

BRITISH DOCUMENTS ON THE END OF EMPIRE

General Editor S R Ashton
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Series B Volume 3

Malaya

Editor
A J STOCKWELL

Part I
THE MALAYAN UNION EXPERIMENT
1942-1948

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Malaya

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Contents

Foreword	<i>page</i> vii
Malaya: Schedule of contents: parts I–III	xvii
Abbreviations: part I	xix
Principal holders of offices 1942–1948: part I	xxiii
Chronological table of principal events: parts I–III	xxvii
Introduction	xxxix
<i>Notes to Introduction</i>	lxxxix
Summary of documents: part I	lxxxv
Documents: part I	1
Index: parts I–III	377
MAPS	
The Malayan Peninsula	xiv
South-East Asia and the Far East	xv

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IN

ORIGINAL

Foreword

The main purpose of the British Documents on the End of Empire Project (BDEEP) is to publish documents from British official archives on the ending of colonial and associated rule and on the context in which this took place. In 1945, aside from the countries of present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burma, Britain had over fifty formal dependencies; by the end of 1965 the total had been almost halved and by 1985 only a handful remained. The ending of Britain's position in these formal dependencies was paralleled by changes in relations with states in an informal empire. The end of empire in the period at least since 1945 involved a change also in the empire as something that was more than the sum of its parts and as such formed an integral part of Britain's domestic affairs and international relations. In publishing official British documents on the end of empire this project is, to a degree, the successor to the two earlier series of published documents concerning the end of British rule in India and Burma which were edited by Professors Mansergh and Tinker respectively.¹ The successful completion of *The transfer of power* and *The struggle for independence*, both of which were based on British records, emphasised the need for similar published collections of documents important to the history of the final stages of Britain's association with other dependencies in Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, South-East Asia and the Pacific. In their absence, scholars both from sovereign independent states which emerged from colonial rule, as well as from Britain itself, lack an important tool for understanding and teaching their respective histories. But BDEEP is also set in the much wider context of the efforts made by successive British governments to locate Britain's position in an international order. Here the empire, both in its formal and informal senses, is viewed as an instrument of the domestic, foreign and defence policies of successive British governments. The project is therefore concerned with the ending of colonial rule in individual territories as seen from the British side at one level, and the broader political, economic and strategic considerations involved in that at another.

BDEEP is a sequel, not only to the India and Burma series but also to the still earlier series of published Foreign Office documents which continues as Documents on British Policy Overseas (DBPO). The contemporary volumes in DBPO appear in two parallel series covering the years 1945 to 1955. In certain respects the documents published in the BDEEP volumes will complement those published in DBPO. On issues where there is, or is likely to be, direct overlap, BDEEP will not provide detailed coverage. The most notable examples concern the post-Second World War international settlements in the Far East and the Pacific, and the immediate events of the Suez crisis of 1956.

¹ Nicholas Mansergh et al, eds, *Constitutional relations between Britain and India: the transfer of power 1942-47*, 12 vols, (London, 1970-1983); Hugh Tinker, ed, *Constitutional relations between Britain and Burma: the struggle for independence 1944-1948*, 2 vols, (London, 1983-1984).

Despite the similarities, however, BDEEP differs in significant ways from its predecessors in terms both of presentation and content. The project is of greater magnitude than that undertaken by Professor Mansergh for India. Four major differences can be identified. First, the ending of colonial rule within a dependent empire took place over a much longer period of time, extending into the final years of the twentieth century, while having its roots in the Second World War and before. Secondly, the empire consisted of a large number of territories, varying in area, population, wealth and in many other ways, each with its own individual problems, but often with their futures linked to those of neighbouring territories and the growing complexity surrounding the colonial empire. Thirdly, while for India the documentary record for certain matters of high policy could be encapsulated within a relatively straightforward 'country' study, in the case of the colonial empire the documentary record is more diffuse because of the plethora of territories and their scattered location. Finally, the documents relating to the ending of colonial rule are not conveniently located within one leading department of state but rather are to be found in several of them. As the purpose of the project is to publish documents relating to the end of empire from the extensive range and quantity of official British records, private collections and other categories of non-official material are not regarded as principal documentary sources. In BDEEP, selections from non-official material will be used only in exceptional cases to fill gaps where they exist in the available official record.

In recognition of these differences, and also of the fact that the end of empire involves consideration of a range of issues which operated at a much wider level than that normally associated with the ending of colonial rule in a single country, BDEEP is structured in two main series along with a third support series. Series A represents the general volumes in which, for successive British governments, documents relating to the empire as a whole will be published. Series B represents the country or territory volumes and provides territorial studies of how, from a British government perspective, former colonies and dependencies achieved their independence, and countries which were part of an informal empire regained their autonomy. In addition to the two main documentary series, a third series – series C – will be published in the form of handbooks to the records of the former colonial empire which are deposited at the Public Record Office (PRO). The handbooks will be published in two volumes as an integral part of BDEEP and also as PRO guides to the records. They will enable scholars and others wishing to follow the record of the ending of colonial rule and empire to pursue their inquiries beyond the published record provided by the general studies in series A and the country studies in series B. Volume One of the handbooks, a revised and updated version of *The records of the Colonial and Dominions Offices* (by R B Pugh) which was first published in 1964, is entitled *Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office*. It covers over two hundred years of activity down to 1968 when the Commonwealth Office merged with the Foreign Office to form the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Volume Two, entitled *Cabinet, Foreign Office, Treasury and other records*, focuses more specifically on twentieth-century departmental records and also includes references to the records of inter-departmental committees, commissions of inquiry and international organisations. These two volumes have been prepared under the direction and supervision of Dr Anne Thurston, honorary research fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the

University of London.

The criteria which have been used in selecting documents for inclusion in individual volumes will be explained in the introductions written by the specialist editors. These introductions are more substantial and contextual than those in previous series. Each volume will also list the PRO sources which have been searched. However, it may be helpful to outline the more general guiding principles which have been employed. BDEEP editors pursue several lines of inquiry. There is first the end of empire in a broad high policy sense, in which the empire is viewed in terms of Britain's position as a world power, and of the inter-relationship between what derives from this position and developments within the colonial dependencies. Here Britain's relations with the dependencies of the empire are set in the wider context of Britain's relations with the United States, with Europe, and with the Commonwealth and United Nations. The central themes are the political constraints, both domestic and international, to which British governments were subject, the economic requirements of the sterling area, the geopolitical and strategic questions associated with priorities in foreign policy and in defence planning, and the interaction between these various constraints and concerns and the imperatives imposed by developments in colonial territories. Secondly, there is investigation into colonial policy in its strict sense. Here the emphasis is on those areas which were specifically – but not exclusively – the concern of the leading department. In the period before the administrative amalgamations of the 1960s,² the leading department of the British government for most of the dependencies was the Colonial Office; for a minority it was either the Dominions Office and its successor, the Commonwealth Relations Office, or the Foreign Office. Colonial policy included questions of economic and social development, questions of governmental institutions and constitutional structures, and administrative questions concerning the future of the civil and public services and of the defence forces in a period of transition from European to indigenous control. Finally there is inquiry into the development of political and social forces within colonies, the response to these and the transfer of governmental authority and of legal sovereignty from Britain to its colonial dependencies as these processes were understood and interpreted by the British government. Here it should be emphasised that the purpose of BDEEP is not to document the history of colony politics or nationalist movements in any particular territory. Given the purpose of the project and the nature of much of the source material, the place of colony politics in BDEEP is conditioned by the extent to which an awareness of local political situations played an overt part in influencing major policy decisions made in Britain.

Although in varying degrees and from different perspectives, elements of these various lines of inquiry appear in both the general and the country series. The aim in both is to concentrate on the British record by selecting documents which illustrate those policy issues which were deemed important by ministers and officials at the time. General volumes do not normally treat in any detail of matters which will be fully documented in the country volumes, but some especially significant documents do appear in both series. The process of selection involves an inevitable degree of

² The Colonial Office merged with the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1966 to form the Commonwealth Office. The Commonwealth Office merged with the Foreign Office in 1968 to form the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

sifting and subtraction. Issues which in retrospect appear to be of lesser significance or to be ephemeral have been omitted. The main example concerns the extensive quantity of material devoted to appointments and terms of service – salaries, gradings, allowances, pension rights and compensation – within the colonial and related services. It is equally important to stress certain negative aspects of the official documentary record. Officials in London were sometimes not in a position to address potentially significant issues because the information was not available. Much in this respect depended on the extent of the documentation sent to London by the different colonial administrations. Once the stage of internal self-government had been reached, or where there was a dyarchy, the flow of detailed local information to London began to diminish.

Selection policy has been influenced by one further factor, namely access to the records at the PRO. Unlike the India and Burma series and DBPO, BDEEP is not an official project. In practice this means that while editors have privileged access (in the form of research facilities and requisitioning procedures) to the records at the PRO, they do not have unrestricted access. For files which at the time a volume is in preparation are either subject to extended closures beyond the statutory thirty years, or retained in the originating department under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act of 1958, editors are subject to the same restrictions as all other researchers. Where necessary, volume editors will provide details of potentially significant files or individual documents of which they are aware and which they have not been able to consult.

A thematic arrangement of the documents has been adopted for the general volumes in series A. The country volumes in series B follow a chronological arrangement; in this respect they adopt the same approach as was used in the India and Burma series. For each volume in both series A and B a summary list of the documents included is provided. The headings to BDEEP documents, which have been editorially standardised, present the essential information. Together with the sequence number, the file reference (in the form of the PRO call-up number and any internal pagination or numeration) and the date of the document appear on the first line.³ The second and subsequent lines record the subject of the document, the type of document (letter, memorandum, telegram etc), the originator (person or persons, committee, department) and the recipient (if any). In headings, a subject entry in single quotation marks denotes the title of a document as it appears in the original. An entry in square brackets denotes a subject indicator devised by the editor. This latter device has been employed in cases where no title is given in the original or where the original title is too unwieldy to reproduce in its entirety. Security classifications and, in the case of telegrams, times of despatch and receipt, have generally been omitted as confusing and needlessly complicating, and are retained only where they are necessary to a full understanding. In the headings to documents and the summary lists, ministers are identified by the name of the office-holder, not the title of the office (ie, Mr Lyttelton, not secretary of state for the colonies).⁴ In the same contexts, officials are identified by their initials and surname. In general

³ The PRO call-up number precedes the comma in the references cited. In the case of documents from FO 371, the major Foreign Office political class, the internal numeration refers to the jacket number of the file.

⁴ This is an editorial convention, following DBPO practice. Very few memoranda issued in their name were actually written by ministers themselves, but normally drafted by officials.

volumes in series A, ambassadors, governors, high commissioners and other embassy or high commission staff are given in the form 'Sir E Baring (Kenya)'. Footnotes to documents appearing below the rule are editorial; those above the rule, or where no rule is printed, are part of the original document. Each part of a volume provides a select list of which principal offices were held by whom, with a separate series of biographical notes (at the end) for major figures who appear in the documents. Minor figures are identified in editorial footnotes on the occasion of first appearance. Link-notes, written by the volume editor and indented in square brackets between the heading and the beginning of a document, are sometimes used to explain the context of a document. Technical detail or extraneous material has been extracted from a number of documents. In such cases omission dots have been inserted in the text and the document is identified in the heading as an extract. Occasional omission dots have also been used to excise purely mechanical chain-of-command executive instructions, and some redundant internal referencing has been removed, though much of it remains in place, for the benefit of researchers. No substantive material relating to policy-making has been excised from the documents. In general the aim has been to reproduce documents in their entirety. The footnote reference 'not printed' has been used only in cases where a specified enclosure or an annex to a document has not been included. Unless a specific cross-reference or note of explanation is provided, however, it can be assumed that other documents referred to in the text of the documents included have not been reproduced. Each part of a volume has a list of abbreviations occurring in it. A consolidated index for the whole volume appears at the end of each part.

One radical innovation, compared with previous Foreign Office or India and Burma series, is that BDEEP will reproduce many more minutes by ministers and officials.

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* * * *

BDEEP has received assistance and support from many quarters. The project was first discussed at a one-day workshop attended by over thirty interested scholars which, supported by a small grant from the Smuts Memorial Fund, was held at Churchill College, Cambridge, in May 1985. At that stage the obstacles looked daunting. It seemed unlikely that public money would be made available along the lines provided for the India and Burma projects. The complexities of the task looked substantial, partly because there was more financial and economic data with which to deal, still more because there were so many more territories to cover. It was not at all clear, moreover, who could take institutional responsibility for the project as the India Office Records had for the earlier ones; and in view of the escalating price of the successive India and Burma volumes, it seemed unlikely that publication in book form would be feasible; for some while a choice was being discussed between microfilm, microfiche and facsimile.

A small group nevertheless undertook to explore matters further, and in a quite remarkable way found itself able to make substantial progress. The British Academy

adopted BDEEP as one of its major projects, and thus provided critical support. The Institute of Commonwealth Studies served as a crucial institutional anchor in taking responsibility for the project. The Institute also made office space available, and negotiated an administrative nexus within the University of London. Dr Anne Thurston put at the disposal of the project her unique knowledge of the relevant archival sources; while the keeper of the Public Records undertook to provide all the support that he could. It then proved possible to appoint Professor Michael Crowder as project director on a part-time basis, and he approached the Leverhulme Trust, who made a munificent grant which was to make the whole project viable. Almost all those approached to be volume editors accepted and, after consultation with a number of publishers, Her Majesty's Stationery Office undertook to publish the project in book form. There can be few projects that after so faltering a start found itself quite so blessed.

Formally launched in 1987, BDEEP has been based since its inception at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. The work of the project is supervised by a Project Committee chaired by Professor Anthony Low, Smuts professor of the history of the British Commonwealth in the University of Cambridge. Professor Michael Crowder became general editor while holding a visiting professorship in the University of London and a part-time position at Amherst College, Massachusetts. Following his untimely death in 1988, Professor Crowder was replaced as general editor by Professor David Murray, pro vice-chancellor and professor of government at the Open University. Mrs Anita Burdett was appointed as project secretary and research assistant. She was succeeded in September 1989 by Dr Ashton who had previously worked with Professors Mansergh and Tinker during the final stages of the India and Burma series. Dr Ashton replaced Professor Murray as project director and general editor in 1993. When BDEEP was launched in 1987, eight volumes in series A and B were approved by the Project Committee and specialist scholars were commissioned to research and select documents for inclusion in each. Collectively, these eight volumes (three general and five country)⁵ represent the first stage of the project which begins with an introductory general volume covering the years between 1925 and 1945 but which concentrates on the period from the Second World War to 1957 when Ghana and Malaya became independent.⁶

It is fitting that the present general editor should begin his acknowledgements with an appreciation of the contributions made by his predecessors. The late Professor Crowder supervised the launch of the project and planned the volumes included in stage one. The volumes already published bear lasting testimony to his resolve and dedication during the project's formative phase. Professor Murray played a no less crucial role in establishing a secure financial base for the project and in negotiating contracts with the volume editors and HMSO. His invaluable advice and expertise during the early stages of editing are acknowledged with particular gratitude.

⁵ Series A general volumes: vol 1 *Colonial policy and practice 1924–1945*; vol 2 *The Labour government and the end of empire 1945–1951* (published 1992); vol 3 *The Conservative government and the end of empire 1951–1957* (published 1994).

Series B country volumes: vol 1 *Ghana* (published 1992); vol 2 *Sri Lanka*; vol 3 *Malaya* (published 1995); vol 4 *Egypt and the defence of the Middle East*; vol 5 *Sudan*.

⁶ Plans are currently in preparation to commission new research for a second stage covering the period 1957–1964.

The project benefited from an initial pump-priming grant from the British Academy. Thanks are due to the secretary and Board of the Academy for this grant and for the decision of the British Academy to adopt BDEEP as one of its major projects. The principal funding for the project has been provided by the Leverhulme Trust and the volumes are a tribute to the support provided by the Trustees. A major debt of gratitude is owed to the Trustees. In addition to their generous grant to cover the costs of the first stage, the Trustees agreed to a subsequent request to extend the duration of the grant, and also provided a supplementary grant which enabled the project to secure Dr Ashton's appointment.

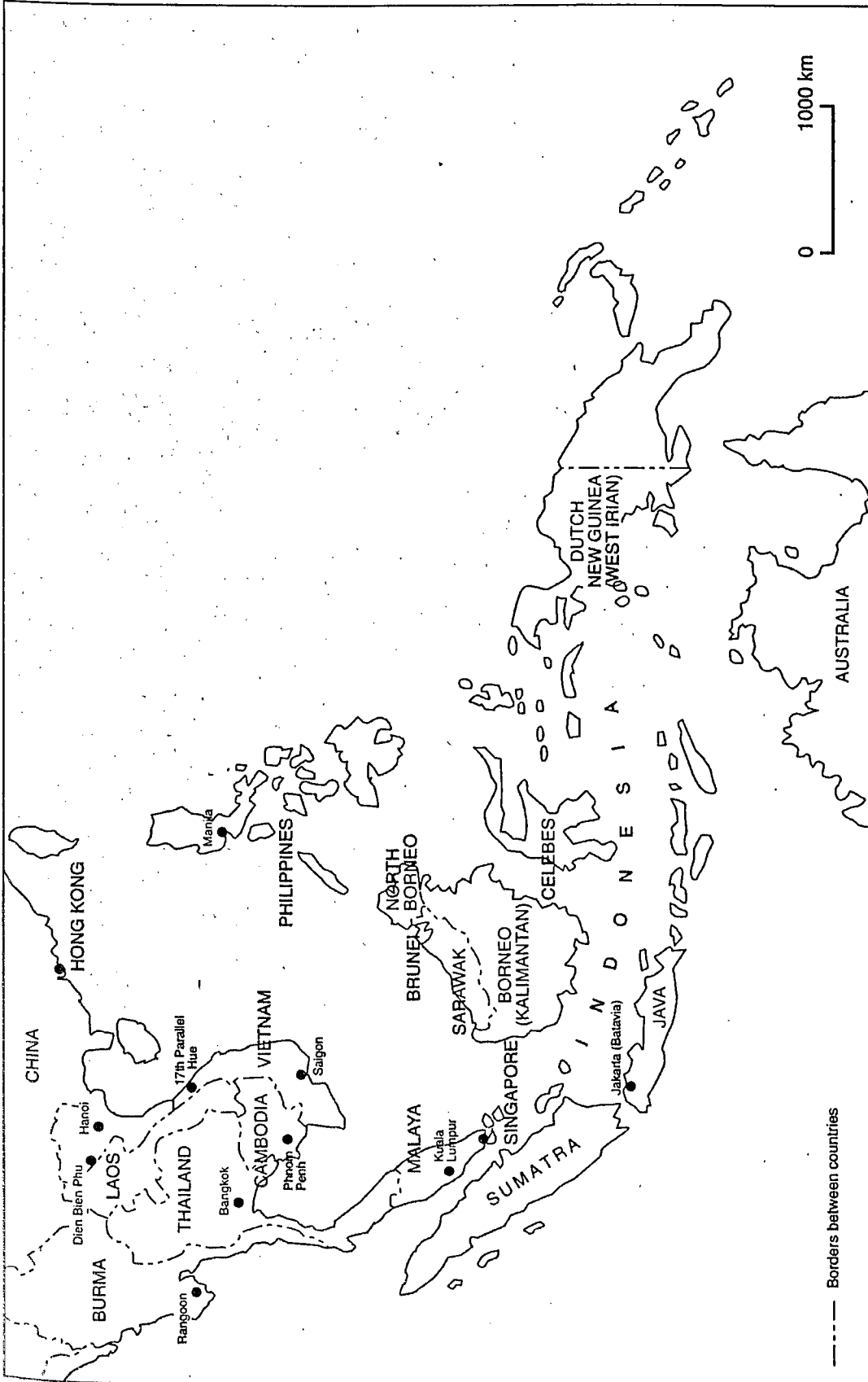
Members of the Project Committee, who meet annually at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, have provided valuable advice and much needed encouragement. Professor Low, chairman of the Committee, has made a singular contribution, initiating the first exploratory meeting at Cambridge in 1985 and presiding over subsequent developments in his customary constructive but unobtrusive manner.⁷ In addition to the annual meeting of the Project Committee, the project holds an annual seminar to discuss issues arising from the research of the volume editors. Valuable comments have been received from academic colleagues attending the seminars by invitation. The director and staff of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies have provided administrative support and the congenial surroundings within which the general editor works. The editors of volumes in Stage One have profited considerably from the researches undertaken by Dr Anne Thurston and her assistants during the preparation of the records handbooks. Although BDEEP is not an official project, the general editor wishes to acknowledge the support and co-operation received from the Historical Section of the Cabinet Office and the Records Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He wishes also to record his appreciation of the spirit of friendly co-operation emanating from the editors of DBPO. Dr Ronald Hyam, editor of the volume in series A on *The Labour government and the end of empire 1945–1951*, played an important role in the compilation of the house-style adopted by BDEEP and his contribution is acknowledged with gratitude. Thanks also are due to HMSO for assuming publishing responsibility and for their expert advice on matters of design and production. Last, but by no means least, the contribution of the keeper of the records and the staff, both curatorial and administrative, at the PRO must be emphasised. Without the facilities and privileges afforded to BDEEP editors at Kew, the project would not be viable.

S R Ashton
Institute of Commonwealth Studies
November 1994

⁷ Professor Low retired in November 1994 and has been succeeded as chairman of the Project Committee by Professor Andrew Porter, Rhodes Professor of Imperial History in the University of London.



The Malayan Peninsula



South-East Asia and the Far East

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Malaya

Schedule of Contents: Parts I–III

- PART I THE MALAYAN UNION EXPERIMENT 1942–1948**
- Chapter 1 Wartime planning, Mar 1942 – Aug 1945
Document numbers 1–42
- Chapter 2 British Military Administration, Aug 1945 – Mar 1946
Document numbers 43–81
- Chapter 3 Constitutional conflict: from Malayan Union to Federation, Apr 1946–
Feb 1948
Document numbers 82–138
- PART II THE COMMUNIST INSURRECTION 1948–1953**
- Chapter 4 The origins of the emergency, Feb–Sept 1948
Document numbers 139–167
- Chapter 5 Combating communism and communalism: diagnoses and
prescriptions, Oct 1948 – Dec 1950
Document numbers 168–205
- Chapter 6 Combating communism and communalism: progress and frustration,
Mar 1950 – Oct 1951
Document numbers 206–247
- Chapter 7 Changes at the top, Oct 1951 – Feb 1952
Document numbers 248–268
- Chapter 8 Fulfilling the directive: Templer’s regime to the declaration of the first
‘white area’, Feb 1952 – Aug 1953
Document numbers 269–303
- PART III THE ALLIANCE ROUTE TO INDEPENDENCE 1953–1957**
- Chapter 9 Planning federal elections, Sept 1953 – July 1954
Document numbers 304–334
- Chapter 10 Taking stock: regional security, Malayanisation and the first MCP peace
offer, July 1954 – July 1955
Document numbers 335–355

- Chapter 11 Alliance ascendancy: electoral victory and Baling talks, July–Dec 1955
Document numbers 356–391
- Chapter 12 The London conference and the Reid Commission, Jan 1956 – Feb 1957
Document numbers 392–443
- Chapter 13 Achievement of independence within the Commonwealth, Feb–Aug 1957
Document numbers 444–467

Abbreviations: Part I

ADC	aide de camp
AJA	Anti-Japanese Army
AJUF	Anti-Japanese United Front
ALFSEA	Allied Land Forces South-East Asia
AMCJA	All Malayan Council of Joint Action
API	Angktan Pemuda Insaf (youth movement for justice)
BBCAU	British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit
BDEEP	British Documents on the End of Empire Project
BMA	British Military Administration
BNB	British North Borneo
BSA	British South Africa Company
CA	civil affairs
CAB	Cabinet
CAU	civil affairs unit
CCAO(M)	chief civil affairs officer (Malaya)
CIGS	chief of the imperial general staff
C-in-C	commander-in-chief
CMG	Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George
CO	Colonial Office
Col	colonial/colonel
Con	Conservative Party (MP)
COSSEA	Chiefs of Staff South-East Asia
DCCAO	deputy chief civil affairs officer
Dept	Department
DQMG	deputy quarter master general
DSO	Companion of the Distinguished Service Order
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East