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Remember Bukit Kepong

GALLANT LAST STAND: The police have sacrificed much to uphold law and order in the country



THIS&THAT

STORIES of police bravery in the line of duty abound, and the most memorable and stirring of them all must surely be that of the defence of the police station at Bukit Kepong, an isolated community in the Pagoh district of Johor. This is what Brian Stewart, formerly of the Malayan Civil Service and the author of *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency — The Vital Contribution of the Police*, has to say in his introduction to the chapter on the "Gallant Last Stand" at Bukit Kepong.

"This is the story of how 13 Malay

policemen, supported magnificently by their wives, made a stand against overwhelming odds holding the enemy off for several hours and how, finally the exasperated CTs (communist terrorists) showed their usual barbarity and threw men, women and children, some still alive, into the burning remains of the police station."

The 200 heavily armed communists launched the attack at 4am on Feb 23, 1950. A surrendered Chinese communist, years after the event was interviewed by a gallant officer, Police Lieutenant J.W.G. Moran, the author of *Spearhead in Malaya*. This was what the Surrendered Enemy Personnel had to say: "We encircled the police station at four o'clock in the morning. We had chosen that hour because we thought the sentries would be asleep.

"As it happened they were not and that was the first setback to our plans. At exactly 4.30am our bugle was sounded and the attack was underway, firing into the police sta-

tion from all sides. We received a heavy barrage of return gunfire. The greatest resistance to our attack came from under the police station because the brens were there.

"We concentrated our frontal attack on that position, and after about an hour it was silenced. We then received orders to charge the front of the police station. This we did with fixed bayonets, but the gunfire from the Charge Room was so intense that we withdrew to reform for another attack."

The attackers took nearly five hours to accomplish their dastardly work because every policeman fought to the last and refused to surrender. The wives followed their brave example and died fighting. A small boy found trembling with fear among the dead policemen was thrown alive into the fire.

J.J. Raj (JR), now Datuk, who achieved great distinction as a police officer, was a young inspector of police officiating as the OCPD (Officer in Charge of Police District) of Pagoh in Johor. Bukit Kepong was in his neck of the woods.

This is his account of the epic defence of the remote police station, the symbol and embodiment of authority, law and order as recorded in his book, *The Struggle for Malaysian Independence*: "The scene was hor-



The police force in **Bukit Kepong in the 1950s**. It has not always been easy for them but they have shown what **esprit de corps and discipline** can achieve. Pic courtesy of the Royal Malaysia Police