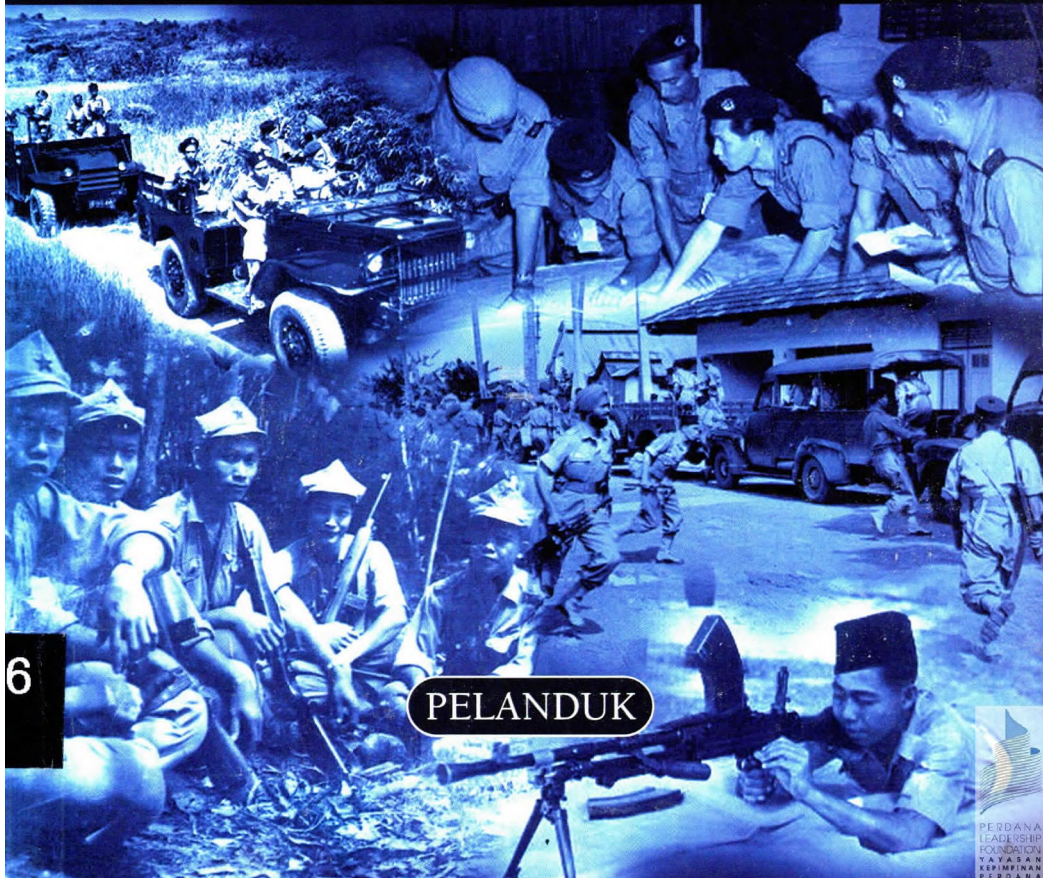


BRIAN STEWART, C.M.G., M.C.S.

# Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency

*The Vital Contribution of the Police*



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*In memory of all those gallant young men in the  
Malayan Police who risked, and sometimes  
gave, their lives during the Emergency.*





## FOREWORD

MORE USED to reviewing rather than forewording books, the first thing to say, in either capacity, is that for me this is utterly engaging. Academic reviewers often sniff at volumes of essays or conference proceedings - 'uneven quality' etc. - but academic reviewers seldom live dangerously. Nor do they always know how it feels. This is real. The body of evidence compared to the bones or structure of scholarly argument. Some of it is delightfully inconsequential: but so is quite a lot of family history. Some of it only lifts a corner of the curtain - for example, on Nicol Gray - although far enough for inference and to modify opinions, even if one is still looking for the full Monty. At the highest-level one wonders why no one mentions Arthur Young nor, for that matter Langworthy, Jenkin or Madoc. But this, again, reveals the historian's predisposition to believe that change comes from the top rather than from the bottom.

For me and for anyone else who may still need convincing, the overwhelming importance of what happened at the bottom is hereinafter revealed. Yes, it was fortuitous that as soon as the Mandate in Palestine ended, the Emergency in Malaya began. But how kampong Malays and British police lieutenants bonded to produce the indispensable security for the rubber estates and just how much work went into creating a special constabulary from nothing is certainly something that has hardly been taken into account, at least by me.

One knows that for every soldier who was killed, two policemen died. Not a lot of people, however, would know how fraught the situation was at the beginning and that police lieutenants could be killed within days of arrival without firing a shot. And there are few who have known the eventual, awful and terminal silence of ambush as well as the mayhem and fury when it begins. These are the unaffected and understated accounts of those who were at the sharp end. There is some very fine writing. If I were to mention one or two pieces, they would be those on 'Q' operations: because the authors had more space for their nar-

rative; and because they had me dry-mouthed with fear and excitement. Also, for the historian, the revelation that half of the remnants of an Armed Work Force - admittedly down to four in September 1956 - were women and that a woman State Committee Member in Negri Sembilan had another female comrade as her second in command.

Elsewhere there is humour, pathos, and a glorious piece of near libel on visitors from Westminster. There is the unaffected charm of the animal stories and snippets, a reminder not to bounce your Sten gun on the ground and so many changing pictures, shapes and colours as to produce a genuine, old-fashioned kaleidoscope.

Presumably this is what Brian Stewart had in mind: but it is astonishing, nevertheless. At an age when he might reasonably have put on his carpet slippers, to have sought out and compiled these first-hand testimonies has given us a monument to the Malayan Police. Many of the experiences were shared. Each of these accounts is unique. I hope it is not too sentimental to see it as a remarkable family history; and I am honoured that Brian has asked me to write this foreword. May I, in turn, honour the achievements, the bravery, and the steadfastness of those who served, and especially those who died.

*Anthony Short*  
*Crathie, Aberdeenshire*

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I HAVE A great number of people to thank for help in moving 'Operation Sharp End' from plan to reality.

*The Committee of the Royal Malaysia Police Former Officers' Association (RMPFOA) without whose support and encouragement the project would never have got off the ground, particularly the indefatigable Honorary Secretary, Paddy Giles, the Deputy Chairman, Gus Fletcher, and the Chairman, Simon Hutchinson.*

Tun Mohammed Hanif Omar, former Inspector General of Police, Tan Sri Mohd Amin bin Osman, former Deputy Inspector General and their colleagues in Malaysia, and other old Malaysian friends such as Datuk Amar Leo Moggie and Datin Amar Elizabeth, and Michael Thompson. My thanks also go to Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie and Tan Sri Khir Johari for their encouragement in this project.

I thank them all; particularly for the warm and generous welcome they gave me when Michael and I visited Kuala Lumpur in 2001 to seek their help and guidance.

I must express my deep gratitude to those former Royal Malaysia Police Officers who have unhesitatingly given me permission to use material from their books. Dato' Seri Yuan Yuet Leng, Dato' Mohd Pilus Yusoh, Dato' J.J. Raj (Jnr), Mr Leong Chee Woh, Mr Thambapillay and Mr Roy Follows.

It would be invidious and, indeed, impossible without devoting a chapter to the subject, to discuss the relative merits of the contributions of each individual who helped in this project. Some wrote encouragement but did not submit material; some sent photographs and documents and many submitted texts, which varied in length from half a page to 120 pages. The Bible has it that, "Many are called, but few are chosen." I hope those who were not chosen will accept my sincere thanks for their support and understand my problems.

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other academic, Steve Hurst, to whom I owe a particular debt of gratitude as an expert on the Malayan archives and an artist.

And I have to thank Kevin Baverstock, with whom I collaborated previously on a military book, for his excellent maps and 'visuals'.

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Last but by no means least, I must acknowledge the wonderful support given to me by Heather Hooker who has, with her cheerful efficiency, turned my dog's breakfast drafts into text, and to my long suffering wife, Sally, who proof-read after tolerating the long gestation period.



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## GLOSSARY AND CONVENTIONS

ADO	Assistant District Officer.
Alliance Party	An alliance of the principal Malay, Chinese and Indian parties.
Anjing	Dog.
AO	Administrative Officer. The title given to District Officers in the Malay States.
ADSBO	Assistant District Special Branch Officer.
Anai-Anai	White Ant.
AOCPD	Assistant Officer Commanding Police District.
AP	Auxiliary Policeman.
APC	Armoured Personnel Carrier (see GMC).
AS	Assistant Superintendent.
ASAL	The organisation developed by the MCP to control the Orang Asli.
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police, the rank attained by a Cadet ASP after he had passed his language and law exam and completed his probation.
Attap	A form of thatching used to make roofs and walls of buildings.
AWF	Armed Work Force (MCP term for cells of armed terrorists working on the jungle fringes under CTO direction).
Babi	Pig.
Bandits	A term in vogue at the beginning of the Emergency but abandoned in favour of CT as being dangerously reminiscent of the propaganda by the Nationalist Chinese, who were being severely trounced by the Communist 'bandits' in China.
Bangsa	Race.
Basha	A flimsy temporary shelter made from jungle plants.
BCM	Branch Committee Member (of the MCP).

Belukar	A nasty high scrub growing in secondary jungle; a formidable obstacle.
Bluff Road	Shorthand for Police Headquarters that is sited on a bluff overlooking KL.
BMA	British Military Administration which took over the administration after the Japanese surrender.
Bn	Battalion.
Bomoh	Witch Doctor.
BOR	British Other Rank; i.e. a British soldier.
Bren Gun	The highly regarded light machine gun used by the British Army throughout WWII and after. The CTs loved it.
British Adviser	The senior MCS officer in a Malay State.
British Sergeant	The predecessors of the Police Lieutenants.
Bruang	Bear.
Bukit	Hill.
Central Committee	Highest authority in the MCP.
CCM	Central Committee Member of MCP.
CCP	Chinese Communist Party.
CEP	Captured Enemy Personnel.
Chandu	Opium.
Cheongsam	The slinky, sheath-like, high-collared long gown worn by Chinese women of all ages. The design, a mix of Chinese and French chic, could be stunningly attractive on the right figure, and also highly seductive since it was slit up the side to a height chosen according to taste by the wearer.
CID	Criminal Investigation Department.
CO	Commanding Officer.
Commissioner of Police	The officer in charge of the Federation Police Force.
CPM	Colonial Police Medal for gallantry.
CPO	The senior police officer in a State or Settlement.
CT	Detective Constable.
DCM	District Committee Member of the MCP.

DLB	Dead Letter Box; i.e. prearranged hiding place in which to conceal a secret message for later collection.
DLI	Durham Light Infantry
DO	District Officer. The officer charged with over-all authority for a District.
Durian	A large fruit much beloved in South East Asia, but the taste is, to put it mildly, strange and not easily acquired by visitors. Its 'fragrance' is so penetrating and long-lasting that many carriers refuse to allow it on board!
DPP	Deputy Public Prosecutor (the senior government lawyer in each State or Settlement).
Dresser	A combination of male nurse and dispenser of medicines.
DSB	Director Special Branch.
DSBO	District Special Branch Officer.
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police.
DWEC	District War Executive Committee chaired by the DO and attended by Military Police and civilian representatives, charged with coordinating and prosecuting the counter-terrorist campaign at District level.
DZ	Dropping Zone, the place designated for dropping supplies from the air.
EIS	Emergency Information Service. The service set up in parallel with the Information Service to handle Psywar in support of the hearts and minds programmes and counter-terrorism.
FFJS	Field Force Jungle Squad.
FJC	Federal Jungle Company; the forerunner of the PFF.
Ferret Force	An improvised counter-insurgency force created at the beginning of the Emergency, led by ex-Force 136 Officers, Chinese-speaking MCS Officers and others, to hunt down 'bandits'.
Force 136	The clandestine force tasked by SOE to fight the Japanese.
Gajah	Elephant.

GM	George Medal.
GMC	Literally General Motor Corporation. In our context, the shorthand for the 'workhorse' armoured personnel carrier.
Gunong	Mountain (Malay).
Haji	A person who has been on a pilgrimage to Mecca.
Hang Kong	Supervisor of a tin mine or other workforce.
Hantu	A ghost, a supernatural spirit. (Malay).
Haram	Unclean: forbidden. (Malay).
HG	Home Guard.
HQ	Headquarters.
HSB	Head of Special Branch (State level).
Hujan	Rain. (Malay).
Hung Mo Kwai	Red-Haired Devil (i.e. a European) (Cantonese).
Imam	The religious head of a Muslim community.
IGP	Inspector General of Police; the title of the head of the Police Force of Malaysia.
ISA	Internal Security Act.
Istana	Palace. (Malay).
Jalan	Road. (Malay).
Kampong	Village. (Malay).
Kampong Guards	Equivalent of the Home Guard.
KAR	King's African Rifles.
KD	Khaki Drill (uniform).
Keling	A slang name for Tamils and others from South India. It derives from the word Kalinga. (Sanskrit).
Kempetai	Japanese Military Police.
Kenduri	Feast (Malay).
Kepala	Head (Malay) thus by extension, headman.
Ketua Kampong	Headman of the Kampong. (Malay).
KIA	Killed in Action.
KL	The commonly used abbreviation for Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia.

KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist People's Party) - the governing party of China until 1949.
Konfrontasi	Confrontation (the Indonesian attack on the newly created State of Malaysia in the 1960s).
Kongsi	A Chinese term for a group or association and, by extension, a building or complex housing a group of Chinese workers.
Kubu	Sentry Posts.
Kukri	The legendary short curved sword used by the Gurkhas.
Kwai	Literally 'spirit' or 'devil' (Chinese). Used by the less educated Chinese to refer to all non-Chinese. Hence, for example, Hung Mo Kwai (red-haired devil) was a common slang Cantonese name for any European. Many Chinese have claimed in our PC times that the term should not be taken at its face value, but rather as a light-hearted term. Not all foreigners are persuaded.
Ladang	A clearing made in the jungle in order to grow food. (Malay).
Lalang	A type of tall stiff grass with sharp edges, which made a formidable obstacle. (Malay).
Laterite	Red clay that hardens after exposure to air: frequently used as rural road surface.
Latex	The sticky white substance tapped from the bark of a rubber tree to make rubber sheets.
Lee Enfield	The reliable and effective .303 calibre rifle used by the British Army for many years.
LZ	Landing Zone; a landing strip specially prepared for operational purposes.
Mata Mata	Slang Malay term for policeman; literally 'eyes'.
Mata Mata Gelap	The slang Malay term for a detective; literally 'secret eyes'.
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association. The Chinese Party formed during the Emergency. Led by Tan Cheng Lock (later Sir Cheng Lock Tan).
MCP	Malayan Communist Party (later Communist Party Malaya).

MCS	Malayan Civil Service; the officers, like the gazetted police officers, were traditionally recruited by the British Colonial Office.
Mentri Besar	The Chief Minister in a Malay State.
Merdeka	The Malay term for Independence.
Min Yuen	A Chinese term for the 'masses' organisation outside the jungle, which supplied logistic and intelligence support for the armed terrorists.
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer.
MO	Medical Officer.
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army; i.e. the Communist- dominated guerrilla force, which collaborated with Force 136.
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army, the name given by the MCP to their gangs of armed terrorists.
MSS	Malayan Security Service; the service responsible for monitoring security threats in Malaya and Singapore.
MU	Malayan Union.
New Village	A village constructed to house rural people, usually Chinese, who had been moved from the jungle fringes for their security and in order to disrupt the CTs supply system. They were provided with a perimeter fence, police and HGs, schools, water supplies, and health care, and with material to build houses.
NRIC	Identity Card.
OC	Officer Commanding.
OCPD	Officer Commanding Police District.
OCS	Officer Commanding (Police) Station.
OCTU	Officer Cadet Training Unit (British Army).
Orang	Person or people. (Malay).
OSPC	Officer Superintending Police Circle. (A Circle consisted of several Police Districts).
P&T	Post and Telegraph, i.e. the department responsible for running the Post Office and the telegraph service.

Padi	Rice in the field; (Malay).
Padang	A flat open ground in the centre of village or town. (Malay).
Panji	Sharpened bamboo stake, which used as a mantrap can cause painful wounds or, if smeared with poison, death. (Malay).
Parang	A heavy, short-bladed sword used for clearing jungle but, like a machete or panga, at times a fearsome slashing weapon. (Malay).
PC	Police Constable.
Penghulu	Malay headman of a rural area.
P/Lt	Police Lieutenant. The rank given to the European reinforcements who were hurriedly recruited in 1948.
PFF	Police Field Force; the paramilitary force organised to fight the CT in the jungle.
PKI	Party Communist Indonesia.
Prahu	Boat (Malay).
Propaganda	Generic term for attempts to influence people by words; originally used in relation to a committee of Roman Catholic Cardinals overseeing missionary work.
Psywar	Psychological Warfare; a more sophisticated form of propaganda, which the practitioners intended to be more effective than the lies of the MC propaganda machine.
PWD	Public Works Department. The department responsible for all public building.
Q Squads	Police squads consisting of government officers, SEPs and CEPS, masquerading as CTs.
Raja	The Malay Ruler of Perlis State.
Rakits	Bamboo raft. (Malay).
Resettlement	The process of moving squatters and others from the jungle fringes to New Villages.
Rotan	Cane.
R&R	Rest and Recreation. Originally a term coined by the military to cover a period of local leave, if possible amongst the fleshpots.

RMPFOA	Royal Malaysia Police Former Officers' Association.
Rubber Tapper	The worker who wields a tapper's knife to create a channel in the bark from which the latex oozes and drips into a small cup.
RV	Rendezvous; a prearranged meeting place.
SAC	Senior Assistant Commissioner.
Sakai	A generic, rather derogatory, term for the aborigines in general.
Sampan	Small boat. (Chinese).
Sangar	A breastwork built of stone to provide protection against bullets.
Sarong	Traditional cloth sheath worn by men and women. (Malay).
SAS	Special Air Service.
SB	Special Branch (Police).
SCA	Secretary for Chinese Affairs. A Chinese-speaking MCS officer working at Federal or State Settlement level on 'Chinese Affairs'.
SC	Special Constable. Police recruited specially on short contracts to provide security in the rural areas. Most were Malays.
SCM	State Committee Member; (subordinate to Central Committee of the MCP).
Semut Api	Fire Ants. (Malay).
Senoi	One of the aborigine groups. A highly successful force recruited from Senois and trained by the SAS for jungle work against the CTs.
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel. A CT who surrendered.
Sitrep	Situation Report.
SOE	Special Operations Executive: organisation tasked with guerrilla warfare against occupying forces.
Songkok	Malay cap shaped like a cross between a Glengarry and a 'pillbox'.
SF	Security Forces (police and military).

SOVF	Special Operations Volunteer Force. (Consisting of SEPs operating under police command).
Squaddie	Slang term for a Private in the British Army.
Sten Gun	A crude but useful submachine gun widely used in WWII.
Stop	A party of men placed behind the objective to prevent the enemy escaping.
Sultan	The ruler of a Malay State.
Sungei	River (Malay).
Susah	Difficult (Malay).
SWEC	State War Executive Committee.
Syce	A word imported from India which originally meant a groom and, later, a driver.
Tamil	The South Indian race which supplied most of the labour force for the early Malayan rubber estates.
Tengku	Malay Prince.
Temiar	One of the aboriginal tribal groups.
Tengku Bendahara	Court Chamberlain.
Thunderer	A lorry bearing a loudspeaker system for broadcasting messages to the CTs.
TS	Tiger Squads. (Police fighting patrols).
Tin Tailing	The worked out residue of a tin mine.
Towkays	Chinese shopkeepers and businessmen.
Tuan	A polite form of address used in Malay. The term has become tarnished. It does not have to be translated as 'master'; it is the equivalent of 'Sir', the derivation is from the Spanish 'Don'.
Tuan Mat Salleh	Malay slang for expatriate officers.
Ulu	Backwoods - Up Country - Up River.
UMNO	United Malay National Organisation, the principal Malay Party led by Tengku Abdul Rahman.
WD	War Department (British).
World (Happy or Great)	The name given to Amusement Parks containing food stalls, restaurants, theatres, cinemas, dance halls etc. Post-war every large town had

one or more 'Worlds' where families could stroll, eat, drink or otherwise amuse themselves and men could enjoy the dance halls.

WOSB

War Office Selection Board (British).

WRAC

Women's Royal Army Corps.

I have not attempted to standardise the Romanised version of Malay and Chinese words and names which appear from time to time in the stories.

There have, of course, been changes in orthography over the half-century since the Emergency, but in the case of Malaya the changes have not been extreme, like Burma for instance becoming Myanmar; it does not need a cryptographer to work out that Terengannu and Trengannu are the same place.

The Romanisation of Chinese names presents plenty of scope for confusion since the official Romanisation (Pin Yin) deals only with the standard national language, and does not cover the so-called dialects of the south which are the mother tongues of most Malayan Chinese. For example, Mr Wu, a northern Chinese, would find his name being pronounced Goh in Fujian Province or Ng in Guangdong.

The Malay convention for personal names follows the Arabic custom. The given name is followed by 'bin' (son of) or 'binti' (daughter of) and then the father's name. Thus Onn bin Jaffar is Onn the son of Jaffar.

For Chinese the traditional system is to put the family name first. Thus Tan Cheng Lock is Cheng Lock child of Mr Tan. Sometimes Chinese adopt western custom when Romanising their names: Sir Cheng Lock Tan, for example, but this is rare.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE FIRST EDITION, which was published in 2003, was above all a collection of the memories of police officers who had contributed. However, although those stories continue to be the main purpose of the book I have added further material; on the four very different men who commanded the police from 1948 to 1958, on the intelligence situation, on Chin Peng's book *My Side of History* and on Loi Tak and Chin Peng the two Secretary Generals of the MCP.

These pieces, except in the Chin Peng case, draw mainly upon material in the PRO and the Bodleian Library.

One might, of course, cast the net wider, with, for example, a note on the four High Commissioners. They were all very different men, beloved by some and execrated by others. Gent, the Colonial Office Mandarin despatched to Malaya to implement the new disastrous Union constitution, castigated by the old Malaya clique for being too soft, and killed in an air accident on his way to the UK. Gurney, ex-Chief Secretary in Palestine who, like Gent, died at the hands of terrorists before the verdict of history could be pronounced. General Templer, 'Tiger' of Malaya, greatly loved by those who wanted action but not by those who wanted a quiet life, and lastly Macgillvray, a man with consummate skills as an administrator and a diplomat.

But since this book does not pretend to be a history of the Emergency (that task has already been well attended to by Professor Short). I shall not broaden the canvas further.



## PREFACE

MANY BOOKS HAVE been written about the war which erupted in Malaya in 1948 and was known, for legal reasons, as an 'Emergency'. There have been histories by Professors Short and Stockwell, accounts by authors and journalists, academics, soldiers and by former police officers, such as Dato' Mohd Pilus Yusoh, Dato' J.J. Raj (Jnr), Dato' Seri Yuan Yuet Leng, Mr Leong Chee Woh, Mr R Thambapillay, Roy Follows, Leon Comber and the late John Slimming. But none of these authors took as a central theme the role and performance of the police in that bitterly fought war, nor did they deliberately attempt, as this book does, to record the voices of the junior police officers who fought in what General Templer was quick to recognise as a 'Subalterns' war.

Thomas Grey, the 18th Century poet, said, "Any fool can write a valuable book if he will only tell us what he heard and saw with veracity." I have tried to follow Grey's precepts.

The book is not only intended to record the voices of the subalterns and, where possible, of their men, but also to pay tribute to the many policemen who sacrificed their lives in the fight for freedom, and to all the gallant men who fought alongside them during the campaign. In 1952, the worst year for police casualties, 350 police, of all ranks, races and branches lost their lives in action. We salute their memory.

When I suggested this book, I captioned my proposal Operation Sharp End, a phrase chosen to emphasise that my central objective was to record memories of junior officers who bore the brunt of the fight on the ground. Of course, some of those junior officers who survived and continued their police careers in Malaysia, finished up as distinguished senior officers, but it is their memories as juniors, not their later reflections, which appear in this book.

In the course of preparation I received a lot of material, which was not all about battles, ambushes, patrols and operations, and tales of derring-do in the face of the enemy. The book,

therefore, has stories of events 'behind the lines' and 'off duty', even of ghosts and magic.

Although most of the text was specially written for Operation Sharp End some of it consists of extracts taken, with the permission of the authors, from articles and books, which have already been published.

I hope that the book may occasionally cast some new light on the complicated events of those far off days, but that is certainly not its central purpose. The army and the police both performed magnificently, fighting side-by-side in many cases. But whereas some of the voices of the soldiers who participated in the fight have been recorded in regimental histories, there has been no equivalent literature recording the police voices, and so this book was born of a wish to ensure that police voices could also be 'heard'.

Although I never had the honour of serving in the Royal Malaysia Police Force, I did spend the best part of twenty years working with them as a Malayan Civil Service officer, a diplomat and, finally, for four years as Director of the Rubber Growers Association, where I was in charge of 2,500 auxiliary policemen (APs) guarding the estates. I have, as a result, a lot of friends in the police force, and a very high regard for their service.

When, after fifty years or so, I returned to Scotland and was invited to join the RMPFOA it occurred to me that there was probably sufficient material available to form the basis for a book of reminiscences and anecdotes by people who had served during the Emergency. The Association agreed.

Of course, we have started Operation Sharp End very late, but better late than never; we owe it to the families and descendants of all those who served in the Emergency to ensure that the overviews should be complemented by more individual memories and anecdotes.

There is seldom a mention of the voices in the field in the books written by senior officers, whose books therefore give little flavour of the realities of action. A typical military example might be, "The advance ran into heavy resistance and it took several hours to drive the enemy out of their positions." But this passage does not tell us that the subaltern commanding the leading platoon and the platoon sergeant were both killed in the battle, that at

the platoon suffered fifty percent casualties from well-sited machineguns, or how a corporal rallied the survivors and mounted a second attack, skilfully using mortar smoke to conceal his movements and, finally, led a bayonet charge to dislodge the enemy. Nor does such a history tell us that the corporal won a Military Medal. And we know nothing of the thoughts of the men engaged in the battle; and how they overcame fear of death and wounds. In short, the two-line summary tells us nothing about the human dimension.

There are few precedents for the sort of book we are attempting here. In the 1960s a British farmer, visiting the war graves of Flanders, was so moved by the thought of the carnage at the Battle of the Somme that he pulled together the memories of survivors of all ranks. I found a moving quotation from this book: The Tyneside Scottish were advancing across the moonscape of No Man's Land toward the German trenches, where, despite the heaviest bombardment of all time, the Germans were still in fighting trim, and the bullets from their machine-guns were mowing down the advancing infantry. In one company only a subaltern, a platoon sergeant and a private reached the objective. The private recalled, "We had started out as a Company of over a hundred men, but now there were only three of us; the lieutenant looked round and said; "God! God! Where are the rest of the Company?"

There are many obvious objections to this type of history; memories are selective, and fade and play tricks. The contributors are self-selecting: many people who have a story to tell will not tell it. During my efforts to collect stories from the survivors of a battle in 1944, I once asked a Jock (Scottish soldier) to tell me what he remembered of a twelve-hour battle when his platoon was constantly on the move, carrying ammunition and wounded to and from the front line. All I could drag out of him was, "Och! I suppose it was pretty rough." But although it is sometimes like drawing teeth trying to extract memories, I believe the effort is worthwhile, and I hope that the collection that follows will find merit with readers who want to know what sort of men were leading the police at the Sharp End during the Emergency, and what they thought about.

In August 2001, having received a large number of manuscripts as a result of our original appeal for anecdotes, and scoured the libraries for relevant material, I visited Malaysia to seek further material from Malaysians. I knew the visit would be fun since the Malaysians are probably the most friendly and welcoming people in the world. But I did not anticipate the astonishing kindness, helpfulness, and encouragement with which I and Michael Thompson, who kindly accompanied me, were received.

My hosts, Datuk and Datin Moggie, gave us the run of their comfortable home, and the use of a car and driver. Former Inspector of Police (IGP), Tun Hanif, invited a vast gathering of former friends and colleagues, ex-ministers, retired generals, and highly decorated police officers, to launch our 'Seminar', and provided us with an office where we could conduct our discussions.

The younger generations in Britain have been brainwashed into believing that our colonial history was shameful, and Whitehall always tended to assume that we would be *persona non grata* if we ever showed our faces in our former territories. It is a pity that none of them have experienced the reality: not just politeness, but full-blooded cooperation, warm friendship and respect.

Whatever else the Seminar accomplished, it gave me confidence that my Malaysian friends approved of Operation Sharp End.

Readers coming to this book at the beginning of the 21st Century may find our fear of the Communist Revolution bizarre. But in 1948 the threat seemed real enough. We had, at crippling cost, just won a war against Hitler to stop him dominating the world, and now the Soviet Union was sprawling over Eastern Europe and half of Germany, and boasting that Communism would bury capitalism. It is easy now to see that the giant had feet of clay, but at the time the size of the bear, his victories over Hitler's best troops, and his belligerence, could not easily be ignored. Meanwhile in Asia, Mao Tsetung was thrashing the Chinese Nationalists, the French in Vietnam were finding it increasingly hard to contain the Vietcong, and Sukarno, having forced the Dutch out of the Netherlands East Indies, had allied himself with Communist China. You did not have to be a profes- es-

sional cold war warrior to conclude that Communism posed a serious threat.

At a time when all round the world terrorism continues to defy civilised societies, it will be noted that in Malaya we defeated a strong terrorist force relying more on intelligence than on weaponry, and on brains as much as on courage.

I hope that readers will share some of the pleasure that I have derived from this exercise. It is an exercise in nostalgia for all of us who were involved but also, I hope, a contribution to an understanding of the young men who were plunged in at the deep end, often with minimum, or even no training, and achieved near miracles in the face of a determined, jungle-trained and experienced enemy.

I salute them. They did wonders!



## INTRODUCTION

THE MALAYA OF 1948, which was about to be plunged into a bloody war, was a peninsula slightly smaller in area than England and Wales. It had a population of nearly 6 million of whom about 3 million were Malays, overwhelmingly traditional and monarchists who respected their rulers, the Sultans. They were also devout Muslims. The Chinese community of about 2.25 million were mostly recent immigrants and, for the most part, atheists: apolitical and conscious perhaps of their good fortune in having settled in Malaya and left their tormented motherland behind. If they were in some respects second-class citizens, this had certainly not prevented their prospering in their new home. The Indians, a much smaller minority, were also for the most part contented with their lot, which was certainly better for most of them than it was for the relatives and friends they had left behind in India. Some, however, had been infected with anti-British sentiments during the Japanese occupation.

Malaya was a plural, not an integrated, society. No one pretended that all the races were the same, but the *bangsa*, for the most part, tolerated each other's different cultures and beliefs. Inevitably there was some resentment at the growing economic power of the immigrants, who now represented half the population, but tolerance, not pogrom, was the norm in Malayan society.

The Malay Peninsula stretches for about 550 miles: from Thailand in the north to Singapore in the south. It is lapped on the east by the South China Sea and on the west by the Straits of Malacca. Mountains running down the centre divide the east with its stretches of golden beaches and agricultural and fishing economy from the west with its tin mines and plantations. In 1948 there were main roads running from north to south on both sides of the peninsula, the main railway line ran from Thailand to Singapore, through KL, the Federal capital.

A Department of Information leaflet of the time described Malaya as follows:



The backbone of mountains, the highest over 7000 ft, is covered in primary and secondary evergreen jungle. One fifth of the country consists of rubber estates, tin mines, rice fields, towns and villages: four fifths is trackless forest and undergrowth so dense that a man is invisible at twenty-five yards. The average noon temperature is 90° and there is torrential rain almost every day.

The primary jungle can be spectacularly beautiful with tree trunks hundreds of feet high, standing like the pillars of some great cathedral, its roof a green canopy of leaves and ferns. The secondary jungle however is quite another matter. Scrubby *belukar*, a tangle of bushes, saplings, thorny plants, tough creepers and sturdy bamboo, combine to create a nearly impenetrable barrier requiring heavy work with a *parang* (short bladed sword) to force a path. Torrential rains and the accompanying humidity rot equipment and uniform, which then rubs the skin off in the tenderest parts of the body. Leeches search assiduously for an opening in boots or clothes that allow them to get at the victim's blood, while mosquitoes, ants and midges seek his flesh. It was this trackless forest that made up eighty per cent of the country and was the scene of most operations.

Constitutionally Malaya had, since the 19th Century, been a loose association of Malay States, ruled by Malay monarchs but accepting protection and advice from Britain, linked through the British connection to the three Straits Settlements: Malacca, Penang and Singapore.

The normal tranquillity of the political scene had been disturbed after the war by a misguided Colonial Office attempt to replace the loose pre-war association of Federated and Unfederated States with a centralised system under a new constitution. The Malayan Union (MU) was designed not only to centralise and tidy up but also to improve the constitutional position of the immigrants. Although the Rulers reluctantly agreed to accept the new constitution, it was not long before the Malays began to protest publicly. London retreated and by early 1948 a new Federal constitution, which took fuller account of Malay sensitivities, had been agreed. Perhaps someone had taken heed of the Malay proverb, *Sisat di ujung jalan, balek ka pangkal jalan*: 'If you lose

your way, go back to the beginning of the road'. Malaya reverted to its normal decorous mode in which political discussion tended not to take place in riotous assembly. The immigrant interest in legal rights was much weaker at grass roots level than Britain's metropolitan reformers had imagined. This was hardly surprising since they had emigrated to Malaya for economic, not for political, reasons.

Communist ideas had been circulating in Malaya since the 1920s. In 1939, adopting the Moscow line, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had opposed the war against Germany and fomented strikes to damage the war effort. The Party line was, of course, changed when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union and the Malayan Communists joined the British in a temporary alliance against the Japanese invaders.

After the Japanese surrender the MCP claimed that it had been responsible for the surrender of the Japanese, a claim that many believed. The MCP then returned to its subversive ways, flexing its muscles through domination of organisations such as the Trade Unions, the China Democratic Youth League, Chinese schools and the Chinese press, all of which formed part of what they called a United Front. But their subversive activities were not limited to propaganda and industrial action: their henchmen were using torture and murder.

Although there was a small Malay element in the MCP, and also a small Indian element, the MCP was in essence a Chinese party drawing the vast majority of its members from Chinese immigrant families of relatively recent arrival, and educated, if at all, in Chinese language schools. Such people had minimal interest in integration into their host society, unlike the long resident Chinese, such as the Straits Chinese, who had learnt Malay and English, and saw themselves as Malaysians.

The MCP had been encouraged to revive their wartime dreams of taking over Malaya by the triumph of the Soviet Union in Europe and, even more, by the dramatic victories of Mao Tsetung in China where, despite massive US aid to President Chiang Kaishek and his party, the Communists were winning.

In early 1948 the Central Committee of the MCP directed that plans should be made to launch a countrywide armed insurrection. At this time, although the country had not fully recov-



*Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency: The Vital Contribution of the Police* depicts the vivid memories of Malayan Police officers who, as young subalterns, played a major part in defeating the terrorist campaign launched by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). It is a memorial to the Police of all ranks and many *bangsa*, who risked—and sometimes gave—their lives for freedom.

It includes comments on Chin Peng's *My Side of History* (2003) and the performance of the Malayan Government of those days, quoting extensively from official archives.

Professor Anthony Short, the doyen of British historians who have written on the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), said in his foreword to the first edition (2003), "academic reviewers seldom live dangerously. Nor do they always know how it feels. This is real."

*If people still think a policeman's lot is not a happy one, they would find in this book the reasons why that need not be true. When the cause is sound and the goals set are doable, when morale is high and there is trust and confidence in leadership, a police force would happily carry out what it was trained to do. In an era of terrorism, such a force would be invaluable. Brian Stewart's book tells us why that can be so.*

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