that training for jungle operations can do little or nothing to develop the habit of thought and action required for ordinary police work.[55]

On occasion the enforcement of these blunt instruments and para-military nature of policing under Nicol Gray led to acts of extreme and unwarranted violence, such as the shooting of twenty-four unarmed villagers at Batang Kali on the 12th December 1948.[56] Furthermore, the majority of security personnel operating in and around the squatters could not even speak Chinese.[57] It is not surprising that the flow of intelligence gathered by the Police in the squatter areas was limited.

The task of acquiring intelligence in the first years of the emergency proved a near unsolvable conundrum. The security forces had to provide local, semi-static protection to the population. As Ritchie explained, unless this is done "vulnerable points are insecure, all sense of personal security amongst the Civilian population is lacking…furthermore, willingness on part of the unprotected civilians to provide information and intelligence ceases, and without this, the task of the security forces

---

[55] MEPO 2/9710, Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, 1950.

[56] See ibid. Also C. Hale, *Massacre in Malaya - exposing Britain's My Lai* (London 2013); K. Hack, 'Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699; D. French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67* (Oxford 2011).

[57] CO 537/4374, A note by CIGS to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15th November 1949.

is reduced to conditions akin to searching for a needle in a haystack."[58] And yet an inability to go on the offensive would allow the insurgents to operate largely at will. On balance, Richite favoured the offensive but, without security intelligence, the efforts of the security forces was often fruitless. Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, visited Malaya in 1949 and found,

> … a band having been located in an area, a military force proceeds to beat through a wide expanse of jungle and locate the band. Contact is usually made with one or two individual bandits acting as outposts but the main body is able to evacuate its camp and disperse to rally again in some pre-arranged area many miles away. The Army then laboriously repeats the process.[59]

Indeed, it quickly became apparent that it was "virtually impossible to protect or secure" the squatter communities: they were too dispersed; there were insufficient troops, insufficient Police officers and administrators, and an absolute lack of Chinese-speakers. Consequently, as subsequently noted by General Sir Harold Briggs, the squatters "were more inclined to support the Communists, whom they had good reason to expect to win. As a result, there was little information forthcoming about the CTs, and the bulk of the Army was deployed on large scale and fruitless searches in the jungle."[60]

Sir Harold Briggs

It was the need to manage the efforts between the Police and military that led the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, to suggest in 1950 the appointment of "one officer to plan, co-ordinate and generally direct the anti-bandit operations of the police and fighting services." He argued that not "it is not feasible for the Commissioner of Police to plan, co-ordinate and direct all such operations except at the expense of his functions as head of the police force. Nor is there any civil officer

---

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

[59] CO 537/4374, A note by CIGS to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15th November 1949.

[60] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948- August 1957.

other than myself in a position to give directions to the GOC and the AOC." The High Commissioner therefore proposed the secondment to Malaya of an experienced military officer to a newly created civil post, with the responsibility of creating a "general plan for offensive action and the allocation of tasks to the various components of the security forces." The post-holder would have no executive power, and would be expected to exercise control through "heads of police and fighting services", but also 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 the settlement of labour disputes."[61] James Griffiths, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Emmanuel Shinwell, the Secretary of State for Defence, approved the proposal and Slim proposed that his friend, General Sir Harold Briggs, should be encouraged to leave retirement in Cyprus to take-up the post. Remarkably, only six weeks elapsed between Gurney first raising the idea with London to Briggs arriving in Kuala Lumpur.

Briggs subsequently presented his plan "for the elimination of the Communist organisation and armed forces in Malaya" to British Defence Co-ordination Committee, Far East (BDCC/FE) on 24th May 1950. The plan was based on the premise that the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) relied "very largely for food, money, information and propaganda on the Min Yen (literally "People's Organisation") in the populated areas including towns and villages as well as uncontrolled squatter areas, unsupervised Chinese estates and small holdings, estate labour lines and timber kongsis." Thus, he suggested that to end the Emergency the authorities would need to destroy both the Min Yuen and MRLA - the first task being "primarily the responsibility of the civil authorities and second of the Services, mainly the Army."[62] The Briggs plan had four key components. He intended to "clear the country, step by step, from South to North, by:

[61] CO 537/5994, Gurney to Creech Jones, 23rd February 1950.
[62] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs, p. 6.

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

b) breaking up Min Yuen within the populated areas;

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

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

To achieve this, Briggs planned that in all States, the Police would be focused on "fulfilling normal Police functions including the obtaining of intelligence through its Special Branch organisation in all populated areas." The Army would maintain in each State maintain a 'framework' of troops to support the Police. This would, he explained, "entail the setting up of a serious of strong points whereon patrols will be based." The Army would "superimpose further strike forces upon this framework, on a state-by-state basis, to dominate the tracks on which the bandits rely to make contact with their information and supply organisation, thus forcing the bandits either to fight, disintegrate or to leave the area."[63]

Briggs was concerned to ensure "the closest possible coordination and liaison between the Fighting Services, the Police and the Civil Administration." Thus, in his first directive, issued on 16 April 1950, the Director of Operations instructed that officials would set up "State and Settlement War Executive Committees and combined operational headquarters at all levels."[64] This, therefore, recognised and enhanced the status of the committees initially created at District level across Malaya at the beginning of the Emergency, and created parallel structures at State / Settlement level. These became known as the District and State / Settlement War Executive Committees (D/SWECs).

---

[63] Ibid. See also CAB 104/263, Cabinet Malaya Committee, *Future Anti Policy in Malaya* – A memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12th May 1950.

[64] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs, p. 12.

In the following month the Director of Operations issued a second directive which stipulated that that the tactical headquarters of the senior Army commander in each State or Settlement will be sited close to the headquarters of the Chief Police Officer.[65] Consequently, a Brigade Headquarters was normally located at each Contingent Police Headquarters in a State / Settlement capital. The Brigade Commander was operationally responsible to the SWEC, of which he was a member. Similarly, Battalion Headquarters were co-located with the Police Circle Headquarters at the administrative Centre of a Civil District, with the Battalion Commander operationally responsible to and a member of the DWEC. Finally Company Headquarters was generally co-located with Police District Headquarters.[66]

Crucially, *Directive No* 2 also stipulated, "that a joint operations/intelligence room will be maintained. This intelligence room will be a permanent requirement and will be a part of the Contingent Headquarters." Moreover, "this principle will apply at all levels including Police Circles and Administrative Districts."[67] The operations room included senior officers of the Police and military, a member of special branch, and one officer (either Police or military) acted as an ad hoc G-3.[68] Also, RAF intelligence officers attached themselves to these operations room to facilitate coordination of tactical air support missions. Briggs was doggedly egalitarian in relation to the staffing of the operations rooms – he stated "it is immaterial whether the local military commander is a Lieutenant-Colonel and the local Police Officer is a sergeant or whether they are respectively a Major and a Superintendent; in each case they will establish a joint headquarters and will work in the closest co-operation also with the local administrative officer."[69] These intelligence structures further reflected the intimate, co-dependent relationship between the key actors in the Emergency.

---

[65] CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya – Directive No. 2, 12th May 1950.
[66] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1957.
[67] CAB 134/497, Director of Operations Malaya, Directive No. 2, 12th May 1950.
[68] Sunderland, Organising COIN in Malaya, p. 45.
[69] CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya – Directive No. 2, 12th May 1950.

Resettlement, confidence and intelligence

The concept of resettlement was been closely linked with intelligence conundrum which confronted Gurney and Briggs, and is at the crux of the latter's plan to restore security to Malaya. The problem remained the lack of intelligence being gathered by the Police from the Chinese community. For instance, the Cabinet Malaya Committee noted "more and better information is needed, particularly from the Chinese community, and this information can be obtained only if the Chinese have confidence in the Administration."[70] The Secretary of State for the Colonies considered how to address this in a perceptive memorandum written in July 1950. He noted that the reluctance for the Chinese to provide information was a result of "the most brutal intimidation by the compatriots in the Communist ranks" which had resulted seven hundred deaths with that community. He noted that "we shall not get the full active cooperation of the Chinese (even though the vast majority of them are not in sympathy with the Communist ideology) until we are in a position to offer the people security and protection against the bandits and the conviction that, if they throw in their lot with the forces of law and order, they will be incorporated as full members of the body politic."[71]

The problem posed by the large numbers of ungoverned Chinese was recognised at the very beginning of the Emergency. For instance, as Anthony Short ergues, "in Perak, and no doubt in other states, there was in 1948 an administrative no man's land, which, under the influence of Communism, threatened to become a vast sprawling state within a state extending over huge areas of what were once Forest Reserves, Malay Reservations, Mining or Agricultural land and considerable areas of privately owned estates, particularly European, which were felled during the Occupation."[72] Without effective government, the squatters were "easy prey for Communist intimidation, and became his [the insurgent's] chief source of both supplies and

---

[70] CAB 104/263, Cabinet Malaya Committee, minutes of a meeting held on 19th April 1950.
[71] CAB 21/1681, Cabinet Malaya Committee, Malaya – General Background – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14th July 1950.
[72] Short, *The Communist Insurrection,* p. 174.

recruits."[73] Even prior to the declaration of Emergency, the MSS highlighted the importance of links between squatter areas and the MPAJA and recommended that squatters who provided insurgents with sustenance should be relocated.[74] Similarly, instructions for the Civil Liaison Officers issued in late 1948 noted that "there is no doubt that squatter areas are the main source of supply of the bandits and the key to their extermination is the denial of the use of these areas to them."[75] Thus, in 1949 the government appointed Squatter Committee recommended that:

a. That wherever possible squatters should be settled in the areas already occupied by them;

b. That where settlement in existing areas was not possible, an alternative suitable area should be made available for resettlement;

c. That, if the squatter should refuse settlement or resettlement on the terms offered, he should be liable to compulsory repatriation;

d. That emergency measures to deal with the security problem of certain areas should be supported by administrative measures designed permanently to re-establish the authority of government;

e. That legal means should be introduced to provide for the eviction of squatters by summary process.[76]

Gurney realised that not only did the administration have to break the link between the squatters and the MRLA, but that any benefits of resettlement would be temporary "if we do not at once show the potentially loyal squatters what we can offer them in the way of a peaceful livelihood, free from intimidation." As a result he placed pressure on the State governments to accelerate resettlement operations and use the provisions in Emergency regulations for banishment.[77]

---

[73] WO 106/5884, Report on Operations in Malaya by General Neil Ritchie, June 1948 to July 1948. See also, CO 537/4374, A note on the visit of the CIGS to South East Asia, November 1949.
[74] Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS*, p. 80.
[75] WO 268/647, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Civil Liaison Corps, *Action Against Squatter Areas.*
[76] Short, *The Communist Insurrection,* p. 186.
[77] CO 537/4751, Minute by HE The High Commissioner, 31 May 1949. See also, Bayly & Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 482; T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60* (London 1990)*,* p. 114-5; Short, *The Communist Insurrection,* p. 175, pp. 185-6.

Pronouncements by HQ Malaya District in the first eighteen months of the campaign about the impact of resettlement under security operations proved to be prescient. For instance, the Weekly Intelligence Review for the week ending 13 January 1949, issued by HQ Malaya District, stated "food is now the prime factor in the campaign, and the denial of it to the bandits, by removal of squatters and other means, becomes the main task. It is of interest to note that, just as the supply of rice was the main factor in the internal situation before the insurrection, and is the most powerful anti-Communist weapon, so the lack of it will drive the bandits out of battle."[78] As farsighted as this statement was, it would be a further two years before security forces would see tangible operational benefit as a result of population control. This was due to three key reasons. First, the success of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ended the agreement with China to deport her citizens from Malaya. Second, contrary to Ritiche's wishes, there were no little or no resources available to bring effective government to the squatter area, whether in situ or resettlement camps. The result was that the Chinese who were re-settled were transported to areas entirely unsuited for habitation, with little running water or other amenities. Third, neither the military nor the Federal government had any powers to compel state governments to undertake a coordinated program of resettlement.[79]

The Briggs Plan brought a renewed focus on resettlement, the detail of which is outside of the scope of this discussion. The salient point is, however, that regardless of any the moral judgement, resettlement made possible the implementation of food denial operations that really began to yield intelligence dividends later in the Emergency.[80] Operation Hammer, which ran between October 1952 and April 1953, was a typical food denial operation made possible by the resettlement of squatters into New Villages. It originated after the security forces obtained detailed intelligence on the Communist organisation in Selangor from an insurgent killed during an ambush

---

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

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

[80] Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32:3 (2009), p. 438-441.

in July. Subsequently the authorities planned "a long-term operation combing civil administrative measures with a concentration of Police and Army." The object of the operation was:

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

The first phase of the plan involved the removal of surplus rice and arrests of all known or suspected food suppliers. As a result "the worst New Villages, Kampongs and labour lines…were subjected in turn to Special Branch screening; collection of surplus food by Food Control Teams; explanations to the local population by Information Service Teams of the need for increased restrictions and instructions on cooperation." The second phase called for the security forces "preventing the insurgents from re-establishing their supply organisation and killing or capturing any terrorist in the area." The authorities used various joint methods to achieve this, including restricting movements and carrying of food supplies, convoying civilian vehicles carrying restricted articles, frequent road checks and surprise checks by Food Control Teams. These activities were supplemented by air strikes by the RAF and coastal bombardments of "selected areas in the jungle, day and night, to harass the enemy." It is debatable whether the results of this resource intensive operation were commensurate with the investment - the security forces killed just seventeen terrorists during the course of the seven month-long operation. However, another twenty-four insurgents were induced to surrender. Moreover, the post-operation report noted "full use was made of these surrenders, the CTs being sent back into the jungle to persuade their former colleagues to give themselves up, or to lead them in Security Force ambushes. The Information Services also utilised them to demonstrate the failure of the Communists and the good treatment meted out to those who surrendered."[81]

---

[81] Liddell Hart Archives, Papers of General Stockwell, *Operation Hammer.* See also WO 216/874, Director of Operations' Directive, February 1955. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, p. 98-9;

Operational Refinement under Templer

The appointment in 1952 of General Templer as High Commissioner and Director of Operations, following the murder of Sir Henry Gurney and retirement of General Briggs, heralded a mixture of continuity and structural change. Hence, Templer adhered to the basic principles of the Briggs Plan that meant at a District level, the security forces continued the process of resettling the Chinese squatter community and patrolling the jungle fringes, with a particular emphasis on food denial operations. The main structural changes related to the organisation of the Police Service. As will be discussed in a later chapter, Special Branch was finally separated from the shackles of the broader CID apparatus. Also Colonel Arthur Young, who replaced Colonel Nicol Gray, began the process of moving the Police Service from a paramilitary model to one based on consent.

Templer made very little change to the intelligence apparatus at District level. He did, however, review how the S/DWEC system was operating. There was some concern that the size of District committees, in particular, had became excessive. As a result, General Walker (1/6th Gurkha Rifles) explained that "heads of departments produce for discussion matters of minor policy which merely waste valuable time…sessions last from 4-7 hours which is absurd." The key officers in the War Executive Committees were the District Officer, Chief Police Office, and Senior Army Officer. They formed a natural triumvirate. However, there was no "no clear method of ironing out differences of opinion between police and military and obviously these must at times occur." There was particular concern that the "police must let the Army know full details of all info available…and not hold back 'plum' information. Conversely military patrol reports must be frank and true…unfounded claims by the military of kills and wounded are always finally laid bare by later SEP or captured docs, and only cause lack of confidence amongst their police."[82]

Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, p. 116-7; R. Clutterbuck, *The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-60* (1966), p. 116-121.

[82] Liddell Hart Collection (Kings College London) – the papers of General Walter Walker, a letter from Walker to Graham, 12th July 1952.

As a result, General Sir Robert Lockhart, D/Director of Operations, created a specific course to help members of DWEC operate effectively. Interestingly, this course was entirely Army-led.[83] The objective of the course was:

a) to practice DWECs in joint planning;

b) to study all aspects of the Emergency with a direct or indirect effect on operational planning by DWECs;

c) to exchange views of the various problems that have confronted DWECs in various parts of the country so that local experience gained can be shared throughout the Federation;

d) to analyse the relationship between Civil, Police and Military so that the maximum effect may be obtained in planning and execution of measures necessary to defeat the enemy;

e) to study some of the different types of operations with which DWECs have to deal.[84]

To achieve this, members of the DWECs received lectures on the organisation and characteristics of the MCP and MRLA; the intelligence organisation (particularly Special Branch organisation, methods, sources and exploitation of information, and the difference between political and operational information); the organisation of the Police Force (its functions and problems); and the machinery of command for operational planning (particularly the relationship between the District Officer, Police and Military, and the organisation and functions of the Joint Operations Room and its relationship with Special Branch). There were further lectures on the Home Guard, Air and Naval support and the Army. Each course also had to complete a number of syndicate exercises. For instance, Exercise 'Co-operation' tested the delegates in how they would tackle a theoretical area in which the "general situation vis-à-vis the

---

[83] Following the death of Sir Edward Gurney and retirement of General Sir Harold Briggs at the end of 1951, Sir General Sir Gerald Templer became, in the following year, both High Commissioner and Director of Operations. General Sir Robert Lockhart was thus appointed as Templer's Deputy Director of Operations.

[84] Ibid., Director of Operations, Courses for Members of DWECs, 1st August 1952.

enemy is unsatisfactory." This required them to consider special measures to control timber workers in the area, to study in detail measures to make food control effective, how to create effective propaganda measures, and how to respond to a major incident.[85]

Lockhart believed that best results would be achieved "when a Joint Operations Room is established [at District level] for the planning and control of Operations." A letter from Walker to Col C. Graham (Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas) gives a good indication of how the Police and Army conducted joint operations in the District of Kuala Kangsar in mid 1952. Walker explained to Graham that "physical liaison takes place regularly at 0900hrs each day, and thereafter as required. We are in direct comm [communication] with the pol sta [police station] by phone and an officer goes down at once at any time of day, if and whenever required. My IO [intelligence officer] or Tac Adjt [tactical adjutant] spends more time with the police than he does with me. There is a joint ops room at police HQ and if one had sufficient officers there might be an offr [officer] employed full time at the joint ops room. However, we manage very well by frequent visits throughout the day."[86]

Moreover, the Intelligence Corps was developing its local presence at this point of the Emergency: Field Security Wing (Malaya) was formed, replacing 348 Field Security Section (FSS) in North Malaya (with detachments in Penang, Taiping, Ipoh and Cameron Highlands) and 355 FSS in South Malaya (with detachments in KL, Kluang, Johore Bahru, Montakab, Bentong and Segamat). The exact numbers are not clear, but the unpublished, in-house, history of the Intelligence Corps in the Far East suggests that the Ipoh Detachment consisted of two sergeants, two MOR, and two civilian interpreters. The strength of 355 FSS was approximately thirty soldiers, and fifteen-eighteen interpreters and drivers. It appears that each Detachment was linked to the local Army battalion. For instance, in 1953, the Detachment at Kuala Lipis

---

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., Walker to Graham, 12th July 1952. For a description of the Sungei Siput Joint Operations Room in 1958 see, Yuen Yuet Leng, *Nation Before Self – And values that do not die* (Kuala Lumpur 2008), p. 127.

"supported an infantry battalion providing vetting clearance for labourers both for the battalion and the Garrison in the Cameron Highlands. They also occasionally collected intelligence on enemy movements from their sources." Furthermore, in the same year, Templer had embedded six G II (Int), six G III and 16 Intelligence Officers into Special Branch. Their task was to "assess and collect tactical information collected by the Special Branch and to pass it to the joint Police / Military Operations room for action."[87]

Thus, the basic joint intelligence structures at a local level had been defined by and protocols arranged for their use by the end of Templer's tenure as High Commissioner. However, the Emergency was far from over. Indeed, according General Bourne, who took over as Director of Operations following Templer's departure from Malaya, at the end of 1954 there were still "rather more than 4,000 Communist terrorists" in the jungle, who were "able to emerge from the jungle regularly, at points of their choosing, to create an incident or to collect supplies, when they think they can do so with great risk." Bourne was particularly concerned about the MCP's continued ability to launch "terrorist" attacks against "small and isolated police posts and to take a more drastic line with uncooperative members of the public, including the elimination of suspected agents and the selective murder of other citizens as a warning." In the longer-term, Bourne suspected that the Communists were waiting for when "outside assistance or the outbreaks of communal strife resulting upon the withdrawal of the British, will enable them to come out into the open and take over the country." [88] Despite the continued efforts of some thirty-one battalions of troops, 16,840 regular Police officers and 23,238 members of the Special Constabulary, Bourne concluded at the end of 1956 that there was "a considerable and continuing danger to the security and stability of Malaya until the Communist Terrorist Organisation has been thoroughly broken."[89] The security forces were containing the insurgents and

---

[87] Intelligence Corp Museum, Acc No. 576/2 – Notes on the Intelligence Corps in South East Asia, undated, believed to be mid-1953.
[88] WO 208/3219, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954, by the Director of Operations, Malaya.
[89] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956. For the troop and police levels see AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1957.

gradually eroding their strength, but were unable to administer a coup de grâce. The fate of Malaya depended upon the Police to win the trust and confidence of Malaya's Chinese community and for Special Branch to turn this into solid, actionable, intelligence. As will be seen in chapter 8, this proved a highly difficult task that would take many years. In the interim, the security forces on the ground, including the Police, 'held the ring.'

Conclusion

Consideration of how the intelligence apparatus in Malaya evolved at a local level reveals three key factors. The first is that the response to the Communist insurgency was highly decentralised. Indeed, the initial move to enlist the military to support the civilian authorities was made by the Chief Police Officer in Perak, rather than any Federal official. Indeed, in some critical areas, such as Perak, the Police and Army were already working together to tackle the rise in banditry prior to the declaration of Emergency. As emergency powers were declared across Malaya, the security forces in conjunction with officials such as District Officers and unofficial representatives of the expatriate communities organised themselves into committees. These committees considered what intelligence was available, often obtained through informal networks of informants, and directed the local operational response against the insurgent gangs. Over time the Federal authorities overlaid plans and formalised the committee structures but, fundamentally, the Emergency was a local affair.

The second factor is that the operational response was a highly collaborative affair. Although the military acted in support of civilian authorities, the Army provided the focal point for operations. The Police adopted a highly paramilitary stance, as witnessed by the creation of the Police Jungle Squads, and until 1952 were a de facto adjunct of the military. The level of co-operation with the RAF was also significant and has been underplayed by previous commentators. For instance, the RAF Regiment undertook regular patrols in the jungle and RAF intelligence officers were often attached to DWECs and also went on patrol with their Army colleagues. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, perhaps the most noteworthy example of this interagency cooperation are the reports, very early in the Emergency, of Police officers

acting as spotters in the RAF's light aircraft which were flown by Army Air Corp pilots. In contrast to the civilian intelligence agencies, the military demonstrated an instinctive ability to work together with little friction from the very beginning of the Emergency.

The third factor is that the key structures for managing operational intelligence that were created at the beginning of the Emergency did not change significantly throughout the duration of the campaign. Sir Harold Briggs standardised the working of the local committees, and re-named them as District or State / Settlement War Executive Councils and Sir Gerald Templer refined their practices but the fundamental structures and processes remained the same. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the D/SWEC system was supported at theatre-level with a sophisticated intelligence coordinating apparatus, in the form of the Land/Air Operations Room and the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (Far East).

The weak link in the system was the Federation's Police force. In the first instance, orthodox policing was forgotten as Gray quickly turned the Federation's Police force into a pseudo-military force. In practice, there was very little difference between a contingent Police squad and an infantry company. Moreover, the Police and military regularly worked in conjunction to mount patrols, stage ambushes, and enforce Emergency regulations, such as deportation and resettlement. As a result, the Police were unable to maintain or develop contacts within the Chinese community which were necessary to generate the human intelligence vital for turning security force operations from cumbersome speculative affairs into more precise, targeted operations. Officials were caught in a conundrum - the Police depended upon the Army to generate a perception of security, while the Army were dependent upon the Police to provide humint to enable effective operations. In the first four years of the Emergency, both the Police and Army tried to generate a perception of security but, without humint, this largely failed. This often bred resentment and mistrust, rather than confidence. Thus, for a large proportion of the Emergency – at least until the mid 1950s – the Army 'held the ring' until the civilian authorities were able to provide a more effective response to the demands of the counter-insurgency campaign.

In the interim the Army attempted to stimulate the flow of intelligence at local level – as witnessed by the experiment of the Ferret Force and the use of the Intelligence Corps' Field Security Sections. More often than not, however, local commanders felt the need to implement large-unit sweeps of the jungle, often supported by aerial bombardments simply in the hope of generating a contact with the insurgent forces and finding intelligence, such as a captured documents. Moreover, the Army relied heavily upon the RAF to supplement the limited supply of humint from the Police with visual surveillance and photographic intelligence. However, this was no substitute for humint.

The Emergency was fundamental a civilian affair and the military were acting at all times in support of the administration. The ability of the security forces to do this relatively effectively arguably prevented the insurgents from developing 'liberated areas' and gaining further momentum. However, the local intelligence set-up was, in fact, slave to a much wider apparatus. Real success would only be realised when all the elements of the counter-insurgency campaign were synchronised, including the civilian intelligence structures, the policing strategy, the psychological warfare programme and the transition to self-government. As will be discussed in the following chapter, a key but under-recognised precursor to this was the creation of suitable intelligence mechanisms to link the local operational intelligence structures to those at theatre-level.

Chapter 7 – Networking Intelligence: creating a theatre-level intelligence apparatus[1]

As the security forces began to tackle the insurgent threat across Malaya, the need to coordinate the fledging intelligence apparatus at a broader, pan-State, level became apparent. In particular, the intelligence needs of the security forces confronting the insurgents in villages, rubber plantations and jungles across Malaya had to be aligned to the theatre-level resources, such as the Royal Air Force's photographic reconnaissance squadron. Nearly all assessments of the Emergency make some reference to the creation of various mechanisms to oversee the interagency counter-insurgency effort, such as the creation of a committee system or the appointment of a Director of Intelligence (which will be discussed in a later chapter). However, there is a distinct lacuna in the literature relation to the evolution of theatre-level intelligence apparatus.

There are, in particular, two critical omissions. The first concerns the establishment in the first weeks of the Emergency of a Land / Air Operations Room (later known as the Joint Operations Centre) to link operational 'consumers' with theatre-level 'suppliers'. The Land / Air Operations Room coordinated counter-insurgency operations, including the assessment, dissemination and tasking of intelligence between the Army, Royal Air Force and Police at theatre-level. It was also the medium through which requests for tactical air support were routed and, later in the Emergency, coordinated the work of the psychological warfare teams. Moreover, the Land / Air Operations room in Kuala Lumpur provided the template for the creation of facsimiles at a State and District level across Malaya which were introduced under the auspices of the Briggs Plan. [2]

---

[1] An article based on this chapter has been accepted for publication by *Small Wars and Insurgencies.* Please see R. Arditti, "The View from Above: How the Royal Air Force provided a strategic vision for operational intelligence during the Malayan Emergency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), pp. 762-786.
[2] The Land/Air Operations Room was established in Kuala Lumpur in the summer of 1948. General Briggs dictated that the concept be extended down to State / Settlement and District level in 1950 and the terms Joint Operations Centre / Rooms were later used to reflect this. See M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog* (London 1992), p. 53 and AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from

The second omission in the historiography relates to the creation of the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre (Far East) (JAPIC(FE)) in 1948. This was a quite remarkable 'joint' body, which performed a critical role in the coordination, collection, assessment and dissemination of photographic intelligence. It was answerable through the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (Far East) (JAPIB (FE)) to the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC(FE)) which, it will be recalled from chapter three, was in a state of significant disarray at the beginning of the Emergency. In contrast, JAPIC (FE) managed inter-agency tensions well and was able to ensure both Royal Air Force and Army resources were focused upon providing a consistent, high-level, of aerial intelligence support to the security forces 'on the ground'. Not only did air reconnaissance enable commanders to chart hitherto unexplored areas of Malaya and update their stock of pre-war maps, it also provided the means to identify signs of insurgent activity (i.e. camps and areas of cultivation) and corroborate intelligence being provided by other sources. In fact, air reconnaissance afforded a vital and largely continuous stream of intelligence throughout the counter-insurgency campaign. Moreover, JAPIB (FE) constituted the only functioning strategic intelligence body in Malaya until the creation of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC) in 1952.

The rapid development by the military of a theatre-wide intelligence apparatus in the shape of the Land / Air Room (s) and JAPIC (FE) was of particular importance because, for at least the first four years of the counter-insurgency campaign, the civilian authorities were in a state of turmoil. It will be recalled that the Malayan Security Service (MSS) was disbanded as a result of MI5's empire-building; Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) lacked resources to fill the gap that was to be left by the MSS; the fledgling Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) failed to provide any form of leadership or support; and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Police faced the prospect of creating a Special Branch while at the same time restoring law and order to Malaya. Indeed, the Police were beset with bitter internal divisions and it was not until 1952 that Special Branch became a separate division within the Malayan

April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs and CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations Malaya, Directive No. 2, 12th May 1950.

Police Service. In contrast, the military were affected by none of the difficult organisational problems that beset the civilian apparatus in the first half of the Emergency. Together the Land/Air Rooms, JAPIB (FE) and JAPIC (FE) provided the means to 'network' the intelligence activities taking place, often spontaneously, at both a District and State level across Malaya. This formed a vital layer in the Federation's intelligence apparatus, one which enabled the security forces to contain and degrade the insurgents until the civilian intelligence agencies were able to adapt to the demands of the Emergency.

Land / Air Operations Room (s)

In June 1948, when the state of emergency was declared in Malaya, neither the military nor the civilian authorities were organised to confront the challenges posed the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). At a federal-level, the Commanders-in-Chief of each of the services and the Commissioner of Police sat with the High Commissioner of the Federation and the Governor of Singapore on a Local Defence Committee (LDC).[3] The decision to declare a state of emergency was a conscious decision not to declare martial law. The insurgency was considered a criminal problem, rather than a military one. However, the Police were ill-prepared to address the problem and needed very significant support from the military.

The RAF might have been forgiven for not getting too involved in this low-level 'policing' action. Not only were the actions of the insurgents considered as a problem of criminality, but the RAF did not even have a base on the Malaya peninsular - all RAF resources were based on Singapore Island.[4] Nevertheless, they were tasked by Boucher to:

a) "Assist the Army in the course of their Operations in phase 1…

b) Fly over various areas with the object of restoring morale in isolated Areas

---

[3] T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945-1952* (Oxon 2001), p. 84.
[4] Postgate, *Operation Firedog,* p. 34.

c) Reconnoitre the Northern Frontier and the Northern Areas of the East and West Coasts; the object being to amass information to enable us to cut down, and eventually stop, infiltration by the Insurgents into Malaya."[5]

To achieve this, a task force comprised of Dakota transport aircraft from No. 110 Squadron and Spitfires from No. 28 and 60 Squadrons was despatched from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, under the command of Air Vice Marshall A. C. Sanderson. Beaufighters from No. 45 Squadron joined the Spitfires in July, significantly increasing the firepower available potentially to bring to bear against any identified insurgent positions.[6] However, Sanderson realised that the control of the rear and forward elements of the RAF in Malaya and Singapore could not be exercised by the main Air Headquarters (AHQ) at Changi. He therefore decided to establish the Advanced AHQ at Kuala Lumpur.[7] Importantly, however, the RAF chose to locate the Advanced AHQ not at RAF Kuala Lumpur but in the city, co-located with Army Headquarters, Malaya District. The co-location of both the Army and RAF headquarters in Kuala Lumpur allowed the creation of the Land/Air Operations room. Group Captain Slater subsequently explained to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) that this "was located in the main Air Headquarters immediately alongside Headquarters Malaya Command, where the AOC and the GOC had adjoining offices, close to their respective staffs." As a result, "controllers were able to refer any controversial decisions or major allocations of air effort to the two commanders or their principal staff officers without delay." Hence, the "command and control organisation finally adopted approximately fairly closely to the standard Army/Tactical Air Force set-up."[8]

---

[5] A. Short, *Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, 1948-60 (1977), p. 136-7. See also AIR 24/1924, AQH Malaya, Operational Order No, 24/48, 30th June 1948.

[6] J. Corum and W. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars – Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (London 2003), pp. 191-2; M. Robinson, "Offensive Air Operations, Beaufighter / Brigand" *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal*, 21 (2000), p. 22.

[7] AIR 24/1917, Operations Record Book, AHQ Malaya, July 1948. Initially, those squadrons based in Singapore but which supported ground forces in southern Malaya remained under the control of the rear AHQ, matching the Army's division of command. However, was rectified in November 1949 when the control of the Jahore Sub-District was passed from GOC Singapore District to GOC Malaya District, thus enabling AHQ to have operational control over all aircraft operating against the insurgents. See AIR 23/8435, Report on the RAF Operations in Malaya, April 1949 to December 1950 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 8th January 1951.

[8] K. Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, 102:607 (1957), p. 38; See also R. Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-60* (Rand 1964), p. 225. That said, even

Initially, however, the staffing of the intelligence component of the Land / Air Operations Room was a significant concern. Due to the scaling down of the Air Command Far East (ACFE) after the war with Japan, there was a dearth of trained intelligence officers at the start of the Emergency. Hence, an intelligence officer was 'borrowed' from HQ ACFE and a number of general duties officers were drafted in to act as Squadron or Station intelligence officers. These officers were supported by the appointment of an Army Major as Air Liaison Officer. [9] However, it was not until September that five dedicated Intelligence Officers, under the command of Squadron Leader Dent, arrived in Kuala Lumpur to bolster AHQ intelligence capacity.[10] The difficulties in establishing a new intelligence cell within AHQ led a subsequent report to suggest "whatever the strictures of man-power economy may be, it is an ill conceived economy to do without any intelligence staff in an Air Headquarters."[11] Despite these initial troubles, the AHQ's intelligence cell was fully operational by the autumn of 1948 and went on to form a key element of the joint operations and intelligence centre set-up at Army HQ.[12]

A critical role of the Land / Air Operations Room was to coordinate theatre-level resources and operational requests. This involved linking the intelligence, often but not exclusively provided by aerial reconnaissance, with operational commanders and, where necessary, providing offensive air support. In the first few months of the Emergency, the insurgents presented themselves in relatively large formations. The operational summaries (opsums) for the first few months of the Emergency show a surprising degree of integration between air and land, which contradict Sebastian

---

later in the Emergency, informal lines of communication and command developed, where local ground commanders would simply ring direct a squadron for assistance in pre-planned operations – with many thanks to the staff of The Military History Museum, Chicksands.

[9] AIR 24/1917, Operations Record Book, AHQ Malaya, July 1948.

[10] AIR 23/8435, Report on the RAF Operations in Malaya, 27th June 1948 – 31st March 1949 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 9th May 1949).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 34-5. This is very much at odds with the assertions made by Donald Mackay. See D. Mackay, *The Domino That Stood – The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (London 1997), p. 37.

Ritiche's suggestion about the lack of immediate air support.[13] Indeed, from the very beginning of the Emergency, ground forces of platoon size did incorporate 'ground contact teams' which requested by radio tactical air support or logistic support from the Land / Air Operations Room at Kuala Lumpur, which would in turn forward the request to the relevant RAF squadron.[14] For instance, on 2 August 1948 two Spitfires attacked a temple, huts and a jungle path which had been indicated to them by an air contact team, in the guise of an Army vehicle equipped with radio equipment. The following day the ACFE reported to the Air Ministry, "two Spitfires were scrambled on request from [a] Shawforce air contact team and successful attack was made with cannon and machine guns against insurgents holding? [sic] against an advance party of Shawforce." Similarly, on 21 August, troops on patrol made contact with a Dakota transport aircraft via radio to arrange air cover for the following day.[15] A further example of effective local joint operations at the very beginning of the Emergency is provided in the opsum for 13 August 1948, which reported that a Royal Naval officer accompanied a Dakota on a visual reconnaissance operation off the coast of Selangor.[16]

Visual reconnaissance typifies the interservice (but RAF-led) intelligence support which was coordinated by the Land / Air Room. The bulk of visual reconnaissance was conducted by no. 1914 Air Observation Platform (AOP) Flight, the rump of No. 656 Squadron that had been disbanded in 1946. No 1914 Flight was initially placed under the operational control of Army Headquarters at Fort Canning, Singapore and then AHQ Malaya. However, within weeks of the declaration of Emergency, the demand for its Auster light aircraft outstripped supply and the Army were asked to provide sufficient aircraft to transform no. 1914 Flight back into No. 656 Air Observation

---

[13] S. Ritchie, *The RAF, Small Wars and Insurgencies: Late Colonial Operations, 1945-1975* (Air Historical Branch, 2011), pp. 23-4.

[14] The situation was by no means perfect, however. For instance, the jungle tended to reduce the normal efficiency of the Army's wireless sets by up to seventy-five percent. See Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, pp. 41-2. I am grateful to Gordon Leith, Curator of the RAF Museum, Hendon for explaining to me how Air Contact Teams operated.

[15] AIR 23/8421, HQ ACFE to Air Ministry London, Air Operations Malaya, 10th August 1948. Shawforce was a hybrid unit of the 2nd/6th Gurkhas and Police which was commanded by Lt. Col. N. F. B. Shaw (see AIR 23/8435, Report on the Royal Air Force Operations in Malaya, 27th June 1948 – 31st March 1949 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 9th May 1949)).

[16] Ibid, 13th August 1948.

Squadron.[17] This allowed each brigade area to be allocated its own flight of five or six Austers drawn from 656 Air Observation Squadron to provide regular visual reconnaissance, "in particular, the routine and systematic searching for terrorist camps and other signs of their presence in order to remedy the general lack of information about their whereabouts that was the biggest single drawback to Security Force operations."[18]

Visual reconnaissance was a distinctively 'low tech' approach to generating intelligence but the operational summaries clearly show that it could be effective. For instance, the report for the 11th January 1949 stated that:

> a captured insurgent was flown with a police officer over an area in Perak in an Auster. As a result an air strike was called in via a Contact Car. The Auster remained on station to guide a three Beaufighters and four Spitfires onto the target. A combined force of Army and police officers subsequently found a camp suitable for over one hundred insurgents, two of whom were found dead. Eight other insurgents were believed to have escaped; three or whom were thought to be wounded.[19]

This entry is notable for a number of reasons: that both an insurgent and Police officer were brought into an operational aircraft; that the Auster was able to locate the camp; that it was able to call in an airstrike. Moreover, it was not a unique operation. Tactics had to change as the Emergency developed. In particular, increasing caution on behalf of the insurgents and the growing effectiveness of food denial campaigns by the ground forces meant that pilots had to refine their terms of search from insurgent

---

[17] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 129. Austers were regularly supplemented in this role by Dakota transport aircraft from No. 110 Squadron. See, for instance, AIR 24/1917, Operational Summary for September 1948.

[18] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 127; Austers were regularly supplemented in this role by Dakota transport aircraft from No. 110 Squadron. See, for instance, AIR 24/1917, Operational Summary for September 1948.

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

camps or formations on the fringes of the jungle at the beginning of the Emergency to areas of cultivation, cooking fires or waterholes in deeper jungle.[20] Once found, the Auster fleet would mark targets, for instance by using smoke for tactical aircraft attempting air strikes or to guide ground forces to the area. [21]

Moreover, the brigade Auster fleet was also able to enhance the situational awareness of ground forces by acting as an airborne relay station which allowed, for instance, different sections involved in a pre-planned ambush to have effective communications. As will be discussed below, the maps available to ground forces at the beginning of the Emergency were poor and ground-to-ground communication via the no. 38 radio sets was problematic. However, Austers using the No. 62 radio set could act as an airborne relay station which allowed, for instance, different sections involved in an pre-planned ambush to have effective communications. Moreover, "sections frequently lost their bearings in thick country, and an Auster was invaluable for either telling them where to go next, or, alternatively, where they were now."[22] This level of 'joint' action at such an early stage of the Emergency is even more remarkable when contrasted with the shambolic and fractured nature of the relationship between the Malayan Security Service (MSS) and Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), and the in-fighting which beset the Police.

Coordination and Control of Air Assets

The concept of the Land / Air Operations room proved so effective that, as discussed in the previous chapter, General Harold Briggs stipulated in *Directive No 2* that facsimiles be created at State and District levels across Malaya.[23] To avoid confusion, the original *Federal-level* Land/Air Operations room became known as the Joint Operations Centre (JOC), which was thus supported at State and District level by Joint Operations Rooms. Nevertheless, the system was not without problems. Indeed, there

---

[20] J. Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle* (Stroud 2007), p. 88.
[21] AIR 20/8928, Director of Operations, Malaya: Reconnaissance of Cultivated Areas, Appendix A (Spraying Food Crops with Poison from the Air).
[22] G. Warner, *From Auster to Apache – The History of 656 Squadron RAF / AAC 1942-2012* (Barnsley 2012), p. 70.
[23] CAB 21/1681, Director of Operations, Malaya – Directive No. 2, 12th May 1950.

was an inherent structural tension in the command and control regime: ground operations were devolved down to state and district level, while air operations had to remain centralised in the Air Headquarters. Group Captain Slater told the Royal United Services Institute "control of air operations in Malaya is complicated by the fact that, for political reasons, it is necessary to decentralise control of ground operations down to State and District War Executive Committees [S/DWECs]; whereas, because air effort is indivisible, control of air operations had to remain centralised under Air Headquarters." Slater explained that "the need for this is obvious when one reflects that it is quite possible to lay on a major operation to take place at dawn in Johore, using bombers, airborne forces, helicopters, and in fact every type of aircraft, operating in a variety of roles, and then, using the same aircraft, to mount a similar operation in Perak in the afternoon."[24]

The solution to the problem of having the decentralised ground forces and centralised air resources was to enable local State and District War Executive Committees to call upon the services of mobile teams of Air Staff planners.[25] The idea for these teams evolved in the context of growing controversy about the value of using Lincoln bombers in the counter-insurgency campaign. The Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) recommended embedding RAF intelligence officers within State / Settlement Police headquarters to "get raw intelligence and be altogether closer to the bandit war." He explained to Air Vice Marshal Sir Francis Mellersh, AOC Malaya, that there were three key reasons to do this. First, "intelligence inevitably comes slowly; it must be fetched if it is to be fresh." Second, "police and Army in the field, regardless of the many instructions that are issued, are never quite sure when or how to call for air." Finally, he stated that RAF intelligence officers, if deployed within State / Settlement headquarters "could get hot intelligence and knowing what the air can do, could see in such intelligence, opportunities for air action, which a layman would inevitably miss."[26] Mellersh agreed with the idea. Consequently, RAF intelligence officers were attached to the SWEC and DWEC Joint Operations Rooms, which were "manned by

---

[24] Slater, 'Air Operations in Malaya', *RUSI*, 102:607 (1957), p. 386.
[25] Ibid.
[26] AIR 24/8347, SASO to AOC, 3rd November 1950.

the military and police on a 24hr basis to bring together and display relevant intelligence and operational data."[27] In addition, it was not uncommon for these officers to go on patrol with the ground officers they were supporting.[28] These officers would "channel all bids for air support from the Army, the police, and the civil administration through the Land / Air Operations Room, which functioned as the controlling agency for all day-to-day operations throughout the Emergency."[29]

The change of strategy employed by the MCP following the adoption by the Malayan authorities of the Briggs Plan in 1950 caused the security forces to reassess the manner in which intelligence was tasked to air assets.[30] Heralded by the October Directives, the MCP changed "its policy of wholesale terrorism to one of infiltration by planting cells in villages and Kampongs and of establishing camps in the jungle to cultivate small plots for food."[31] Nevertheless, the Malayan authorities recognised that the insurgents "tended to carry out more incidents close to resettlement areas, both to boost their own morale and to intimidate the population." This strategy meant that that Army and Police shifted emphasis "from deep jungle penetration to offensive patrolling in the jungle / rubber edges."[32] This issue was a potential source of friction between the RAF and the Director of Operations, and the RAF was ordered not to accept any target that was likely to damage rubber plantations, unless Federal Police Headquarters had approved the operation beforehand. The RAF argued that the increased risk to rubber plants was acceptable if it enabled strike aircraft to flush insurgents from the jungle fringe into awaiting ground force ambushes. In any case, it argued, "the number of rubber trees damage by air attack will be small compared to rubber slashing." The Director of Operations' committee noted the "necessity for the RAF to be able to give air support closer to the edges of rubber plantations." However,

---

[27] R. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organisation of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Rand 1972), p. 28.
[28] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 53.
[29] Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *RUSI*, 102:607 (1957), p. 386.
[30] AIR 20/8925, Director of Operation's Committee Minutes, 13th December 1951, Appendix C to Agenda dated 7th December 1951, An appreciation on the requirement for jungle/rubber edge air support.
[31] AIR 23/8853, HQ FEAF to Air Ministry London, 17th December 1952.
[32] AIR 20/8925, D/Op's Committee Minutes, 13th December 1951, Appendix C, dated 7th December 1951.

"such a policy entailed greater risks to innocent people and therefore made the task of the local police in giving clearance for an air strike more difficult."[33]

Very quickly, however, a revised tasking process was established. While the Director of Operations recognised the Army to be key 'employer' of airpower, it was accepted that the Police could also task airpower and, in some circumstances, provide the final approval for specific targets. However, no Police clearance was needed when there was an immediate request for offensive air support. Thus, a tasking would be sent "by the fastest means" by the commander of the ground security forces to the AHQ Operations Room (within the Joint Operations Centre) which would consider the request and then inform the Police HQ Operations Information Branch of the decision. In the case of pre-planned offensive air support, the Army or Police commander initiating the request would inform Advanced AHQ Operations Room and the local Police. The latter would consult with the DWEC and ensure that:

I.   No innocent person, lawful habitation or property liable to damage is in the target area.

II.   Any innocent person, lawful habitation or property inside the target area or within 1500 yards of it, which the air attack must avoid, is described in the Air Support Demand.

III. Arrangements are made if necessary to remove from the target area any innocent persons known or believed to be in the target area within 1500 yards from it.[34]

Following consultation with the DWEC, the Chief of Police would recommend whether or not to approve a pre-planned air strike. However, the Director of Operations made it clear that air attacks within 1500 yards of innocent persons, lawful habitation or property would only be prosecuted in "exceptional circumstances." In the event of the

---

[33] Ibid. The authorities also experimented with the use of cluster bombs to isolate bomb blasts and minimise damage to rubber plantations, see AIR 20/8927, D/Ops Committee meeting 29/52, 27th August 1952 (Appendix A – Trial of the Cluster Bomb Against A Target in Rubber).
[34] AIR 20/8928, D/Ops, Instruction No, 14, Offensive Air Support, November 1952.

Police recommending a strike, the Advanced AHQ had final "responsibility for accepting or refusing the target and in the event of acceptance, for issuing orders to the Air Forces involved to avoid those innocent persons and lawful property."[35]

Joint Operations Rooms and Psychological Warfare Operations

A further important function for the Joint Operations Rooms attached to the SWECs was the coordination of psychological warfare operations, particularly the use of voice aircraft. By 1950 it was clear to all that the Federation was in a battle with the MCP for the confidence and loyalty of Malayan people. Hence, the Briggs Plan stated that "security, and with it confidence and information" could only be restored and maintained if measures to extend the effective administration and control of all populated areas could be exploited "with good propaganda, both constructive and destructive."[36] As a result, James Griffiths, Secretary of State for the Colonies, secured the services from the BBC of Hugh Carleton Greene, brother of the novelist Graham Greene, to head the newly created Emergency Information Services (EIS). Greene was charged with three objectives: "to raise public confidence in the Government and increase the flow of information from the public to the Police; second to 'attack the morale of the members of the MRLA, Min Yuen and their supporters' and 'drive a wedge between the leaders and the rank and file' so as to encourage 'defection'; and 'to create an awareness of the democratic way of life' being threatened by Communism."[37]

In many ways, the Federation's propaganda services were aligned to the familiar committee structure. The EIS Headquarters provided the theatre-level hub. It was located in Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur, near to the Federal Police Headquarters and Greene appears to have enjoyed cordial relations with both Nicol Grey, the Commissioner of Police, and William Jenkin, the Director of Intelligence. Each State and Settlement was allocated an Emergency Information Officer (SEIO), with a full-

---

[35] Ibid.

[36] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs.

[37] K. Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-58* (London 2001), p. 106.

time Chinese assistant.[38] However, the shortage of Chinese-speaking staff was a perennial problem within the wider intelligence apparatus and there were insufficient numbers to provide each District with an Emergency Liaison Officer. Instead, DWECs either called upon the SEIO for assistance or Chinese-speaking officials, such as District Officers and Resettlement Officers took on the task as a 'secondary duty.'[39] Although the role of SEIOs was *not* to act as a conscience to those planning operations, Greene "tried to ensure effective contacts 'down the line' between SEIOs and Chief Officers, Contingent Intelligence Officers [within the SWEC] and Officer Commanding, Troops, with the result that SEIOs by 1951 were attending SWEC meetings regularly."[40]

The real importance of SEIOs was that they linked operational demand with theatre-level resources, via the Joint Operations Rooms. For instance, the Land/Air Warfare Liaison Letter for July-December 1952 noted, "as the lot of the CTs in the jungle deteriorates, there is an increasingly demand for psychological warfare so that they may be induced to give up the struggle and betray their leaders." Hence, the EIS experimented with ways of achieving this, and there was a widespread use of leaflet drops from aircraft. It was reported that in November 1952, "nearly every surrendered CT in the past month has carried one of these leaflets and the severe penalties imposed by the communist leaders for reading them shows that they are, in fact, a potent weapon in this type of warfare."[41] A less obvious method of supporting security forces on the ground was by using aircraft fitted with loudspeakers to broadcast selected messages to insurgents believed to be located in the area.[42] The effectiveness of these operations often depended on good initial intelligence, which would enable the EIS to tailor the messages appropriately. Hence, during the first trial of voice aircraft in southern and western Selangor, the EIS broadcast that Liew Lon Kim had been shot dead by security forces and that any insurgent wishing to surrender would

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] The EIS was set-up to work in parallel with the existing Department of Information. Hence the Emergency propaganda apparatus (responsible to the Director of Operations) had to work alongside the day-to-day information services (responsible to Member of Home Affairs. Moreover, Greene had no powers of coordination. Ibid., p.118.

[40] Ibid., p. 108.

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

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

be well treated. Within days "District Committee Member Wei Keiong gave himself up and on 9th November, he broadcast to the same areas that he had surrendered and urged others to give up. Six days later, Ah Yoke and Ah Fong, both surrendered."[43] By 1954 the process had been refined to ensure the authorities could 'exploit' the psychological moment caused by a security force success 'on the ground' or specific intelligence: the SEIO signalled their request for voice aircraft to the Joint Operations Centre at Kuala Lumpur, where it was received by the Voice Aircraft Committee (VAC). This committee consisted of a Police officer and two members of the Psychological Warfare Section (PWS –the Operations Division of Information Services had been hived off to the Director of Operation's Staff in March 1954, and renamed the PWS), and was responsible for preparing suitable messages and liaison with the RAF.[44] Again, this provides another excellent example of how joint theatre-level intelligence machinery evolved, largely because of the precedent set at the beginning of the Emergency with the formation of the Land/Air Operations room.

Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre / Far East

The second critical element of the theatre-level intelligence apparatus in Malaya was Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Centre (Far East) (JAPIC (FE)). Photographic intelligence (photint) constituted a critical stream of intelligence during the Emergency but has subsequently been largely overlooked. To some degree this is understandable: the insurgency was primarily an ideological battle and there were significant obstacles in using offensive airpower or photoreconnaissance, not least because the insurgents were scattered in vast jungle covered mountains and in deep "trackless evergreen forest and undergrowth." [45] Moreover, the RAF lacked even the most basic aids such as accurate maps, let alone anything like modern ISTAR equipment that allows modern counter-insurgents to stream 'real time', discreetly-obtained, multi-spectrum images of their foes from drones to tactical ground commanders.

---

[43] Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda*, p. 158.
[44] Ibid., p. 188.
[45] *The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya* (Government of Malaya, 3rd Edition, 1958), Chapter XIV, p. 9.

Nevertheless, photint held for those charged with restoring law and order to Malaya the means of updating the existing stock of pre-war maps, to survey areas previously unmapped, and of identifying indications of insurgent activity (such as a camp or areas of cultivation). When the insurgents did choose to gather in larger formations, as they did in the first eighteen months of the Emergency, photint was one way the security authorities forces might determine their exact location. The value of this form of intelligence was only magnified by the dearth of quality human intelligence (humint) being collected by Special Branch from Malaya's Chinese population. Indeed, as Malcolm Postgate says, "not only was aerial reconnaissance a profitable source of basic intelligence but it also played an important part in confirming and pinpointing targets which had been reported, usually inaccurately, by police informers and other agents."[46]

JAPIC (FE) was created in 1948 and was charged with managing the production of photint in the region. JAPIC (FE) had its roots in the interservice photographic intelligence machinery of the Allied Central Interpretation Unit (ACIU) which was based in London during the Second World War. The ACIU was administered by the Royal Air Force but was under the policy direction of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).[47] In 1945 the JIC tasked itself to "review the existing intelligence system and examine the possibilities of a post-war intelligence system." Written by the JIC Secretary, Denis Capel-Dunn, the report was issued in January 1945.[48] Capel-Dunn clearly recognised the value of photint. He noted, "it would be invidious, even if it were possible, to assess the relative values of different types of intelligence. All are complementary. Intelligence obtained by one means may give to intelligence obtained by other means a value which it would not otherwise possess. Yet in sheer volume, the product of aerial photographical reconnaissance has probably provided the

[46] Postgate, *Operation Firedog,* p. 123.
[47] P. Davies, "Imagery in the UK: Britain's troubled imagery intelligence architecture", *Review of International Studies*, 35: 4 (2009), p. 693.
[48] P. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States – Volume 2: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara, 2012), p. 121.

greatest single contribution."[49] In relation to how Britain would manage this form of intelligence in the post-war context, Capel-Dunn argued that "while the principal part in aerial photographic reconnaissance must…be undertaken by the Royal Air Force, since it is they who have to operate the aircraft, the interest of the consumers is so considerable that we do not believe that any one Ministry should be burdened with the exclusive responsibility for the general control and direction of this branch of intelligence."[50] Therefore, he recommended that operational control of the post-war aerial photographic reconnaissance should remain with the Royal Air Force, while the direction of policy should rest with the Joint Intelligence Committee's Photographic Reconnaissance sub-Committee. As a result, the JAPIC was created. In the following year, the UK exported its JIC system to the Far East and consequently the JAPIC/FE was created.

The directive creating JAPIC/FE explained that it would be "a joint service unit comprising an RAF element and an Army element, and also with Naval representation as and when required." The three service "elements, although having separate establishments, will normally work together as an integrated organisation in order that the greatest efficiency may be obtained by the most economical use of the resources available." More specifically, JAPIC/FE was charged with:

I.   Compilation and maintenance of a Print Library and an Intelligence Library.
II.   Production and maintenance of cover maps and traces.
III.   Plotting new cover.
IV.   Preparation of interpretation reports.
V.   Advice on all aspects of air photographic intelligence.
VI.   Production of such papers and manuals as may be required on photographic interpretation in tropic countries.
VII.   Training in reading and interpretation of aerial photography as may be required by the Services.

---

[49] CAB 163/6, 'The Intelligence machine' Report to the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 10th January 1945.
[50] Ibid.

VIII.   To provide interpreters and draughtsmen for operations, training and instruction as required by GHQ FARELF [General Headquarters Far East Land Forces] and FEAF [Far East Air Force], for photographic interpretation.[51]

JAPIC (FE)'s position within Malaya's broader intelligence structures was complicated. The secretary of the JAPIC (FE) later explained that policy "is controlled by the Joint Intelligence Committee, through the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (Far East) (JAPIB (FE)), which is itself a sub-committee of the JIC (FE)."[52] The Board was chaired by the Chief Intelligence Officer, Far East Air Force and had representatives of the Chief Staff Officer (Intelligence) Far East Station, Colonel (Intelligence) GHQ, Far East Land Forces, and the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB).[53] The Board was responsible to the JIC (FE) for "ensuring that requests from the three Services and the JIB Representative for air photographic intelligence material for whatever purpose it may be required are met as far possible from resources, or where new cover is required to recommend priority." JAPIB was therefore authorised to "receive, via HQ FEAF, all demands for air photographic intelligence material from Service agencies in the Far East, to assess their relative priorities and to take appropriate action to ensure their fulfilment [via JAPIC (FE)]."[54]

To complicate matters further, the Army had its own Air Photographic Interpretation Unit (APIU), which was answerable both to the Army and JAPIC (FE) and, consequently, had two differing roles. In relation to the former, the APIU performed a distinctly 'operational' role and was responsible for:

a) Advising the commander on all aspects of Photographic Interpretation.
b) Receiving and coordinating all Army requests for Photo Intelligence.
c) The provision of and distribution of Air Photographic Intelligence.

---

[51] AIR 20/8917, Headquarters, Far East Air Force to Officer Commanding, Air Photographic Intelligence Unit (FE), 11 February 1952, Appendix A 'Directive to JAPIC (FE)', dated 1 June 1948.
[52] Ibid., Organisation of Joint Air Photographic Interpretation Centre (Far East), undated.
[53] Ibid., Directive from the Joint Intelligence Committee Defining the Composition and Responsibilities of the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (FE) JAPIB(FE), 15th September 1952.
[54] Ibid.

d) The distribution of Air Photo material.

e) The organisation and running of Photo Reading courses for units in the field.

f) Visiting units in the field to assist and advise on the use of Air Photo Intelligence.[55]

However, at theatre-level, the APIU supplied a significant number of personnel to JAPIC. Indeed, the two elements were so closely intertwined as to be considered one integrated unit under the JAPIC nomenclature. The establishment of JAPIC Headquarters shows the clear interservice nature of the unit, for it comprised, under RAF leadership, of five Royal Air Force Officers, three Army Officers and one officer from the Royal Navy, supported by 29 other ranks drawn from all three services. Although still under the administrative control of the OC, APIU (FE), these seconded officers were "directed in their technical employment by JAPIC."[56] The day-to-day "operational control" JAPIC (FE) was "guided by the operational control committee under the chairmanship O.C., A.P.I.U. with representatives of the other two Services."[57] While the JAPIC and APIU headquarters were co-located at RAF Seletar, there were joint JAPIC / APIU detachments located at RAF Kuala Lumpur, RAF Butterworth, RAF Tengah and RAF Hong Kong. JAPIC (FE) was thus a truly 'joint' unit, staffed on an interservice basis, providing intelligence to multiple 'customers' and answerable to civilian-chaired committee.

JAPIC (FE)'s original directive stipulated that "all demands for photographic intelligence will be submitted to HQ FEAF for consideration by the Joint Air Photographic Intelligence Board (FE)."[58] In reality, however, much demand for photint originated from HQ Malaya, via the APIU (FE). If approved, the APIU (FE) would send the request to JAPIB. In turn, JAPIB would allocate a 'job number' and send the request to the JAPIC (FE), with an indication of priority. As an APIU (FE) memorandum explained, from that point in the process, "the whole question of the production of

---

[55] Ibid., APIU (FE) to all APIU (FE) officers, Reorganisation, APIU – JAPIC, 12th September 1952.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., Organisation of Joint Air Photographic Interpretation Centre (Far East), undated.

[58] Ibid., Headquarters, FEAF to OC, APIU (FE), 11th February 1952, Appendix A 'Directive to JAPIC (FE)', dated 1st June 1948.

prints, mosaics and interpretation is therefore now a JAPIC responsibility."[59] However, by 1952, JIC (FE) felt it necessary to recognise formally the degree of flexibility in photint tasking process that appears to have already developed organically. Hence, it stipulated JAPIB (FE) was authorised "in times of Emergency, requiring localised operations, to delegate responsibility for co-ordinating and allocating priorities to operational demands received from the services, and the local authorities participating in the operation, to the Territorial Air Force Commander."[60] This was a significant consideration. Whilst the directive outlining the JAPIB's responsibilities articulated a defined process, suitable for managing demands for photographic intelligence across the region, the JIC (FE) was sufficiently astute to realise effective informal local practice had evolved in Malaya and that not only would it be both fruitless and foolish to attempt to prevent it but, on the contrary, that it would be wise to codify such pragmatic behaviour. In many respects this simple clause is representative of the wider management of aerial intelligence in the Emergency.

Although sources about the JAPIC / APIS structures are scare, it appears that the system worked well. The hints of inter-service friction that are apparent stem not from fundamental concern over remits, which so plagued elements of the civilian intelligence apparatus in Malaya, but resourcing. For instance, Major Wilkie, OC of the APIU (FE), wrote in 1953 a letter expressing some concern about a difference of views between the RAF and Army. Unfortunately this letter is not on file. However, the point of contention originated from the failure of the War Office to increase the establishment of the APIU (FE) to meet its operational and theatre-level commitments.[61] The response sent on behalf of the staff officer of Air Marshall Sir Clifford Sanderson, Commander-in-Chief, HQ Far East Air Force, was uncompromising. His retort stated that JAPIC's "directive is self explanatory, and you will notice that none of the three Services retain its own identity, all three becoming integrated members of JAPIC (FE)." Moreover, he threatened that any "failure to regard JAPIC

---

[59] Ibid, APIU (FE) to All APIU (FE) Officers, Reorganisation, APIU – JAPIC, 12th Sept 1952.
[60] Ibid., Directive from JIC Defining the Composition and Responsibilities of the JAPIB (FE) JAPIB(FE), 15th September 1952.
[61] Ibid, HQ FARLF to Chairman, JAPIB (FE), 27th February 1953.

(FE) as an integrated unit, may well compel the RAF to regard the APIU (FE) as purely a demander unit who will be called upon to reimburse the Royal Air Force for services rendered."[62] It would be unreasonable to expect a joint unit not to experience any points of friction and this issue appears to be resolved speedily, not least because it was agreed to create a dedicated a G (Int) Air Reece post at HQ Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.[63]

Photint during the Emergency was used in four key ways: to identify and confirm insurgent camps; the planning of ground operations, ambushes, and escape routes; the briefing of troops; and revealing inaccuracies on local maps.[64] It was the latter aspect that proved the most pressing.[65] In 1945 the RAF began on behalf of the Colonial Office a systematic aerial survey of Malaya but at the beginning of the Emergency only 16,460 of the Federation's 51,000 square miles of territory had been mapped.[66] The result was that operational commanders and planners had to rely largely upon pre-war maps for operations in western Malaya and those available for northern and central Malaya had significant errors and omissions.[67] Air Vice Marshal Sir Francis Mellersh, who in 1951 returned to Britain after an eighteen month tour as AOC Malaya, told the Royal United Services Institute that

> "the value of air photography as an essential supplement to the inadequate
>
> maps of the Country has been fully appreciated by the Ground forces since the
>
> beginning of the campaign…[maps were] virtually useless to patrols working in
>
> the jungle, for although the most important ground features are shown with
>
> some accuracy, rivers are frequently found to have changed their course, many
>
> of the smaller features are either grossly misplaced or entirely omitted, and

---

[62] Ibid., HQ FEAF to OC APIU, 11th February 1952.

[63] Ibid., APIU (FE) to OC APIU (UK), November 1953.

[64] AIR 23/8435, Report on the RAF Operations in Malaya, 27th June 1948 – 31st March 1949 (AHQ RAF Malaya, 9th May 1949), p. 9.

[65] Concepts Division, *The Accomplishments of Airpower in the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60* (Aerospace Studies Institute, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, USA), p. 41.

[66] Postgate, *Operation Firedog,* p. 125.

[67] See also, Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle*, p. 81.

there still remain areas, notably in Trengganu and South Pahang, which appear quite simply on the map as 'Unexplored.'"[68]

As a result, additional Mosquitos and Spitfires were drafted in to bolster the capacity of No. 81 Squadron, the primary air reconnaissance squadron in Malaya. By 1953, No. 2 Air Survey Liaison Section (the Army unit working with No. 81 Squadron) had produced a total of 133 new maps that proved essential for the on-going campaign against the insurgents.[69]

No. 81 Squadron also provided tactical photographic reconnaissance. As the Emergency progressed, planners realised that the topography of the battle space changed regularly. For instance, it took as little as six months for secondary jungle to consume villages that had been cleared under the resettlement program, rendering previous aerial photographs largely redundant. Thus, as Postgate argues, "it was clear that systematic tactical photography of the whole country on a scale which gave adequate information of tracks, cultivation plots and temporary camps was the only effective method of recording the changing face of the jungle." As result, between 1951-3, No. 81 Squadron produced 800 'mosaics', each covering 10,000 x 20,000 yards at 1;10,000 scale.[70] This was particularly important from 1952 onwards, when the insurgents partially withdrew into deep jungle, placing a greater burden on the RAF's photographic reconnaissance effort to pin point areas of cultivation as a means of identifying the insurgents' camps.[71]

The tempo of activity was significant. For instance, The Land / Air Warfare Quarterly Liaison Letter for April to Sept 1954 reported that during that time frame 228 mosaics were produced by 81 Squadron. During the same period, "the interpreters of 103 AIS and the JAPIC (FE) detachment at KUALA LUMPUR interpreted 225 PRs carrying out, in the process, a detailed search of over 56,000 prints and issuing, as a result, 537 Type

---

[68] Mellersh, "The Campaign against the Terrorists in Malaya", *RUSI Journal*, 96: 583 (1951), p. 409.
[69] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 124-5.
[70] Ibid., p. 126.
[71] DEFE 4/39, General Headquarters Far East Land Forces, Land/Air Warfare Quarterly Liaison Letter, No. 6, July – December 1952.

3 photo mosaics." Despite the fact that Malaya's weather severely hampered flying in general, and photint sorties particuarly, very often "areas have been photographed and the prints delivered to the demanding formation on the same day necessitating, in one case, a 350 mile delivery flight."[72] In the same period 227 'mosaics' were laid by similar units at Tengah, of which 128 were used for the detailed briefing of airstrikes and provided 100 pinpoints and 131 area targets, while a further 123 pinpoint targets were afforded by the 53 'mosaics' that were laid by a JAPIC (FE) detachment at Butterworth."[73] Moreover, the Land / Air Quarterly News Letter gave a number of examples of how photographic reconnaissance supported Emergency operations in the previous six months. For instance, "from a side-facing oblique photograph of a built up area an informer recognised a particular house. The operation mounted as a result of this recognition captured an important CT."[74] Nevertheless, perhaps the most notable feature of photint in Malaya is not the volume of aerial photographs taken, or subsequent successful operations, but the creation and operation of joint organisational structures that made this possible.

Conclusion

The Land / Air Operations Rooms and JAPIC (FE) represent a layer of the Malayan intelligence apparatus which has been largely ignored by existing commentators. Despite this historical neglect, they constitute an element of the intelligence apparatus was critical to the counter-insurgency campaign. Although the Director of Operations Committee provided some strategic oversight, the DWEC and SWEC structure effectively decentralised the operational response to the insurgent forces. Hence, the Land / Air Operations Room and JAPIC (FE) provided a mechanism to link the local, operational, effort to theatre-level resources, including additional ground support, visual surveillance, photoreconnaissance and psychological warfare teams.

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the development of this theatre-level machinery was the decisive role of the RAF. In many respects, the Emergency was not

---

[72] Ibid.
[73] Postgate, *Operation Firedog*, p. 127.
[74] Ibid.

the natural environment for the RAF. There were many factors to militate against the effectiveness of airpower, not least that the RAF was in the process of transitioning from the demands of the Second World War to the Cold War. Moreover, Malaya's climate coupled with the lack of technical aids, meant for most of the Emergency RAF aircraft were operated under Visual Flight Rules; in the early years of the campaign maps for both ground forces and aircrew were often inaccurate and out-of-date; the limitations of air-to-ground communications were exacerbated by topography; and the enemy was small in number and sheltered by both the canopy of the jungle and large elements of the Chinese community. Moreover, the Emergency was a policing action, not a conventional war for which the RAF was geared to fight.

However, there was an acute need for aerial intelligence throughout the Emergency. Particularly in the first eighteen months of the campaign, visual surveillance played a critical role in identifying larger formations of insurgents and subsequently guiding either ground forces or tactical airpower to the targets. As the Emergency developed visual surveillance was used to identify areas of the jungle brought under cultivation by the insurgency to mitigate the effects of food denial. Photographic intelligence proved even more important. The mosaics provided by the RAF's photographic reconnaissance elements equipped ground forces with accurate maps, which were perhaps the most basic but critical intelligence 'product.' These were constantly updated throughout the Emergency to reflect changing topography, for instance when secondary jungle reclaimed villages which had been abandoned due to the resettlement program. Moreover, photographic intelligence provided another means to identify the insurgents' whereabouts, particularly in the latter half of the Emergency when they had largely fled to the deep jungle.

While the RAF was the lead agency involved in the production of photographic intelligence, it is important to note that this was very much an inter-service venture. For instance, the Auster fleet used in visual surveillance was very much a combined RAF / Army force and there is evidence that the Police (sometimes in conjunction with Surrendered Enemy Personnel) were used as 'spotters'. At theatre-level, JAPIB/FE, which refereed the competing inter-service demands for photographic

reconnaissance, was similarly a joint affair. Whilst chaired by a senior RAF officer, the JAPIB/FE included the Chief Staff Officer (Intelligence) Far East Station, Colonel (Intelligence), GHQ, Far East Land Forces; and the Joint Intelligence Bureau. Similarly, JAPIC/FE was effectively integrated with the APIUs, both at its headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and the various detachments across Malaya. Indeed, JAPIC/FE stands in stark contrast to manner in which the civilian interagency intelligence bodies functioned in the first years of the Emergency – after all, the Malayan Security Service, Security Intelligence Far East, Special Branch and key elements of the core executive struggled to work harmoniously during the most critical phases of the Emergency.

The RAF also played a decisive element in the creation of the Land / Air Operations Room. The enlightened decision to create a forward AHQ at Kuala Lumpur, not at the airfield but alongside GHQ proved vital to the subsequent inter-agency coordination of intelligence and resources. In particular, AHQ's investment at the earliest phase of the Emergency in a dedicated intelligence cell was critical, as was the on-going determination to use this capacity flexibly (as demonstrated by embedding RAF intelligence officers within State Police headquarters and then SWECs and DWECs). Other key practical examples of a flexible attitude towards inter-service working was the deployment of the RAF Regiment on counter-insurgency patrols, the work of No. 656 Squadron and close working relationship between the APIS and JAPIC (which itself was a fundamentally 'joint' unit).

It is without doubt that a great deal of ordinance was expended for little tangible benefit. The fundamental problem was not that the interagency structures were unable to support the mission but that there was a relative dearth of reliable intelligence, particular from human sources, to enable the quick and accurate deployment of tactical airpower. Moreover, any form of Bomb Damage Analysis (BDA) was very difficult. For instance, a report on the effectiveness of bombing during 1955 explained "the most direct evidence as to the quality of target information was provided when Army or Police units searched the bombed areas after the attacks. This was possible only in a limited number of cases, and even then the difficulties of precise map-reading and thorough search sometimes made these follow-up reports

inconclusive."[75] Thus the real impact of intelligence-driven tactical bombing is unlikely to ever be fully quantified. Nevertheless, the Operational Research Section did state in 1955 that "despite very careful sifting at the Joint Operations Centre of the evidence upon which air strike demands were based, it was often subsequently found to have been inaccurate."[76] That said, Chin Peng noted in his biography that in early 1953 his camp was spotted by Auster aircraft which called in a strike by Lincolns of the Royal Australian Air Force: two of his body guards both died and three others were wounded. The attack also brought the problem of deteriorating morale, partly as a result of regular attacks from the air, to the forefront of Chin Peng's mind.[77]

The Joint Operations Centre at Kuala Lumpur, the Joint Operations Rooms in Malaya's States and Settlements, and JAPIC/FE provided the means to link and coordinate the decentralised intelligence activities that were taking place in Districts all across Malaya. Moreover, they provided the means for local ground commanders, whether Police or military officers, to access theatre-level intelligence resources, particular photint. The latter aspect can easily be overlooked, but without accurate maps – the most basic product of aerial intelligence – troops on the ground would not be able to conduct meaningful patrols, let alone find and engage the insurgents. However, there was a limit to what the military could achieve in what was fundamentally a civilian campaign to restore law and order to Malaya. Timely and accurate humint that would lead to the prosecution of the insurgent forces was at a premium. This required an effective Police Service. Unfortunately for the Malayan authorities, for at least the first six years of the Emergency, if not longer, the Police was in fact dysfunctional. During this time the military were left to 'hold the ring.'[78]

---

[75] AIR 23/8741, Operational Research Branch, Memorandum No, 13: An Analysis of the Types of Target Attacked During Offensive Air Operations in Malaya in 1955, 14th May 1956.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History* (Singapore 2003), pp. 321-22.
[78] CAB 129/48, c (51) 26 The Situation in Malaya: a Cabinet Memorandum by Lyttelton, dated 20th November 1951.

Chapter 8 - The Reconstruction of the Civilian Intelligence Apparatus.

Within months of the declaration of a state of Emergency, the Federation of Malaya had established the embryonic structures necessary for the development and sharing of intelligence both 'on the ground' and at theatre level. However, there were two key problems. The first was a flow of intelligence. Particularly during the first six years of the Emergency, the authorities had a limited stream of intelligence - captured documents and personnel provided indications about the insurgents' philosophy, disposition and intentions, and the RAF provided valuable photographic intelligence.[1] Missing, however, was freely given, timely and accurate information from informants who wished to see the government forces prevail against the insurgents. The second problem was the lack of strategic leadership required to coordinate and develop the various organisations which together formed Malaya's intelligence machine.

The common denominator was the Federation of Malaya's Police force, which was responsible both for the generation of humint and, for the first two years of the Emergency, the broader coordination of Emergency intelligence. As General Sir Harold Briggs, the Director of Operations, explained in 1950, "the security of the population and elimination of the Communist Cells must be the primary task of the Police."[2] More specifically, the Special Branch of the Malayan Police was charged with developing Emergency intelligence to aid the restoration of law and order, a principle confirmed by numerous subsequent reviews.[3] The fundamental problem was, however, that the Police was largely inca pable until the mid 1950s of generating sufficient levels of humint to allow security forces to tackle the insurgents effectively. Nor was it able to

---

[1] See K. Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), pp. 211-241; also KV 4/408, The co-ordination of Intelligence in the Malayan Emergency, undated lecture notes by J. Morton
[2] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs.
[3] Also see, CO 537/4374, A note by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir William Slim) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, November 1949; CO 537/5440, Report of the Police Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr W. C. Johnson), December 1949; CO 547/5427, Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950; AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, Director of Operations, September 1957.

provide the strategic leadership necessary to galvanise the intelligence apparatus as whole.

The relationship between Special Branch and their colleagues in the Uniformed Branch of the Police has not been fully explored in the literature. Indeed policing and Special Branch tend to be considered as two separate entities.[4] This division in the historiography is not helpful because Special Branch cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of policing in Malaya. The Police Service as a whole was charged with restoring law and order to the country. Undoubtedly, a key element to this was Special Branch's task of gathering 'political' intelligence. This involved identifying and facilitating the prosecution of members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), its support wing (the Min Yuen) and its armed wing (the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA)). This function resembles the concept of 'high policing' articulated by Jean-Paul Brodeur.[5] However, for a significant period of the Emergency, Special Branch lacked the resources to perform this function effectively. For instance, it had very few officers with knowledge of the Chinese community or its dialects. More importantly, it lacked a physical presence in that community and was therefore reliant upon the wider Police organisation, particularly the Uniformed Branch, the Special constabulary and Home Guard - in Brodeur's terminology, 'low policing' - to generate information and potential informants. Without an effective relationship between the 'low' Police and the Chinese community, the flow of intelligence to the Special Branch would be limited, hampering the ability of the security forces to restore order.

Leon Comber sees the appointment of Sir William Jenkin as Malaya's first Director of Intelligence in 1950 as marking the 'coming of age' of Special Branch.[6] This is a

---

[4] For general policing see A. Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60* (London, 1975); A. Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in D. Anderson & D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police* (Manchester 1992), p. 108. For Special Branch see L. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60 – The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Monash 2008); G. Sinclair, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': the rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948-1955", *Intelligence and National Security*, 26:4 (2011), pp. 465-67.

[5] J-P Brodeur, "High Policing and Low Policing: Remarks about the Policing of Political Activities", *Social Problems,* 30: 5 (Thematic Issue on Justice, June 1983), pp. 507-520.

[6] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, pp. 131-46.

significant misreading of the evidence. Jenkin's appointment reflected both that Special Branch required fundamental reform and the Police, in general, were incapable of providing strategic leadership to the wider intelligence machine. The reason why an independent candidate had to be brought in to fill this position was that no officer from within Malayan's police service was deemed capable of either reforming Special Branch or coordinating Emergency intelligence. The appointment of Jenkin was, in fact, a damning indictment of Special Branch. Moreover, Jenkin lasted only eighteen months in office before retiring in a state of nervous exhaustion. He left Malaya with the core executive in a state of near paralysis, with the Director of Operations, Commissioner of Police and High Commissioner in open disagreement about how best to reform the intelligence apparatus. Jenkin's appointment thus marked the failure of Special Branch, not it's coming of age.

Moreover, until 1952 the Uniformed Branch adopted a paramilitary style of policing - there was, for instance, little difference between a company of soldiers on patrol in the jungle and the Police Jungle Squads.[7] Moreover, the Police were charged with enforcing Emergency regulations such a detention without trial, deportation, and the wholesale forced resettlement of the Chinese squatter camps. Whilst this strategy might have been necessary to prevent the insurgency gaining further momentum, it meant that the Chinese population often feared the security forces as much, if not more, than the insurgents. It was a strategy which was the antithesis of that required to secure accurate, timely and freely given humint. Hence, the change under Commissioner Arthur Young in 1952 to more consensual style of policing was critical to Special Branch and the development of the civilian intelligence machine in Malaya, even if it took time to take hold.

Moreover, the civilian intelligence apparatus, of which Special Branch was one key element, came to a level of organisational maturity only after a number of key developments. In the first instance, the Malayan core executive had to be recast to allow Jack Morton, Jenkin's successor, to coordinate freely the intelligence apparatus.

---

[7] For instance, see A. Campbell, *Jungle Green* (London 1953), J. Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle* (Stroud 2007) and J. Moran, Spearhead in Malaya (London 1959).

His efforts were supported by the creation in 1952 of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC) that provided for the first time in the Emergency the administrative mechanisms through which the Director of Intelligence could coordinate the intelligence apparatus. More fundamentally, ordinary policing had to change significantly to give Special Branch the links it required within the Chinese community necessary to identify quality sources of intelligence.

The Relationship between the Special and Uniformed Branches of the Police Service

The Special Branch of the Federation's Police Service was created in haste in the weeks following the declaration of a state of Emergency and the abolition of the Malayan Security Service. The newly created Special Branch had little organisational legacy upon which to draw – not only did the Second World War decimate the Police, but also prior to the creation of the Malayan Union in 1946 there was no single pan-Malaya force.[8] Moreover, it had to confront some significant organisational problems whilst taking the lead in the intelligence efforts against the MCP. For instance, like the MSS, Special Branch had very few staff: in June 1948 the Special Branch had only thirteen gazetted officers (just over 5% of the total number in the force); forty-four Asian inspectors (19% of the total number in the force); and while there was an establishment of 693 detectives working in Special Branch and CID, the actual number employed in both departments was only 132. Thus, Special Branch, compared to the 10,900 uniformed Police officers, was very small.[9] Indeed, according to Sir Jack Morton (Director of Intelligence 1952-4), "on the ground there was virtually nothing to collect intelligence. Facilities for translation, interrogation and agent running did not exist."[10] While the authorities made concerted efforts to improve Special Branch's establishment, particularly in relation to native Chinese officers and Chinese speakers, the task confronting the organisation was enormous and these efforts took years to have a positive impact upon operational efficiency.

---

[8] Rhodes House Library, The Dalley Papers, Dalley to Hone, 13th July 1948.
[9] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 60.
[10] KV 4/408, Lecture notes by J. Morton entitled 'The problems we faced in Malaya and how they were solved', July 1954.

To compound the situation, Special Branch had significant structural problems which hampered its ability to receive, assess and disseminate what little information was being collected by the Uniform Branch and its own officers. Within a year of its creation in 1948, observers were highlighting flaws in the organisation of Special Branch's headquarters. While creation of specific 'desks' demarcated by race may have appeared logical, the primary intelligence issue was the spread of Communism that cut across these areas. Hence, Eric Leighton, the Defence Security Officer (DSO) for Malaya, reported, "there are possibly no less than three officers responsible for the collation of Communist activities, one for the Chinese section, another for the Indian section and a third for the Malay section."[11] Further problems were highlighted by a Metropolitan Police Special Branch officer, Francis Covey, who was seconded to Malaya to advise on setting up an effective registry system. He was particularly concerned about the practical implications of the decision to harness political and criminal intelligence together. Covey explained that "where the senior C.I.D. officer is the Special Branch officer, then he has to be diverted from all the important task of directing his staff in its work of collecting vital information about Communist and other subversive activities, to supervising work of criminal detectives often reporting trivial criminal matters."[12] Moreover, as Jack Morton later reported "Special Branch at this time did not extend beyond the capitals of the Malay States and Settlements…the intelligence apparatus in the States and Settlements was part of the CID pursing its own parochial course." It was, he said, a period "of considerable muddle and ineptitude."[13]

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

---

[11] KV 4/424, Leighton to Morton, 28th April 1949.
[12] CO 537/4322, Report by Francis Covey to Commissioner of Police Malaya, July 1949.
[13] KV 4/408, The Co-ordination of Intelligence in the Malayan Emergency.

strengthen their Special Branches.[14] Shortly after this Creech Jones appointed William Johnson, a former Inspector of the Colonies, as Colonial Police Advisor.[15] In relation to intelligence, Johnson subsequently reported that "although the general purpose of such [Special] Branches is fairly well known, I doubt whether it is realised that, quite apart from their establishment and the allocation of trained Staff, in order to provide an efficient service of accurate information it is essential to use the 'eyes and ears' of the whole Police Force."[16]

However, as discussed previously, the Federation's Police Service was very poorly placed either to develop a consensual relationship with the Chinese community or, in turn, support their Special Branch colleagues. The primary reason for this was the paramilitary strategy adopted by the Police Commissioner, Col. Nicol Gray, and the associated rapid expansion of Police numbers need to provide static guards, enforce emergency legislation and to undertake jungle patrols. While arguably necessary to prevent the Communists developing more momentum, Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), who visited Malaya in 1949, identified two key consequences of this rapid expansion. First, he noted that the influx of ex-Palestine Police officers had caused significant friction with the rump of the pre-war Malayan Police. Not only did this have an impact on overall efficiency but, more importantly, the Police greatly lacked local knowledge about the communities they were attempting to protect. Second, he emphasised that the lack of Chinese and Chinese-speaking Police (and district) officers severely hampered the ability to gather and analyse intelligence. For instance, he said that "roughly half the population is Chinese and yet a civil official who can speak Chinese is extremely rare, and there are no uniformed Chinese Constables. Moreover, "senior British civil and Police officials have little knowledge of the Chinese, and most of the sub-ordinate District Officers, who should be entrusted with the detailed local administration, are Malays who not only

---

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

[15] CO 537/2770, Terms of Reference for the Police Advisor to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, undated.

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

dislike the Chinese and are disliked by them, but are in some cases extremely nervous of entering squatter areas." Although efforts were being made to spread the government's administrative presence by "setting up Police stations in areas where they have never existed before", because "the whole of the Police are Malays this merely means that a small party of alien Police are dumped down in a populations strange and often hostile to them.[17] Jack Morton later explained the demographic issue more succinctly. He stated "in its composition, it [the police] was predominantly Malaya: by contrast the security problem was essentially Chinese."[18]

Perhaps the key reason that the Police were not functioning satisfactorily was that the pressures of fighting an insurgency meant it lost sight of what 'routine' policing involved. Gray himself reflected in 1950 that "although the progress made in numbers could perhaps not have been accelerated greatly, progress in police efficiency has not been adequate to keep abreast of the pressure of events."[19] Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this was the use of the Police to enforce the extraordinary powers associated with the declaration of Emergency. These powers were draconian, including allowing the arrest on suspicion and detention without trial for up to two weeks, permitting the officer in charge of a Police district to "destroy or authorise the destruction" of a suspect building or structure, and allowing a Chief Police Officer to declare any location a "special area", in which the security forces could search anyone they wished and could use force to arrest anyone who failed to stop.[20] The practical effect of this was that Police were constantly involved in armed patrols, conducting large-scale cordon and search operations, the executing of arrest warrants and the forced relocation of the Chinese squatter communities.

In March 1950 the Policing Mission to Malaya reported back to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Whereas Johnson was charged with reviewing policing in colonies, the Policing Mission, which was headed by Sir Alexander Maxwell, was asked

---

[17] CO 537/4374, Report by Sir William Slim, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 15th November 1949.

[18] KV 4/408, 'The situation in Malaya – lecture notes', undated.

[19] CO 537/5993, Gray to Carcosa, 21st October 1950.

[20] H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), p. 431.

specifically to consider how the Federation's Police was discharging its functions whilst coping with the demands of the counterinsurgency campaign. The Policing Mission emphasised the tension between the rapid expansion of the Police to meet the immediate security threat and the impact upon normal policing duties. It noted, "so much manpower is required for jungle operations that beats are undermanned and many of the normal functions of the force cannot be carried out satisfactorily." Moreover, whilst necessary, jungle operations fostered a frame of mind entirely at odds with the Policeman's primary function to "gaining and keeping the trust and co-operation of the public."[21] Without trust and confidence of the public, the Police would not be able to collect information effectively for Special Branch to develop.

Maxwell's report noted the importance of 'ordinary police work' and subsequent dangers of allowing this work to decline. It argued that "when there is a decline in police efficiency, there is corresponding decline in public confidence in the police: and people who have little confidence in the police are less likely to withhold food and money from the bandits and less likely to give the police information which would be helpful for anti-bandit operations." Unfortunately for the government of Malaya, there was ample evidence that this vicious circle was already hampering their counter-insurgency efforts.[22] For instance, an Australian Mission commanded by General Bridgeford, which toured Malaya in August 1950, reported to Field Marshall Sir John Harding, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), "the police, particularly on the intelligence side, were NOT functioning satisfactorily."[23] Moreover, it would take many years to reverse.

The pattern of policing operations under Gray could only be highly detrimental to securing the trust and rapport with the Chinese community necessary to elicit information, particularly from human sources. As Kumar Ramakrishna explains, "up to 1951, the dearth of adequate intelligence on the identities of terrorists, the circumstantial reality that most MCP terrorists appeared to be Chinese, and the notion

---

[21] CO 537/5427, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.
[22] Ibid.
[23] CAB 21/1682, Report on the visit of the Australian Military Mission to Malaya: July – August 1950.

that a firm hand was needed to deal with the Chinese villagers, compelled the harassed police and Army to regard all Chinese as potential terrorists and subject them to rough treatment."[24] Indeed, Huw Bennett has argued that the security forces systematically used collective punishments, including the burning of villages, to "intimidate the whole Chinese population in Malaya into submission."[25] Little wonder, then, that one estimate suggested that "as many as 70 per cent of the MCP recruits comprised rural Chinese anxious to escape from police repression."[26]

The failure of leadership

The problem was exacerbated, at least in the first four years of the Emergency, by the absence of effective leadership of Federation's intelligence apparatus. For reasons that remain opaque, Gurney refused to create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC), as recommended by the Joint Intelligence Committee (Far East) (JIC/FE)). Instead, he chose to hold a weekly 'conference' to discuss the progress of the Emergency with the General Officer Command (GOC), the Air Office Commanding (AOC), the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Police, the Secretary of Defence and, when necessary, the Naval Liaison Officer. With the appointment of General Briggs, these conferences were replaced by the Director of Operation's committee. However, the Director of Operations had no executive powers and relied upon influence and persuasion to resolve difficulties between key actors. It is thus perhaps understandable that there was obvious tension, and at times hostility, within the Malayan core executive about the progress of the Emergency. This was particularly true in relation to policing and intelligence.

To rectify this situation, the Policing Mission recommended the appointment of "some senior police officer with special experience of Intelligence work…to act as technical

---

[24] K. Ramakrishna, "Content, credibility and context: Propaganda government surrender policy and the Malaya Communist terrorist mass surrenders of 1958", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), p 247.

[25] H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), p. 417.

[26] Ramakrishna, "Content, credibility and context", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), p 247.

adviser to the [Criminal Investigation] Department for a limited period.[27] Consequently Sir William Jenkin, a former officer of the Indian Special Branch, was appointed as advisor to the Commissioner of Police. Jenkin had seen enough after five months. He gave Stafford Foster Sutton, Acting Chief Secretary, notice of his resignation on 10 November 1950, stating that it was beyond his "power to effect improvement in Malayan Police Intelligence so quickly as deemed necessary."[28] However, this coincided with the offer of resignation given by Gray to Gurney, relating to the former's umbrage at what he considered the High Commissioner's interference with his right to run the Police Service as he saw fit. In particular, Gurney's insistence that the post of Senior Assistance Commissioner CID was filled by an officer of pre-war Malayan experience caused Gray considerable concern.[29] There was, therefore, a very real prospect that the intelligence apparatus would have to contend without a Commissioner of Police or advisor for intelligence, and that the CID (including Special Branch) would be run be an officer whom Gray felt unfit to discharge those responsibilities and Jenkin considered disloyal.

To prevent this possibility Briggs suggested that Jenkin be posted as Deputy Commissioner CID. However, this mutated over the course of November 1950 to a proposal that Jenkins be offered a two-year contract as Director of Intelligence (DOI)"with direct access to you [the High Commissioner] on Intelligence, and with executive control over the CID and Special Branch."[30] The final charter for the Director of Intelligence reflected the difficulties officials had in differentiating between political and security intelligence and criminality. Hence, the DOI was "generally responsible to Government for the supply of political and security intelligence." The DOI would also "act as an Advisor to Government on Security matters and shall reinforce physical security measures with intelligence precautionary [sic] measures when deemed necessary."[31] The fundamental problem was that

---

[27] CO 537/5427, The Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950.
[28] CO 537/5973, Jenkin to Foster Sutton, 10th November 1950.
[29] Ibid., see Gray to Carcosa, 21 October 1950 and a briefing noted prepared by Briggs, 25th October 1950.
[30] Ibid., Foster Sutton to Gurney, 17th November 1950.
[31] CO 537/7260, Charter for the Director of Intelligence.

officials considered the Criminal Investigation Department of the Federation of Malaya Police as "the machinery of Government for the collection of Criminal Statistics, the investigation of Crime, as well as for the collection of intelligence." It was therefore not readily apparent whether the CID should answer to the DOI or Commissioner of Police. To work around this problem, the DOI was required to "exercise control in collaboration and consultation with the Commissioner of Police and with regard to the requirements of the Commissioner of Police, who is responsible to Government for law and order in the Federation." Thus, the DOI appeared to be an equal partner with the Commissioner of Police. However, the DOI could exercise control over CIDs in the Federations in "respect of political and security matters…from time to time, in order to promote efficiency and also collaboration between Criminal Investigation Departments of the Federation." Thus, Jenkin had responsibilities that he could only discharge via the CID apparatus, which remained an integral part of Gray's Police force. He did not have executive authority over the CID but was able to control it "from time to time". [32] Moreover, while he had a responsibility to work in collaboration with Gray, he could always appeal to the High Commissioner. This placed both Jenkin and Gray in a near impossible position. The appointment simply serves to highlight the structural tensions that beset the Federation's intelligence apparatus.

Jenkin did oversee a number of important operational initiatives designed to improve the management of intelligence, including attempting to increase the number of Chinese in the Police and Special Branch, improving the overall strength of the CID and Special Branch, bringing detention camps within Special Branch's remit and the establishment of Special Branch interrogation units at all Police contingent headquarters.[33] However, he remained convinced that the intelligence apparatus in its existing form was flawed. Like Dalley before him, he felt Emergency intelligence should be overseen by an independent organisation, responsible directly to the Federal Government. Thus, whilst Gray was on leave in the UK between April and October 1951, Jenkin audaciously amalgamated Special Branch and CID, creating the

---

[32] Ibid.

[33] See Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police, 1945-60*, pp. 135-145; KV 4/408, Lecture notes by Morton, July 1954.

Police Intelligence Bureau, with the intention of devoting all the combined CID/SB efforts into Emergency intelligence and leaving all non-Emergency criminal matters to the Uniformed Branch of Police.[34] Jenkin believed that for a Police Service to be efficient, it "had to penetrate deep in to the public social structure and, if it lacks public respect, cooperation and trust, it suffers from a handicap which is most crippling." He recognised that the para-military stance adopted by the Police Service was hampering not only its "primary duty of looking after the people" but also its specialist, Emergency, responsibilities. Thus,

> "by putting some of the responsibility [for investigations] on to the Uniformed Police, where it rightly belongs, it will help them to closer profitable contact with the people. This should result in the better enforcement of law and order and better information coming in, which will be beneficial to important interests. It will also result in the Specialised [sic] Branch being relieved of routine and matters which are not pertinent to particular issues and so enable them to give more time and attention to the bigger things that count more."[35]

While these aims were laudable, Gurney argued that it did not necessitate the abolition of the whole C.I.D. and Special Branch. Also Jenkin's proposal for direct access to the High Commissioner was fraught with danger – Gurney was not prepared for Jenkin to by-pass the Commissioner of Police.[36] Furthermore, Gurney was also concerned that the establishment of a separate Intelligence Bureau would create suspicions that the UK was trying to build-up an organ of the British Intelligence Service working for other agencies other than the government and people of Malaya."[37] Upon his return to Malaya, Gray was outraged and secured the agreement

---

[34] Ibid., Memorandum to all Chief Police Officer, all Contingent Intelligence Officers, and Circle Intelligence Representatives from Robinson (Acting Commissioner of Police), 18th May 1951.
[35] Ibid, Jenkin to Gray, 9th August 1951.
[36] Ibid., Notes of a meeting with the Acting Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Police, and the Director of Intelligence on 1st Sept 1951, made on behalf of Gurney. The High Commissioner's letter to Gray on 3rd September 1951 shows how the intelligence executive was fractured due to personality. Whilst Gray had a reputation of being hard to get on with, Gurney's letter suggests the same about Jenkin.
[37] Ibid., minute by Lloyd for Jim Griffiths, 25th September 1951.

of Gurney and Briggs to abort the changes Jenkin attempted to implement.[38] However, the episode came at a cost: Gray and Jenkin (who was said to be close to a breakdown) resigned from their respective posts, throwing the intelligence system into further disarray. [39] The debacle of Jenkin's appointment as DOI can hardly be described as heralding the rise of the Special Branch, as Leon Comber suggests.[40]

Reconstructing the Leadership Apparatus

The near paralysis at the heart of the core executive at the end of 1951 was compounded by the murder by the MRLA of the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney. His replacement, Sir Gerald Templer, subsequently arrived in Malaya in February 1952. He inherited an intelligence system that was broken. For instance, the Police were effectively a paramilitary force that tended to alienate, rather than court, the Chinese population.[41] The government's use of propaganda was limited and the public were reluctant to provide information to the Police.[42] Moreover, the Police and military often had conflicting intelligence requirements, the former wanted to target the *Min Yuen* while the latter wanted tactical intelligence.[43] Sir Oliver Lyttelton, the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies visited Malaya in November 1951. He found that "the police itself was divided by a great schism between the Commissioner of Police and the Head of Special Branch. Intelligence was scanty and uncoordinated between the military and the civil authorities."[44] Similarly, in May 1952 the new head of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), Courtney Young, sent Sir Percy Sillitoe (Director General of MI5) a damning assessment of Special Branch's

---

[38] Erroneously, Grob-Fitzgibbon suggests states that Jenkin served as Briggs' director of intelligence and "so integral, in fact, did his position become that in May 1951 Briggs completely separated the special and branch and CID from the regular police." See Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame – Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke 2011), p. 155. For Gurney's views, see CO 537/7260, Gurney to Higham, 3rd September 1951.

[39] Ibid., Gurney to Lloyd, 3rd September 1951.

[40] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 131-46.

[41] See Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in Anderson & Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police*, pp. 108-126; G. Sinclair, *At the end of the line – Colonial policing and the imperial endgame, 1945-80* (Manchester 2006), p. 4.

[42] See K. Ramakishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: the impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952-54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79-92.

[43] KV 4/408, undated lecture notes by Morton entitled, 'The co-ordination of intelligence in the Malayan Emergency.'

[44] O. Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London 1962), p. 366.

understanding of the MCP. He stated that while there was good information about the organisation and senior personalities of the MCP, "little is available on its tactical deployment and intentions; its intelligence and sabotage organisations; its external links and communications. There is no counter-espionage information and, so far as is known, no long-term or high-level penetration of the MCP."[45]

The need to "get a grip of intelligence"[46] was clearly recognised by Templer who, prior to his departure for Malaya, decided his priorities in Malaya would be to "a) coordinate intelligence under one person; b) reorganise and retrain the police; c) ensure that the government information services told the people what the government was doing."[47] The centrality of intelligence to Templer's plans was made public upon his arrival in Malaya; he informed *The Straits Times* that "the Emergency will be won by our intelligence system."[48] He acted quickly. Within a month the High Commissioner wrote to Lyttelton stating bluntly that there was "urgent need for a director to be responsible for the coordination and evaluation of intelligence from all sources."[49] However, Templer did not want simply to recruit another former Special Branch officer to replace Jenkin. Indeed, his vision for the new Director of Intelligence differed from that of his predecessors in a number of ways. One of the most obvious was the type of person he wanted to fill the role. Initially, he asked for Dick White, an MI5 officer, to become his Director of Intelligence.[50] When White declined the offer, Templer turned to Jack Morton who had recently retired as H/SIFE. Templer's preference for MI5 officers, rather than former Special Branch men, reflected the increasing desire to 'professionalise' intelligence within the Federation but also on-going concerns about potential regional dimensions of the Emergency.

[45] KV 4/424, H/SIFE to DG Security Service, draft review of security intelligence in the Far East, 21st May 1952.

[46] J. Cloake, *Templer – Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985), p. 228.

[47] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60,* p. 178.

[48] Cloake, *Templer – Tiger of Malaya*, p. 227.

[49] CO 1022/51, Templer to Lyttelton, 13th February 1952.

[50] Ibid. See also T. Bowyer, *The Perfect English Spy* (London 1995), p. 136 and Cloake, *Templer - Tiger of Malaya*, p. 228.

Templer's vision for the post of DOI also differed from that of his predecessors in terms of concept and location within the Malayan executive. His first inclination was that the DOI should "have executive responsiblity for the control of all intelligence services, both military and Service, within the area of responsibility."[51] This would have remedied one of the conundrums that plagued Jenkin and Dalley before him, both of whom had complained bitterly about having the responsibility of coordinating intelligence but not the power. However, having discussed the idea with Colonel Arthur Young (who replaced Gray as Commissioner of Police in Malaya) and Sillitoe, Templer reconsidered. He appears to have been dissuaded by concerns that the DOI would labour under the significant administrative burden of having executive authority over the various intelligence agencies contributing to the Emergency (including Police, Special Branch, Navy, Army, Air Intelligence) and also the potential division of responsibility, as witnessed when Jenkin became answerable to both the Police Commissioner and the High Commissioner.[52]

Templer withdrew plans to give the DOI executive responsibility for intelligence, but the revised proposals did little to remove the risks of blurred and divided lines of responsibility. For instance, he proposed that the DOI would be on the staff of the Deputy Director of Operations but "in any important case where his advice was not taken he would be able to represent his views to [the] High Commissioner direct." Despite the DOI's lack of executive powers, Templer also expected the role holder to "be responsible for coordinating activities of the above agencies or any other which exist today or which may be organised in the future." Moreover, the new DOI would "be completely responsible for collation and evaluation of all the intelligence available and for its presentation to those concerned in the proper form."[53] Morton would, therefore, have all the responsibility for managing Emergency intelligence but, like Dalley and Jenkin before him, would lack any authority to ensure this responsibility was discharged effectively. The revised terms of reference for the DOI were thus a

---

[51] Ibid., Meeting with General Sir Gerald Templer, 31st January 1952 (JIC 289/52).
[52] Ibid., Luke to Reilly, 29th January 1952.
[53] Ibid., Templer to Lyttelton, 13th February 1952.

dangerous 'fudge' rather than an effective structural solution to the difficulties of co-ordinating Emergency intelligence.

Unsurprisingly, Templer's request caused some concern within London – it was clearly not lost on officials that Templer was in danger of recreating an intelligence model based on the same infirm foundations which proved so divisive to his predecessors. An internal Colonial Office minute by Mr Jerrom, noted that although the new Director would not be formally in executive command of any of the various intelligence agencies, his advisory powers and the right of direct daily access to General Templer would in fact give him de facto executive powers if, in Templer's words, " he is a man I can completely rely on." Jerrom felt this was "a long step backwards towards Sir William Jenkin's ideas." However, it is notable how quickly Jerrom tempered his concerns. He concluded that "so long as General Templer is in command in Malaya we need not expect any more Gray–Jenkin affairs…I do not see that we need raise the usual functional arguments."[54] Clearly the force of Templer's personality influenced the Colonial Office as much as those closer to him in Malaya.

Templer did see some dangers in his proposal for the post of DOI. He thus suggested that, instead of having executive authority, the DOI should have "a more general authority over intelligence, which should be exercised through the chairmanship of a fully representative intelligence committee."[55] This led to the creation in March 1952 of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC), supported by the Combined Intelligence Staff (CIS).[56] The FIC was chaired by the DOI and included the head of Special Branch, the Security Liaison Officer, representatives of the three military intelligence organisations, the Police, the head of Information Services and both the Secretary for Chinese Affairs and Commissioner for Labour. The charter for the Committee outlined its four key responsibilities:

---

[54] Ibid., Extract from Mr Jerrom's minute to Mr Higham, 16th May 1952.
[55] Ibid., Luke to Reilly, 29th January 1952; also Meeting with General Sir Gerald Templer, 31st January 1952 (JIC 289/52).
[56] This was a non-executive body, consisting of three permanent members (Secretary of the FIC, and one member from the Special Branch and an officer from Malaya H.Q) charged with preparing briefs for either the Director of Operations Committee or the Director of intelligence.

i. To consider Emergency Intelligence matters and to make recommendations to the Director of Operations Committee through the Deputy Director of Operations.

ii. To consider matters of Intelligence policy within the Federation of Malaya and to make recommendations to the appropriate authority.

iii. To prepare papers on Intelligence matters as required by the Director of Operations.

iv. To comment on papers which have an intelligence aspect before submission to the Director of Operations Committee.[57]

However, this remit also caused significant concern within Whitehall – it was simply not clear what authority the committee would exercise, if any. Upon reading the charter, Anthony Gann presumed that any recommendations made by the FIC that were accepted by the Deputy Director of Operations would be embodied in an appropriate directive issued by the High Commissioner, but the line of executive authority was ambiguous. There was further ambiguity about the committee's ability to make recommendations on policy matters to the appropriate authority. For instance, Gann questioned whether the FIC could make recommendations direct to Special Branch. He went on to postulate that the "important point is that it [the FIC] will not direct Emergency Intelligence and nor will its Chairman, the Director of Intelligence. It is to be essentially a coordinating body on which the representatives of suppliers and users of intelligence decide the policies they would like to see adopted."[58] However, Jerrom was not convinced. He minuted that "there is still the doubt just how far the Director of Intelligence in pursuit of his 'coordinating' function will influence the S.B. and how far the S.B. will be directly controlled by the

---

[57] CO 1022/51, Charter for the Federation Intelligence Committee and Combined Intelligence Staff, 11th June 1952. The Charter is not dissimilar to that proposed for Local Intelligence Committees but lacked the latter's provision to coordinate intelligence, presumably because this was the function of the DOI. For the LIC charter see CAB 176/19, BDCC (FE) to CoS, 18th August 1948.
[58] Ibid., Minute by Gann, 19th June 1952.

Commissioner of Police." He concluded rather weakly, "we can only await developments."[59]

Reconstructing Malayan Police Service

Structural reform to Malaya's strategic intelligence apparatus was paramount, even if a level of ambiguity about the respective functions of the Director of Intelligence, Commissioner of Police and the FIC remained. However, as a cabinet paper noted, "it would be foolish to expect any profound improvement [in the intelligence apparatus] even with an increased and more efficient CID until the basic Police training of all ranks of the regular, uniformed Police is proved. It is mainly on the uniformed Police that CID counter-measures must be based. Without the firm base of a Police Force in close touch with the people, penetration of enemy organisations becomes most difficult."[60] Thus, it was fortunate that Templer's efforts to redefine the higher echelons of the Federation's intelligence apparatus were supported by a broad and ambitious programme of Police reform. This programme had its roots in the visit to Malaya by Lyttelton that took place during the interregnum between Gurney's death and appointment of Templer. Lyttelton's subsequent report stated that "urgent and drastic action" was required in relation to the policing of the Emergency. In particular Lyttelton was concerned that "the organisation of the police is in utter disorder and even the Regular Force is inefficient."[61] Lyttelton therefore proposed to replace Gray, whom he considered "a gallant officer but without the necessary grasp of organisation in these exceptional circumstances", with Colonel Arthur Young.[62]

Upon arrival in Malaya, Young found that the Police had "a very strong military slant on it. This slant is very firmly established now and even some of the old Malay officers have become so used to it that they appear not to notice it. It is very noticeable to me,

---

[59] Ibid., Minute by Jerrom, 19th June 1952.

[60] Ibid., Cabinet Paper, 'Appendix IX – Intelligence Services and Related Counter-Measures'., C (51) 59, 12th December 1951.

[61] CAB 129/48, Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21st December 1951. See also MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 2/3, a Report by Colonel Muller to Hugh Fraser, 22nd December 1951. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, claimed to have secured the resignation of Gray, whom he claimed to be "gallant officer but not a professional policeman." See Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, p. 374.

[62] Ibid., Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21st December 1951.

and I think, to other whole-time policemen who have come recently." He reported back to the Colonial Office that seventy percent of Special Constables had not received any training and that "there can be no doubt an enormous amount of corruption is taking place when so many untrained men receiving practically no supervision have been let loose on the public armed with most arbitrary emergency regulations." Young was unambiguous about the impact of having a rapidly expanded, para-military Police force as the lead agency in the counter-insurgency campaign. He stated "the value of this force as a Police Force in whom members of the public have confidence and will co-operate must be practically negligible outside the main towns. It has even been said, I believe, that the public are more afraid of the police than they are of the bandits. They are certainly giving the bandits more tangible co-operation."[63]

Young considered the task before him as being no less than the re-construction of the Police force.[64] This was clearly a daunting challenge, not least the need to effect cultural change. Young acknowledged that "police headquarters, and for that matter all the gazetted officers, will have to be 'converted' to the foregoing idea of establishing a normal non-military police force." He "found the above suggestions were not acceptable at Police headquarters, and new ideas will either have to be put over or forced over."[65]

Hence, over the next two years, Young unleashed a raft of reforms: improved training of the auxiliary Police; a significant reduction in the total strength of the force; the promotion of 'local officers'; and initiatives like 'Operation Service' and the declaration of 'white areas' designed to show Malaya's communities that the policing style had indeed changed.[66] However, prior to doing so, Young recognised the need to reorganise Police headquarters. He felt that Gray had not developed a suitable

---

[63] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, An appreciation of the Basic Situation by The Commissioner, March 1952.

[64] Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya,* p. 354. See also Stockwell, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in D. Anderson & D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police* (Manchester 1992), pp. 105-126.

[65] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Young to Hugh Fraser, 22nd December 1951.

[66] Ibid., Young to Templer, 3rd & 5th February 1953.

headquarters staff, resulting in his predecessor being overwhelmed in "day to day administrative problems and a gap between Headquarters and Chief Police Officers." Moreover, he recognised that it was clearly necessary that Special Branch "should have the undivided attention of a Senior Assistant Commissioner at Headquarters."[67] In practical terms, "Special Branch was the poorer relation of the larger bodies, i.e. CID."[68] Young therefore created a new post of Deputy Commissioner (field), added three additional posts of Senior Assistant Commissioner (SAC), and upgraded all Chief Police Officers to this rank. Crucially for the management of intelligence, this allowed the Commissioner to disentangle CID from Special Branch by creating two separate departments ('D' and 'E' respectively), the latter being commanded by Senior Assistant Commissioner Guy Madoc.[69]

This decision to divorce the Special Branch from CID was not, however, one rooted in simple administrative efficiency.[70] Indeed, it reflected the incongruence of having Emergency intelligence (which was considered, to use a modern phrase, an 'all-of-government' concept) located within one narrow and 'siloed' aspect of policing. The conceptual origins of this crucial decision can therefore be linked to Dalley's advocacy of the need for the post MSS intelligence structures to have a degree of independence from the Police, and Jenkin's doomed efforts to recast Special Branch as its own entity. Young's decision to give Special Branch operational autonomy (albeit within the wider confines of Police force) marked the practical realisation of his predecessors' ideas. Young had thus finally resolved the problem of where the concept of intelligence would 'sit' within the Federation's broader administrative apparatus. As a result, four years into the Emergency, Special Branch was finally given the organisational space to develop according to operational needs.

---

[67] Ibid., A review of development in 1952, undated.

[68] KV 4/408, 'The situation in Malaya – lecture notes', by Morton, undated.

[69] Young's decision caused some concern in London, to the extent that Colonial Office officials sought a meeting with Morton, who was on home leave prior to taking up his new position as DOI. Higham noted somewhat sceptically that the proposals were similar to those of Jenkin which Gray and Gurney so vigorously opposed in the previous year but did nothing to dissuade Young from implementing the plan. See CO 1022/51, minute by Higham, 21st June 1952.

[70] K. Hack. "British intelligence and counter-insurgency in the era of decolonisation: the example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:2 (Summer 1999), p 130, fn 54 &5.

Young also changed Special Branch's organisational objectives. Even prior to his arrival in Malaya, he considered his immediate priority upon taking command was "to develop and extend the Special Branch in order to ensure adequate strength at all levels with a clear directive – (1) to produce information which the Military require in time for effective action; (2) to penetrate the Malayan Communist Party."[71] The second aspect of the Commissioner's plan marked a significant departure from the focus under Jenkin and Gray upon the *Min Yuen* – Young was aiming at the heart of the MCP. This was not a reaction to the assassination of Gurney but a reflection of the growing concern that "the Communists might give up their uniformed arm and try Palestine tactics [i.e terrorism]."[72] This concern was based upon the fact that the intelligence network relied at this point of the Emergency almost entirely upon information supplied by captured documents, and surrendered or captured enemy personnel (SEP / CEP) who, after their initial operational exploitation, became 'blown' or 'dead' as sources of information.[73] Thus, if the MCP were to disband the MRLA and revert to fomenting labour unrest and isolated terrorist tactics, the government would be deprived of the vast majority of intelligence sources.[74] As a result Templer's *Directive 21* outlined the urgent need to penetrate the MCP with 'live' agents and to "ensure that these agents are not compromised either by indiscreet or premature action, particularly for low-level bandit kills and quick rewards."[75]

Young realised Special Branch's twin objectives required different approaches. In relation to "tactical information which would permit the security forces to eliminate armed Communists", the Commissioner welcomed the posting of Military Intelligence Officers (MIOs) into Special Branch. However, the task of penetrating the MCP was considered a specialist one, focused upon the SAC and his planning staff at Headquarters. To support this, Young created a planning room in the Inner Keep at Bluff Road. This staff was supported by teams of specialist field officers "to exploit the very considerable quality of information, which cannot be handled by the collectors

---

[71] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Advanced Appreciation, undated.
[72] CO 1022/51, a minute by Mr Jerrom, 19th June 1952
[73] Ibid., Director of Operations, Directive No. 21 – S.B. Intelligence Targets, 24th April 1952.
[74] Ibid., a minute by Mr Jerrom, 19th June 1952
[75] Ibid., Director of Operations, Directive No. 21 – S.B. Intelligence Targets, 24th April 1952.

of information on the ground." Young concluded a review of developments in his first year as Commissioner by stating

> "there has been a re-orientation of policy within the Special Branch throughout the year, directed towards ensuring that intelligence available to Government remains 'alive' whatever may be the results of the efforts of Security Forces to suppress the 'shooting war'. While it is appreciated that Special Branch does have a duty to perform in the provision of day to day tactical intelligence, that must take second place to the penetration of the Party at all levels, both on a long and a short term basis."[76]

However, this policy came began to bear fruit much later in the Emergency than previous commentators suggest – certainly later than 1951 as the 'incrementalists' imply or 1952 as the advocates for the 'stalemate' theory argue. As one officer who joined Malayan Police in 1952 later recalled, "notionally we were police, but we were really a paramilitary organisation. We didn't have anything really to do with normal police work, we weren't concerned with burglaries and people riding bicycles without lights and that sort of stuff."[77] But without doing "that sort of stuff", the Police were missing the opportunity to engage with the ordinary Chinese who might have the potential to be an informer.

The lag between policing reform and operational impact is reflected in the broader measures of the Emergency. For instance, at the end of 1954 the Director of Operations, General Geoffrey Bourne, reported that the absolute number of incidents and casualties continued to fall from the 1951/2 peak. However, there were still 4,000 insurgents in Malaya's jungles who were "able to emerge from the jungle regularly, at points of their own choosing, to create an incident or to collect supplies, when they think they can do so without great risk." Furthermore, he said "penetration of the Malayan Communist Party at high level is difficult…" Bourne did qualify this statement

---

[76] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1, Part I (A review of development in 1952) and Part II (A summary of plans for 1953).
[77] Imperial War Museum, Acc. 10120 – Interview with Peter Maule Ffinch.

by saying "The Special Branch keeps well abreast of Malayan Communist Party policy intentions and organisations at all levels." [78] In reality, however, without well-placed and willing informants, Special Branch at this time continued to rely on captured documents, and captured / surrendered enemy personal for this information. The following year, Bourne reported to Harding, that "statics by no means show the whole picture, but it so happens that at the moment they do conform the thoughts which I have had recently, namely that things have gone rather better on the shooting side than I had been expecting." He attributed the primary reason for this success to be the increasing co-operation of the Chinese population.[79] However, the supply of "adequate intelligence" remained critical and Special Branch was ordered to redouble efforts.[80]

However, by 1956, the estimated Communist strength had halved, as had the number of major terrorist-generated incidents, compared to the previous year. The new Director of Operations, General Roger Bower, explained, "a high proportion of the casualties inflicted on the terrorists stem from action taken by the Security Forces on information received from intelligence sources." This was because, at last, the Police and military were working in unison Indeed, he suggested "probably one of the main lessons to be learned from the experience of the last eight years is that unless the two [Police and military] are geared and maintained to the same pitch and work in the closest harmony, success will not be achieved."[81] By 1957 – the year Malaya achieved independence from Britain – Bower stated that "the police intelligence system (Special Branch) has not only charted nearly every member of the enemy Army, but has brought about the great majority of contacts resulting in eliminations."[82] It thus took some four years for Templer and Young's reforms to come to fruition, so that the uniformed police, Special Branch and the strategic coordinating apparatus were

---

[78] WO 208/3219, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1954, by the Director of Operations, 10th January 1955.
[79] WO 216/885, Bourne to Harding, 3rd June 1955.
[80] WO 216/874, Director of Operations' Directive, February 1955.
[81] WO 208/5356, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the End of 1956, by the Director of Operations, January 1957.
[82] AIR 20/10377, Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957, by the Director of Operations, September 1955.

working in harmony with the D/SWECs and the theatre level intelligence machinery. It was only at this point in the Emergency that the 'model' Malayan intelligence apparatus evolved into its most mature and effective form.

Conclusion

The current understanding of policing in the Emergency rightly indicates that the Uniformed Branch of the Police Service followed two distinct policing styles during the Emergency – a paramilitary stance which was pursued between 1948-51, followed by a consensual approach from 1952 onwards. Running in parallel to this narrative is the separate argument that Special Branch emerged from the ruins of the MSS to experience exponential and rapid improvement in operational efficiency. As a result, according to Leon Comber, Special Branch played the defining part in the intelligence war against the MCP, allowing the government "to eschew the 'rifle and bayonet' approach…and defer to the Special Branch's more subtle methods of fighting the war by the use of human intelligence…"[83]

There are, however, two fundamental problems with the current understanding of the contribution made by the Federation of Malaya Police Service, and its Special Branch, to intelligence effort during the Emergency. The first is the failure to acknowledge that Special Branch was at all times an integral part of the Federation of Malaya's Police Service. Special Branch lacked an effective presence amongst Malaya's Chinese community and depended upon relatively 'resource-rich' Uniformed Branch to be its 'eyes and ears on the ground.' However, as has been discussed, the Uniformed Branch was beset by numerous problems which impeded its ability to secure the trust of the Chinese community. The need to implement necessary but draconian Emergency regulations, the lack of Chinese or Chinese-speaking officers, the influx of ex-Palestine officers, and the rapid shift to a distinctly paramilitary style of Police conspired to prevent the ordinary Chinese from trusting the ordinary Malayan 'bobby'. Indeed, the biggest problem affecting Special Branch was that its fortunes were intimately linked with the broader policing strategy, and for first four critical years of the Emergency

---

[83] Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60*, p. 282-3.

this strategy was entirely at odds with task of generating intelligence. The shift from a para-military to consensual stance was critical in providing Special Branch with more raw material but it took time to implement and even more time for the Chinese community to develop confidence. Hence, Special Branch did not work in isolation. On the contrary, it was heavily dependent upon other elements of the intelligence apparatus to identify raw intelligence and potential informants which they could subsequently develop and exploit.

Second, the creation of the post of DOI reflected not the growth of Special Branch but its inability to coordinate emergency intelligence. This was recognised by the Policing Mission which recommended the appointment of an independent advisor to resolve some of the 'technical' problems affecting the Special Branch, an idea which evolved into the non-executive role of Director of Intelligence. It is important to note that rather than appoint the Head of Special Branch to the role, or simply give the head of Special Branch broader responsibilities, it was decided to create a post which was not embedded fully within the Police and where the role holder could by-pass the Commissioner of Police entirely. Indeed, Jenkin's tenure as Director of Intelligence ended in disaster. Gradually, reforms introduced to ensure the intelligence apparatus could function efficiently – not least the desegregated Special Branch, the development of the role of the Director of Intelligence and the Federal Intelligence Committee, all of which reflect both the composite nature of Emergency intelligence and shows that neither the Special Branch nor the Commissioner were able to manage it alone.

Many problems faced by Special Branch during the Emergency were a function of the peculiar nature of counter-insurgency intelligence, and the difficulty officials had in categorising it to fit the existing organisational structures. Young noted in 1952 that, "police headquarters take the view that banditry is a form of crime and their dealing with it is the normal function of the police force whose duty it is to prevent and detect crime."[84] Of course there is logic to that argument and it was one that was confirmed

---

[84] MSS Brit Empire, S. 486, 3/1.

by numerous reviews and assessments, particularly in the first four years the Emergency. In reality, however, the breadth and depth of the insurgent challenge far surpassed *normal* criminality. This created a clear tension between the type of intelligence required by Special Branch and that required by the security forces 'on the ground'. The former required a complex mix of intelligence relating to identifying the Communist cell structures, isolating the Communist armed units from the supply organisation, the identification of informants, all of which would lead, ideally, to the detention or arrest of high ranking members of the MCP. Thus to Special Branch, particularly in the second half of the Emergency, the long-term development of sources was far more important than quick, tactical, operations. Conversely, the security forces operating in Districts all of over Malaya, while interested in these forms for intelligence, had a primary focus upon operational intelligence – information to leading to the arrest or elimination of the MRLA. Emergency intelligence was a concept that transcended the contemporary epistemology of intelligence. The attempt by Jenkin to detach Special Branch from the mainstream Police, and the development extraordinary structures, such as the DOI and FIC were increasingly desperate attempts to coordinate a concept that was wider than orthodox policing. The suggestion in the current historiography that the concept of Emergency intelligence was simply synonymous with Special Branch fails to appreciate the relationship between 'low' and 'high' policing, the peculiar nature of Emergency intelligence and extraordinary inter-organisational demands it placed upon the administration. The task of Special Branch during the Emergency was daunting and its achievements should be acknowledged. Conversely, however, these achievements should not be exaggerated. Special Branch was not the 'silver bullet' that Comber and Sinclair maintain it was.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion: The Development of the Intelligence Apparatus during the Malayan Emergency

The intelligence apparatus that evolved during the Malayan Emergency was not a single-dimensional entity focused solely or even predominantly upon Special Branch. Nor did it the apparatus evolve in a linear manner. On the contrary, it was a broad, constantly evolving phenomenon, responding both to internal frictions and external stimuli. It took the best part of seven years to reach a degree of structural maturity, largely because of the infirm foundations laid in the aftermath of the abolition of South East Asia Command (SEAC) in 1945. The transition from a single military intelligence apparatus in the region to a diffuse civilian model proved highly problematic. Consequently, the civilian agencies in Malaya (the uniformed and Special branches of the Federation of Malaya's Police, the Security Service and Joint Intelligence Committee / Far East) were beset with problems relating to remits and resources, and struggled to generate timely and high-quality intelligence until the latter years of the Emergency. The military were not, as other commentators have suggested, wedded to the tactics of 'counter-terror'.[1] In fact, the military attempted to move to what would now be termed 'intelligence-led', small-unit, operations at the very beginning of the Emergency, However, the efforts of the security forces for the bulk of the Emergency were frustrated because of a limited flow of intelligence from their civilian colleagues. Consequently the security forces were able to contain and reduce but not effectively mitigate the threat posed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) until the mass surrenders of 1958. As such, it is difficult to conclude that the Emergency can provide the basis of an exemplary paradigm for managing intelligence during a counter-insurgency campaign as advocated, for instance, by Robert Thompson.[2]

The first substantial post-war iteration of the Malayan intelligence machine was that in existence from the abolition of SEAC in 1945 to the abolition of the Malayan Security

---

[1] H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444; D. French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67* (Oxford 2011); K. Hack, "Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699.
[2] R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam* (1966)

Service (MSS) in 1948. The move from SEAC's wartime intelligence structures to a new paradigm suitable to protect Britain's post-war territories and colonies, in the context of the rapidly developing concerns about global Communism, was inevitably challenging. Planners attempted to address this problem by creating a three-tier system. First, a Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) (JIC (FE)) would provide strategic oversight to Britain's intelligence apparatus in the Far East, providing assessments to its metropolitan counter-part, local governments and the Chiefs of Staff. Second, the Security Service's newly created regional hub – Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) - would coordinate security intelligence in region and be answerable both to London and local governments, as well as being represented on the JIC (FE). Finally, SIFE would be supported by the different Special Branches in the region or, in the peculiar case of the Malayan Union, its own intelligence agency, the MSS.

The idea of basing Britain's post-war regional intelligence apparatus around the concept of the JIC was not without precedent. Indeed, various iterations of the JIC were at the heart of Britain's wartime intelligence structures in London, Cairo and Singapore. However, the JIC run by Lord Louis Mountbatten's SEAC, which went on to form the basis of the JIC (FE), was perhaps the least suitable incarnation of the concept to support the post-war demands both of the Commanders-in-Chief and Britain's newly re-installed colonial governments in the region. This was primarily because the committee's key focus was on defence intelligence related to the war against Japan. Perhaps understandably, given that so little of SEAC's operating area was in allied hands, security intelligence was simply not a priority. Hence, neither the Security Service (MI5) nor the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) were represented on the JIC (SEAC), and the emphasis on defence intelligence continued with the JIC (FE).

It is difficult to conclude anything other than the JIC (FE) was poorly set-up, not least because it was established without a fully-defined remit, full-time chairman or drafting staff. To compound the problem, the JIC answered to multiple masters. It was not uncommon for various elements of Britain's intelligence apparatus to have dual reporting lines at this time, and the JIC (FE) was thus not unique in this respect. However, being answerable to the Chiefs of Staff in London and the British Defence

Coordination Committee / Far East (BDCC/FE) presented Patrick Scrivener, the JIC (FE)'s chairman, with some difficult challenges. In particular, London was only concerned with defence intelligence, as were the Commanders-in-Chief on the BDCC(FE). However, the BDCC (FE) had a broader remit and its chairman, Malcolm MacDonald, had a need for both security and political intelligence. Inevitably, however, the agenda set by London prevailed.

Inherent, but perhaps not fully developed, in the JIC concept was the responsibility to provide a warning function. Of course, this was dependent upon the other elements of the wider intelligence structure providing the JIC (FE) with a stream of assessed intelligence from their various disparate sources. To fill the gap in relation to security intelligence, officials created Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE) as MI5's regional intelligence hub. This was based upon the highly successful joint security intelligence hub, Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME) that was established in Cairo just before the outbreak of the Second World War. It is clear that officals intended that SIFE would perform a similar function: its network of Defence Security Officers (DSOs) would act as conduits for information gathered by local officials, which would be assessed by SIFE Headquarters, and then passed to the JIC (FE).

SIFE failed to meet this ideal. This is not surprising given the broader dislocation among Britain's intelligence agencies as they attempted to manage the transition from the Second World War to the Cold War. At the most basic level, SIFE had very few DSOs – in fact it had only one DSO to cover all of Malaya. Eric Leighton, the DSO for Malaya, was thus entirely dependent on the Police and the MSS for intelligence. The inherent difficulty in this process was exacerbated by the stance taken by Sir Percy Sillitoe, the Director General of the Security Service. Sillitoe was determined to entrench and then expand the position of his newly created regional hub. He pushed SIFE to develop a collection function and sought to prevent the MSS from operating outside Malaya, aims which are at least understandable. However, Sillitoe was determined to go further and subvert completely the MSS, which he perceived as direct competitor to SIFE. This was to prove disastrous both for the MSS and SIFE, as well as Malaya itself.

The MSS formed the third layer of the initial Malayan intelligence apparatus. The MSS has been widely criticised, if not vilified, both by contemporaries and later commentators for apparently failing to forecast the start of the Communist insurgency. And yet a re-reading of the MSS's Fortnightly Political Intelligence Journals clearly reveals that the organisation warned regularly of the MCP's intent and capability to threaten the security of the Federation. Granted, the reports tend to be verbose and, at times, it is not easy to differentiate between the different levels of threats identified but the concerns about the MCP are clear. The reason why the outbreak of violence that led to the declaration of Emergency apparently took officials by surprise relates to the dysfunction of the wider intelligence machine: Sillitoe was in the process of doing his best to discredit the MSS; the Commissioner General retained faith in MSS but Sillitoe's message was taking hold; the JIC (FE) was focused on defence intelligence and, despite its remit, lacked the influence or capability to intervene in the SIFE / MSS dispute. Moreover, whilst it is impossible to prove, it is likely that the MSS (in addition to the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, who died in an aircraft crash shortly after the declaration of Emergency) proved to be convenient 'scapegoats' for the failings of wider intelligence and administrative apparatus.

The second substantial iteration of the Malayan intelligence apparatus developed quickly in the aftermath of the declaration of Emergency and abolition of the MSS. The JIC (FE) remained at the notional head of this apparatus and benefited from a confirmed remit, full-time chairman and drafting staff. And yet the JIC (FE)'s involvement in the Emergency, in relation to its responsibility to co-ordinate the regional intelligence apparatus, appears limited to suggesting that Sir Henry Gurney, the Federation's High Commissioner, should create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC). The JIC (FE) did provide London with some strategic assessments about the potential relationship between the violence in Malaya and the wider Communist threat to British interests in the region. However, there is no evidence that it considered the Emergency in its own right until General Sir Harold Briggs' demand in 1950 for more troops to reinforce the implementation of his plan to restore law and

order to Malaya coincided with the start of the Korea War. Even then, the JIC (FE)'s involvement was focused upon the potential adverse impact extra troops might have upon Britain's wider strategic concerns in the region, rather than the consequences of not acceding to Briggs' demands.

The abolition of the MSS in August 1948 effectively destroyed the Federation's capacity to generate human intelligence (humint) in the short to medium term. Despite Sillitoe's lofty ambitions, SIFE was unable to fill the void - it lacked both the staff and resources to necessary to develop an effective collecting capacity. Consequently, SIFE remained largely dependent upon local authorities for a flow of material which it could then assess and disseminate. Indeed, having secured the destruction of the MSS, SIFE was forced to adopt a much more defensive posture in the wake of criticism from its regional partners, not least the Commissioner General. As a result, the burden for intelligence collection in Malaya fell upon the Federation's Police Service. However, the Police Service was grossly under-strength, both in terms of constables and officers, and was already engaged fully in attempting to reduce the level of 'ordinary' crime that was rife in the chaos of post-war Malaya. It too was thus unable to provide sufficient intelligence to enable the security forces to neutralise the threat from the MCP effectively.

It was thus decided to create a Special Branch. Although there was a precedent for the existence of Special Branches in the pre-war Straits and Settlements, the Malayan Union did not feel the need to create a Special Branch in the new post-war structure. Thus, when the MSS was abolished, the Commissioner of Police, H. B. Langworthy, had to do so in haste and with little institutional knowledge. Some personnel from the MSS headquarters were drafted into the newly created Special Branch but it suffered from the similar shortage of suitable staff that affected its predecessor and the wider Police organisation. Moreover, Special Branch was reconstituted as an integral part of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). In practice, this meant that counter-insurgency intelligence was subjugated to criminal intelligence until Templer separated the two elements in 1954.

Against the background of this intelligence vacuum, the Royal Air Force and the Army picked up the mantle. The Royal Air Force took the enlightened decision not only to move its forward headquarters to Kuala Lumpur but also to co-locate with the Army's command centre in the town rather than at airfield. This effectively created a 'J2' cell right at the beginning of the Emergency. Furthermore, the RAF and Army created within months of the declaration of Emergency a cohesive joint photoreconnaissance apparatus. In the absence of an adequate flow of intelligence from Special Branch, the visual surveillance and photoreconnaissance missions provided a much needed stream of information upon which the security forces could base their efforts on the ground. Once the residual pool of intelligence gathered by the out-going MSS had been exhausted, the surveillance and reconnaissance missions flown by the RAF that played a critical part in the Federation's efforts to prevent the insurgents developing a momentum, forming larger armed units and creating liberated areas. This was a truly 'joint' apparatus and there is even evidence of Police officers taking informants on visual surveillance flights to help identify insurgent locations.

The Army also attempted to fill the intelligence gap from the earliest phases of the Emergency. The development of the Ferret Force and Civil Liaison Corps (a concept which are surely the distant precursors of the use of modern anthropological techniques during the recent conflict in Afghanistan) are excellent examples of initiatives designed to use local knowledge and small-unit techniques to 'ferret' out the insurgents. That the Ferret Force was cancelled after a matter of months, seemingly replaced by large-scale cordon and search operations that, at times included the use of village burning, did not, however, indicate the rejection of small, intelligence-led, counter-insurgency operations. Indeed, General Boucher intended to introduce ferret units to all battalions operating in Malaya, via the Far Eastern Training Centre. Small unit operations were heavily frustrated, however, particularly in the period 1948-56, by the lack of timely and reliable intelligence from Special Branch. Despite the value of visual surveillance and photoreconnaissance provided by the RAF, there was a critical lack of humint.

In an effort to isolate the insurgents from the Chinese squatter community, the Police and military became heavily employed in population control measures such as resettlement. This, as Karl Hack has explained, forced the MCP from a classical Maoist prescription for insurgency with the ultimate aim of creating liberated areas to one designed to harass and subvert the colonial authorities but with fewer acts designed to terrorise the civilian population.[3] As part of the change of strategy, the insurgents moved deeper into the jungle. This afforded greater tactical opportunity for the security forces to interdict the insurgents who became increasingly concerned with obtaining supplies. As a consequence casualties, both to civilians and the security forces, declined and the numbers of insurgents who chose to surrender increased. However, population control did not 'break the back' of the Emergency, as Karl Hack claims. It merely changed the nature of it. Hence, the insurgents were still able to murder the High Commissioner in 1951. The numbers of surrendered enemy personnel began to decline after 1952, leaving a hard-core rump of up-to 3,000 insurgents still determined to subvert, if not destroy, colonial government.[4] Moreover, the Emergency still soaked-up a vast amount of resources, which neither Malaya nor London could afford but, despite these numbers, the authorities struggled to find let alone engage their insurgent opponents.

There were two critical factors that hindered the ability of the intelligence machine to locate the insurgents. The first was that it lacked, at least in the first four years of the Emergency, an effective command and control structure – particularly at a strategic level. The military did spontaneously create an efficient operational command structure which was subsequently formalised in the District and State Executive War Committees (D/SWEC) and the Land / Air Operations room which subsequently

---

[3] K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124-155; Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), pp. 211-241; Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99-101; Hack, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383-414; K. Hack, "'Everyone lived in fear': Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699.

[4] WO 208/5356, Director of Operations, Malaya, *Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956*, January 1957.

morphed into the Joint Operations Centre. However, for the first two years there was no central figure or body to coordinate the efforts of the intelligence apparatus as a whole. This was partially addressed by the appointment of Sir William Jenkin as Director of Intelligence (DOI) in 1950. Ultimately, however, this appointment was a significant missed opportunity and contributed to the onset of a near fatal paralysis within the Federation's core executive in 1951. The situation became significantly better in 1952 when Jack Morton was appointed as Jenkin's successor and subsequently created the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC). Despite the inherent vulnerabilities of the system, not least that its effectiveness depended largely upon the force of personality of the new High Commissioner, Sir Gerald Templer, these developments provided the strategic direction which had been lacking even prior to the declaration of Emergency.

The second and far more intractable factor which hindered the ability of the intelligence machine to locate the insurgents was the ineffectiveness of the Police. Between 1948-51, under the leadership of High Commissioner Sir Edward Gurney, General Sir Harold Briggs and Police Commissioner Sir Nicol Gray, the establishment of the Police grew to near 240,000 officers, all of whom were wedded to a highly paramilitary strategy.[5] These officers dressed in a paramilitary style, carried automatic weapons, conducted armed patrols deep into the jungle and were responsible for detention and deportation of suspects, enforcing curfews and other Emergency regulations, including the systematic relocation of the Chinese squatter community and food restrictions. Such a strategy may well have been necessary, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of Emergency when there was a real possibility that the insurgency might be able to create 'liberated zones.' However, the cost in terms of intelligence was dramatic. Under such a strategy, the Police found intelligence largely through coercion – hence documents might be found as a result of searching all those entering or leaving an area, or via captured insurgents but this was second-rate compared to the ultimate goal of all intelligence organisations – timely and accurate information from willing and uncompromised informants. Indeed, the

---

[5] A. Stockwell, "British imperial policy and decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13:1 (October 1984), pp. 68-87.

strategy of paramilitary policing could not be more incompatible with secure this vital type of information.

In addition to improving the strategic command and control of the intelligence operations in Malaya, Templer attempted to resolve the fundamental problems within the Federations Police Service. Sir Arthur Young was appointed as Gray's successor with a clear mandate to reform policing. He quickly freed Special Branch from the shackles of the CID and set-about transforming the Police from a para-military force to a Police Service. The state of the intelligence machine at the end of Templer's tenure looks and feels much more mature than that which he inherited. For the sake of analysis, one might consider it the third significant iteration of the intelligence apparatus in Malaya since abolition of SEAC in 1946.

However, at least in terms of 'output', Templer's reforms did not mark a turning point in the counter-insurgency struggle. A community's trust in its Police Service takes time to build and public relations initiatives like Operation Service struggled to compete against the collective memory of detention orders, curfews and forced resettlement. Thus, reliable and timely information, particularly from human sources remained hard to find. Hence, at the end of 1954, General Bourne, the Director of Operations, estimated that there were still some 4,000 Communist terrorists at large who were able to emerge from the jungle at a time and place of their own choosing. Finding them continued to be like "hunting for a needle in a haystack" - a hunt which absorbed one-third of Malaya's total revenue, cost the UK £55 million a year and involved the simultaneous deployment of up to twenty-one battalions of troops.[6] Two years later, the Director of Operations noted that although the insurgents were concentrating on subversion, pending Malaya obtaining self-government, they were "much more alert and difficult to find." Moreover, while the absolute number of insurgents was estimated to have dropped from 4,000 to 2063, the surrender rate had fallen significantly which "severely handicapped the security forces." Hence at the beginning of 1957, the Director of Operations concluded "there is still a considerable and

---

[6] WO 208/3219, Director of Operations, Malaya, *Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954*, January 1955.

continuing danger to the security and stability of Malaya until the Communist Terrorist Organisation has been thoroughly broken."[7] The arrival of Templer was not the 'big-bang' that others have claimed.[8]

If one accepts that the intelligence apparatus was unstable for the vast majority of the Emergency, one might reasonably question what contribution it actually made counter-insurgency campaign and the ending of the Emergency? Measuring the utility of intelligence is a notoriously problematic endeavour, not least because such measures become the means to generalise or condense a very long and complicated process with multiple variables into something simple. Hence, the decline in casualty rates or an increase in surrenders could equally be attributable to a change of strategy by either the Communists or government, the inability of the insurgents to find food and supplies, an inability to manoeuvre freely, a decrease in political support, increasing tactical efficiency of the security forces, better command and control, the maturing of the psychological warfare program, or people's belief that their lives would be better under a self-governing or independent Malaya rather than a Communist Malaya, or a combination of all these aspects or more. It is near impossible to disaggregate the role of the intelligence apparatus from these factors and highly problematic to link developments in that apparatus to improved counter-insurgency metrics, such as the number of incidents, contacts, insurgent ambushes, security force ambushes, SEPs etc. This is a pitfall that may have affected those commentators who suggest the declining causality rate seen in 1952-3 was a direct reflection of the impact of General Templer's arrival in Malaya (such as Anthony Short and Richard Stubbs) *or* the October 1951 Directives (such as Karl Hack) *or* the organisational reform of Special Branch (such as Leon Comber).

Nevertheless, it is axiomatic that intelligence is a critical factor in counter-insurgency operations. Accurate and timely information about who is subverting governing institutions, who is posing a physical threat to the state and its citizens, and who is

---

[7] WO 208/5356, Director of Operations, Malaya, *Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956*, January 1957.

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

supporting the insurgent forces allows the counter-insurgents to nullify the threat. Without such information, the insurgents are able to operate unhindered. General Templer set up in 1952 the Operational Research Section (ORS) to "to analyse incidents and contacts and contacts and extract from them not only statistics and patterns, but lessons to be applied in future operations, large or small."[9] The Research Section conducted numerous studies into the combat effectiveness of the Army and concluded that the majority of the Army's efforts between 1952-4 (the period when most historian's suggest the tide of the Emergency had already been turned) were unproductive either in terms of 'contacts' or 'eliminations' when operations were not 'intelligence-led'. For instance, the Research Section undertook an analysis of patrolling between May and August 1952. It found that the Army had launched "700 'intelligence-led' patrols during this period, of which only 41 [5.85%] made contact with the enemy." However, in the same time period the Army sent out 1853 speculative patrols, of which even less – just 51 [or 2.75] - made contact with the enemy. The 'kill-rate' was reflected in these figures: when patrols were intelligence-led, the security forces killed on average 0.65 per patrol, compared with 0.39 for speculative patrols. This study concluded, perhaps obviously, that information increased the chance of patrols making contact and then 'eliminating' the enemy.[10]

Similarly, the Research Section conducted a number of studies aimed at improving ambushes. It noted that intelligence was the "biggest single factor affecting ambushes. The chances of an ambush being sprung [i.e. government forces engaging Communist forces] are:- a) on information 1 in 10 b) on no information 1 in 88." As a result, the Research Section concluded "that on information one can expect a kill after 130 hours; on no information one can expect one after 3,900 hours." These are astonishing figures. At period of the Emergency when most commentators suggest that the back of the Emergency had been broken, over a four month period "58,000 ambush party hours (say ½ million man hours) have been spent in ambushes on no

---

[9] J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002), p. 96; J. Cloake, *Templer – Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985), p. 242.

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

information and have only achieved 15 kills." [11] This does not, of course, suggest that the efforts of the intelligence apparatus made little net impact upon the course of the insurgency. Indeed, the work of the ORS simply serves to emphasise the value of intelligence during the Emergency, and the necessity to have a robust apparatus to collect raw information, assess, disseminate and ultimately use that intelligence to further the campaign.

How and why then, if the intelligence apparatus was unable to allow the security forces to deliver a coup de grâce to the insurgents, was the Emergency brought to a successful conclusion? This thesis has already considered and discounted Karl Hack's theory that the government achieved security by 'screwing down the people.'[12] Population control was undoubtedly important to the broader counter-insurgent campaign and in a large part helped convince the insurgents to change strategy, but it was ultimately unable to prevent the hard-core of the insurgents taking to the deeper areas of the jungle where they continued to pose a significant threat Malaya's internal security. Nor was Templer's regime decisive. It is clear that Templer did pull Malaya back from the nadir of his predecessor's murder and implemented many highly important reforms that were vital to the gradual improvement of the security situation, not least policing reform. However, as Generals Bourne and McGillivray allude to their end of year reports for 1954 and 1956, this did not have instant results – the insurgents continued to pose a very real threat to Malaya, huge amounts of resources remained engaged in counter-insurgency operations and the Emergency continued until 1960.

---

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

[12] K. Hack, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (2008), pp. 211-241; Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 30: 1 (March 1999), pp. 99-101; Hack, 'The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383-414; Hack, "'Everyone lived in fear': Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699. K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124-155.

Indeed, this thesis sits easily with neither the 'incremental' or 'stalemate' hypotheses that dominate the wider historiography of the Emergency. However, it does support Kumar Ramaskrishna's argument that the various elements of the Federation's counter-insurgency campaign came to maturity in the latter half of the 1950s.[13] In particular, the political situation had developed rapidly: municipal and town elections were held in 1952, followed by State and Federal elections two years later. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the leader of the powerful United Malays National Organisation – Malayan Chinese Association (UMNO – MCA) Alliance political party, was appointed first minister in July 1955 and the following year secured control of internal defence and security.[14] The rise of Tunku Abdul Rahman and the accelerated pace of decolonisation effectively rendered a central pillar of the MCP's aspirations redundant: Tunku Abdul Rahman taunted the MCP by declaring, "you say that you are fighting for independence. My Party and I have achieved it."[15] The prolonged security campaign, in conjunction with the accelerated pace of political development within Malaya, created the conditions in which the government's propaganda campaign could take effect and stimulated the mass surrenders of 1958, which effectively ended the Communist insurgency.

Correction of the historical record

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, nearly all previous commentators recognise the importance of intelligence during the Emergency, a contention which this thesis supports.[16] However, many assessments have either been incorrect or based on infirm foundations. This has critical implications for the understanding of the Emergency, not

---

[13] K. Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-58* (London 2001).

[14] See Stockwell, "British imperial policy and decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13:1 (October 1984), pp. 68-87.

[15] K. Ramakrishna, 'Content, credibility and context: Propaganda, government surrender policy and the Malayan Communist terrorist mass surrenders of 1958', *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), p. 257.

[16] See, for instance, Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya*, p. 502; R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006), p. 494; F. Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977), p. 286 and R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam (London 1966)*, p. 84; H. Miller, Jungle War in Malaya, fn. 90, p. 90; B. Stewart, "Winning in Malaya: An intelligence success story", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 267-283.

only as an episode of significant historic interest but, as will be discussed below, as a campaign upon which much of the United Kingdom and United States of America's current counterinsurgency doctrine is based.

Most previous accounts start their discussion of the Emergency with events in 1948. However, the contest between the Malayan government and the MCP started significantly before that, arguably in 1945. The declaration of Emergency merely signalled the government's inability to forestall the Communist insurgency using normal, peacetime, statutory instruments. Using previously unpublished material on the SEAC intelligence apparatus and the Security Service's plans for managing security intelligence in the Far East after the defeat of Japan, this discussion has shown that what has previously been perceived as simply an intelligence failure by the Malayan Security Service in 1948 was, in fact, a much broader, systematic failure, of Britain's post-war intelligence structures in the region. Indeed, the MSS was the junior member of a triumvirate, in conjunction with the SIFE and JIC (FE), that had a collective responsibility to safeguard Malaya's security. However, the triumvirate was riddled with weak remits, competing agendas and inter-organisational disputes, the origins of which can be traced directly to the flawed foundations provided by South East Asia Command's intelligence apparatus.

The roles played by both SIFE and the JIC/FE during the Emergency is one which not previously been told. This is partly due to limited sources – the Security Service's SIFE papers have only recently de-declassified and very few JIC (FE) papers are available in The National Archive. However, it is precisely because the role of both bodies was so limited that makes them a source of interest. This thesis has shown that SIFE very clearly had a responsibility in relation to security intelligence in Far East, including Malaya and it was within the JIC (FE)'s remit both to provide pertinent intelligence assessments and coordinate the intelligence apparatus in the region. However, both bodies were set up in haste. The result, particularly in relation to SIFE, was inter-agency competition, conflict and a failure to meet core responsibilities. This contributed significantly to the collapse of the civilian agencies within the Malayan intelligence machine at the beginning of the Emergency. Thus, this thesis has, for the

first time, fully explored the intelligence architecture supporting the Malayan authorities in the built up to the declaration of Emergency. This is vital to help understand the pressure on the MSS and subsequently the Police and Special Branch, and the importance of role played by the military in 'holding the ring' until the civilian intelligence agencies were reconstructed into a form more suitable to tackling the insurgency.

The discussion has shown that, contrary to previous analysis, the MSS did provide in its very first Fortnightly Political Journal, and every subsequent one, a clear warning of the MCP's intent to destabilise Malaya and its increase capability to do so. However, SIFE, the JIC (FE) nor officials in the Malaya government listened to the warnings provided by the MSS. The precise timing of the upsurge in violence that prompted the declaration of a state of Emergency may have been a surprise to officials but the existence of an insurgent campaign would not have been to anyone who read the warnings provided by the MSS over the previous two years.

Special Branch is at the centre of the discussion about intelligence during the Emergency in the existing literature. However, this thesis has shown that Special Branch was but one element of a much broader intelligence apparatus that, until now, has yet to be explored in detail. The apparatus included the JIC/FE, SIFE, the MSS, the Army, the Royal Air Force, and the mainstream Police *as well* as Special Branch. Nor was it the model intelligence agency that the current historiography suggests. On the contrary it was largely ineffective, partly because of the administrative shackles that tied it to the mainstream CID but, more importantly, because of its dependency on the wider Police Service. Special Branch lacked a viable presence within the Chinese community, with the acute lack of Chinese-speaking officers being a particular problem. It therefore relied upon the wider Police Service, not least the Uniformed Branch, to secure the trust of the Chinese community, gather raw intelligence and identify informants. Hence, intelligence was just as much an overt function, particularly of the Uniformed Branch, as it was a covert function as represented by Special Branch. However, until 1952, the Uniformed Branch was a paramilitary force, wedded to a strategy that alienated the community it needed to befriend. Even when

this strategy changed, it would take more than leaflet drops and the staged-managed 'Operation Service' to convince members of the Chinese community to take the significant personal risk of providing information about the insurgents to the Police.

Moreover, this thesis has demonstrated that Special Branch simply failed to provide the leadership necessary to ensure the various intelligence organisations in Malaya operated as one coordinated apparatus rather than a collection of individual entities. Sir William Jenkin was initially brought to Malaya to help improve the way in which Special Branch was operating as a collection agency. He quickly assessed the situation as impossible and tendered his resignation. He was, however, persuaded to stay on, in the guise as Malaya's first Director of Intelligence (DOI). Contrary to Comber's assertions, this was a development which marked not Special Branch's coming of age but its inability to manage itself, let alone the rest of the intelligence apparatus in Malaya. Unfortunately Jenkin's initial assessment proved correct and he was unable to function within the already dysfunctional core executive of the Malayan government. Indeed, he left the post with the Police and Special Branch in turmoil. It was not until the creation of the Federal Intelligence Committee (FIC) and the appointment of Jack Morton, former H/SIFE, as the new DOI that the Malaya intelligence apparatus gained the strategic leadership it so desperately required. Thus civil-military co-operation was critical during the Emergency but, in relation to intelligence, this co-operation was generated by the second Director of Intelligence and the FIC, not Special Branch.

The final point of departure relates to the role of the military within the broader intelligence apparatus. Rather than being subordinate to the Police, simply an end-user to Special Branch's intelligence, the military for the majority of the Emergency provided the structures that held together Malaya intelligence apparatus while the civilian intelligence agencies disintegrated and were then reconstructed. This was due to their ability to work in a *joint* manner. For instance, this discussion has demonstrated, for the first time, the full extent of the contribution made by the Royal Air Force to the intelligence campaign in the Emergency. Indeed, it was the RAF that took the first steps to create a joint command centre with the Army. There are many

practical examples of the RAF working effectively and innovatively with other agencies from the earliest days of the Emergency, including taking informants in light aircraft to identify insurgent locations, using transport aircraft as airborne communication posts, and deploying intelligence officers into the field. Furthermore, using previous unpublished material this discussion has shown how the RAF and Army worked effectively together from 1948 to coordinate throughout the Emergency the collection, assessment and distribution of photographic reconnaissance. These efforts helped ensure the insurgents were not able to develop the momentum necessary to create liberated zones and provided vital steams of intelligence in lieu of the lack of humint being generated by the Police.

The Army also demonstrated instinctive ability to develop collaborative, local-level, intelligence structures and worked with the Police on 'anti-bandit operations' even before the formal declaration of Emergency. Moreover, the Army did attempt to develop more efficient methods of counter-insurgency operations from the very beginning of the Emergency, for instance via the Ferret Force and Jungle Training School. Moreover, through rare access to the Intelligence Corps archives, this discussion has shown that the Field Security Sections had an important intelligence-gathering role in Emergency.[17]

The initial, intelligence-led, efforts by the security forces to find and locate the large bands of insurgents probably prevented the insurgency mutating to a form of more conventional guerrilla warfare as advocated by Mao Zedong. Indeed, it was the efforts of the military that brought time for the civilian agencies, particularly Special Branch and the wider Police organisation to adjust to the demands of counter-insurgency. Granted, biographies and operational debriefs indicate the widespread dissatisfaction within the military about the quality of intelligence being provided by the civilian agencies for the majority of the Emergency. However, the fact that key elements of

---

[17] The archivists at The Military History Museum provided the author access to the Intelligence Corps archives and also the Medmenham Collection (photint). Although I was unable to find material relating directly to Malaya in the Medmenham Collection I was able to speak with two officers who had served in Malaya during the Emergency, one with JAPIC/FE, the other as young subaltern. I am very grateful for their time, insights and hospitality, and that of the Intelligence Corps staff.

the apparatus were unstable for large periods of the Emergency only increased the Federation's dependence upon the remainder and made the production of timely and accurate intelligence, from whatever source or agency, that much more valuable to the counter-insurgents. Indeed, the intelligence that did reach the security forces and that which they were able to self-generate through speculative patrols, cordon-search, food denial, and resettlement, undoubtedly contributed to the frustration of the MCP's efforts to overthrow the Malayan government. However, the security forces struggled to deliver a coup d'grace to the MCP and were ultimately frustrated by the lack of humint being provided by Special Branch. Population control did lead to food denial operations, but this proved to be effected by the law of diminishing returns and big unit operations persisted deep into the Emergency, well past Templer's tenure as High Commissioner.

This thesis has therefore provided a radically different assessment of intelligence during the Emergency. Using a broad range of sources, many of which had not been previously analysed, it has suggested that the previous consensus that the intelligence war in Malaya was won by the linear development of Special Branch into a model intelligence agency is incorrect. Special Branch was, in fact, for large periods of the Emergency ineffective. It suffered from the lack of Chinese speakers and the administrative handicap of being tied to the CID. However, its biggest problem was a dependency upon the Uniform Branch (to use Brodeur's term – low policing) to win the trust of the Chinese community and identify willing informants.[18] As such it struggled to generate sufficient humint to allow the security forces to render the insurgents a fatal blow. The other civilian intelligence agencies in Malaya also struggled to play a meaningful role in the campaign against the Communist insurgents: the MSS, for all its faults, did actually provide clear and consistent warning but was subverted by the Security Service; SIFE could not fill the void following the abolition of the MSS; and the JIC (FE) was simply too immature and distracted with defence intelligence to contribute to the Emergency. This then left the military. Fortunately for the Malayan government, both the Army and the Royal Air Force were able to hold

---

[18] J-P Brodeur, "High Policing and Low Policing: Remarks about the Policing of Political Activities", *Social Problems,* 30:5 (June 1983), pp. 507-520.

the wider intelligence apparatus together, securing vital time for the Police to change to move from a paramilitary to a more consensual strategy in 1952; for the creation of a FIC and appointment of Morton as DOI; the acceleration of the pace of decolonisation; and the maturing of the psychological warfare programme. The intelligence model in place in Malaya in 1957 was mature and sophisticated. However, the process of creating this model was far more organisationally complicated, indeed arduous, than previous commentators allow.

While counter-factuals are often of limited value, it is thought-provoking to consider what would have happened in Malaya if both the military and civilian wings of the intelligence apparatus were working more effectively and in harmony much earlier in campaign: it is unlikely that the Emergency would have lasted for such a long time or that so many resources would have been diverted to Malaya; the pace of decolonisation was unlikely to have been so rapid; indeed, if the warnings of the MSS had been heeded and acted upon, perhaps a state of Emergency might never have been declared in Malaya.

Relationship to current counter-insurgency theory

The implications of this correction of our understanding about the management of intelligence in Malaya maybe significant because current counter-insurgency theory has its roots in lessons derived from the Emergency. As noted above and in the introduction to this thesis, it is widely accepted that intelligence is vital to contemporary counter-insurgency. For instance, the current US Army and Marine Corps counter-insurgency doctrine (FM 3-24) states, "effective intelligence drives effective operations. Effective operations produce information, which generates more intelligence. Similarly, ineffective or inaccurate intelligence produces ineffective operations, which produce the opposite results."[19] Moreover, it is widely accepted that Malaya is a preeminent example of a successful counter-insurgency campaign, the resonances of which are still evident in current military doctrine. Indeed, the

---

[19] US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago 2007). See AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya from April 1950 to November 1951 by General Sir Harold Briggs for the original quotation. See also Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, p. 89.

statement above from the US Army and Marine Corps counter-insurgency doctrine is, in fact, a near direct quotation from the Briggs' Plan. Given the perceived impact that Malaya makes upon current doctrine, it would therefore be logical to conclude that an accurate understanding of the Malayan experience of managing intelligence would be at the heart of current counter-insurgency doctrine.

There are two fundamental problems with this logic, however. The first, as already has been demonstrated, is that the historical record concerning intelligence during the Emergency has required wholesale correction. This suggests that current doctrine is based upon incorrect assumptions. Second, current counter-insurgency doctrine actually pays scant attention to the problem of managing intelligence within such a campaign. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider fully the validity of contemporary British counter-insurgency doctrine, it is hoped that reassessment of the historical record presented above, in conjunction with a brief assessment of the implications for doctrine, may encourage other scholars to do so.

The Briggs Plan is arguably the seminal work in defining post-war counter-insurgency theory.[20] It will be recalled that General Briggs, in his capacity as Director of Intelligence, planned to dominate the populated areas to build up a feeling of security; to break-up the insurgents' physical links with the Chinese community, depriving them of supplies and information; and force them to attack in unfavourable situations. In aftermath of the Emergency, Robert Thompson, an Army officer on the staff both of General Sir Harold Briggs and General Sir Gerald Templer, wrote a counter-insurgency manual based on his experiences in Malaya.[21] *Defeating Communist Insurgency* proved to be an enduring work and continues to inform the counter-insurgency doctrine of the Britain and the United States. Thompson outlined five key principles

---

[20] A number of commentators trace the origins of Britain's counter-insurgency theory back to General Callwell's *Small Wars* (1898) and Charles Gywnn's *Imperial Policing* (1934). For a broader discussion of Britain's counterinsurgency theory see A. Alderson, "Britain", T. Rid & T. Keaney (eds), *Understanding Counterinsurgency – Doctrine, operations and challenges* (Oxon 2010), pp. 28-45; D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency – Exposing the myths of New Way of War* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 246-268; I Beckett, "The historiography of insurgency", R. Rich & I Duyvesteyn (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, pp. 23-31.
[21] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.

for defeating an insurgency: that the government must have a clear political aim; that it must function in accordance with the law; that it must have a plan; that it must give priority to defeating political subversion; and that a government must secure its base area first.[22] General Sir Frank Kitson, who served in the emergencies in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus, developed similar ideas.[23] He stressed the need for good coordinating machinery; the creation of a political atmosphere within which measures taken by the government will be will received; that the campaign must be conducted within the law; and that their must be an effective intelligence organisation. Thomas Mockaitis further developed this strand of counter-insurgency theory in a broad survey of British experience of small wars between 1919-60.[24] He concluded success in these campaigns was based upon the use of minimum force, the winning of hearts and minds, and civil-military co-operation. Taken together, these works form the bedrock of classic counterinsurgency theory.

Classic counterinsurgency theory, in particular the example of Malaya, proved highly significant in the rewriting in 2007 of the US Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine as embodied in FM3-24.[25] One of the key authors of FM3-24 was John Nagl whose PhD topic was a comparison of British experiences in Malaya with those of the United States in Vietnam. His thesis was later published as the influential *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife.*[26] The manual, which provided the conceptual foundations for General David Paetraeus' surge in Iraq and his subsequent revision of the campaign in Afghanistan, is fundamentally a restatement of classic counter-insurgency theory, with a particular focus on 'hearts and minds.'[27] The influence of Malaya on FM 3-24 is clear throughout – despite being an operational manual, the authors even felt it important to include a two-page case study on role of

---

[22] Ibid., pp. 50-62.

[23] F. Kitson, *Gangs and Counter-gangs* (London 1960); Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations – Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London 1971); Kitson, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977).

[24] T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60* (London 1990).

[25] US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.

[26] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*.

[27] See T. Ricks, *The Gamble* (London 2009); P. Broadwell, *All In – The Education of David Petraeus* (London 2012); F. Kaplan, *The Insurgents (New York 2013).*

policing during the Emergency. [28] Indeed, the manual states, "at its core, COIN [counter-insurgency] is a struggle for the population's support." This is a statement that could easily have been made by Briggs, Templer, Thompson, or Kitson. Although less publicised and therefore less discussed, the current British counter-insurgency doctrine is also resolutely 'population-centric' and clearly has the same ideological heritage as its American counterpart. [29]

Many commentators argue that classic counterinsurgency theory continues to remain relevant in the contemporary, post-Iraq and Afghanistan context. For instance, Warren Chin suggests the "British experience in Iraq demonstrates that failure was not due to an obsolete doctrine but happened because the British never implemented a proper counterinsurgency strategy."[30] Similarly Ian Rigden has concluded that "the whole of Great Britain's colonial and post-colonial counter-insurgency experience is relevant and yields 16 premises that, taken together, constitute a theory that outlines how success can be pursued and when success may no longer be possible when countering an insurgency."[31] Moreover, David Ucko has posited that Malaya continues to offer "a useful and valuable case study in the successful practical implementation of time tested counter-insurgency principles."[32] Although FM 3-24 is being revised at the time of writing, classical counter-insurgency theory, and thus Malaya, remains at the centre of both current British and American doctrine.

However, perhaps unsurprisingly given the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, others have questioned the validity of classical counterinsurgency theory. In particular, the

---

[28] Gian Gentile, an ardent critic of FM 3-24, argues that Malaya formed the "historical bedrock" upon which contemporary counter-insurgency doctrine is based. See G. Gentile, *Wrong Turn – America's Deadly Embrace of Counter*-insurgency (New York 2013), pp. 12, 25, & 36.

[29] British Army Field Manual, Volume 1, Part 10, Countering Insurgency. Accessed on 15 July 2015, via http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_11_09_Army_manual.pdf

[30] W. Chin, "Why did It all Go Wrong – Reassessing British Counterinsurgency in Iraq", *Strategic Studies Quarterly,* Winter 2008, p. 133.

[31] I. Rigden, *The British Approach to Counter-insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges,* Strategic Research Project – US Army War College, abstract. See also D. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story", *Defence Studies,* 10: 1-2 (March-June 2010), pp. 13-39.

[32] D. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story", *Defence Studies*, 10: 1-2 (March – June 2010), p. 36.

recent raft of revisionist accounts of Britain's conduct during her wars of decolonisation, prompted by the court cases brought against the government by the relatives of those killed by the Scots Guards at Batang Kali in Malaya and by former Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya, sit uncomfortably with the principles articulated by Robert Thompson, Frank Kitson and Thomas Mockaitis. [33] This implies that the real character of the Emergency was one of 'counter-terror' rather than 'hearts and minds', something which classical counter-insurgent theorists, not least the authors of FM 3-24, have subsequently chosen to ignore. Indeed, Robert Egnell has suggested, "the dominant narrative of British counterinsurgency experience has…been criticized as empirically weak and subjective over the last few years."[34]

A number of contemporary counter-insurgents, most notably Gian Gentile, have joined revisionist academics in questioning the validity of the lessons drawn from the Emergency. This appears to have orginated, at least in part, in the reaction against Brigadier Aylwin-Foster's fierce critique of the United States management of the 'Phase IV' of Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, in which he re-emphasised the traditional British theory of counter-insurgency, much of which was drawn from the Malayan campaign.[35] Unfortunately, fortune was soon to reveal that the British performance in Basra also appeared not to encompass the lessons from previous counter-insurgency campaigns (although, of course, there is an argument which suggests that neither Basra nor Helmand were orthodox insurgencies). This appears, however, not to have deflected staff officers from clinging on to past glories. Indeed, as Frank Ledwidge states, "no visitor to military headquarters in Iraq or, especially, Afghanistan could miss the almost compulsory mentions in presentations to guests (and indeed serving soldiers) of this jungle war, along time ago, far away and in the most different environment imaginable."[36] Indeed, some commentators have suggested that the

---

[33] See, for instance, French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67*; Hack, "Everyone lived in fear: Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5, pp. 671-699; Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949" *Journal of Strategic Studies,* 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444.

[34] R. Egnell, "Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan: what now for British counter-insurgency," *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), p. 300.

[35] N. Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations", *Military Review*, Nov – Dec 2005.

[36] F. Ledwidge, *Losing Small* Wars (2011), p. 154.

circumstances in Malaya were so unique – in particular, that the MCP did not have external support, that the British were able to use selective but highly coercive measures, and ultimately, were forced to grant independence to neuter the Communist cause – that the Emergency should never have been used as a model upon which doctrine could be based.[37]

Others have argued that the contemporary threat is so different from the post-war colonial emergencies as to make the British counter-insurgency experience in Malaya largely irrelevant. The influential theorist, David Kilcullen, is the key protagonist of this argument. He maintains that contemporary insurgents "may not be seeking to overthrow the state, may have no coherent strategy or may pursue a faith-based approach difficult to counter with traditional methods. There may be numerous competing insurgencies in one theatre, meaning that the counter-insurgency must control the overall environment rather than defeat a specific enemy."[38] Thus, Kilcullen argues, "that not only is classical COIN not the new dominant paradigm for Western intervention, but that it *should not be*…"[39]

Hence, at the time of writing, the current position is that counter-insurgency doctrine for both Britain and the United States remains founded, in large part, upon the interpretation of experiences of the Malayan Emergency. While a number of commentators consider this doctrine as fundamentally sound, it has attracted significant criticism from two camps. The first suggests that the Malayan people were repressed and coerced into submission, and that concept of 'hearts and minds' was an artificial construct, hence the current doctrine is unsound. The second argues the experiences of the colonial government in Malaya some sixty-years ago bear little resemblance to contemporary security challenges.

---

[37] Ibid., p. 159; See also, Rigden, *The British Approach to Counter-insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges,* p.10; Gentile, *Wrong Turn,* pp. 37-9.
[38] D. Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency *Redux*", *Survival*, 48: 4 (2006), pp. 111-130.
[39] Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency – The state of a controversial art," in Rich and Duyvesteyn eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, p. 128.

While these criticisms have merit, the fundamental problem with classical and neo-classical counter-insurgency theory, as by-product of the Emergency, relates to the abject lack of detailed consideration of intelligence. For all the rhetoric about the importance of intelligence to counter-insurgency, the key doctrinal publications based on the Emergency consider the issue with a surprising lack of rigour. This can be traced back to the Briggs plan, the bedrock upon which classical and neo-classical counter-insurgency is based. It will be recalled that the plan called for the creation of a "feeling complete security in the populated areas" in order to secure "a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources." The Police, via Special Branch would develop this information. The other aspects of the plan were discussed in more considerable detail, with paragraphs dedicated to the provision of additional District Officers, increasing the Police, Police wireless communications the creation of a Federal War Council, road-making, repatriation, propaganda, resettlement, and finance. However, the development of intelligence (in relation to collection, analysis or organisation) simply was not subject to similar elucidation.[40] Similarly, virtually every subsequent major review of Emergency, including Lyttelton's 1951 report and successive end of year reports give the issue of intelligence scant consideration.[41] Typical is General Bower's review of the Emergency written in 1957, in which the discussion of intelligence is limited to four small paragraphs (out of a total of 126). The first two paragraphs give a broad outline of the intelligence apparatus, as it was in 1957. The second two paragraphs suggest that Special Branch was performing admirably but that government must continue to post "really good men to Special Branch." In a document partly designed to identify lessons for future counter-insurgency campaigns, it seems almost negligent to distil the development of Malayan intelligence machine over the course of nine years into this shallow evaluation.[42]

---

[40] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya, from April 1950 to November 1951, by Sir Harold Briggs.

[41] See CAB 129/48, c (51) 26 The Situation in Malaya: a Cabinet Memorandum by Lyttelton, dated 20th November 1951; WO 216/806, Sir Rob Lockhart (Director of Operations) to Sir William Slim (CIGS), 14th January 1952; WO 208/3219, Director of Operations, Malaya, "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1954"; WO 216/885, Bourne to Harding, 3rd June 1955; WO 208/5356, Director of Operations, Malaya, "Review of the Emergency Situation in Malaya at the end of 1956".

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

This is a pattern that continues in subsequent, post Emergency, assessments of intelligence during the campaign. For instance, the collection, assessment or exploitation of intelligence does not even feature as one of Thompson's five principles of counter-insurgency.[43] The concept does, admittedly, constitute a small chapter in *Defeating Communist Insurgency* in which he highlights a number of points. Thompson first explains the need for an intelligence agency to identify and tackle a threat at the subversive stage, which is generally the precursor to a more developed campaign of insurgency. This is relatively self-evident – the longer a threat has time to mature, the harder it will be to tackle. However, Thompson does not consider *how* an intelligence agency could set about this task. He then argues that "ideally there should be just one organisation responsible for all security intelligence within the country." Thompson suggests that this organisation should be Special Branch. Clearly referring to the inter-organisational feud between the MSS and SIFE between 1946-8, he says, "if there is more than one, it is almost impossible to define the respective responsibilities of each organisation or to devise any means of co-ordinating activities." However, this is problematic for two reasons. First, in nearly all cases there is going to be more than one intelligence organisation, conceivable at least three-service intelligence organisations plus the Police. Second, in the case of Malaya, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the proposed Local Intelligence Committee, the post of Director of Intelligence, and the Federal Intelligence Committee all proved potentially viable models for the coordination intelligence – the problem was that the systems were immature and, until the second iteration of the DOI under Jack Morton, in concert with the FIC, they were implemented poorly. The final key point made by Thompson was that "the intelligence organisation, however good, must still limit its targets and not disperse its effort too widely."[44] This, really, is also self-evident. It is hard not to conclude that Thompson's consideration of intelligence, based on the Malayan experience, is cursory.

---

[43] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, pp. 50-62.
[44] Ibid., pp. 84-9.

However, Kitson gives the concept even less attention – just over two pages in *A Bunch of Five*. Nevertheless, he raises a really important question of how an intelligence agency can adjust to the demands of an incipient or fully developed insurgency. He says that

> The problem about establishing the sort organisation needed is that in normal times the requirement can best be met by a small, highly centralised and highly secure system which produces a relatively small amount of precise top-level information, whereas once an insurgent organisation builds up, the operational requirement is for a mass of lower level information which must of necessity be less reliable.[45]

Frank Kitson notes that this is a particularly difficult issue, not least because "expansion, decentralisation and contact with the outside world in the form of junior military commanders all bring in their train the possibility for the odd indiscretion."[46] This is certainly a risk that the revisionist historians such as David French, Huw Bennett, and Karl Hack believe was realised in Malaya.[47] Moreover, an influx of military officers into an existing intelligence organisation could jeopardise a country's constitutional status quo. Frustratingly, Kitson does not provide any remedies to these problems. He concludes, somewhat meekly, "somehow the government has to ensure the essential risks are accepted and necessary action is taken."[48] It is unfortunate that Kitson does not explore this issue at greater length.

Similarly, the discussion of intelligence within FM 3-24 is limited largely to operational considerations, such as pre-deployment intelligence planning, how to define the threat, and understanding different streams of intelligence available to a commander.

---

[45] Kitson, *Bunch of Five,* p. 287.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3, pp. 415-444; French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67* (Oxford 2011); Hack, "'Everyone lived in fear': Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5, pp. 671-699.

[48] Kitson, *Bunch of Five,* p. 288. Thomas Mockaitis does consider briefly the relationship between the use of force and intelligence but, generally, *British Counterinsurgency 1960-60,* does not consider the concept in any more detail than Thompson or Kitson.

The manual does suggest that intelligence collaboration is important to "organize the collection and analysis actions of various units and organizations into a coherent, mutually supportive intelligence effort."[49] And yet, the manual offers no advice or guidance on how to ensure this is done effectively. Richard Schultz and Andrea Dew for *The New York Times* highlighted this problem in a review of an early draft of FM 3-24. They noted that

> The Pentagon manual rightly insists that 'intelligence drives operations' and that 'without good intelligence, a counter-insurgent is like a blind boxer.' Yet the document provides no organizational blueprint for collecting such intelligence...the British and Israelis have blueprints for successful intelligence architecture. This is a key counterinsurgency tool that must be included in the final version of the Pentagon's counterinsurgency manual.[50]

This review is interesting for two reasons. First, it notes the deficiency in FM 3-24 in relation to intelligence. The manual "rightly focuses heavily upon understanding the cultural, religious, and social sensitivities of a host population, about the need to map potential threats, the relative merits of human versus technical forms of intelligence gathering."[51] However, there is no discussion of how officials can adapt and develop intelligence agencies to meet the demands of particular situation, how to prioritise different intelligence requirements or harmonise the different organisations which will form an intelligence apparatus. Second, and perhaps even more notable, the reviewers, suggest that Britain (and Israel) have the 'blueprints for successful intelligence architecture.' It is not clear to what blueprint the reviewers refer – certainly neither Briggs, Thompson, Kitson, or Mockaitis offer anything like a set of plans to create a intelligence apparatus suitable for a counter-insurgency campaign. Indeed, while many commentators claim to understand the Malayan Emergency, classical and neo classical counter-insurgency doctrine neither reflects accurately the

---

[49] US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 132.
[50] R. Schultz and A. Dew, "Counterinsurgency, by the Book", *The New York Times,* 7th August 2006.
[51] Ibid.

manner in which intelligence apparatus evolved in that campaign nor provides robust 'lessons', 'principles' or 'blue prints' for future counterinsurgents.

The mythical blue print for intelligence?

While the primary aim of this thesis is not to provide another set of principles for counter-insurgency, it is possible to draw some inferences about the organisation and management of an intelligence apparatus in such a campaign, based upon this revised account of the experience in Malaya.

Indicator and Warnings

It is self-evident that intelligence is the key commodity in a counter-insurgency campaign – without it the security forces will be unable to identify those intending to carry out acts of subversion or insurgency and prevent, detain or eliminate them.[52] However, as Frank Kitson suggests, it is vital to gather that intelligence as early as possible in the insurgent campaign, not least because this will often predate a government response by months, if not years. For instance, the state of Emergency in Malaya was declared only when the MCP's campaign of violence had escalated to unmanageable proportions. As has been discussed, contrary to the orthodox understanding that informed Thompson *et al*, the MSS, despite its imperfections, provided consistent warnings of the threat posed by the MCP to the security of the Federation at least eighteen months prior to the declaration of Emergency. And yet these warnings were not heeded. This was primarily because the effects of Sir Percy Sillitoe's campaign to subvert the MSS had taken effect. However, it does also appear that the dynamic between officials and the MSS was out-of-balance. Modern commentators recognise that there needs to be an equilibrium between officials requesting (or 'pulling') intelligence on certain themes or subjects from their intelligence agencies and the latter sending (or 'pushing') intelligence to the former

---

[52] Thompson, *Defeating Communist* Insurgency, p. 84; Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, p. 287; D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare – Theory and Practice*, p. 50; FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 79; Alderson, "Britain", in Rid and Keaney (eds), *Understanding Counterinsurgency – Doctrine, operations and challenges*, p. 29.

which they think might be of interest.[53] In the case of Malaya, a broad range of intelligence was 'pushed' by the MSS on a fortnightly basis to officials but there is no evidence to suggest those officials directed that process in anyway. This raises questions about the potential value they placed on security intelligence in general and, more specifically, that provided by the MSS.

Hence, perhaps the first lesson that might drawn from the Emergency is that the 'push-pull' dynamic between policy-makers and intelligence agencies needs to be balanced. This is a problem with which contemporary practitioners continue to wrestle. For instance, in January 2010 Michael Flynn, Matt Pottinger and Paul Batchelor released an influential report entitled *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*. In it they say,

> Of critical importance to the war effort is how a commander orders his or her intelligence apparatus to undertake finite collection, production, and dissemination. "If a commander does not effectively define and prioritise intelligence requirements," Marine Corps doctrine warns, "the entire effort may falter."[54]

If the push-pull dynamic is successfully balanced, the next challenge is to ensure that policy makers are prepared to accept unpalatable or unforeseen intelligence assessments, or at least work with the intelligence organisations to probe and substantiate these assessments, rather than dismiss or ignore. Of course, in the years since the end of the Emergency both practitioners and scholars have undertaken a great deal of work on cognitive bias and the relationship between intelligence providers and consumers.[55] And yet significant fault lines still occur, as exemplified in

---

[53] P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the Far East controller: Secret intelligence structure and process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

[54] M. Flynn, M. Pottinger, P. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Centre for a New American Security, January 2010), p. 23. Accessed on 6 July 2015 via www.cnas.org/files/.../AfghanIntel_**Flynn**_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf

[55] See, for instance, J. Cooper, *Curing Analytical Pathologies – Pathways to Improved Intelligence Analysis* (Centre for the Study of Intelligence 2005); A. Gendron, "Improving the IC's Analytical Performance", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence,* 25:2 (2012), pp. 420-426;

the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq debacle.[56] Even if this relationship is sound (and it is often not), a robust and imaginative set of Indications and Warnings metrics may pay dividends because at the point in which a besieged government recognises that it is under significant threat, its opponents may have already spent years quietly preparing in the shadows.[57]

Agency Adaptation

Depending upon how mature the insurgency is at the point of discovery, the existing intelligence agencies are likely to be required to change focus rapidly to meet the threat. The more mature the insurgency, the more rapidly the intelligence agencies may have to change. In the case of Malaya, the civilian elements of the intelligence apparatus struggled to make this change. Indeed, the declaration of Emergency triggered an unseemly apportioning of blame for the apparent failure to forecast the start of the Communist insurgency. Sir Edward Gent, who died in an aircraft crash on the way back to London for talks, could not defend his reputation. Col. John Dalley, who had already been subject to a significant campaign of back briefing by Sir Percy Sillitoe, was made an scape-goat and the MSS was abolished. In hindsight, the latter decision seems extraordinary. The failings that Sillitoe had highlighted over the previous twelve months were that the MSS might be operating outside Malaya and that it was not sharing intelligence with SIFE. These were issues that could easily be remedied and did not warrant the abolition of Malaya's sole intelligence service at the time it was needed the most. The folly of this decision was highlighted by the inability of the Security Service in the Far East to fill the void left by the demise of MSS and real challenges faced by the newly created Special Branch of the Federation of Malaya Police.

S. Marrin, "Intelligence Analysis Theory: Explaining and Predicting Analytical Responsibilities", *Intelligence and National Security*, 22:6 (2008), pp. 821-846; S. Marrin, "Preventing Intelligence Failures by Learning from the Past", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 17:4 (2004), pp. 655-672; C. Wastell, "Cognitive Predisposition and Intelligence Analyst Reasoning", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 23:3 (2010), pp. 449-460.

[56] Lord Butler, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London 2004).

[57] For instance, see S. Freyn, "Using Structured Methods to Improve Indicator and Warning Analysis", *Competitive Intelligence,* 15: 4 (October /December 2013), pp. 22-29.

The episode highlights the problems faced by intelligence agencies when confronted with a paradigm-changing threat, transitioning from a peacetime stance to a level of organisational activity suitable for a pseudo war. None of the civilian intelligence organisations in Malaya adapted quickly or efficiently to the demands of the emergency: the MSS did not get a chance to do so; the JIC (FE) failed to recognise the need to do so; despite Sillitoe's ambitions, SIFE simply lacked capacity to replace the MSS; Special Branch was bereft of both a presence on the ground or an effective analytical capability; the Uniformed Branch of the Police shifted quickly to a paramilitary strategy which, arguably, was necessary to halt insurgent momentum in the short-term but was entirely at odds with the need to generate intelligence in the long-term. Over time and at different rates, the MSS, JIC (FE) and SIFE left the orbit of the Emergency. This, then, left the Police alone amongst the civilian intelligence agencies to confront the MCP. However, it was not until Col Arthur Young's reforms took effect in the mid-1950s that either the Special or Uniformed Branches were able to counter the insurgent threat effectively.

In contrast to the civilian agencies, however, the military were able to adapt quickly to the demands of the Emergency. It has been shown how quickly the Army moved to establish interagency committees to coordinate local counter-insurgency efforts. Just as importantly, the RAF's decision to co-locate its forward Headquarters with Army allowed the creation of what would be known as the Joint Operations Centre, which proved to be the keystone upon which an effective theatre level intelligence apparatus was built. Similarly, the creation of JAPIC (FE) ensured that there was an effective interagency photint capacity from the earliest stages of the Emergency. A central tenet of conventional British counter-insurgency theory states that it is fundamentally a civil function. However, in relation to the intelligence effort, it was the armed services that demonstrated the institutional agility to adapt to the needs of the emergency - it was the military, not Special Branch or any of the civilian intelligence agencies that created the local and theatre-level intelligence framework that were in place throughout the Emergency.

The presumption displayed by Thompson and Kitson that future British counter-insurgency campaigns would focus upon a Special Branch is a logical function of the colonial context of the time. However, as Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, contemporary British counter-insurgency operations are unlikely to benefit from an effective, consensual-based, local Police force. This, in fact, is not unlike the situation in Malaya at least until Arthur Young's reforms began to take effect. Contemporary counter-insurgents may well benefit from considering the very significant burden this placed upon the Army and Royal Air Force 'to pick up the intelligence baton.' Such a burden not only required the military personal to work together effectively, it demanded a different mind-set. Indeed, many revisionist critics suggest that the military in Malaya did not alter its mind-set, resulting in repression. Certainly, repeating the mantra of 'hearts and minds' is not sufficient – in the future counter-insurgency campaigns, and in lieu of an effective local Police force, it is likely the military will have to become 'pseudo' Police officers to enable them to really get into and understand the community they are trying to protect.

All Source Intelligence

The Emergency was a truly a multi-agency affair: the uniform branch of the Police, the Special Branch of the Police, the Army, the RAF, and JAPIC (FE) were key actors throughout the Emergency. Moreover, the JIC (FE) and the Security Service in the guise of SIFE *should* also have been key actors but largely failed to fulfil their responsibilities and evolved away from the counterinsurgency campaign.

Despite the presence of these multiple intelligence agencies during the Emergency, commentators focus nearly entirely upon Special Branch. In reality, as this thesis has shown, it would be entirely incorrect to characterise the intelligence effort in Malaya as being solely or predominantly the affair of Special Branch. Arguably, it was the ordinary 'bobby' rather than the Special Branch detective who held the fate of Malaya in his hands – lacking a presence on the ground, particularly in relation to Chinese speakers, Special Branch depended upon their uniformed colleagues to identify sources of information from within the Chinese community. Robert Thompson suggests in theory a police force is the idea agency to counter an insurgency because

generally "the police force is a static organisation reaching out into every corner of the country and will have had long experience of close contact with the population."[58] However, in Malaya this was not the case – due to the severe dislocation during the Second World War and its aftermath, the Malayan Police did not reach into every corner the country and its experience of close contact with the population was interrupted for four years by the Japanese occupying forces. It is understandable in theory that Thompson subsequently suggested that the Army should not have any responsibility for internal security intelligence. At least in the case of Malaya, however, the Police Service wholly unprepared for the demands of insurgency and there was little option other than to use a mixture of the military and paramilitary forces to fill the void.

This placed a huge pressure on the military to assume a new character – to move from a weight of numbers and contesting for territory to decentralised forces, to contesting for the allegiance of the population until the Police were in position to take the burden. From the earliest days of the Emergency the military looked to generate operational intelligence, whether that was via the Ferret Force, the efforts the Intelligence Corps or RAF intelligence officers out on patrol with their security force colleagues, and to assess and coordinate that information via means of district level intelligence committees. Similarly the Army worked jointly with the RAF to develop aerial intelligence. Photint and visual surveillance provided an on-going and critical stream of intelligence to the security forces providing products such as up-to-date maps and detailed photographic surveys, and the capability of coordinating operations from the air and calling in airstrikes. There was, therefore, a clear desire to inject momentum into the intelligence cycle. However, it was not until the late 1950s that the Police was able to provide the Army with sufficient human intelligence to move to a more targeted method of operations. Within this context, the Emergency shows the importance of an integrated operational intelligence capacity in which *all* streams of potential information are assessed – if the government simply relied upon

---

[58] Thompson, *Defeating Communist* Insurgency, p. 85; C. Grado, *Anticipating Surprise, Analysis for Strategic Warning* (Centre for Strategic Intelligence Research, 2002); S. Khalsa, *Forecasting Terrorism – Indicators and Proven Analytic Techniques* (Oxford 2004).

the Special Branch, as Thompson retrospectively advocated, the Emergency may well have taken a very different course.

The 2010 Flynn Report suggested that information gathering in counter-insurgency differs from that in conventional warfare: "In a conventional conflict, ground units depend heavily on intelligence from higher commands to help them navigate the fog of war…information flows largely from the top down. In a counterinsurgency, the flow is (or should be) reversed."[59] This undoubtedly would be the ideal position. And yet neither Malaya nor Afghanistan presented circumstances to allow this position to develop nor, probably, will any counter-insurgency environment. Perhaps a key point from Malaya was that all forms of intelligence were critical. The flow of humint was, for large periods of the Emergency limited, which only elevated the value of other streams of intelligence. Just as important, however, was the means of networking intelligence provided by the Joint Intelligence Rooms at District and State level, the Joint Operations Centre and JAPIC/FE at a theatre level, and FIC at a Federal level.

Strategic Direction

 All these streams of information required coordination, which generated a number of intractable problems during the first six years of the Emergency. The civilian intelligence agencies in Malaya were beset by divisive inter-organisational squabbling even prior to the declaration of emergency. This was largely because until 1952 there was no one person, department or organisation able to coordinate intelligence and referee squabbles. The obvious candidate for the role was the JIC (FE), not least because its charter enshrined such duties. However, the committee was too immature and narrowly focused to recognise the need for intervention or the potential consequences if it did not. Sir Henry Gurney refused to create a Local Intelligence Committee (LIC), which may well have provided the direction and coordination that was desperately needed. While Gurney did not support the idea of a LIC, he did decide to establish the post of Director of Intelligence, partly to reform Special Branch and

---

[59] Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, p 12.

partly to coordinate the wider intelligence apparatus. However, in its initial guise under Sir William Jenkin, interagency intelligence tensions only increased.

Hence, in the eighteen months prior to the declaration of Emergency and for at least four years of the subsequent counter-insurgency campaign, there was little, if any, strategic coordination of intelligence. The bitter and highly destructive feud between the Security Service and the Malayan Security Service was not forestalled or minimised. Moreover, Sir Nicol Gray, the Police Commissioner, was unable to coordinate the efforts of the Police, Special Branch, the Army, the Royal Air Force and the Security Service. Moreover, Jenkin failed to resolve the situation – in fact he made it worse. Matters improved significantly under Jack Morton and Sir Gerald Templer but this is more attributable their strength of personality than any robust, structural, resolution to the general problem of coordinating Emergency intelligence and the particular issue of defining the relationship between the Director of Intelligence and the High Commissioner.

Much of the problem can be traced back to the process of designing Britain's post-war intelligence apparatus in the Far East. SEAC provided a poor foundation. Its interpretation of the JIC was arguably the least developed of the iterations in operation across the globe during the Second World War. Moreover, SEAC's relative lack of demand for security intelligence meant that the Counter Intelligence Combined Board provided SIFE with a limited inheritance, both in terms of conceptual a foundation or practical resources. The planning for the post-war apparatus exacerbated the situation. Although the idea of SIFE had been debated for some years, the collapse of the Japanese at the end of the Second World War caught officials off-guard and there was a pressing need to commence effective government of British territories in region as soon as possible. The result was that SIFE, the MSS and JIC (FE) were introduced quickly, with poorly defined remits. This might not have mattered had the MCP decided not to destabilise Malaya – the issues emerging from the limited remits could have been considered, debated and resolved without the pressure of an emerging insurgency. This, however, was not the case – the Emergency was declared when SIFE, the MSS, and the JIC (FE) were immature, lacking the organisation agility

to adapt quickly to the MCP challenge. The result was that rather than working in concert the MSS and SIFE were in a state of deep conflict. Moreover, the JIC (FE) was in the process of establishing itself, and simply ignored Malaya's rapid decline into conflict.

With the benefit of hindsight, the solution to this issue appears self-evident. Either the JIC (FE) had to meet the element of its charter that gave it a responsibility for coordinating the intelligence apparatus in the region or the Federation had to create a Local Intelligence Committee, chaired by a non-executive Director of Intelligence. Only in this way could a degree of strategic coordination be imposed upon the various decentralised components of Malaya's intelligence machine. It remains difficult to understand why Gurney opposed so vigorously this solution, particularly when one considers his otherwise sophisticated and perceptive understanding of the security problems with which he was confronted. The problem was not solved until 1952, when Templer created the Federal Intelligence Committee. It is near impossible to correlate with any degree of certainly the impact that the FIC had upon the counter-insurgency campaign. Nevertheless, a decrease of conflict within the Malayan core executive, a change in interagency relations from competition to dependence, and a general stability characterises the Malaya intelligence apparatus after the establishment of the FIC, which is in marked contrast with the first four years of the Emergency.

The problems experienced by the Malayan authorities in coordinating emergency intelligence highlights a problem which will inevitably be a pressing challenge in any contemporary counter-insurgency operation. The fact that the Malayan authorities took over four years to resolve this problem meant that the Emergency was severely compromised when such inter-organisation strife could be least afforded.

Final Thoughts

Far from being irrelevant to contemporary counter-insurgents, the Emergency continues to provoke discussion about its conceptual legacy and value of the perceived lessons upon which current doctrine in the United Kingdom and United

States is based. It is unfortunate that for the best part of fifty-years, through misinterpretation and well-intentioned myth-making, a skewed understanding of the development and management of intelligence has worked its way both into the historiography of the Emergency and, perhaps more importantly, into subsequent counter-insurgency theory.[60] Rather being dominated by a Special Branch which developed in a linear, whiggish, fashion, the intelligence apparatus in Malaya was broad and diffuse, with different elements developing independently and in non-linear rates. The origins of its failure to forecast the start of the insurgency were far deeper than the simple explanation that the MSS was flawed. Rather than being the defining element, Special Branch was but one of a number of organisations that subsequently fought the counter-insurgency. Moreover, it was dependent upon a Police force that was unable to serve as the 'eyes and ears' of Special Branch in any meaningful way to due to paramilitary strategy which was employed in the first four years of the Emergency. It fell to the military to 'hold the ring' until the civilian elements of the intelligence apparatus had fully adapted to the demands of counter-insurgency. This is a fundamentally different interpretation of the evolution of intelligence during the Emergency. Moreover, it leads to the conclusion that effective forecasting; the need to react proportionately when a threat is detected; the importance of truly joint intelligence operations; and effective strategic coordination are the enduring lessons from the Emergency in relation to intelligence.

General Briggs bemoaned in his plan that intelligence was 'our Achilles' heel'.[61] Despite his best efforts, it remained the counter-insurgents' 'Achilles' Heel' for the best part of the Emergency. The efforts of the Federation to tackle the Communist insurgency do not provide a blueprint or mystical formula for managing intelligence that might be used without alteration to other campaigns. The process of devising an appropriate intelligence structure suitable to produce sufficient intelligence to halt the Emergency was tortuous and prolonged. In many ways, it provides the model of

---

[60] Paul Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn advocate a similar argument in relation to 'hearts and minds'. See Rich and Duyvesteyn eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, pp. 362-3.

[61] AIR 20/7777, Report on the Emergency in Malaya, from April 1950 to November 1951, by Sir Harold Briggs.

what *not* to do. However, it is hoped that this thesis may encourage contemporary counter-insurgents to reconsider the management of intelligence during the Emergency and whether the efforts of people like Dalley, Gurney, Briggs, Templer, Young and Morton may have continued relevance in today's difficult, unconventional, security situation.

Bibliography.

Primary Sources

The Gurkha Museum, Winchester

2 Gurkha Rifles Regimental Records

2 Gurkha Rifles Documents of historical interest, Malaya 1947-49; War Diary

7 Gurkha Rifles, Diaries 1949-57

The India Office Records, London

War Staff (WS) Series Files, 1946-47

Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London

The papers of Major General Sir William Penney

The papers of Major General Sir Hugh Stockwell

The Military Intelligence Museum

Maj. L. Wilkins, Intelligence Reports, 1948-50

Capt. Woods, Narrative – Malaya to 1971

History of Int. Corps in Far East

Notes on Int Corps in S. E. Asia

The National Archives, London

Air Ministry Files

AIR/20 – Papers accumulated by the Air Historical Branch, 1874-1983

AIR/23 - Royal Air Force Overseas Commands: Reports and Correspondence, 1916-1978

AIR/24 –Operations Record Books, Commands, 1920-1982

AIR/25 - Operations Record Books, Groups, 1914-82

Cabinet Office Files.

CAB/21 - Cabinet Office and Predecessors, Registered Files, 1916-1953

CAB/34 - Miscellaneous Committees Minutes and Papers, 1945-1982

CAB/58 – Joint Intelligence Committee Memoranda, 1947-1968

CAB/129 - Cabinet Memoranda, 1945-1978

CAB/130 - Miscellaneous Committees Minutes and Papers, 1945-1980

CAB/159 - Joint Intelligence Committee Minutes, 1947-1968

CAB/163 - Joint Intelligence Committee Secretariat files, 1939-1980

CAB/176 - Joint Intelligence Committee Secretariat files, 1942-1957

Colonial Office Files

CO/537 – Confidential General and Confidential Original Correspondence, 1759-1955

CO/717 – Federated Malay States Original Correspondence, 1920-1951

CO/1022 –South East Asia Department: Original Correspondence, 1950-1956

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FCO/141 - Records of Former Colonial Administrations: Migrated Archives, 1835-2012

FO/371 – Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966

Ministry of Defence Files

DEFE/4 – Chiefs of Staff Committee Minutes, 1947-1978

DEFE/5 - Chiefs of Staff Committee Memoranda, 1947-1977

DEFE/11 - Chiefs of Staff Committee Registered Files, 1946-1983

Security Service Files

KV/4 – Policy (Pol F Series) Files, 1909-1963

War Office Files.

WO/106 – Director of Military Operations and Military Intelligence, and predecessors: Correspondence and Papers, 1837 – 1962

WO/203 – South East Asia Command: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War, 1932 – 1949

WO/204 – Allied Forces, Mediterranean Theatre: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War, 1941 – 1948

WO/208 - Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, and Director of Military Intelligence: files, 1917 – 1974

WO/216 – Officer of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff: Papers, 1935-1964

WO/268 – Far East Land Forces: Quarterly Historical Reports, 1946-1966

WO/291 – Military Operational Research Unit, successors and related bodies: Reports and Papers, 1941-1983

Rhodes House, Oxford.

The papers of Lt. Col. John Dalley

The papers of Col. Arthur Young

Secondary Sources

A. Alderson, "Britain", in T. Rid and T. Keaney (eds), *Understanding Counterinsurgency – doctrine, operations and challenges* (London 2010).

R. Aldrich, "Secret Intelligence for a post-war world: reshaping the British Intelligence Committee, 1944-51", in R. Aldrich (ed.), *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War 1945-51* (Cambridge 1992).

------------, "Britain's Secret Intelligence Service in Asia during the Second World War", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (Feb 1998), pp. 179-217.

------------, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan – Politics, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge 2000).

------------, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London 2006).

------------, *GCHQ* (London 2011).

C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5* (London 2010).

R. Arditti & P. Davies, *"*Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946-8", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43: 2 (2015), pp. 292-316.

R. Arditti, "Security Intelligence in the Middle East (SIME): Joint Security Intelligence Operations in the Middle East, c. 1939-58", *Intelligence and National Security*, published online, 5 May 2015.

-------------, "The View from Above: How the Royal Air Force provided a strategic vision for operational intelligence during the Malayan Emergency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 26: 5 (2015), pp. 762-786.

N. Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations"*, Military Review*, Nov – Dec 2005.

J. Bailey, R. Iron and H. Strachan (eds), *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham 2013).

M. Banton, "Destroy? 'Migrate'? Conceal? British Strategies for the Disposal of Sensitive Records of Colonial Administrations at Independence", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40: 2 (June 2012), pp. 321-335.

C. Bayly and T. Harper, *Forgotten Wars – the end of Britain's Asian Empire* (London 2008).

I. Beckett, "British counter-insurgency a historiographical reflection", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 781-798.

H. Bennett, "'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 415-444.

M. Bloch, *The historian's craft* (1992).

D. Branch, "Footprints in the sand: British colonial counter-insurgency and the war in Iraq", *Politics and Society*, 38: 1 (2010), pp. 15-34.

P. Broadwell, *All In - The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York 2012).

J-P Brodeur, "High Policing and Low Policing: Remarks about the Policing of Political Activities", *Social Problems*, 30: 5 Thematic Issue on Justice (June 1983), pp. 507-520.

J. Burgress, "Lincolns – 100 Squadron Malaya 1950", *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal*, 21 (2000), pp. 5-58.

M. Burton, "The Malayan Emergency: A Subaltern's View", *Asian Affairs*, 42: 2 (2011), pp. 251-260.

Lord Butler, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London 2004).

M. Calvert, *Fighting Mad – One Man's Guerrilla War* (London 1964).

A. Campbell, Jungle Green (London, 1953).

E. Carr, *What is History?* (London 2001).

S. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-insurgency 1944-1960* (London 1995).

D. Charters, "Counter-insurgency intelligence: The Evolution of British Theory and Practice", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 29 (2009).

Cheah Boon Kheng, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 22: 2 (September 1991), pp. 427-430.

C. C. Chin & K. Hack (eds), *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party* (Singapore 2004).

W. Chin, "Why did It all Go Wrong – Reassessing British Counterinsurgency in Iraq", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2008.

W. Chin, "From Belfast to Lashkar Gar Via Basra – British counter-insurgency today" in R. Rich and I. Duyvesteyn, *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (Oxon 2014), p. 276.

Chin Peng, *Alias Chin Peng – My Side of History* (Singapore 2003).

J. Chynoweth, *Hunting Terrorists in the Jungle* (Stroud 2007).

J. Cloake, *Templer – Tiger of Malaya* (London 1985).

R. Clutterbuck, *The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-60* (London 1966).

-------------------, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945-1963* (London 1973).

-------------------, *The Long Long War – The Emergency in Malaya*, (Michigan 1966).

-------------------, "Review of The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60", *Modern Asian Studies*, 11: 1 (1977), pp. 149-152.

L. Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945-48)", *Intelligence and National Security*, 18:3 (2003), pp. 128-153.

--------------, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60 – The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore 2008).

J. Cooper, *Curing Analytical Pathologies – Pathways to Improved Intelligence Analysis* (Centre for the Study of Intelligence 2005).

R. Cormac, "Organising Intelligence: An Introduction to the 1955 Report on Colonial Security", *Intelligence and National Security*, 25: 6 (2010), pp. 800-22.

--------------, "A Whitehall 'Showdown'?: Colonial Office – Joint Intelligence Committee Relations in the Mid-1950s", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 2 (June 2011), pp. 249-67.

--------------, *Finding a Role: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Counterinsurgency at the end of Empire*, PhD Thesis, King's College London, 2011.

--------------, *Confronting the Colonies – British Intelligence and Counterinsurgency* (London 2013).

J. Corum and W. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars – Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (London 2003).

P. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy – How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World* (London 2002).

J. Curry, *The Security Service 1908–1945: The Official History* (London 1999).

P. Davies, "The SIS Singapore station and the role of the Far East controller: Secret intelligence structure and process in post-war colonial administration", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

------------, *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London 2005).

------------, "Imagery in the UK: Britain's troubled imagery intelligence architecture", *Review of International Studies*, 35: 4 (2009), p. 957-969.

------------, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States, Volume 2: Evolution of the UK Intelligence Community* (Santa Barbara 2012).

P. Deery, "The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34: 2 (June 2003), pp. 231-247.

-----------, "Britain's Asian Cold War?", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 9: 1 (Winter 2007), pp. 29-54.

P. Dixon, "'Hearts and Minds'? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 353-381.

J. Durkin, *Malayan Scouts SAS – A memoir of the Malayan Emergency, 1951* (Stroud 2011).

R. Egnell, "Lessons from Helmand, Afghanistan: what now for British counter-insurgency," *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), pp. 297-315.

C. Elkins, "Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire and the High Court of Justice", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39: 5 (2011), pp. 731-748.

R. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London 2000).

Christopher Felix, *The Spy and his Masters* (London 1963).

D. French, *The British Way in Counter-insurgency 1945-67* (Oxford 2011).

-------------, "Nasty not nice: British counter-insurgency doctrine and practice, 1945-67", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 744-761.

S. Freyn, "Using Structured Methods to Improve Indicator and Warning Analysis", *Competitive Intelligence,* 15: 4 (October /December 2013), pp. 22-29.

J. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History* (Oxford 2002).

D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency warfare – Theory and Practice* (London 2006).

M. Goodman, "Learning to Walk: The Origins of the UK's Joint Intelligence Committee", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, 21: 1 (2007), pp. 40-56.

------------------, *The Official History of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Volume 1* (Oxford 2014).

B. Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame – Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke 2011).

K. Hack, "British Intelligence and Counter-Insurgency in the Era of Decolonisation: The Example of Malaya", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 124-155.

----------, "'Iron Claws on Malaya': The Historiography of the Malaya Emergency", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 30: 1 (March 1999).

----------, "British and Communist Crises in Malaya: A Response to Anthony Short", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31: 2 (September 2000).

----------, "Corpses, prisoners of war and captured documents: British and Communist narratives of the Malayan Emergency, and the dynamics of intelligence transformation", Intelligence and National Security, 14: 4 (2008).

----------, "The Malayan Emergency as Counter-Insurgency Paradigm", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32: 3 (2009), pp. 383-414.

----------, "Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40: 3 (October 2009), pp. 471-496.

----------, "'Everyone lived in fear': Malaya and the British way of counter-insurgency", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23: 4-5 (2012), pp. 671-699.

J. Hamby, "Civil-Military Operations: Joint Doctrine and the Malayan Emergency", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn 2002, pp. 54-61.

W. Hayter, *A Double Life – The Memoirs of Sir William Hayter* (London 1974).

H. Hembry, *Malayan Spymaster* (Singapore 2011).

M. Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge, 1996).

F. Hinsley, British Intelligence in the Second World War, Volume 1 (London 1979).

F. Hinsley and C. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War Volume Four: Security and Counterintelligence* (London 1990).

A. Hoe & E. Morris, *Re-enter the SAS* (London 1994).

F. Hoffmman, "Neo-Classical Counterinsurgency", *Parameters* (Summer 2007), pp. 71-87.

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

S. Hurst, "Colonel Gray and the armoured cars: The Malayan police 1948-1952", Monash Asia Institute, Working Paper 119, 2003.

A. Gendron, "Improving the IC's Analytical Performance", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence,* 25:2 (2012), pp. 420-426.

G. Gentile, *Wrong Turn – America's Deadly Embrace of Counter*-insurgency (New York 2013).

D. Jones & M. Smith, "Whose Hearts and Whose Minds? The Curious Case of Global Counter-Insurgency", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33:1 (2010), pp. 81-121.

D. Jones, "Empire of Secrets by Calder Watson", *The Telegraph*, 30 January 2013.

T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS, 1945-1952 – A Special Type of Warfare* (Oxon 2001).

F. Kaplan, *The Insurgents (New York 2013).*

R. Kershaw, Review of *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya 1948-1960* by Anthony Short, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 52: 2 (April 1976), p. 309.

D. Kilcullen, "Counterinsurgency Redux", *Survival,* 48: 4 (2006), pp. 111-130.

J. Kiszely, "The British Army and Thinking About the Operational Level", J. Bailey, R. Iron & H. Strachan (eds), *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (2013).

F. Kitson, *Gangs and Counter-gangs* (London 1960).

-----------, *Low Intensity Operations – Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London 1971).

-----------, *Bunch of Five* (London 1977).

R. Komer, *Organisation of A Successful Counterinsurgency* (Rand 1972).

W. Ladwig, "Managing Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Malaya", *Military Review*, May to June 2007, pp. 56-66.

W. Laqueur, *World of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence* (London 1985)

F. Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars* (London 2011).

M. Leifer, Review of *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* by Richard Clutterbuck, *International Affairs,* 43: 4 (October 1967), pp. 790-791.

C. Lockard, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 49: 3 (August 1990).

O. Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London 1962).

D. Mackay, *The Domino that Stood – The Malayan Emergency 1948-60* (London 1997).

W. Magan, *Middle Eastern Approaches – Experiences and Travels of an Intelligence Officer 1939-1948* (Norwich 2001).

S. Marrin, "Intelligence Analysis Theory: Explaining and Predicting Analytical Responsibilities", *Intelligence and National Security*, 22:6 (2008), pp. 821-846.

-------------, "Preventing Intelligence Failures by Learning from the Past", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 17:4 (2004), pp. 655-672.

J. Mc Alister, "Review of Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam", *American Political Science Review*, 61: 3 (September 1967), pp. 773-775.

G. Means, "Review of Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-60 by Richard Stubbs", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 23: 4 (December 1990), pp. 813-14.

F. Mellersh, "The Campaign against the Terrorists in Malaya", *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, 96: 583 (1951).

T. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60* (London 1990).

J. Moran, Spearhead in Malaya (London 1959).

A. Mumford and C. Kennedy-Pipe, "Unnecessary or Unsung? The Strategic Role of Air Power in Britain's Colonial Counter-Insurgencies", in J. Hayward (ed.), *Air Power, Insurgency and the 'War on Terror'* (Cranwell 2009), pp. 63-78.

A. Mumford, "Sir Robert Thompson's lessons for Iraq: bringing the "basic principles of counter insurgency" into the 21st century", *Defence Studies*, vol. 10 (2010), pp. 177-94.

J. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago 2002).

N. Parton, "Air Power and Insurgency: Early RAF Doctrine", J. Hayward (ed), *Air Power, Insurgency and the 'War on Terror'* (Cranwell 2009), pp. 29-42.

T. Pocock, *Fighting General – The Public and Private Campaigns of General Sir Walter Walker* (London 1973).

R. Popplewell "Lacking Intelligence: Some reflections on recent approaches to British counter-insurgency, 1900-1960," *Intelligence and National Security*, 10:2 (April 1995), pp. 336-52.

D. Porch, *Counterinsurgency – Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge 2013).

M. Postgate, *Operation Firedog: Air Support in the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (London 1992).

K. Ramakrishna, "Content, credibility and content: Propaganda government surrender policy and the Malaya Communist terrorist mass surrenders of 1958", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14: 4 (1999), pp. 242-266.

---------------------, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: the impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952-54)", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 32: 1 (February 2001), pp. 79-92.

---------------------, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-58* (London 2001).

---------------------, "'Bribing the Reds to Give Up': Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency", *War in History*, 9: 3, (2002), pp. 332-353

---------------------, Review of *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency*, *Pacific Affairs*, 82:3 (2009).

T. Ricks, *The Gamble* (New York 2009).

I. Rigden, *The British Approach to Counter-insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges*, Strategic Research Project – US Army War College (2008).

P. Rich and I. Duyvesteyn eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (Oxon 2014).

S. Ritchie, *The RAF, Small Wars and Insurgencies: Late Colonial Operations, 1945-1975* (Air Historical Branch, 2011).

M. Robinson, "Offensive Air Operations, Beaufighter / Brigand", *Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal*, 21 (2000).

C. Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald – Bringing an End to Empire* (Liverpool 1995).

M. Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya* (Stroud 2007).

A. Short, The Communist Insurrection in Malaya (London 1975).

----------, "Letter from Short", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31: 2 (September 2000).

----------, "The Malayan Emergency and the Batang Kali Incident", *Asian Affairs*, 41; 3 (2010).

A. Shulsky & G. Schmitt, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Warfare* (Washington 2002).

G. Sinclair, *At the end of the line – Colonial policing and the imperial endgame 1945-80* (Manchester 2006).

-------------, "'The Sharp End of the Intelligence Machine': the rise of the Malayan Police Special Branch 1948-1955", *Intelligence and National Security*, 26:4 (2011), pp. 465-67.

K. Slater, "Air Operations in Malaya", *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, 102:607 (1957).

S. Smith, "General Templer and counter-insurgency in Malaya: hearts and minds, intelligence and propaganda", *Intelligence and National Security*, 16:3 (2001), pp. 60-78.

B. Stewart, "Winning in Malaya: An intelligence success story", *Intelligence and National Security*, 14:4 (1999), pp. 267-283.

A. Stockwell, "British imperial policy and decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13:1, October 1984, pp. 68-87.

----------------, "Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948-60: communism, communalism, and decolonisation", in D. Anderson & D. Killingray eds., *Policing and Decolonisation: politics, nationalism and the police* (Manchester 1992), pp. 105-126.

----------------, "'A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow the Government in Malaya?' The Origins of the Malayan Emergency", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21: 3 (Sept. 1993), pp. 66-88.

----------------, "Chin Peng and the Struggle for Malaya", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 16: 3 (2006).

----------------, Review of *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* by Leon Comber, *Asian Affairs*, 40: 3 (2009), pp. 478-9.

H. Strachan, *The Direction of War – Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge 2013), pp. 26-46.

K. Strong, *Men of Intelligence* (London 1970).

R. Stubbs, Review of "The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60", *Pacific Affairs*, 49: 4 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 742-744.

R. Sunderland, *Antiguerrilla Intelligence in Malaya, 1948-1960* (Rand 1964).

------------------, *Organising Counterinsurgency in Malaya* (Rand 1964).

------------------, *Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-60* (Rand 1964).

------------------, *Resettlement and Food Control in Malaya* (Rand 1964).

------------------, *Winning the Hearts and Minds of the People in Malaya* (Rand 1964).

R. Taylor, Review of *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* by Leon Comber, *Asian Studies Review*, 35: 1, p. 117.

R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam* (London 1966).

R. Thompson, *Make for the Hills* (London 1989).

D. Ucko, "The Malayan Emergency: The Legacy and Relevance of a Counter-Insurgency Success Story", *Defence Studies*, 10: 01-02 (2010), pp. 13-39.

D. Ukco and R. Egnell, "Options for Avoiding Counterinsurgencies", *Parameters*, 44: 1 (Spring 2014).

US Army & Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago 2007).

C. Walton, *Empire of Secrets* (London 2013).

G. Warner, *From Auster to Apache: The History of 656 Squadron RAF/AAC 1942-2012* (Barnsley 2013).

C. Wastell, "Cognitive Predisposition and Intelligence Analyst Reasoning", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 23:3 (2010), pp. 449-460.

C. Wolf, Review of *The Long Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* by Richard Clutterbuck, *International Journal*, 22: 4, (Autumn 1967), pp. 683-685.

C. Woodhouse, "Review of Defeating Communist Insurgency – Experience from Malaya and Vietnam'", *International Affairs*, 43: 1 (1967).

Yuen Yuet Leng, *Nation Before Self – And values that do not die* (Kuala Lumpur 2008).

P. Ziegler, Mountbatten – The Official Biography (London 1985).