



SMALL WARS JOURNAL

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Mind Games From Above:

The Use of Psychological Warfare and Direct Propaganda at the Turning Point of the Malayan Emergency, 1952-54

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The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) provides several interesting lessons for those interested in the separate, but related fields of political history and the psychology of war. This essay focuses on the latter as the success of the conflict for the British army, UK government and Malayan state (who will be referred to as the ‘the authorities’) is a direct reflection of the centrality of psychology in this war. This essay does not seek to provide a chronological narrative of the Emergency’s progression, but will instead focus on the relatively unexplored branch of the conflict: the use of propaganda and the psychological methods employed the government and its agents. This essay will analyse the psychology behind the propaganda used during the conflict and the British army and UK government’s adaptation of it to suit conditions in Malaya. While somewhat more has been written about the propaganda used, its use in conjunction with psychological warfare (psywar) techniques has received little attention in the past fifty years. In particular the psychological methodologies developed by the British army during the period 1951-53 for use against the communist insurgents in Malaya present a case study with lessons for a professional army to successfully combat irregular troops in a rural setting.

The term ‘Emergency’ was used at the time and remains in common usage today. The UK and Malayan governments at the time wished to avoid higher insurance premiums for companies operating in Malaya as a declaration of war would have negative effects on the UK economy which was still attempting to recover from WWII. As a result, there was a deliberate attempt to play down events in the UK and in the press to avoid drawing attention to the conflict. This began with the deliberate application of word ‘emergency’, which did not place it on par with a full-scale war and relegated it in people’s mind to a minor hiccup in a far flung colony.

This essay will review the means by which the communist insurgency in Malaya was isolated from its logistical base among the people and subsequently picked apart by well thought out means. The Malayan Emergency is an example of the rise of non-set piece battles that have occurred with far greater frequency around the world since 1945 and is a prototype of the nature of warfare as it exists in the modern world. In particular this essay tracks the emergence and development of pre-meditated psychological warfare operations undertaken against communist insurgents in Malaya, while also tracking the use and adaption of new mediums for the distribution of propaganda, focusing in particular on the pivotal years of 1952-54.

The psychological principles governing the use of propaganda employed by the British government and its armed forces during the Malayan Emergency

Before any serious analysis of the conflict can begin, it is necessary to provide some relevant context. Prior to the Second World War (WWII) the region that most of Malaya would come to comprise during the Emergency was called the Straits settlement and was administered as a colonial possession of the British Empire. Other significant sections of Malaya were administered separately as part of the Dutch imperial territories in South East Asia. During the period of early-1942 and August 1945 the Japanese Empire occupied the region after a remarkably swift victory against the British army, which culminated in the fall of Singapore. After the war the region became a more autonomous entity within the British Empire with the aspiration of eventually attaining full sovereignty.

The Malayan Union, established in April 1947, was a federally governed state that comprised nine states each run by a local ruler and local government. Two separate British administered states (Pahang and Malacca) were also part of the Federation. This Federation was organised by a national parliament of seventy four members as well as a ten man Executive Council (Cabinet), all under the governance of the London appointed High Commissioner.¹ The effects of the Japanese army's victory over the British and Commonwealth forces had several far reaching consequences for Malaya in the post-war period. Above all, the tremendous shock of seeing the colonial government defeated led to a loss of confidence in their ability to govern and defend the peoples living on the Malayan peninsula against foreign or domestic threats. John Nagl concludes that this led to widespread doubt regarding British power and led to a loss of the "aura of invincibility" which colonial government enjoyed prior to WWII.² The collaboration of many members of the ethnic Malay civil service with the brutal Japanese occupational forces left a bitter taste in the mouths of many non- Malays that would require serious work to remove.

During the immediate post-war period the federal government and the British Commonwealth as a whole faced the daunting prospect of restoring faith and credibility to their leadership. This was particularly difficult as the only serious resistance offered during the years of occupation came from Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), an armed wing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) a group dogmatically at odds with the British run administration of the time. At the end of WWII, 6,000 members of MPAJA surrendered their arms with about 1,000 members retaining their arms and ammunition.³ While British administration initially pressed for legal reform and greater equality to recognise the efforts of the Chinese community fighting the Japanese, the Malayan community protested against these reforms which removed their advantageous position in society. As a result, these plans for change were cancelled.⁴ In response to these perceived wrongdoings, the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) emerged in June 1948 as the successor to the MPAJA to fight against colonialism as they perceived it.

The MRLA struck out against the government using methods prescribed by Mao. The MRLA began attacking European settlers and anybody that worked for them in a unified effort to

1 Julian Paget, Counter-insurgency campaigning (London, 1967) p.45.

2 John Nagl, Learning to eat soup with a knife (Chicago, 2002) p.64.

3 Dougherty, James, "The guerrilla war in Malaya", in Franklin Mark Osanka (Ed.), Modern guerrilla warfare (New York, 1962), p.300.

4 Jan Pluvier, South-East Asia-From colonialism to independence (Oxford 1974) p.396.

cripple the national economy by disrupting work in tin mines and on rubber plantations as the first part of its plan, attacking the two primary industries of the country.⁵ This was stage one of the plan called for by Mao. Stages two and three were intended to drive the government and its agents to more hospitable urban regions before ultimately being destroyed and driven from the country.⁶ This was the theory at least, with ten years calculated as the timeframe it would take to complete the entire process. In reality the implementation of this strategy never progressed beyond stage two. The MRLA acting as the armed wing of the MCP ultimately wanted fully independent rule from among non-European inhabitants as well as racial equality (in theory) within a communist governed country. Britain ultimately wanted a democratic, pro-British inclined government to rule after a slow transition of power to the oriental inhabitants of the country that could survive in the long term; this vision did not extend to the inclusion of a communist party.

Malaya during the Emergency contained three predominant ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian, with a small number of aborigines living in the interior and a just a few thousand Europeans also on the peninsula. The total population was roughly 4.9 million, with 2.43 million Malays who considered themselves the true natives, 1.8 million Chinese as well as another 500,000 Indians that had been coming over steadily since the 1870s.⁷ Despite its name the MRLA was mostly comprised of just ethnic Chinese settlers, most of who were predominantly from the southern Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi and Fukien.⁸ Chinese settlers had first began immigrating to the Malayan region as early as the sixteenth century, but at the turn of the twentieth century the scale of migration from China to Malaya exploded with 100,000s arriving and staying every year during the 1920s and 1930s.⁹ Many of these Chinese migrants came to labour on the rubber plantations and in the tin mines under temporary work visas or TOLs (Temporary Occupation Licenses). However, many were stranded when these TOLs were revoked during the economic slump of the 1930s, leaving many living in Malaya illegally as squatters on the fringes of the forest.¹⁰ With various ethnic groups falling within the racial grouping of 'Chinese' and each of these speaking a variety of languages there was a broad spectrum of cultures and political inclinations.

During the brutal Japanese occupation, many more moved out of urban areas to avoid problems so that by VJ day more than 300,000 Chinese were living as rural squatters. The battle for the confidence, trust and assistance of these squatters was to be a focal point of the Emergency, with both the MRLA and the Malayan government vying for their backing, as both sides eventually realised that whoever had them, effectively. The MRLA failed to achieve its aims in the end, but it utilise a number of naturally occurring factors that made dealing with them more onerous and lengthy when hostilities began in 1948. Primarily these were the physical and topographical conditions in Malaya, which were highly favourable to any would-be insurgent campaign. During the 1950s as much as four-fifths of the country remained covered in primeval jungle (significant deforestation has occurred since the 1960s) that limited visibility to less than 200 meters. Down the middle of the country a 2,000 meter mountain range prohibits access to

⁵ Harry Miller, *Jungle warfare in Malaya* (Bristol, 1972) pp. 18-19.

⁶ Harry Miller, *Jungle warfare in Malaya*, p.19.

⁷ James Noel McHugh, 'Psychological and political warfare' in *The Journal of the Historical society of the University of Malaya* vols. IV and V (1966 and 1967), p.23.

⁸ Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency propaganda* (Richmond, Surrey, 2002)p.6.

⁹ James Noel McHugh, 'Psychological', p.24.

¹⁰ Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency propaganda*, p.7.

large sections of the country except on foot and makes east-west communications hard except by sea or air.¹¹

Many memoirs from the conflict note the arduousness of combat in the jungle, with poor light, incredible heat, wild animals, and a variety of other conditions and diseases that resulted from the humidity. This made it strenuous to live, operate and fight in the jungle especially for western armies who were quite unused to it.¹² The difficulty of operations in the jungle added yet another dimension to the conflict, it was a primarily a “war of psychology” with whoever controlled the situation the best by psychological means ultimately controlling the outcome of the war.¹³ While the works of Mao Tse-Tung served as a guide to the MCP, the application of his ideal of an army living off the land and the rural population proved impossible once the MRLA was driven away from the jungle fringe. Here the MRLA was forced to rely on the aboriginal tribes living in the interior of which little was known before the Emergency. These aboriginal tribes survived on subsistence farming and were unable to support more people; in time their inability to help angered the MRLA who punished them, forcing the aboriginal tribes to seek help from the authorities.¹⁴

Comparisons with other western armies of the time have shown that the four hallmarks of the British imperial administration were a significant factor in its success combating the MPLA and restoring confidence in the British administration. More generally, the keys to British success in Malaya were the use of ‘minimum’ force, the close co-operation of police and military forces, extensive use of intelligence and decentralised governance. The collective body of knowledge and psychological warfare culture within which the British administration operated when the Emergency began must first be grasped if one is to chart the most important advances in this area.

That all civil and military actions stemming from the government have psychological effects on perception and behaviour was one of the most significant lessons gleaned during the Malayan Emergency, regardless of whether or not it was planned.¹⁵ In essence this meant that everything the government did or did not do, either direct legislation or by proxy, had an effect and mattered. During WWII considerable headway occurred in the British government and army by pooling the most effective techniques for disseminating propaganda, sending the right psychological message for the occasion and ensuring the source’s credibility was intact. Richard Crossman was one of the primary movers in this movement; his cataloguing and quantification of principles were to be of immense use in Malaya. By 1948 the British army was well aware of how to ensure its propaganda would be effective, but lacked the vital element of backing up what it said in its deed. Neither psychological warfare methods nor propaganda as a component of it work in a vacuum, its message must coincide with official strategy and actions.¹⁶ There is a distinct requirement to back up words with official deeds.

¹¹ Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, p.45.

¹² David Owen, *Battle of wits* (London, 1975) p.58.

¹³ David Owen, *Battle of wits*, p.58.

¹⁴ R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in retrospect* (Santa Monica, 1972) p.63 The role of the aboriginal (Iban) tribes during the Emergency is a rather interesting one, with as many as 100,000 of them living in the Jungle they began as an utterly neutral resource that both sides attempted to woo. Ultimately the government won their trust with the use jungle forts to protect them, medical care and by providing basic infrastructure, while they served in army units and served as gifted trackers as noted in colonial files, e.g. CO 1022/57.

¹⁵ Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency propaganda* (Richmond, Surrey, 2002) p.16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.20.

During WWII the BBC, while acting as a mouthpiece of the government concluded after much trial and error that ‘straight’ news holds primacy. While the enemy may not necessarily side with you, it is vital that he believes you are telling the truth. For the BBC, this was ensured by reporting events honestly even if the British had faced an upset or major campaign reversal, psychologically establishing the credentials of the mouthpiece and mentally preparing the enemy for a later time and date.¹⁷ Sensitivity to the audience was another important lesson learned and transplanted to the Malayan situation. This sensitivity extended to cultural differences and faux-pas, which were important. More universally, to the need to avoid alienating and degrading the enemy. Where possible, one must avoid threats as it provokes a natural defensiveness and irrationality of fighting to the death. This sensitivity was applied in such a way as to prevent the enemy combatant from appearing to lose face.

The British army had found that minute changes to wording had massive psychological repercussions in Burma during WWII with regard to Japanese soldiers who being very proud, could not stomach the idea of surrender.¹⁸ By supplementing such simple sentences as ‘I surrender’ with ‘I cease resistance’ opposing forces could be seen to maintain their pride and seem reasonable, rather than appear weak or cowardly to either themselves or their enemy. This idea of not losing face is of critical importance if any army is seeking to induce surrender by allowing the enemy to appear as if he has a choice in the matter even if his situation is in reality, utterly hopeless. This idea ties into another idea that will be placed within a Malayan context, the ephemeral idea of the ‘psychological moment’, the use of propaganda tailored to a particular enemy and applied at the appropriate moment, neither too early to be dismissed or too late for the enemy to have consigned himself to his fate.¹⁹ The tone of the broadcasts and information was another vital factor, sounding defensive or unsure led to questions of credibility and made the source appear weak. The source also needed to avoid the use of polemics and direct argumentation with the opposition’s own propaganda.²⁰ Despite the cruelty of the Emergency, which saw civilians and military alike targeted, the authorities did not demonise the MRLA, as this had in the past led to abuse of prisoners, made enemy forces more unlikely to surrender and left a negative impact on a society driven by hate.²¹

The British army in Malaya adapted these principles and theories within their psychological warfare operations based upon findings in prior conflicts. These include: showing the enemy the full extent of their plight, allowing them to save face and maintaining credibility before the enemy. Immediately before the period of this essay the introduction of a new plan for dealing with the Communist insurgency was put in place by Director of Operations Sir Harold Briggs. The Briggs plan called for the resettlement of the Chinese squatters from the jungles fringe into ‘New Villages’ where they could be better safeguarded from the MRLA who used them for food and medical supplies. The Briggs plan also called for the use of ‘food denial’ operations, which effectively blockaded the MRLA from food supplies and began slowly starving them to death. These two practices were hoped to force the MRLA into contact with security forces as they needed to search harder for supplies, isolating and protecting the Chinese populace from the communist guerrillas.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.18.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.19.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.20.

²⁰ Robert Thompson, *Defeating communist insurgency* (London, 1966) pp. 96-97.

²¹ Ibid., p. 94.

The restoration of confidence in the government from the Chinese community was a continuous struggle as the government sought to earn legitimacy to govern. While the body of knowledge was there, relaying these principles to everyone proved challenging in the first few years, as did adapting these principles to non-linear warfare. The next section will review the use of psychological warfare techniques in this asymmetric context, investigating the improvements in the mediums of propaganda and psychological warfare that occurred most poignantly during the years 1951-53.

Concerning the amassing of information, the methods used to label and define the communist threat while encouraging enemy surrenders in 1951-53

Most of the successful security contacts with terrorists have been the result of information, rather than chance encounter”

- High commissioner Sir David MacGillivray, Jan 1955²²

Attempts to deal with the communist guerrilla threat bordered on the farcical during the first four years of the Emergency with military and civil authorities unable to fix the problem as military and civilian deaths increased steadily. This led to considerable wastage of time, money and effort during the period. This dual military-civil failing arose predominantly from unsuitable and ill-conceived measures being taken to combat the causes of the insurrection, the forces sustaining them and the champions of the insurrection in their current form. It was further compounded by the poor lines of communication between civil and military authorities when it came to sharing information. The Chinese community was further alienated during the early years of the Emergency by the introduction of draconian laws, intended to crack down on all support for the MRLA cause. It took government forces several years to figure exactly who they were fighting beyond merely claiming to be fighting a vague force of ‘communists’. As this chapter will show, a vast amount of effort was first to be put into establishing some basic facts about the enemy in order to understand how to even respond.

During this period of 1951-53 an increased emphasis was placed on inducing surrender as easily and rapidly as possible. One of the more controversial means of encouraging surrenders was the ‘rewards policy’ which essentially sought to bribe the communist forces into giving up, surrendering their weapons and informing on their former comrades’ whereabouts to the authorities. This policy has been both widely condemned for being completely amoral, but also highly applauded for its practicality in bringing about the end to a protracted and costly conflict.

Before delving into the Psychological warfare methods used and developed between the period of 1952 and 1955, it is best to make a number of assumptions that will be proved by sufficient evidence. Firstly, that the dramatic and continuous increase in enemy kills and surrenders occurring from 1952 onwards are a direct result of novel approaches in psychological warfare and the dissemination of pro-government propaganda. Secondly, that while several methods for dealing with enemy forces existed prior to 1952, they were poorly co-ordinated, limited in vision and lacked both the hard work as well as the details that would be put into them from 1952 onwards. These two premises lead us to the conclusion (if the facts hold up) that 1952 in particular was an important year for the government, that the decisions and processes started in this year were to be critical in bringing an end to the Emergency. As one will see, the role and

²² David Ucko, “Countering insurgents through distributed operations: Insights from Malaya 1948-1960” in *The Journal of strategic studies*, Vol. 30, No.1 February 2007), p.61.

value of winning the psychological war was to be vital, this became particularly apparent to the government in 1952. It is an often repeated idea that one must know or at least understand one's enemy if one is to beat him. Understanding one's enemy begins with identifying who he is, in order to eventually understand his weaknesses, cares, flaws, thoughts and fears.

This first step in understanding who the enemy is begins with an honest appraisal of the situation, devoid of needlessly confusing or loaded terms that allows the subject to be as comprehensible as possible. Within a Malayan context, the most obvious example of this process of omitting jargon or loaded terms began to occur in mid-1952 within the government's re-designation of enemy forces as Communist Terrorists (CTs). Previously, the terms 'bandits', 'guerrillas' or 'ruffians' had been used, however the government overhauled this with internal memorandums.²³ Phillip Deevy correctly points out that this avoids the use of overly "euphemistic terminology" that leads to poor policy casting that does not convey the true nature of the threat, with an "image-reality gulf (that) is too wide".²⁴ This successful adaption of a new designation for all enemy combatants and non-combatants had two significant results within this war of semiotics. This denied the enemy legitimacy by the use of the term 'terrorist' while placing it soundly within a Cold-war context with the word 'communist', allowing the war for moral superiority to be fought on the government's terms.²⁵

With the enemy adequately labelled, the government in Malaya under the direction of General Sir Gerald Templer now attempted to better understand the enemy in order to destroy him. 'Jungle bashing', the name given to vast battalion sized (or larger) sweeps through the jungle looking for the enemy had proven inadequate, expanding vast amounts of time (on average 1,000 hours per man per enemy contact) with few kills or surrenders to justify it.²⁶ Under Templer's leadership, the emphasis was placed on acting on good information, obtained from reliable sources and amassed in greater and greater amounts long after he had left Malaya. By the war's end information on anything to do with the CTs was primarily obtained from interrogations of captured or Surrendered Enemy Personnel (SEPs), while also being supplemented and corroborated by anonymous Chinese civilian informants. More broadly, a reformation of the organisations gathering information occurred under Templer with the Department of Information merging with the Emergency Information Services under the command of the A.D.C Peterson in 1952. Peterson's work and leadership during his tenure as Director General of Information Services (DGIS) was ground breaking, teaching all under his control that anything and everything that the government did or said should be orientated as propaganda to increase confidence in the government and the anti-MCP cause.²⁷ This newly created position of DGIS had two results that would stand to the government's credit later on. Firstly, a centralised organisation for gathering and sharing information, Secondly a centralised body that took care of all matters of propaganda distribution in Malaya.

The Operations Research Section (ORS), within the Department of Information Services dealt with Psychological Warfare in Malaya for much of the Emergency. According to its own

²³ Colonial Office File CO 1022/48, p.6. In effect from mid- 1952 onwards

²⁴ Phillip Deevy, "Terminology of terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52" in *Journal of South-east Asian studies*, Vol. 34, No.2 (June, 2003) pp. 239-240.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

²⁶ Harry, Miller, *Jungle warfare in Malaya* (Bristol, 1972) p.23, Julian Paget places the figure as high as 1,800 man hours per enemy contact, p.62.

²⁷ Kumar Ramakrishna, "Transmogrifying Malaya: The impact of Sir Gerald Templer" in *Journal of South-east Asian studies*, Vol. 32, No.1 (February 2001) p. 86.

records, the ORS opened its Interrogation Centre in March 1953 after several months work of preparation and building, under the control of DGIS and with the remit for studying the following.²⁸

- (i) “To investigate reasons for becoming a Communist Terrorists;
- (ii) To answer a variety of questions about life in the jungle;
- (iii) To investigate reasons for surrender”²⁹

ORS memorandums beginning in June 1953 were some of the first of many attempts to objectively study and learn from the SEPs.³⁰ Highly specific personal information on every SEP was compiled: age, gender, age on entry to jungle, time in jungle, level of education etc. A range of more subjective questions were asked of the SEPs, such as ‘satisfaction with the cause’, ‘reasons for entering the jungle’, ‘reasons for surrender’ and ‘reasons for not surrendering sooner’.³¹ SEPs would be given a list of answers or preferences to choose from as the ORS attempted to find trends, patterns and medians within the data collected. The ORS attempted to fine tune methods of propaganda dispersal and successful campaigns suitable to the target audience. Examples of these attempts to understand the CTs and its affiliated civilian support network the Min Yuen (referred to as the ‘Communist Terrorist Organisation’ in official literature) are prevalent throughout the remainder of the Malayan conflict. The results of police and military campaigns against CTs, poor CT recruiting after the early 1950s as well as a collection of other factors were continuously published in ORS memos from 1953 onwards and used in later propaganda campaigns.

Broader studies comparing trends, changes in medians and spikes in data occur in later works such conducted between July 1954 and February 1955 show some interesting facts. For example, WO 291/1792 contains a breakdown of data of the period July 1949 and March 1955, while some of the data is outside the time period concerned, we do see a number of conclusions that ORS drew from their own work pertaining to the years 1952-53. Most noticeably an increase in the number of monthly CT surrenders in 1952 (21.3 per month as compared to 15.5 per month in period 1948-51), this increased further to 29.4 per month during the first six months of 1953 and during the last half of the year at rate of 32.5 surrenders.³² Conclusions from the period 1952-53 period show the significant effect of continuous psychological operations on the enemy, most notably that of ‘food denial’ (including medical supplies) which had worn away at the enemy’s resolve since its introduction eighteen months prior. Figures from 1952 onwards show a ‘snowball’ effect of growing dissatisfaction within the MRLA with more accurate and frequent attacks by the authorities embittering relations between officers and ordinary soldiers.³³

Interrogation data circulated in other memorandums from the period attempt to gain a great appreciation for the sort of people likely to join the MRLA and its affiliated groups. By understanding who they were fighting the government would later manage to not only target existing CTs but also use the information and propaganda services to target individuals that were statistically likely to become CTs in the future. Studies at the end of the 1953 showed a number

²⁸ War Office file (WO) 291/1763 Sections 1-7, UK National Archives, London

²⁹ WO 291/1763, Sections 1-7, UK National Archives, London

³⁰ WO 291/1763, p.1.

³¹ WO 291/1763, pp.5-10

³² WO 291/1792, Note #28-35.

³³ WO 291/1792, Note #33-35

of trends and patterns in the CTs membership. In one instance, by thoroughly interrogating fifty one prisoners on all known associates, the ORS yielded information on 965 different individuals within the MRLA. This allowed for a more accurate spread of results and correcting for unrepresentative statistical anomalies that probably would have arisen if a smaller group had been used.³⁴ This produced number of findings, for example, that men outnumbered women 8:1 within the terrorist organisation and that within certain units no woman were present or even known of, an indication that all-female units may have existed.³⁵ While all fifty one SEPs interrogated were ethnically Chinese, from among the 965 that the ORS had data, only 86.6% (833 CTs) were discovered to be Chinese, while 3.7% (36) were Malay, 1.4% (13) Indian 1.1% (11) Aborigine, 7.5% (72) of other/uncertain ethnicity.

It is worth noting that the thoroughness of the interrogation and its use of advanced statistical methods such as this allowed for hidden information to be gleaned, information that would have been missed if the study were based solely upon the 51 SEPs. According to the figures gleaned from this study, at least two from amongst the fifty one CTs should have been non-Chinese, and yet none were, this study shows awareness of the dangers of statistics based on fewer numbers of people and avoids it. It is worth noting that in this memorandum shows that the ORS had greatly improved its methodology as it was obtaining more accurate information while working with the same resources, overcoming problems raised in prior memorandums just two months earlier with regard to low sampling numbers.³⁶ The high number of Chinese in MRLA has been noted within Pye's fieldwork. He notes an obvious superiority complex among Chinese SEPs who at times showed "downright contempt" towards Malays and Indians.³⁷ Indeed many Chinese believed that the MCP was a solely Chinese organisation, the ideals of which were beyond the understanding of the other two races, this dismissive attitude probably stems from the lack of dealings or knowledge with other races.³⁸

For the Colonial authorities in 1952, the start of General Sir Gerald Templer's tenure as High-Commissioner was an opportunity seized. Starting afresh, practices were bettered and wasteful or unnecessary pieces of the administration removed. More specifically, the foundation of the ORS was an important landmark in this series of reforms. The psychological warfare campaign in Malaya was partly intended to encourage support for the authorities from amongst the Chinese civilian community. This was done to challenge the pervasive culture of apathy amongst the Chinese population, who the authorities frequently noted still needed to "commit to our side (and realise) that Malaya and not red China is their home".³⁹ These examples of ORS studies, research practices and methodology beginning in 1952, show an attention to minute details, a recording and amassing of information on the enemy for the use on propaganda operations.

Strategically, the rewards-for-surrender policy was a highly successful bribery campaign, although as will be discussed further on, it has been disapproved of by some for its obvious

³⁴ WO 291/1785, Note #5

³⁵ WO 291/1785, Note #6.

³⁶ WO 291/1766, Note #7.

³⁷ Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: Its social and political meaning* (Princeton, NJ, 1956) p.207.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp.207-208. Pye record that as many as 70% Chinese SEPs interviewed had never had any dealings with Indians, while as many as 40% had had no dealings with Malays despite them being numerous than the Chinese. Among the sixty SEPs interviews only one stated that he believed the MCP should be used to reduce racial discrimination.

³⁹ General Sir John Harding Commander-in-Chief Far Eastern Land forces (C-in-C FARELF) quoted in John Nagl, *Learning to eat soup with a knife* (Chicago, 2002) p. 74.

amorality. As has been noted since time immemorial, war is a costly, time consuming endeavour. Even by 1951 the Malayan Emergency had already cost millions of pounds, and any means of bring it to an end more expediently was embraced by the authorities.⁴⁰ At the heart of the psy-ops campaign, the largest carrot of them all was dangled before the CTs: a lucrative settlement package for every one of their comrades that surrendered or was killed thanks to their information.

The authorities realised that almost every man has his price. Essentially the government of Malaya began to outbid the communists for their members' loyalty throughout the 1950s. With constant attacks, food denial and propaganda aimed directly at them, the CTs had their arms further twisted into accepting the government's generous rewards policy. Austin Long's work allows us to gauge the relative value of the rewards offered for each specific rank of the MRLA/MCP.⁴¹ With these figures, one can deduce an accurate rate for the rewards at their current value:

Rank:	Value in US\$ early-1950s	Value in US\$ in 2011
MCP Chairman	28,000	236,500
Presidium member	22,700	195,000
Central committee member	18,200	153,000
Province secretary/ Regimental CO	16,000	135,000
District Assistant secretary/ Company CO	4,550	38,300

Charts with each reward were widely distributed throughout Malaya during this period and the 'going rate' for each rank of the MRLA/MCP would have been widely known. It is worth noting however, that full time members of the security forces were ineligible to receive payments for this.⁴² The difference in reward given to information leading to a kill instead of capture was approximately 50% less for senior officials and only 25% less mid-grade/junior officials.⁴³ Thus, the rates actively encouraged the capture of senior officials who would be of far more use in bringing about a strategic victory, as supposed to a more temporary local victory from amongst lower ranks. Further financial incentives were extended to those that surrendered

⁴⁰Jackson, p.114. The total cost of the Malayan Emergency at the time was placed at about £700million, of which £570 million was paid by the UK government.

⁴¹ Austin Long, *On 'other war' lessons from five decades of RAND counter-insurgency research* (Santa Monica, 2006) p.68. Using Long's figures one can convert all figures relatively accurately. Beginning with the conversion from Malayan dollars to US\$ at the rate of 1:0.43. Long then allow for inflation at the rate of approximately 742% since the mid-1950s until 2005. From here one can deduce the rest, assuming standard rates of inflation at roughly 2% compound from 2005 until 2011.

⁴² CO 1030/23, p.7.

⁴³ CO 1022/152, No page number, File dated April 30, 1952

weapons and ammunition, with light machine guns worth 1,000 Malayan dollars (US\$ 3600 in 2011), rifles (US\$ 1080), mortar rounds (US\$ 360) and every round of live ammunition fetching (US\$ 18).⁴⁴

It is worth noting that for any Malayan peasant, the reward from one light machine gun or tip-off on even a rank and file member would be as much as he would earn in several decades.⁴⁵ More extreme examples of the rewards policy saw men effectively becoming millionaires (by Malayan standards of the time). One particular SEP supplied information that allowed for a successful airstrike that killed fourteen of sixteen ordinary CTs in a camp, earning him some US\$ 170,000 at today's rates.⁴⁶ As Ramakrishna puts it, "greed was temporarily exploited in place of civic virtue".⁴⁷ It was not until such an attitude was more pervasive that money could be done away with and people could be relied upon to do the 'right thing', beginning with 'Operation Service' during General Templer's period as High Commissioner.⁴⁸

As seen earlier on, the information not only killed terrorists but also informed Special Branch, providing them with up to date and accurate information on CT movements. During the Templer period, the lines of communication were ameliorated to reduce the lag time between SEPs coming in and information being distributed and acted on. Military liaison officers were posted to each Special Branch unit to disperse information as rapidly as it came in to those that needed it most, while the army units were kept on standby in all regions to act on information coming in as soon as possible.⁴⁹ Surrenders were a choreographed event, with strict guidelines issued to police on how to handle surrenders to avoid spooking them, preventing a change of heart, SEPs committing suicide or the MRLA trying to stop them. Typically, 'walk-ins' were isolated, while Special Branch were telephoned and informed of the situation using a code word. Knowledge of the surrender was limited to as few people as possible and the prisoner would not be mistreated. However, he would not be fed and would remain in isolation to stew over for a short period of time. Uncooperative prisoners were on occasion threatened with obvious public release; such an act would obviously compromise him before the MCP.⁵⁰ The importance of this process of initial isolation has been noted by a variety of writers; however the need for the SEP to be put to use straight away was also of vital importance as it prevented him from dwelling on his decision for too long and possibly regretting it and ensured his information was as fresh as possible.⁵¹

Former CTs working for Special Branch were used to interrogate SEPs, renunciations of communism were sought in order to ensure the SEP was not a double agent. As such an act was believed to be akin to a religious conversion, many men broke down and thus, could not fake their real intentions.⁵² Lucien Pye's fieldwork notes conducted in interviews with SEPs show that

⁴⁴ CO 1030/22, No page number, File dated to be released on September 1, 1952. Here converted to a modern approximation in US\$ using the method mentioned before.

⁴⁵ R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in retrospect: Organisation of a successful counter-insurgency effort* or 'Rand Memo R-957-ARPA' (Santa Monica, 1972) p.74.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Ramakrishna, *Emergency propaganda*, p.117.

⁴⁸ CO 1022/49 pp.13-14.

⁴⁹ Ucko, pp. 59-62.

⁵⁰ Riley Sunderland, *Anti-guerrilla intelligence in Malaya, 1948-60/Rand Memo-4172-ISA* (Santa Monica, September, 1964) pp. 41-46.

⁵¹ Thompson, p. 92. Thompson notes the need to for the SEP to be kept in an inaccessible "vacuum" initially, preventing him from being harmed by CTs.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 46-47.

following this renunciation many SEPs showed a “total (re)orientation” against communism, they were often willing to return a few hours after surrender with the authorities to their camps betraying all their former comrades in the process.⁵³ As mentioned, specific information would be acted upon rapidly, while less perishable information would be used by ORS who would integrate it into its studies and interrogate SEPs regarding more specific data it was looking for. In fact, former British Army Colonel Richard Clutterbuck notes in his memoirs that it was not uncommon to have SEPs turned around in under six hours and leading government forces back to their former comrades.⁵⁴

At the time, the rewards policy drew considerable attention as Colonial Office files attest to. Letters of complaint from a variety of organisations and individuals are noted throughout most Colonial Office files during the period, these articles and letters to the Editor appear in the Manchester Guardian and Daily Worker as well as telegrams from Reuters.⁵⁵ There were also several matters that were brought up in Parliament and required clarification, the issue of those eligible to receive the rewards for example.⁵⁶ Despite the complaints, the SEPs served as a very important propaganda weapon, as the MRLA began haemorrhaging men from 1953 onwards and knew it, as security was tightened in camps across Malaya to make defection harder. Stubbs also concludes that the bribes work and that the “morality of it aside, it is highly successful”.⁵⁷ The MRLA lost considerable time and energy on checks and controls, productivity declined as the food situation also grew bleak for them due to the food denial operations underway thanks to the Briggs plan.

While it will never be possible to just how badly the situation was for them, suffice to say that the surrenders were a pervasive “rot” within the MRLA that grew worse and worse.⁵⁸ Surrender numbers grew and grew from 201 surrenders in 1951 this increased to 256 in 1952 reaching 372 by 1953.⁵⁹ These surrenders left the MRLA undermanned and demoralised to an extent far greater than the number of SEPs would suggest, as those that remained knew their location had been compromised and comrades for the past few years had betrayed them. At its peak, some twelve armed Special operations volunteer force (SOVF) platoons formed from armed SEPs were used to directly combat the CTs.⁶⁰ The disheartening effect of being hunted by well-fed, well equipped, well paid former comrades that knew the CTs’ behaviour inside out must be immense.

The use of SEPs extended beyond mere surrenders as they proved to be a cornucopia of reliable, relevant information on the MRLA/MCP. By 1955 it is reported that almost every police station and Special Branch office had an in depth catalogue on every known CT, containing photographs, information and all known aliases.⁶¹ SEPs were also used as guest speakers and

⁵³ Pye, p.p. 339-340.

⁵⁴ Richard Clutterbuck, *The long, long war- The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960* (London, 1966) p. 102.

⁵⁵ CO 1022/152, This file is full of numerous cuttings containing letters of complaint from the public, letters to the editor, newspaper articles as well as internal Colonial office memos discussing how to reply best to all this negative press.

⁵⁶ CO 1022/152, p. 8, Note #3

⁵⁷ Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in guerrilla warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960* (New York, 1989) p. 184.

⁵⁸ Komer, p. 75.

⁵⁹ WO 291/1718, p. 2. Note #2 (Table 1)

⁶⁰ David Owens, p. 163. As recorded in CO 1022/52 p.7, The Colonial office gives details on the structure of the SOVF, with 180 men in fifteen man platoons. By the time Lucien Pye conducted his interviews in 1953 there were 300 SEPs serving in the SOVF, see Pye p.117.

⁶¹ Clutterbuck, p. 109.

lecturers in New villages, in schools and in plantations as a means of anti-communist propaganda among the civilian populace. The information given by SEPs allowed for audience specific propaganda campaigns on the basis of strong, credible information that recognised the fluidity of the CT threat in different regions. The information gathering techniques, using statistical practices were of substantial benefit to the ORS for the allocation of time to be spent on CT groups based upon education, race, language and political fervour. However it does not appear that this research section was aware of the need to test for 'statistical significance' or leading questions that may have biased the source and detracted from the accuracy of results. This is apparent as there is no mention or reference to either of these standard statistical practices in any of the ORS' memos. The next chapter will cover the application of this information gleaned from SEPs during the years 1951-53, with a more in-depth look at leaflet use in conjunction with voice aircraft flights as a means of contacting CTs and potential SEPs.

Concerning the use information gathered on the communists, leaflet drops and Voice Aircraft flights

During the first year of the Emergency leaflet drops had been used by the authorities in an attempt to induce surrenders within the CT movement, with 30 million leaflets being dropped during 1948 alone.⁶² The majority of these leaflets were short and to the point, on one side a generic 'safe-passage' note instructing any CT attempting to surrender to present themselves with the note to the authorities where they would be fed, given medical attention and be treated well. The reverse side contained the current propaganda message, which varied greatly over the course of the Emergency from appeals to surrender, photographs of SEPs being treated well, changes in surrender policy and news on CT setbacks. Not until 1952 can the effect of these leaflets on the entire CT organisation be judged as the authorities remained unsure of the number of literate terrorists. Research by the ORS concluded that the level of education amongst SEP groups was on average lower than that expected from people across the rest of Federation. From among one sampling of SEPs some 40% had no formal education whatsoever and a further 33.3% only to a primary level (with 10% noted as 'not known').⁶³ Regional variations in levels of education appear amongst SEPs, with CTs from the states of Johore, Negri Sembilan and Selangor being more educated.

There appears to be a certain level disagreement between writers in slightly later sources on this matter of education levels among CTs. Clutterbuck notes that "in Malaya then education of the communist guerrillas was generally above average"⁶⁴, a point Pye backs up in his study of sixty SEPs, noting that only three were illiterate.⁶⁵ However, despite Pye's in-depth study and Clutterbuck's considerable time in Malaya, ORS statistics based on the interrogation of several hundred SEPs would appear to disagree with this conclusion. Pye's work seems to be mere conjecture with questionably low sample numbers at odds with the government's own figures.

Obviously the method of delivering propaganda would differ according to the level of education and the wording of the appeals would be determined accordingly. Any headway

⁶² Jackson, p.110.

⁶³ WO 291/1785, Note #17-20

⁶⁴ Clutterbuck, p.103.

⁶⁵ Pye, p.149. Pye notes that only 4% of his sample were illiterate, indicating in his mind that the CTs were much more educated as compared to the rest of the Chinese community with 45% illiterate according to 1947 census statistics, While McHugh also places the national rate of illiteracy quite high at 40%, p.20.

against their morale would also vary according to levels of education. Appeals to the more intelligent 'hard-core' element of the MRLA would need to avoid simple messages focused on short term benefits or giving vague promises, as these were thought to be far less likely to succeed.⁶⁶ At the opposite end of the spectrum and being somewhat more numerous, "those of little education and/or low mental ability" were thought to respond better to promises of better treatment, but lack the capacity to understand written messages or appreciate (and therefore be convinced) by "well-reasoned arguments".⁶⁷ However, the ORS did recommend that the intelligence of the better educated CTs not be overestimated and that more universal 'simple news' could be addressed to both groups, including surrenders and kills.⁶⁸

Examples of the leaflets used are relatively sparse in official catalogues, however a number of these do appear to have been saved for posterity and/or later reference. Within Colonial Office files one finds more examples than in the War Office records, these include English translations. These leaflets often appear as simple comic strips or illustrations, a 'how to guide' for CTs advising them of the best times to escape ("performing ablutions, on sentry duty, as lead scout"), how to surrender to security forces ("stand still and wave your hands above your head") and reinforcing the notion that they would not be mistreated ("you will receive medical treatment, you will be given food and cigarettes, you will meet your friends and former comrades").⁶⁹ It is worth highlighting the format of these leaflets, as they appear as cartoons, which would be easily understood. With little text (in Mandarin) they are simple and very accessible. Considerable effort went into explaining how to surrender.⁷⁰ These leaflets appeared in a variety of colours, some were brightly coloured in order to draw attention to them, while others were in dull to make them easier to read discreetly and hide from other CTs or superiors.⁷¹

The messages transmitted by leaflet and Voice Aircraft flights could be tactical or strategic in aim, exploiting recent localised setbacks suffered by the CTs (an ambush, a patrol, a high-ranking kill or surrender) or more strategic, less specific appeals (a change in surrender terms, promises of good treatment, an upcoming amnesty). Leaflets were tailored according to the particular group they were intended for, if the CT force was surrounded or cut off, the emphasis would be placed on the promise of food while they would be asked rhetorically why they starved. Groups that had recently been ambushed, especially those with dead or wounded were promised medical aid and sanctuary, while groups that had suffered desertion would be invited to join their comrades and enjoy a good life.⁷² Leaflets often contained 'before and after' photographs of SEPs, one taken at the time of surrender where they typically appeared dishevelled, scrawny and sick. Juxtaposed to this, the other photograph would show the SEP several few weeks later, looking well fed, clean, happy and with either their girl-friend or mother.⁷³

Often these leaflets with photographs would be addressed to a number of individuals from the same unit as the SEP shown if they were believed to still be operating in the area. These appeals would typically contain a declaration of the SEPs good treatment, "I was wounded and

⁶⁶ WO 291/1789, Note #27-31

⁶⁷ WO 291/1789, Note #31(b)

⁶⁸ WO 291/1789, Note #33(c)

⁶⁹ CO 1030/23, pp.38-39.

⁷⁰ Ramakrishna, Emergency propaganda, p.115.

⁷¹ Lim Cheng Leng, The story of a psy-warrior: Tan Sri Dr. C.C. Too (Selangor, Malaysia, 2000), p.154.

⁷² Ibid., p.154.

⁷³ Clutterbuck, p.105.

captured. Early medical treatment saved my life. I am well and safe. How about you? Use good conduct pass, quickly join me in safety".⁷⁴ Each leaflet instructed anyone to supply the bearer with cigarettes and to bring them to the nearest police or military post with the promise that they would be duly rewarded.⁷⁵ With regard to terminology, it is worth noting that the term 'surrender' was deliberately not used. C.C. Too who wrote and designed many of these (he later replaced A.D.C Peterson as the first oriental DGIS) placed a considerable emphasis on the omission of this word. The SEP was being encouraged to 'self-renew', in keeping with this, the leaflets used this term and avoided words like 'surrender' and 'give-up' at all costs. Laying down arms was encouraged as an opportunity for self-improvement and betterment.⁷⁶ C.C. Too was also wary to avoid using threats, informing the terrorists that they had made a mistake and were in danger was one thing, but directly threatening them was considered a likely cause for them to become defensive and more difficult to appeal to later.⁷⁷ These images of the SEP also served as a rebuttal to the Politburo's claims that SEPs were mistreated, tortured and even killed by the authorities, showing that on the contrary, SEPs could enjoy the process of normalisation.⁷⁸ The photographs of these well treated SEPs spoke for themselves and added further credibility to the information espoused by not only the Information services department but also the government as a whole. Factual information was and still remains the most effective theme for propaganda use.⁷⁹

The use of leaflets increased by over 300% during the course of the war, so that by 1950 the authorities were dropping over 50 million leaflets every year, this increased to 77 million in 1953 (of which 23 million were deemed 'tactical' drops). Between the years 1954-57 this increased further to 100 million leaflets per annum.⁸⁰ Drops en masse could saturate a small area with government propaganda, ensuring that any CTs in the area were almost certain to see any numerous leaflets. ORS memorandums show that between 70-88% of SEPs interviewed during the period January 1952 through March 1954 had seen at least one leaflet.⁸¹ Valetta aircraft and Dakota C-47 aircraft (the latter borrowed from the US government) were used for mass drops. Each plane capable of carrying as many as 800,000 leaflets in bunches of 5,000 while more precise drops were carried out using Auster observation aircraft.⁸² While the RAF carried out the drops, oral testimony by Commanding Officers shows that they had no part in the production or creation of the leaflets, this remained exclusively the job of the Information Service using ORS data from October 1952 onwards.⁸³ On average, ten leaflet drop sorties were flown by the RAF every month, however some months saw increased activity as new propaganda campaigns were launched, as was the case with June 1951 which had 102 sorties flown, an average of one drop every seven hours.⁸⁴ Later campaigns witnessed as many as 21 million leaflets being dropped

⁷⁴ Leng, p.156.

⁷⁵Ibid.,p.156.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.154.

⁷⁷ Ramakrishna, Emergency propaganda, p.114.

⁷⁸ MacKay, p.130.

⁷⁹ Thompson, p.96.

⁸⁰ Jackson, p.110.

⁸¹ WO 291/1792, pp.6-7.,Note #30-36.

⁸² Jackson, p.110.

⁸³ Air Commodore P.E. Warcup Interviewed in July 1963, "RAND symposium on the role of airpower in counter-insurgency and unconventional warfare: The Malayan Emergency" (Eds.) A.H. Peterson, G.C. Reinhardt and E.E. Conger (Santa Monica, CA, 1963), p.68.

⁸⁴ Jackson, p.110.

during the course of a single week (week of September 9, 1955).⁸⁵ Leaflet drops continued throughout the Emergency, so that by the end of the war more than 500 million leaflets had been dropped and 2,500 sorties flown.⁸⁶

During this period of the war Voice Aircraft flights were introduced. These Voice Aircraft flights or (VA flights) were almost certainly gleaned from similar methods being used by the United States Army in Korea. While the usage of VA flights was more limited than leaflet drops, this message carried could not be ignored or censored by the MRLA by threats of execution (the standard punishment introduced for picking up or having a government leaflet). The VA flights were remarkably successful, commencing in early in 1953, they were heard by 10% of surrendered CTs within their first six months, increasing to 52.6% of SEPs interviewed by the end of 1953. While this figure dropped to 47.5% during the first half of 1954, it rose steadily to the point that 96.7% of SEPs reported that they had heard the VA flights by the end of 1954.⁸⁷ The first two months of flights alone in 1953 yielded eight direct surrenders, while numerous others claimed it had partly persuaded them.⁸⁸ Initially there were problems with audibility; these were soon rectified, so that by 1955 complaints about the lack of clarity had disappeared altogether.⁸⁹ Considerable effort went into finding the optimum aircraft speed and altitude, while live broadcasts were found to be far superior in quality. Dakota aircraft were also used for these VA flights, proving to be a versatile aircraft for propaganda distribution; the three aircraft used for VA flights were suitably named Faith, Hope and Charity.⁹⁰

Mandarin Chinese served as a *lingua franca* for the majority of CTs within the MRLA.⁹¹ However, Mandarin speakers were not always available for live broadcast flights and tape recordings were often substituted in their place.⁹² Chinese language speech patterns, in particular Mandarin were found to record poorly, with stresses on words and high pitch damaging recording devices. These problems gave the ORS considerable trouble until a technical solution could be found, as the files note this was an unavoidable difficulty.⁹³ Other languages were used and specific regions were allocated differing quotas of VA flights based on linguistic trends. For example, in the region of Negri Sembilan during this period ORS recommended as much as 65% flights in Hakka, while the state of Kedah and Perlis were advised to have 55% of flights in Cantonese with more obscure dialects such as Hailem still being allocated time (a mere 2% of VA flights in the state of Kedah).⁹⁴ Continuing efforts to understand and quantify the communists by the government demonstrates a remarkable attitude that set it apart from previous British colonial wars where the enemy was generalised, referred to euphemistically and had his intentions misunderstood.

The material used for tactical messages was far more fleeting, specific and often quite parochial. While few English language transcriptions of the text broadcast remain, one can glean a good idea of their content from the few surviving files in the National Archives. For example,

⁸⁵ Jackson, p.111.

⁸⁶ Jackson, p.111.

⁸⁷ WO 291/1792, pp.6-8.

⁸⁸ Jackson, p.114.

⁸⁹ WO 291/1792, p.8.

⁹⁰ Eric Smith, Counter insurgency operations: Malaya and Borneo (London, 1985) p.42.

⁹¹ WO 291/1785, p.3. Note #11.

⁹² WO 291/1794, p.2.

⁹³ WO 291/1762, p.5.Note #27

⁹⁴ WO 291/1789, p.9.Appendix A

one such transcript (which has no year given) shows the ingenuity of the ORS section and Information services in using fresh, relevant facts and SEPs themselves appeal to the CTs still at large in the jungle covering several operations during November of that year.⁹⁵ The authorities had worked hard to sure that the veracity of their claims was beyond doubt, so there is little reason to think that the information in VA flight was not believed, in fact SEP interrogations show that CT trust in the government's information improved from 41.5% in 1952 to as high as 57.6% by March 1954.⁹⁶

The information broadcast is both tactical and strategic, informing the CTs of the most recently killed and surrendered guerrillas by name, while the second half implores the CTs to surrender and is very similar to the content given in the leaflet example earlier.⁹⁷ This message was repeated for two days on November 3rd and 4th 1953, before technical problems forced the aircraft to seek repairs, however five days later the plane returned with news relevant to area, announcing that Wei Keiong a District committee member had surrendered. This was verified by the playing of a recorded message in which he stated "I have surrendered to start a new life. Do not wait in the jungle to die. Join me before it is too late".⁹⁸ This message in turn prompted a number of further surrenders six days later; these SEPs specifically state that the first message encouraged them to surrender as did the news of the death of one their comrades, Liew Kon Kim.⁹⁹ Surrenders in the area a number of days later cite Wei Keiong's appeal as being a contributing factor in their decision to surrender.¹⁰⁰ Here one sees a clear pattern beginning to emerge; a surrender or death followed by rapid broadcast of the events, which in turn leads to further surrenders, all the while the credibility of the authorities is reinforced. This 'good' treatment post-surrender was the success on which the entire campaign was judged, the authorities were quite aware that any maltreatment by security forces would be reported and spread by word of mouth.¹⁰¹

Leaflets were a more permanent method of propaganda distribution and could provide photographic proof. However, they required time to design, print and load onto planes. Despite their best efforts, the lag time between a suitable moment for appeals occurring and being acted upon was considerably slower with leaflets. Even in a 'best case' scenario, such as the events following the surrender of an MRLA officer named Tan Guat on April 22, 1951, it still took over forty-eight hours for leaflets to be produced to publicise and exploit his desertion, at this stage 250,000 were dropped on the area his unit was believed to be operating within.¹⁰² Voice Aircraft broadcasts on the other hand were almost instantaneous to produce and distribute, sometimes only taking a matter of hours, despite the occasional problems with audibility and the brevity of their message which left no trace behind. One particularly fine example of this, shows the speed with which a message could be requested and delivered is the case of a CT group that had been

⁹⁵ WO 291/1762, pp.6-7. While the year is not given, due to the nature of the flights, which are described as 'tests' one can deduce that it is probably November of 1952, but may be 1953.

⁹⁶ WO 291/1792, pp.6-7Note #30-37.

⁹⁷ WO 291/1762, p. 6.Note #31.The first half of the message reads "Good morning. Liew Kon Kim is shot dead. Thong Kwai Ong, Lee Chew is alive. Loh Pin is shot dead. Ho Ah Chuen is alive. Decide now." The second half reads "Listen carefully. Listen carefully. Hide your arms and cap. Ask the masses to help you go to the nearest police station. You will be well treated."

⁹⁸ Ibid.,p.6.Note #34.

⁹⁹ Ibid.,p.6.Note #37(i-ii).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.6.Note #40.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, p. 92.

¹⁰² . Ramakrishna, Emergency propaganda, p.116.Tan Guat was second in Command of the 4th Co., 3rd MRLA Reg., he is reported to have surrendered after reading a leaflet containing testimony from a prominent former CT named Lam Swee.

ambushed, their leader killed and two members wounded on the morning of November 16, 1952. Rather than send troops in and risk a fire fight with considerable risk to government forces, it was decided that they would try appealing to the CTs first rather than forcing a fight to the death.¹⁰³ Here one sees a perfectly timed use of this idea of appeals at the most opportune time, or in other words an appeal at the 'psychological moment'. The files shows that a request for a suitable message was received at 1025 hours and that by 1453 hours the message had been recorded by a Mandarin speaking Special Branch detective at a nearby station before being broadcast.¹⁰⁴ From receiving the request until its transmission, the total time taken was a mere four and half hours.

The psychological warfare methods mentioned did not work in a vacuum; their role was ancillary to the strong and effective actions of the government that backed up word with deed, over time creating trust and eventually co-operation.¹⁰⁵ The government drew attention to the benefits of assisting them, initially these were financial and after a while with the creation of 'white areas' (areas where Emergency regulations had been recalled). The government remained true to its word, increasing self-determination and giving greater governance of Malaya to non-Europeans. The Chinese in particular benefited from greater social equality, improved services and infrastructure (especially in the New Villages) and the gift of full citizenship. This idea is an extension of the need for the authorities to achieve credibility and trust from its entire people, not just one or two groups. The ultimate failure of communism in Malaya was a result of not only the government's success in dealing with them, but the misperception of the factors that would bring people to communism in Malaya.¹⁰⁶ Unlike China and Vietnam, there were no starving millions and the people were not suffering under a corrupt regime. Another glaring oversight by the Communist party was that 50% of the Malayan population was Muslim, and thus extremely unlikely to be attracted to the movement as in other Muslim countries during the Cold war. In the case of the Chinese community more specifically where the Communist party had found the warmest support, the Chinese community had shown an ambivalent attitude to extra-communal governance which had previously had little business with them. While it had left them marginalised and somewhat disenfranchised, this government involvement could hardly be described as oppressive and was merely lacking. The relatively low levels of literacy in Federation already discussed also prevented any strong intellectual or ideological base for the Communist movement ever taking root. Thus the two traditional avenues for communism to progress along were blocked, the masses were poor, but free, and the intelligentsia either non-existent or already working for the government. Despite questionable ties to the more international Communist movement of the time, the situation in Malaya made the communist insurrection a likely failure in the end.

By the end of the war, surrenders outnumbered kills in elimination statistics.¹⁰⁷ The content of the propaganda remained far more important than the methods of distribution; there was rarely a shortage of radios, planes or leaflets for the authorities in Malaya.¹⁰⁸ The success of the operations and methods mentioned are judged primarily on this, while hunger and despair

¹⁰³ WO 291/1762, Note #42.

¹⁰⁴ WO 291/1762, Note #42. It is worth noting that messages were typically written in English, translated into the suitable dialect for the intended audience before being recorded in a studio to ensure the best sound quality possible.

¹⁰⁵ McHugh, p.36.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson, p.114.

¹⁰⁷ MacKay, p.131.

¹⁰⁸ Thompson, pp.98-106.

created by the use of food denial operations and the actions of the security forces acted as the primary catalysts in the conversion process.¹⁰⁹ The methods noted were used in conjunction with the radio and press, filtering down through the civilian populace and the MRLA's supply base in the Min Yuen. The mass surrenders of 1957 and the MRLA's eventual collapse in 1960 began in 1952 and 1953 with the use and subsequent refinement of the psychological and research methods mentioned earlier. The use of SEPs, the bribe policy and the promise of a new life despite past offences, while ethically contentious was highly successful, providing reliable data on the MRLA's membership and encouraging others to surrender. The regular supply of information supplied to ORS and the Department of Information by SEPs in interrogations also allowed the authorities to keep reliable statistics on the whereabouts, movements, strength and sentiments of their enemy. The use of SEPs in appeals to their former comrades provoked a cascade of further surrenders that grew and grew, until the MRLA was unable to replace its losses, wilted and died.

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