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EMERGENCY PROPAGANDA

THE WINNING OF MALAYAN HEARTS AND MINDS 1948–1958

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List of Abbreviations

AEBUS	Anti-Enemy Backing Up Society
AIO	Area Information Officer
ANM	Arkib Negara Malaysia (National Archives of Malaysia)
ARO	Assistant Resettlement Officer
ACAO	Assistant Chinese Affairs Officer
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMA	British Military Administration
CAO	Chinese Affairs Officer
CCM	Central Committee Member
CDW	Colonial Development and Welfare
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CEP	Captured Enemy Personnel
CFO	Chinese Field Officer (Mobile Unit)
DCM	District Committee Member
DGIS	Director-General Information Services
DIS	Director Information Services/Department of Information Services
DO	District Officer
DOR	Director of Operations Review
DPR	Department of Public Relations
DWEC	District War Executive Committee
EEP	'End of Empire' Papers, Rhodes House Library, Oxford
EIS	Emergency Information Services
EOC	Emergency Operations Council
FEO	Federal Establishment Office
FMS	Federated Malay States
FO	Field Officer (Mobile Unit)
GCC	Good Citizens' Committee
HEIS	Head Emergency Information Services

HPWS	Head Psychological Warfare Section
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JIPC	Joint Information and Propaganda Committee
KMT	Kuomintang
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MCS	Malayan Civil Service
MOI	Ministry of Information, United Kingdom
MPABA	Malayan People's Anti-British Army
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MFU	Malayan Film Unit
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
NAM	National Army Museum
NAS	National Archives of Singapore
PMFTU	Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions
PP	Private Papers, C.C. Too
PRS	Public Relations Secretary, Singapore
PSC	Public Service Commission
PWS	Psychological Warfare Section
RHO	Rhodes House Library, Oxford
RO	Resettlement Officer
SCA	Secretary for Chinese Affairs
SCM	State Committee Member
SEIO	State Emergency Information Officer
SEP	Surrendered Enemy Personnel
SIO	State Information Officer
SWEC	State War Executive Committee
TCLP-ISEAS	Tan Cheng Lock Papers, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
VAC	Voice Aircraft Committee
WINSUM	'Security Forces' Weekly Intelligence Summary'
WNS	'Department of Information Weekly News Summary'

Federation of Malaya, 1948

CHAPTER ONE

Propaganda in the Malayan Emergency

The Missing Dimension

The Malayan Emergency is one of the few post-war insurgencies which the insurgents did not win, and this fact has generated much interest in the reasons as to why the Government of the Federation of Malaya was eventually able to overcome the revolt led by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The conventional view holds that Government succeeded because of its effectiveness in the administrative, military and political spheres. Administratively, by constructing New Villages that provided 'supplies of clean water, schools, community centres, basic medical care, some agricultural land' and some other basic essentials, Government is said to have secured the all-important 'hearts and minds' of the Malayan Chinese, who were the MCP's support base.[1] Complementing hearts-and-minds tactics were the 'severe penalties' of 'mass detention, deportations and resettlement', which, by removing the Chinese from the jungle fringes, disrupted the MCP's supply line and effectively broke the back of the Emergency.[2] Militarily, it is suggested that Government beat the MCP because it had an overall plan which co-ordinated administrative, Police and Army measures at all levels and sought to secure its own base areas before embarking on a military campaign against the terrorists. Moreover, the Security Forces were eventually able to secure better intelligence on the terrorists and mount effective food control operations which deprived the terrorists of their essential supplies. Furthermore, by adhering to the time-honoured 'principles' of small-unit operations instead of large scale ones and importantly, the use of minimum force in operations in support of the civil power, Government was able to function within the law and defeat the terrorists without alienating the public.[3] Finally, the conventional view posits that Government, because it was committed to a 'clear political aim' – granting the non-Malays, especially the Chinese, a political stake in the country as a prelude to *Merdeka* or independence – was able to steal the MCP's thunder, as the latter was supposedly fighting for that very outcome.

Hence, political reforms in the form of elections at not only the State and Federal but particularly the New Village level, were necessary to the defeat of the Insurrection.[4]

The fundamental problem with the conventional perspective outlined above is that it conflates the political and military dimensions of the Emergency. Essentially, it suggests that the defeat of the military insurgency was contingent on the attainment of political security for the Malayan Chinese: once the Chinese were assured of a political stake in an independent Malaya, they deprived the MCP of their support and the insurgency collapsed. As we shall see, however, while progress in the insurgency certainly contributed to the pace of advance toward *Merdeka*, the converse was not true: mere political reforms did not *ipso facto* confer on Government the initiative in the shooting war. This is because the resolution of the military insurgency did not depend on securing the hearts and minds of those Chinese interested in political, constitutional questions, but rather those who were the least enamoured of such issues: the rural Chinese. In essence, there were really two Emergencies. First, a political one in which the British strove to create an anti-Communist, friendly, united Malayan nation governed by a multiracial Government. The key to this political Emergency was the Malay and Chinese elites represented by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). The second Emergency embraced the military insurgency in the rural areas of Malaya, and the key to the resolution of this campaign lay as we shall see, with the rural Chinese. This crucial distinction has been obscured in the conventional view, which essentially asserts that it was political advance toward *Merdeka* which won the hearts and minds of the rural Chinese. In fact a recurring theme in this study will be that Government's ability to win over the rural Chinese depended not so much on whether the latter were provided the opportunity to become Federal citizens and to shape their political destiny, but rather if their basic needs for physical and socio-economic security were met. Securing these less abstract, more concrete needs was the real key to rural Chinese hearts and minds.

The issue of 'hearts and minds' brings us to a second problem with the conventional analysis: the absence of conceptual rigour as to what 'hearts and minds' refers to in the Emergency. While Cloake and Stubbs for instance take the meaning of the phrase as self-evident and instead seek to identify when the term was first used during the Emergency, Carruthers merely suggests that the hearts and minds of not only colonial, but also metropolitan, peoples were an important objective for the British to secure.[5] Moreover, while Mockaitis gives the impression that the hearts and minds of the public were most important,[6] Hack distinguishes between 'civilian' and 'military' hearts and minds, and places political concessions, schools and piped water under the 'civilian' category, and propaganda,

rewards for information, surrender policies and limiting collateral damage, under 'military'. He, however, makes no attempt to explain this distinction.[7] A third shortcoming with the received wisdom exists: although the psychological connotation of the phrase 'hearts and minds' is apparent, analysts pay relatively little attention to the psychological dimension of the Emergency. The emphasis has been on the functional aspects of counter-insurgency methods and techniques such as resettlement, food control, intelligence, civil-military co-operation and small unit operations. The ways in which such measures also generated mental pressures on the public and the terrorists – with operational consequences – have been far less noticed. Those few writers who do recognise the significance of psychological elements focus separately – and in a piecemeal fashion – on their effect on different groups in Malaya: the Malayan public, the MCP terrorists, and British troops. No work systematically examines the impact of psychological pressures on the key players in the rural insurrection: the MCP rank and file and the rural Chinese public.[8]

The final problem with the prevailing view derives directly from the general neglect of the psychological dimension: the relative marginalisation of the role of Government propaganda in the Emergency, despite acknowledgement that it was very effective.[9] This marginalisation has taken two forms: at one level, 'propaganda' has been narrowly conceived as Government's spoken, printed and broadcast output: leaflets and posters, mobile cinema shows, roving lectures by Surrendered Enemy Personnel, rewards for information, Voice Aircraft broadcasts and Civics Courses for instance. Such a limited perspective has meant that previous analysts have ignored the propaganda implications of certain Government policies as well as the behaviour of senior officials and the Security Forces amongst the public, and the ways in which Security Force pressure and food denial schemes also constituted 'propaganda' to harassed and starving terrorists. In addition, even with respect to Government spoken, printed and broadcast output – propaganda as conventionally understood – past works have opted for a descriptive rather than an analytical approach, failing to explain the philosophy underlying the usage of such propaganda media in Malaya and where it came from. Furthermore, there is disagreement on the relative contributions of Hugh Carleton Greene, Head Emergency Information Services (1950–1951) and A.D.C. Peterson, Director-General Information Services (1952–1954). While some writers highlight only Peterson,[10] others focus on Greene.[11] Very few have attempted to assess in detail the contributions of both.[12] Moreover, because most analyses treat Templer's departure from Malaya in mid-1954 as the virtual end of the Emergency and regard the remaining years as a long 'mopping up' process,[13] there has been little attention paid to the contributions of Yaacob Latiff, Director of Information Services from July 1954, and C.C. Too, Head Psychological Warfare Section from 1956, to Government propaganda in

the decisive period January 1955 to December 1958. As we shall see, the actual collapse of terrorist morale compelling the MCP to demobilise occurred during this period, and Government propaganda played a decisive role.[14]

In light of these omissions in the literature, this study will show that fundamentally, Government was able to defeat the MCP's rural insurgency because it was gradually able, despite an inauspicious beginning, to secure the 'hearts and minds' – or more accurately the 'confidence' – of not only the rural Chinese public but also that of the terrorist rank and file. We shall see that Government was able to achieve these outcomes through the propaganda of not merely its 'words', but even more importantly 'deeds' which promoted the physical and socio-economic security of the rural Chinese and ultimately even the terrorists. At the same time, we shall note that the MCP inadvertently contributed to Government's eventual success through serious doctrinal errors; mistakes constituting in themselves 'propaganda' which completely alienated the mass of the rural Chinese as well as the bulk of its own rank and file. Within this overarching framework, the study will also pursue five supplemental aims: it will examine the origins and evolution of certain Government attitudes and practices which had considerable propaganda implications in Malaya; analyse the origins and evolution of the media, organisation and philosophy of Government spoken, printed and broadcast propaganda in Malaya; evaluate the respective contributions of the key propagandists Hugh Greene and Alec Peterson to the development of Government propaganda; analyse the contributions of Yaacob Latiff and C.C. Too to Government propaganda during the final phase of the Insurrection between 1955 and the end of 1958; and finally show, from a propaganda perspective, that 21 December 1957 was the date which marked the beginning of the collapse in MCP morale, culminating in the mass surrenders of 1958. In line with these aims, this introductory chapter will briefly sketch out the historical and historiographical context of the Emergency, develop a model of propaganda applicable to the conflict, and identify the imperial and wartime antecedents of British propaganda in the Emergency.

THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY: HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In order to defend the eastern flank of the Indian Empire on the one hand and the security of the China trade route on the other, the British East India Company recognised that control of the Straits of Malacca was essential. Beginning in 1786, therefore, the Company established Settlements at Penang, Singapore, and Malacca, which were united formally in 1826 as the Straits Settlements. Control of the Settlements passed directly to the Colonial Office in 1867, when the Settlements became a Crown Colony.

Between 1874 and 1895, moreover, British power was further extended into the interior, encompassing the Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang. In these States, Malay Rulers allowed British Residents to tacitly assume effective administrative control over all matters except those pertaining to Malay religion and custom. In 1896, these Protected States were unified in the interests of administrative efficiency and referred to henceforth as the Federated Malay States. The Governor of the Straits Settlements became concurrently High Commissioner to the Federated Malay States. Furthermore, in 1909, the four northern States of Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu and Kelantan passed to British control from Siam, and in 1914, Johore was added. These five States were known collectively as the Unfederated Malay States, and accepted British Advisers with remits similar to those of the Residents in the Federated States. Hence, between 1874 and 1914, British control of the internal administration and foreign policy of the Malay States was consolidated.[15]

British intervention involved developing the resources of Malaya, principally tin and rubber, and this in turn demanded a labour force. The indigenous Malays – and the migrants from the surrounding archipelago who assimilated with them – lived in villages located near coasts and river estuaries, were primarily farmers and fishermen, and demonstrably unenthusiastic about working a fixed number of hours each day for wages.[16] This meant that immigrant labour was needed. The British thus encouraged Chinese and Indian immigration into Malaya, thereby shaping the country's demographic destiny. Indian immigration – mainly Madrasi Tamils from south India – tended to match the expansion of the Malayan rubber industry. Hence when the total acreage under rubber grew from 50,000 acres in 1900 to 3,272,000 acres by 1938 – making Malaya the world's largest producer of natural rubber – the Indian population – only 30,000 in 1870 – shot up to 625,000 in 1931. Plantation labour proved the most important economic activity of the Malayan Indians, employing 53 percent of the Indian population as late as 1947. By this date, however, other sectors were employing other Indians as well. These included English-educated Jaffna or Ceylon Tamils who had been brought in from the 1890s to staff clerical posts in the Railway, Postal Services, Accounts and Treasury Departments in particular; Sikhs, Punjabis and north Indians who filled jobs in the Police and other Government departments; Tamil professionals and south Indian Muslim retailers who filled the private sector; and the wealthy Chettyar Tamils who were principally money-lenders.[17]

Matching the diversity of Indian immigration, eclipsing it in terms of scale and crucially important to our understanding of the Emergency was Chinese immigration. The earliest Chinese immigrants, from the 1500s, had been Hokkiens from Fukien in south China who settled in Malacca, many of whom intermarrying with the Malays and producing the progeny that became known as the Straits Chinese or *Babas*. It was however the growth

in European, especially British, demand for Straits tin from the 1850s and 1860s that led to a massive increase in Chinese coolie immigration into the tin-rich States of Perak, Selangor and Sungei Ujong (later part of Negri Sembilan). Thus by 1901 65 percent of the population of Selangor was Chinese. However, because these immigrant Chinese considered Malaya as a temporary abode, a place to make money before returning, there was considerable ebb and flow in migration between Malaya and China in the first decades of the 20th century. Nevertheless, up to the late 1920s, there was a considerable migrational gain to Malaya. However, following the worldwide tin and rubber slump in 1930, serious unemployment prompted thousands of Chinese to return to China. In addition, the Federated Malay States (FMS) Government passed the Immigration Restriction Ordinance in 1930 which sharply curtailed Chinese male immigration into Malaya. Hence while there had been 192,809 Chinese arriving in 1928, by 1933 the number had declined to 13,535. While the 1933 Aliens Ordinance also imposed a quota on male immigration, very significantly, it imposed none on female immigration. Thus between 1933 and 1938 190,000 Chinese females arrived in the Federated Malay States. This had the effect of improving the sex ratio: while there had been 5 females to every 10 Chinese males in 1931, by 1947, there were 8 females to every 10 males. These women were aged between 18 and 40, were mainly peasants and entered the rubber, tin and building industries as well as factories. They married the male coolies and settled in Malaya. Furthermore, indentured workers who had worked off their debts returned to China, married and brought their wives back to Malaya. These developments in the 1930s facilitated the transformation of the immigrant male Chinese from a temporary sojourner into a settled family man, and the immigrant Chinese in Malaya became a more stable community. Hence by the end of the Japanese Occupation, while the Malays formed 44 percent of the approximately 5 million population, the Chinese formed a significant 38.5 percent.[18]

These increasingly settled Chinese immigrants were largely from the southern Chinese provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Fukien, and comprised five main groups: Cantonese and Hakkas, who were cultivators and rubber tappers but mainly miners; Tiechius who were essentially agriculturalists in Penang/Province Wellesley; Hailams from Hainan island; and Hokkiens. While the Hokkiens were concentrated in Penang as traders, Hokkien sub-groups like the Hokchius, Hokchias and Hinghwas were mainly labourers. Of particular salience were the Chinese concentrated in the rural sector – the tappers, miners and agriculturalists. Although the coolie Chinese had been brought in principally to provide a labour pool for the exploitation of Malaya's tin and rubber, during times of food shortages and economic slumps, as in 1920–21, 1930–32, and 1938, the FMS Government established Food Production Reserves and issued the rural Chinese with Temporary Occupation Licences (TOLs) to encourage them to

grow crops like rice, vegetables and even cash crops like tapioca and groundnuts to keep them occupied and earning a living. Although the tin and rubber industries, once recovered, re-employed these rural Chinese and Government withdrew the TOLs, many rural Chinese did not give up cash cropping as they had found it more stable and profitable than working on estates or mines. Hence by the time the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941, 150,000 rural Chinese remained on land without TOLs and were technically considered squatters. Furthermore, by the end of the Japanese Occupation in September 1945, the number of squatters had risen to about 300,000. Three factors contributed to this increase: first, thousands of urban Chinese had escaped from the towns because of Japanese persecution; second, urban food shortages, inflation of food prices and rationing had also acted as a push factor; and third, the Japanese, like the FMS Government in the 1920s and 1930s, had also tried to alleviate food shortages by resettling urban Chinese on rural estates, mines, State Land, Forest Reserves and even Malay Reservations. In addition, immediately after the war, because wages in the rubber and tin industries were insufficient to support families, many Chinese, even if working on estates and mines, continued to squat illegally, engaging in food cultivation to supplement their incomes. It was these rural, squatter Chinese who were to be the focus of the propaganda war between Government and the MCP during the Emergency.[19]

It was conscious British policy to maintain ethnic barriers in this plural society of Malays, Chinese and Indians. From the 1870s, realising that the large numbers of immigrants entering the country could conceivably threaten the future position of the Malays, the British pursued a declared policy of 'Malaya for the Malays', actively endeavouring to build up a Malay elite capable of assisting them in maintaining the Malay identity of the country. Hence in 1905 a Malay College was opened in Kuala Kangsar, while a Malayan Administrative Service was also started to absorb graduates of the College. The better Malay civil servants were then promoted to the British-dominated Malayan Civil Service (MCS). By the 1930s, about 10 percent of MCS officers were Malay.[20] These consciously maintained pre-war ethnic barriers were reinforced by the Occupation. While Malay Rulers, civil servants and ordinary people collaborated with the Japanese, 40,000 Chinese perished as part of the so-called *sook ching* campaign mounted by the Japanese Army. Furthermore, it was during the Occupation that the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) developed into a major political force on the peninsula. Formed originally in 1925 by mainland Chinese Communists, it was revamped on Comintern instructions in 1930 so as to establish more multiracial credentials. Throughout the 1930s, however, repeated disruptions of its communications links with the Comintern, internal schisms – and because it was illegal – Police repression, hampered its efforts. However, its fortunes began to improve from 1936,

when it successfully mounted strikes and demonstrations exploiting worker distress during the slump caused by the global depression. A year later, moreover, following the Japanese invasion of China in July 1937, the Party enjoyed considerable success in setting up anti-Japanese fronts in Malaya to mobilise the local Chinese in decrying Japanese aggression, the most important being the Anti-Enemy Backing Up Society (AEBUS). During the Occupation, the MCP – now styling itself the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) – built very close ties with the squatter Chinese mentioned earlier. As these Chinese generally bore the brunt of Japanese brutality, they welcomed the MPAJA's attempts to strike back on their behalf. Hence they not only joined the MPAJA fighting units but also supplied the Communists through the secret organisation called MPAJU (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union). So significant did the MPAJA become that by 1943 the British had recognised it as a force to be reckoned with and supplied it with instructors and arms. By the end of the war, the MPAJA boasted 7,000–8,000 men under arms with thousands more in the cells of the MPAJU. Significantly, in the three weeks between the Japanese surrender and the arrival of British forces, the MPAJA emerged from the jungle to dispense summary justice to collaborators with the Japanese. This resulted in large scale Sino-Malay clashes in Johore. Not only did these and later clashes have a lasting effect on Sino-Malay relations, they added credence to the perception that the MCP remained very much a Chinese Party, something which was to have fateful consequences during the Emergency.[21]

The end of the Occupation also saw British moves to effect a fundamental transformation in the political landscape of Malaya. Wartime British planners had recognised that change was overdue for several reasons: the existence of the politically separate Settlements and Malay States was administratively unwieldy; a unified Malayan State was desirable if the country's natural resources were to be efficiently harnessed to assist in Britain's economic rehabilitation after the war; a common citizenship embracing not only Malays but also the immigrants, especially the Chinese, was just reward for their assistance in helping defend British interests in Malaya, and such a scheme needed direct British sovereignty over Malaya – bypassing the Rulers – in order to succeed; and finally direct rule of Malaya leading to the imposition of a uniform political structure on Malaya and a common citizenship were necessary prerequisites to the long-term goal of self-government, an outcome calculated to appease Britain's American allies. Accordingly, the Malayan Union was promulgated on 1 April 1946, unifying the Settlements of Malacca and Penang (but not Singapore) and all nine Malay States under a Governor acting as the direct representative of the British King, and depriving the Malay Rulers of their sovereignty. However, Malay opposition to the scheme coalesced around Dato Onn bin Jaafar, the *Mentri Besar* (chief minister) of Johore, and the United Malays

National Organisation (UMNO) was formed in May 1946 to protest against the Union. The British, taken aback at this vociferous Malay opposition, backtracked and after several months of negotiations, and despite opposition from the educated non-Malays, the Union was replaced on 1 February 1948 by the Federation Agreement. While the latter restored the sovereignty of the Rulers and recognised State autonomy once more, the core ideas of the Malayan Union: a strong central Government and common citizenship, were retained, although they would henceforth be achieved through a more circuitous route.[22]

These political convulsions aside, post-war Malaya was also racked by socio-economic unrest. The British Military Administration (BMA) which re-occupied the country from September 1945 to March 1946, as well as the civil administration which took over from April, were unable to shield the suffering population from endemic shortages: for instance, official rice rations were insufficient to feed the people while black market rice was very expensive, and housing was in short supply as well as characterised by high rents and overcrowding. Meanwhile the cost of living in November 1945 was estimated to be 300–400 percent higher than in pre-war days, and yet basic wages were still paid according to pre-war scales. Little wonder that labour unrest broke out in urban areas in the peninsula from the very month the BMA was set up. Meanwhile the MCP, which had demobilised the MPAJA in December 1945, but was no longer proscribed, fully exploited the economic distress of Malayan workers through its vehicle, the Pan-Malayan General Labour Union (PMGLU – later split into the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and the Singapore Federation of Trade Unions). PMGLU demands were pegged at the socio-economic level: large wage increases, free medical services, better housing, paid sick leave and paid holidays, for instance. Because the militant PMGLU met the real needs of workers, it gained a large measure of support which it translated into public demonstrations against the BMA, which peaked in January/ February 1946 in Singapore and the peninsula. Because the BMA belatedly responded firmly with arrests of key Communist officials, however, from February 1946 onward the MCP withdrew from overt confrontation with Government. Instead until June 1948 it focused its energies at three levels: first, the Party intensified its labour agitation through its cadres in the unions, a strategy so successful that by March 1947, the PMFTU had branches in every industry and craft in Malaya. Second, the Communists set up front organisations like the New Democratic Youth League, the Ex-Servicemen's Association for former MPAJA guerrillas and even a Chinese Women's Association, to penetrate all sectors of the public. Finally, the MCP participated in the Malayan political arena by infiltrating the Malayan Democratic Union (MDU) which had been formed by English-educated intellectuals in December 1945, as well as radical Malay organisations and the pro-Indonesia Malay Nationalist Party. Hence the

MCP was able, through the MDU-led All-Malayan Council for Joint Action (AMCJA) and PUTERA (a coalition of radical Malay parties), to take part in fomenting opposition to the proposed Federation Agreement. In sum, between 1946 and 1948, the MCP sought to dominate Malaya by capturing and controlling industrial, social and political bodies.[23]

Nevertheless, despite its success in extending its influence through its 'open and legal struggle', in mid-June 1948 the MCP switched strategy: its members left the urban areas of Malaya, reactivated the wartime rural support organisation amongst the squatters and from the recesses of the Malayan jungle launched an armed revolt against the Federation Government. The origins of this Insurrection have been shrouded in controversy. One perspective posits that international factors were crucial in determining the timing of the Malayan uprising. Proponents of this view argue that in September 1947 in Poland the Soviet leader Andrei Zhdanov formally declared that wartime co-operation was at an end and the world was divided into two irreconcilably opposed camps, Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism. The Zhdanov line was emphasised again in February/March 1948 in Calcutta, at the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India and the Southeast Asian Youth Conference. According to this argument, therefore, it was no coincidence that revolts broke out in Malaya, Indonesia and Burma in 1948. On the other hand, another argument suggests that the change of MCP tack came about because of factors internal to Malaya: the assumption of the Secretary-Generalship by Chin Peng, who was inclined to a more militant line than his predecessor Lai Tek; the restlessness of MCP members who had been unhappy with the earlier decision to demobilise the MPAJA; the erosion of the MCP's ability to influence the masses due to the recovering economy; and the failure of the AMCJA-PUTERA strategy to help the MCP secure power. A further view posits that labour unrest on estates between 1946 and 1948 prompted a growing pattern of Government repression in the form of Police action against striking workers and banishment of Communist unionists, culminating in the swift passage of restrictive union legislation at the end of May 1948 which rendered the PMFTU illegal. Taken aback by the swiftness and ferocity of Government action, the MCP was forced to the jungle prematurely as a defensive reaction to Government measures.[24] Interestingly, in June 1998, Chin Peng surfaced in London and revealed that the MCP revolt was never directed from Moscow, and that while the Party from March 1948 had foreseen its possible proscription, this development had been expected to occur by September. Hence Government's clampdown following the murders of three planters in Sungei Siput, Perak on 16 June caught it utterly off-balance.[25] At any rate, by June 1948, the first shots in the Malayan Emergency had been fired, and it would be 12 long years before Government officially declared it at an end.

DEFINING 'HEARTS AND MINDS'

Having described the historical and historiographical context of the Emergency, we may now attempt a rigorous definition of 'hearts and minds' and 'propaganda'. To do so adequately however requires an understanding as to where these concepts fit into the very fabric of war, and there is no better guide to this subject than Clausewitz, the nineteenth-century Prussian philosopher. There exists an unfortunate modern misperception that Clausewitz was never interested in conflicts other than conventional wars. For instance Thomas K. Adams claims that because Clausewitz has no interest in 'psycho-social' means of statecraft, the Prussian has nothing useful to say about insurgencies.[26] In actual fact, Clausewitz starts off by arguing that 'psycho-social' or moral factors 'form the spirit which permeates the whole being of War', including not merely conventional wars but also what he calls 'popular uprisings'. Clausewitz's idea of the intrinsic psychological dynamic of all types of war is clearly expressed in the 'Trinity of War' concept – ignored by Adams – which posits that war in real life is waged when the basic *passions* of the People are harnessed by Government and translated into policies as well as military strategies which the Army pursues. It follows that the People are the well-spring – in not only the physical but also the moral sense – of the capacity of Government and the Army to wage war.[27] To Clausewitz, therefore, the People represents the ultimate 'centre of gravity' – the 'hub of all power and movement on which everything depends' – of a country at war.[28] If this is true of conventional wars, it is arguably even more so in insurgencies, where the support of the People is the *sine qua non* of success in counterinsurgency efforts. Hence Clausewitz emphasises that the centre of gravity in 'popular uprisings' is 'public opinion'.[29] Clausewitz therefore provides a theoretical 'nest' for the much-bandied phrase 'hearts and minds': in the context of an insurgency like the Emergency it refers to 'public opinion'. Of course, retaining the Clausewitzian framework does not *ipso facto* require us to adhere to his peculiar terminology. We might use other terms in preference to 'hearts and minds': for instance the student of propaganda Lasswell prefers the phrase 'moral',[30] while in the context of the Emergency, Short has referred to public 'confidence'.[31]

The People are the centre of gravity in an insurgency not only because Government and the Army need their support in implementing counter-insurgency measures but also because the insurgents emerge from the People as well. Hence if Government wins the support of the People, the flow of recruits to the insurgent cause would be cut off. This is not to say, however, that insurgent 'hearts and minds' are unimportant in relation to that of the wider People. After all, should the insurgents be persuaded at some point to lay down arms, the insurgency – and the need for an expensive counterinsurgency – would end immediately. Now persuading

insurgents, or indeed any enemy forces, to lay down arms requires, as Clausewitz observes, not merely the destruction of their physical but especially their 'will' or 'psychic forces'.[32] Insurgents' 'psychic forces' are thus a legitimate target of Government efforts, and in modern parlance, is referred to as 'morale'. Rundquist and Sletto define morale as 'one's confidence in one's ability to cope with whatever the future may bring',[33] while Frezza argues that morale involves the 'conviction of having some resource adequate to meet the threat'.[34] A more rigorous definition of 'morale' has been provided by General William Slim, the charismatic commander of the Fourteenth Army in Burma during World War Two.[35] He defines 'morale' as a positive 'state of mind' that has three components: 'spiritual' confidence that the cause is just; 'intellectual' confidence that the goal can be attained; and 'material' confidence that the means of attaining the goal (good leadership, sufficient provisions and good working and living conditions), are available.[36]

In fact, throughout this study, we shall see that the terms 'confidence' and 'morale', rather than 'hearts and minds' – surprising as it may seem – were used more often by contemporary participants and observers to describe fluctuations in the state of mind of the public and the terrorists. By June 1951 for instance, both High Commissioner Gurney and Director of Operations Briggs reported that 'success depends on the morale of and the help given by the population and the breaking of communist morale and organisation'.[37] Hence in this study, instead of 'hearts and minds', we will adopt the term 'confidence' and generate working definitions based on this concept. Thus, if we accept that an integral aspect of 'confidence' is a sense of assurance and certainty, then in the specific context of the Emergency, we could consider 'public confidence' as the assurance enjoyed by members of the public that Government was willing and able to provide security and welfare despite the Communist Insurrection. Moreover, by 'terrorist confidence' we mean the assurance on the part of Communist terrorists, that the MCP was willing and able to fulfil its promises to them. We shall also observe that in the context of Government's surrender policy, terrorist confidence meant the assurance that Government promises of fair treatment would be kept.

UNDERSTANDING 'PROPAGANDA'

If the confidence of the People and the terrorists are important objectives to target in an insurgency, then what *means* could Government use to do so? This is where propaganda comes into the picture. 'Propaganda' (variously known as 'psychological warfare', 'psychological operations' and 'political warfare') represents 'a suspect word and a suspect activity', an exercise in making 'people do things against their will', utilising 'deceit' and 'trickery'.[38] Moreover, there is no shortage of definitions. For instance,

Lasswell argues that propaganda is concerned with 'the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion',[39] while Taylor opines that propaganda refers to the 'organisation of methods designed to persuade people to think and behave in a certain way'.[40] In addition, Linebarger has provided a well-known definition of propaganda: the 'planned use of any form of communication designed to affect the minds, emotions, and action of a given group for a specific purpose'.[41] These definitions certainly accommodate the use of public speeches, leaflets, film shows, radio broadcasts and other conventionally accepted media of propaganda. However, we argue here that a definition of propaganda limited merely to the content of various instruments of communication would be overly restrictive. Clausewitz helps us understand why.

To recapitulate, because moral factors permeate the entire being of war, Clausewitz's trinity – the Government, the Army and the People – live in not merely a physical but simultaneously a moral (or psychological) milieu as well. Moreover:[42]

> The effects of physical and psychological factors form an organic whole which, unlike a metal alloy, is inseparable by chemical processes.

The implication is that in war, every physical act has an inescapable psychological by-product. Hence, when Government forces shell an enemy position, they subject the opposing troops not merely to physical but also psychological pressure. 'Physical factors' do not only mean firepower. When Government officials build a clinic in a village, they not only meet the villagers' physical needs, they at the same time influence the villagers' *feelings* toward Government. This notion of the moral effects of physical action is not at all confined to Clausewitz. The Italian anarchist Carlo Pisacane argues that ideas always emanate from 'deeds', and Pisacane's thoughts subsequently influenced the French anti-parliamentarian Paule Brousse, who coined the famous phrase 'propaganda of the deed'.[43] Although 'propaganda of the deed' has traditionally been a pejorative phrase given its association with the underground activity of nineteenth-century Russian anarchists and social revolutionaries, it is nevertheless entirely relevant in helping us develop a more rounded appreciation of 'propaganda'. After all, even the noted student of propaganda Harold Lasswell accepts that physical deeds are simply another type of 'mass communication', because *like words, deeds can communicate a message.* Hence, not merely 'spoken or printed' words and pictures, but also 'physical acts' such as the assassination of a key figure, can communicate futility and 'destroy the enemy's will to fight'.[44] More recently, moreover, Saunders avers that 'carefully constructed images and words', as well as 'bullets, shells and bombs' can communicate power and 'reduce the enemy's will to win'.[45]

Because of the communicative characteristic of deeds, Watson argues that political, economic and military actions have as much 'psychological impact' on the target group as leaflets and broadcasts.[46] Thus 'civic action' – those attempts by Government to make 'real, lasting improvements to the social, economic and political environment', like building a school or a medical clinic; 'community relations' – activities such as organising a picnic for the villagers in a district; and 'troop behaviour' – the basic attitude of Government forces toward the local population – represent deeds with profound psychological effects and can be considered as propaganda.[47] In sum, because not only Government leaflets and other media but also Government 'deeds' communicate messages to an audience, Askenasy argues that 'propaganda' should be conceived as 'a co-ordinated approach' embracing both words and deeds to 'influence' the audience's 'way of thinking and acting'.[48] In other words, to ensure that its leaflets, films and radio broadcasts – its 'words' – are credible, Government must *co-ordinate its words and deeds so as to project the same message to the target audience*. If Government's words convey one thing but its actual deeds suggest something else, the audience will dismiss Government's words and lose confidence in its good faith. The need to synchronise all Government mass communications to a specific audience is the point of Luttwak's sardonic criticism of the American counterinsurgency approach in South Vietnam:[49]

> The [Agency for International Development] people would come to a village in Vietnam and help it out... The next day the air force would bomb the village. Then a special-forces team would go in to work with the survivors to rebuild the village and train them in self-defense [sic]. Next the artillery would barrage the village. Then a psychological operations unit would pass around leaflets and explain the importance of fighting the Vietcong. Then the navy would flatten the place with its gunfire.

In short, Vietnamese villagers could not consider as credible the message in Government leaflets that Government was their friend, when Government deeds suggested the opposite idea. It must be emphasised: to ensure the credibility of one's propaganda requires synchronising the pronouncements and actions of Government officials and troops. Askenasy thus argues that 'personnel should be sensitized [sic] to the psychological implications of potential actions', while 'sensitizing [sic] training' should be given not only to 'explicitly labeled [sic] psychological operations officers but also to commanders who make important decisions and to troops who are in daily contact' with the local population.[50]

Related to the need to ensure that one's words and deeds project the same message is the issue of their relative importance in one's overall propaganda. The anarchists felt that deeds were far more important.

Pisacane argues that 'intellectual propaganda' is 'an empty gesture', and Kropotkin avers that in dealing with largely uneducated people, physical 'deeds that attract general attention' can achieve 'more propagandizing in a few days than do thousands of leaflets'.[51] On the other hand, Most opines that words can be very helpful if closely co-ordinated with physical actions so as to exploit and amplify the message generated by the latter. This means that immediately after an action is carried out, pamphlets should be circulated 'setting out the reasons for the action in such a way as to draw from them the best possible benefit'.[52] In short, the psychological impact of a deed can be enhanced by the use of printed propaganda drawing the attention of the public to the act. However, while the psychological impact of a specific deed alone might be highly effective – as Kropotkin suggests – the psychological impact of words alone cannot. As Most suggests, printed or spoken propaganda needs to draw attention to – or 'exploit'- something tangible. If propaganda of words proclaims something which has no basis in reality, the audience will ignore it. Hence effective spoken, printed and even broadcast propaganda presupposes concrete deeds. Little wonder that more recently Katz observes that if political, social and economic programmes – concrete deeds – are 'seriously deficient', then 'no amount' of words 'will persuade the people that the programmes are worth while'.[53] In the case of the Emergency, moreover, Clutterbuck and Thompson have admitted that the work of Information Services simply had to be complemented by concrete progress in security and development in Malaya.[54] In sum, while the propagandist could conceivably persuade an audience through deeds alone, he cannot do so with words only. Words cannot persuade without concomitant deeds; the message conveyed by words must match that simultaneously communicated by real deeds.

It is now apposite to sum up this section by formulating a comprehensive understanding of 'propaganda': we may define 'propaganda' as *those relevant mass communications which influence the attitudes and behaviour of a specific audience.* The following points should be noted. First, the term 'mass communications' refers to both the conventional media of propaganda in addition to 'deeds' such as the behaviour of Government officials and the Security Forces, as well as certain Government policies. For propaganda to be credible both words and deeds have to be closely co-ordinated to ensure that they project the same message. If the propagandist's spoken, printed and broadcast output project one message but his actions convey a contradictory idea, the audience will reject his words and lose confidence in him. Furthermore, while the propagandist could influence an audience with deeds alone, he cannot do so with only words. Words have to exploit and amplify the message suggested by actual deeds.

The immediate objection to any definition of propaganda which encompasses 'deeds' is that *every* conceivable action or policy might be construed to have some impact on an audience, rendering the definition too

broad to be tenable. This however, brings us to the next point: it is only those mass communications which are 'relevant' to a 'specific' audience that constitute propaganda to the latter. This is because the peculiar interests of a specific audience delimit the nature of the deeds (and for that matter the words) capable of influencing it. In short, propaganda is always audience-specific, and what constitutes propaganda for one group may not be for another. To use an analogy from the related field of advertising: a man who wants to buy a car naturally skips those newspaper classifieds which advertise vacuum cleaners. The advertisements about vacuum cleaners may be smartly-crafted and eye-catching, but the man ignores them because they are not *relevant to his specific needs*. Similarly, the man would be less attentive toward a neighbour who shows up eager to show off his new vacuum cleaner than another who turns up in his new car which seems to be well-engineered. To reiterate: it is only those mass communications which address the real needs of a specific audience which translate into propaganda capable of influencing that audience. In the case of the Insurrection, therefore, Government's much-trumpeted moves to liberalise Federal citizenship conditions and introduce elections at all levels prompted a positive response mainly from the educated, wealthy urban Chinese. The rural Chinese however were largely unimpressed, judging from voter turnout at New Village elections. Grassroots democracy failed as propaganda to the rural Chinese because as it did not *ipso facto* improve their physical and socio-economic well-being, it was simply irrelevant from their point of view. Instead, what proved the most effective propaganda, contributing materially to increased rural Chinese confidence in Government, was effective Security Force protection from MCP terror, economic opportunities and welfare in the form of well-equipped New Villages.[55] Conversely, early Government indifference to the rural Chinese and harsh Security Force behaviour were highly relevant to rural Chinese interests and hence powerful but negative propaganda.[56]

A final point should be noted. Despite the assertion by some theorists of propaganda that the concept refers to mass communication that is not accidental but planned,[57] this is too restrictive. After all, as Askenasy argues in the context of insurgency campaigns, 'all military actions can have psychological effects on [villager] perception and behaviour whether or not the commander intended such effects'. He adds that 'such unintentional aspects of military operations may have a greater influence ... than do calculated schemes'.[58] Thus in Malaya, for instance, when a Royal West Kent mortar crew accidentally shelled and killed some people in a Chinese Resettlement Area in Selangor in November 1951,[59] although it was purely unplanned and accidental, it was highly *relevant* as it adversely undermined the rural Chinese sense of security and hence confidence. This reinforces our point: what makes a particular mass communication propaganda is not whether it is planned but whether it is *relevant* to a specific audience.

Having developed a theoretical understanding of how 'propaganda' properly conceived affects public and terrorist confidence in an insurgency context, it is now necessary to see how British imperial and wartime experience generated antecedents which profoundly affected British propaganda during the Emergency.

THE ANTECEDENTS OF BRITISH PROPAGANDA IN THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY I: PROPAGANDA OF WORDS

To be sure, most of the instruments of propaganda used in Malaya had already been introduced elsewhere. The leaflet for instance, had been widely used by the Royal Air Force during World War One as well as in the imperial pacification campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s in the Middle East and the Northwest Frontier of India, while rewards for information and amnesties had earlier been used to entice Boer guerrillas to give up.[60] In addition, in March 1929 the Colonial Film Committee drew attention to the propaganda value of British feature films,[61] while newsreels and documentaries were also perceived as useful in impressing upon colonial peoples the benefits of metropolitan rule. For instance, the Colonial Film Unit, formed by the British Ministry of Information (MOI) in 1939, produced *Katsina Tank* and *Comforts from Uganda* to show Africans how their financial contributions were being used for their benefit.[62] The Second World War, moreover, suggested that there had to be some means by which films could actually reach audiences in rural areas. Thus MOI provided African colonies with a limited number of mobile cinema vans which did good work. A small number of mobile vans were also used in Malaya just before the Japanese invasion.[63] Closely associated with film exhibitions by mobile vans was the roving song and drama troupe. In Nigeria, for instance, in addition to mobile cinema film shows, famous battles of the Second World War were enacted in the village marketplace, in conjunction with anti-Nazi sketches and songs like 'Hitler, causer of the war'.[64]

Radio also came of age in the inter-war years, and by the start of the Second World War, West African broadcasting had been fairly well established, and in Nairobi and Lusaka, radio stations transmitted war news, talks and entertainment programmes in English and selected local languages. A particularly important inter-war innovation in radio was Community Listening. This referred to the provision of low-cost public wireless receivers which would enable large groups of people to listen to broadcasts at any time. In Africa, for instance, community wireless receivers were set up at district headquarters, mission stations, and listening points in towns and farms. Where such receivers were unavailable, programmes were broadcast over loudspeakers. Hence in Nigeria, there were over 700 privately hired loudspeakers and seven public street

loudspeakers.[65] In Malaya in 1941, moreover, scores of towns and villages were allocated loudspeakers with amplifiers.[66]

Instruments of 'word-propaganda' aside, a far more important legacy to Malayan propagandists was the well-articulated *philosophy* of spoken, printed and broadcast propaganda which had been forged by the end of the Second World War. Of the principles truly germane to our understanding of the later Emergency, the foremost was the need for establishing credibility. Richard H.S. Crossman, the leading wartime Allied propagandist,[67] argued that the first thing a propagandist should do was to ensure that his target audience believed him. This meant that the propagandist had to be prepared to tell the truth to the audience, even if the truth was not flattering to his cause.[68] If the propagandist lied to the audience and was found out, then his future output would be disregarded by his audience and he would therefore be unable to influence its thinking. Similarly, Leslie Glass, who served with the Far Eastern Bureau of the MOI, and later in the Burma section of the Psychological Warfare Division of Southeast Asia Command, pointed out that if his team had promised 'early victories' that proved 'hollow', the Burmese would have dismissed everything else the British put out.[69] Likewise, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was prepared to tell the truth about British defeats especially during the initial stages of the war, and won for itself a reputation for honesty which attracted audiences in Occupied Europe.[70] Crossman therefore emphasised that to preserve his credibility, the propagandist must remember that the 'central substance of propaganda is hard, correct information'.[71] Telling the truth is of course another way of saying that the message conveyed by one's words must be consistent with that emanating from one's actual deeds or achievements.

Since the stuff of propaganda was hard, correct information, it followed that the propagandist also had to have access to first-class intelligence on the enemy. What was needed was not merely an 'intimate knowledge of the background of the audience – its language, history, myths, institutions, practices, social composition and politics', but also a 'detailed knowledge of the current developments among the audience', in terms of 'current grievances'.[72] Thus, effective propaganda presupposed an efficient and 'large propaganda intelligence department', tasked with undertaking painstaking 'market research' into the psyche of the audience and thinking 'itself into the mind of the Communist, soaking itself in his phrases and his clichés until it writes and thinks them naturally'.[73] The last statement provides a link to the next precept of British propaganda philosophy: the propagandist must enjoy an 'empathy' with the audience, expressing himself in ways familiar to them.[74] Glass in Burma was very conscious of this need and was therefore of the opinion that 'propaganda aimed at a foreign people can be effective only if it is channelled through nationals of their own country'.[75] Other British propagandists, however, like Sir Robert

Bruce Lockhart, wartime head of the Political Warfare Executive, opined that British officers with 'first-hand experience of a country' could also do the job.[76] Thus in Europe, British propagandists charged with waging the radio war against Germany like Crossman, the noted black propagandist Sefton Delmer and Hugh Carleton Greene of the BBC's German Section, were extremely well acquainted with German politics, language and culture.[77]

Yet another precept was the need to respect the sensitivities of the audience. This was especially important in framing surrender appeals. First, it was important to avoid threats in leaflets directed at the enemy soldier, in case they frightened him into staying put and not surrendering. Second, it was also necessary to convince him that he would not lose face if he gave himself up. Thus Crossman argued that the whole 'art of the leaflet is to appear as a simple, honourable offer by one honourable soldier to another, saying, "You have fought very gallantly; now is the time when you have a perfectly good reason for giving in a little earlier"'.[78] Hence in Burma, in order to take into account the pride of the all but defeated Japanese troops, safe conduct passes substituted the phrase 'I cease resistance' for the potentially humiliating and hence offensive 'I surrender'.[79] Another principle of British propaganda of words was the need to provide the audience with information that was really attractive to them. Whether it was radio broadcasts or leaflets, the audience, especially if listening or living under 'risk and physical inconvenience', had 'every incentive to switch off the radio and not to pick up the leaflet'.[80] Hence, to attract attention, the propagandist had to give his readers what they really wanted: 'impersonal and unemotional news', about 'some big, vitally important, extremely interesting event whose general character is widely known and whose significance and probable consequences are of wide interest'.[81] Crossman in fact believed that 'news must take priority over views', and 'facts over preaching'.[82] A further precept was the recognition that entertainment had a place in propaganda. During the war it was found that music items interspersed in between news and talks helped to attract listeners. Crossman noted that 'entertainment is a valuable narcotic for dulling the sensibilities of a propaganda-conscious mind', and that German troops on the Atlantic Wall for instance were keen listeners to radio programmes chiefly but not completely devoted to light music. Significantly, they often passed on bits of information broadcast in between music items.[83] In Burma, furthermore, Japanese troops never once shot at Allied mobile units playing music.[84]

The final principle of British propaganda philosophy recapitulated the basic notion that the message expressed by one's words must be consistent with that projected by one's deeds. Thus Lockhart held that propaganda could never work in a vacuum, and it had to be always 'the handmaid of official policy and strategy'.[85] Crossman added that propaganda was 'not

an independent arm' and could never achieve 'miracles on its own'.[86] This idea that the message communicated by one's words had to match that emanating from one's deeds was amply demonstrated by the fiasco of the so-called V Campaign of 1941. That year the BBC European Service launched an anti-Nazi radio campaign, urging the populations of Occupied Europe to write, wherever they could, the letter 'V' as the first letter of the French word for 'victory' and the Flemish word for freedom. When this proved successful in many towns, the BBC extended the scope of the Campaign to promote active civil defiance of the Germans. Hence Europeans were urged for example to hoard copper and nickel coins as these metals were vital to the German war effort.[87] To be sure, the V- sign proved to be an 'ingenious propaganda gimmick', raising morale both at home and in Occupied Europe.[88] However, because the BBC had acted on its own initiative, propaganda was out of step with both policy and strategy. Hence, while the V Campaign encouraged the European publics, it also conveyed the mistaken idea that the invasion of Europe was imminent when it was not, and led many people to take undue risks for which they paid the penalty.[89] The V Campaign thus turned into a propaganda disaster for the British.[90]

Apart from being very sensitive to the general strategic context, it was also necessary to seek the specific 'psychological moment' for transmitting propaganda to an audience. Crossman insisted that this was 'not a trite phrase but a precise description of what we had to aim at'.[91] That is, the propagandist had to act when the message emanating from the physical environment of the audience was particularly intense.[92] Thus the psychological moment for launching the V Campaign should have been the onset of an actual Allied invasion. In addition, the concept had applications at the tactical level as well, for instance during the Allied counteroffensive in the Ardennes in the winter of 1944. By 'keeping a curve on the morale of freshly taken prisoners on various sections of the front', Allied propagandists carefully *timed* the release of 'tactical' leaflets to German units cut off by the Allies. Crossman explained that if Allied leaflets had been dropped before the worsening military situation had demoralised the German Army, the latter would not have been affected. However, if leaflets had been released too late, that is, after demoralisation had set in, then 'propaganda would have been nugatory'.[93] In short, if surrender propaganda was to be effective, it had to be transmitted to the soldiers at the *correct moment*, in order to reinforce the notion of hopelessness generated by their immediate tactical plight.[94] Furthermore, in order for propagandists to ascertain the correct psychological moment to release propaganda at enemy troops in particular, it was essential that they were based close to the front line. Thus Crossman noted that during the war Psychological Warfare Divisions were set up not only at Supreme Headquarters but at the lowest level – Army headquarters – as well. In