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Colonel Gray and the armoured cars:

The Malayan police 1948–1952

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Contents

A note on the writer

Steve Hurst was born in Egypt in 1932 and educated in England. Following training as an art student at Oxford he served in Malaya with GS (Intelligence) attached to the Federation Malaya Police from 1953 to 1955. Returning to England he was employed by the Admiralty, and later in the motor engineering industry, while working towards a commission in the Intelligence Corps TA. He studied at Goldsmiths College University of London, then taught in London, Ireland and the USA, including Chelsea School of Art, and the University of Ulster at Belfast. Between 1987 and 2000 he worked as a technical training adviser and organiser of technical courses for a variety of Third World development NGOs in Africa, Asia and South America. In 1998 he gained an MA in modern history at Royal Holloway College University of London, specialising in the history of de-colonisation in Southeast Asia. Hurst lives in Oxfordshire, on the edge of the Cotswold hills. He is married with two daughters, one living in Beijing.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a sequel to my Master of Arts dissertation, September 1999, Department of Modern History, Royal Holloway College, University of London. Towards the end of the research period Neal Acherson, who served in Malaya with the Royal Marines, put me in contact with retired British officers of the Federation of Malaya Police through the secretary of RMPFOA, Paddy Giles and the editor of the RMPFOA magazine, Simon Hutchinson. After the dissertation was completed, Sir Richard Catling was kind enough to give me lunch and advise me on various points concerning the Commissioner, Colonel Nicol Gray, and the condition of the Force when he and Gray arrived from Palestine in 1948. Every former officer of Malayan Police that I interviewed believed that the so-called 'Armoured car crisis' was exaggerated by the press out of all proportion to its importance.

My own experience of the Malayan Emergency came after Gray left Kuala Lumpur, when I was at a very junior level, so I am immensely grateful for the advice and information that these officers gave me and for their most generous hospitality. John Gullick and Brian Stewart of the Malayan Civil Service gave me much wise advice on the project. Leon Comber, formerly of Special Branch of the Malayan Police and now at Monash University, has both advised and encouraged the completion of my project. Lastly, and certainly not least, I want to thank my tutor at Royal Holloway University of London, Professor Tony Stockwell, not only for his immense store of knowledge about the politics of Malaya and Malaysia, but for his wise and calm advice at moments when the dissertation threatened to expand to a Tolstoyan epic.

Introduction

Two years after the surrender of Japan and the withdrawal of the Imperial Japanese Army, Malaya did not in any way resemble the prosperous and pleasant land that it had been before the war and that Malaysia is today. The muddle, devastation and inter-racial strife left by the Japanese administration created problems hard to solve by the most energetic and efficient of administrators. The great majority of British civil servants and police had just been released from Japanese prison-camps. They were exhausted and half-starved; many were ill. Few could work well with the 'newcomers', the young and often inexperienced officers of the BMA. The idealistic but ill-advised Malayan Union experiment alienated both the Malay rulers and the *Ryat*, while the reversal of colonial office policy and imposition of the Malayan Federation offended both the Chinese and Indian minorities (see Allen 1967; Gullick 1993:98; Stockwell 1979). Agriculture and communications along the coastal strip were neglected or seriously damaged, while the opportunism and hatred generated by war and occupation led to banditry and lawlessness along the jungle-covered spine of the peninsular. Rubber estates suffered *Hartals*, arson and destruction of estate property. Violence and intimidation of labour by well armed gangs, sometimes in uniform, increased at an alarming rate. Planters organisations, tin miners, the *Straits Times* and *Malay Mail*, accused the Commissioner of Police, HB Langworthy of failing to protect the public from growing disorder, while an editorial in the *Straits Times* challenged the High Commissioner, Sir Edward Gent, to 'Govern or Get Out'.

On 16 June 1948 three English planters and a Chinese overseer were murdered by a heavily armed gang near Sungei Siput. At the same time a Chinese estate official was murdered in Johore. Sir Edward Gent declared a state of Emergency in the Sungei Siput district of Perak and in parts of Johore State. The next day he extended the Emergency regulations throughout Malaya. The majority of the former guerrilla fighters of the disbanded MPAJA escaped to prepared positions in the jungle. Within days the re-titled Communist force[1] mounted planned and well organised attacks on rubber estate buildings, tin mines, road and rail transport and isolated police posts. The small scale jungle war, known as the 'Emergency' had begun and it would continue for 12 years until lack of food and supplies forced the Communist army to retreat over the border into southern Thailand.

Rich in rubber and tin, Malaya was one of the few states administered by Britain through the post-war period that showed a profit. The previous year British forces and administration withdrew from India. Burma too gained independence. The Federation of Malaya was a different case altogether. Despite a general anti-colonial and pro-independence ideology, the post-war Labour Government had no choice but to hold on to Malaya. There were several reasons for this decision. Firstly rubber and tin were both commodities that the United States needed to import, which gave the British Empire much needed dollar exchange. Impoverished and practically bankrupt by the cost of two world wars and maintaining large armies, navy and airforce in the Empire after 1945, the last thing the British Labour government needed was an expensive war in the Far East. But Clement Attlee was a shrewd and pragmatic Prime Minister. The peninsula of Malaya and the island of Singapore were features that had great importance strategically as the Cold War in Europe changed to an outbreak of small hot wars in Asia. The attitude of the United States towards colonial rule in Southeast Asia was ambiguous. Hostile to the Dutch in Indonesia and initially disapproving of both the French in Indo-China and the British in Malaya, official American opinion gradually shifted

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[1] The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) was the military arm of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM, more usually titled MCP in British documents of the period). In June 1948, and for a few months only, the guerrilla organisation was re-titled the Malayan Peoples Anti-British Army (MPABA) before the Central Committee of the CPM settled on the title Malayan Races Liberation Army or MRLA, which it retains to this day. The civilian arm of the CPM's armed force was the 'Min Yuen' (or 'Anti-enemy backing-up force'), a subversive highly effective civilian organisation for espionage, intimidation and food gathering. The Min Yuen worked along the jungle edge and among the Chinese quarters of villages and small towns throughout Malaya.

through the 1950s. The visit of Vice President Nixon, in October 1953, put the seal of US approval on the British struggle to prevent Malaya falling within the orbit of Communist China.

Lastly came the emotional, or pride, factor which, though unacknowledged, was as important as these more practical considerations in convincing the Attlee government that it must defend Malaya against a Communist insurrection. This was the humiliating defeat of British, Australian and Indian troops by the Japanese only six years earlier. British pride and British public opinion would not tolerate another defeat in the same place.

Attlee has been criticised for delaying the despatch of troops to contain the insurrection, but one has to point out that movement of large numbers of men with their weapons and equipment, before the days of routine air-trooping, was no easy or rapid matter. Through the mid-1940s and into the 1950s the majority of soldiers and airmen travelled by sea or by train. A battalion embarking at Liverpool or Southampton would take from four to five weeks to reach Singapore. The War Office despatched a battalion of the Inniskilling Fusiliers from Hong Kong and embarked the Brigade of Guards from Britain. This was unprecedented in peace-time. More to the point of this study, the British government recruited officers of the former Indian police, and officers from Hong Kong, to reinforce the hard-pressed and ill-armed force in Malaya. But the bulk of the reinforcements came from the Middle East. The Colonial Office recruited 500 former officers and sergeants of the Palestine police and sent them by air to Malaya under the command of the Commissioner of the Malayan Police, Colonel William Nicol Gray (the former Inspector General of Palestine Police). The impact of these 'Newcomers' on the pre-war British Malayan Police is part of the controversy surrounding Gray's term as Commisioner and is described in detail later.

The outbreak of the communist insurrection in mid-1948 found the Malayan police ill-prepared to meet it. The force was trained to meet pre-war conditions and to some extent had adapted to meet the increase in crime and civil disorder that followed the Japanese occupation. It was not equipped, armed or trained to fight a war against an experienced, well-trained and, initially, well-armed guerrilla force in the cultivation, the villages or along the jungle edge.

The majority of accounts of the Malayan Emergency describe the newly appointed Commissioner of Police, Nicol Gray, as 'a controversial figure'. To British former colonial police officers who served under his command his name can provoke bitter arguments and expose factions in the officer corps to this day. William Nicol Gray came of a farming family on the Scottish border and trained as a land surveyor. In 1939 he enlisted in the ranks of the Royal Marines. He was commissioned, and fought in North Africa and on the Mediterranean. He was rapidly promoted until by 1945 he reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Gray was awarded a bar to his DSO while commanding Number 45 Commando at the crossing of the Rhine. As Inspector General of Palestine Police 1946–48 he was awarded the CMG. Gray was a larger than life officer whose faults matched his virtues in scale. He was an officer who made both loyal friends and ferocious enemies and it is not too melodramatic to say that the latter pursued him to the grave.

One of many accusations against Gray was that he failed to recruit Chinese officers into the uniformed branches of the police. This was true, but it was also true of every other commissioner. Professor Stockwell points out that the police were largely Malay, while both the MRLA and the civilians that they oppressed were mostly Chinese (Stockwell 1992a). During the initial stage of the struggle the CPM proclaimed its multi-racial base. Within the year the Indian communists had been arrested, killed or surrendered. The minority of Malays in the jungle lasted a little longer but by 1950 the MRLA was almost exclusively a Chinese force. As for the Chinese community as a whole, even Chin Peng admitted that the majority were hostile, or at best indifferent to the aims of the CPM. Shortly before his death, Sir Henry Gurney lost his temper, accusing the Chinese community of sitting on the fence. Fence-sitting was a natural posture when one considers the suffering of the Chinese squatters and middle class alike through the 1940s. Throughout the Emergency period the worst of the communist atrocities were inflicted on Chinese squatters and Indian rubber-tappers,

possibly because the CPM expected support from those living in miserable conditions and were incensed when the poor did not respond.

As for Malay political inclinations, prior to the outbreak of the insurrection police intelligence officers like John Dalley viewed pan-Malay–Indonesian nationalism as a greater threat than either the KMT or the CPM. There were a few tentative approaches by the CPM to Malay nationalist organisations between 1945 and 1948 but these ceased when the Emergency began and Malay police were killed or wounded by Chinese guerrilla gangs. To portray the communist, largely Chinese, insurrection as an 'independence struggle' is incorrect.

The Malayan Emergency inspired an unusual number of contemporary books, both fiction and autobiography, most of them written by soldiers, and the sheer volume of works gives a misleading impression.[2] In fact the police played the crucial role throughout the Emergency and paid for it in a casualty rate, on average, three times higher than the army's. Even so formidable a figure as Templer had to concede that the army should act 'in aid of civil power' and, much as successive GOCs disliked it, the army remained subordinate to the police throughout the Emergency period.[3]

Gray and his force of officers and sergeants were praised as saviours by the expatriate community when they arrived from Palestine. No group welcomed their presence more fervently than the planters, whose life depended on the resolute and professional defence of the estates in their charge. And yet within three years Gray was dismissed by the newly-elected Conservative government, represented by its Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton, under the influence as much by the planters organisations and commercial lobby as the 'Old Malayans' (see Lyttelton 1962; Short 2000:335–36). Gray, many of his former officers remarked, had neither talent nor inclination towards diplomacy. He was frequently his own worst enemy, but most agreed that Gray and the arrival of police trained to meet a similar situation saved the country.

Under Gray's leadership the police took the full force of the two major communist assaults (1948–49 and 1951) and held fast. The Emergency continued for another decade but most historians agree that it was the year 1951 that broke the communist campaign in Malaya. Towards the end of that year the central committee of the CPM sent out a directive to all fighting units. This was a reversal of policy, moving from an offensive to a defensive strategy. This was also the year when the Government security forces suffered their greatest number of casualties, the police in particular losing a high proportion of experienced officers and NCOs. For this turning point in the Emergency and the slow reversal in the fortunes of the communist guerrillas most of the credit must go to the police of all races, but especially to the stubborn and unyielding spirit of Nicol Gray.

It is the contention of this study that Gray's reputation was destroyed by a confluence of events peculiar to Malaya during the violent years of the Emergency that preceded the transfer of power from a British administration to an independent Malaysia. Gray's enemies made many accusations against him that, towards the end of his career, caused a colonial police investigation. Gray was exonerated and his accusers earned a mild rebuke in the report, but Gray's reputation suffered irreparable damage. Perhaps the most singular and over-inflated section of the accusations was the alleged scandal of the armoured cars. It is arguably one of the least important. Gray took the blame for apparently refusing to equip his police with armoured personnel carriers (a very different vehicle from an armoured car). Gray was a Scots officer of the old school: 'Never complain, never

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[2] An exception is Moran (1959).

[3] Sir Arthur Young wrote in 1967, 'Templer believed that success would be less difficult if the army assumed command of the police. I categorically denied and resisted this'. Young threatened to resign and meant it. Templer telephoned Young late that night and said 'Was I talking a lot of ballyhoo just now?' Young agreed. Templer said 'Good night old cock,' and never mentioned police subordination to the army again. 'No one, I believe, in Malaya disagreed with him more or got on with him better than I.' See also Sir Gerald Templer and Sir Arthur Young in the biographical section of this paper.

explain' a part of his code. He would not plead, lie or compromise to please the crowd. So, to this day, he is labelled as the callous commander who put the lives of his officers and men at risk.

Research into the post-Second World War arms industry shows that there was no suitable vehicle on the market at the time of the scandal; nor did the Malayan police budget have enough funds to buy them in quantity, even had they been available. The significance of Sherlock Holmes dog is its silence. The significance of Gray's armoured cars lies in their absence.

The dog that did not bark

> Holmes: 'Is there any point to which you wish to draw my attention? To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time?'
>
> Watson: 'The dog did nothing in the night-time.'
>
> 'That is the curious incident,' remarked Sherlock Holmes.
>
> *The return of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Conan Doyle teases his readers. Neither of his two world famous characters reveals the story of the dog that did not bark in the night-time, nor why this non-event was so significant. But the author's meaning is clear. There is a similarity to the dog that did not bark to the case of Nicol Gray and the so-called 'armoured car scandal'. To extend the Sherlock Holmes metaphor further, the accused in English law is entitled to a defence council as well as a prosecution. In the case of Nicol Gray the prosecution is well documented. There is a defence but the evidence has neither been collected nor presented. Reading through the memoirs of former officers of the Malayan Police in the Rhodes House archives one might gain the impression that not only had the entire officer corps closed ranks against Gray, but behind them paraded the walls and spires of the University of Oxford

The historian has to take evidence as he, or she, finds it. In the case of Dame Marjorie Perham and the post-colonial research team from the University of Oxford, those officials available to be interviewed representing Malaya were elderly, high ranking, retired and of the pre-Second World War generation. In other words 'Old Malayans'. The younger officers (the wartime, or post-war generation) were either serving officers in other colonial police forces, transferred after Malaysian independence, or too preoccupied with new careers, mortgages and young families to have time for interviews, even for so prestigious an institution as the University of Oxford. Dame Marjorie Perham's collection includes inspectors general of Malayan police and several chief police officers of state forces. In the writing of some of the most senior officers—for example Fairburn (1972), Wallace (1972)[4] and Bovell (1972)—hatred of Gray and his 'Palestinians' reached a point of paranoia.[5] Amongst the 'Old Malayans' the only senior officer in favour of Gray's style of policing is TPQ Gaffikin the CPO for Perak. Sir Arthur Young[6] and Sir Richard Catling both gave their papers to Rhodes House, but the latter's concern Kenya with only passing references to his service as Gray's Secretary (Chief of Staff) in Malaya. The other former police officer who is a supporter

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[4] Wallace's papers demonstrate a dislike of both Gurney and Gray. Wallace takes a snobbish and patronising attitude to Palestinians, Gray in particular: 'A very unfortunate choice...his previous experience speaks for itself'. Wallace did not mean this as a compliment.

[5] In a remark to Heussler, a pre-war Malayan civil servant and prisoner of war, Goode (1970:5) put his finger on the root of the Old Malayans' grievance: 'We were jealous that our contemporaries had all become Colonels and Wing-Commanders and were doing jobs in the BMA that were far above their proper level'.

[6] Sir Arthur Young wrote (1967:6): 'Templer believed that success would be less difficult if the army assumed command of the police. I categorically denied and resisted this'. Young threatened to resign and meant it. Templer telephoned Young late that night and said 'Was I talking a lot of ballyhoo just now?' Young agreed. Templer said 'Good night old cock,' and never mentioned police subordination to the army again. 'No one, I believe, in Malaya disagreed with him more or got on with him better than I.'

of the Commissioner is RA Ruegg (see Ruegg 1980),[7] whose unpublished biography of service in Malaya is in the collection. Among the files of documents left by British Malayan civil servants and police officers there is one notable omission: Nicol Gray left no documents to public collections in Britain. If he wrote an account of his service in Malaya through the worst years of the Emergency, no-one has found it. It is most unlikely that he did so. From what Sir Richard Catling and other former senior officers have said self-justification and excuses were foreign to his nature (Catling 2000).

Sherlock Holmes would regard Sir Richard Catling as a key witness. Sir Richard said in a telephone conversation, 'I am the only person who can set the record straight'. In conversation, at his club and on the phone he did so. Paradoxically he avoids the subject in his memoirs dictated on a tape recorder to Simon Hutchinson (see Catling 2001–01 sound archives). Apart from Sir Richard Catling, who has never made a secret of his support for Nicol Gray, the other senior police officer to sympathise with Gray's problems was his successor as Commissioner of Police, Sir Arthur Young. Young donated six boxes of papers to Rhodes House, three of which concern his service in Malaya. Young never once names Gray, nor is he tempted to denigrate his predecessor. His reports stress again and again the constraints and disadvantages suffered by the previous commissioner. Amongst retired officers of the Malayan police Young's name is almost as controversial as Gray's. In character the two Commissioners were as different as one could imagine. Gray, in the words of Catling, 'quietly folded his tent and went on his way'. Young arrived, if not to a fanfare of trumpets, certainly with official support right up to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and with the promise of the weapons, uniforms and equipment that Gray had requested in vain for three and a half years. Young could see clearly the major constraints that hampered Gray both in the war in the jungle and the battle for hearts and minds in the cities and small towns of Malaya, and he was detirmined not to inherit his predecessors' disadvantages.

Young's report on the condition of the Force on his arrival and proposals for change for a future more efficient police force is blunt practical and clear. A carbon copy of a report on Gray's senior officers has escaped destruction. (It seems unlikely that Young would have wanted so sensitive a document to end up in an archive open to the public.) Some officers, he decides, should be moved to posts where they could be more effective; others he regards as worn out and needing to be retired or moved. Young remarks, in particular, on the ability and experience of his predecessor's Secretary, (Chief-of-Staff) Richard Catling, whom he identifies as an outstanding officer. 'Catling is the Asst Commissioner in charge of the uniformed branch of the force, and I hear on all sides that although he has the disadvantage of coming to Malaya with a Palestine label, nevertheless he has won the esteem and the regard of the Force' (Young 1953).[8] Never once does Young blame the previous Commissioner. Indeed his report, written during his first visit to Bluff Road, concentrates on the problems faced by Gray. Young stresses the shortage of material of all kinds, from uniforms to wireless equipment, and from small-arms to armoured vehicles. He points out the shortage of experienced officers and NCOs to train the swollen numbers of constables, both regular police and SCs, just as Gray did. Young's papers make clear that the incoming Commissioner appreciated the severe problems and disadvantages suffered by Gray, in a way that Lyttelton did not.

Many retired police officers remarked that Gray was his own worst enemy. He was neither a sociable man nor a diplomat. Sir Richard Catling commented on the lack of rapport between the different services. Had Gray invited an obstructive official over for a drink or a meal, to talk over

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[7] Ruegg admired Nicol Gray and comments on the childish and offensive way in which Gray was treated on arrival in Kuala Lumpur. But, Ruegg comments, amongst the Old Malayans there were some outstanding and well-balanced officers.

[8] In the Young archive, Box 2 file 3/1 contains an appreciation from Young to Templer dated 2 February 1953, in which Young reiterates his belief in the need for a central command and independence for the police: 'Integrity of police command free from external interference, from which this Force—like most other colonial police forces—has suffered so much in the past'.

their problem, his position would have eased. But Gray could not unbend to resolve a quarrel (Catling 2000a). Hugh Bailey, who was for a time Personal Assistant to Gray, commented on Gray's dedication to his job and his acrimonious relationship both with senior army officers and with the 'old Malayan' faction of the police. Young had a gift for making friends with those in a position to help him, and, one must add, who could help the police force. In contrast, Gray appears to have enjoyed making enemies in high places. Sir Mark Prescott, a trainer and racing friend of Gray's in Newmarket, gave the analogy of dining out. 'If there was something wrong with the food, Gray would never bollock the waiter, he'd bollock the manager' (Prescott 2000). What social solecism the Colonel of Royal Marines committed, to offend the GOC Middle East Land Forces during the desert campaign, is not recorded, but he made an enemy for life in Montgomery. Montgomery (CIGS 1945–48) was, by most historians accounts, a brilliant general, but he was a man of exceptional egoism and vindictiveness. From North Africa to Palestine to Malaya, Montgomery never failed to denigrate Gray whenever he had the opportunity (Dixon 1994; Stockwell 1992b:vol 2, items 258–60).[9]

Montgomery's successor as CIGS was Sir William Slim (1948–52). It is important to note that Slim thought very highly of Gray (Stockwell 1992b:174).[10] Gray's enemies within the force remarked, over and over again, that Gray was not a policeman. The Old Malayans, in their persistent correspondence with the Colonial Office and allies in Parliament, accuse Gray of 'Commando style' or 'Gendarmerie' policing (Fairburn 1972). Young, in contrast, was hailed as a 'real policeman'. Looked at from the vantage point of 1952, a 'real' policeman appears essential to adapt the force to changed circumstances. (Several Police officers argue that 'Operation Service' was in part cosmetic, to make the police more acceptable in American eyes.) But what was the view like in 1948? 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 (Hutchinson 1999). Gray was not picked by accident, or because he was a likeable chap. He was chosen because of his record through the Second World War and as a senior police officer in Palestine. The Labour Government chose not to declare martial law in Malaya, and not to call the murderous, destructive and chaotic situation a 'war'. (Historians dispute the reasons for the decision to declare a state of emergency, rather than a state of war, but time proved that treating the insurrection in this low-key way was the correct course of action.) Had it been called a war the army would simply have taken over. The Emergency was a civil matter. Whatever it was called, the situation remained one in which the police were taking appalling losses. In June 1948 neither British officers nor Malay constables were trained or equipped to fight an insurrection. Langworthy, the Commissioner of Police, was an exhausted and sick man, appointed to the BMA while in India because he was one of the very few senior officers not imprisoned in 1942. The Japanese occupation, and the disturbed and anarchic post-war period of the British Military Administration, left the Police exhausted and demoralised. Gray had that extraordinary strength of will and a belief in his own ability given to very few men. No-one in 1948

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[9] Field-Marshal Lord Montgomery's letters to Lyttelton and Churchill contain streams of invective against officials in Malaya and Singapore. On Malcolm Macdonald: 'A waffler' and 'He must have known the appalling state of affairs...he must have known that del Tufo and Gray in Kuala Lumper [*sic*] and Blythe were not fit for their jobs.' On Blythe (Colonial Secretary Singapore) 'He is the type of Colonial Civil servant who will never take any action that he thinks is likely to be unpopular'. On the Governor of Singapore: 'Gimson is a worthy soul, but he was a prisoner in Japanese hands...he has now had it and admits it'. On Gurney: 'It is natural after his murder that he should have a build up...he never was able to handle the bandit problem'. On del Tufo: 'His parentage is I believe Maltese, Ceylonese, Burgher...he has no power of command and gives out no inspiration. He is of course quite useless as Chief Secretary'. On the Commissioner of Police Malaya:
Gray was a commando officer under me during the 1939–45 war; he has great energy but does not know what to do with it. No one in his senses would imagine him as a good Commissioner of Police. When he was appointed I was CIGS and protested to Creech-Jones' (Colonial Secretary).
On the Chief of Police Singapore: 'I do not know him, but it is clear he can not be much good'.

[10] This document, written in November 1949, is a note written on a tour of Southeast Asia by Field Marshall Sir W Slim on the importance of civil action in counter insurgency.

complained at his lack of social graces. Attlee and Creech Jones (Colonial Secretary) were realists. They knew that dollar-earning Malayan rubber and tin were essential to a British economy approaching bankruptcy. Gray was not appointed as a diplomat, nor even as a policeman, but as a soldier taking command of a gendarmerie that was in grave danger of losing control.

To say that the bandits in the jungle were the least of Gray's worries would be both trite and misleading.[11] The communist insurrection was launched not by bandits but by a well-trained and well-armed military force (Stockwell 1992b). But the MRLA was not the only enemy. Gray was fighting a war on two fronts from the moment his appointment was announced. Appeals, memoranda and intrigue against the new Commissioner of Police began even before Gray and the advance guard of former Palestine police left the aircraft on Singapore island (Fairburn 1972). Gray's insistence on the rule of law brought him into conflict with the GOC, General Boucher (Short 1975:153–55).[12] Early in his term of office Gray managed to offend both senior officials of the MCS and senior planters by promoting the fittest and most able of his officers and sending home those who were unfit or exhausted by years in Japanese POW camps. The passage of time did nothing to heal the breach. Gray made no attempt to reconcile the factions within the police and there was little chance that his enemies would have changed their views even if he had attempted to placate them. At one point in 1949 Gray considered resigning (Catling 2000). The ambush at Jelebu late in 1949 (see page 10) brought to a crescendo the chorus of voices raised against Gray, not only in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore but in Westminster and Whitehall. Shortly before this tragedy the Colonial Office despatched a police mission to investigate the charges framed against the Commissioner by four former inspectors general of police. The Police Mission arrived in Malaya late in 1949. The Chairman of the Mission was Sir Alexander Maxwell (Permanent Under Secretary at the Home Office) assisted by JF Ferguson (Chief Constable of Kent) and RL Jackson (Assistant Commissioner, New Scotland Yard). The visit was arranged and co-ordinated by John Gullick MCS. The Mission spent four months (November 1949–February 1950) touring Malaya, interviewing policemen of all ranks. Though the Mission dealt kindly with the Old Malayans, it exonerated the Commissioner. We know now that Sir Henry Gurney was extremely worried that the Commissioner might resign. Gray did not resign but the damage was done.

Some of the charges framed against Gray by Fairburn and the other retired inspectors general were dismissed tactfully but firmly by the commission. Others were more dangerous. The most serious could be divided into three:

- Palestinian nepotism;
- The Commissioners inability to work with leaders of other services and civil organisations;
- Gray's failure to co-ordinate the disparate Intelligence organisations.

The most serious of the charges set out by Fairburn was that of nepotism: that Gray packed Police HQ with his Palestinian 'Praetorian Guard'. The mission examined this and found it false. The police had expanded to almost seven times its pre-Emergency size, so the officer-corps had to expand with it. Gray was careful to promote as many Old Malayan officers to HQ posts as

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[11] The use of the name 'bandits' is misleading. The official view shown in the debate of 8 July 1948. In Parliament the MRLA were called 'bandits', 'gangsters' and 'a ragged rabble' (see Stockwell 1998). Later the official name was 'CT' for Communist Terrorist, the name generally used by all members of the Security Forces. The term 'bandit', though widely used, gives a misleading impression. The MRLA was a well-organised and highly disciplined force. Chin Peng believes that the MCP/MRLA was not defeated but starved out of action. He is probably correct. It was the Government's successful denial of supplies of food, medical supplies and ammunition, more than any other factor, that defeated the Communists in Malaya.

[12] Reports from CPO Perak and CPO Pahang that the army were burning villages as reprisals. Short reports a bitter quarrel between Gray and Boucher, the former defending the rule of law, the latter the right of his battalion COs to take whatever action they though appropriate. Gray's belief in the law also offended many influential planters, who took the law into their own hands.

'Newcomers'. As to technical posts such as transport, wireless communications and weapons training, through no fault of their theirs those officers who had been in POW camps lacked the up-to-date training and experience that was common to the newcomers.

The second charge was that no one could work with the Commissioner. Nicol Gray was ferocious in guarding the integrity and autonomy of the force, but it is incorrect to allege that he could not work with anyone of equal rank. That he had worked with Gurney in Palestine merely increased the suspicions of many expatriates in Malaya who feared what they called a 'Palestine Solution' (by which they meant an even handed treatment of both Chinese and Malay communities).

It is true that Gray had major and heated disagreements with the first GOC of the Emergency, General Boucher, who turned a blind eye to the flouting of the law of certain battalions. Equally serious, or even more so, was the clash over who took precedence, the army or the police? In the policy of the army being 'In aid of civil power' Gray had the whole hearted support of the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney. Gray both respected and had a good working relationship with the Director of Operations, Sir Harold Briggs, despite the immense burden placed upon the police by the Briggs plan. The resettlement of a huge number of Chinese squatters was carried out mainly by the army and specially recruited resettlement officers. Upon the police fell the job of guarding the New Villages, preventing the guerrillas from getting in and supplies of food to the guerrillas from getting out.

Under Gray's command the number of police, Regulars, Special Constables and Auxiliary police, grew seven-fold. The greatest problem was the number, lack of training and lack of discipline of the Special Constables. Briggs proposed that the police be divided into two parts: the first, the normal police, and the second a corps of guards, who would both receive rudimentary training from and be under the command of the army. Gray disagreed with Briggs, but it is untrue to say that Gray could not work with the Director of Operations.

The final charge concerned the co-ordination of Intelligence departments with the Special Branch, the CID and Military Intelligence. Gray was involved in two major rows. The first ended with the resignation of the Director and Assistant Director of CID, O'Connel and Duthie. The second, over who controlled CID and Special Branch, led to the resignation of the newly appointed director of Intelligence, Sir William Jenkin.

Putting to one side, for the moment, the armed struggle in the jungle, the Intelligence campaign in the towns and villages and the constant barrage of complaint against Gray emanating from the Old Malayans, one can point to three periods of crisis for the Commissioner. The first was the Colonial Police Mission. The second, overlapping the first, was the so-called 'armoured-car scandal'. The third, and final, crisis was the fact-finding tour of Malaya by the newly-appointed Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton. Lyttelton (later Lord Chandos) was a businessman who, before the Second World War, had an interest in Malayan tin. Lyttelton was detirmined on a 'clean sweep' of officials in Malaya within a few months of Winston Churchill's Conservative administration succeeding the Labour Government of Clement Attlee.

Gurney had been assassinated, and Briggs retired ill to Cyprus where he died within a few months. De Tufo, acting High Commissioner, was given a knighthood and pushed to one side. There is no way of knowing how much the armoured car drama influenced Lyttelton's decision to 'secure the resignation of the Commissioner of Police', as he put it. The 'armoured car scandal' became a *cause celebre* not because it was high on the list of Gray's misdemeanours, but because the press made it so. Former officers of the Malayan Police disagree over whether the shortage of armoured personel carriers was a serious impediment to the prosecution of the Emergency, or an irrelevance (Catling 2000a). What is clear is that other interests, both inside and outside the police, chose to use it as a stick with which to beat the Commissioner, with the aid of the *Straits Times* and *Malay Mail*, then the British press. This in turn led to questions in Parliament from those Conservative MPs with interests in Malayan exports and ties with the Old Malayan faction in the MCS and police.

The denigration of Sir Henry Gurney ceased with his death, but the letters, memoranda, lobbying of MPs, press, and influential Old Malayans in London, continued against the 'Palestinians' that the High Commissioner brought with him, Gray in particular. The Police Mission exonerated him, but the damage to Gray's reputation was already done. 'Gendarmerie' or 'Commando' policing, 'promotion of Palestinian henchmen', 'breach of tradition' by abolishing appointment by seniority, 'splitting the force'—all these accusations left wounds that would eventually prove fatal.

The dogs that did not bark, the cars that were not for sale

The case of the shortage of armoured cars is important because it is an early example of a press campaign that created an effect by mobilising an ignorant public opinion on a complex technical problem. The outcry and press coverage grew out of proportion to the cause. The armoured car press campaign had its effect long after the police received a supply of appropriate vehicles. It still leaves its mark today. The press campaign became myth, and this myth has entered many popular histories and biographies as fact. Thus Gray has joined that list of legendary ogres who denied their long-suffering troops the equipment that they needed (Mackay 1989).[13] Many officers assert that the opposite is true. Police patrols in 1948 and 1949 went out in KD uniforms, without webbing equipment, field rations or military water bottles (they brought food from their homes and water in glass bottles).

> In the year 1949 a total lack of suitable uniform or equipment for jungle patrolling meant that Bailey found himself leading patrols wearing standard khaki police uniforms as worn on beat duty. Food, (which the men provided themselves) was carried in a sarong slung bandolier fashion and water in glass bottles. There was no radio to communicate with base and there were no maps (Bailey 2000)
>
> Certainly equipment and some arms were scarce or non-existent in the first days of the Emergency in Johore…but in the first half of 1949 I got adequate stores to equip two jungle squads in Labis, Johore, to go out on operations in jungle green. The scale of weapons available was basic (.303 rifles and a few sten guns only). The bren gun was slow in arriving and there were no signs of WT sets even into 1950. Ration packs were not available which forced constables (and myself) to purchase in the predominantly Chinese Labis shops, a fact surely not missed by the local Min Yuen…We had sufficient vehicles to get us to drop off points and do a bit of road patrols but all were soft skinned vehicles. By the time I moved into jungle companies [Perak 1953] we had a number of GMCs and Scout Cars, mechanically unreliable though some proved to be (Giles 2000).

The police had no wireless sets, very few LMGs, and were so short of rifles that they had to borrow them from the army. They were short of vehicles of all kinds. Of the 15 AFVs in the whole of Malaya belonging to the army, only 12 were operational at the start of the Emergency, and all lacked spare parts (Short 1975:150).[14] One of the first tasks facing Gray and Catling, on arriving in Kuala Lumpur, was to draw up a list of priorities. Efficient WT communications and efficient weapons came top of the list. Demands for barbed wire and searchlights to protect rubber estate buildings followed closely.

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[13] Mackay has not one word of praise to say about Gray, or his officers and eulogises Young as saviour. Mackay brings no documentary backing apart from Lord Chandos, who altered his account radically by the time he came to write his memoirs. This is Hollywood, not history.

[14] On 10 July 1948, CPO Pahang signalled Police HQ about the dangerous state of roads, particularly between Kuantan and Sungei Lembing, where both civilians and police had been ambushed and killed. He refers to the GOC's boast that the army was well equipped with all the weapons and vehicles it needed (General Boucher) and requested that the army send armoured cars for escort duties, ending his message 'at present the police in this state are powerless to protect life and property'. The Commissioner replied, 'Your request for armoured cars for patrols in Pahang is out of the question. Of the fifteen in the country twelve are army operational and three are replacements, so the army says; none are available'.

The transport and communications problem

Colonel Tsuji (1960) remarked that a combination of well-made British roads and well-made Japanese bicycles gave victory to the Japanese in Malaya in 1941. By the late 1940s and early 1950s the surface of Malayan roads was unusually good, despite years of poor maintenance under Japanese occupation. But even the most important main roads were narrow and winding in comparison with the wide, skilfully engineered and graded roads one finds in Malaysia today. The main feature that concerned transport planners in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur was the danger of ambush. Narrow, twisting roads, especially those in the mountainous areas of Pahang, Negri Sembilan and Perak, were well suited to the classic ambush of the type taught to the Chinese guerrillas of the MRLA by the British advisers of Force 136. It was one of these set-piece ambushes that caught the attention of the press and eventually, in combination with other factors, led to the dismissal of the Commissioner of Police.

In December 1949 a convoy of three un-armoured police trucks was ambushed in Negri Sembilan, on the road between Seremban and Bahau. This is mountainous country and the road climbs, with many twists and sharp turns to the summit. The journey offers spectacular views over the hilly jungle and coastal plain towards the Mallacca straits. It was also an exceptionally dangerous route throughout the Emergency period because of the dense undergrowth on either side of the road and numerous ravines, re-entrants and blind bends where the road cut into the cliffs. A large party of communist guerrillas took up ambush positions in front of and behind the section of road on which they intended to hit the convoy. In the first burst of cross-fire from rifles and automatic weapons 11 of the policemen were killed. Others were wounded but managed to escape. These included two British sergeants, one shot through both legs. For Gray the Jelebu pass ambush could not have come at a worse time. The Colonial Police Mission had been in Malaya little more than a month. The protests that followed the tragedy attracted the attention of the London press and their reports, some of them wildly exaggerated, inflated the drama that became known as the 'armoured car scandal'.

The problem of protection for bodies of troops and police on the move has to be seen within the context of transport as a whole. The problem of protecting narrow twisting roads and two sections of railways within a long peninsula divided by a spine of jungle-covered mountains was no easy one to solve. Long and indefensible lines of communication had been a problem for every commander, from Marlborough to Montgomery. In Malaya this preoccupation ranged from Boucher and Gray to the youngest lance-corporal in charge of a truck. (As an immature NCO the writer came on the scene of an ambush soon after it happened. A GMC armoured car was blown off the road in the mountains north of Seremban, near the Pahang state border. Not one of its police crew survived the crash. The dead included a British police lieutenant.)

First a definition: what is an 'armoured car'? Armoured cars were a common sight in Kuala Lumpur. The majority were American saloons with powerful engines upon which the owner had fitted sheets of boiler plate. Side windows were replaced by steel sheeting, and a large sheet with a visor slit was suspended above the windscreen, ready to be dropped should the car be ambushed. Variants of these home made armoured vehicles were jeeps and civilian 15 cwt trucks. None of these was designed to take the extra weight. Tyres, brakes, steering and suspension all suffered. Though home made armoured vehicles were notoriously unreliable and unstable, they saved the lives of many planters and miners. They were not a practical option for a well-armed military or police patrol. The army were not 'already equipped with armour', as some journalists asserted (Miller 1954:164–65). Apart from armoured cavalry and the COs of infantry battalions, no soldiers travelled in armoured trucks. The GOCs, Stockwell and later Bourne, laid down 'Immediate action' drills to be carried out in the event of an ambush. These were formalised in Templer's blue book of instructions to all members of the Security Forces (Templer 1952). Contrary to the myth created by the local press, the army followed exactly the same policy as Gray's police. In the words of a

transport sergeant at Nee Soon barracks early in 1954, 'Get out and go for the buggers, and pray that their ammo's duff' (Hurst 1954).[15]

Lyttelton's list (1952) divided the armoured fighting vehicles suitable for the Malayan Emergency into three types (Stockwell 1992b:318): Scout cars; AFVs (virtually light or medium tanks on wheels with run-flat tyres); and APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers). It was a shortage of the latter type, designed to carry about ten people, that caused the outcry against the Commissioner of Police, precipitated by the tragic ambush of two police vehicles at the Jelebu pass (Miller 1954).[16] Jock Greenhowe, formerly of the Malayan Police, wrote to the author:

> There wasn't any decent transport, or sufficient firearms. I had to wait six months to get a pistol! We had armoured cars in Palestine and perhaps we should have had some in Malaya but I believe that Gray was right—we had to get out and at them. Gray was hounded out of office by people in UK who didn't know the situation, and the 'Old Malayans' didn't help…it wasn't just Gray, everyone had his favourite tactic for dealing with ambushes. The winning tactic was that on which every person in the Malayan police will have his own version of events but why Nicol Gray had to take the 'can' I don't know. He was needed at that time and without him history might have to be re-written (Greenhowe 1999).

Police Lieutenant Rufus Cole (1999) disliked the Commissioner. He wrote describing the purchase of an old GMC armoured personnel carrier from a scrap-merchant in Singapore. The local planters association raised money to buy this machine. Rufus Cole could not be certain of its provenance but believed it had come from Indonesia. His account fits with records of the makers of this early pattern GMC APC.

The General Motors Corporation of Detroit owned a subsidiary company in Canada, whose factory was sited at Oshawa, Ontario. The USA had a flourishing trade in armoured vehicles in the years between the wars, both for domestic use, such as bank security, and for export. The American Army showed little interest in wheeled AFVs, favouring tracked vehicles, but a large quantity of American armoured cars was exported to Britain when the European war broke out in 1939. The majority of these were the heavily armoured type with a turret, mounting either a machine gun or a small calibre canon (Crismon 1983). The ancestor of the GMC armoured personnel carrier that was in common use in Malaya through the mid-1950s, was designed and built in Canada (Gregg 1981). The first model was an artillery tractor armoured at the front. Canadian Infantry officers implemented research into a second model, which could carry a section of infantry rapidly, protected from small-arms fire. Before and during the war the Germans built similar trucks; the Americans and British did not. The Mark 2 GMC arrived in Europe with the Canadian 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions and quickly saw service in Normandy. By VE Day advance units of the 2nd Division reached the Kiel Canal (Kennedy 1999). A number of GMCs were in Germany, others were repaired or reconditioned in Holland and France. In 1945–46, the Canadian War Department sold them to the Dutch, as well as a number of heavier armoured AFVs. Many of these vehicles were shipped out to Batavia and saw action immediately in the war between the Dutch colonial government forces and Indonesian nationalists. There the trail runs cold, but it is likely that some

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[15] Both GS (Int) and GS(Ops) were preoccupied with analysing the types of ammunition captured from the enemy, and the route by which it entered the country. By 1954 the MRLA was short of ammunition and much of its explosive material was defective; whereas, at the start of the insurrection the MRLA could draw on plentiful supplies stockpiled in buried oil drums in 1945. For the Security Forces the reverse was true. By 1954 both police and army were well supplied (Hurst 1954).

[16] Anthony Short (1975:277) wrote, 'It was widely believed that Gray's philosophy—possibly born of his Palestine experience—was that police when ambushed in trucks should get out and fight'. Short (1975:279) blames Gray for his policy on ordering armoured cars, which 'was to provide too little and too late'. Vigorous protests by planters in Kedah and Negri Sembilan, as well as their central organisations, led to an outcry in the press, locally and in London (*Sunday Express* 14 October 1950; *Scotsman* 26 October 1950). In contrast, many senior police officers sided with Gray on this issue. See also Short (2000), a reprint of his 1975 book. It has a new preface and forward. Professor Short's original book has long been out of print and almost impossible to buy second hand. This reprint fills an important need.

were sold on to a scrap merchant or arms dealer in Singapore. So Mr Cole's account of the purchase of a battle scarred GMC has documentary support. By mid-1945 GMC (Canada) ceased to manufacture their APC model. By 1948 only in Palestine were Zionist factories building armoured lorries (Chin Peng 1998).[17]

There is an irony in the story of Nicol Gray's alleged reluctance to buy armoured cars for the Malayan force. While he was Inspector General of police in Palestine, a visiting commission censured Gray for an over-reliance on armoured vehicles. Unlike soldiers, the committee stated, policemen should be close to the public, at whatever risk to themselves, not cooped up in armoured cars (Clark 1978).[18] There were two reasons for Gray's reluctance to order APCs in Malaya. First the police budget was insufficient to buy essentials, such as radios, weapons and jungle green uniforms. So niggardly was the budget that an army depot on Singapore was not permitted to sell the police their surplus webbing equipment (Bailey 1998).[19] As Lyttelton's 1952 report stated, AFVs are expensive to buy and expensive to maintain. Mechanics working on them need specialised training (Stockwell 1992b:vol 2 item 257). Even if the Malayan police had the money to buy these vehicles they could not have done so. None were being manufactured. The second reason was described by Hugh Bailey. Troops were likely to 'freeze' in an open-topped APC, rather than attack the ambushers, and be killed with grenades thrown into the vehicle (Bailey 1998).

Many journalists repeat the story of the home-made armoured lorries and Gray's tour of inspection when, so the story goes, he told the transport officer to have the armour removed. No source is given for this tale, nor has one been located. Is it true, or is it the product of a lively imagination? Given the orthodoxy of the time, Gray was not alone in believing that attack was the best deterrent in road ambushes. The army instructed officers commanding transport units, and infantry travelling by road, to use the same tactics (see Appendix D).

Ditching the pilot

A *Punch* cartoon, published in 1890, shows the Kaiser ordering Bismark off his yacht. Its caption reads: 'Ditching the pilot'. The mysterious manner of Gray's departure from Malaya was turned into yet another scandal attached to the Commissioner by the press. In 1954 Harry Miller wrote.

> In the midst of new hopes for the year came a sensation. Gray, the Commissioner of Police, resigned and left the country in secret. His departure was so secret that even the Police Secretary in Kuala Lumpur thought that he had gone away on tour. It was an entirely unexpected and extraordinary way for the most important individual in the country next to the Director of Operations to leave. The Government never disclosed the reason for Gray's resignation.

In 1972 Miller amended the story.

> Gray was a tough man but he had given the Police backbone, badly needed equipment and the beginnings of a superlative radio communications system. But he was not popular and morale among the police, particularly the officers, was not high. It was however the manner of Gray's going that was particularly criticised and the country was only much, much later given an explanation. Then it seeped

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[17] The wrecks of these home made armoured cars could still be seen in 1998, on the route from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, where the road ascends to the city.

[18] For an interview with Colonel WN Gray in 1977 see Clark (1978:414); for comments regarding over-reliance on armoured cars in Palestine see Clark (1978:151); and for comment on militarisation of the force with reference to the Wyckham report, see Clark (1978:223).

[19] Surplus webbing packs in Singapore were held by the army, who were willing to release them to the police. Gray requested payment to the army but the Financial Secretary refused to authorise payments (Bailey 1998). If there were problems about ordering webbing, military pattern radios, water bottles, jungle green uniforms, modern rifles and LMGs, one may imagine the problems of ordering armoured vehicles, with all their spares and specialist mechanics to maintain these heavy machines.

> out that Lyttleton had 'secured' Gray's resignation and had instructed him to leave before Templer's arrival (Miller 1954:199; 1972:81).[20]

In his interesting and well written book, Stubbs describes the removal of the Commissioner of Police.

> Particularly fortunate from Lyttelton's point of view was the tendering of the resignation of Colonel WN Gray, the Commissioner of Police. This was hastily accepted. Gray quickly and quietly left the country without a word of explanation, making his departure almost as controversial as his time in office.

His source is the Colonial Office, of which Lyttelton was Colonial Secretary. Stubbs spends two pages describing what he condemns as the brutality and corruption of the Newcomers to the police. But Stubbs is an ardent supporter of 'Operation Service' and the return to 'Normal Policing'. His view of the Police prior to the arrival of Sir Arthur Young, and towards the Palestinians in particular, is influenced by Sir Kerr Bovell, who was not exactly an objective observer (Stubbs 1989:72).[21] Perhaps the most widely read account is found in Cloake's biography of Templer.

> He [Gray] concentrated on turning the police into a quasi-military force on the Palestine pattern, but having formed its squads for chasing terrorists he placed an absolute ban on their use of any armoured vehicles...By 1951 he had become thoroughly unpopular with almost all the old Malayan cadre. Morale throughout the Force was at a nadir. Many police officers were on the brink of resignation.

Later on, Cloake writes, 'He [Lyttelton] told Gray to submit his resignation' (Cloake 1985:97, 2000).

Cloake takes his story from Lord Chandos (Lyttelton) and the archives in Rhodes House. The Police Secretary (equivalent to Commissioner's Chief of Staff), Sir Richard Catling, disputes the official story put about at the time, and confirms both Miller's revised version and Cloake's, that Lyttelton forced the Commissioner to resign. Richard Catling (as he was in January 1952) had a drink with Gray on the evening before he left Malaya. Sir Richard said, and confirmed by letter, that the Commissioner did not resign, but left quietly without the usual parades and formalities, because Gray believed that this would be the course of action that would cause the least harm to the Force. Gray also ordered Richard Catling to say nothing about the reason for, or manner of his leaving the Federation of Malaya Police (Catling 2000b).[22]

In contrast, the press printed the story of a mysterious exit, and implied that there was something secretive and underhand about Gray's departure. An exception to this orthodox view was the journalist Noel Barber. Sir Richard's account is corroborated in Barber's book (Barber 1971:145). Gray wrote to his planter friends, Peter Lucy and his wife Tommy Lucy, to apologise for not visiting them to say goodbye, and explaining his reasons. Barber is one of the very few journalists who had anything good to say about the Commissioner.

The cumulative, and long term, effect on Gray's reputation can be gauged through a collection of popular histories of Malaya. Many of these repeat the same distorted or misleading information. Mackay, for example, confuses vendetta with research. Mackay was not in either of the Security Forces; he was a businessman who idolised Lord Chandos and Sir Arthur Young. He paints a very

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[20] Harry Miller was a journalist with the *Straits Times* during the Emergency and the first to write a serious and well researched account of the war. Miller revised his opinions considerably between 1954 and 1972.

[21] Stubbs puts forward a well-argued case for Sir Arthur Young's approach to Colonial policing. He is dismissive of Gray's contribution. Many former police officers believe that historians like Stubbs fail to appreciate the gravity of the threat facing the Malayan economy and stability of the Peninsula in 1948, or of the ill-equipped and ill-prepared condition of the police when Gray succeeded Langworthy as Commissioner. It is the view of the writer that Stubbs is over-influenced by the papers in the Rhodes House archives and the biased account of events left by Lord Chandos.

[22] It is a mistake to regard Gray as having been forced to resign by anybody. He was not. When his job of commander of the police in Malaya was taken from him by London he quietly folded his tent and left. I admired him. I admired his outstanding performance as a colonel in the Marines in the last war (decorations DSO and Bar) and his work as Commissioner of Police in Palestine [CMG]...A sad tale altogether made more sad by gossip (Catling 2000b).

odd picture of the police, one moment shunning Gray, the next about to demonstrate in his support (Mackay 1989).[23] Mackay's description of Gray's departure from Kuala Lumpur appears to be based on gossip. Even reputable biographers do not always check their sources for biased reporting. Cloake, like many others, takes both the letters of Old Malayans and the memoirs of Lord Chandos at their face value. Chandos (then Lyttelton) being the Colonial Secretary who 'secured the resignation of the Commissioner of Police', had an interest in denigrating the officials that he sacked.[24]

One further charge was made against the Commissioner. It was not among those framed by Fairburn and the other retired inspectors general, nor would they have considered it worth discussing. The final charge was that Gray failed to create a multi-racial police force. As AJ Stockwell remarked, 'The police force was largely Malay while the police problem was fundamentally Chinese' (Stockwell 1992a). There were exceptions. The 'Martial Races' of northwest India had always served in the Malayan Police, so Sikh and Pathan NCOs were not an uncommon sight, but very few Tamils, or others originating in South India joined the Security Forces. As for the Chinese, a very small number served with CID or Special Branch. Few, if any, joined the uniformed branches.

One of the major problems leading to the insurrection was the lack of trust between the government and the Chinese community, but it is important to stress that the Malayan Emergency never degenerated into a racial war. Each side proclaimed its multi-racial basis. These aims were more pious hope than reality. Initially the CPM made great efforts to win over both the far left of the Malay nationalist movement and leaders of the Tamil population. The Malays soon became disillusioned, while most of the Indian communists were arrested when the Emergency was declared. As MRLA and Min Yuen atrocities against Tamil rubber tappers increased so Indian support declined.

On the government side, by tradition in the pre-Second World War police and MCS, promotion went to Malay speaking officers while those British officials who studied Chinese were a minority who rarely, if ever, were appointed to the higher ranks. Malaya was considered a Malay country while the Chinese population were regarded as 'birds of passage'. This policy worked until the Japanese invasion, but ceased to be appropriate several years before the outbreak of the insurrection. As early as August 1947 the Director of CID, O'Connel wrote:

> We are fighting a battle based on Chinese psychology, with, say at very most, 400 persons who have some idea of what the Chinese does and how the Chinese thinks and some 9600 persons who are right outside the picture. The machine was built to fight a quite different battle (Short 2000:497–98).

The failure to recruit young Chinese to the police uniformed branches was a problem that ocurred again and again. Gray, with the full backing of High Commissioner Gurney, could not solve it, neither could Young, supported by Templer, nor could his successor William Carbonel. More than half a century after O'Connel's warning the problem remains the same, as a letter from a Mr Yin, a patriotic Malaysian Chinese, in one of the Kuala Lumpur dailies, indicates.[25]

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[23] Mackay contradicts himself on many occasions. For example he writes 'Most dangerously he [Gray] forfeited the respect of the junior ranks on whom he relied to fight the battle' (Mackay 1989:82); and yet, of Gray's departure on he writes 'Lyttelton sent him packing to avoid any demonstrations of solidarity by his colleagues' (Mackay 1989:119f).

[24] Alone amongst the accounts written by 'Old Malayans' and held in Rhodes House, Gaffikin's stands out as an officer with a realistic approach to post-war problems instead of constantly referring to the pre-war idyllic state of the Force. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Gray's approach to policing the Emergency and critical of Young's attempts to create a constabulary-based, unarmed force. For example a handwritten note attached to an article that Gaffikin wrote on the history of the jungle squads rejected by P Morrah, Police press information officer. 20 Oct 1952. Gaffikin comments. 'An example of 'suppressio veri' or how the Police Forces part in the Emergency was deliberately played down at the time when 'Operation Service' was the fashionable catchword at Police HQ and Government circles.' Gaffikin is one of the very few senior officers in agreement with the views of younger officers.

[25] In a letter to the *Sun* Kuala Lumpur, Yin Ee Kiong stated that:

The case for the Commissioner

Within the broad pattern of the history of de-colonisation the story of the missing armoured cars seems, at first sight, as trivial as the dog that did not bark. It is far from trivial because it emphasises the divergence between official records and the memories of those in the firing line, and the way in which the powerful make sure that their version of events prevails, a version justifying their decisions and advancing their interests. In 1962 Lord Chandos wrote of 'the Great Schism' within the police force; the schism persists in the sources available to historians.

Here one stumbles on a historical paradox. The majority of young historians appear to be more interested in pointing out the faults within the British administration in Malaya than those of its opponents. At the most extreme the historian takes a black and white view, seeing the struggle as one between the move towards self determination on one side and the brutal forces of colonialism on the other (Curtis 1995:56–63). The paradox is that they use official British sources to prove the thesis. While consistently accusing the British Malayan Police of brutality and corruption, few, if any, of these historians has taken the trouble to interview those who knew most about policing during this period—the British police officers and their Malaysian successors (Harper 1999:152–55; Stubbs 1989:72–75). In this lies the Great Schism. On the one side is the official view: Lord Chandos's memoirs, and the papers of senior, pre-war police officers collected by Dame Marjorie Perham, Robert Heussler and others at the University of Oxford.[26] Against these weighty and authoritative sources one has to balance the unofficial view of those at the 'sharp end', the retired British police officers who take a different view from the official version of events. With the worst casualty figures since the Japanese invasion, police morale was unlikely to be at a peak, but former officers dispute that it was as bad as these accounts say, and deny that this condition was caused by the Commissioner, least of all the armoured car problem.

Leaving the armoured car *cause celebre* on one side for the moment, there are other, more important, factors one has to consider when attempting to assess the contribution made by Colonel Nicol Gray to containing Communist insurgency in the first, and crucial, period of the Malayan Emergency.

The first is the turn of the tide against the MCP in 1951. Lyttelton was told by Malayan commercial interests in London before he set off on his fact-finding tour that the situation was out of hand, and that Britain was likely to lose control of the country and its assets. Influenced primarily by commercial considerations, Lyttelton had, to some extent, made up his mind about what he would find before he reached Kuala Lumpur. The new colonial secretary was informed correctly that the Security Forces had lost far more men than in any previous year, the police taking the highest number of casualties. Particularly dangerous was the high ratio of officers lost. (Police losses reached their peak in 1951, three times the army losses. *Per capita*, the ratio of British police officers killed, or seriously wounded, was much higher than that of the Force as a whole.) But, if he was briefed correctly about the losses, the new Colonial Secretary was wrong in his assessment. The MRLA was far from a defeated army, but the it had lost the initiative. The police had taken the full shock of the last desperate Communist assault and broken it.

> The outburst by Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar…in parliament on Monday against non-Malays for their lack of contribution in the armed forces is both unhelpful and does not get to the root of the problem. I hope that he is not implying that non-Malays are less loyal and will not die for the country…

Mr Yin places the blame on a racial bias that:

> …permeates every sector of the government service including the armed forces and police…One would be hard put to name a non-Malay who has risen to the rank of general. And the same for the position of inspector-general in the police or even deputy IGP. In the face of unequal treatment, perceived or real, it is natural for non-Malays to look outside the government service for their future (Yin 2002).

[26] Dame Marjorie Perham was Heussler's superviser when he was a Fulbright scholar at Oxford in 1959. Both appear to accept the 'Old Malayan' version of events without question. They accept, for example Fairburn, Onraet and Dalley's assertion that warning of a Communist insurrection was passed to Commissioner of Police Langworthy, who did not act upon it or pass it on the High Commissioner Gent. Both Short and Stockwell think this version unfounded.

The second factor was the change in the armed strength of the Security Forces in relation to the decrease in strength of the MRLA, in both men and weapons. The re-arming of the Security Forces began in 1952. This followed two US missions to Southeast Asia and a radical change of policy in the US State Department and Pentagon towards the European colonial powers. Two years later, following the shocking defeat of French elite forces at the siege of Dienbienphu in mid-1954 and the vision of Singapore–Malaya as a 'bastion against communism', the view from Washington swung even further in favour of British interests. The conclusion of this changed US policy was the South East Asia Defence treaty, signed in Manila on 8 September 1954. The successful visit of US Vice President Nixon to Malaya kept the process moving.

Stubbs (1989) puts forward a powerful and well researched argument for Templer's policy of winning over the people of Malaya, and the Chinese in particular, to the Government side. Nor does Stubbs minimise the effect of a new prosperity, caused by the rise in the price of rubber. But one has to add Ehrlichman's cynical remark during the American war in Vietnam: 'If you've got 'em by the balls their hearts and minds will follow.' The huge effort and sacrifices made by members of the security forces in 1950, and even greater suffering in 1951, acted as a foundation on which the 'hearts and minds' and 'normal policing' policies could be built. Chin Peng remarked, 'Templer reaped what Briggs sowed' (Chin Peng 1998).[27] The more optimistic and benign regime that followed, one that Stubbs correctly praises, could not have taken place without the savage fighting of 1951.

Historians like Harper and Curtis deplore the blood-thirsty recollections of soldiers and policemen who have written of their service in Malaya. At the risk of stating the obvious, war is a brutalising experience. Whether a Police Lieutenant on a five year contract or a National Serviceman conscripted for two, the young man either fails to adapt to new, violent and often disgusting conditions, in which case he goes mad, or he adapts to his changed world and becomes brutalised, to a greater or lesser degree. To take a high-minded view from a country at peace with a temperate climate is easy. Nothing was that easy or simple for the young man waiting in ambush for days and nights under the most vile and uncomfortable conditions. He was ordered to shoot to kill, he was tormented by insects leaches and skin infections, he was exhausted, foul smelling and in fear for his own life. He was trained to kill by various means and, given the opportunity, he killed those who, he was told, were his country's enemies (Heskin 1980:75–93).[28]

Recent books by journalists or biographers give us a misleading impression of the conduct of the Emergency. That most of the non-journalist accounts are written by soldiers further plays down the

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[27] Chin Peng was Secretary General of the Communist Party of Malaya. He speaks good English in a very quiet voice. He appears, at first sight, an ordinary elderly man, but he impressed the writer by the extraordinary calm that he radiates around him. The only tense moment during our meeting came when the writer asked about atrocities against rubber tappers, committed by the Min Yuen. Chin Peng said that one or two party members may have been over-zealous, but refused to admit that there was an official policy of discipline by terror, torture and execution. The writer did not argue, despite memory of the mass of evidence, written and photographic, collected at Bluff Road. Apart from this the writer was very impressed by the visitor. The Secretary General is man of high intelligence and great power of command. To have met both Sir Gerald Templer and Chin Peng is an amazing piece of good fortune.

[28] Heskin writes an informed analysis of the effect of stress, military discipline and training on armed groups. He includes the RUC and British army with the IRA and UVF. The effect of extreme stress is unpredictable. In 1954 and 1955 the writer knew several NCOs who suffered mental collapse in the jungle. In particular, a sergeant of the East Yorks and a corporal of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; the latter became the camp armourer. After leaving the army the writer met an ex-soldier who had been imprisoned in Huntercombe Borstal, Oxfordshire because no-one knew what to do with him. A colleague and close friend in 1952 was a 19-year-old National Service second lieutenant of the Suffolk Regiment who suffered a mental breakdown in Selangor. He lived in a hut away from the officers mess with a Malay girl to look after him. His brother officers ignored him as an embarrassment, and he was sent back to England for demobilisation. These were all brave men pushed beyond their limit. The term 'post-traumatic stress disorder' had not been invented in the 1950s. The effect of severe stress appeared to depend on length of time men spent patrolling and on their degree of responsibility. Thus, regular soldiers and police officers were more at risk, because of length of service, than National Servicemen, who were called up for two years.

reputation of the police. Both Short, in his monumental history, and Stockwell in his three volume collection of documents, give a thorough and fair picture of insurgency and counter-insurgency. The former is out of print and proscribed by the present Malaysian Government, who have made second hand copies unobtainable. Fortunately this excellent history has been re-published in Singapore. Stockwell's three volumes contain so vast a store of valuable information, and the volumes are so expensive, that it is purchased by libraries and scholars of decolonisation rather than the general reader.

Following the lead of retired Army officers (Thompson, Clutterbuck, Kitson, JP Cross) radio and television programs describe the Malayan Emergency from the soldiers' viewpoint. The reason is the size of the viewing, or listening public. A large number of British conscripts served in Malaya. Because these programs concentrate more on individual stories by soldiers in the jungle and less on background, they do not emphasise the importance of the economic and material war, nor the scale of police casualties. They do not explain, for instance, the difficulty for the MRLA of maintaining communications without radios, or the importance of the 'Briggs plan' in cutting supplies of food and ammunition to the insurgents. Many of these problems had been solved by 1952. Templer's genius lay in co-ordination, not innovation.

One should not place too much importance on either Professor Purcell, or Louis Heren's personal vendettas against the High Commissioner (Purcell 1954;[29] Herren 1978:151[30]). But, at the same time, one should not ignore the MCP Central Committee directive of October 1951, which conceded that the Communists had lost the initiative. Thanks to the sudden rise in the price of rubber, and thanks to changes in US policy as much as Templer's forceful and intelligent direction, by 1953 the police were re-equipped. Most of this materiel came from North America, including the majority of the 1,500 armoured personnel carriers on Lyttelton's list. The Commissioner of Police cannot be either praised or blamed for changes in policy at an international level. Gammans, the vociferous Member of Parliament representing business interest in Malaya, was right in 1949 when he accused the Colonial Office of failing to supply the police fast enough and in sufficient quantity (Stockwell 1979).[31] Whatever the complex reasons, whether shortage of dollar exchange, or a policy in Washington hostile to European colonial interests, the equipment did not arrive. Coinciding with the arrival in Kuala Lumpur of Templer and Young, the purse strings opened and equipment came.

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[29] I visited Malaya in 1950 and I was to some extent reassured by what Sir Henry Gurney told me of his plans... setting Malaya once more on the road to self-government, but when I again visited the country in 1952, I was brought up with a jolt. Malaya had become a vast armed camp in which no one could call his soul his own, and the clock of progress, it seemed, had stopped for the duration of the Emergency... The main success against the Communists was, in fact, won before General Templer arrived (Purcell 1954:5–6).
Purcell often contradicts his own argument. For example, he writes (1954:256) as though Young's 'Operation Service' mitigated Templer's harsh rule after Templer left Malaya. In fact, Young arrived with Templer (in January 1952) on a year's appointment, which was extended to 15 months. There was a gap of more than a year between Young's returning to London and Templer's handing over the position of High Commissioner to Sir Donald MacGillivray in May 1954

[30] Herren was *Times* correspondent in Southeast Asia. Templer was convinced that Herren was a 'fellow traveller', if not a communist, and Young ordered Special Branch to investigate him. Lyttelton spoke to the editor and the *Times* replaced Herren.
In Young's papers (1953:3/3) is a letter written on 4 November 1953 in which Young refers to Herren's 'sabotage'. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that Templer and Young allowed the Herren and the Purcell episodes to grow out of proportion. Herren, a conceited and inaccurate journalist, was unimportant. Victor Purcell, in contrast, was an MCS official turned scholar, with great experience of Malayan Chinese affairs, an influential figure in Cambridge and Westminster.

[31] Gammans said in Parliament: 'They [the Colonial office] were caught completely napping. If they had any sort of police or military intelligence, they would have known that this was going to happen'. Later in the debate Gammans asked:

> Have the police been given sufficient military weapons? If so, why was it that I heard on the news two days ago that radio equipment and arms are being flown out to Malaya? Is it true that the training battalion of the police have no weapons at all? (Hansard 453, Parliamentary debate 8 July 1948/53).

Conclusions

Possibly the most interesting aspect of the so-called Armoured Car Scandal is concerned more with historiography than armour. The former Malayan Civil Servant and historian, Brian Stewart, remarked on the absence of documents vital to research into many aspects of the Emergency period and transfer of power from a British to a largely Malay administration (Stewart 2001). Professor Tony Stockwell spoke of two crates of documents sent to London from Singapore, eagerly awaited by historians from both Britain and Australia. On opening the cases the historians found a mass of papers concerned with routine matters, such as stores. There was little, if anything, of interest (Stockwell 1999). Clearly one cannot make an argument from documents that were destroyed, or never returned to Britain.

Gray's detractors tell us that the Commissioner made enemies in high places, and, in this at least, they tell the truth. Many historians extrapolate from this to state, or imply, that Gray had no friends or supporters. Records left by senior police officers like Sir Kerr Bovell, Wallace, Fairburn, or MCS officials like Goode, available to the public in the archives at Rhodes House, appear to confirm this. For instance, John Cloake stated that, 'Morale throughout the force was at a nadir. Many police officers were on the brink of resignation'. Cloake is echoed by Nigel West: 'Morale was at an all-time low' and 'Templer swept into office and, together with Young, restored morale'. These statements over-simplify a complex situation (Comber 1999–2001).[32] That morale was not at its highest need surprise no-one. The Force had emerged through the worst year for casualties since the Japanese invasion.

One must compare the documents open to us with the statements of former Police officers (RMPFOA 1999–2000). The majority of former officers are surprised by the comments on low morale. That is not how they remember the period. As to the press campaign, they see the armoured car issue as unimportant compared with other, more immediate problems and dangers faced by the police. There are many reasons why they take this view:

- Safeguarding transport was a major problem in Malaya throughout the duration of the Emergency, but especially during the first three years, when the insurgents still possessed quantities of reliable ammunition and explosives. Given the nature of the country and its roads, armoured vehicles were not the panacea that those writing with hindsight believe.
- Another common statement—that the army had an abundance of armoured vehicles, and that soldiers were protected while policemen were exposed to danger—is a myth. The vast majority of troops travelled in soft topped vehicles, or by train. Unlike the armoured railcars, ('Wyckham trolleys'), troop trains carried no armour and were another tempting target for the insurgents.

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[32] Leon Comber commented on remarks in *The friends* (West 1989:60–61):

> I think what Nigel West is getting at is the serious disagreement early on between Gray and Basil O'Connor, the head of CID (when the SP was subsumed in the CID, and before it became separate) it was part of the great divide between the pre-war police officers and the ex-Palestine police officers who came in with Gray. The actual head of the SB part of the CID in those days was Ian Wylie and Claude Fenner was his number two. Fenner, later of course, as you know, became Inspector General of the Royal Malaysian Police Force. He was then an ASP although he was promoted Superintendent not long afterwards. I was an ASP at the time and the only other British police officer in federal SB HQ, heading what was then called the Chinese section. The SB at HQ was then divided into racial sections. The dispute between O'Connor, a senior prewar Malayan police officer, and Gray led to O'Connor resigning. This must have been around 1949.

Comber (2001) further comments:

> West, incidentally, makes some surprising remarks. On page 60 he describes Special Branch 'creating a training centre' at Federal Police Headquarters in the Bluff Road complex outside Kuala Lumpur.' He is confusing the police depot outside KL with Bluff Road' which was, and is, on a bluff behind the padang in the centre of the city. On page 56 West writes. 'He [Chin Peng] had also attended the Victory parade in London.' Chin Peng did not visit London in 1945. When asked why not he grinned and said 'Too busy'.

A letter to the author from Leon Comber (15 May 2001) provides a useful character sketch of Nicol Gray, concurring with the views of Catling, Bailey, Giles, Hutchinson and Weir. In talking to former officers I have found the same phrase recurs: 'Gray carried the can'. At a rough estimate this represents the view of the majority of the younger officers who served under Colonel Gray.

- The blue pocket-book, commissioned by Templer and published by HQ Malaya Command Kuala Lumpur in 1952, lays down the same principal demanded by Gray—that an aggressive show and the training and the will to attack, was the best method of defence (Templer 1952. See also Appendix D).
- The worst criticism of Gray is reserved for the first two years. The Commissioner takes the blame for the lack of armoured cars. In fact, research shows that there was no suitable APC available, in quantity and in good condition, until 1952. War surplus vehicles were worn out, unreliable, and designed for war in the desert or in Europe, quite unsuitable for the terrain of mountain and forest found in Southeast Asia.
- The idea that Gray failed to order armoured cars when sufficient funds became available is another myth. No matter who placed the series of orders between 1949 and 1951, it is obvious that either Gray or Richard Catling must have authorised the very large sum needed to purchase such expensive vehicles (Short 1975).[33]

Politicians, from Lloyd George, to Churchill to Blair, love grand simple gestures that catch the attention of the press. Lyttleton's 'clean sweep' in Malaya was no exception. Following in the tradition of Clive and Warren Hastings, the manner in which the Commissioner was dismissed came as no surprise. Lyttelton's 'New broom' swept out both the acting High Commissioner and the Commissioner of Police. DeTufo got his knighthood. Gray received no honour or recognition for safeguarding the wealth of Malaya. Gray was a convenient scapegoat. Former Malayan Police Officer Doug Weir (1999) summed it up well: 'Gray saved the country, but he shot himself in the foot by being so bloody rude to so many important people'.

The issue of the armoured cars is important only because it caught the public imagination via the popular press. The real issues that led to Gray's dismissal were too complicated to be made public by the commercial elite that demanded his replacement, a powerful group that Lyttelton represented so forcefully. At the outbreak of the insurrection Gray, the Palestinians and other police reinforcements were essential to safeguard Britain's vital dollar-earning assets, rubber and tin. Once this small but formidable group of men had done its job the British elite had to clean up and make acceptable the image of colonial policing. So out went Gray and in came Young, the epitome of the 'London Bobby' and with him the cosmetic 'Operation Service.' In practice there was no chance of a return to 'normal policing' until Chin Peng and the MRLA were driven over the border into Thailand.

Between August 1948 and December 1951 Gray reorganised, re-equipped and enlarged the Malayan police to withstand two major communist offensives. The contributions made by the army and successive GOCs was great but, as its casualty figures prove, it was the police force that took the first shock of the campaign by the insurgents to destroy the government and society of Malaya. It is probable that Gray did more than any other individual government official to save the economy, stability and future peace of the country through the crucial years of 1948 to 1952. Gray retired into obscurity and never received the credit he deserved. The blame for this injustice can be traced to a well-orchestrated press campaign, promoted at the highest level, and by a spate of books playing follow-the-leader. Though professor Anthony Short is critical of Gray over the non-provision of armoured vehicles, in general he puts the record straight in the revised version of his history of the Emergency:

> In the first instance it is the opinion of many that the country was saved by the fortuitous arrival in 1948 of the Palestine Police. With them came the Palestine Commissioner of Police Colonel Gray, whose task it was to expand the Malayan Police to unprecedented numbers, hold them together and withstand the first and second guerrilla offensives. His successor colonel Young from the City of London, had the entirely different task of reconverting the Police from a paramilitary to and

[33] For a precis of Short's figures on purchase of APCs and armoured scout cars by the police, see Appendix A.

> essentially civil function. Here again it seems fortuitous that the two men arrived when they did and in the sequences that they did (Short 2000:501).

Gray, the first effective Commissioner of Police in the Emergency, was a difficult man with a knack of upsetting his peers and superiors. That he would not compromise is well known; in some cases, neither would he co-operate. Retired officers disagree on whether he should have been replaced by Young (RMPFOA 1999–2002). But over Gray's attention to his officers and men, there is no argument. Without ever considering his own career, or cultivating influential friends, in or outside Malaya, Gray toured the Federation in a Jeep or unarmoured truck, visited police posts, talked to his men, and did his utmost to get them the radios, the weapons and the equipment that they needed. That history should label him with the charge of refusing to equip them, is a bitter and tragic irony.

Biographical information:

People referred to in the text and/or whose information has been used

An Indian Army officer, Hugh **Bailey** joined the Malayan Police in 1949 and was appointed OCPD. He later served as Gray's personal assistant. He transferred to the Aden Police in 1956, retiring with the rank of Senior Superintendent.

A pre-war Malayan police officer and Inspector General of Malayan Police, Sir Kerr **Bovell** left the Malayan Police in 1956 to become Inspector General of the Nigerian Police.

Lieutenant-General Sir Harold **Briggs** (1894–1952) was a dedicated and intelligent professional soldier. He served in both the 1914–18 and 1939–45 world wars. He commanded the 5th Indian Division in Burma when Sir William Slim was GOC. In 1948 he left the army to live in Cyprus. Slim persuaded Briggs to take up the post of Director of Operations in Malaya. This labour exhausted him and he returned to Cyprus a sick man in November 1951 and died early in 1952. He is remembered as the strategist who designed the 'Briggs Plan'.

William LR **Carbonnell** (CMG; KPM; PMN (Malaysia) 1912–1993) went up to Cambridge in 1931 where he rowed for the university. He joined the Federated Malay States Police Force in 1935 as Probationary Assistant Commissioner of Police. This cumbersome title was changed to Assistant Superintendent in 1938. Carbonnell served in various postings in northeastern Malaya until the Japanese army landed at Khota Bahru. He spent three and a half years as a POW, most of it in Changi gaol. Like so many POWs in Asia, Carbonnell was released half-starved and ill. Colleagues remarked that his good humour, his thoughtful nature and excellent education kept him alive. While on leave in UK he married the Australian nurse who looked after him after his captivity. The couple returned to Malaya. The outbreak of the communist insurrection in June 1948 found Carbonnell with the rank of superintendent in Kedah, where he collected Intelligence information and led his men against the MRLA in the jungle. In 1952 he moved to Kelantan as Assistant-Commissioner. Young moved him within the year to take charge of Special Branch in Kuala Lumpur. He acted as Young's deputy in May 1952 while the latter was away on his tour of the USA. Carbonnell succeeded Young as Commissioner in 1953. Though the security situation had continued to improve throughout Malaya, Carbonnell's term of office as Commissioner was marked by one major event and one major problem. The event began under Templer's rule as High Commissioner. It was the road to independence (*merdeka*) and the gradual transfer of police power from a British to a Malay administration. The problem was the continual and debilitating cuts in funding and in personnel for the police. Carbonnell was awarded the CMG and the King's Police medal by the British and the Perlawan Mangku Negara Malaya by the Royal Malaysian Government on his retirement in 1958.

Sir Richard **Catling** was in the Police service in Palestine 1935–48 and Malaya 1948, where he was Secretary (Chief of Staff) to Commissioner Gray. He was briefly assistant to Young before being appointed Commissioner of Police Kenya.

Chin Peng (1924–) was Secretary General of the Communist Party of Malaya and virtual leader of all communist forces in the Malayan jungle 1948–1980. He was born in 1924 in Sitiawan, where his father Wong Sing Piaw owned a bicycle shop. He received a good education at Nan Hua High School and speaks six languages, including English. At the age of 17 he and two companions, with one cycle to carry their belongings and food, set off into the mountains to join the guerrillas fighting the Japanese. As an intellectual and planner he was promoted within the MPAJA and won the respect of the British technical advisers parachuted into Malaya with Force 136. At the end of the Second World War he was awarded the OBE by the British. (This still causes Chin Peng great amusement, though he says that the tale that he marched in the victory parade in London is a myth. 'I was too busy' he said with a smile.) Within the year Malayan Special Branch and the Malayan

Intelligence Service were keeping an eye on him, as his *Who's who* Intelligence dossier in Rhodes House Archives proves. He was noted as a leading communist writer and organiser:

> In December 1946 he was elected Vice-President of the all-Malayan, MPAJA ex-service association…In August 1947 it was reported that he was a committee member of the Central Military Council of the MCP, and was responsible for all arms and ammunition of the MCP, and in September he was reported to be chairman of the Central Military Council of the MCP.

In March 1947 the Secretary General of the Communist Party, Loi Tek, absconded with the party funds. Chin Peng was appointed to investigate and, almost immediately, to take up the position of Secretary General of the party, a post that he retains to this day. Chin Peng led his followers into the jungle in June 1948 and maintained a skilful and tenacious war against the government of Malaya for something like two decades, because the MRLA kept fighting for several years after the Emergency was officially ended. Chin Peng's children and grandchildren live in Perak. He and his followers live in southern Thailand, unable to visit their relatives because of a Malaysian government ban. During the last few years he has visited both Britain and Australia and talked with historians specialising in Southeast Asia

Leon **Comber** landed in Malaya in 1945 with the BMA, following service with the Indian army. He resigned from the Malayan Police in 1954, after service as police ADC to Sir Henry Gurney and later with Special Branch. His final position was Superintendent in the Johore contingent Special Branch. He is now a research associate with the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Australia.

Colonel John **Dalley** was a pre-war Malayan police officer, and the founder of 'Dalforce', an anti-Japanese stay-behind party. He became a Prisoner of War of the Japanese. His papers set out to prove his case, that he predicted the Communist Insurrection in 1947. The Dalley papers also show that the messages from the Malayan Security Service were mixed and not clear. Both Short and Stockwell point out that Dalley was as much preoccupied with the threat from Indonesia and the KMT as from the Communists.

Captain **Denny** served in Malaya with the Royal West Kents, escaping from Singapore in 1942. He was CPO in Malacca 1951–55.

H **Fairburn** was a pre-war Malayan Police officer and Inspector General of Malayan Police.

Gus **Fletcher** was a Palestine policeman. He arrived in Malaya in the same plane as Gray with the first contingent of 'Palestinians'. He was in the Malayan Police service guarding rubber estates followed by the Chinese language course at Cameron Highlands. As a Chinese speaker joined Special Branch and later transferred to Special Branch in UK.

TQ **Gaffikin** was CPO Trengganu and Kelantan, and was later moved by Gray to a more important post as CPO Perak during the Emergency period. CPO. He was a pre-war Malayan police officer and a prisoner of war during the Japanese occupation.

Paddy **Giles** saw war service in the Royal Navy 1944–46. He served in the Malaya from the beginning of the Emergency, initially commanding jungle companies in Johore and was Personal Assistant to Commissioner Gray with the rank of Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police. Giles retired from the Colonial Police in Uganda with the rank of Superintendent after he was wounded during a prison riot in Lira, Northern Uganda.

Colonel William Nicol **Gray** CMG DSO and Bar, KPM 1908–1988, was educated at Trinity College, Glenalmond, and qualified as a chartered surveyor in 1939. He joined the 2nd Battalion of the newly-formed Royal Marine Brigade and served in North Africa and the Middle East. As second-in-command of 45 Commando, he landed in Normandy on D-Day, taking charge when his CO was wounded. He was awarded the DSO, took part in many operations during the advance through Europe, and spearheaded the crossing of the Rhine at Wesel, where he was wounded and

gained a bar to his DSO. Gray became, in turn, GSO2 to the RM Division; military instructor at HMS Dorlin; CO of 45 Comando; and Commandant RM OCTU. He was married twice and had two daughters.

> After the war he was appointed Inspector-General of Palestine Police, 1946–48. for which he was appointed CMG, and Commissioner of Police of the Federation of Malaya, receiving the King's Police Medal. He led, trained and equipped both forces under extremely difficult conditions. When the British Mandate in Palestine ended he moved to Malaya, where his unbounded energy and concern for his men laid the solid foundation of a police force able to play an important part in the future of that country. In 1952 he returned to Britain and served as Agent to the Jockey Club at Newmarket for ten years before becoming the administrator or the MacRobert trusts at Tarland, Aberdeenshire. At this time he gave invaluable service to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme as trustee and as chairman of the advisory committee (from his obituary in the *Times* 16 January 1988).

Sir Eric Newton **Griffith-Jones** served in the Malayan Police 1939–51 and Kenya Police 1952–56.

Following war service and preparation for Operation 'Zipper', John **Gullick** landed in Malaya with the BMA. He was later in the Malayan Civil Service, British Adviser to Negri Sembilan, and Secretary to the Colonial Police Mission 1950.

Sir Henry **Gurney**, 1898–1951, High Commissioner Malaya 1948–1951. An all round sportsman who gained a golf blue at Oxford, Gurney dedicated his life and skill as an organiser in the Colonial Office. He was appointed Chief Secretary to the government in Palestine in 1945 and held that office until the British Mandate ended in 1948. He was immediately offered the post of High Commissioner in Malaya. The 'Old Malayans' suspected that Gurney wanted to impose a 'Palestine solution' in Malaya, by which they meant an even-handed approach to both Chinese and Malays. The appointment of another senior 'Palestinian' as Commissioner of Police increased their suspicions of a Colonial Office plot. A hardworking, formal official, Gurney was respected rather than liked. On 7 October 1951 Sir Henry and Lady Gurney set off from Kuala Lumpur on the twisted, jungle fringed road to Frasers Hill for a weekend's golf and relaxation. Why the High Commissioner's un-armoured Rolls Royce got ahead of its escort is still not clear. He was ambushed by a section of MRLA. This was almost certainly an opportunist rather than a planned assassination and the Chinese guerrillas had no idea which British official they were shooting. With great courage Gurney got out of the Rolls after his driver was shot and walked towards the enemy to draw fire away from his wife. The High Commissioner and the car were riddled with bullets. Lady Gurney survived. The murder of the High Commissioner, coming in the worst year for Security Force casualties, created a wave of despair throughout Malaya.

John **Hamer** was born in 1910. He did war service in the Free French and Combined Operations 1945. He was Controller of Supplies in Singapore, then BMA adviser to Jasin and Klang 1955–57, and British Adviser in Perlis. He retired in 1961.

WD **Horne** was in the Malayan Police Special Branch 1949–51.

Simon **Hutchinson** joined the Malayan police at the beginning of the Emergency after service in the Guards. He was, in fact, working at the police depot in Kuala Lumpur as weapons and field-craft training officer before the arrival of Gray, Catling and the Palestinians. He remarked that though some of the Old Malayans were exclusive and offensive to newcomers and frequently incompetent, there were a few Old Malayan officers who were outstanding, despite their wartime suffering. He mentioned Claud Fenner and William Carbonel (who became Commissioner after Sir Arthur Young). Hutchinson was seriously wounded while Operations officer, Batu Gajah Police Circle, Perak. (March 1951). He was in hospital in England when Gray left KL, and did not return to duty until after Young's departure. Towards the end of the Emergency he transfered to the Sarawak, Constabulary, retiring with the rank of Superintendent in 1967.

HB **Langworthy**, Commissioner of Malayan Police 1945–1948. Langworthy was the last CPO for Selangor before the Japanese capture of the state in 1941, and he was the first Commissioner of

Police for the Federation of Malaya following the Japanese surrender in 1945. Langworthy joined the Malayan Police as a cadet following service in the Royal Navy through the war of 1914–18. Possibly the war caused the wound or illness that incapacitated him periodically throughout his career. Langworthy was OCPD at Jelebu until 1924. He became CPO Negri Sembilan and, from 1935 to 1936 was CPO Johore. He was appointed CPO Selangor in 1941. September 1945 found Langworthy stationed at Pallavaram cantonment near Madras, as Officer Commanding the police contingent of the British Military Administration of Malaya. Langworthy had the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the BMA Civil Affairs Police. Leon Comber described him as 'a pleasnt man, tall quietly spoken and easy to get on with'. In an unpublished memoir Bill Haines called Langworthy 'a man it was a privilege to know'. Doug Weir described the Commissioner as 'A fine officer and a gentleman'. The two charges made against Langworthy by many historians are: that he failed to prepare or arm the police for the approaching crisis; and that he failed to heed warnings by Intelligence specialists of the threat posed by the CPM and old comrades organisation of the MPAJA. Neither of these charges is fair to Langworthy. The first, lack of weapons and equipment is discussed in the text. The second concerns the allegations made by Colonel John Dalley, Inspector General RHdeS Onraets and others formerly in Special Branch and the Malayan Intelligence Service that they warned the Commissioner. As both Short and Stockwell have remarked, Dalley hedged his bets, sending warnings about the pan-Indonesian–Malay nationalist threat, the KMT threat, and the CPM threat so that it was hard to discern where the main threat originated. Langworthy was a sick man through most of his post-1945 service. He retired on medical grounds in 1948 and was succeeded as Commissioner by Colonel Nicol Gray.

Oliver **Lyttelton**, later Lord Chandos (1893–1972), Colonial Secretary 1951–54, was a personal friend of Churchill and had known him since childhood (see Churchill 1950:281–82, 345). Soldier, businessman and politician, Lyttelton was Managing Director of the British Metal Corporation in 1928, when he acquired interests in Malayan tin. He visited tin mines and plantations in 1937 and formed links with the major tin and rubber businesses in Malaya and Singapore. Harry Miller records that British Malayan companies and business associations were a major influence in forming Lyttelton's policy before he left London for Kuala Lumpur (see also Harper 1999:155. Harper describes attempts by British Malayan businessmen to get rid of Gurney because of his 'Fabianism' as they removed Gent. Gray was associated with Gurney because of the 'Palestinian' slur.) Unfortunately Gray did not hide his contempt for businessmen and plantation owners during his tours of Malaya.

RA **Ruegg** served with the Royal Navy, then worked in East Africa before enlisting in the Marine Police Malaya. He was later transferred to Special Branch.

Joe **Rothwell** was a Malayan Police Officer.

Roy **Russell** was a Malayan Police Officer.

Brian **Stewart** CMG, China and Chinese specialist. He was commissioned in the Black Watch and wounded in Normandy in 1944 with the rank of Captain. During the first half of the Malayan Emergency he was an official with the MCS. He worked for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office through the 1960s in a series of Far East postings, including Consul General in Hanoi during the US–Vietnam War 1967–68. He then moved to Hong Kong. Until 1992 he worked for various private business in Malaysia and China, and he is now a freelance writer and historian.

Sir Gerald **Templer** 1898–1979, High Commissioner Malaya 1952–54. Templer was educated at Wellington and Sandhurst and served throughout the First and Second World Wars, towards the end of the latter as GOC of the 6th Armoured division. He was Director of Military Intelligence from 1946 to 1947 and Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1947–52. Winston Churchill appointed Templer as High Commissioner and Director of Operations in Malaya 1952–54. Templer was promoted to Field Marshal in 1955 and was CIGS from 1955 to 1958. He is best known for his part in defeating the Communist insurgency, and as the executor of the preparations towards *merdeka*

(Malaysia gained independence two years after Templer returned to England). Both soldiers and civilians commented on the intensity of Templer's gaze and his total concentration on the subject under discussion, whether it was a major policy decision or a small feature on a map. As Director of Operations he gained the respect of his soldiers and police. As High Commissioner he convinced Malay, Chinese and Indian politicians that Britain's promise to transfer power and implement independence, once the communist menace was removed, was genuine. He was an idiosyncratic and often ruthless leader who made influential enemies—such as Professor Victor Purcell, who accused him of creating a police state. Louis Heren, *Times* correspondent in Southeast Asia, called Templer a dictator. The High Commissioner gained the reputation of being coarse and insulting to senior officers and civilian dignitaries. To junior ranks he was courteous and patient, interested to know what the conscript or young regular soldier thought about the conduct of the Emergency, the country and its people. I met Templer at King's House on several occasions while I was drawing or revising the High Commissioner's maps and graphs. We met again at Chelsea Royal Hospital in 1979 where the Field Marshal was Commandant. That he was extremely ill was obvious, but his gaze and concentration were as intense as ever. Field Marshal Templer died of cancer a few weeks later.

F **Wallace** was a pre-war Malayan Police officer and CPO in Trengganu 1947–50.

Douglas **Weir** joined the Malayan Police in 1939 before enlisting in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and was a Prisoner of War in 1942–45. He was Assistant Commissioner, and police officer assigned to the Director of Operations, General Briggs, for two and a half years.

Colonel Sir Arthur E **Young** 1907–1979. Arthur Young joined the Portsmouth City Police in 1924, and by 1938 he was Chief Constable of the Leamington force. During the air-raids on English Midlands cities in 1940–41, he was appointed Assistant Chief Constable of Birmingham. He served with the Allied Control Commission in Italy, ending the war as colonel. In 1947 Young became Assistant Chief Constable of the City of London Police. The City Police authorities were approached in 1952 to second Young to the Malayan force for one year. In fact Templer persuaded him to stay on for another three months. Young's achievement in Malaya was re-organising the force, reducing its unwieldy size and introducing more efficient training methods. Some former police officers have pointed out that many of the achievements attributed to Young were requested or attempted by his predecessor but could not be implemented simply because Gray did not have the resources or the trained officers to carry them out. Equally some of the imaginative ideas thought to be Young's came from Templer. To state this is not to deny Young's organising ability or commitment to the Malayan police force. Young remained with the City of London Police until 1971 and was seconded twice, first to the Kenyan police in 1954 later to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 1969–70. He was knighted in 1965.

Appendix A

Police purchases of armoured vehicles—September 1948–March 1951

Among a mass of books on the Emergency, the only accurate list of purchases of APCs by the police during the early years appears in Short's history of the Emergency. The police had none in June 1948, the army only 12 in operational condition. In September an order was placed for 25 'Lynx' armoured scout cars.

> All that could be found of that type at that time in serviceable condition and with the necessary spares. There was at that time a manifest shortage of suitable armoured vehicles and a corresponding shortage or armour plate which might have provided a measure of protection.

But Short goes on to say that 'The insurmountable obstacle, however, to the provision of more armoured vehicles was the Commissioner himself'.

Quite why Short should write this is hard to discover, because he then gives a detailed description of both the orders for, and arrival of, both Armoured Personnel Carriers and Armoured Scout Cars. The version below is a precis of Short's description.

April 1949 31 APCs ordered. Arrived August 1950.

August 1950 60 APCs ordered. Arrived March 1951.

March 1951 Large order of 340 Armoured cars, (type not specified)

At a meeting held on 17 August 1951, 'Gurney (High Commissioner) appeared to think that the vehicles available would be sufficient'.

At the end of 1951 (but before Gray was removed) a committee was set up to examine the policy on APCs. On 16 December the Committee listed optimum requirements as 900 troop carriers. 200 escort vehicles and 500 individual transport vehicles (see Short 2000:277, 279) The recommendation of this committee is remarkably similar to Lyttelton's list, for which the Colonial Secretary did not hesitate to take the credit (see below).

Appendix B

Appendices to Lyttelton's report—December 1951.

This is a lengthy document addressed to Cabinet on 21 December 1951. The Colonial Secretary's report (Oliver Lyttelton, later Lord Chandos) indicates the scale of shortage of equipment, weapons and vehicles suffered by the police prior to Young's appointment. It proves that the lack of any real effort to equip the police between 1948 and 1951 was taken way above the level of Commissioner of Police. This section is shown in Stockwell (1992b vol 2:318, item 257; 337–40).

Appendix iv. Armoured vehicles for the Police.

App v. Arms, Clothing and Equipment urgently required for Police.

App vi. Earth-shifting equipment.

App vii. Chemical Defoliation of the Roadside Jungle.

Appendix iv

1) Types of vehicles.

i) For carrying numbers of men travelling dangerous roads or when called out on operations.

ii) for escorting soft vehicles; and

ii) for carrying individual officers travelling on duty in dangerous areas.

2) Specifications.

i) Troop carrying vehicles.

Fully armoured for carrying driver and ten men. Ports from which small-arms can be fired. Weight not to exceed 5 1/2 tons in order that the vehicle may negotiate bad roads and weak bridges.

ii) Escort vehicles. Fully armoured. Accommodation for 1 driver and 2 men. Revolving turret and LMG mounting.

ii) Vehicle for carrying individual officers. Fully armoured accommodation for 1 driver and 2 men.

3) Numbers required.

TCV 902.

escort vehicle. 206.

individual transport vehicle. 502.

Total vehicles 1610…

5) Most suitable vehicles.

Type i) a) Proposal to modify the GMC APC with extra armour.

type ii) GMC scout car. None available at the moment.

Available.

a) Ford Lynx. Police have 26. Not satisfactory. Spares situation unknown.

b) Humber scout car. No spares available.

c) Daimler. Needs to be modified. Turrets fitted.

d) Morris armoured car. Mechanically unsound. Problems spares.

e) 'Oxley' type on Ford chassis. It is considered that in order to armour this vehicle effectively, the weight of the armour would prove too much for chassis and suspension.

f) Armoured landrovers. The weight of armour is too much for the carrying and tractive capacity of the vehicle.

g) Saloons converted to partial armouring as used by estate and mine managers. The intensive use to which police vehicles are put would entail constant mechanical breakdowns, since the vehicles are not built to carry armour and the weight imposes too great a strain...

10) Maintenance.

As armoured vehicle require more maintenance than a soft vehicle, and an increase of armoured vehicles for the police on the scale suggested will impose a very heavy strain indeed on Police maintenance facilities.

f) All vehicles should be fitted with run-flat tyres and have a full scaling of spares.

Appendix v Arms, clothing and equipment.

1) Problems; supply India. Khaki cellular shirting, or KD. Order one million yards USA.

2) 12,000 carbines M1 and 4,000,000 rounds .300 ammunition. (Only from USA)

3) 500 pump guns (Shot guns) and 125,000 rounds steel plated ammunition, to increase fire power of jungle companies. (Obtainable only from USA)

Appendix vi Earth-shifting machinery.

20 caterpillar tractors from 'The Caterpillar tractor company Ltd USA'.[34]

The War office and Foreign Office are taking this matter up vigorously, but if they are unsuccessful, it is hoped that the Prime Minister (Churchill) will agree to press the matter at the highest level. An assurance could be given to the Americans that this equipment, if supplied, would be used in the first place only for work of immediate importance to the anti-Communist campaign.

Appendix vii. Chemical Defoliation. Tests by ICI (Malaya) Ltd.[35]

a) rail and roadside clearance of dangerous areas.

b) clearance of perimeters, resettlement area, etc.

c) destruction of crops grown by, or for, bandits in remote areas.

Hormone weed-killer 24-D or 24. 5-T mixed with Sodium tri-cloracetate in various combinations. Cost per mile of road £1607. Hope—Future new chemical reduce cost per mile to £133 per mile. Need two spray rigs for 'Auster' aircraft.

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[34] This had the support of two US missions to Malaya, the Griffin and the Melby missions in 1950. US Defense Department rating, 'DO' Urgent.

[35] This bears out Gray's argument that the problem of road and rail ambushes could not be solved by armour alone. Dangerous roads were a problem throughout the Emergency and could only be approached as part of a general communications strategy.

Appendix C

Details and dates of manufacture of the GMC Armoured Personnel Carrier (Oshawa, Ontario, Canada)

From: 'Blue print for Victory' Canadian Military Vehicles vol III.

Ford 'Lynx' scout car.

'Lynx' and GMC 'Fox' (Humber design using Canadian components.)

GMC 'Otter' Light reconnaissance 1942.

GMC 15cwt armoured truck. 4000 built at Oshawa factory in 1944 and 1945

GMC Armoured command post model 1945 'Production abandoned due to cessation of hostilities'.[36]

Note

The GMC armoured truck was a common sight by 1954. It was not without faults. Though additional armour was added at the rear and above the driver (a weakness in the early models) the open top made it vulnerable to grenade attack, particularly when travelling through a cutting. Even as late as 1954 the MRLA were still making use of home-made mines, often airial bombs or artillery shells electrically detonated. No vehicle was safe from a well-placed mine, or explosive device of the 'Claymore' type.

The Alvis 'Saracen' six-wheeled APC was issued to the British Army in 1952 but did not arrive in Malaya until 1954, where it was used on trials with the 11th Hussars. The 'Saracen' appeared to be the answer to road ambushes. In action they were so hot and uncomfortable that BORs called them 'ovens' or 'coffins' and detested them. By 1954 both police and army appeared to have sufficient armoured vehicles. Perhaps for this reason tacticians were more concerned with clearing the sides of roads and securing cuttings and other danger spots. The 'Saracen' was a long-lived machine. It was still operational when the writer was teaching in Belfast in 1981, the vehicle a decade older than its crew.

[36] There is no mention of the GMC artillery tractor, or the later model armoured truck produced during and after 1952.

Appendix D

Extract from 'The Conduct of Anti-terrorist Operations in Malaya.' HQ Malaya Kuala Lumpur 1952. Section referring to counter-measures against MRLA road ambushes.

Chapter XII. The road ambush.

Section 1.

1. Security Forces must constantly use the roads of Malaya and the danger of ambush is an ever present one. It is the duty of all commanders to keep the problem of counter ambush action constantly in mind and to keep themselves informed as to bandit tactics used. Also to ensure that the troops under them appreciate the problem, take precautions against them, and are prepared for immediate offensive action in the event of their being ambushed.

Section 2.5

There is ample evidence to show that the bandit plans and executes a road ambush with very great care. He gathers information from all sources, chooses his ground carefully and well, makes a detailed plan - and often rehearses it—and organises his forces in a workmanlike manner.

Section 6. BALING OUT DRILL.

1. When a vehicle is forced to stop in an ambush position, due either to an obstacle or injury to the driver, troops must debus instantly. This must be taught and practised as a drill.
2. The bandit attempts to stop the vehicle in his killing ground by the use of mines or obstacles, or by firing at the tyres. He then tries to kill the entire load in the first moment of surprise; to do this he places an automatic where it can cover the rear of the vehicle.
3. The question of alertness has already been stressed. Vehicle commanders must call troops to scale 1 of alertness whenever likely ambush postions are approached.
4. To ensure ease of debussing all packs and stores will be piled in the centre of the vehicle. Troops will sit along the sides. Troops will be holding their weapons at all times and spare Bren magazines will be in soldiers pouches—NOT in boxes. Vehicle sentries will have primed No 80 grenades to hand ready to throw.
5. When the vehicle is forced to stop:
   a) The vehicle commander will shout 'DEBUS RIGHT' or 'LEFT' to indicate the direction in which troops will muster.
   b) Sentries throw No 80 grenades in direction of fire.
   c) Sentries fire in direction of fire to disturb bandit's aim.
   d) Troops debus over both sides of the vehicle and dash in the direction indicated. In the case of the armoured 3-ton vehicle all exits will be used, under cover of fire from the vehicle itself.
   e) As soon as troops are clear sentries debus and join the remainder.
   f) At this stage of the battle the aim must be to collect the fit men as a formed body for counter action. Wounded troops must be dealt with after counter action is taken.
6. The drill must be practised frequently by vehicle loads, eg infantry sections. Where miscellaneous loads are made up before a journey, two or three practices must be held before the convoy moves off.

Section 7.

2. In the case of large Service Corps convoys with armed military drivers it is considered that the principal behind the drill holds good.

4. The appearance of a unit's road convoys can tell much about its operational efficiency. The bandit can read and interpret the signs as well as we can.

5. The danger of ambush must not be allowed to become a bogey. Troops should be taught that well prepared they are more than a match for the bandit under any circumstances and that the contact afforded by a road ambush gives them the opportunity of closing with the bandit and destroying him. They must understand also the more prepared and aggressive they are and appear to be to the watcher, the less likely they are to be ambushed.

Appendix E

The Briggs Plan

As soon as he arrived in Malaya Sir Harold Briggs saw the centre of the problem facing the Security Forces. The MRLA strength lay in their familiarity with the jungle, their mobility and advantage of choosing when and where to attack. Their weakness lay in supply. His experience in Burma taught him that small groups of guerrillas who were highly mobile where almost impossible to defeat unless their hold on the civilian population was broken and their supply lines were cut. The Briggs Plan had four sections.

- to dominate the populated areas and build up a sense of security, free from CPM enforcement squads, uniformed or Min Yuen;
- to break up the CPM organisation within the populated areas;
- to isolate the MRLA platoons from their sources of food and medical supplies;
- to destroy the MRLA by forcing the guerrilla platoons to attack the Security Forces on their own ground.

None of these problems was easy to solve, but Briggs saw the third as the greatest task ahead of him. So long as the squatters continued to grow food and so long as the police lacked the power to protect them, the squatters would continue to supply the MRLA. The squatters were a group of landless, independent and industrious Chinese who farmed along the jungle edge. The invasion of 1941–42, Japanese brutality and lack of food added groups of refugees to their number. Many stayed there after the Japanese surrender. Some were communist sympathisers and a minority of these active in the Min Yuen, but the great majority gave food because they were terrified of the men who came out of the jungle to lecture them, take their food and, from time to time, hold peoples courts to try, torture and frequently execute anyone who did not co-operate.

Brigg's answer was to separate the MRLA from those who were supplying them with food, clothing and medical supplies, willingly or under duress. Out of this grew the 'New Villages' policy. This was an immense piece of social engineering, nothing less than re-settling up to 600,000 Chinese. Secure villages on fertile land had to be constructed along the entire west coast of Malaya, protected by barbed wire fences, searchlights and sand-bagged machine gun posts. Until Home Guards could be recruited and trained to defend the villages the burden fell upon the already overburdened police. Historians are divided on both the morality and the efficiency of the resettlement program. In Malaya it was successful, whereas attempts to emulate it during the Vietnam War failed (see Short 2000:ch 7; Harper 1999:ch 4. For a personal view see Han 1956).

Appendix F

Recommended reading

Allen, Charles and Michael Mason (eds) 1983, *Tales from the South China seas*: Images of the British in South-East Asia in the twentieth century, Deutsch, London. Includes an account of home-built armoured cars (page 223) and interviews with Old Malayans.

Bartlett, Vernon 1954, *Report from Malaya*, Verschoyle, London. Useful survey of Malaya under Templer.

Burgess, Anthony 1972 *The Malayan trilogy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth. Three novels that give an accurate, if jaundiced, view of Malaya/Malaysia in transition. Burgess delights in the intercourse and misunderstandings that accompany the mixing of class and race. To anyone who witnessed the prelude to *merdeka*, comic as well as dramatic, Burgess' description is a delight.

Campbell, Colonel A 1953 *Jungle green*, Allen & Unwin, London. Forward by Templer. The book that so enraged Professor Purcell. Today it is hard to see why. National Servicemen who read it in Malaya regarded the Colonel's patronising view of Other Ranks and 'Natives' as a joke.

Chapman, Colonel F Spencer 1949, *The jungle is neutral*, Chatto & Windus, London. If any book could be called the handbook for the Malayan Emergency this is the one. Spencer Chapman's book stands out not just as a manual for jungle survival but for its clarity and quality of language, as an adventure story, naturalist's logbook and dramatic tale of survival. I read it, very like someone in a storm reaches for a lifejacket, when the French lost the war in Indochina and, to those convinced by the 'Domino theory', history appeared to be about to repeat itself in Southeast Asia. I have read it many times for pleasure since leaving the army. Highly recommended to anyone contemplating a visit to the jungles of Southeast Asia.

Cloake, John 1985, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*, Harrap, London. Cloake gives us a valuable and entertaining account of the life of an extraordinary man. His pen-portraits of members of the High Commissioner's staff at Kings House, Kuala Lumpur, are well observed. For example, Templer's one-armed military adviser, Major Lord Wynford and his military private secretary, WO2 Olive Gibb, an efficient but also motherly lady. (The writer met both at Kings House.) On the current of events in Malaya preceding Templer's appointment as High Commissioner Cloake is often misleading, taking popular stories at their face value. Professor Chandran Jeshurun wrote in his review of *Templer*: 'Cloake is the prisoner of the private papers for there is little evidence of more investigative reading' (*Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* vol 61 1988). Cloake follows Miller and Lyttelton in eulogising Young while belittling Gray and the Palestinians

Clutterbuck, Brigadier Richard 1973, *Riot and revolution in Singapore and Malaysia. 1945–63*, Faber, London.

Dixon, Norman 1994, *The psychology of military incompetence*, revised edition, Pimlico Books, London, and the earlier edition, published in 1976 by Jonathan Cape. Professor Dixon is a former officer of Royal Engineers who lost a hand, and is now professor of psychology at the University of London. The first and second versions of his book differ, some essays added, some deleted. As a shrewd and sympathetic view of military life this is both interesting and enjoyable reading.

Fauconnier, Henri 1948 *The soul of Malaya* Penguin, Harmondsworth. Translated from the French *Malaisie* (1931). Novel of plantation life between the two world wars.

Furedi, F 1993, 'Creating a breathing space', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21(3).

Harper, TN 1999, *The end of empire and the making of Malaya*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. This covers the period from the Second World War to the present day. For anyone who wants to attempt to understand the complex and multi-racial, society of Malaysia this large and detailed account is essential reading. It is especially useful as a corrective to those of my generation who experienced British Malaya but have little understanding of the changes that have taken place since the official end of the Emergency in 1960. My only criticism of this otherwise excellent work is a lack of sympathy, on Dr Harper's part, for his countrymen trying to cope with a bewildering, and often bloody, Asian puzzle, usually under conditions of extreme discomfort.

Herren, Louis 1978, *Growing up on the* Times, Hamish Hamilton, London. Famous for his altercations with the High Commissioner (for Templer's side of the story see Cloake 1985:292–94). In his own writing Herren comes across as a conceited man with an inflated sense of his own importance. On the other hand some of his paranoia is well founded. Young's papers show that the Commissioner of Police requested chums in Special Branch in UK to investigate Herren. Young was convinced that the journalist was a communist agent. At the same time the Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, put pressure on the editor of the *Times* to move Herren from Singapore to somewhere less sensitive. Even if one takes the journalist's version with a pinch of salt, this storm in a teacup reveals very clearly the way the British establishment operates when its members feel threatened.

Heskin, Ken 1980, *Northern Ireland: A psychological analysis*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin. This is a wise and readable book written in non-technical language. Heskin's research applies as much to other low-intensity conflicts, such as Palestine, Malaya or Cyprus, as it does to Northern Ireland. Heskin was a lecturer in psychology at Queens University, Belfast during the same period that I was teaching at the University of Ulster. His view of the situation in Northern Ireland at that stage in the 'Troubles' is clear and detached. This very detachment earned him vituperative condemnation, particularly over chapter 4, 'Terrorism', with its opening sentence: 'Terrorism is in the eye of the beholder.' He goes on to compare atrocious behaviour of the terrorist with that of uniformed groups in a conventional war, mentioning such controversial names as Dresden, Hiroshima and the London Blitz. He caused especial offence by making comparisons between 'conflict-oriented groups', naming the Provisional IRA, the RUC and British Army:

> Milgrams research has brought to light and subjected to theoretical analysis a phenomenon of human behaviour with which military practitioners have been familiar for centuries. All the square-bashing, kit cleaning and endless, apparently pointless regimentation and authority is geared towards the day when vile acts and atrocious behaviour will be called for and received (Heskin 1980:90–91).

Heussler, Robert 1983, *Completing the stewardship. The Malayan Civil Service 1942–1957*, Greenwood Press, Westport. Both Professor Heussler's books on the British administration show impressive research and scholarship and give the reader a very clear picture of the working of British rule in Malaya. But the reader who is unfamiliar with the nuances of the class system in the colonies should consider the viewpoint of the author. Like a number of American academics living in England, Heussler has embraced the snobberies and class-consciousness of an England of an earlier age. His view of Malaya during the last days of British rule is the opposite to that of Anthony Burgess.

Kirkup, J 1965, *Tropic temper*, Collins, London. Autobiographical novel by a visiting lecturer with interesting and amusing vignettes of post independence society in Malaysia.

Kitson, Brigadier Frank 1971, *Low intensity operations: Subversion, insurgency and peacekeeping*, Faber and Faber, London. As a young officer Kitson served in Malaya and Kenya, much later as a senior officer in Northern Ireland. This analysis is often extremely revealing about such secretive matters as the links between police, army, intelligence organisations and paramilitary groups. The author gives a clear insight into the way officials and military men think in a violent society.

Louis, WR and R Robinson 1994, 'The imperialism of decolonisation', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*.

Lyttelton, Oliver, Viscount Chandos 1962 *The memoirs of Lord Chandos*, The Bodley Head, London. The author's viewpoint is that of the political and commercial elite. Lyttelton frequently rewrites his own history. For example, he changed his story between his report to Churchill's cabinet and his memoirs. Compare Lyttelton's account of the dismissal of Gray (page 374) with Stockwell's *Malaya* volume 2, item 257. Sir Richard Catling described Gray's last evening in Malaya when they had a drink together. Gray did not resign. He left without any ceremonial parade or publicity to avoid any further drama or dissension in the force. The 'mystery' of Gray's departure was merely another stunt whipped up by the press.

> It is a mistake to regard Gray as having been forced to resign by anybody. He was not. When his job as commander of the police in Malaya was taken from him he quietly folded his tent and left. I admired him (Catling 2000b).

McKie, Ronald 1963, *Malaysia in focus*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney. An Australian view of Southeast Asia, opposed to the Heussler view. Includes an interview with Leon Comber.

Maugham, W Somerset 2002, *Collected short stories*, Volume 4, Vintage, London. The stories are undated in this volume but most were written between 1921 and 1930. Heussler makes a point of denigrating Maugham, Burgess and Orwell as mere novelists. In fact all three explore hidden depths in British life in Southeast Asia that no factual account can reach. Written well before the Second World War, 'The letter' and 'The outstation' show Maugham's skill at dissecting the nervous system of colonial society. Though written at least a decade before the fall of Singapore, 'The outstation' reveals the mutual incomprehension leading to hatred of the upper-class English Old Malaya hand and the impatient colonial with a chip on his shoulder, forecasting the animosity between the Old Malayans and the Palestinians a quarter of a century later.

Miller, Harry 1954, *Menace in Malaya*, Harrap, London. Harry Miller spent his working life as a journalist in Malaya and Singapore, most of it on the staff of the *Straits Times*. Published at the half-way point in the Emergency, *Menace in Malaya* was the first serious, well researched book on the campaign and has been quoted in many later studies. Miller established excellent contacts both on the island and the peninsula and kept himself well-informed on the day-to-day incidents and dramas of the conflict. He described events honestly as he saw them. But hindsight shows that many things were not what they seemed at the time. Some opinions are wrong, some stories untrue. In the case of the expansion and training of the police Miller relied on his contacts, most of whom hailed from a more civilised pre-war society. Many of the stories contained as much gossip and rumour as verifiable fact. Being a working journalist in a tense, often dangerous situation, Miller cannot be blamed for a few errors in a flow of perceptive professional reporting. Others who arrived late on the scene quote Miller without bothering to check his sources. In his second book on the Emergency, published 18 years later, Miller (1972) is frank and open in putting the record straight.

Moran, JWG 1959, *Spearhead in Malaya*, Peter Davis, Leeds. Autobiographical novel by a former Malayan police lieutenant. Most former officers consider it an authentic view of the police role during the Emergency.

Morrah, Patrick 1968, *The history of the Malayan police*, Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch, Singapore. A useful and interesting history that concludes with the Pacific war of 1941–45. Morah shows that calls for a 'return to normal policing' were baseless. The Malayan police tradition was always that of a para-military or gendarmerie force and that tradition is continued in today's Royal Malaysian Police.

Morrison, Ian 1942. *Malayan postscript*, Faber and Faber, London. Clear and unbiased description of the fall of Malaya and Singapore. The author was killed in Korea.

O'Ballance, Edgar 1966 *Malaya: the communist insurgent war 1948–1960*, Faber, London. This is a readable, accurate, fair and well -researched account of the Emergency.

Ooi Jin-Bee 1963, *Land, people and economy of Malaya*, Longmans, London. Particularly chapter 6 'The pattern of population distribution' and chapter 7 'New Villages'. Contains a useful account of the genesis and post-Emergency development of these settlements. Many have prospered and flourished in a way that few observers would have predicted in the mid-1950s.

Orwell, George 1967, *Burmese days*, Penguin, Harmondsworth (first published 1934). This is an autobiographical novel based on the writer's service with the British Indian police in Burma. See also autobiographical notes by Orwell in 'The road to Wigan Pier' (1962, Penguin, Harmondswoth, pages 123–30). Comparing Orwell's experience during the years following the war of 1914–18 with society in post-1945 Malaya is both interesting and useful.

Pilger, John 1998, *Hidden agendas*, Vintage, London. Whatever the merits of the author's opinions on recent history in Southeast Asia, his views on the Malayan Emergency are a grotesque distortion of events. Inaccurate comparisons with the Vietnam War are followed by allegations of British atrocities in Malaya. A rant of hearsay and wild accusations that are not backed up by any proof or evidence.

Pluvier J, 1974, *South East Asia from colonialism to independence*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.

Purcell, Victor 1965, *The Chinese in South East Asia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur. When he can detach his own ego from his research Purcell is superb. He brings a lifetime of research and enthusiasm to his subject.

Purcell, Victor 1954, *Malaya, communist or free?*, Gollancz, London. The book that so infuriated the High Commissioner and provoked Young and the Malayan Special Branch to request their colleagues in UK to investigate the professor. The main body of the book is thoughtful and interesting. In the introduction and conclusions (possibly added later) Purcell's egoism and hurt pride have run away with him.

Pye, Lucien W 1956, *Guerrilla communism in Malaya: Its social and political meaning*, Princeton University Press, Princeton. An extremely interesting and detached account by an American sociologist of interviews with both captured and surrendered MRLA. This explains a mystery that baffled many British and Australian soldiers. Why did captured communist Chinese immediately turn against their former comrades?

SarDesai, DR 1994, *South East Asia, past and present*, Westview, Boulder.

Shennan, Margaret 2000, *Out in the midday sun: The British in Malaya 1880–1960*, John Murray, London. The author was born in British Malaya so, naturally enough, sees the country through 'Old Malayan' eyes. Yet the account is generally (and unusually) fair to the 'Newcomers'.

Short, Anthony 2000, *In pursuit of Mountain rats. The Communist insurrection in Malaya*, Cultured Lotus Press, Singapore. Despite the misleading title this book is the most thorough account of all the details and nuances of the Emergency and nothing like it can possibly be written again. The original version ,*The communist insurrection in Malaya 1948–1960*, was commissioned by the Malaysian government, who gave Professor Short access to the Malaysian PRO, a privilege that no foreign researcher has enjoyed since. When the book was at proof stage the Malaysian government changed course and, without giving a reason, demanded that the book not be published. Oxford University Press capitulated. Fortunately for scholars of Southeast Asia Robert Mueller published the book in 1975. Unfortunately the book soon became obtainable second hand only, at a huge price, as the Malaysian government bought up copies. A year ago I heard that the book had been re-published in Singapore and was on the shelves again. It cannot be recommended too highly.

Smith, Eric David 1985, *Malaya and Borneo*, Ian Allen, London.

Smith, RB and AJ Stockwell 1988, *British policy and the transfer of power in Asia: Documentary perspectives*, SOAS, University of London.

Stockwell, AJ 1992, 'Policing during the Malayan Emergency, 1948–60: Communism, communalism and decolonization' in Anderson D and D Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonization: Politics, nationalism and the police, 1917–65*, Manchester University Press, Manchester. This article is essential reading for anyone who needs to understand the problems and trials facing the Malayan police through the Emergency and period leading to the transfer of power at independence. The collection of essays is also extremely useful as a guide to trace colonial police counterinsurgency techniques dating back to the guerrilla war in Ireland of 1919–21.

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GLOSSARY

ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
ADC	*Aide de Camp*
AFV	Armoured Fighting Vehicle
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier
ASP	Assistant Superintendent
ASU	Area Security Unit (Police)
Bandit	Pejorative term for MPAJA and Min Yuen
Bar	A bar to a DSO means that Gray won the DSO twice
Bluff Road	Headquarters of the Federal Police, Malaya
BMA	British Military Administration (immediate post-war period)
BOR	British Other Rank (soldier or NCO. MOR Malay. GOR Gurkha)
Briggs Plan	See Appendix E
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Whitehall, London)
CMG	Commander of St Michael and St George (British decoration)
CO	Commanding Officer (usually of a battalion, a ship or an RAF station)
CP	Commissioner of Police (over all police forces in Malaya)
CPM (MCP)	Communist Party of Malaya (term preferred by the party to MCP)
CPO	Chief Police Officer (of a state force)
CT	Communist Terrorist (term used by Security Forces for MRLA)
Domino theory	Belief, common in American and British military and diplomatic circles, th the fall of French Indochina would cause the fall of Thailand, followed b Malaya and Indonesia.
DSO	Distinguished Service Order (British decoration for RN & Marines)
Force 136	(British advisers fighting the Japanese with the MPAJA 1942-45)
GMC	General Motors Co. Refers to type of APC in common use 1952-60
GOC	General Officer Commanding (as I/C British troops, Malaya)
GS(I)	General Staff (Intelligence)
GS(O)	General Staff (Operations)
Hartal	Strike, labour unrest (Hindi)
HE	His Excellency. Often used referring to the High Commissioner
IA Drill	Immediate Action Drill (for troops or police in a road or rail ambush)
ISUM	Monthly Intelligence Summary, published by GS(I)
IRA	Irish Republican Army
JG	Jungle Green (uniform worn by Far East forces)

KD	Khaki Drill (uniform worn by Middle East forces)
KL	Kuala Lumpur
KMT	Kuo Min Tang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
KPM	Kings Police Medal (British decoration)
LMG	Light Machine Gun (usually refers to the Bren LMG)
MCP (CPM)	Malayan Communist Party (term preferred by Security Forces during the period 1945–60)
MCS	Malayan Civil Service
Min Yuen	Civilian arm of the MPAJA and later MRLA
MPAJA	Malayan Peoples Anti Japanese Army (1942–45)
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army (1948-onwards)
NCO	Non-commissioned officer.
OBE	Order of the British Empire (British decoration)
OCPC	Officer Commanding Police Circle
OCPD	Officer Commanding Police District
Old Malayans	Slang for pre-Second World War British MCS and Police officers
Palestinians	Slang term for former Palestine Police officers
PFF	Police Field Force (squads in the jungle, or jungle edge)
POW	Prisoner of War. In Malaya this usually referred to Japanese POWs
PRO	Public Records Office (Kew, London)
Rayat	The Malay people (Malay term indicating racial identity)
RMPFOA	Royal Malaysian Police Former Officers Association
SB	Special Branch (Police)
SC	Special Constable (Police)
Scout-car	Small armoured vehicle, usually mounting one or two LMGs
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel (surrendered communist)
SF	Security Forces (term including police, army, air force and navy)
SITREP	Daily Situation Report, published by GS(I)
TCV	Troop carrying vehicle
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
VE-Day	Day of celebration, Victory in Europe, 8 May 1945
VJ-Day	Day of celebration, Victory over Japan, 14 August 1945
WD	War Department (forerunner of today's Ministry of Defence)
WO	Warrant Officer. British senior NCO (WO class 1 and 2)

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