Managing End of Empire:
the post-war Malayan Civil Service.

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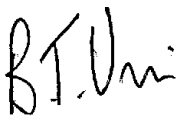
Declaration

I, Brian T. Urwin, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



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Abstract

This thesis asks what influence active and retired members of the Malayan Civil Service were able to exert over the post-war Malayan Union and Federation of Malaya, the path to independence, and the subsequent way in which the record of their contribution was shaped.

The Malayan Civil Service (MCS) was the British Colonial Administrative Service in Malaya. Pre-war, its members exercised both an administrative and a political control within the Federated Malay States. Retired members of the MCS, termed here the 'ex-MCS', considered their past service a justification for continued influence on British policy. After the British surrender to the Japanese in 1942, 90% of the MCS were imprisoned. Some of those still at liberty were recruited to the War Office, to prepare for a British return. At war's end, 90 of the MCS officers held captive returned to service in Malaya and predominated amongst the senior cadre of MCS roles. Post-war recruits filled an expanding number of junior MCS roles.

In a post-war history of the MCS published in 1983, its contribution was depicted as the completion of a 'stewardship'. The history was drawn largely from the memoirs of MCS officers. The roles of many of the actors in post-war Malaya, (political, military, police and intelligence), have been reconsidered in recent works. Such works, however, have not focused on the MCS. The post-war history of the MCS is now revisited in this thesis with the aid of primary sources not available or not used in 1983. On the nature and functioning of colonial administration, the major contribution made by Kirk-Greene some 20 years ago focused on African examples and has not been subsequently developed. Missing detail on Malaya's post-war colonial administration is now provided, seeking to refresh academic interest in the history of colonial administration. Recent works have studied the impact of memoirs in shaping public perceptions of history. Insight is now provided on how ex-MCS officers sought to use their memoirs to achieve a similar impact.

Three primary sources are interrogated; the official record, contemporary writing (in newspapers, journals, and personal letters), and personal memoirs written subsequent to events. The official record has been studied in both the UK and the Malaysian National Archives. Contemporary writing and correspondence has been studied at 13 libraries and other holdings in the UK and South-East Asia. 80 post-war MCS memoirs have been located as

published works, personal papers, and interview transcripts. Secondary sources studied in the UK and South-East Asia have largely comprised published books and articles.

Several factors are identified which made the MCS a less influential force in post-war Malaya compared to its pre-war dominance. Senior MCS officers were increasingly marginalised in discussions on policy. This was partly a deliberate decision taken by political leaders concerned at MCS officers openly expressing their doubts on the efficacy of the British policy to foster a plural democracy in Malaya. It also resulted from the provisions of the Federation of Malaya's constitution, introduced in 1948, which empowered State roles filled by Malayans. Additionally, there were concerns that the physical and mental health of previously interned MCS officers remained weakened by their experiences. Although morale and focus improved under Templer, MCS officers were further excluded from leadership roles as Malayans took over the domestic leadership of the Federal Government in anticipation of independence. At the junior level, the MCS lacked the numbers and Chinese language skills to meet the administrative demands of the Emergency. Resort was increasingly made to officers from other Services. Ex-MCS officers were seen by British officialdom as unhelpful meddlers. Those who remained in the public eye adopted increasingly extreme positions.

Within this overall picture, there are three notable exceptions. Ex-MCS public protests and behind-the-scenes assistance influenced official actions taken to extricate the British Government from its commitment to the Malayan Union. The work of junior MCS officers towards the creation and development of new villages, and in the chairing of District War Committees, was important to the defeat of communist insurgency. These officers focused more on enhancing the mechanisms of control than on winning hearts and minds. Lastly, the 1983 publication of the post-war MCS history made an enduring impact on the historiography of colonial Malaya, through a depiction of British exceptionalism in managing end of empire in South-East Asia.

Contents

List of Tables and Charts

Acronyms

BAM Association of British Malaya – later British Association of Malaya/Malaysia
BMA British Military Administration
CAO Chinese Affairs Officer (ACAO Assistant)
CCAO Chief Civil Affairs Officer (DCCAO Deputy)
CIGS Chief of Imperial General Staff
CLC Communities Liaison Committee
CO Colonial Office
CP Chinese Protectorate
CRO Commonwealth Relations Office
DO District Officer (ADO Assistant)
DOO Director of Operations Committee
DWEC District War Executive Committee
FMS Federated Malay States
FO Foreign Office
FPA Food Prohibited Area
FRA Food Restricted Area
FWC Federal War Council
HMOCS Her Majesty's Overseas Colonial Service
IMP Independence of Malaya Party
MAS Malay Administrative Service
MCA Malayan Chinese Association
MCP Malayan Communist Party
MCS Malayan Civil Service
MCSA Malayan Civil Service Association
MNLA Malayan National Liberation Army
MPU Malaya Planning Unit
MSS Malayan Security Service
MU Malayan Union
OAG Officer Administering the Government
OCRP Oxford University Colonial Records project
O&M Organisation and Methods
OSPA Overseas Service Pensioners' Association
OSRB Overseas Services Resettlement Bureau
PAS Principal Assistant Secretary
RIDA Rural and Industrial Development Authority
RO Resettlement Officer (ARO Assistant)
SCA Secretary of Chinese Affairs
SCAO Senior Civil Affairs Officer
SWEC State War Executive Committee
TECSAM The European Civil Servants Association of Malaya
UMNO United Malays National Organisation
UMS Unfederated Malay States

Conventions

MCS Senior and Junior Cadres

The MCS grading system was denominated into Classes. After Cadet Class entry, there were four timescale Classes (V, VI, III, and II), so named as progression through these depended on time served, provided an initial probation period and subsequent exams and 'efficiency bars' were passed. Beyond the timescale Classes lay a number of ascending superscale Classes, (IA, IB and Staff), entry to which depended on appointment to an available appropriately graded role. The term 'senior cadre' was not used by the MCS but is applied to denote the total of officers in the highest timescale Class (II), and all the superscale Classes. This senior cadre comprised 35% of total MCS numbers. Consequently, the term 'junior cadre' refers to the balance, comprising Cadets, and officers in the remaining timescale Classes, (V, VI, and III).

Quotations

( ) Words added to quotations to assist understanding.

[ ] Words in brackets in the original text.

Spellings

The spellings of Malaya's States, place names and job titles are taken from the usage in official documents and memoirs of the post-war colonial era, whilst acknowledging alternative spellings were used before, after, and even during this period.

State/States

The term State/States is sometimes used to denote the 9 Malay States, Penang, and Malacca, whilst acknowledging that the latter two were officially 'Settlements', reflecting their prior status as part of the pre-war Straits Settlement Colony, and that they had no Sultans.

Sultans

The term Sultans is used to denote the Royal Rulers of all 9 Malay States, whilst acknowledging that the Royal Ruler of Negri Sembilan State was titled Yang di-Pertuan Besar, and that of Perlis State, Rajah.

Introduction

This thesis asks what influence active and retired members of the Malayan Civil Service (the MCS) were able to exert over the development of the post-war Malayan Union and Federation of Malaya, the path to independence, and the subsequent way in which the record of the MCS contribution was shaped. It identifies the difficult transition that the MCS underwent from wielders of political power to servants of elected representatives. It explores the attitudes that formed within the MCS as its members responded and adapted to continued change in constitutional structure, the exigencies of the Malayan Emergency, and the final accelerated timeline towards independence. Retired members of the MCS are called the 'ex-MCS' as a shorthand, and are included in the analysis as they considered their past service and experience a justification for a continued influential contribution to British policy in Malaya.

The time span of research is from 1941 to 1983. The war years are included to analyse the role of the MCS and ex-MCS in the development of the plans for post-war Malaya and to understand the continued effect of second world war experiences in the subsequent post-war period. The years from Malaya's independence in 1957 up to the 1980s are included to place in historical context the multiple memoirs written by surviving MCS members and the determination of some of them to have a history of the MCS written. A fresh understanding is presented of these memoirs and of the post-war MCS history published in 1983.

Such an ambitious scope requires two boundaries to avoid an overcomplexity of analysis. Firstly, the 'European' members of the MCS are the subjects of the research. They represented the large majority of the MCS and in turn were dominated by British nationals and those of British descent from the Dominions. Secondly, throughout the research period Singapore was separately administered by the British, with its own distinctive history of constitutional and administrative development, and is consequently not included.

An introduction to the MCS in Malaya's colonial history is now given. This is followed by a review of historical perspectives on colonial Malaya and the MCS, including discussion on the contribution that this thesis makes. This chapter then continues with an explanation of the methodology and sources used, and ends with a brief overview of the subsequent chapters.

Inter-war map of the Malay Peninsula – Straits Settlements Colony (red) Federated Malay States (Yellow) Unfederated Malay States (Blue)[1]

The MCS in Malaya's Colonial History

Three themes concerning the MCS in Malaya's colonial history provide the introductory context for the subsequent thesis chapters. These are the fusion of politics and administration up to 1941, the MCS belief in its own superiority over other Services, and its belief in British exceptionalism in managing end of empire in South-East Asia.

1) The fusion of politics and administration up to 1941

From diverse colonial origins, the ports and coastal settlements of Singapore, Penang, Malacca and Dindings had, by 1867, been merged into a British Crown Colony, called the Straits Settlements. The Colony was ruled by a Governor, under the supervision of the Colonial Office (CO) in London. On the Malay Peninsula, behind these small enclaves, lay the four independent Malay States that were believed to hold abundant tin ore; Negri Sembilan,

[1] File:British Malaya circa 1922.PNG - Wikimedia Commons

Perak, Pahang, and Selangor. Commercial interests based in the Straits Settlements sought to extract this and other resources, and lobbied for the stabilising force of British rule to be imposed so as to facilitate their plans. As each State was independent, and subject to the autocratic rule of its Malay Sultan, the British introduced its system of Protection, or indirect rule, in a sequence of treaties and quasi-formal agreements, covering Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan in 1874/1875, and then Pahang in 1887. These purportedly recognised each Sultan's continued sovereignty but insisted on installing a British Resident whose advice had to be sought and acted upon by the Sultan, other than on Malay religious concerns. This was one version of a varied British approach to indirect rule in empire. At one end of a scale defined by Low[2] lay the Gulf Sheikhdoms, where British imperial power did not supersede the existing political authority, or interfere with internal administration, being instead limited to control of foreign policy. Low's scale then tracks examples of increasing imperial dominance over pre-existing political authority, with the Malaya version lying at the opposite extreme. In Malaya, the Residents used the treaty provisions, that their advice must be accepted by the Sultans, so as to increasingly assume political control, and to frame and implement policy under the authority of the Straits Settlements Governor. Where needed, they were backed by British military force, such as that which put down a Malay rebellion against the treaty in Perak in 1875/1876. The Residents progressively created new State administrations in which they and their staff collected revenue, organised police, and administered justice. Puthucheary contends that, as a consequence, 'senior British MCS Officers had a virtual monopoly of power' through the 'fusion of politics and administration' within their roles'.[3]

In 1895, British authority was further consolidated by the integration of the 4 protected Malay States into a new structure named the Federated Malay States (FMS). The new Federal Treaty proclaimed that each Sultan continued to be independently sovereign over his State, but Emerson concludes that British control 'was an indisputable reality'.[4] The Federation was led by a British Resident General, to whom the existing cohort of the British Residents in the four states now reported. The Resident General's actions under the Straits

[2] D.A.Low, *Lion Rampant*, (London, 2014), 9-14.
[3] Mavis Puthucheary, *The Politics of Administration*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), 24-25.
[4] Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia, A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1969), hereafter Emerson, *Malaysia*, 138.

Governor's authority were, at least in theory, moderated by a Federal Council upon which the Sultans sat, but which contained an overall British official majority. The Federal bureaucracy swelled as new departments and secretariats were created for the development of the land, roads, railways, and ports needed for the existing tin-mining and emerging rubber plantation industries. In his historical narrative, *British Malaya*[5], Sir Frank Swettenham justified the authority the British had taken in Malaya. Swettenham's career had embraced his being one of the first colonial officers deployed in Perak, Resident in Selangor, Resident General of the FMS, and finally Governor of the Straits Settlements/High Commissioner to the Malay States. He insisted that the urgent demands of creating order and progress had required total British authority.

The interwar period was dominated by British handwringing over what was the most appropriate administrative structure for its protected Malay States. Eyed from the CO, the Straits Colony, and the Sultans' palaces, the FMS structure had become too top heavy and costly. In 1926 Sir George Maxwell, Chief Secretary of the FMS and its most senior MCS officer, retired unhappily after clashes with the Governor and High Commissioner, Laurence Guillemard, who had sought to reduce what he felt was the crushing weight of federal bureaucracy.[6] In 1932, when Governor Cecil Clementi was once again trying to decentralise the FMS bureaucracy, Maxwell lobbied the CO attempting to discredit the new reform effort.[7]

Despite limited de-centralisation reforms, the largely British staffed FMS administration continued to stand in uncomplimentary contrast to the more slim-line, and predominantly Malay staffed administrations within what were now an additional 5 protected, but unfederated, Malay States. An original lone unfederated State, Johor, had been joined by Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Trengganu when these States transferred from Siamese suzerainty to British protection in 1909. The British termed all five the Unfederated Malay States (UMS). Each had a British Adviser (as opposed to a Resident) but their protection treaties contained the same principle of British indirect rule, i.e. that British advice had to be accepted.

[5] Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya*, (London, 1907), 216-221.
[6] The UK National Archives, hereafter TNA, FCO 141/16583, Maxwell memos dated 19th April 1923 and 22nd November 1925.
[7] TNA, FCO 141/16699, No. 59, letter Maxwell to CO Permanent Undersecretary, Samuel Wilson, 6th February 1932.

Across all 9 Federated and Unfederated Malay States, Malays comprised only 49% of the total population by 1931. The Chinese (34%) had a long history of immigration into Malaya but large numbers had started to arrive from the late 19th Century onwards to work in the tin mines. Indians (15%) had arrived in the early 20th century to work on Rubber plantations.[8] Until 1941 the British simply maintained that Chinese and Indian workers in the Malay States were 'aliens' destined eventually to return to their home countries. In reality, the Chinese community had established a commercial dominance over many parts of the economy.

The fusion of politics and administration would break down in the post-war period. As Malaya took tentative steps towards self-government, its post-war colonial history would be defined by the search for a formula that would enable all communities to participate in civil society as 'Malayans', but without the Malays being economically overwhelmed. In the final transition towards independence, the MCS had to adjust to becoming the administrative servants to Malayan political masters.

2) The MCS belief in its superiority over other Services

The term Malayan Civil Service (MCS) was first used in 1919. By 1934 there were 125 MCS officers serving in the FMS and UMS. The senior MCS cadre in the FMS comprised the Chief Secretary to the FMS government, the British Resident in each federated State, and the leaders of the major FMS departments such as Lands, Treasury, Labour, and Chinese Affairs. In the UMS, the senior MCS role was the British Adviser in each State. Within the junior MCS cadre, the two largest groupings were 24 District Officers in the FMS and some 20 officers leading a department, or in a specialist role, in one of the unfederated States. The balance of the junior MCS were deputies, assistants or secretaries to the senior MCS roles, or were otherwise 'attached' to various departments.[9] Whilst State Councils were established upon which the Sultans and Malay leaders sat, their activities were limited and always subject to the 'advice' of the British Resident or Adviser.

MCS officers were recruited by the CO for the Colonial Administrative Service and then deployed to Malaya on local employment contracts and terms and conditions. Such recruits were called Cadets, and each was immediately deployed into a language learning stream,

[8] *Annual Report of the Federation of Malaya*, (HMSO, 1951), 21, population figures for 1931. The balance 2% comprised indigenous peoples and expatriates.

[9] Malayan Civil Service Lists – comprising various titles, (hereafter MCSLs), held at the Cambridge University Library, (hereafter CUL), in Special Collections, RCS.SC.31, and at the University of Oxford Bodleian Library (hereafter UOBL), in Periodical Issues, ICPblcas_uncat: 915.13 s. Analysis from Malayan Civil Service List 1934.

(Malay, Chinese or Tamil), which would significantly affect the MCS roles they would subsequently undertake and the career paths they would follow. All anticipated spending their entire careers in Malaya. A small number of Malay candidates for the MCS could be nominated by each Sultan for approval by the British Governor.

The MCS was only one of a number of Colonial Services. By 1940, over 1000 officers were members of 12 other Services across the FMS and the Straits Colony; Police, Medical, Education, Posts/Telegraphs, Fisheries, Agriculture, Forestry, Mines, Museums, Public Works, Surveys and Veterinarian.[10] Nonetheless, the CO described the Colonial Administrative Service as the 'Higher Civil Service' within Colonial Governments.[11] British absolute authority on the Peninsula before 1941, combined with their position at the apex of all the Colonial Services, was no doubt a heady experience for many MCS officers, and one that brought benefits in terms of lifestyle. Ralph Furse recalled his experience on visiting Malaya in 1928 as the CO's Director of Recruitment.

> The (MCS) had done a great work. Progress, especially material progress – roads, hospitals, school buildings – was impressive. But rubber and tin had made Malaya rich, and there was far more money to play with than elsewhere. I got a sense that for some time past the things had come a little too easy. There was a faint atmosphere of complacency which disturbed me, and a slightly brahminical attitude towards their colleagues in the professional services.[12]

In the post-war period, long serving MCS officers had to come to terms with reductions in their status, resulting from constitutional changes and the progress towards self-government, combined with an increased value placed in the Emergency on the contributions of other Services. These MCS officers would be seen as distracted by nostalgia for the position their Service had earlier occupied.

3) ***The MCS belief in British exceptionalism in managing End of Empire in South-East Asia***

In the post-war period, many in the MCS considered that their actions in support of the Malayan people, especially during the Emergency, had made an important contribution to the path to independence. They believed that this contrasted favourably with the experience of colonial administrators of other empires in South-East Asia who had been rejected by their

[10] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Civil List 1940.
[11] *Appointments in His Majesty's Colonial Service*, (HMSO, 1950), 14.
[12] Ralph Furse, *Aucuparius*, (London, 1962), hereafter Furse, *Aucuparius*, 207.

populations.[13] Although the British returned to disorder created by the breakout of intercommunal violence amongst Malaya's communities, its resumption of colonial authority was not significantly challenged. The only potential challenger with a military force, the Malayan Communist Party, had decided to pursue a legal struggle, and disbanded its army at the end of 1945. This thesis will describe how MCS officers returning to work in Malaya experienced a sometimes muted, but largely sympathetic welcome from Malayans who appreciated the war-time deprivations the officers had endured in captivity.

Many Dutch administrators of the Netherlands East Indies had similarly been interned. After the Japanese surrender, nationalist leaders proclaimed independence. This provoked a cycle of nationalist violence against the internees, who remained in their internment camps for protection. British forces had responsibility for assuming an initial military, but not political command. It would be several more weeks before Dutch forces and new administrators were able to return to try to implement the recolonisation plans formulated by a Dutch government which had only recently returned to the Netherlands after wartime exile in London. Large parts of its previous colonial territory were now under nationalist control and it would take until early 1947 to repatriate all Dutch internees to Dutch controlled territory. Two 'police actions' failed to dislodge the Nationalists from the territories they controlled. In the absence of international, and most especially US, support the Dutch ceded their sovereignty on the creation of Indonesia at the end of 1949.[14]

Those French administrators in Indochina who had been prepared to serve the Government of Vichy France had not been interned. Only in the final months did the Allied reconquest of France lead to the imposition of direct Japanese rule over the colony, and the internment of French administrators from March 1945. On the Japanese surrender, the victorious powers of Britain and China (under Chiang Kai-Shek) were given responsibility for establishing a military command over the colonial territory, in the south and north respectively. The same political vacuum that had emboldened the nationalists in the East Indies, gave communist leader Ho Chi Minh the opportunity to declare independence for

[13] Robert Heussler, *Completing a Stewardship: The Malayan Civil Service, 1942-1957*, (Westport CT, 1983), hereafter, Heussler, *Stewardship*, 143-144.

[14] Sources: 1) Pierre Asselin and Henk Shulte Nordholt, Cracking Down on Revolutionary Zeal and Violence, in Thijs Brocades Zaalberg and Bart Luttikhuis, (editors), *Empires Violent End*, *Comparing Dutch, British and French Wars of Decolonisation*, (Ithaca, 2022), 71-95; 2) Christopher Goscha, Global Wars and Decolonisation in East and South-East Asia, in Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson, (editors), *The Oxford Handbook of The Ends of Empire*, (Oxford, 2023), hereafter Oxford, *Ends of Empire*, 276-298.

Vietnam. By the time Free French forces and a new cadre of colonial administrators were able to reach Indochina, they faced a challenge similar to the Dutch in reclaiming their colonial territory in Vietnam by force. Clothing their case for recolonisation within the legitimacy of the Cold War against communism, the French subsequently fought the Vietnamese communists in the largest colonial war in South-East Asia. After their catastrophic defeat at Dien Ben Phu in 1954, the French abandoned their ambitions in Indochina, leaving behind the newly independent countries of Laos, Cambodia, and a Vietnam administratively divided between north and south, pending elections.[15]

The 1955 Federal Elections in Malaya marked the start of Malaya's accelerated path towards independence. A communist insurgency had broken out in 1948 but its defeat now seemed in sight. When they looked at the fate of their Dutch and French equivalents, it is perhaps not surprising that pride developed in the MCS over British resilience in the face of the Malayan insurgency, and the ordered way in which independence was now planned. Several factors had, however, favoured the British compared to the Dutch and French experiences. The British had been able to impose immediate military and political control over Malaya in 1945. When armed insurgency eventually broke out in 1948, it was led by a communist entity strongly identified with the minority Chinese community, therefore lacking the majority community legitimacy held by Indonesian nationalists and Vietnamese communists. The British could rely on the solid support of the Malay community in fighting the insurgency. Nonetheless, it had perhaps been a close run thing. Britain's decision to establish a complete British sovereignty over Malaya, through the Malayan Union, was nearly its undoing. If it had not rapidly u-turned and implemented a federal constitution, then Britain might have found itself in conflict with both the Malay and Chinese communities. The analysis in this thesis on the influence exerted by the ex-MCS over this British change of constitutional direction in 1948 is, therefore, of particular importance.

After Malaya's independence, MCS memoirs conveyed a belief in the exceptionalism of post-war British administration in Malaya, in selflessly guiding Malaya to a peaceful independence founded on British democratic principles. The sudden collapse of the Belgian and Portuguese empires at this time provided ample reinforcement. Neither colonial power had anticipated an end to their colonial empires, Portugal even arguing that it had no empire

[15] Sources: 1) and 2), Ibid; 3) Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France and their Roads from Empire*, (Oxford, 2014), hereafter Thomas, *Fight or Flight*.

as it was a 'pluricontinental' state. The violence and anarchy that preceded and followed the Belgian withdrawal from The Congo in 1960, and the Portuguese from Timor-Leste in 1975, were partly a consequence of a lack of long-term preparation for decolonisation which resulted in a series of chaotic responses to the emergence of nationalist movements. The ensuing violence would be long lived, Timor-Leste having to endure many years of Indonesian occupation until it could 'resume' its independence in 2002.[16]

Ex-MCS memoirs built on an established narrative of British end of empire exceptionalism. Alan Burns, who had been Governor in British Honduras and the Gold Coast before becoming Permanent Representative of the UK on the United Nations Trusteeship Council, made a spirited defence of the British colonial record. He emphasised that 'our administration has been honest and beneficial' and praised the Administrative Service for its 'high tradition of integrity'.[17] Mason recorded that 'British troops had left India with a dignity in sharp contrast with the French departure from Indo-China.[18] In 1968, the last volume of Morris' Pax Britannica trilogy portrayed a dispiriting passing of empire but sounded a 'loyal note' that 'people all over the world admired it still…as a force for good'.[19] This exceptionalist narrative of liberal mission, which Sarah Stockwell argues 'amounted almost to a national self-conceit'[20] has been increasingly challenged in recent decades. As further examples, Anderson[21] has exposed Britain's excessive use of violent force in Kenya, and Siollun[22] has described the enduring violence and corruption endemic to political structures established by the British in Nigeria. Thomas[23] uses a 'fight or flight' analogy, to consider the extent to which the British and French avoided fights, or chose conflict, during their respective ends of empire. He concludes that both paths were taken in each empire. The contribution this thesis can make to this and other historiographies is now discussed.

[16] Sources: *Oxford, Ends of Empire*, Matthew G. Stanard, Belgium, Decolonization and the Congo, 144-161, and Norrie MacQueen, Portugal, 162-178.
[17] Alan Burns, *In Defence of Colonies*, (London, 1957), 23, 40.
[18] Philip Mason, *The Men who Ruled India,* abridged version, (London, 1987), 399.
[19] Jan Morris, *Farewell the Trumpets: An Imperial Retreat*, reprint, (London, 1998), 531.
[20] Sarah Stockwell, Britain and Decolonisation, in Thomas Martin and Andrew S. Thompson, (editors), *Oxford, Ends of Empire*, 73.
[21] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, (New York, 2005).
[22] Max Siollun, *What Britain Did to Nigeria*, (London, 2021).
[23] Thomas, *Fight or Flight*, 370.

Historical Perspectives on Colonial Malaya and the MCS

As this thesis seeks to fill some gaps in the historiography, and to build on a number of existing works, this review is subdivided into 5 segments to define these varied contributions.

1) Late colonial Malaya.

In the early post-war period, the historiography of Malaya was still heavily influenced by ex-MCS writers. Winstedt,[24] Sheppard,[25] and Gullick[26] produced general histories, whilst specialist histories focused on the Chinese community were provided by Purcell[27] and Blythe.[28] This corpus of MCS work contained limited information on the post-war colonial period.

Two monographs on the Malayan Union, by Allen,[29]and Stockwell,[30] marked a new era in which the historiography was written by professional historians who interviewed key participants, both British and Malayan, and studied the official record that was now opening. A fuller understanding of how communalism had developed in Malaya was added, often by Asian historians. A sequence of works by Ratnam,[31] Roff,[32] Simandjuntak,[33] Sopiee,[34] Cheah[35] and Ampalavanar[36] demonstrated how appreciation of each of Malaya's communities, their histories, cultures and politics, helped understand the political alliances that emerged in late-colonial Malaya. These histories also raised questions on how even handed the British record had been, particularly in enshrining Malay community privileges in the Federal Constitution.

[24] Richard Winstedt, *Malaya and its History*, (London, 1950).
[25] Mervin Sheppard, *Historic Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1956).
[26] J.M.Gullick, *Malaya*, (London, 1963).
[27] Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in South-East Asia*, (London, 1951).
[28] Wilfred Blythe, *The Impact of Chinese Secret Societies in Malaya*, (London, 1969).
[29] James de Vere Allen, *The Malayan Union*, Monograph Series No. 10, South East Asia Studies (Yale, 1967), hereafter Allen, *Malayan Union.*
[30] Anthony Stockwell, *British policy and Malay politics during the Malayan Union experiment, 1945-1948,* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979), hereafter Anthony Stockwell, *Malayan Union.*.
[31] K.J.Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1965), hereafter Ratnam, *Communalism*.
[32] William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, (New Haven, 1967).
[33] B. Simandjuntak, *Malayan Federalism 1945-1963,* (London, 1969).
[34] Mohamed Noordin Sopiee, *From Malayan Union to Singapore separation*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1974).
[35] Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star Over Malaya,* (Singapore, 1983).
[36] Rajeswary Ampalavanar, *The Indian Minority and Political Change in Malaya 1945-1957*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1981).

At the same time, British writers were revisiting the British official war histories written earlier by Percival[37] and Woodburn Kirby.[38] Using previously unpublished testament, and the progressive opening of the official record, the works of Barber,[39] Simson[40] and Woodburn Kirby[41] claimed that there was more to be understood about the fall of Malaya, some of it relating to failures in civil governance. The first detailed history of the Emergency, written by Short[42], was published in 1975, after much delay caused by concerns of the Malaysian government on the release of its contents. Immediately before publication, Short added a note acknowledging that 'grave suspicion' had recently emerged on the conduct of British forces in the killing of Chinese villagers at Batang Kali in 1948.[43]

As it became clear that the historiography was taking a critical turn on depictions of the British record, a small group of ex-MCS officers determined that MCS memoirs should be collected, and a history of the MCS written. A post-war volume, *Completing a Stewardship: The Malayan Civil Service 1942-1957*, by American academic Robert Heussler, was published in 1983,[44] drawing heavily on MCS memoirs.

In the 40 years since Heussler's *Stewardship*, the historiography of late colonial Malaya has expanded immensely into many strands and areas of focus. Those historians whose works have been important secondary sources to this thesis are now discussed.

Anthony Stockwell has been writing on end of empire in Malaya for over four decades. His many monographs, articles and contributions to volumes cover multiple issues, with a keen focus on the political dynamics within Malaya's communities.[45] He has also enabled historians to appreciate the richness of the British official record. His work on the *British Documents on the End of Empire Project*, an initiative of the Institute of Commonwealth

[37] *London Gazette*, 20th February 1948, Lieut-General A.E.Percival, *Operations of Malaya Command from 8th December 1941 to 15th February 1942*, hereafter Percival, *Malaya Command*.
[38] Major General S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, *Vol I*, (HMSO, 1957), hereafter Woodburn Kirby, *British official military history*.
[39] Noel Barber, *Sinister Twilight, The Fall and Rise Again of Singapore*, (London, 1968), hereafter Barber, *Sinister Twilight*.
[40] Ivan Simson, *Singapore: Too little, Too late, Some aspects of the Malayan disaster in 1942*, (London, 1970), hereafter, Simson, *Singapore*.
[41] Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby*, Singapore, The Chain of Disaster,* (New York, 1971), hereafter Woodburn Kirby, *Chain of Disaster*.
[42] Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya,* 1948-1960, (London, 1975), hereafter Short, *Insurrection*.
[43] Ibid, 168-169.
[44] Heussler, *Stewardship*, op. cit.
[45] Those referenced are cited in footnotes throughout.

Studies, produced a volume of selected official documents on Malaya[46] which has provided leads to parts of the official archive, cabinet papers for example, that have contained further relevant material.

Tim Harper's work on the making of Malaya[47] scrutinises 'foundation myths' and questions why the modern country 'has often been perceived as a monument to colonial administrative and political arrangements'. Describing the 1940s and 50s as 'one of the least understood periods of Malaysian history', he depicts the British in this period as torn between their obligations to protect the Malay States and the demands of governing a multi-racial society. Harper concludes that the decolonisation in Malaya evolved in response to a succession of post-war social and political crises. Whilst the final political settlement was based on communalism, it entrenched some Malay privileges.[48] This thesis builds on Harper's work by studying the influence the MCS exerted on the government responses to the post-war crises he describes.

Karl Hack is a major contributor to the history of the insurgency in Malaya. Challenging earlier conclusions drawn by Stubbs[49] and Carruthers,[50] which give prominence to the effectiveness of Templer's initiatives in winning hearts and minds, he uses the analogy of 'iron claws' to focus on the significance of population control and food denial measures in the British defeat of the insurgency in Malaya.[51] Hack's conclusions have been challenged by Simon Smith for downplaying Templer's significant contributions towards impactful hearts and minds initiatives, such as the creation of village councils and introduction of State and Federal elections.[52] The analysis in this thesis contributes to this ongoing debate by explaining the contributions made by MCS officers to both dimensions concerned. On one hand, the contributions made to the War Committee structure, the creation of new villages, and the implementation of food control policies. On the other, the contributions made to the welfare development of new villages, and the facilitation of elections at all levels. This analysis reveals

[46] Anthony. J. Stockwell, (editor), *The British Documents on the End of Empire Project*, Series B Volume 3, *Malaya*, (HMSO, for The Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1995), hereafter BDEEP Malaya.
[47] Tim Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, (Cambridge, 1999).
[48] Quotes from paperback edition, (Cambridge, 2002), hereafter Harper, *End of Empire,* 1-2, 7.
[49] Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare,* (Singapore, 1989), hereafter Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*.
[50] Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds*, (London, 1995).
[51] Karl Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya": The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency, *Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, (March 1999): 99-125.
[52] Simon Smith, General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence, and Propaganda, *Intelligence and National Security Journal*, 16:3, 2001, 60-78, hereafter Smith, *Templer*.

that junior MCS officers often prioritised food control measures over new village welfare development, and that many senior MCS officers doubted that Malaya's communities could peacefully co-operate in self-government.

Significant attention has recently been given to policing, and specifically intelligence gathering, during the Emergency. Works by Comber,[53] Walton,[54] and Sinclair,[55] together with Hack's works already referenced, have given deserved focus to the activities of the Special Branch within the Federation of Malaya Police Force. They credit intelligence gathering with providing key breakthroughs in the ultimate defeat of the communist insurgency. The connections between the Malaya Special Branch and British intelligence organs, such as MI5, have also been described in these works, revealing an hitherto little appreciated sophistication in intelligence organisation. Police Officers, including those in Special Branch, were not MCS officers. However, the Police Force at the outbreak of the Emergency formed part of the organisational remit of the Federation's Secretary of Defence, under the Chief Secretary, both of whom were MCS officers. This thesis explains the successive reorganisations that increasingly distanced the MCS from influence over the Police Force and its Special Branch activities.

Kenneison[56] has provided a similarly detailed and fresh perspective of the role of the Special Operations Executive during the Japanese occupation and the early post-war period. By following the subsequent MCS careers of two Special Operations officers, John Davis and Robert Thompson, this thesis reveals the mixed success each had in utilising their unique experiences and skills in a number of specialised MCS roles.

Historians with a deep understanding of Malaya's communities have continued to make important contributions. Three works have been particularly valuable. Ariffin Omar[57] gives insight to the shifting of Malay community allegiance from their Sultans to new political parties in the late 1940s. Fernando[58] explains how the political initiative was seized through

[53] Leon Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police, 1945 to 1946*, (Singapore, 2008), hereafter Comber, *Secret Police*.
[54] Calder Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, (London, 2014), hereafter Walton, *Secrets*.
[55] Georgina Sinclair, *At the End of the Line*, (Manchester, 2010).
[56] Rebecca Kenneison, *The Special Operations Executive in Malaya*, (London, 2019), hereafter Kenneison, *SOE.*
[57] Ariffin Omar*, Bangsa Melayu, Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950*, (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 2015), hereafter Ariffin, *Bangsa Melayu*.
[58] Joseph M. Fernando, *The Alliance Road to Independence*, (Kuala Lumpur, 2009), hereafter Fernando, *Alliance Road*.

Malay and Chinese political co-operation in the early 1950s. Tan[59] has built on the earlier work of Loh[60] in providing a sobering record of life in the new villages. These works show the historical benefit brought by new perspective and individual testament. Acknowledgement is also due to the Strategic Information and Research Development Centre in Malaysia which has been instrumental in publishing, and republishing, a number of these important histories.

Lastly, the social histories of pre-war expatriate communities in Malaya by Butcher[61] and Shennan[62] help explain the nostalgia for bygone years identified by post-war visitors to Malaya amongst senior MCS officers. Less sympathetic portrayals of the privileged lifestyles and attitudes of British colonial servants in Malaya up to 1941 are found in the fictional works of Somerset Maughan[63] and J.G.Farrell.[64] Anthony Burgess's fictional trilogy portrays the humbling experiences of the final days of empire in Malaya.[65]

However, despite the many strands and areas of focus developed over the last 40 years in the historiography of late colonial Malaya, none has yet specifically addressed the post-war MCS. Consequently, this thesis adds a fresh perspective, drawing on primary sources not available, or not used by the 1983 MCS history.

2) British colonial administration

In 1952, there were 55 British colonial territories covering 1.96 million square miles and containing an estimated population of 77 million. The Federation of Malaya was just one of these, covering 50,690 square miles and containing a population of 5.7 million.[66] The British had been the colonial rulers of Malaya for nearly 70 years at this stage and, like all the other territories, Malaya had its own rich administrative history of the specific structures and organisations that had developed to administer the territory. It was, consequently, a challenge for any author to explain concisely how the British Empire had been administered, beyond a high level explanation of the workings of the CO and certain common administrative features of the many territories. In the immediate post-war period, Sir Charles Jeffries,

[59] Tan Teng Phee, *Behind Barbed Wire, Chinese New Villages During the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960*, (Kuala Lumpur, 2020), hereafter Tan, *Barbed Wire.*
[60] Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Beyond the Tin Mines*, (Singapore, 1988), hereafter Loh*, Tin Mines.*
[61] John Butcher, *The British in Malaya 1880-1941*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1979).
[62] Margaret Shennan*, Out in the Midday Sun,* (London, 2000).
[63] W. Somerset Maughan, *The Casuarina Tree*, (London, 1926).
[64] J.G.Farrell, *The Singapore Grip*, (London, 1978).
[65] Anthony Burgess, *The Long Day Wanes, The Malayan Trilogy,* (London, 1984)
[66] Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Office*, (London, 1956), 206-207.

Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the CO, attempted this challenge, his two works[67] being partly designed to maintain a public awareness of the career opportunities available within the Colonial Service. With the same aim, the CO supported the publication of *The Colonial Service as a Career*[68] and published 4 editions of *Appointments in His (Her) Majesty's Colonial Service*[69] in subsequent years. However, readers of all these works gained insights only to the general administrative workings of the British Empire.

As it became clear in the 1960s that the British Empire was rapidly dissolving, the Oxford Colonial Records Project spearheaded the collection of papers and memoirs that would preserve the record of empire and its administration. Heussler's works were amongst the first to use this newly available resource. His first[70] focused on the methods developed in the interwar period by Ralph Furse, the CO's Head of Recruitment and Training, to recruit and deploy colonial civil servants around the world. Combined with Furse's own memoirs published a year earlier,[71] the reader gains an excellent insight on recruitment but much less on broader issues of empire's administration. Heussler's subsequent works on British Rule in Northern Nigeria,[72] Tanganyika[73] and in Malaya[74] attempt to explain some of the mechanisms of administration in these countries. However, they have been criticised for over reliance on the memoirs and anecdotes of past administrators, and a shortage of evidence from the official record.

Understanding of the working of colonial administration has been much improved by the subsequent works of Anthony Kirk-Greene. In his earlier career, Kirk-Greene had been a colonial administrator in the Nigerian Administrative Service. On leaving the Service, he became a Senior Research Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford. His major works[75] give an empire-wide depiction. Where analysis is sub-divided, this is by Indian Civil Service, Sudan

[67] Sir Charles Jeffries : 1) *Partners For Progress: The Men and Women of the Colonial Service*, (London, 1949); 2) *The Colonial Office*, (London, 1956).
[68] HMSO, 1950.
[69] HMSO, 1950, 1954, 1955, 1957.
[70] Robert Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers, the Making of the British Colonial Service,* (Syracuse, 1963), hereafter Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers*.
[71] Furse, *Aucuparius.*
[72] Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, (London, 1968), hereafter Heussler, *Nigeria*.
[73] Robert Heussler, *British Tanganyika*, (Durham, 1971).
[74] 1) Robert Heussler, *British Rule in Malaya, The Malayan Civil Service and Its Predecessors, 1867-1942*, (Oxford, 1981), hereafter Heussler, *British Rule*; 2) Heussler, *Stewardship*.
[75] Anthony Kirk-Greene: 1) *On Crown Service: A History of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services, 1837-1997* (London 1999); 2) *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966*, (Basingstoke, 2000), hereafter Kirk-Greene, *Administrators*.

Political Service, and the Colonial Administrative Service, with the experience of the African colonies used to understand the last category. Consequently, there are a number of short specific references to Malaya, but no detailed section or chapter. His work on the British District Officer,[76] uses colonial Africa as its source.

Since Kirk-Greene's works were published there does not appear to have been a further overarching comparative study of British colonial administration. This thesis seeks to refresh interest in this important area by contributing the first detailed study of post-war colonial administration structures and organisation in Malaya, providing some opportunity for comparison with other territories. The prime sources on the structure of Malaya's colonial administration are the post-war colonial files at the Malaysian National Archives. MCS memoirs continue to be an important additional source, and these have been supplemented by contemporary booklets, guides, and articles on administration written by four MCS officers; Middlebrook and Pinnick,[77] Taylor,[78] and T.E.Smith.[79] A search for works written by Malaysian authors has found three, by Ismail,[80] Othman,[81] and Nadaraja,[82] that discuss local colonial administration structures.

The existing historiography also allows comparison of British colonial administration practice between territories. Three areas of comparison concern the agency exercised by colonial administrators with respect to their pay and end of service compensation, and towards colonial constitutional change, together with their experiences in forging post-colonial careers. In the area of pay and compensation, Rathbone[83] and Lynn[84] illuminate events at the end of empire in Ghana (Gold Coast) and Nigeria respectively. In these territories there were deep concerns that disenchanted expatriate administrators would rapidly leave

[76] Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Symbol of Authority, The British District Officer in Africa*, (London, 2006).
[77] S.M. Middlebrook and A.W. Pinnick, *How Malaya is Governed*, (London, 1949).
[78] W.C. Taylor, *Local Government in Malaya*, (Kedah, 1949).
[79] T.E.Smith, The Effect of Recent Constitutional Changes on the Public Service in the Federation of Malaya and Singapore, *Journal of the Royal Institute of Public Administration,* Autumn 1959, hereafter T.E. Smith, *Public Service*.
[80] Ismail B. Haji Saleh, *The Sultan was Not Alone,* (Alor Setar, 1989), hereafter Ismail, *Sultan*.
[81] Mohd. Isa Othman, *Pengalan Kedah & Perlis, Zaman Penjajahan British (Kedah & Perlis, British Colonial Period)*, (Kuala Lumpur,2001).
[82] K. Nadaraja, *The Kuala Muda District*, (Sintok, 2016) hereafter Nadaraja, *Kuala Muda*.
[83] Richard Rathbone, The Colonial Service and the transfer of power in Ghana, in John Smith (editor) *Administering Empire, The British Colonial Service in Retrospect*, (London, 1999), hereafter John Smith (editor) *Administering Empire,* 149-165.
[84] Martin Lynn, Nigerian complications: The Colonial Office, The Colonial Service and the 1953 crisis in Nigeria, in John Smith, (editor), *Administering Empire*, 181-205.

their posts to seek new opportunity, creating administrative chaos in the transition period to independence, and leaving the new countries without a functioning civil service. To prevent this, schemes of pay protection and end of service compensation were developed to retain expatriate administrators until local staff were ready to take their positions. Works by Sarah Stockwell[85] have explored the impact of imperial liberal ideologies imbued into young postwar colonial administrators during their formal training courses at UK universities. She finds that whilst there is evidence of such values being subsequently used in building colonial political institutions, their survival was much dependent on the circumstances in which each country achieved independence. Lewis[86] builds on these ideas by studying how postwar attempts by the CO to engineer social change through social welfare initiatives fared in Kenya. She finds that whilst some progress was made, achieving transformational social change proved 'beyond the capacity' of Kenyan colonial administration, with progress further restrained during the Mau Mau uprising, through disagreement between those administrators who advocated the use of force and those, with more liberal attitudes, who advocated rehabilitation. On the diverse postcolonial career paths taken by colonial officers at end of empire, analysis by Kirk-Greene,[87] (primarily on ex-Colonial Administration Service officers from African territories), reveals the predominance of continued overseas careers in civil service roles, or in British diplomatic and Commonwealth service, along with careers in university and school education/administration. The works of Hodge[88] (on technical officers who pursued careers in international development), and Craggs and Neate[89] (on ex-administrative officers who worked in British new town development) give additional insights on specific paths chosen by some officers. Buettner[90] explains the challenges that colonial

[85] Sarah Stockwell, 1) Imperial Liberalism and Institution Building at the End of Empire in Africa, in *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 2018, Vol.46, No. 5, 1009-1033; 2) Sarah Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 2018), 26-38, 93-110.

[86] Joanna Lewis, *Empire State Building*, (Oxford, 2000). Quote from page 365.

[87] A. Kirk-Greene, 1) Decolonization: The Ultimate Diaspora, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan., 2001, hereafter Kirk-Greene, The Ultimate Diaspora, 133-151, Table 8, page 148. 2) Towards a Retrospective Record: Part I – What Became of Us?, *The Overseas Pensioner*, Journal of the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association, hereafter OSPA Journal, 82 (Oct. 2002), 30–34. Table III, page 34, contains some data on Malaya but unfortunately it is an aggregation of second career data on those who had served in all the colonial services. The MCS represented only around a third of these respondents.

[88] Joseph M. Hodge, British Colonial Expertise, Post-Colonial Careering and the Early History of International Development, *Journal of Modern European History* , Vol. 8, No. 1, (2010), 24-46

[89] Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate, Post-colonial careering and urban policy mobility: between Britain and Nigeria, 1945-1990, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 2017, 44-57.

[90] E Buettner, We don't grow coffee and bananas in Clapham Junction you know!, in R Bickers, (editor), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas*, (Oxford, 2020), 302-28.

officers often faced in integrating into the British workforce, particularly in persuading potential new employers of the transferability of their colonial experiences and qualifications to new roles.

The contribution that this thesis makes to each of these three areas of colonial administration comparison is discussed in the conclusion.

3) The MCS in the context of the history of colonial administrators

In addition to the study of the mechanisms of colonial administration, there is a branch of the historiography that considers colonial administrators as individuals and a collective, attempting to find commonalities in trait, character and thinking. Common attributes amongst colonial administrators have been studied by Heussler,[91] Dewey,[92] and Jeppesen,[93] often focusing on the pre-war conviction held by the CO that public schools inculcated the 'character' needed in their recruits for the Colonial Administrative Service.

Nonetheless, amongst post-war MCS officers there is much less evidence of the influence of common education. Gardiner undertook an extensive analysis of the biographical data of some 800 'post-1945' members of the Colonial Administrative Service (CAS) across the British Empire, including Malaya. He concludes that the CAS was conspicuous by 'its diversity of family and national background', as 'half of post-1945 recruits had not been educated in British independent (mainly boarding) schools'.[94] This finding is supported by analysis of the educational background of 32 senior MCS officers who had been recruited in the 1930s, and who remained in service in 1946. This finds that only 8 had been to elite public schools. 7 had been to grammar schools, academies or institutes, and a further 5 had been educated outside the UK. A higher proportion had in common a tertiary education at Oxford or Cambridge, but this was still only 50% of the total.[95]

Post-war members of the MCS who commented on theories concerning the elite social origin and education of colonial civil servants were universally dismissive of their applicability to Malaya. Bryson analysed lists of MCS Malayan recruits from 1923 to 1939, concluding 'that

[91] Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers*.
[92] Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service*, (London, 1993).
[93] Chris Jeppesen, Sanders of the River, still the best job for a British boy , Recruitment to the Colonial Administrative Service at the End of Empire, *The Historical Journal*, 59, 2, (2016): 469-508.
[94] Nile Gardiner, *Sentinels of Empire, The British Colonial Administrative Service, 1919-1954*, PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1998, 256, 259.
[95] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Civil List, 1940 and MCS quarterly list November 1946. The elite public schools were Felsted, King's Rochester, Malvern College, Repton, and Sherbourne.

grammar schools and redbrick universities figured just as frequently'.[96] Gullick placed much more emphasis on the importance of common MCS experience as the source of the bonding amongst its members.

> Too much emphasis is placed on the common social origin of most men in the MCS – public school and usually university. More important is the fusion resulting from being in the same service, with the same general outlook. It was a friendly club if you conformed to its mores, but if you remained an odd man out…it was less congenial.[97]

Consequently, the analysis presented in this thesis takes a different path to earlier historiography, by studying commonality in MCS and ex-MCS thinking derived from common career experiences in Malaya. To emphasise this point, the title of each thesis chapter is broadly drawn from the impact on MCS thinking of common career experiences in the period studied in the chapter. Such common experience is also evident in the thinking of those MCS officers who made significant contributions to Heussler's histories of the MCS. Many had started their careers in pre-war Malaya, experienced internment under the Japanese, and then returned to post-war careers which progressed to senior MCS positions. This group held to shared beliefs that criticism of the MCS track record in the fall of Malaya to the Japanese was unfair, and that the imposition of the Malayan Union was a betrayal of the trust that the Malays had earlier placed in the British.

Networks also offer evidence of common thinking and attitudes. Works on imperial networking by Lester,[98] Potter,[99] Ballantyne[100] have explored the impact of webs and networks in different phases and across varying geographies of the British Empire. Potter's work identifies how technological development increasingly reinforced London's position as the 'news hub' of the British Empire. The exploration of ex-MCS networking in this thesis builds on this historiography. The impact of ex-MCS opinions published in the post-war UK and Malay press is explored, particularly that achieved by David Gammans and Victor Purcell. Gammans benefitted from the additional attention given to him as a Member of Parliament.

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[96] UOBL, Papers of Professor Robert Heussler, MSS. Brit.Emp.s.480, (hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers), Box (hereafter B) 18, File (hereafter F) 1, letter Bryson to H.G. Turner, 18th September 1969.
[97] John Gullick, Recollections of My Time in Malaya, part 3, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS),* Vol. 87, No. 2, (2014), 79.
[98] Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks*, (London, 2001).
[99] Simon Potter, Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire, *Journal of British Studies* , Vol. 46, No. 3 (July 2007): 621-646.
[100] Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire*, (Vancouver, 2014).

Purcell used his engagement as an adviser to the Malayan Chinese Association as a source of legitimacy. Both were perceived by officials, both in the CO and in Malaya, as unwelcome meddlers who stirred up attitudes and behaviours which undermined the implementation of British Policy. Until its closure in 1974, the British Association of Malaya purported to represent British opinion on Malaya through its monthly journals and newsletters. Amongst its members and contributors were ex-MCS officers. Collaboration between ex-MCS members of the Association was intense in the immediate post-war period when a well-coordinated assault on the legitimacy of British plans for a Malayan Union was made. The Association's membership base after Malaya's independence in 1957 is analysed in this thesis to assess its role in the networking of the 1960s and 70s that stimulated the writing of MCS memoirs. This analysis questions how representative the Association was of the total ex-MCS cohort and explains how alternative groupings of retired colonial servants, especially those in the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association, eventually came to supplant the networks based around the British Association of Malaya.

Collective thinking and attitudes can be impacted by common experiences of physical and mental trauma. The work of Parkes and Still[101] is valuable in understanding the nature of such trauma amongst Far East captives during WW2. Research for this thesis has found a number of contemporary accounts of the ongoing impact on the mental and physical health of MCS officers who were interned and then returned to Malaya to resume their careers. It is notable, however, that such accounts were largely given by visiting senior British officials who were frustrated by the attitudes being expressed by senior MCS officers towards British policy in Malaya. As was the case amongst many in the British war generation who had suffered under the Japanese, MCS officers may have preferred not to talk openly about their ongoing struggles with the effects of incarceration. Humiliation and loss of dignity are a particular form of mental trauma. The recent work of Frevert,[102] has discussed the political role of public humiliation and how it can have a profound impact on feelings of dignity amongst those so humiliated. By interning British civil servants in full view of the Malayan people, the Japanese sought to achieve this. The MCS memoirs studied in this thesis suggest, however, that

[101] Meg Parkes and Geoff Still, *Captive Memories: starvation, disease, survival: Far East POWs & Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine*, (Lancaster, 2016), hereafter Parkes and Still, *Captive Memories*.
[102] Ute Frevert, *The Politics of Humiliation*, (Oxford, 2020).

Japanese attempts to humiliate British MCS internees did not have a long-term detrimental impact on their sense of dignity.

As a final consideration, applying to this and the preceding section, the historiography of colonial administration and administrators embraces all empires. That of the French colonial empire, for example, contains parallels to the predominantly British focused historiography described above. Robert Delavignette was a career colonial administrator who became Director of France's school for colonial administrators, the École nationale de la France d'outre-mer (ENFOM). He wrote prolifically, leaving a valuable body of work on French colonial administration. His work on the role of French Commandant du Cercle[103] mirrors Kirk-Greene's work on the British equivalent role of the District Officer. In academic research, Cohen's work on French colonial administration was published in the same period as Heussler's works. In contrast to Heussler's use of administrator memoirs, Cohen offers a more statistic based analysis to understand evolving attitudes, using the results of questionnaires periodically completed by ENFOM attendees. From these, he finds that most administrators thought independence came too soon and that French presence 'should have continued for another generation'.[104] The mixed value of French administrator memoirs is further debated by Aldrich who finds that 'some are largely self-aggrandising monologues…whilst others are fine eyewitness records of colonial society'.[105] Lastly, on the second careers of ex-colonial officers, Dimier[106] explores the role and influence of ex-French officers over the development policy of the European Economic Community from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, demonstrating how they transferred their colonial experience back to Europe. Whilst an inter-empire comparison of colonial administration and administrators cannot be pursued further in this thesis, it is hoped that findings presented on the post-war MCS might contribute to a future comparative analysis.

4) Malaya in the context of decolonisation

A search for the causes of Britian's end of empire has often concentrated on geopolitical and economic considerations. Darwin[107] posits four main causes, centred around domestic UK

[103] Robert Delavignette, *Freedom and Authority in French West Africa*, English translation, (London, 1968).
[104] William B. Cohen, *Rulers of Empire: The French Colonial Service in Africa*, (Stanford, 1971), 193.
[105] Robert Aldrich, *Greater France, A History of French Overseas Expansion*, (Basingstoke, 1996), 153.
[106] Véronique Dimier, Recycling Empire, in Martin Thomas (editor), *The French Colonial Mind, Volume 1*, (Lincoln, 2011), 251-274.
[107] John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, (Basingstoke, 1988).

politics, economics, international politics, and the onslaught of nationalism. Whilst all played a part, he concludes that the decisive blow was that of international politics, particularly the necessity for Britain to fall in line with the anti-imperial ideologies of the post-war hegemons, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, further explanation is needed on why Malaya's independence occurred a decade after India and Burma's and, apparently, with much less sense of hasty disposal. Gallagher[108] offers some explanation, arguing that the immediate post war period actually saw a revival in the British Empire. Only from the 1950s onwards did Britain's lack of economic and military strength become telling. Tarling[109] emphasises the striking level of Britain's post-war ambition in the South-East Asia region, even though it lacked resources to see it through. In Malaya, tactical sacrifices to timetables were made to preserve the aspiration for continued strategic control in the emerging post-colonial cold-war world. For Tarling, 'end of empire' needs to be understood as a creative act, transforming British influence towards the economic and diplomatic and away from the territorial and imperial. Cain and Hopkins[110] support the economic dimension of Tarling's argument, reasoning that it was the economic value of post-war Malaya, especially its contribution to the Sterling Area and to dollar earnings, that mainly explain Britain's determination to retain control. They contend that the fight against communism was used to justify remaining, but the prime goal was maintaining Britain's economic position. This allowed the time needed to construct the neo-mercantilist system that would continue to protect British financial interests after independence. White[111] nevertheless, finds little evidence of collusion between business and government in seeking the preservation of British economic interests in South-East Asia. Heinlein[112] also finds less evidence of a British grand strategy, preferring to depict the end of empire as a series of mostly ad hoc decisions made in response to periphery or international pressures. Hack[113] explains the initiatives taken by the British Government, such as the Colombo Plan, in terms of efforts to maintain local and regional influence in South-East Asia, and measures taken with the USA and France to resist regional communism. He finds that many of these initiatives

[108] John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 1982).
[109] Nicholas Tarling, *The Fall of Imperial Britain in South-East Asia*, (Singapore, 1993).
[110] P.J. Cain, A.G Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000*, 2nd Edition, (Harlow, 2002).
[111] Nicholas J. White, *Business, Government and the End of Empire*, (Singapore, 1996), hereafter White, *Business and Government.*
[112] Frank Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945-1963*, (London, 2002)
[113] Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonization in South-East Asia*, (London, 2000).

were only partly successful and Britain, in time, had to come to accept a much diminished role in the region. He concludes that Malaya's independence was ultimately a pragmatic British decision, delayed until a time that there was 'overlapping of British and Malayan interests',[114] and a British-orientated Malay ruling elite had been established.

On balance, Harper's depiction of end of empire in Malaya, as forged by responses to a succession of largely unseen post-war crises, best maps to the findings presented in this thesis. Nonetheless, the differing geopolitical and economic narratives presented above provide valuable context to the discussion of opinions expressed by ex-MCS officers, such as Gammans, Purcell and Thompson. In parliament, Gammans argued that the economic value of Malaya was critical for Britain's recovery. Purcell argued that communist encroachment could be prevented only if Malaya was immediately given its independence.[115] Thompson[116] was central to the British political initiative to share learnings from Malaya's insurgency with American and South Vietnamese military leaders.

Kennedy locates the enduring relevance of Britian's imperial history in its speaking to 'moral concerns and political issues that remain very much with us'. He champions those historians of empire who have sought new perspectives which eschew traditional modes of study based on decision making processes at the highest level of British government and commerce.[117] As examples, Gopal[118] demonstrates how colonial subjects were active agents in their liberation; Sarah Stockwell advocates looking beyond the official record in addressing questions of decolonisation,[119] and has studied the end of empire transition within Britain itself.[120] Nonetheless, the study of colonial administrators in the early periods of the British Empire has offered little in the way of the distinctive perspective that Kennedy urges, as they are depicted as closely connected with decisions in British government. The work of Robertson and Gallagher, with Denny[121] identifies British colonial administrators at the start of empire as successful intermediaries in adaption processes between periphery and centre. Their success stemmed from the common educational background and socio/ideological

[114] Ibid, 225.
[115] Victor Purcell, *Communist or Free?*, (London, 1954).
[116] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, (London, 1966).
[117] Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars*, (London, 2018), 89, 145. Quote from page 145.
[118] Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, (London, 2019).
[119] Sarah Stockwell, Decolonisation beyond the public record office: Non-official sources for studying the end of empire, *The Journal of the Contemporary British History*, Vol. 6, No.3, Winter 1992, 557-566.
[120] Sarah Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 2018).
[121] Ronald Robertson, and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, (London, 1961).

world view, or 'official mind', that metropole and local colonial officials shared. Works on the early colonial history of Malaya align with this thesis. Parkinson[122] provides an analysis of empire-building activities on the Malaya peninsula explaining the local pressures that had demanded a British presence in the 1870s, and Cowan[123] uses official papers to show how Malaya's earlier administrators were moving beyond a CO policy of non-intervention but were subsequently able to gain CO acquiescence to their actions.

From 1942, the end of empire period in Malaya is, however, different. The British Government dominated policy formulation, largely ignoring the opposing counsel of senior MCS officers. There was no local adaption of central policy. MCS attitudes reported at the time, and reflected in subsequent memoirs, reveal little evidence of a shared 'official mind'. This allows for the post-war study of the MCS to be presented as a distinct perspective on end of empire in Malaya, that of a grouping of administrators with their own colonial identity and agency.

5) The history of the book

The final segment of historiography concerns the impact of memoir. Moran describes how memoirs shape public perceptions. In his work on the USA Central Intelligence Agency[124] he explains how earlier attempts by the Agency to prevent or curtail the publication of memoirs by former officers had proved counter-productive. Subsequently, its selective support to the publication of memoirs proved beneficial in helping it counter negative public perceptions of its activities and people. In Moran's work on the British State,[125] he notes that the access to official papers given to both Lloyd George and Churchill for their published memoirs went well beyond the stated intentions of the 1911 Official Secrets Act. This furnished both Prime Ministers with a significant early advantage in presenting their own accounts. The case of Churchill is further explored by Reynolds[126] who studies his six volumes of 'war memoirs' published between 1948 and 1953. Reynolds explains how Churchill the historian used his memoirs to shape his public image as both a past Prime Minister, and a hopeful future one; an aspiration fulfilled in 1951. He demonstrates that Churchill's recollections were selective,

[122] C. Northcote Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya, 1867 – 1877*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1960), hereafter Parkinson, *British Intervention*.
[123] Charles D. Cowan, *Nineteenth-century Malaya*, (London, 1961).
[124] Christopher Moran, *Company Confessions: Revealing CIA Secrets*, (London, 2015).
[125] Christopher Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain*, (Cambridge, 2013).
[126] David Reynolds, *In Command of History*, (London, 2005).

sometimes reflecting a sense of guilt over events and his desire to defend his wartime decision making. One example concerns Churchill's account of the Japanese sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in 1941. This event, which effectively sealed Malaya's fate, created in Churchill 'twists and turns of anguish (which) continued long afterwards on paper' as he sought to place blame on military commanders.[127]

For many years, the historical depiction of the British colonial enterprise in Malaya was dominated by Swettenham's *British Malaya*. Even as nonagenarian in his fourth decade of retirement from colonial service, he was still able to lay a further stamp on the historiography of colonial Malaya in his memoir-cum-history,[128] published in the year Malaya fell to the Japanese. In this, Swettenham places himself Churchill-like in the centre of a very personal version of Malaya's early colonial history. The subsequent ex-MCS campaign against the Malayan Union held to deeply entrenched views on the necessary preservation of British honour by fulfilling obligations to protection treaties. These views drew their legitimacy in large part from Swettenham's account of how the obligations had originally been pledged.

Heussler's *Stewardship* drew significantly from ex-MCS memoirs. It depicted the MCS as stewards who continued to be at the centre of power and influence in post-war colonial Malaya as it progressed towards independence. Even forty years after independence, Harper noted the perpetuation of an 'optimistic rhetoric of a stewardship successfully concluded' and the depiction of a British 'success story - from defeat at Singapore in 1942, to recovery and selfless renunciation'.[129] The last chapter of this thesis adds to the literature around the history of the book by explaining how ex-MCS memoirs influenced the writing and perpetuation of this 'optimistic rhetoric'.

Research Methodology and Sources

Three primary sources are interrogated; the official record, contemporary writing (in newspapers, journals, and personal letters), and personal memoirs written several years later.

The official record and memoirs help build a detailed understanding of the structure and functioning of colonial administration in post-war Malaya. They convey the organisational changes made as this structure necessarily adapted successively to the constitutional change

[127] Ibid, 267.
[128] Frank Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, (London, 1942).
[129] Harper, *End of Empire*, 365.

from Malayan Union to Federation, the Emergency, and the introduction of the democratic processes that marked the path to independence. In all these phases, the focus of the analysis is on the changing roles of the MCS, especially those changes which either weakened or reinforced MCS influence. Statistical analysis is presented, drawn largely from annual Malayan Civil Service Lists. Presentation is either in table form embedded in the main text, or in written summary in the main text with a link to a more detailed graphical presentation in the Appendix.

From the official record and contemporary writing, an understanding is built of the thinking and attitudes which the MCS and ex-MCS exhibited in each of the phases of the post-war colonial period, and the impact made on political leaders in Britain and Malaya. As analysis of memoirs reveals the thinking and attitudes of ex-MCS officers some decades after the events they describe, areas where ex-MCS recollections differ from what is in the official record are identified. Contemporary writing is the prime source for understanding the motivations of ex-MCS officers in the 1960s and 1970s which underlay their determination to have a history of the MCS written.

A full record of primary sources is given in the Bibliography. The official record largely exists in the UK and the Malaysian National Archives, comprising information published by the British and Federation Governments (including the record of parliamentary proceedings), and confidential files of non-published reports, correspondence and meeting minutes. The UK Archive includes the Migrated Archives of the Federation of Malaya. These are the confidential files that were repatriated shortly before independence and held secretly at Hanslope Park until recently. The Malaysian National Archives provide a rich source of information on the detailed functioning of the colonial administration. The Malayan Civil Service Lists are found in the Bodleian and Cambridge University Libraries.

Contemporary newspapers and journals are held at the British Library and the Singapore National Library Board. Contemporary papers and letters were sourced from 10 separate holdings in the UK and South-East Asia. Most cited are private papers and diaries held at the Bodleian, the Archives of the BAM held at Cambridge University Library, and the Tan Chen Lock Papers at the Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

MCS memoirs are found in multiple places. 11 memoirs are published works. 57 are held in the Heussler Papers at the Bodleian, some of these being memoirs originally submitted to the BAM and then passed to Heussler. The papers and memoirs of 12 MCS officers form

separate holdings at the Bodleian, being either submissions made to the Colonial Records Project, or transcripts of interviews given for the *End of Empire* Granada TV series. Two MCS memoirs are in the BAM Archives at Cambridge University. Finally, the author is grateful to Anthony Stockwell for sharing his correspondence with John Gullick.

All published secondary sources, comprising memoirs, biographies, books, and articles are listed in the bibliography. Some were published only in Singapore and Malaysia and have been located in the National Library of Malaysia, the Singapore National Library and the libraries of several State Museums in Malaysia.

Structure of the Thesis

The chapters follow a chronological order. Chapter 1 discusses the Japanese Invasion of 1941, the subsequent war years, and the brief period of British Military Administration to 1946. It considers attitudes that developed amongst MCS and ex-MCS officers, driven by accusations of the Service's failures in the organisation of Malaya's civil defence, and their feelings of exclusion from policy formulation for post-war Malaya. Chapter 2 covers the period of the Malayan Union, 1946 to 1948, during which the re-establishment of civil administration was hindered by Malay protests and a reliance on MCS leaders still recovering from the trauma of internment. Ex-MCS public lobbying, and behind-the-scenes assistance, impacted British Governmental action in extricating itself from the Malayan Union.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover the Federation of Malaya, from its formation in 1948 to independence in 1957. The period is characterised by disorder and frequent change, caused by the communist insurgency and emerging electoral politics. Against a backdrop of official concerns over the attitudes and performance of some MCS officers, the distinctive contributions of both junior and senior MCS officers in the Emergency are assessed. Particular focus is given to the structure and functioning of War Committees, and to the creation and welfare management of the Chinese new villages. The positive impact made by General Templer on MCS morale is then contrasted with the ongoing scepticism amongst the same officers on the workability of community politics and the feasibility of a rapid malayanisation of their Service. Such scepticism, combined with reassurances on tenure given by British leaders, contributed to a collective MCS short-sightedness which failed to see the Federation's fast approaching independence and the ending of their careers in Malaya.

Chapter 5 studies post-independence careers and directions to 1983. New ex-MCS networks were created but not all chose to participate. An explanation is given of the determination which arose amongst some ex-MCS officers to have a history of the MCS written and considers the influence which these ex-officers had on its post-war content. The thesis ends with its concluding chapter.

1 Return Baggage

This chapter discusses the period from the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1941 to the end of the post-war British Military Administration (BMA) in April 1946. Its purpose is to explain the origins of two narratives about war-time events that developed within the MCS to defend the Service's honour. These narratives were figuratively part of the return baggage of MCS officers resuming administrative control of Malaya in 1946, and would be rigorously held to and defended throughout the post-war period.

The Japanese Invasion

In December 1941, as the Japanese invasion fleet approached, the leadership of the MCS exhibited stability and long service. Hugh Fraser, recruited to the MCS in 1913, had been Federated Malay States (FMS) Chief Secretary and head of its civil service, based in Kuala Lumpur, for over two years. In Singapore, Stanley Jones, Fraser's senior in MCS service years, had been Colonial Secretary since 1940, leading the civil service in the Straits Settlement Colony and overseeing civil administration in the Unfederated Malay States. Both Fraser and Jones reported to Sir Shenton Thomas, Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner to the Malay States. Thomas had held these roles since 1934, coming to Malaya after a 25-year colonial administration career in Africa. He was now back from a long leave, during which time Jones had assumed the Governor's local responsibilities for civil leadership, including the preparations for civil defence which had quickened after the fall of France in mid-1940. By contrast, the British official military history tells that Malaya's military leadership was in a state of flux. In May 1941, Lieut.-General Arthur Ernest Percival had been appointed as the new General Officer Commanding, Malaya. In November, Churchill had replaced Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke Popham as Commander in Chief, Far East, with a 'younger officer with up-to-date experience of war'.[1] This change would not, however, be made until several weeks after the invasion, when Lieut.-General Sir Henry Pownall arrived to take up the post.

A few days after Japanese troops landed, and on the day that the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* were sunk off the Peninsula's east coast, Alfred Duff Cooper was appointed by

[1] Woodburn Kirby, *British official military history*, 80.

Churchill as Resident (Cabinet) Minister for Far Eastern Affairs. He was responsible for 'settling emergency matters on the spot, when time did not permit reference to Whitehall'.[2]

In his new role, Duff Cooper made accusations that would cause lasting damage to the credibility of the MCS. In private correspondence with Churchill he portrayed Thomas as 'the mouthpiece of the last person he speaks to', and Jones as a 'sinister figure', detested in the Colony for being defeatist, and with a 'black' record in the preparation of civil defence. Jones was blamed for the lack of air raid shelters, trenches, tin hats, and gas masks, and there being no systems for food rationing, registration of inhabitants or identity cards. Duff Cooper was particularly alarmed by the influence he believed Jones exercised over Thomas' overruling of military orders to evacuate European families from Perak. Thomas had been concerned that the earlier evacuation of European-only families from Penang had been seen as discriminatory, and wanted to avoid the same accusations in Perak, but Duff Cooper believed that Jones had failed to see how fast events were moving, as the army was also retreating. Perceiving Thomas as 'much influenced' by Jones, Duff Cooper proposed to Churchill to 'get rid of' Jones and replace him with the 'admirable' Fraser.[3]

As Duff Cooper's private letter made its way to Churchill, a more public broadside against the performance of the MCS appeared in the *Straits Times* leader on the 29th December, under the title 'Who *Are* Our Leaders? The fighting between 'various organisations' over preserves of authority at such a time of peril, was 'more unreal than any nightmare,' lamented the newspaper. It contended that public confidence in the MCS 'was never less' and 'if instant dismissal had been the unavoidable consequence of proved incompetence, the ranks of the Malayan Civil Service would have been seriously depleted since December 8th.'.[4] The article concluded with an appeal for Duff Cooper to become the 'supreme authority' over civil defence and preparation. The story was picked up in Britain by the *Evening Standard* which headlined the 'Malaya Outcry Over "Tea Party" Clique', and the appeal made to Duff Cooper to 'Stop this Nightmare'. Readers learnt that 'the Civil Service in Malaya is today subjected to the most scathing attack ever delivered against Colonial Administration'.[5]

[2] Ibid, 202.
[3] TNA, CO 967/77, letter Duff Cooper to Churchill, 18th December 1941. All quotes.
[4] *Straits Times*, 29th December 1941. All quotes.
[5] *Evening Standard*, 30th December 1941. All quotes.

In the Colonial Office (CO), Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Moyne, pondered how to respond. Thomas telegrammed to reassure him that the *Straits Times* article was just the mischievous work of the paper's editor, and an unofficial member of the Legislative Council, who were both trying to 'ingratiate themselves' with Duff Cooper. Thomas maintained that he remained 'completely in accord' with the Resident Minister.[6] Moyne was likely not assured by Thomas. On the same day, he received a telegram from Duff Cooper warning that 'the Malayan Civil Service has failed lamentably in making adequate preparation for the war', and that Thomas had 'lost his grip of the situation (and) instead of leading he is being led'.[7] Pressure heaped on Moyne as Churchill (in the USA) cabled him saying that Duff Cooper's revelations of poor civil defence preparation were 'a shocking tale'.[8] Moyne's decision was for Thomas to stay, but the CO would recall Jones and replace him with Fraser. Discussion took place in the CO on how this change should be announced but it was decided not to make a public statement so as to avoid giving the matter 'undue prominence'.[9] Anticipating a possible question in the house, however, draft words were mulled along the lines that there was 'no question as to the good service' given by Jones, it being only the 'abnormal conditions in Singapore' that had required a change of incumbents, much helped by the 'fortuitous availability' of Fraser who would 'fit in better' as Colonial Secretary.[10] Although the post-war MCS narrative would portray Jones as a scapegoat and victim, the author of the official military history would later publish an independent account, giving his opinion that Jones had been ill-fitted to a wartime role.

> Although an excellent and efficient civil servant, (he) was so conservative by nature…that he was unable to adjust himself to the conditions that would exist after the outbreak of war. He would therefore oppose measures which, though necessary in war, offended his views as a civil servant.[11]

On February 15th 1942, it was Fraser who represented civil government in the joint military and civil deputation that approached the Japanese lines to propose a cease fire, an initiative that would lead to the signing of formal terms of surrender by Percival later in the day. The

[6] TNA, CO 967/77, telegram from Thomas to Lord Moyne, 3rd January 1942. There is no report of Duff Cooper playing a direct hand in briefing the press.
[7] Ibid, telegram from Duff Cooper to Lord Moyne, 3rd January 1942.
[8] Ibid, naval cypher from Prime Minister to Colonial Secretary, 13th January 1942.
[9] Ibid, minute by Edward Gent, Head of Eastern Department, 26th January 1942.
[10] Ibid, minute 29th January 1942.
[11] Woodburn Kirby, *Chain of Disaster*, 195.

MCS were now interned by the victors, as Thomas had ruled that the MCS must remain throughout the defence. Only those with official reasons to be away, due to leave or other duties, or in Jones' case by being relieved of his post, escaped incarceration.

Reaction in the UK

Those MCS officers fortunate enough to be away from Malaya when the Japanese invaded, or who had retired earlier, now found themselves facing an intensified criticism of the MCS record in Malaya. The ignition point was an article in *The Times* describing British Rule in Malaya as 'having no roots in the life of the people of the country'. It was written by Ian Morrison, an Australian journalist who had witnessed events until shortly before the surrender, then escaping to Australia. He used the 'no roots' analogy to explain why, apart from some parts of the Chinese community, the 'bulk of the Asiatic population remained spectators from start to finish'.[12] Despite decades during which its Protection Treaties had been in force, Britain had seemingly failed to generate loyalty to its colonial institutions amongst those it claimed to be protecting. The CO was immediately alert to the article's impact.

> By the use of this significant – and to many – damning phrase, it called into question the whole spirit and basis of our Colonial policy in a way that the previous, more personal and limited attacks could never have done….It did in fact contain the substance of a reasoned and fundamental criticism which was instinctively recognised, appreciated and given weight by public opinion.[13]

Morrison would expand his criticism in a subsequent book. He argued that life for the governing elites in Malaya had long been easy going and that the administrators sent to Malaya had not been the 'best products' of their generation. As promotion in the service was almost exclusively achieved by years of service/seniority, any early idealism, ambition, or initiative was quickly stifled as it would have no material effect on status and grade. Malaya's civil administrators lived with their families in exclusively European communities separate from the other peoples of Malaya, planning prosperous retirements in their home countries. To Morrison, the Malayan Government had 'treated the natives of the country as a distant but well-disposed father might treat his children'. To criticism that the MCS had been found

[12] *The Times*, February 18th 1942. Both quotes.
[13] TNA, CO 875/14/9, confidential memo, N.J.B.Sabine (CO Information/Press Department), 18th March 1942.

wanting in the organisation of civil defence against the Japanese invader, Morrison had added a much broader criticism of the MCS as negligent, over many decades, in governance of the peoples of Malaya.[14]

In opening debate in the House of Commons on the situation in the Far East, Churchill argued that 'it would be a very unseasonable moment and a very ungracious task' to pass judgement on Malaya's defenders. He urged that the House look across the 'considerable period of immediate punishment' to recognise that Britain's position had in fact been immeasurably improved by the earlier entry of Russia, and now the USA, into the war on the Allied side.[15] The speakers who followed the Prime Minister were not inclined to heed Churchill's word. James Griffiths (Labour) spoke to Morrison's article in *The Times*, proclaiming 'that is really a terrible indictment, that we have been there for generations, and yet these generations have not given us any real roots in the life of the people of the country'.[16] Sir Richard Acland (Liberal) insisted that 'never again is Malaya going back under the joint control of British rubber planters and the kind of Colonial administrators who have lived there in the general kind of atmosphere of the Carlton Club'.[17] Frederick Pethick-Lawrence (Labour), claimed that 'blimpery' was losing Britain its Empire, a reference to the Colonel Blimp cartoons by David Low in the *Evening Standard*.[18] In Low's satirical depictions, Blimp was pompous, rejecting of social change and new ideas, a depiction that Pethick-Lawrence was now extending to those responsible for the management of British colonial policy in the CO, and to the MCS as the administrative rulers of Malaya.

Following the parliamentary debate, articles began to appear calling for new attitudes, even new people, to deliver a new Colonial Policy. *The Economist* recognised a malaise at the heart of colonial service.

> Recruits that go out are generally both able and energetic and frequently idealists as well, but by the end of ten years their spirits are broken and all they look forward to is promotion, an early retirement and a pension…Officers who cannot take responsibility should be replaced by those who can.[19]

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[14] Ian Morrison, *Malayan Postscript*, (London, 1942). Quote from page 38 of the third impression, (1943).
[15] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 378, Commons sitting of Tuesday 24th February 1942, 46-47.
[16] Ibid, 52.
[17] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 378, Commons sitting of Wednesday 25th February 1942, 254-255. The Carlton Club was a private members club in London and, for a time, the home of the Conservative Party.
[18] Ibid, 304-305. Colonel Blimp was named after the term for a gas filled military barrage balloon.
[19] *The Economist*, The Colonial Melting Pot, March 7th 1942.

John Harvey had been an MCS officer since 1924 and was on leave when the Japanese invaded. He had been reposted to Nigeria where he was shocked to learn of the Parliamentary debate.

> Those of us who were not interned were frankly disgusted at the treatment meted out in parliament to the pre-war administration and commercial community in the debates on the fall of Singapore which was after all a military defeat.[20]

Nonetheless, with the small number of non-interned MCS members scattered around the world, and those interned both unaware and unable to contribute, who could now pick up the baton to defend the reputation of the MCS and provide the experienced advice needed to plan for a return to Malaya? The Association of British Malaya (BAM)[21] was ready to step into the breach, its Committee declaring such to Association members.

> To a large extent the Association represents all that is left of Malayan opinion and political life. The committee feel that the Association should endeavour within its limited resources to explain the past, defend the present and plan for the future.[22]

The BAM had existed for over 20 years, claiming to represent opinion on all subjects of 'public interest' in British Malaya. Such opinion reflected two major areas of interest. The first was that of Malayan rubber plantation and tin mining companies with corporate headquarters and shareholders in the UK. The second was that of senior retired members of the MCS, who held that their past status and experience gave them qualification and entitlement to contribute to the political and constitutional development of empire in Malaya, through public statement and private advice to the CO. Membership of the BAM's Committee was typically split between these interests. In September 1942, businessman H.B. Egmont Hake was President. The Honorary Secretary was Captain L. David Gammans, who had served in the MCS from 1920 to 1934, until returning to the UK and becoming a Conservative MP. The two notable retired MCS members on the Committee were Sir George Maxwell, retired Chief Secretary of FMS, and Stanley Jones, who had been elected to the Committee after his ignominious return from Singapore. No longer on the Committee, but ever present in the background, was Sir Frank Swettenham. His public statements continued to be treated with respect, even though he was now in his 90s and had been retired from colonial service for

[20] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B14, F1, Recollections of J.A.Harvey, 1st August 1970, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers, Harvey, *Memoirs*, 26.
[21] The Association changed its name several times. The acronym BAM is used throughout.
[22] *British Malaya*, the monthly journal of the Association of British Malaya, September 1942.

nearly 40 years. Swettenham's mantle as authoritative spokesman on colonial administration was, however, shared within the BAM with Maxwell. In his campaigning against FMS de-centralisation whilst in office, and then he retirement, Maxwell had honed his skills in media management and CO lobbying, being able to turn out a letter or article at rapid pace.

On the BAM Committee, Maxwell was the obvious choice to organise a defence of war-time civil performance in Malaya. The Association called on those with personal knowledge of the fall of Malaya to send in their recollections.[23] A year later the Association published '*The Civil Defence of Malaya'*. It had been compiled by a committee under Maxwell's chairmanship from information 'received from persons who were in Malaya at the time'. It claimed, (in capitals), that it was 'AN ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF THE CIVIL DEFENCE OF MALAYA', and its conclusion was clear.

> The fall of Malaya was a military disaster. Nothing that "Civil Defence" could have done could have availed to prevent that disaster. It is hoped that this narrative may serve to show how "Civil Defence" supported the military defenders.[24]

In an impassioned paragraph, carrying the hallmarks of Maxwell's own exaggerated style, the British public was berated for its attitude and the impact this might have on future British credibility in Malaya.

> It cannot be declared too emphatically and too often that the British public…abused indiscriminately…the entire civilian community for what was, from beginning to end, a military disaster...The British public has every right to be ashamed of what it thought and said……(and) unless the facts are recognised before the British return to Malaya, our reception may not be the one that is necessary for co-operation in laying the foundations of the Malaya of the future.[25]

In its review of the work, *British Malaya* considered it 'an authoritative refutation of calumny and a record which carries complete vindication'.[26] Whether it carried weight with a 'British public' that had apparently been so in ignorance of the facts is difficult to judge. A second reviewer was also positive, albeit he was a member of the MCS seconded to the War Office.[27] A reference to the book in *The Times* was made in a letter written by Maxwell himself.[28] In

[23] *British Malaya*, February 1943.
[24] The Association of British Malaya, *The Civil Defence of Malaya*, (London, 1944), 127.
[25] Ibid, 90.
[26] *British Malaya*, June 1944.
[27] Victor Purcell, review of 'The Civil Defence of Malaya' in *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs),* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Oct. 1944), 597-598.
[28] *The Times* August 5th, 1944.

mid-1944, minds were on the recent D-day landings and the hoped-for end of the war in Europe. The war against Japan was less in focus, and the 14th army fighting in Burma was considering itself the 'forgotten army'.

Public discussion on Malaya needed to be proactive, however strong the Association's desire for past vindication. In mid-1943, the BAM Committee published a 'Memorandum for the Reconstruction of Malaya' in *British Malaya*.[29] It appeared to be modelled on analysis and proposals contained in three articles Maxwell had written in the same journal earlier in the year. These had proposed an extension of the pre-war Federation of four Malay States, to bring all nine Malay States into a new protected Federation, still ostensibly under Sultan sovereignty.[30] The memorandum was sent by Gammans, as Honorary Secretary of the Association, to Colonel Oliver Stanley who was now Secretary of State for the Colonies.[31] It soon became apparent, however, that not all members of the BAM saw things the same way. Swettenham denounced the need for any change in post-war Malaya, arguing 'there is nothing much the matter with British Malaya except that we have lost it'. Planning any changes before the British reoccupation of Malaya, Swettenham protested, would mean that 'the voice of the Malay people...is dismissed as of no account', thus breaching Britain's commitment to Sultan sovereignty over constitutional matters.[32]

Signs of internal disagreement became more apparent when the BAM Committee published a second memorandum in July 1944. Purporting to be merely an expansion and explanation of the original proposals, the memorandum contained significant revisions. There was now an expressed desire to include the Settlements Colony in some form of stronger union with a new Federation of all Malay States. Maxwell apparently missed the BAM Committee meeting that had approved the second memorandum. He made it plain that he considered the new memorandum a 'complete reversal' of the original proposals as the idea of a closer union between Colony and Federation 'would entirely reorganise the constitution of the Crown Colony and the Malay States (and) seems to me to be impossible in constitutional law and unworkable in practice'.[33] In its September 1944 Special General

[29] *British Malaya,* August 1943.
[30] *British Malaya*, April, May, and June 1943, *The Administration of Malaya*.
[31] TNA, CO 825/35/14, letter from Gammans to Stanley, 25th May 1943.
[32] *British Malaya*, November 1943, Frank Swettenham, *Rebuilding*.
[33] *British Malaya*, August 1944, George Maxwell letter, July 22nd 1944.

Meeting, the BAM's incoming President appeared to concede that the BAM could not play a significant role in planning for post-war Malaya. The two memoranda, he advised,

> had been compiled with a view only to elicit comment and criticism and were by no means necessarily right in themselves. It was quite impossible for the Committee to say what form the reconstruction would take; that was a matter for the Colonial Office.[34]

CO planning for the constitution of post-war Malaya had anyway been progressing at a pace since mid-1943, under the leadership of the Head of the Eastern Department, Edward Gent. Anthony Stockwell concludes that Secretary of State Stanley, although serving through the important planning period, (November 1942 to July 1945), was strategically supportive but not instrumental in the specific directions taken.[35] He also concludes that whilst Britain wanted to restore its rule over Malaya, it had to do so in a way that would accommodate US anti-colonial opinion, by developing a clear plan for eventual self-government.

Lau identifies a critical juncture in April 1943, when Lord Hailey exerted significant influence over Gent's thinking.[36] Hailey's career had been in the Indian Civil Service. After retirement, he had been appointed in 1942 to lead the British Colonial Research Committee, which offered advice to the CO on spending the funds allocated by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Lau suggests that Hailey's influence stemmed from his leadership of a British Delegation to the Institute of Pacific Relations Conference in Canada, in December 1942. Hailey had made a much-praised defence of British colonial policy and, in the process, gained credible insight into likely American opinion on Britain's post-war colonial planning. Invited to comment on the CO's thinking, he argued the need for more radical constitutional reform in Malaya than the CO appeared to be considering. In a lengthy memo,[37] Hailey questioned whether Malaya's pre-war constitutional constructs, which centred on Malay protection, could be adapted to create a self-government that incorporated Chinese and Indian communities. He advocated a very different strategy in which the British would first assume jurisdiction (sovereignty) over the Malay States and all its peoples. Whilst this might seem a step back from self-government, as it would remove jurisdiction from the Sultans, Hailey believed this was the only way to create a basis upon which self-government

[34] *British Malaya*, October 1944, *Notes of SGM*, statement by. H.G.R. Leonard.
[35] Anthony Stockwell, *Malayan Union,* 20-21.
[36] Albert Lau, *The Malayan Union Controversy (1942-48)*, (Singapore, 1991), hereafter Lau, *Malayan Union*, 46.
[37] BDEEP, Malaya, Part 1, TNA, CO 825/35/6, *Constitutional Reconstruction*: Memo by Lord Hailey on the existing CO proposals, 19th April 1943.

embracing all peoples in Malaya could be developed. Any obligation to the spirit of existing protection treaties, which would have to be superseded, could be achieved by allowing the Sultans continued oversight of Islamic law and Malay custom. The powerful impact of these ideas on Gent's thinking can be seen in a revised memo he now wrote on the post-war constitution.[38] Hailey's proposals on British jurisdiction over post war Malaya were incorporated, and the memo specified the clear separation of Singapore from a union of Malay States.

With the future direction in Malaya now determined, CO engagement with the BAM Committee was polite but cautious. A Committee dinner with Stanley, which Maxwell felt had been impactful,[39] and Gent's subsequent discussions with two other Committee members from the business community,[40] did not lead to any changes to Gent's plan. The CO continued to receive submissions from other individuals and organisations that considered themselves equally able to represent Malayan opinion. In India, there was both a Malayan Association and an Overseas Chinese Association, whose memberships comprised European (non-MCS), Malay and Chinese exiles from Malaya.[41] In addition, several individuals were invited by the CO to submit ideas, or provided them unprompted.[42] However, there is no evidence that these other submissions influenced CO thinking. Review minutes written by the Eastern Department team largely focused on what were seen as weaknesses or impracticalities in the submissions.[43] These officials did little other than send polite acknowledgements and appreciations, along with vague undertakings to be in touch if the need arose.[44]

The Contributions of non-captive MCS Officers

There was one final source of advice available to the CO, namely those MCS officers who had been fortuitously absent from Malaya in early 1942. Edward Day, who had been British

[38] Ibid, *Constitutional Reconstruction in the Far East* – revised memo by Gent 18th May 1943.
[39] CUL, Archives of the British Association of Malaysia and Singapore, GBR/0115/RCS/RCMS, hereafter CUL, BAM Archives, file 103/1/1/1, Maxwell Memoir, 27th January 1955, hereafter CUL, BAM Archives, Maxwell, *Memoir*. Maxwell donated his papers to the BAM Archives.
[40] TNA, CO 825/35/14, Gent minute 15th December 1943.
[41] TNA CO/825/42/5 contains these submissions.
[42] TNA CO 825/35 and CO 717/147/17 contain these submission. Two were from ex-MCS retirees Charles Wilson and Alan Baker.
[43] TNA, CO 825/42/5, minute by Bourdillon, 11th July 1945; CO 825/42/7, minute by Bourdillon, 29th July 1944; CO 825/35, minute by Monson, 15th April 1943; ibid, memo by Gent, 16th April 1943.
[44] TNA CO 717/147/17, Gent's minute on ex-MCS Charles Wilsons' submission, 30th December 1942, is an example.

Adviser in the Malay State of Perlis, wrote to the CO from Ceylon, where he was redeployed as Deputy Political Secretary. He argued that the MCS still had a role to play.

> So far as I can discover there are only about 21 - 10% of the MCS - of us outside Malaya…It may be that we comprise the "duds" to be shot eventually 'pour encourager les autres' or at best to be delegated to the discard as soon as the war is over, but it does seem to those of us who are free and who loved Malaya that some use might be made of us and our knowledge of the country. The lack of interest shown in us individually or as the remnants of a service seems to point to the C.O. having no further interest in us or use for us.

Day could not understand why 'the C.O. should scatter the few of us who are available all over the world' especially as the 'civil administration has been maligned and ridiculed and charged with all sorts of shortcoming'.[45] Although Martin sent Day's letter to Gent with the deprecating comment that, 'I used to wonder if he (Day) had not perhaps had a touch of the sun',[46] it was subsequently agreed that 'it might be a good idea, now that the immediate rush has died down, to request senior officials in other posts overseas…to let us know their considered views'.[47]

MCS Class	Total July 1941	Non-interned
Staff	10	1
Class IA	15	1
Class IB	25	2
Class II	41	7
Class III	35	5
Class IV	33	4
Class V	17	2
Cadets	20*	0
Total	**196**	**22**

Table: MCS Officers not interned: by Class (1942)

*Excludes Cadets not yet deployed to Malaya

Day's calculation of non-interned MCS was accurate. Official figures gathered in 1943 on MCS staff are shown in the table above. When those Cadets not yet deployed to Malaya are excluded, there were 22 non-interned MCS from an original 196. Of these, only four were

[45] TNA, CO/825/35/7, letter Day to John Martin (Eastern Department), 16th May 1942. All quotes.
[46] TNA, CO 825/35/7, note Martin to Gent, 10th July 1942.
[47] TNA, CO 825/35/7, minute by W.B.L Monson (Principal, Eastern Department), 27th August 1942.

civilians in the UK. The remainder were indeed spread across the world in administrations in Australia, Ceylon, Fiji, India, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Seychelles, or were in the armed forces.[48]

The CO received the 'considered views' of five non-interned MCS staff. The most senior respondent was Theodore Adams. He was now Chief Commissioner of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, but had been British Resident Selangor until 1936 when his controversial involvement in the Sultan succession dispute in that State had required his redeployment. Adams now warned the CO against any new policy that would 'make us repudiate all our promises to the Malay Rulers.[49] Gent was immediately dismissive, seeing Adams as steeped in the British pre-war, pro-Malay policy and would 'naturally be extremely critical of any tendency to reverse this policy'.[50]

Patrick McKerron submitted a memo jointly with Edward Day, the author of the letter to Martin that had started this process of gathering views. McKerron, like Day, was MCS Class II and had some 20 years' experience. Their memo focused on the immediate practicalities of re-establishing British civil administration, considering it too early to speculate what exact form of government would be suitable for Malaya. A return to the pre-war heterogeneity was, however, 'unthinkable' and some form of peninsula wide federation would be needed.[51] Alexander Newboult, also MCS Class II with 20 years' experience, wrote from Fiji. His starting assumption was that 'the separate sovereignty of the individual rulers will continue to be recognised'. He then advocated a federation of all Malay States, very much modelled on the structure of the inter-war FMS, and considered any discussion on the 'immigrant races…to be premature and out of place...without an indication of the attitude of His Majesty's Government'.[52] The last submission was from the more junior Harold Luckham, MCS Class III, with 12 years' experience, about to be posted to Kenya. In his experience senior MCS officers had been fearful of decision making and prone to procrastination. Past policy development had been slow, and over reliant on a belief in 'common sense,' rather than expert research and review. The principle of seniority as the basis of promotion had resulted in 'many men reaching positions of responsibility, who are not fitted for them or who had lost their earlier

[48] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Establishment List, July 1941, gives numbers in each MCS Class. TNA, WO 32/10182, gives non-Interned (non-POW) numbers, and details of location.
[49] TNA, CO 825/35, Adams memo, 9th June 1943.
[50] Ibid, minute by Gent, 27th June 1943.
[51] TNA, CO 865/14, Memo submitted by McKerron and Day, 8th December 1942. Both were in Colombo.
[52] TNA, CO 825/35, Note from A.T.Newboult, 6th June 1943. Both quotes.

drive and enthusiasm'. Luckham argued that Britain's pre-war pro-Malay policy had created a 'selfish nationalism which demanded a privileged position for Malays'.[53]

Of the five MCS who gave input, Luckham received the warmest acknowledgement. The CO replied expressing its own enthusiasm for a 'closer union' in Malaya, and held out a hope that Luckham would 'not be left in Kenya for the rest of the War'.[54] This contrasted with Gent's dismissal of what, in time, would prove prescient advice from Adams. The senior cadre MCS officers had been cautious in their responses and their ideas had not really progressed beyond the obvious need for some form of federation amongst the Malay States. They seemed pliable, preferring to await British policy decisions. Overall, the CO appeared averse to the opinions of senior MCS officers closely associated with pre-war British policy and enthused by more Junior MCS contributions critical of the past.

Similar CO attitudes appeared to influence the selection of MCS officers to participate in detailed planning for post-war Malaya. Towards the end of 1942, the Cabinet decided that the first step after the reoccupation of Malaya would be the establishment of a military administration under a senior military commander. It was subsequently agreed that the War Office (WO) would undertake all military planning for this administration, whilst the CO would be responsible for conceiving and formulating future colonial policy, especially regarding constitution and citizenship. On 5th July 1943, a Malayan Planning Unit (MPU) for civil administration was established within the WO, attached to its Directorate of Civil Affairs. The head of this unit could have been chosen from available senior MCS officers. As we have seen, such candidates were in short supply, but not totally absent. Perhaps Adams and Jones had disqualified themselves through the circumstances under which they had left Malaya, but three officers who had been British Residents or Advisers in 1941 had avoided internment.[55] The position went, however, to Ralph Hone whose colonial legal career had started in the East African Legal Service in 1923, progressed to Gibraltar in 1933 and then on to Uganda, as Attorney General in 1937. Hone's experience in military administration as Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Middle East Command from 1942 to 1943 was likely seen as good background experience to his appointment as Chief Planner and Head of the MPU. Whilst Hone had some

[53] Ibid, Luckham, letter and attached memo to Martin, 30th June 1942. Both quotes.
[54] Ibid, minute by Monson, 15th April 1943.
[55] TNA, CO 825/35/7, *Disposal of Malayan Officers*: S.T.Williams, British Adviser, Kelantan in 1941, now in Australia; J.M. Barron, Adviser Johore in 1941, recently retired; and M.Rex, British Resident Perak in 1941, also recently retired.

relevant experience, the fact remained that the leader of the team that would now plan Malaya's post-war civil administration had no experience of Malaya, and little of peacetime colonial civil administration outside of legal service. It was presumably the view of the CO that the shortfall of Malayan experience on Hone's part would be compensated by the CO's own Malayan expertise in the Eastern Department and that of the small corps of MCS officers who would join Hone in the MPU. Perhaps the CO was easily reconciled to the WO's preference for Hone, as it would provide a leader with some colonial administrative experience but without the baggage of past MCS experience resistant to the new direction planned for Malaya.[56]

The CO's desire to avoid entrenched attitudes of the past may also explain its decision to pass over most of its most senior available MCS officers in the selection of the officers who would join Hone in the embryonic MPU. The positions went instead to four MCS officers who had joined the MCS in 1920; McKerron, Newboult, Purcell, and Willan. The first three had stayed in Malaya, progressing to MCS Class II by 1941. Willan had moved on to a legal career and had left Malaya in 1934. Later, 5 more MCS officers would join the MPU; Hay, Day, Calder, Moles, and Watherston. Hay was by far the most senior having joined the MCS in 1913, and by 1941 had been Deputy Commissioner of Lands in the FMS, at Class IA. Despite this seniority and experience, he remained responsible only for social services and labour planning in the MPU.[57] Day and Calder had joined the MCS in 1921 and were now at MCS Class II. Moles and Watherston had joined around 1930 and were at MCS Class IV.

Despite being largely middle career officers, it is important to assess what influence these nine MCS officers had over the development of Malaya policy in the MPU from June 1943 to September 1945. One account, given by Hay to historian James Allen, painted the MCS officers as mere functionaries unable to influence the course pre-set by the CO and British Government.

> The drafting (of the Malayan Union Constitution) was done by Willan, who was of course bound by the Minute (of the Cabinet decision on future constitutional structure). We others

[56] TNA, WO 220/562, Major-General H.R.Hone, Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Malaya, *Report of the British Military Administration in Malaya September 1945 to March 1946* (Kuala Lumpur, 1946), hereafter Hone, *Report of the BMA*, para. 4, states 'The Colonial Office felt it was important to select as the heads of the planning units experienced Colonial Service Officers, whilst the War Office desired to secure the services of officers who had some military experience, particularly in regard to Civil Affairs'.
[57] TNA, CO 825/42/27, MPU Civilian Staff List, May 1944.

had occasional conferences on it and made suggestions most of which were brushed aside by the C.O. [58]

Allen acknowledges that Hay's retrospective account had been 'written when the Malayan Union had become a thing of opprobrium, especially among the older generation of the MCS'.[59] He concludes, nonetheless, that it did seem the case that decisions had been made by leading actors in the CO, especially Gent, and not by the MPU.

The official record would not, however, start to be released until five years after Allen's monograph was published. The records now available contain notes and minutes written by Purcell, Willan and Newboult in their MPU roles. These allow a reappraisal of the individual contributions of the three MCS officers who had the most influential roles in the MPU. By way of a caveat, it can be argued that all MCS officers knew that the chain of command demanded they follow the direction of senior WO and CO leaders. All three must have also been conscious of the good fortune that fate had dealt them. They had evaded internment and were now elevated to positions close to the centres of power which would likely lead them to senior positions in the post-war administration. Such rapid progression must have been well beyond what would have been their reasonable career expectations in 1941. Such consideration might have been powerful motivation not to rock the boat and to produce proposals aligned with the direction already decided.

When war broke out in 1939, Victor Purcell was Protector of Chinese in the Malay States of Selangor and Pahang. He was several organisational layers below the Secretary for Chinese Affairs (SCA) who held responsibility for Chinese inhabitants of all the Malay States and the Straits Settlements. Purcell had recently completed a thesis on Chinese Education, which had been accepted by Cambridge University for a PhD. He was seconded in 1940 to the Ministry of Information in Singapore where he was described by his manager as 'a turbulent and adventurous character who was bound to indulge in hazardous exploits'.[60] He rose quickly to become Director-General of Information and Publicity for Malaya. It was whilst he was on a speaking tour of Australia and America in connection with this work that Malaya fell

[58] Allen, *Malayan Union,* statement by M.C.Hay. 14.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Victor Purcell, *The Memoirs of a Malayan Official*, (London, 1965), hereafter Purcell, *Memoirs*. Purcell records this assessment of him made by his supervisor, Robert Scott, Far Eastern Representative of the Ministry of Information in 1940. Purcell chose not to include his period in the MPU in his memoirs.

to the Japanese. He remained in Australia on propaganda work until mid-1943, when he was needed in the MPU as its China Specialist.

By the time Purcell arrived in this new role, the exigencies of war had led Britain to develop a new policy towards China, now an ally in the contest with Japan. The minutes of a meeting between Foreign Office (FO) and CO staff of November 1943 captured the impact of the new China policy on the CO's policy for Malaya.

> The Foreign Office view was that the Chinese Government should be treated as our ally on a basis of full equality with our other allies and would, therefore welcome any steps which could be construed as placing our relations with them on Malayan matters on a new footing…As regards the Kuomintang in particular…from the Foreign Office point of view it would be desirable to treat the party in Malaya on a basis of legality. [61]

For the CO, this 'new-footing' represented a conundrum, as its pre-war policy had banned both Chinese Kuomintang and Communist overseas organisations in Malaya. Chinese immigrants in the Malay States considered themselves citizens of a greater China, reinforced by their being unrecognised as 'subjects' of the Sultans. The overseas branches of China's political parties had, therefore, been seen as a potentially dangerous spearhead to the establishment of a Chinese *imperium in imperio* in Malaya. Nonetheless, a new Malayan Chinese strategy was now needed.

Purcell's arrival as China expert was keenly awaited by Gent.[62] However, the first meeting of a working party on Chinese policy, involving Purcell, Newboult and Day from the MPU, and Paskin and Monson from the CO, had an obfuscatory outcome.

> The only way on which to make progress with this subject would be to consider the general future machinery of Government which we envisaged and from that basis consider the association of each community in turn with that machinery.[63]

Gent acted to clear this logjam, producing the first draft of a Chinese Policy Directive.[64] The Chinese in Malaya would become citizens of the planned MU, provided they met relatively modest domicile qualifications and, as such, would have the same rights and privileges as other 'sections' of citizens. Such Chinese citizens would be free to be members of Chinese

[61] TNA, CO 825/35/13, statement by Arthur Blackburn, Foreign Office, 1st November 1943. The Kuomintang were at that time the governing party of China.
[62] Ibid, minute by Gent 11th September 1943 calling for 'an informal discussion here as soon as Purcell arrives'.
[63] Ibid, minute by Monson, 17th December 1943.
[64] TNA, CO 825/42/9, Gent, *First Draft, Malaya, Long Term Policy Directive on Chinese Policy*, 29th February 1944.

political societies. Purcell appears to have quickly become enthused by Gent's planned direction.

> Mr Gent in my view, puts his finger on the vital point. Once we have given locally domiciled Chinese their proper status, we shall be in a far better position to resist, tooth and nail, any pretensions of the Chinese Government to interfere with them.[65]

Whilst remaining an enthusiastic supporter, Purcell expressed his own thoughts in two lengthy memos. In the first, some comments did not align with Gent's thinking, such as his suggestion the 'Chinese problem' might still be insoluble if the Chinese Government maintained its law that a child's citizenship was determined by its parents' citizenship, and its 'ambitions in the direction of nationalistic imperialism'.[66] Gent was likely wary of this explicit criticism of Britian's new ally, and of the suggestion that his Chinese policy might not work. He wrote to Hone, Purcell's boss at the WO, to ask that the memo not be circulated any further 'in its present form,' as there were several sentences he wished to exclude.[67]

Purcell took the opportunity in his second memo to identify past failings regarding the administration of Chinese affairs within the MCS.

> Before the Japanese invasion less than 15% of the M.C.S. spoke Chinese. This led to the service being largely out of touch and sympathy with the Chinese…From the point of view of opportunity in the M.C.S. it was a disaster to be "selected" as Chinese Cadet…If he passed the first examination after six months he would have to spend a further two years (in China) in one of the most gruelling tasks that the human mind can be called upon to tackle (learning Chinese)…The position of officers of the Chinese Directorate was rather similar to that of the eccentrics who surrender themselves to any esoteric and materially unprofitable study such as Hittite, astrology, or the problem of the lost tribes. Their Malay Cadet colleagues regarded them with the sort of admiration that is usually reserved for a performing seal or a Boneless Wonder…No Chinese Cadet is ever considered suitable for Residency role (a British Resident/Advisor or District Officer) in the Malay States,...for high administrative appointment in another Colony, or is ever selected for attachment to the Colonial Office with the prospect of new avenues of advancement.[68]

In these criticisms, Purcell was laying down his narrative on necessary change in the MCS to accommodate Malaya's Chinese population which he would forcefully articulate until

[65] Ibid, minute by Purcell, 27th January 1944.
[66] Ibid, Purcell memo, *Chinese Affairs in Malaya*, 11th April 1944.
[67] Ibid, Gent letter to Hone, 14th April 1944.
[68] Ibid, Purcell memo, *My Comments on Malaya, Long Term Policy Directive on Chinese Policy*, March 1944.

Malaya's independence. Whilst he had taken no role in creating the main elements of Gent's new Chinese policy, Purcell's arrival as a Chinese expert was impactful, not just for his enthusiastic endorsement of the main planks of the policy, but also for his willingness to express sometimes discomforting ideas. In his subsequent career as academic, historian and political commentator on Malaya he would continue to exhibit this characteristic.

Further evidence of MCS influence is found in the differences of opinion expressed by Willan and Newboult over implementation of the planned Malayan Union constitution. In May 1944 the War Cabinet had provisionally approved the CO's broad recommendation.[69] This proposed that in the interest of efficiency and democratic progress, Malaya would become a unitary state, under British sovereignty exercised through a Governor advised by Legislative and Executive Councils. The CO was tasked with developing a legal framework for a new constitution. Harold Willan was the MPU's Legal expert, tasked with producing a first draft. When completed, in November 1944, it ran to 40 pages. Willan devoted the first 6 pages to a recap of the six occasions between 1919 and 1933 when representatives of the British Government had made authoritative public statements on the enduring sovereignty of each Malay State under the protection treaties. As these statements would doubtless be used as a source of appeal by the Sultans in discussions on the envisaged new constitution, Willan proposed that the change in the British position be justified as a result of the following.

> a) The development of Malaya is due to members of immigrant races and its further development lies largely in their hands.
>
> b) The present day position of China as one of the four great Allied nations.
>
> c) The creation of a Malayan nationalism.
>
> d) The present constitutional set up, with its several units impairs efficiency and is not conducive to the political progress and economic development of the country.

Willan further argued that,

> without British assistance the Sultans would have never attained their present positions…they would have remained local chiefs. The continuance of the British policy of "Malaya for the Malays" is gradually earning for the Malays the jealousy of the other eastern races in Malaya, because members of those other races dislike seeing persons who are their inferiors in intellect and capability continually being favoured at their expense.

[69] BDEEP, Malaya, Part I, CAB 98/4l, CMB (44)3, *Future constitutional policy for British colonial territories in SouthEast Asia*, memorandum by Mr Stanley for War Cabinet Committee on Malaya and Borneo, 14th January 1944.

The remaining part of Willan's memo explained the legal mechanisms by which the Sultans would sign new treaties to cede jurisdiction to the British Crown. Once new treaties were in place, Orders in Council made under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act could then be used to exercise British sovereignty in creating a new constitution. Whilst this broad legal strategy had already been included in the earlier memorandum submitted to the War Cabinet, Willan was filling in the necessary details to turn it into a viable plan. The tenor of his lengthy introduction strongly suggests that he personally supported the strategic direction that the Cabinet had approved, although he added one proviso. As the Sultans would be asked to sign away their sovereign powers, he argued there had to be some place found for them in the constitution as 'the whole success or failure of the negotiations for the execution of these matters hangs on this matter'. He suggested that a Federal Council of Sultans be formed which would discuss matters of Malay religion and custom and any other matter approved by the Governor. It would be advisory and consultative, but not executive.[70]

Newboult voiced caution that Willan's suggested approach was underestimating likely Malay resistance. As a 'Malay' Cadet, Newboult had served as District Officer and in various secretariat roles, before becoming Acting Under Secretary in the FMS when war broke out. He had never been a British Resident or Adviser working next to a Malay Sultan, but he would have experienced enough to anticipate the likely Malay reaction to the constitutional proposals. Newboult submitted his views on the Willan proposals directly to Gent explaining that, to date, he had wished 'not to let my views predominate too much'. He now contended that replacing Sultan with British sovereignty would be retrograde, a move away from, not towards, self-government, and would relegate the Sultans to 'inferior positions', thereby threatening the security of the Malay people. He suggested it could be possible to establish a Union without ceding authority to the British Crown if the Sultans could be persuaded instead to cede their individual sovereignties to a more representative constitution, overseen by a limited collective Sultan sovereignty.[71]

A decisive meeting took place on 8th December 1944 between Gent, his CO team, and Hone, Newboult and Willan from the MPU. Hone seemed to have been partly influenced by Newboult's ideas, expressing his hope that it would 'be possible to give the Sultans a

[70] TNA, CO 825/42/4, H.Willan memo, *Future Constitution for Malay Peninsula*, 15th November 1944. All quotes.
[71] Ibid, notes by Col. Newboult on Col. Willan's memo. 30th November 1944.

sufficiently attractive place in the new constitution to ensure their acceptance of the proposed new treaties'. Perhaps it was possible, Hone surmised, 'for the laws passed by the new Union Legislature to carry some ocular indication that the Sultans had played some part in their enactment'. By this he meant that Sultans would be seen to have the right of assent, but they would delegate that right to the Governor so new laws passed smoothly. The minutes record that Hone's proposal 'did not meet with general acceptance'.[72]

Although Willan produced an update of his draft memorandum on the constitution,[73] it remained the plan for Sultans to cede jurisdiction to the British Crown. Soon afterwards, he departed to India, with Newboult and other members of the MPU, to prepare for the allied invasion of Malaya. The MPU was moving from planning to implementation. Willan's draft memo would continue to be worked on and amended by the CO. Meetings in the Eastern Department agonised over the possible reaction of the Sultans, but no substantive change to policy was made. The CO's finalised memorandum on the future constitution was issued in September 1945, after the Cabinet gave its final endorsement to creating the Malayan Union. The memorandum was still a secret document as its implementation could not proceed until the Sultans had signed new treaties ceding jurisdiction to the British Crown. The plan remained that the Sultans would retain only the modest part in the constitution that Willan had suggested, as an Advisory Council to the Governor, primarily on religious matters.[74]

Like Purcell, Willan seems to have tackled his responsibilities with enthusiasm, with few, if any, signs of duress from the CO. Bill Bryson, the ex-MCS officer who would later lead the initiative to have a history of the MCS written, described Willan as 'the villain of the piece…who showed little regard for the Malay point of view'.[75] However, if there was zealousness in Willan's work, then it could have been the responsibility of other MCS members in the MPU to challenge him. The record shows Newboult, and to a degree Hone, expressing reservations, but not forcibly or with an offer of a simple alternative. In their defence, Hone had no Malaya experience, and both he and Newboult were arguing against the mainstream of CO opinion. McKerron, who as a fellow Malay Cadet might have been expected to add weight to Newboult's ideas, appears silent in the MPU record.

[72] Ibid, *Malay Peninsula, Future Constitution*, revised note of discussion 5th December 1944. All quotes.
[73] TNA, CO 273/675/11, H. Willan, *Future Constitution for the Malay Peninsula*, 8th March 1945.
[74] Ibid, *Memorandum on Future Constitution for Malay Peninsula*, 20th September 1945.
[75] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/2/17, letter from Bryson to Allen 23rd December 1967.

The official record shows Gent considering the views of Willan, Purcell and Newboult, but intervening to suppress views he disliked. In wartime there was no place for skirting around issues and polite posturing. Direct and clear argument, perhaps with some passion, could go a long way to winning an argument. Willan and Purcell had forceful personalities, and the advantage of being aligned with Gent's thinking. Those MCS officers who articulated the Malay perspective were much less impactful. A sense emerges of the new plans for Malaya sweeping all before them. Even Adams, who remained in contact with the CO, now appeared more open minded. He agreed 'wholeheartedly that some radical change in the post-war constitutional position in Malaya was required and that this should probably take the form of the creation of a Malayan Union'.[76] Even so, he counselled a slow approach, first gaining Malay support for the Union, preparing the ground as well as possible. Adams was offering sound advice, but it was not to be followed.

The British return to Malaya

By April 1945, as war in Europe moved to its conclusion, the MPU was in its final stages of preparations for the re-establishment of British civil administration in the footsteps of an Allied invasion of Malaya. The MPU had been through four organisational expansions since its creation in July 1943. It now had 289 staff, split between London and the invasion mustering locations in India. All these staff fell under the WO, their numbers split between officers (162), other ranks (83) and civilians (44).[77] Earlier in the war, there had been debate as to whether to give military commissions to staff who would serve in the Civil Affairs Services branch of the War Office. The debate concerned not only the MPU, but other similar planning organisations assembled in preparation for Allied advances in Europe and Burma. In Burma's case, it had been argued in the WO that it would be better if Civil Affairs Officers were civilians as 'their real usefulness even to the army might be weakened if they had automatically to obey the orders of local military commanders, however much they disagreed with those orders'.[78] Churchill joined in, arguing against 'hordes of sham Major-Generals preening themselves in all directions'.[79] The position changed in 1944 when Civil Affairs

[76] TNA, CO 825/42/8, discussion with Adams, minute by J.J. Paskin (Assistant Secretary, Eastern Department), 28th July 1944.
[77] Hone, *Report of the BMA*, Appendices I to V. All statistics.
[78] F.S.V. Donnison, *British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943-46*, (HMSO, 1956), 47-48.
[79] Ibid, words attributed by Donnison to Churchill, 48-49.

Officers suffered casualties in combat in Burma. Given such clear military involvement, commissioning of those in Civil Affairs was finally confirmed by the WO. Within the MPU, Hone was commissioned as a Brigadier, with Willan, Newboult and Percival becoming Colonels. Consequently, new MPU joiners in 1944 encountered their senior leaders as commissioned officers, and many of these joiners also acquired military rank. Two were Harold Luckham and John Gullick.

Luckham, whose 1942 submission to the CO had been enthusiastically received, had indeed not been 'left in Kenya', and had joined the MPU in London in 1945 after two years with the armed forces in Ceylon. In his memoirs he described the MCS officers he encountered in the MPU. He found Hay not 'entirely in sympathy with the views expressed in the MPU (and) upset because he did not play a significant part in the planning'. Luckham 'did not think that Newboult had outstanding ability' and Willan was 'very determined and could be expected to push his views'.[80] Luckham had met Purcell in Ceylon in late 1944 and found him boastful of what he had achieved in the MPU but wondered if he would have been quite so influential had he not been aligned with the existing direction of Malayan policy. Gullick had been in the colonial service in Africa at war's outbreak and had joined the African Rifles, later transitioning to the British Military Government for the captured Italian Colonies. Here he had worked with Hone, then Chief Legal Adviser. Gullick joined the MPU in London in mid-1944, serving as an instructor at the MPU's Civil Affairs Staff Centre in Wimbledon. The Centre was tasked with giving orientation training to the large number of MPU recruits who would staff technical and professional services divisions in the BMA. Such recruits were being sourced from the armed forces or other occupations, and had no experience of colonial service. Gullick's contact with senior planners in the MPU was limited to two briefings and a similar number of private meetings with Hone. In his memoirs he described the senior MPU leaders he encountered, who were now 'donning uniforms – somewhat uneasily'.

> Hone was an able man but had no experience either of senior administrative posts in the Colonial Service nor of Malaya. As his subsequent record in North Borneo showed, men of strong views and more experience in the posts below him…could influence his judgement too much. Of the men below Hone in the MPU he was not in my opinion well served by Newboult who was ambitious and anxious not to blot his copy book at a critical stage in his path to the

[80] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B16, F1, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers, Luckham, *Correspondence*, letters Luckham to Heussler 10th August 1980, and 15th October 1982. All quotes.

> top. Willan was a former Malayan Civil Service officer who had transferred to the Legal Service and had left Malaya to go to East Africa some years before the war. He had not held senior administrative posts in Malaya but he was a man of strong personality and incisive views. [81]

Both Gullick and Luckham paint less than complimentary portrayals of their MPU leaders, in a manner consistent with the narrative that the MPU was wanting for senior MCS experience and leadership, a factor which contributed to what Gullick termed the 'strategic disaster' that awaited the MU.

On 15th August 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender. Meticulous Allied preparations had been made for two military offensives in Malaya, named ZIPPER and MAILFIST, which would be followed by a rolling implementation of the British Military Administration (BMA) as territory was re-won. Plans now had to be rapidly redrawn. Two days after British troops landed unopposed at Penang on 2nd September, the BMA was proclaimed across all of Malaya. Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander South-East Asia Command, assumed all powers over Malaya. These he then delegated to Lieutenant General Philip Christison, General Officer Commanding British forces in Malaya. Lieutenant General Christison then delegated to (now) Major-General Hone, responsibility for the entire administration of the civil population as Chief Civil Affairs Officer (CCAO). Hone, in turn, then delegated responsibilities for the Malay States, Penang and Malacca to (now) Brigadier H.C. Willan, as Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer (DCCAO), and for Singapore to Brigadier P.A.B. McKerron, also as DCCAO.

Those MCS who had been interned in Civilian and POW camps were being released and repatriated. For a short period, they interacted, often uneasily, with the BMA administrative leaders who were quickly nicknamed 'Banana Colonels'. When the Japanese had introduced a new dollar currency in its occupied territories in South-East Asia in 1942, it was called 'banana money' by local populations. This was derived from the banana leaf motifs on the $10 note, but the term was also meant to convey contempt and derision. It may be the case that the term 'Banana Colonels' also originated in local populations surprised to see familiar MCS faces returning as military officers but, whatever its origin, the term came to capture a broader dismissive attitude towards those MCS officers who had returned to Malaya in uniform in September 1945. Purcell was shocked to find his former colleagues half-

[81] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B13 F4, J.M.Gullick, *My Time in Malaya*, June 1970, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs, Part 1*, 10-11. Underlining in the original.

naked and starved but did not record if they were equally shocked to see him in his Colonel's uniform.[82] Repatriation of all internees was ordered on medical advice. This might also have been the desire of most but some were prepared to return immediately to work. Interned MCS officer Mubin Sheppard recalled that after internees had registered at a repatriation centre in Singapore, and awaited a berth home, 'offers by a number of MCS and technical officers to serve temporarily in any capacity in the British Military Administration were rejected'.[83] Sjovald Cunyngham-Brown returned to Singapore from POW camp in Sumatra and was also ready to help. He met McKerron, who ' turned his face away as though he had smelt something disagreeable' and told him to go home and recuperate as he was not needed.[84]

With the BMA now established across Malaya, focus turned to dialogue with the Sultans on new treaties. Willan visited all the Sultans between 8th and 28th September, preparing the ground. He took a firm line, informing the Sultans that they held no authority whilst the Malay States were under military administration. He advised the Sultans of Johore, Selangor, Perak, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang that they would continue to be recognised by the British Crown, as they were the same incumbent rulers as before the Japanese invasion. The Sultans of Kedah, Trengganu, Kelantan, and Perlis had all died during the Japanese occupation. Their successors were told they were not recognised by the Crown, as such would depend on future discussions on new treaties. Sir Harold MacMichael was appointed by the Attlee cabinet as the 'Special Representative of His Majesty's Government' to lead the discussions with the Sultans on the new treaties required to cede jurisdiction to the British Crown. Publicity on the new MU policy and MacMichael's mission was phased, with the first public mention of the new policy being a brief statement by Secretary of State, Hall, on the 10th October in response to a question in the House of Commons.[85] The day after this announcement, MacMichael landed in Malaya. Accompanied by Newboult, his 'mission' would last from 11th October 1945 to 1st January 1946. The Sultan of Johore would be the first to sign a new treaty, ceding full power and jurisdiction within his State to the British Crown. The Sultan of Trengganu was the last, on the 21st December.

[82] Purcell, *Memoirs*, 346.
[83] Mubin Sheppard, *Taman Budiman, Memoirs of an Unorthodox Civil Servant*, (Kuala Lumpur 1979), hereafter Sheppard, *Memoirs*, 131.
[84] Sjovald Cunyngham-Brown, *Crowded Hour*, (London, 1975), 149-150.
[85] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 414, 255-256.

Each Malay State had a Senior Civil Affairs Officer (SCAO, Colonels or Lieut. Colonels) reporting to Willan. As the officer responsible for daily contact between each Sultan and the BMA, SCAOs were involved to varying degrees in the MacMichael discussions. Five of the SCAOs were MCS officers who had avoided internment; Calder, Day, Harvey, Headly, and Somerville. Somerville, SCAO in Kelantan state, was dismayed by his experience.

> (The Sultan's) brother had succeeded. To my considerable embarrassment I was ordered not to recognise the change, although he had been recognised as heir long before the war and there was no suggestion of improper behaviour or collaboration…It became evident that recognition of succession in states where rulers had died during the war was to be used as bait to gain acquiescence in the British Government's new constitutional plan for Malaya. To most members of the MCS this sort of chicanery was considered to be entirely dishonourable.[86]

Harvey, SCAO in Pahang state, was similarly appalled.

> Any experienced administrator in the M.C.S. would have foreseen that the new constitution would be unacceptable, but none were consulted and the veil of secrecy was most damaging…Almost 80 years of good will was lost overnight.[87]

Whatever the reservations held amongst individual SCAOs, the BMA had to focus on restoring British governance. Monthly BMA reports were written by Hone, Willan and McKerran. The one for November 1945 was pleased to report an overall picture of 'sustained progress', with some anxiety over food supply given the dependence of political stability on continued food security.[88] The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army[89] was demobilising, and the priority was to find jobs for its ex-soldiers. The December BMA report advised that MacMichael had 'successfully concluded' his mission with 'no very noticeable reaction to his activities'.[90]

Colonel Purcell had been appointed Chinese Adviser to Hone. He started issuing his own confidential monthly reports on 'Malaya's Political Climate', writing more openly than the staid phrasing of the monthly BMA reports. In his first report, he acknowledged that inter-communal clashes were occurring, identifying the Malays as the aggressors. Complete freedom of speech was now permitted and Chinese people were demanding employment

[86] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B17, F3, D.A.Somerville, *History of the M.C.S.*, 21st March 1970.
[87] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Harvey, *Memoirs,* 26-27.
[88] TNA, CO 537/1572, *BMA Monthly Report No 3*, November 1945.
[89] The communist guerrilla army that had resisted the Japanese, with British material support.
[90] TNA, CO 537/1572, *BMA Monthly Report No. 4*, December 1945.

and a say in how they were governed. Although the Chinese Communist Party had published a manifesto of 'eight points', Purcell advised that there was 'nothing in these points to which we can take exception (and) at the moment the slogan is co-operation with the BMA'.[91] By November, Purcell's reports were becoming more alarmist, as interracial clashes and disturbances continued. He was now concerned at the unexpected consequences of free association and free speech, voicing his concerns publicly in a broadcast on Radio Singapore in November.

> Liberty does not mean unbridled licence, it does not mean the right to incite to violence, to raise up hatred or contempt, to commit criminal libel with impunity. When I see the way the new found liberty is so often abused I confess that I am discouraged – but I am not defeated.

Purcell placed his hope in the planned MU which would address the genuine aspirations of Chinese for a representative system in which 'the voice of all peoples must be heard, and heard in proportion to their numbers'.[92]

Growing Protest against British Constitutional Intentions

Purcell's concerns aside, the BMA reports, and the completion of MacMichael's mission, must have fuelled a cautious optimism in the CO in London that its plans were coming to fruition. The strategy of phased publicity of the new policy for Malaya seemed to have produced the hoped-for muted reaction. The basic elements announced on 10th October had been a constitutional Union of Malaya and the institution of a Malayan Citizenship with equal citizenship rights to all those who could claim Malaya as their home. The CO subsequently announced that there would need to be new treaties with the Sultans, so as the Crown could possess and exercise full jurisdiction.

The Times described the announcement as 'a far reaching and courageous decision…the peoples of Malaya can be encouraged to develop the sense of unity upon which the future of them all so largely depends'.[93] The *Straits Times* published an article by Maxwell in which he declared the MU as 'full of promise and hope for all communities'.[94] Even the BAM seemed to have little to say, other than the views of the people of the country must now

[91] TNA, WO 203/5660, V. Purcell, *Report on Malaya's Political Climate*, October 1945.
[92] Ibid, V. Purcell, *Malaya in Crisis' text of broadcast on Radio Singapore,* 14th November 1945. Both quotes.
[93] *The Times*, leading article, 12th October 1945.
[94] *Straits Times*, 14th November 1945, *The Malayan Union.*

be consulted.[95] Swettenham was not convinced. Writing to *The Times,* he reminded readers that the status of the Sultans had been guaranteed by treaty. If they were now going to pass jurisdiction to the Crown, was this not annexation, and who had asked for it? Certainly not the Malays in his view.[96] It seemed, however, that few were listening to Swettenham. His contention on the binding nature of existing treaties was challenged by Charles Vlieland, himself an ex-MCS officer.[97] Swettenham had, however, identified the weak point in the British position. It would be morally difficult to defend enforcement of new treaties if the Sultans refused to co-operate. The same argument was also put in the Lords by Viscount Marchwood (of Penang and of Marchwood), the recently ennobled businessman and Conservative politician Frederick Penny. The Labour Government, however, seemed unconcerned by the debate. Viscount Addison, Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, thanked Marchwood for his 'entirely sympathetic and knowledgeable contribution' and assured him that the positive progress of MacMichael's mission was evidence that 'nothing could be more conciliatory than the steps that we have been taking…with conspicuous success and amity all round'.[98] As a mark of their own success, Newboult and Willan were made Companions of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael (C.M.G.), the badge of distinction for senior Colonial Servants. Willan was now back in the UK, having returned for briefing for the Chief Justice role that he would assume when the MU was established. Newboult was promoted to fill Willan's role as DCCAO Malaya. With all the new treaties signed, the Government published its full proposals for the MU which, after debate in Parliament, could be passed by Order in Council.

The first 3 months of 1946 were, however, marked by increased public discontent in Malaya, amongst both Chinese and Malays. The BMA had been instructed to avoid political debate[99] and so now pressed in its monthly reports for civil government to be restored as soon as practical to enable effective political dialogue. However, others urged that more time be given to dialogue on developing the new constitution and citizenship laws. Newboult stressed that the Sultans were still generally trusting of the British Government but held

[95] *British Malaya*, November 1945.
[96] *The Times*, letter from Swettenham, 26th October 1945.
[97] *The Times*, letter from C.A.Vlieland, 29th October 1945. Vlieland had been in the MCS from 1914 to 1939, rising to be Secretary of Defence.
[98] Hansard, Fifth Series, Vol. 138, Lords Sitting, 19th December 1945, 936-937. Both quotes.
[99] Hone, *Report of the BMA*, Appendix VIII, Directive on Civil Affairs for Malaya, para. 7.

misgivings regarding the MU. He was particularly concerned that the notions of union and common citizenship had not yet been properly understood by most Malays. He saw the citizenship proposals as particularly risky and suggested amendment to restrict the range of those initially covered.[100] A letter from Admiral Mountbatten, penned after a visit to Singapore, gave the CO more direct advice.

> I am satisfied that unless the detailed organisation of the new constitution is presented as a purely temporary expedient, it will be considered to be a constitution autocratically imposed from London without prior consultation with local opinion out here; and as such will be stigmatised as a return to the old type of Colonial government and a denial of democratic principles.[101]

Hone wrote privately to the CO worried that further consultation would delay the return of civil government 'with unfortunate results'. However, he continued, 'it is important that the detailed constitution should not appear to be merely evolved in the Colonial Office and imposed upon the people willy-nilly', aligning himself with Mountbatten's idea of a temporary implementation without 'implication of finality'.[102]

The CO pressed on with the policy already approved by Cabinet, publishing the necessary White Paper.[103] The full plan was now in the public domain. Singapore would be constitutionally separated from the rest of Malaya which would become a Malayan Union of nine Malay States and the Settlements of Penang, and Malacca. The new MU legislative structures, in which the Sultans would take no part, were explained. The idea that the Sultans would form an Advisory Council to the Governor of Malaya had been dropped. There would only be a Malay Advisory Council in each State, presided over by the Sultan and concerned mainly with matters of religion. Any broader agenda in these Advisory Councils would require the Governor's consent. On citizenship, people who were born in Malaya, or had been resident for 10 of the previous 15 years, would automatically acquire MU Citizenship. Singapore and Malaya would each have a Governor reporting, along with the Governors of a number of other British Territories, to a new Governor General for South-East Asia. Gent was designated as the future Governor of the MU. Initial press reaction in the UK was neutral,

[100] BDEEP, *Malaya*, Part I, CO/273/675/18, memo from Newboult, 31st December 1945.
[101] BDEEP, *Malaya*, Part I, CO 537/1528, letter from Mountbatten to Hall, 4th January 1946.
[102] Ibid, letter from Hone to Gater, (Permanent Undersecretary CO), 7th January 1946. All quotes.
[103] White Paper*, Malayan Union and Singapore, Statement of Policy and Future Constitution*, (HMSO, 22nd January 1946).

even positive, seeing Union as a 'necessary' part of a move towards self-government,[104] a welcome reorganisation of an archaic system of administration that had 'helped the Japanese drive down the Peninsula',[105] and a structure in which the Sultans 'will scarcely feel that their power has been seriously undermined'.[106]

In Malaya, the reaction was negative. In their February BMA monthly report, Hone and Newboult explained that Malay opinion was 'generally vociferous' and was inclined to blame the Sultans 'for having sold their birthright' without any consultation with the Malay people. Faced with such criticism, some Sultans were now alleging they had been given no option by the British but to sign the new treaties. The monthly report identified the biggest weakness in the British position as the failure to bind the Sultans to the new constitutional proposals. MacMichael had shown the Sultans a memorandum on the constitutional proposals, but the Sultans had signed only brief treaties passing jurisdiction to the British Crown. They had not signed their consent to the constitutional proposals. Hone and Newboult contended in their Monthly Report that 'most of the Sultans genuinely believed that there would be an opportunity for further discussions on the details of the proposals'. The BMA felt powerless to work out a solution as it had been instructed to avoid political discussion, thus deciding to 'limit itself with the issue of the text of the White Paper'. In a still hopeful conclusion, its Report contended that 'if time is afforded for local discussion' nothing had yet emerged that would 'prevent agreement'. [107]

A few months later, when Hone was writing his Full Report on the BMA period, he gave a gloomier assessment of the latter BMA period. He described how the 'White Paper, and particularly the paragraphs relating to common citizenship, had aroused feelings of profound misgiving' and had resulted in immediate protests from several Sultans and Malay Associations. On 1st March a newly formed Pan-Malayan Congress had assembled in Kuala Lumpur and passed a resolution that the new treaties had not been executed appropriately and were therefore non-binding.[108] At the time, Hone had written privately to the CO distancing himself from the unfolding debacle.

[104] *Daily Telegraph,* 23rd January 1946.
[105] *News Chronicle*, 23rd January 1946.
[106] *The Economist*, 2nd February 1946.
[107] TNA, CO 537/1572, *BMA Monthly Report No.6*, February 1946. All quotes.
[108] Hone, *Report of the BMA,* paras. 321, 322, and 328.

> I have given this constitutional problem very great thought. In London at various stages I put forward proposals which were not acceptable to Gent or to Willan. I was very much handicapped in not having been in the country before, but since I have been here I have felt that I ought to have argued the points I had in mind more strenuously than I did. At the time, however, I realised my lack of personal knowledge and bowed to the views of others. [109]

This private sentiment did not, however, appear in Hone's formal Report of the BMA period. This claimed that there had been adequate time for 'detailed and careful planning' and, whilst he 'had no previous experience of Malaya…arrangements were made to supply him with staff officers who were formerly serving in the Colonial Civil Service of the country'.[110]

Newboult was now Chief Secretary designate to the Malayan Union and was preparing to take over the leadership of the Civil Service on 1st April. He also wrote privately to the CO.

> The sooner Civil Government starts tackling this political problem the better, because at the moment we are losing ground…I shall be very grateful when some of our old M.C.S. officers return as a tremendous strain is put on me in having no one with who I can consult and discuss all these problems.[111]

One person becoming more a hindrance than help to Newboult was Purcell. Chinese issues had dominated the first three months of the BMA and had continued in the new year. The Communist Party called a general strike at the end of January. On the fourth anniversary of the fall of Malaya, in February, the communists pointedly attempted to organise a day of national commemoration to remind the nation of the British failure to defend Malaya. Whilst such actions created difficulties, of more significant concern was the lack of interest shown by Chinese communists and youth movements in the new constitutional proposals, especially those relating to Malayan citizenship. Indian communities were also largely indifferent to the opportunity of Malayan citizenship. Nehru had toured Malaya indicating that an independent India would still recognise Indians overseas as citizens of India, if they so wished.[112] Despite the now equal dominance of Malay issues on the political agenda, Purcell continued to focus on Chinese issues in his monthly reports. Newboult intervened, arguing that an analysis of Malayan politics 'cannot possibly ignore the feelings of the Malay race'. He cautioned that not enough attention was being given to the hardening of opinion amongst Malays after the

[109] TNA, CO 537/1548, letter from Hone to Gater, 31st March 1946.
[110] Hone, *Report of the BMA,* paras. 1 and 6.
[111] TNA, CO 537/1548, letter Newboult to Assistant Undersecretary of State, Thomas Lloyd, 7th February 1946.
[112] Hone, *Report of the BMA,* paras. 333 and 334 give detail on both the Chinese and Indian reaction to the constitutional and citizenship proposals.

publication of the White Paper.[113] Purcell did not change tack, continuing to devote his reports largely to Chinese Affairs. In his last report he regretted that the 'gesture of generosity' that had been handed to the Chinese in the citizenship proposals was being accepted without thanks or any increased obligation to Malaya.[114] At the creation of the MU on 1st April, he was appointed Secretary of Chinese Affairs. In his memoirs he recounted that he was not looking forward to the 'melancholy duty full of dangers and difficulties, presiding over the liquidation of bits of the British Empire'. Purcell resigned, leaving Malaya, and colonial service, on 25th April.[115]

Whilst officials in Malaya were expressing their frustrations, retired members of the MCS in Britain were being spurred into action. For Maxwell, the January White Paper was a 'cold blooded atrocity, in violation of all the treaties which respected the independence of the Malay States…perhaps without parallel in the history of the Colonial Office'.[116] He wrote to the *Straits Times* withdrawing the support he had earlier given to the MU proposals, as he now realised the constitutional changes were to be affected 'by orders in council, in which the Rulers will not be consulted'.[117] In a letter to *The Telegraph* he recommended that any aggrieved Sultan go to the UK Supreme Court to gain 'a Declaratory Order that his treaty is invalid by reason of duress'.[118] He penned an article, 'The Foreign Jurisdiction Act in Malaya', and sent it to the Foreign Office, with copies to the CO and to the *Sunday Times.* It warned that some nations might view British actions in Malaya as territorial aggrandisement and raise protests within the Security Council of the United Nations.[119] Not resting, Maxwell prepared two further articles titled 'Malayan Union, Amalgamation or Federation' and 'Malayan Union Citizenship', sending these to Gammans for review. Gammans replied enthusiastically, believing there would now be 'a formidable case put by the opposition when the Bill comes before the House'.[120]

Maxwell was now gathering a small group of like-minded ex-MCS officers. In addition to Gammans, this included Richard Winstead who had served in the MCS between 1902 to

[113] TNA, WO 203/5660, Newboult Memo, 22nd January 1946.
[114] Ibid, Purcell, *Report No. VIII,* 5th February to March 4th.
[115] Purcell, *Memoirs*, 359.
[116] CUL, BAM Archives, Maxwell, *Memoir*.
[117] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/1/1/6, Maxwell letter to *Straits Times,* 9th February.
[118] Ibid, Maxwell letter to the *Daily Telegraph,* 28th February 1946.
[119] Ibid, 1/1/3, letter Maxwell to FCO & CO, 7th February 1946.
[120] Ibid, 1/1/6 letter Gammans to Maxwell, 9th February 1946.

1935. In retirement he had taken positions at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and at the Royal Asiatic Society, publishing histories of Malaya[121] and studies of the Malay language. In an article in the *Straits Times*, Winstedt had already condemned the MU policy as meaning 'the extinction of the Malay in political life'.[122] He and Maxwell had disagreed in the past[123] but were now united in opposition to the MU. Maxwell's ex-MCS group began private discussions with some of the Sultans and their advisers. Maxwell corresponded with officials on the Sultan of Johore's staff whilst the Sultan was in London, meeting with Herbert Welham, the Sultan's Private Secretary.[124] In his correspondence, Gammans referred to cables received from Sultans and promised to 'do my best for all my old friends'.[125] An idea that all the Sultans come to the UK to appeal directly to the King was being progressed by Winstedt through their representatives in the UK.[126] One organisation, however, that did not appear involved in Maxwell's efforts was the BAM. None of his articles were published in *British Malaya* in the first three months of 1946. The journal restricted itself to an explanation of the Government's White Paper and parliamentary debate, suggesting that there were views in the BAM broadly supportive of the proposed new constitution.

Whilst the CO appeared to ignore criticism, it was persuaded to listen to an appeal by Lord Marchwood. A CO minute in February recorded that the 'Secretary of State has agreed to accede to the suggestions made in the House of Lords that he should see various distinguished ex-Malayans and discuss various matters arising out of the policy set in the White Paper'.[127] This meeting took place on 26th February, attended by Maxwell, Swettenham, Winstedt, and Gammans, along with ex-Governor Cecil Clementi, and rubber businessman Egmont Hake, ex-President of the BAM. The CO was represented by Under Secretary of State, Arthur Creech Jones, Eastern Undersecretary, Thomas Lloyd, and John Paskin from the Eastern Department. Whilst Creech Jones would become Secretary of State later in the year, the attendees must have been disappointed that Secretary of State Hall did not attend due to illness. The CO had prepared briefs for Creech Jones on each attendee. By

[121] Richard Winstedt, *Britain and Malaya* (London, 1944) was the most recent publication at this time.
[122] *Straits Times*, 15th November 1945, *The Malayan Union*.
[123] *British Malaya*, March 1943, Winstedt describes Maxwell's earlier article, *The Mixed Communities of Malaya*, as a 'tendentious paper'.
[124] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/1/1/5, Maxwell note, 23rd February 1946.
[125] Ismail, *Sultan*, 42, letter Gammans to Wan Ibrahim bin Wan Soloh, 26th February 1946.
[126] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/1/1/4, letter Winstedt to Maxwell, undated.
[127] TNA, CO 273/676/4, minute by Paskin, 15th February 1946. Marchwood had made this proposal in the Lords debate on 19th December, (Hansard, Fifth Series, Vol. 138, 932-933).

far the longest, at over three pages, was on Maxwell. It anticipated that he would argue for Sultan jurisdiction to be restored and for each state to voluntarily join a federation. The brief stated this was not a solution 'as it merely touches the surface of the problem…the Rulers, though federated, would remain independent Monarchs and there would be no more likelihood that they would accept Chinese and Indians as their subjects than in the past'. Creech Jones was briefed that Winstedt was considered 'entirely unconstructive' with no alternative to propose other than a return to the previous system. Swettenham was likewise seen to 'harp back to the past', failing to appreciate the necessity for change.[128] There is no evidence that the CO expected the meeting to change its policy, as it appeared to merely wish to show that it had acknowledged the suggestion from Marchwood to listen to expert opinion. No official minutes were taken and there was no CO follow up. Maxwell took his own minutes which he submitted subsequently. They indicate that each participant had their own ideas, Clementi and Swettenham submitting their own statements. Gammans spoke only briefly. The CO had listened to the criticisms and solutions presented without entering into discussion.[129]

The Government issued a new White Paper on 4th March.[130] Whilst it incorporated some minor concessions on religious and citizenship issues, it did little to quell parliamentary opposition. In the subsequent Commons debate, Gammans read out protest letters from five Sultans. Shadow Secretary of State, Stanley, urged that only a minimum of measures be passed to set up the Union, to allow time for further local consultations. In reply, Creech Jones, still deputising for the Secretary of State, conceded that the citizenship proposals would not be included, pending local consultation. This was enough to satisfy the opposition, and the Bill passed without a division.[131] Mountbatten's proclamation terminating the BMA was read at 11am on 1st April 1946 in Kuala Lumpur. Gent was then sworn in (by Chief Justice Willan) as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Malayan Union.[132] In his first telegram as Governor to his Secretary of State, he included the embarrassing news that the Sultans, although in Kuala Lumpur, had resolved not to attend his investiture.

[128] Ibid, CO confidential briefing notes on Maxwell, Winstedt, and Swettenham.
[129] Ibid, Maxwell, *Notes of A Discussion 26th February 1946*, 6th March 1946.
[130] *Malayan Union and Singapore: Summary of Proposed Constitutional Arrangements*, (HMSO, March 1946).
[131] Lau, *Malayan Union,* 143-144.
[132] Hone, *Report of the BMA*, para. 859.

Summary

Two narratives about war-time events developed within the MCS to defend the Service's honour. The first narrative told of the injustice that had been served on the MCS through accusations of civil administrative failure during the defence of Malaya. This narrative sought to define the fall of Malaya solely as a military failure. The second narrative sought to absolve the MCS from accountability for what was perceived as the deeply flawed constitutional idea of the MU. Accountability, this narrative maintained, lay with the CO which had been remiss in its failure to listen to, or even seek, available MCS experience in formulating post-war plans for Malaya. Nonetheless, whilst the large majority of MCS officers were interned, and unable to influence British constitutional planning, a small number of non-interned MCS officers were recruited into the MPU. Some of these were enthusiastic supporters of the MU concept. Others were concerned but did not strongly or effectively voice their reservations. Wartime contributions from the ex-MCS were also largely ignored by the CO. These ex-officers missed early opportunities to be more co-ordinated and impactful, and only formed an organised opposition as the MU was being implemented. The next chapter explores the Malayan Union period, and the opportunities and challenges it provided for re-establishing MCS and ex-MCS influence.

2. A Wearying Union

This chapter spans the short period of the Malayan Union (MU), from April 1946 to January 1948. In the UK, the CO was confronted by an attack on its moral integrity by an ex-MCS campaign accusing it of betraying existing treaties by abandoning the British guarantee of Sultan sovereignty. Previously interned MCS officers returning to Malaya after recuperation were still weakened by their ordeal. They were further wearied by significant challenges in restoring effective administration, as Malay opposition to the MU escalated.

Organised Opposition to the Malayan Union.

The MU was two weeks old when the ex-MCS struck against British policy in Malaya. Expressing 'profound concern', 17 signatories added their names to a letter to *The Times* on 16th April 1946, lamenting the 'summary method' used to persuade the Malay Rulers to sign over their sovereignty to the British Crown. Although the notable signatories were three former Governors/High Commissioners, (Swettenham, Guillemard, and Clementi), 13 were ex-MCS, and 15 were members of the BAM.[1] Their letter conjectured that the Sultans and people of Malaya would be favourable to a federation of sovereign states, instead of British annexation, and urged the government to consider such to 'restore confidence in British good faith'.[2] Maxwell and Winstedt appeared to have been at the heart of the letter writing operation,[3] with Maxwell's papers revealing a regular correspondence with Swettenham, and some with Clementi around this time.[4] Working with Swettenham and Clementi was not easy. Swettenham, 96, was profoundly deaf whilst the younger Clementi, 70, was blinded by diabetes. Swettenham would die within two months of the letter's publication, Clementi within a year. The one High Commissioner surviving in relatively good health, albeit still recovering from internment, was Shenton Thomas. He would play no part in the letter, however, as he supported the government's MU policy.[5]

[1] *British Malaya*, July 1938, Membership List.
[2] *The Times*, 16th April 1946. The letter became known as the 'proconsular letter', (Anthony Stockwell, *Malayan Union*, 61).
[3] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/1/1/6, letter Maxwell to Winstedt, 19th April 1946.
[4] Ibid, files 103/1/1/4, 5 and 6.
[5] UOBL, Papers of Sir Cecil Clementi, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.352, Box 43, letter from Shenton Thomas to Clementi, March 6th 1946.

The CO responded the next day. It maintained that the 'correspondents' were simply out of touch, unable 'to admit the need for new policies, or realise the immense changes that have taken place in Malaya'.[6] In a subsequent newspaper interview, Creech Jones maintained the Sultans had agreed new treaties as they 'realised the old order was inadequate'. Pointing an accusatory finger, he maintained the British Government was attentive to views being expressed in Malaya but not if 'they have been worked up by influences from this country'.[7] Gent picked up Creech Jones' baton the next day. Whilst acknowledging that there were differences over the MU, he maintained 'we should not naturally be guided…by ideas and prejudices of those ex-Malayan personalities in England who have left the country for good and have no responsibilities to bear here'.[8] With these robust ripostes, the ex-MCS/BAM initiative began to lose steam. However astute their observations and criticisms, the age and infirmity of the leading signatories made it easy for them to be portrayed as Colonel Blimps, wedded to Malay royalty and out of touch with forward looking post-war colonial policy. The initiative was hampered by a complex strategy of establishing legal argument to abrogate the new Treaties in the UK Courts. Legal preparation depended on co-ordination amongst several UK firms of solicitors and barristers representing individual Sultans, leaving Maxwell increasingly frustrated.[9]

The decisive factor that changed British policy was Malay opinion. The Sultans were often portrayed as the leaders of this opinion, but Ariffin Omar argues to the contrary. 'For a growing number of Malays, the Sultanates were no longer the central point of the Malay world view'.[10] Malays were disillusioned with their Sultans for consenting to the MacMichael Treaties. Race (*Bangsar)* was becoming the focus of Malay identity and 'the rulers were now subordinated to the interests of *kebangsaan Melayu*'[11] (a communal solidarity based on Malayism). The rise in influence of Dato Onn Jaffar reflected this new Malay identity. Onn was the son of a former Chief Minister of Johore and had initially worked in the Johore Civil Service. In the 1920s, as a journalist and writer, he had been involved in early Malay nationalism leading to his expulsion and exile in Singapore. After the Japanese defeat, he had

[6] *The Times*, 17th April 1946, letter from Noel Sabine (Public Relations Officer).
[7] *The Observer*, 28th April 1946. At this stage Creech-Jones was still Undersecretary of State.
[8] *The Straits Times*, 29th April 1946.
[9] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/1/1/4, letter Maxwell to R.R.J Turner (Solicitor), 29th April 1946.
[10] Ariffin, *Bangsa Melayu*, 65.
[11] Ibid.

returned to the mainland and convened the meeting of the Pan-Malayan Congress which rejected the MU in March 1946. He was subsequently instrumental in founding a political movement, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), becoming its first president in May 1946. UMNO was not monolithic but an amalgamation of State associations facing a common threat. Its leaders, members of the Malay ruling elite, were not seeking independence at this stage but a renewed British 'protection' of the *bangsar Melayu* (Malay people). For Omar, the formation of UMNO, and its backing by the Malay people, was the deciding factor in the effective articulation of Malay opinion, not loyalty to the Sultans. The return of Malay Sovereignty might be an important objective, but was only one of several aims including restricting citizenship for non-Malays and gaining majority representation for Malays on Legislative Councils. Simon Smith explains how both Sultans and UMNO would now vie to claim representation of Malay interest, creating 'dispute and ill feeling'. Nonetheless, in the bigger movement towards independence, both Malay groups 'came to recognise that their mutual interests would be best served by reaching an accommodation with one another'.[12]

From Gent's briefings, the CO noted that Malay opposition was growing for reasons additional to the noise generated by the ex-MCS in the UK.

> During the past few weeks, the attitude of the Malay Sultans and of leading Malays, as represented by Dato Onn's organisation, has steadily hardened….The Sultans are now more than ever united in an attitude of polite but categorical non-co-operation…These developments cannot be entirely regarded as due to the influence of prominent ex-Malayans.[13]

The CO were, consequently, considering minor concessions to the Sultans, but nothing prepared them for Gent's telegram of 4th May warning that 'Malay opposition [not only from the Sultans but generally] must be satisfied if we are to avoid very serious likelihood of organised and widespread non-co-operation'. Proposals for a federation of the Malay States had been submitted by the Sultans, which Gent urged be 'sympathetically received by His Majesty's Government (as) essential and progressive advantages of Union can be equally obtained by Federal System'. He maintained that such advice was 'almost universal here',

[12] Simon C. Smith, *British Relations with the Malay Rulers from Decentralisation to Malayan Independence*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1995), 167. Both quotes.
[13] TNA, CO 537/1528, minute by Bourdillon, 25th April 1946.

suggesting that MCS leaders such as Newboult, now Chief Secretary of the MU, were openly supporting a federal alternative.[14]

Secretary of State, Hall, remained unconvinced. It would have been a humiliating prospect for him to return to Parliament to overturn the constitutional position for Malaya that he had so recently championed. His preference was to await the arrival in the region of Malcolm MacDonald, as Governor-General of British Territories in South-East Asia, and of a two-man parliamentary mission which he had recently appointed.

Gammans and the Parliamentary Mission

One of the MPs on Hall's mission was Gammans, the other was Labour MP David Rees-Williams. They had been tasked to assess if British annexation of Sarawak was in line with the wishes of the Sarawakian people. Although not part of Hall's original plan, Gammans saw the opportunity to also visit Malaya. One historian of the Sarawak mission concludes that 'by the time he reached Kuching (in early May) his official mission was already of secondary interest'.[15]

Maxwell, however, did not believe that Gammans was up to the task. Writing to Swettenham he appeared exasperated.

> The latest amazing development in the whole business is that Gammans is soon going out to Sarawak and Malaya on some kind of a mission under Government auspices. This comes from Gammans himself and I really do not know what to think about it.[16]

Maxwell and Gammans disagreed over education policy, with the latter advocating the abolition of separate schools for different racial communities in order to forge a Malayan identity, based on tuition in Malay and English only. Maxwell wrote to the CO to warn them that Gammans had already written to one Sultan with this idea, (enclosing a copy of Gammans' letter), and warning that Gammans would use his forthcoming visit to further promulgate ideas contrary to what Maxwell understood to be the CO's existing 'mother tongue' education policy.[17]

[14] Ibid, telegram Gent to Hall, 4th May 1946. All quotes. The 'progressive advantages' were a strong centralised government and a form of limited citizenship for long term Chinese and Indian residents.
[15] Robert Reece, *The Name of Brooke*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1993), 212.
[16] CUL, BAM Archives, 1/1/4, letter Maxwell to Swettenham, 13th March 1946.
[17] TNA, CO 537/1578, letter Maxwell to Undersecretary of State, 15th March 1946.

Muriel Gammans wrote in her diary that Maxwell had done an 'unpardonable thing' by sharing her husband's letter with the CO, and had made things even worse by inferring that,

> 'of course Gammans was only a junior (MCS) officer and only held unimportant posts and knows little about the subject!!' What infernal cheek! He still thinks he's Chief Secretary in Carcosa I suppose! Anyway Len sent him a good snorter back and told him he was now an M.P. and perfectly free to do whatever he pleased without dictation from him.[18]

This dispute exposes insecurities on both sides. The initiative was slipping away from Maxwell and this would continue as legal action in the UK to abrogate the Treaties stalled, and a visit by the Sultans became less likely. For Gammans, there was frustration at his status amongst his ex-MCS colleagues. He had not been a signatory to the proconsular letter which, given his status as an MP, and his leading opposition role in the Commons to the Government's Malaya policy, seems an omission. Perhaps he was not being deemed 'senior' enough in MCS terms to be included amongst the other illustrious signatories. One of the ex-MCS who did recognise Gammans' strengths was Swettenham who wrote to Maxwell saying,

> in the Malaya debate in the House he made a very good and comprehensive speech and my view is that he frightened the Government who determined he must be got out of the way. So they send him to Sarawak and possibly promised that they will make him the Governor of Sarawak and British North Borneo when they have annexed those places.[19]

In his conjecture on career plans for Gammans, Swettenham was likely wide of the mark.[20] The remarks do, however, suggest that he, and possibly others, were now realising the influence Gammans could have.

Gammans and Rees-Williams reached Singapore on 19th May after the completion of their Sarawak mission, their arrival coinciding with that of MacDonald. Both remained in Singapore for MacDonald's installation as Governor-General on the 22nd which, like Gent's, was boycotted by the Sultans and UMNO. Both MPs gave interviews. Gammans felt it was 'a thousand pities' that the British Government had not listened to the people of Malaya. Rees-

[18] UOBL, Papers of Sir Leonard David Gammans and Lady Ann Muriel Gammans, MSS. Brit.Emp.s.506, hereafter UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary*, Box 8, Book 43, entry for 25th March 1946. Gammans kept a diary of sorts but used it for only very brief notes. His private reflections to his wife were seemingly recorded in her diary. In this particular quote, Carcosa is the official residence of the Chief Secretary. Muriel uses her husband's first name, not the middle name he used in public life. Gammans' 'snorter' was not retained in Maxwell's papers.
[19] CUL, BAM Archives, 1/1/4, letter Swettenham to Maxwell, 17th March 1946.
[20] No evidence has emerged suggesting that the CO had any career plans for Gammans.

Williams, by contrast, was not sure how much 'genuine opinion' lay behind the protests. At Onn's invitation, Gammans started a tour of the Peninsula, later joined by Rees-Williams. Gammans told the press he hoped 'that when we finish this tour we shall be able to do something to restore peace and harmony to this land'.[21] In Johore, Muriel recounted that there were 'thousands of people to welcome him…and a reception and meeting in one of the palaces (where) he met Dato Onn'. This pattern of UMNO organised mass rallies and meetings with Malay Sultans and high officials continued as the Gammans motorcade travelled up the Peninsula. Muriel's account reveals the degree of support being lent by Gent.

> Well like all British run things it was a very tolerant show. Len started…on his tour through 500 miles of enthusiasm against the Govt. in Gent's car! The Governor of Malaya, Gent, boycotted for his scheme for them, lends Len his car, Len being hailed as the Saviour of the Malays! Then the lorries and vehicles used for the procession were lent by the Army! Really priceless.

Gent was likely keen for Gammans and Rees-Williams to see the strength of Malay opposition to the Union and, in reporting this back in the UK, add weight to his proposed federal alternative. As he travelled up the Peninsula, giving (according to Muriel) 20 speeches in Malay a day, Gammans advocated a Malay-centric solution based on simple homilies and a return to the earlier friendships and compliant relationships he had experienced in his MCS days. Muriel explained that her husband had met senior Malays in Kuala Lumpur and Perak State whom he had known in the MCS.

> (They) were very bitter, very shaken, But Len started by saying "come on now, we are going to have a frank off the record talk together. We all know each other, in fact some of you are my (MCS) seniors". And he told them how much the senior Europeans in the service are against the methods used.[22]

In the press, Gammans blamed the Labour Government for the 'brutal' imposition of the MU.[23] Whilst Gent would have found Gammans' criticism of the Union painful, he would have been pleased that Gammans was advocating the need for change. MacDonald saw the same need, and had been won over to Gent's idea of a federal solution. He telegraphed Hall saying this was a 'unanimous opinion' held by himself Gent, Newboult, and Hone (now Secretary General on MacDonald's Staff). He claimed the two MPs had added their support,

[21] *Straits Times*, 24th May 1946.
[22] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary*, Book 44. Muriel does not seem to have accompanied her husband to Malaya and appears to have written her Diary account following her discussions with him on his return.
[23] *Straits Times*, 30th May 1946, interview with Gammans.

Rees-Williams being 'particularly insistent that we are in fact dealing with the leaders of progressive Malayan opinion'.[24] Rees-Williams' also conveyed the strength of Malay feeling in a private telegram to his Secretary of State.[25]

Far from being a lone voice in advocating change, Gammans was now part of a 'unanimous' opinion. He was endorsing and amplifying ideas already formulated by Gent. Muriel, nonetheless, believed that his had been the critical contribution and, as such, was a vindication of his 15 years MCS service.

> What a crown on Len's long years in Malaya. For years it seems that all his efforts there and achievements had been lost and forgotten…They (the Malays) felt the man they knew had come back to help them. It was just right and it was certainly for him a personal triumph.[26]

Hagiographic though these words are, they do capture the core of Gammans' contribution. His MCS service, resultant knowledge of Malay, and of many leading Malays, made him a credible British voice opposed to the MU, able to rebuild trust with the Malays and facilitate dialogue. Whilst he was also a parliamentarian who could also claim to have been sent to Malaya on a mission by the CO, Muriel concentrated on his years of MCS service as the prime source of his influence.

On return to the UK, Gammans undertook a new tour, this one of institutes and societies. If he had held any insecurities on his status amongst the ex-MCS before he had departed, these surely must now have been assuaged by the attention he was given by senior ex-MCS colleagues, and a wider circle of leading politicians and retired colonial leaders. At his first meeting, at the Royal Empire Society, he was introduced by his old boss, Sir Andrew Caldecott who had served in the MCS from 1907 to 1935, rising to the Service's highest position in the FMS before moving on to be Governor of Hong Kong and then Ceylon. Caldecott was fulsome in his praise in introducing Gammans to the audience, describing him as 'an old colleague in the Malayan Civil Service' and 'a most proficient civil servant'. Gammans' speech followed a line of argument honed on his Malaya tour. The MU was 'one of the greatest Imperial blunders', blame for which could be laid at the door of the Labour Government. He was convinced 'of the ease with which a settlement could in fact be reached…all the Malays are asking is that they be treated as gentlemen'. The Malays were

[24] TNA, CO 537/1529, telegrams 5A & 6, MacDonald to Hall, 25th May 1946.
[25] TNA, CO 537/1594, telegram Rees-Williams to Hall, 29th May 1946.
[26] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary*, Book 44.

prepared to accept strong centralised government and cede 'equal political rights' to those Chinese who made Malaya their home and gave it their undivided loyalty. The solution would require returning the Malay States to protected state status, their Malay citizens being subjects of their sovereign Sultans, not the British Crown. The Malays were happy to continue to accept British advice, indeed to 'give the Crown all the control it needs in administrative matters'. Such a settlement could be reached in a 'matter of weeks' although it would take longer to restore Malay 'faith and confidence in the honour of Great Britain'. Caldecott wrapped up the meeting lamenting that Gammans' presentation had 'made pitiful hearing' but was 'not unexpected by anybody who worked…in the old Malaya'.[27] With the speeches done, it was now time for a sandwich lunch for 46 members of the 'Chairman's Party'. We have Gammans to thank for keeping the party list and seating plan in one of his scrapbooks. Gammans sat at the top table, adjoined by a wing table which enabled Creech Jones to sit opposite him.[28]

Gammans then participated in the Commons debate on Colonial Affairs on 9th July. Hall was concerned at the impact parliamentary discussion might have on the uncertain situation in Malaya and gained the support of Shadow Secretary of State, Oliver Stanley, to limit debate.[29] Both must have been dismayed when Gammans rose to give a lengthy account of his visit to Malaya and proposed remedies.[30] He next attended Chatham House to make an address on 'Recent Events in Sarawak and Malaya'. In the chair was Victor Purcell who was now forging an academic career that would lead in 1949 to a lectureship in Far East history at Cambridge University. Gammans repeated his now well-rehearsed arguments. During questions, Purcell reminded the audience that he too had recently returned from Malaya. His view was that,

> amongst those officials who had contact with the country there were apt to be two divisions of thought, pro-Malay and pro-Chinese. This was a division due to study of either Malay or Chinese but it was unfortunate that people often took a view which was biased in favour of one race or other.

[27] *United Empire*, Journal of the Royal Empire Society, July-August 1946, 190-194. All quotes.
[28] London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Papers of Gammans, David (Sir), F/GMS/I to V, hereafter LMA, Gammans, *Scrapbooks*, No. I/002. Gammans' scrapbooks cover his entire political career as MP for Hornsey and his numerous written pieces for the *Malay Mail, Jamaica Daily Express and The South China Morning Post*.
[29] TNA, CO 537/1563, letter Hall to Stanley 8th July 1946.
[30] Hansard Fifth Series, Volume 425, Commons Sitting 9th July 1946, 263-304.

Having made this less than subtle suggestion that Gammans (as a Malay Cadet) was biased towards the Malays, Purcell argued that, whatever the short-term solution, those running Malaya would 'still be confronted with the eternal problem of how to reconcile the interests of the Chinese and the Malays'.[31]

Gammans' final meeting of note in this period was at The Empire Parliamentary Association where he and Rees-Williams addressed the Colonial Affairs Study Group, chaired by Hall. Perhaps the Secretary of State's appeal for public debate on Malaya to be muted had now been heard, as both Gammans and Rees-Williams spoke mainly on Sarawak. On Malaya, Gammans limited himself to a brief comment on Malay political consciousness followed by the showing of two films featuring UMNO rallies, made during the visit to Malaya. The necessary impact had been achieved, Hall remarking 'I wondered what was the ulterior motive in inviting me to this meeting, but I could see from the pictures'.[32] Thus was completed Gammans' largely triumphal UK tour in which he had leveraged every opportunity to influence thinking at the CO.

The Return of Adams

Despite the goodwill generated by the Gammans/Rees-Williams visit in May, and the apparent unanimity of opinion amongst MU leaders on the solution, Gent and MacDonald had not made progress in the 6 weeks since the MPs had departed. Revised British proposals for a Malayan Federal Union had been tabled by the British on 2nd June. These incorporated concessions agreed by Hall but insisted the MacMichael treaties remain, as Hall was not prepared to cede jurisdiction back to the Sultans. His fear, if they regained sovereignty, was that they could block further constitutional progress and development in Malaya. The Sultans, and UNMO, were, however, at one in not recognising the MacMichael Treaties and were consequently boycotting all MU institutions. The Sultans wrote to MacDonald with ominous finality.

> We do not see any profit in continuing discussions to consider this matter further here, because it appears that the British government is not prepared to agree to the replacement

[31] Royal Institute of International Affairs, (Hereafter RIIA), Notes of presentation and discussion, *Recent Events in Sarawak and Malaya*, David Gammans M.P., 8/1254, 11th July 1946. All quotes.
[32] UOBL, Papers of the Fabian Bureau, MSS. Brit.Emp.s.365, hereafter UOBL, Fabian Bureau Papers, Box 161, Empire Parliamentary Association, Meeting of Colonial Affairs Study Group, *Addresses on Sarawak and Malaya*, 17th July 1946, 11-12.

> of the MacMichael Agreements. For that reason we have no other course open but that we should all go to England and try to settle the matter there.[33]

In his unpublished autobiography, MacDonald claimed singular credit for the breakthrough in negotiations at this point, through the personal relationship he had developed with Onn. This had started, according to MacDonald, with an informal party.

> Probably the Dato and his colleagues wished to find a way out of the state of complete non-communication with us official Britons which their policy (boycott of the MU) had created. We talked about any subject under the sun – except the MU. Dato Onn was charming and at ease, he and I cracked jokes together and we laughed heartedly. When he was leaving, I remarked to him, as if casually, that if he and some of his Malay colleagues would like to come round for a meal with me at the Residency a day or two later, I would be delighted to welcome him…they accepted.

In their subsequent meeting MacDonald maintained that UNMO agreed to advise the Sultans to re-enter negotiations 'without any preconditions', thus paving the way to resumption of negotiations.[34]

Whilst MacDonald's developing relationship with Onn was undoubtedly important, his account does not tally with the official record. This reveals Hall, to the surprise of Gent and MacDonald, turning to another ex-MCS member, Theodore Adams, to help get constitutional discussions restarted. Adams was introduced in the last chapter when his advice on post-war Malayan policy was ignored by the CO. He had subsequently offered to be Hone's personal adviser on Malay affairs once the BMA was established. Gent had been horrified by this prospect and successfully prevailed on Hone to decline the offer.

> (Adams has) acquired the reputation of being a persistent, able and resourceful exponent of a rather extreme pro-Malay policy, and by "pro-Malay" I mean "Malaya for the Malays and keep Chinese and Indians under"…I am myself convinced…that it would be disastrous to entertain Sir T. Adams aspiration (due to) the calamitous reactions…which his appearance in Malaya would create amongst non-Malay communities. [35]

Little over a year later, the situation facing Hall and Gent was very different. Now, the British concern was not over the reaction of non-Malay communities but of the Malays themselves. Hall told Gent that he had received advice from Lord Marchwood.

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[33] TNA, CO 537/1528, telegram Gent to Hall transmitting the Sultans' letter, 19th June 1946.
[34] CUL, Malcolm MacDonald Papers, RCMS 41/1, *Constant Surprise, a twentieth century life*, c1981, hereafter CUL, MacDonald, *Constant Surprise*, 283. Both quotes.
[35] TNA, CO 825/48/8, Gent minute, 7th February 1945.

> Lord Marchwood has been in touch with me and has suggested that it would be most desirable for some person in the confidence of the Sultans [he mentioned Adams by name] to visit Malaya at the present stage in order to act as their adviser.

Adams had subsequently told Hall that he believed the Sultans could be persuaded to resume negotiations without pre-conditions by 'a person enjoying the trust of the Sultans, meaning himself'.[36] Adams' claims were not as outlandish as might at first seem. After being turned down for employment as adviser to Hone in the BMA, he had re-established contacts in the Far East and had been in Sarawak at the time of the Gammans and Rees-Williams visit. There it had been agreed that he would also tour the Peninsula during the MPs' visit to the MU. *The Straits Times* headlined Adams as 'Champion of Malays to tour Union',[37] adding that his visiting the MU was at Gent's 'special invitation'.

That Adams wanted to be involved in all aspects of Malay affairs is not in question. He had already written to the leader of UMNO in Kedah State (Tunku Abdul Rahman) urging UMNO to engage in negotiations, warning that 'if UMNO will not walk in, it will result in UMNO being left outside'.[38] Gent, however, was not persuaded that Adams could break the deadlock in negotiations. He replied to Hall that 'if Adams thinks agreement…is possible without clear assurance that MacMichael Agreements will be superseded by fresh agreements, he is wrong'. However, he was in no position to reject Hall's initiative and conceded that Adams' pro-Malay sympathies were now aligned with 'the general desire to see reasonable Malay feelings satisfied', especially as Adams had demonstrated to Gent his 'powers of adapting his pre-war pro-Malay prejudices'.[39] MacDonald also replied to Hall supporting the role for Adams but suggesting his invitation to be their adviser should come from the Sultans.[40] Hall concurred, adding that it should be clear Adams was to be a representative of the Sultans and 'in no, repeat no, sense going out as intermediary on behalf of His Majesty's Government'. Maintaining this position was complex, as the CO was keen to get Adams out to Malaya as quickly as possible. It was agreed the CO would pay Adams' fare, in anticipation of some future reimbursement through the solicitors representing the Sultans in the UK.[41]

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[36] TNA, CO 537/1529, telegram Hall to Gent, 4th July 1946. Both quotes.
[37] *Straits Times*, 20th May 1946.
[38] Ismail, *Sultan*, 54, letter Adams to Rahman, 30th May 1946.
[39] TNA, CO 537/1529, telegram Gent to Hall, 6th July 1946. All quotes.
[40] Ibid, telegram MacDonald to Hall, 7th July 1946
[41] TNA, CO 537/1563, telegram Hall to Gent, 10th July 1946.

The Sultans, accompanied by Onn, met with Gent and MacDonald on 18th July in Kuala Lumpur. Adams was in town but not at this meeting. Gent telegraphed Hall with the gloomy news that the Sultans and UMNO remained transfixed on the lack of any pre-assurance from the British side that the MacMichael Treaties would be replaced if a new constitutional agreement was reached. Gent's message sombrely concluded that the 'Rulers have now left…to discuss amongst themselves and Adams and their Malay Advisers and are going to send me their considered reply tomorrow'.[42] Gent's next telegram brought excellent news. He advised Hall that the Sultans were now prepared to reopen discussions provided it was understood that, on completion of negotiations, they would 'not be prepared to sign any agreement whatsoever that does not state quite categorically that the MacMichael Agreements will be superseded'. Gent concluded, 'I feel that Adams in this has proved (the) greatest possible use'. [43] It is difficult to determine whether it was MacDonald's developing relationship with Onn, or Adams' position of trust with the Sultans and other UMNO leaders, that provided the necessary reassurance of British goodwill that got negotiations restarted. Perhaps both were needed. It was, however, ungenerous of MacDonald to make no mention of Adams' involvement in his autobiography.

There are similarities between the roles played by Gammans and Adams in this period. Both were on the outside, one an opposition MP opposed to the Government's Malayan policy, and the other rejected by the CO for any role in post-war Malaya. Whilst both maintained their distance from the official British position, they made contributions to rebuilding trust in British official integrity amongst the Malays. They also played a part, Gammans particularly, in nudging the CO towards accepting reality and moving towards a federal solution. Their influence lay in their MCS track records, particularly their reputations for unapologetically pro-Malay sympathy. Gammans was described as the saviour of the Malays, Adams as the champion of Malays. Gent seems to have seen value in each and acted accordingly in facilitating Gammans' tour and overcoming his past reservations in supporting Adams' new role. Muriel Gammans saw in her husband's role a vindication of his pre-war MCS service and past contribution to Malaya. Adams' thoughts are not recorded but he must surely have taken away satisfaction that his role in the succession dispute of 1936 had seemingly been forgotten, and he had been valued by both the Malays and the CO.

[42] TNA, CO 537/1529, telegram Gent to Hall, 18th July 1946.
[43] Ibid, telegram Gent to Hall, 20th July 1946. Both quotes.

All this contribution had, however, only brought the Malays back to the negotiating table. They were still boycotting the MU, and the resumption of British civil administration was barely 3 months old. An important turning point had undoubtedly been reached but broader recovery on political, economic, and social fronts now depended on the work of the MCS in country, rather than on ex-MCS members lobbying on policy in the UK or making short-term visits to Malaya.

The MCS In-Country

Several historians have gathered statistics on staffing of the immediate post-war administration in Malaya. Kratoska finds it striking that, 'of 1037 officers recruited for the BMA...just 244 had previously held pensionable Colonial Office Service'.[44] Tilman observes 'that of 238 MCS officers in 1947, 107 (44.9 per cent) had seen no previous service in Malaya (and) of the 49 officers who held senior posts in 1941, only 14 had re-appeared on the *Staff List* of 1947'. He describes the emergence of a new generation of MCS, 'a somewhat younger officer, certainly one who felt less of an historical colonial attachment for Malaya, and perhaps one therefore who was less attracted to colonial symbols and customs'.[45] Allen's own calculations also see 'a major break in continuity'.[46]

As none of the databases compiled by these three authors seem to have survived, an MCS database has been reconstructed from the Malayan Staff Lists regularly produced by the colonial administration in Malaya,[47] and from information available on the war time experiences of all the MCS officers who returned in 1945/1946.[48] This reconstructed and expanded database does not differ numerically, other than in minor detail, from the data quoted by earlier authors. The expansion of available data does, however, allow other dimensions and interpretations to be explored. In its totality, the MCS might have been significantly infused with new officers recruited from the BMA in 1946 but this was not the

[44] Paul Kratoska, *The Japanese Occupation of Malaya 1941–1945*, (Honolulu, 1997), 307-308, and note 4.
[45] Robert Tilman, *Bureaucratic Transition in Malaya*, (Durham, N.C., 1964), hereafter Tilman, *Bureaucratic Transition,* 108-109.
[46] J. de Vere Allen, Malayan Civil Service, 1874-1941: Colonial Bureaucracy/Malayan Elite: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Apr 1970, Vol. 12, 149-178, hereafter Allen, *Colonial Bureaucracy.*
[47] UOBL/CUL, MSCLs.
[48] War time experience data was compiled from several sources: 1) UOBL, Heussler Papers, B13 F1, MCS 'Who's Who' compiled by William Goode in 1973; 2) CUL, BAM Archives, 103/12/22, a) Changi internment camp: *Nominal Roll of Internees*, 31 May 1943, and b) Malayan Research Bureau, Australia: *Lists of Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees*, January 1944; 3) a small number of individual records found in various memoirs.

case within its leadership echelons. By November 1946, of the 62 expatriates appointed to roles in the senior cadre[49] of the reconstituted MCS in Malaya, all but 3 had pre-war MCS experience in Malaya. Of the three without pre-war MCS service, two had colonial pre-war service, in the Gold Coast and Ceylon, and the third was seconded from the Home Civil Service. Admittedly, many of the MCS in the senior cadre had experienced rapid progression from their pre-war rankings,[50] but the MCS at leadership level represented more of a continuation than a major shift from the pre-war situation. The other commonality amongst the expatriate leadership cadre was war time experience. Of the 62 expatriate leaders, 48 had been either internees or POWs.[51] To complete the picture, there were an additional five Malays in the senior cadre. All five had joined the MCS pre-war and had, of course, experienced the Japanese occupation, albeit not as internees.

This dominance of pre-war and internee experience within the MCS senior cadre is significant. 'Pre-war experience' was a term frequently used as shorthand for a valued individual with deep language proficiency and working knowledge of the civil administration being reconstructed. During the BMA period, as Chief Secretary designate, Newboult wrote to the CO that he anxiously awaited the return of 'the old MCS officers' to relieve him of the 'tremendous strain' he was under.[52] That internees would have the opportunity to return to Malaya with their career status unaffected by their incarceration was not in doubt, indeed it was seen as essential to the quick rejuvenation of the country and particularly of its economic mainstays of tin and rubber production. The CO had been anxious to make this clear and had written to all interned MCS officers in October 1945, after they had returned home, to assuage concern that 'in their absence their interests might be prejudiced'. All who were fit and able to return would receive the 'full and sympathetic consideration which is due to them in the building up of the restored civil administration'.[53] Whilst the CO and Newboult clearly wanted them back, significant numbers of those interned also wanted to return, despite their experiences. All had joined the MCS as Cadets in expectation that they would spend their entire careers in Malaya. Such was the logical consequence of the personal investment they

[49] See Conventions (thesis page 10) for explanation of the MCS grading system and the composition of MCS senior and junior cadres.
[50] For example, Newboult, who had seen his ranking in the MCS lists progress only from no. 191 to no. 73 between 1926 and 1940, now returned to Malaya as Chief Secretary, in no.1 position.
[51] Of the 48, 41 had been internees and 7 POWs. Henceforth this group will be collectively termed 'internees'.
[52] TNA, CO 537/1528, letter Newboult to Lloyd, 7th February 1946.
[53] George Patterson, *A Spoonful of Rice with Salt*, (Durham, 1993), hereafter Patterson, *Spoonful*, Appendices.

made in their early careers in acquiring language proficiency and knowledge in Malayan colonial law and administrative systems, competences proven by passing examinations and assessments. These skills were not easily transferable to other colonial administrations where other languages were spoken and there were differing laws and administrative systems. Choosing a new career or location would likely mean a step back in status and prospects and might affect benefits steadily accrued within a single colonial administration, such as remuneration, pension, and accommodation. To support their families, many internees may have had no viable alternative to returning to Malaya. Some may also have been attracted by the prospect of having all their wartime internment time counted towards continued, and maybe quicker, progression through the thinned MCS ranks of experienced staff, thereby leveraging their 'pre-war experience' as their most valuable career asset. A professional duty to help Malaya recover from the Japanese occupation might be added to these practical considerations.

The eventual return of internees was understood as inevitable by those serving in the BMA, but not always gracefully accepted. Noel Turner returned from internment to be MacDonald's Assistant Secretary, finding a growing ill-feeling amongst BMA officers. He recalled that,

> many of the officers in the BMA had applied for appointments in the peace-time Malayan Civil Service; some of those who succeeded in doing so were resentful at their relative loss of seniority, while some of those who did not make the grade tended to blame the returning internees whose reappearance in numbers rather greater than had been forecast was keeping them out of the jobs to which they felt they were entitled.[54]

For Amyand Haggard, a soldier and newcomer to Malaya who had served in the BMA's civil administration, the return of the old-guard was a reason not to stay. He had enjoyed the freedom given to him in the BMA to resolve issues without too much need to 'act by the book'. Now, starting work in the MCS in the MU, he decided to return to London and go to Oxford on a government grant.

> We were civil servants, soldiers no longer. With the return to the country of the former administrators now in senior posts I should have been uncomfortable and perhaps unable to adjust myself to the old colonial pre-1941 procedures.[55]

[54] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B19 F1, R.N.Turner, *Memoirs*, *Chapter XI*, 5th page of chapter.
[55] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/15/19, Haggard memoir.

Gullick relates that his BMA boss, Calder, had hoped to remain in Negri Sembilan, transferring from his BMA role directly to the new MU role of Resident Commissioner. However, 'to his chagrin he was displaced in July 1946 by a more senior MCS officer returning from post-internment leave'. Gullick too had to trade his 'half-colonel's pip and star' to become Secretary to the new Resident Commissioner, as two internees with pre-war experience had returned to the District Officer roles in Negri Sembilan that he had aspired to.[56] By contrast, BMA officer Chris Blake was relieved when his role in the BMA ended 'and there arrived…a proper administrator able to manage our affairs and to take control of a still volatile situation'. This was returning internee Arthur 'Cobby' Ramsay. Blake was new to Malaya, having joined the BMA from the Indian Army. He was happy to describe himself as 'Cobby's Boy', spending 'many profitable hours' learning from Ramsay.[57] Nonetheless, there could be potential for such relationships to struggle to progress beyond this master/student stage. Jim Rea, returned from internment to the relatively junior position of Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Kedah (Class III), despite 10 years pre-war MCS experience. In his memoirs, he held to the broadly held belief that capability must be acquired over time.

> Their (the returning MCS') problems were complicated by the fact that many of the newly recruited MCS men however able they were…did not have the experience to enable the older hands immediately to rely on the new men's sense of judgement in making decisions, until in time they had proved themselves.[58]

The return of the pre-war MCS to dominate the leadership of administration in the MU represented a return to continuity. The 'old hands', admittedly some not that old and some having been rapidly progressed, all possessed the valued 'pre-war' experience stamp. The pre-existing MCS ranking rules and conventions which determined entitlement for positions and readiness for progression were not challenged, even if some in the MCS nursed disappointment at their application.

[56] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs, Part 2*, 1. Both quotes
[57] Christopher Blake, *A View from Within, The Last Years of British Rule in South East Asia*, (Castle Cary, Somerset, 1990), hereafter Blake, *View from Within*, 68.
[58] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B17 F2, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers, Rea, *Correspondence*, letter Rea to Heussler, 8th January 1982.

Health and Wellbeing

Although the returning internees were experienced and valued administrative leaders, urgently needed in the MU, their state of health was not well appreciated. In their health study of Far East captives, Parkes and Still find that most were given only 'cursory medicals…the general approach was for them to go home, not talk about their experiences, and get on with their lives'. Over 4,500 Far East captives subsequently sought treatment from 1946 to 1968 at Roehampton Hospital's Tropical Department. Most prevalent conditions were psychiatric diseases (41%), followed by bowel parasites (18%), and liver diseases (17%). When Roehampton closed, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine took over as a national referral centre for tropical diseases. Over 2000 Far East captives were seen in Liverpool from 1968 to 1999. Persistent diseases amongst this group of long-term survivors were psychiatric disorders (35%), osteoarthritis (33%), pulmonary diseases (22%), and worm infections (15%). The persistence of psychiatric illnesses is explained in the Parkes and Still study:

> Mental health disorders were undoubtedly a direct consequence of the experience of Far East captivity which involved not only over work, illness, fear and malnutrition but also isolation from family and, for many, a loss of hope…Such experiences were highly likely to lead to what is now known as PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), with features including flashbacks, nightmares, depression and anxiety. PTSD, however, was not recognised until the 1980s, and its diagnosis was only officially accepted in 1992. Returning veterans thus never underwent debriefing, counselling or surveillance for the emergence of psychiatric problems. Most men simply kept their problems to themselves and did not seek treatment.[59]

Yap suggests that such extremes of experience mostly affected POWs, such as those put to work building Japanese railways.[60] Nonetheless, the recorded conditions at Changi Internment Camp, (and from May 1944 at Sime Road), reveal stressors subsequently identified in medical studies as the causes of PTSD. When the internment camp was liberated in September 1945, a report was compiled and signed by the British Camp Commandants detailing the conditions experienced. It revealed that each internee had an average personal space of only 24 square feet (8 feet by 3 feet). The camp was infested with bed bugs which, along with mosquitoes, contributed to a 'squalor of living conditions'. The Japanese authorities provided only food. All other necessities had to be found by internees themselves,

[59] Parkes and Still, *Captive Memories*, 187-199. All quotes and statistics.
[60] Felicia Yap, Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience, *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 2012, Vol. 47, No. 2, 317-346.

often bought or traded from limited resources originally brought into the camp. The report recorded that the Japanese provided, at best, some 95% and, at worst, only 40%, of total ration requirements for the camp. The balance had to be either bought, grown, or done without. Accordingly, 'food became an obsession accounting for 75% of the conversation of the camp'. The Japanese offered enhanced rations to those who worked for some 3 to 6 hours a day on gardening, wood cutting and minor civil engineering projects. In the final months, as rations were further cut, some 2000 internees were compelled to work 'in order to qualify for a mere subsistence scale of rations'. The result was that 'internees became more and more emaciated; ulcers, boils and carbuncles were prevalent and tended to develop into serious septic conditions'. [61]

In addition to Japanese neglect there was brutality. On what became known as the 'double tenth' (10th October 1943), many internees were taken away and tortured as the Japanese searched for wireless parts, convinced that internees were using these to send military information to allied forces. The most senior MCS officer, acting Colonial Secretary Fraser, died from the effects of his incarceration and interrogation by the Kempeitai (Japanese Police).[62] The 1945 report detailed further punitive actions which isolated internees from friends and family overseas. Permission to send a postcard was permitted on only 5 occasions over the 44 months of internment. Husbands and wives were kept in separate areas, allowed to meet only once or twice a month for between 30 minutes and an hour. The first letters from overseas were allowed in the camp through the Red Cross only in April 1943, 14 months after internment began. Restrictions placed on the International Red Cross by the Japanese meant that it was unable to perform most of its usual functions. For the last 20 months of the war Internees received no official outside news. The report concluded that there was little relief from mental strain, anxiety, and physical discomfort. At the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, there is a large memorial to Far East Prisoners of War, (The FEPOW Grove and Memorial Building). The Memorial Building houses a large display section on Internees, given equal prominence to a similar display on POWs. These displays impress on the visitor the differing experiences but shared anguish and suffering of all those who were imprisoned.

[61] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/12/11, *Report Compiled by C.E. Courtney*, 1945. All quotes.
[62] UOBL, Papers of H.G. Turner, MSS, Ind Ocn.s.259, *Recollections of Life in the Malayan Civil Service, 1929-1944*, 393.

As the MCS internees returned to the UK, a number went to the CO and visited Gent, who would not be installed as Governor until the following March. Gent noted that 'they are mostly thin and obviously in need of a holiday apart from feeding up, but it is a considerable pleasure to see them even though it sets back the mass of files'.[63] Gent's idea that some food and a holiday would do the trick suggests little appreciation of the long-term effects captivity would have on some of his visitors. In his defence, his attitude was likely little different from most others in the UK greeting the returnees. Gent wanted to get back to his files, and most in the UK also wanted to get on with their lives. There was little understanding of what the internees had experienced, reinforced by an unwillingness amongst many returning to talk about what had happened.

Only two personal accounts of the mental effects of internee experience have been found in MCS memoirs. Goode recalled, 'I had a personal problem: to recover my mind and my self-confidence after nearly 4 years as a coolie...Then when I had pretty well recovered, I was shattered again by the death of my wife'.[64] For Geoffrey Mowat, who had survived the Thailand-Burma railway, it was a 'long, long time' before he could bear to see the Japanese flag as it 'was a symbol of all that was horrid and hated concerning the Japanese Occupation…causing a red rage of burning anger to well up within me'.[65]

Several MCS memoirs emphasise instead the welcome given by Malayans on their return. Harvey had not been interned and arrived at Penang with the BMA. He recalled that 'on the wharf there were large crowds to greet us and give us a most hearty welcome'.[66] Blake was also in the BMA. He recalled a Malayan 'thankfulness for the return of the British'.[67] When George Patterson returned to Malaya after his recuperation he remembered that,

> many of us wondered just how we would be received by our old friends in the country, after all we had been responsible for their defence – and had not done that great a job. It was quite heart warming to see the welcome we got and the understanding that was shown to us. Never did I hear any criticism…just sympathy for the terrible times we had had as prisoners of war.[68]

[63] TNA, CO 717/148/2, letter from Gent to Tunku Abu Bakar, 9th October 1945.
[64] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B13 F1, letter Goode to Heussler, 23rd November 1981.
[65] Geoffrey Mowat, *The Rainbow through the Rain*, (Oxford, 2005), hereafter Mowat, *Rainbow*, 140.
[66] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Harvey, *Memoirs,* 18.
[67] Blake, *View from Within*, 67.
[68] Patterson, *Spoonful*, 144

Gullick's BMA memoir was more circumspect describing the population as 'either apathetic or mildly relieved to have the British back'.[69] Despite the warm, or at worst neutral, welcome received by returning internees, it must have taken courage for each internee to return so quickly to Malaya and its daily reminders of their war-time imprisonment. Such courage demands admiration and respect.

Work pressure on return was unrelenting, as ex-internees were expected immediately to assume responsibility for re-establishing administrative structures in the country, whilst guiding new MCS joiners. Consequently, there were extremely long working hours. Hugh Humphrey had returned to work in the Secretariat. He told his parents, 'the strain of the last fourteen months has been severe…I have lost over a stone…and, for the first time in my life, I doubt if I could carry on at the present pace'.[70] When Rea returned he also found the Secretariat 'working every waking hour of the 24 hour day taking home files to work on after dinner until they were exhausted'.[71] Sheppard recorded that he was working sixteen hours a day in the Public Relations Office.[72]

Visitors to Malaya now began reporting that the MCS leaders they encountered were exhausted. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (Chief of the Imperial General Staff) toured the Far East in 1947. On his return, he conveyed to Attlee 'his impression that the Administration in Malaya…includes some men who are still suffering from the effects of internment to an extent which prevents them from pulling their weight as members of the Service'.[73] Gent, when briefed by the CO on Montgomery's report, wrote a response at times dismissive and, at others, accepting of a problem. In dismissal, he wondered how Montgomery had gained his impression given he had spent only a morning visiting the MU across the causeway in Johore. Here Gent was being disingenuous. Montgomery had called a regional conference in Singapore on 28th June attended by the region's military CICs, together with MacDonald, Gent, and the remaining regional Governors. Around the conference, a further 500 military officers had assembled. There seems to have been ample opportunity for cogent concerns regarding the MCS in the MU to pass amongst those present.[74] Gent,

[69] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs*, *Part 1*, 19.
[70] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F2, letter Humphrey to his parents, 26th November 1947.
[71] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Rea, *Correspondence*, letter Rea to Heussler, 8th January 1982.
[72] Sheppard, *Memoirs*, 148.
[73] TNA, CO 537/2179, letter Lloyd to Gent, 18th August 1947.
[74] Imperial War Museum, hereafter IWM, The Private Papers of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Documents 20500, Part I, Section F, BLM/181, Official Diary, June 1947.

nonetheless, held that the 'small proportion of the senior staff' who might not be 'pulling their weight' was no greater 'in the present more arduous conditions' than it had been pre-war. He reassured the CO that, as 'order replaces chaos' there was no need for any 'new innovations'.[75] Having made these initial rebuttals, Gent was prepared to acknowledge that some 'were still suffering from the effects of internment'. Recognising their wartime ordeals, such officers had, however, been allowed an initial short tour of 12 to 18 months, to allow a further recuperative leave which many were now taking. He attached a report from his Director of Medical Services, Dr MacGregor. In the 15 months since April 1946, MacGregor reported there had been four suicides amongst the internees/POWs now employed in civil administration. The doctor added that 'this suicide rate in ex-prisoners…is high…about 10 times the average'.[76] Nonetheless, Gent's overall position was accepted within the CO. Charles Jeffries, Assistant Undersecretary for Appointments, concluded 'we could not possibly replace them, and it is better to carry on with people who are at least some use'.[77]

Restoration of British Administration

The MU was designed to rein in the pre-war elements of devolved State administration. The engine room of its civil administration comprised some 34 centralised Departments ranging from Agriculture, Education, Forestry, Medical through to Police, Prisons and Veterinary. Most of these were not staffed or led by the MCS, and had their own professional and technical staff. Their Department Heads held executive control over their activities, provided such was exercised within legislation and aligned with policy determined ultimately by Gent as Governor. MCS officers were concentrated in two areas, State and District organisations (c. 50%) and the central Secretariat (c. 20%), with the balance spread across a small number of other Departments, most significantly the Labour Department.[78] These MCS organisational areas will now be discussed in turn, whilst addressing two themes which cross all three, namely Gent's relationship with the MCS, and the tension in the organisational relationship between Gent and MacDonald.

[75] TNA, CO 537/2179, letter Gent to Lloyd, 11th September 1947. All quotes.
[76] Ibid, attachment, Dr. R.B. MacGregor, *Efficiency of ex-internee officers,* undated. There is no record of any of the 4 suicides being that of an MCS officer.
[77] Ibid, Jeffries' minute, 30th October 1947.
[78] UOBL/CUL, MSCLs, Malayan Civil Service Quarterly List, November 1946. Other departments: Co-operative Societies, Lands, Public Relations, and Welfare.

Gent was initially empowered to administer and legislate in consultation with an Advisory Council, which he would nominate. As discussions continued on a new constitutional structure, the Malay boycott of the MU and its Advisory Council allowed Gent to extend these 'transitional' arrangements for a further 12 months and to govern autocratically.[79] In each State, a Resident Commissioner (senior expatriate MCS officer) was responsible for managing the State's District Officers. The extension of Gent's powers meant that there were no State Councils or Legislatures and there would be no decision on resurrecting these until the constitutional discussions were completed. Consequently, the Resident Commissioners' responsibilities were exercised through a largely informal dialogue with the Sultans and local elites.

Many of the Department staff were based in each State. They now reported directly to their respective Department Heads, although they were expected to 'work closely' with Resident Commissioners and District Officers.[80] Gullick, secretary to Resident Commissioner Gordon-Hall in Negri Sembilan State, believed that the weakened authority of the Resident Commissioners was deliberate.

> Gent was very anti any attempt to restore the authority of the local administrative head of state over departmental officers (such as Residents had had in the pre-war days). Gordon-Hall was mortified that heads of departments could visit Seremban to discuss business with their state officers…and not even pay him a courtesy call.[81]

Gullick saw working relations improving as Department Heads realised they needed local support but witnessed continued disparagement of Gent in the private correspondence between Gordon-Hall and other Resident Commissioners.

> They did not greatly like the way Gent conducted the MU but were helpless. Gent made no secret of his determination to reduce the MCS from its hallowed position of being "the government" to merely parity with the technical and professional services as one more service. [82]

There are two ways to interpret Gent's apparent side-lining of the MCS. He had worked in the Eastern Department of the CO since 1921 and experienced the frustrations of working with highly individualistic MCS leaders such as Maxwell and Adams. He likely held some desire to

[79] *Annual Report for the Malayan Union 1946*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1947), 129.
[80] Ibid.
[81] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B13 F3, Gullick correspondence with Heussler, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers Gullick, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 27th February 1982.
[82] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs, Part* 2, 3.

reduce the overbearing influence the Service had held in the pre-war period. Rea, however, cautioned against the assumption that Gent had a 'preconscious sour view' of the MCS. He felt it more likely that Gent was being pragmatic, needing to recognise that in their internment most of the senior MCS had been 'effectively cut off from the knowledge of what was going on in the worlds of thought and action'. Under this more generous interpretation, Gent was working around many in the MCS, until they had been given more time to understand and get on board with the rationale for the changes he was making.[83]

Gent did not have to wait long to hear the opinions of the Resident Commissioners. He held his first stormy meeting with them the day after his inauguration as Governor, with Harvey recalling 'there was some plain speaking about the M.U. constitution…the debacle should never have occurred'.[84] Gullick saw no evidence of Gent consulting or involving the Commissioners on major issues,[85] which is borne out by a study of the minutes of their monthly conferences with Gent.[86] These make turgid reading. If constitutional matters were ever discussed, they were not minuted. Considering this was a meeting of the most senior MCS officers, the agendas contained mostly minutiae. Examples from one are: Inducement Goods for Padi Farmers; Annual Registration of Bicycles; Payment of Quit Rent by Instalments; Badges for *Ketuas;* and Labourers' Gardens on Estates.[87] More pressing economic and social issues, such as Rice Rations and Trade Union Disturbances, appeared only rarely on the agenda, and seemed subject to only brief discussion. Even germane matters concerning the Sultans, such as Royal House Allowances and Pensions, received only occasional coverage. It must have been a frustrating, even humiliating, experience for the Commissioners to gather each month with Gent and not discuss in any impactful way the matters that were dominating the country's political and economic agenda.

In their States, at least, the MCS leaders could still be masters of their District organisations. The District Officer is perhaps one of the most recognised job titles in colonial administration. Romanticised in the inter-war period in the fictional *Sanders of the Rivers*

[83] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Rea, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 19th March 1981.
[84] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Harvey, *Memoirs,* 27.
[85] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs, Part 2*, 8.
[86] Arkib Negara Malaysia (Malaysian National Archives), hereafter ANM, 1957/0574486, 1957/0471792, 1957/0471793, and 1957/0292111, Minutes of Resident Commissioners' Conferences 1946/47. Newboult also attended the Conferences.
[87] ANM, 1957/0471793, agenda items for the Conference on 13th February 1947.

series,[88] the role continues to be described respectfully in colonial historiography as a 'symbol of authority'.[89] The District Officer was, indeed, the agent of the State within each of its geographical subdivisions, named 'districts'. The role worked with local chiefs and populations in implementing laws and ordinances and in presiding over numerous boards and committees which governed local life. An important part of the role was acting as local magistrate. In inter-war Malaya, the District Officer worked overwhelmingly with Malay communities. A government office called the 'Chinese Protectorate' oversaw Chinese communities, and the Labour Office was responsible for Indian communities. An MCS 'Malay' Cadet would embark on learning the language and passing law and ordinance exams whilst working in a District Office. As exams were passed and experience gained, the Cadet would become an Assistant District Officer, ultimately taking on the District Officer role. Next moves might be towards senior State or central Secretariat roles, but only after the District Officer role was under the career belt.

In the MU, many District Officer (and Assistant DO) roles were still allocated to expatriate MCS staff. It was into such roles that new MCS recruits from the BMA were being placed, which meant that these roles were now filled by officers of less experience and language ability than in pre-war days. This prospect had concerned the planners in the BMA who had bequeathed to the MU a proposal that the larger States should create new MCS roles of Deputy Commissioner, to act as an intermediary supervisor between their Resident Commissioner and District Officers.[90] Gent and Newboult were also concerned about staffing levels. Newboult warned that 'it would be impossible to find sufficient experienced District Officers to cover the ground'. Gent added that 'staffing was going to present a very formidable problem for some considerable time'.[91] The Resident Commissioner in Perak believed that Deputy Commissioners were necessary.

> It seems inevitable that more and more administrative posts will be opened to Malays and other Asiatics, with a consequent reduction in the MCS. Experience has shown that it will be a long time before the majority of Malay District Officers and Assistant District Officers will have the drive and sense of responsibility of their European colleagues.[92]

[88] Sanders was Edgar Wallace's fictional creation whose colonial peace keeping and adventures appeared in 12 novels between 1911 and 1928. The fictional Sanders was a District Officer in pre-WWI Nigeria.
[89] The title of Kirk-Greene's 2006 work, op.cit.
[90] ANM, 1957/0636188, includes the BMA proposal to create two Deputy Commissioners in Selangor.
[91] ANM, 1957/0636183, Minutes of Resident Commissioners' Conference, 31st May 1946.
[92] ANM, 1957/0636187, Memo, *District Administration Organisation*, 20th June 1946.

The Resident Commissioner in Selangor reluctantly acceded that for the next few years, Deputy Commissioners were needed 'as the majority of the younger officers who will be performing District Officer duties are new to the country'.[93] Consensus of opinion solidified around this temporary expedient.[94] In Gent's submission to the CO on 1947 MCS numbers, he had to acknowledge that the 6 Deputy Commissioner roles originally envisaged by the BMA planners had now increased to 12. All were at senior MCS grades. Gent dared the CO to object, claiming 'it had been necessary to make such alterations as experience on the ground dictated and I assume that you do not want to offer any criticism to such changes'.[95] Before the War, the backbone of district organisation in the FMS had been an MCS expatriate with advanced Malay language skills. There was not yet a vision as to how expatriates with lesser language skills, let alone able Malays, might perform the roles equally effectively. A choice was made instead to create a new layer of senior roles that would now be filled largely by MCS officers with pre-war experience. The opportunity to design a compromise that would make best use of existing resources and be sustainable into the future was missed.

The Secretariat was the interface between the MU's Government, where policy and legislation were promulgated, and the numerous Departments. It struggled from the start with the volume of work and the demands of competing priorities. As early as June 1946, Chief Secretary Newboult proposed that the Secretariat should give priority to 10 subjects above all others, namely; constitutional matters, reorganisation of departments, staffing, service questions related to the occupation period, legislation needed for rehabilitation of the country, powers of the Resident Commissioners, financial provisions, terms of labour employment, supplies, and food production. He maintained that all subjects on his list were of equal importance. Both Watherston and Goode, in Principal Assistant Secretary (PAS) roles, responded to Newboult. Watherston questioned if the Secretariat could set priorities given that it was 'impossible to see what unexpected matters may require urgent decision' adding that 'unpalatable facts have to be accepted that we are hopelessly short of experienced senior and subordinate staff'. Goode was 'appalled at the condition of this secretariat' with staff

[93] ANM, 1957/0636188, letter from Wisdom to Chief Secretary, 12th June 1946.
[94] ANM 1957/0636191 & 2 record supportive comments of the Resident Commissioners of Kelantan and Johore.
[95] TNA, CO 717/149/19, letter Gent to Creech Jones, 20th December 1946.

working long hours and trying to do far too much too quickly, with 'the machine bogged down with paper'.[96] In his memoirs, he still rued the distractions created by the MU.

> The overriding objective was to try to get the country back to ordinary life. People were short of clothes, they were short of food, the water didn't run, the electricity didn't work, the railways didn't work…But of course the theme was complicated by the fact…that London had decided to impose upon the Malays this new constitution.[97]

The Secretariat also supported the organisational interfaces between the MU Government and the other centres of British political power in South-East Asia. Significant amongst these was the new role of Governor-General. In a later interview, Malcolm MacDonald tried to explain it.

> I was Governor General with responsibility of a sort of co-ordinating British policy in the region. In each of the individual colonies or protected states, there was a governor or high commissioner. I was superior to them although I was not so to speak their direct boss, their master, I could not issue orders to them, I had to do my work co-ordination by consultation with them by persuasion of them by me.[98]

In addition to MacDonald's brief, the CO had separately given Gent and Sir Franklin Gimson, Governor in Singapore, a 'duty of co-ordination whenever the need of co-ordination arose'.[99] This was in recognition of the ongoing economic and social links between the two now separately administered territories. Six joint bodies had accordingly been established between the two territories.[100] In a last complexity, the Foreign Office had appointed its own Special Commissioner for South-East Asia, a role held throughout the MU period by Lord Killearn. Part of his responsibility was to advise on 'co-operation between the territories in South-East Asia, particularly in matters of economic and social welfare'.[101] His attention came to be focused on managing food shortages, most especially rice, resulting in the MU Secretariat receiving a daily average of 30-40 telegrams from Lord Killearn's secretariat.[102]

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[96] ANM, 1957/0619529, Chief Secretary draft note, 13th June 1946, Watherston memorandum, 26th June 1946, and Goode note, 22nd June 1946.
[97] UOBL, 'End of Empire' Transcripts, (Granada TV Series), MSS. Brit.Emp.s.527, hereafter, UOBL, *End of Empire,* Transcripts, Vol. 1, interview W. Goode, August 1981, 17.
[98] CUL, Malcolm MacDonald Papers, RCMS 41/4/1, Narain Singh interview, tape 14, vii.
[99] TNA, CO 537/1599, Minutes of Governors' Conference, 25th September 1946.
[100] These covered Chinese Affairs, Transport, Agriculture, Immigration, Labour, and Broadcasting.
[101] Clyde Sanger, *Malcolm MacDonald, Bringing an End to Empire*, (Liverpool, 1995), 272.
[102] ANM, 1957/0619529, Goode note, 22nd June 1946.

Secretariat systems were established to try to satisfy the imperfectly defined interface between Gent and MacDonald. Noel Turner was appointed as MacDonald's Assistant Secretary in early May, shortly before the latter's arrival and installation. He was instructed to proceed at 'maximum speed' to Penang to set up MacDonald's new home and office. Turner thought Penang 'a somewhat strange choice…It looked suspiciously like shunting him off the playing area into the sidelines'.[103] MacDonald soon decided that his operational centre should be in Singapore. He moved to occupy the offices that had been vacated by the BMA on the 9th floor of the Cathay Building, Killearn's offices being one floor below. Turner recalled how the wheels of secretariat bureaucracy turned slowly.

> As for the Governor-general, paper-work did not come exactly flowing in, except for vast quantities of copies of telegrams and savingrams for filing and reference. Quite obviously the Governors of MU and Singapore were in agreement that their main task was to press on with the rehabilitation of their respective areas. The less coordination there was the better they liked it, but, to keep up appearances, they sent in a constant flood of bottom copies of outgoing, but not necessarily ingoing correspondence. It was all very muddled, and there was no thread of consistency.[104]

A 'Governors' Conference' was held every month or so. Membership and attendance at these conferences seemed to vary.[105] Sometimes they were conferences only between Gent and Gimson, and their Chief/Colonial Secretaries. On other occasions, MacDonald chaired and his staff also attended. By the end of 1947 there had been a total of 16 conferences of various formats. The minutes of the 6 Gent/Gimson conferences, which presumably were held under their 'duty of co-operation' brief from the CO, were clipped, capturing final points of agreement only. Those of the 10 chaired by MacDonald generously recorded discussions, such as on the MU/Singapore joint bodies. In September 1946, MacDonald insisted that as 'his principal duty consisted in co-ordination...if he was to do his duty he must be represented on the most important joint bodies'. Gent argued to the contrary.

[103] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B19 F1, R.N.Turner, *Memoirs, Chapter XI*, 2nd page of chapter.
[104] Ibid, 4th page of chapter. A savingram was an internal memo written in telegraphic form, designed to reduce significantly the paper used for internal communications.
[105] TNA, CO 717/149/20, CO/537/1598 to 1605, and CO/537/2159 to 2170 contain minutes of all Conferences from June 1946 to November 1947.

> The Governor-General's duty consisted in assuring himself that co-ordination was being carried out… The functions of the Governor-General should not be interpreted or exercised in a way which…invades their (the Governors of the MU and Singapore) responsibilities.

Newboult concurred, arguing that if MacDonald had representatives on such bodies 'people would accuse that he had executive authority'.[106] MacDonald subsequently relented, acknowledging that he did not want his role to appear to weaken the Singapore and MU Governments, and agreeing to only appoint 'observers'.[107] Thus, an uneasy truce settled over the matter of 'co-ordination' but there would be further flare ups. In March 1947, MacDonald suggested the creation of a Joint Committee on Economic Policy. As an alternative, Gent countered that the proposed experts just 'meet from time to time, as and when any of them wished to consult with each other'. Again, Gent got his way.[108]

The third organisational unit studied in this section is the Labour Department. Its post-war re-creation was very different from the pre-war Department which had been established to manage the welfare of Indian labourers employed on rubber plantations. It now expanded significantly to assume the responsibilities of the pre-war Chinese Protectorate (CP) Department. The CP had managed Chinese labour, regulated secret societies, and dealt with social and welfare issues amongst the Chinese population, such as prostitution and disease. It had been the practice each year for several Cadets joining the MCS to be selected for the CP and sent immediately on a 2-year language training in Canton to learn Cantonese, or in Amoy to learn Hokkien. The early prosperity of the FMS was largely built on tin-mining undertaken by Chinese immigrant labour. As the economy and demand for Chinese labour grew, so too did the CP. It became increasingly focused in the inter-war years on the control of secret societies and enforcement of bans on membership of Malayan branches of the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist) and Chinese Communist Parties. William Blythe, who was to become Secretary for Chinese Affairs (SCA) in the MU, believed it had a proud history.

> It grew to be an institution unrivalled, I venture to say, in British Colonial History, touching the Chinese Community at every point, with officers trained to observe and interpret every

[106] TNA, CO/537/1599, Minutes of Governors' Conference 25th September 1946, 8-9, and Gent Memorandum Paper 12A/46. All quotes.
[107] TNA, CO 537/2163, Minutes of Governors' Conference, 13th November 1946, 18-19.
[108] TNA, CO 537/2166, Minutes of Governors' Conference 11th March 1947, 26.

> reaction throughout the body social and the body politic of Chinese in Malaya. It was, in truth, the finger on the pulse.[109]

Wartime planning in the MPU decided that the separate administration of the Chinese population was no longer aligned with the goal of creating a Malayan identity and treating all communities equally. All that would be retained would be a pan-Malayan Secretary of Chinese Affairs (SCA) role, intended for Purcell. When Purcell resigned, Gent took the opportunity instead to create a dedicated SCA for the MU, into which he placed Blythe who was returning from his recuperation leave after internment. Blythe started his new role with only one clerk and three translators.[110]

The much expanded Labour Department was headed by Labour Commissioner John Jeff, who had joined the MCS in 1920 as a Chinese Cadet and had been Acting Secretary of Chinese Affairs in the late 1930s. Returning from internment, he would last less than a year in his new role. The work of the new Labour Department was strongly influenced by the socialist goals of Attlee's Labour Government. Their impact on planned colonial policy had been clearly signalled ahead of the July 1945 Election.

> (A Labour Government) would curb the exploitation of human labour...labour legislation is as yet still elementary and welfare provision most inadequate. It is not only labour codes and welfare but labour standards that call for action.[111]

This policy called for trade unionism to be actively facilitated in the MU. Trade unions would be the channel for the aspirations of the Chinese work force, rather than membership of secret societies, or China based political parties. By January 1947, membership of trade unions in the MU was over 194,000, within 267 unions. 58% of members were Chinese, 40% Indian, and 2% Malay.[112] Stenson's research explains that the Labour Department assumed a policy of 'conciliation and supervision rather than of direction and control'. To assist Jeff with his task, the CO assigned John Brazier, from the UK's National Union of Railwaymen, as Trade Union Adviser. Brazier's mission was to 'provide positive encouragement and guidance for the growth of "sound", "responsible" unionism'.[113] His arrival added to the already complex

[109] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F3, Blythe, *Note*, 12th September 1948, para. 2.
[110] Ibid, Blythe, *The Malayan Civil Service*, 4.
[111] *Crown Colonist*, June 1945, A. Creech Jones, *A Labour View of British Colonial Policy*.
[112] UOBL, Fabian Bureau Papers, Box 154, *Trade Unionism in Malaya*, Trade Union Department Malaya, September 1947, appendices.
[113] M.R.Stenson, *Industrial Conflict in Malaya: Prelude to the Communist Revolt of 1948*, (London, 1970), hereafter Stenson, *Industrial Conflict*, 134. Both quotes.

organisational structure for labour management which included a separate Department of the Registrar of Trade Unions. Brazier now created a third Department for the formulation and control of trade union policy. As the MU and Singapore had separate Labour Departments, differences in attitude and practice had already emerged, even though some co-operation and commonality was required for managing the communist dominated Pan Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and its affiliated Federations in each State. There were inevitable disagreements and confusions over registration processes, the pace of legislative development and disparities between policy and practice. Brazier's advocacy of new, non-political, independent, and democratic trade unionism[114] seemed at odds with controlling the well-established and communist dominated Federations. As any new legislation would apply to both the Federations and the new independent trade unions, the result was uncertainty and delay in the planned liberalisation of the still operative and restrictive pre-war Trade Unions Ordinance.

Disagreements over policy direction reached a head with the visit to the MU of Ivor Thomas, Undersecretary of State at the CO in February 1947. He was faced with a delegation of employers alarmed by the activities of political agitators. The delegation demanded firm measures to control labour such as suppression of the Federations, banishment of 'subversive elements', strengthening of the police and even use of the military. Such ideas were the antithesis of the Labour Government's liberalisation plans based on free trade union principles. Jeff, not Brazier, was to be the casualty for the perceived failure to foster the right sort of trade unionism, and was he replaced by R.G.D.Houghton, a transferee from the Home Civil Service. Rea, now Deputy Commissioner of Labour in Kedah, saw Gent as the executioner and was not impressed by Houghton. He wrote in his memoirs that,

> (Jeff) spoke up to Gent in Executive Council…it was clear Gent resented this. Gent got a Commissioner of Labour seconded from the Ministry of Labour in London. He knew the correct "labour patter" and could impress the uninitiated in conversation but he'd never been out of England.[115]

Houghton's 1947 Labour Department Annual Report sought to reassure that progress was being made. It boasted that 'Labour Officers now deal with every nationality of labourer in

[114] Democratic in this context meant that workers participated fully in the election of office bearers and in making major decisions.
[115] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Rea, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 31st January 1981.

the country…their activities cover practically every aspect of the labourer's life'. Houghton noted 'welcome signs that in the more progressive trade unions, the strike weapon is becoming, as it should be, a last resort'. [116] Days lost to strikes had indeed reduced, from 96,000 in February 1947 (the month Thomas had visited) to 22,000 in January 1948,[117] but there was more than a touch of wishful thinking around such reporting. Evidence existed of continued MCP infiltration, determined on industrial disruption not reconciliation. Brazier was aware of this but his otherwise fulsome Report made only a brief statement of regret that 'interested parties and groups took advantage of the very fertile ground to further aggravate the unsettled economic position'.[118] However, it was not Brazier's, nor indeed the Labour Department's, responsibility to weed out infiltrators in trade unions, as was later acknowledged by Guy Madoc, Deputy Director of the Malayan Security Service (MSS) during the MU period.

> (Brazier's role was) to show them how to run a trade union; to elect their officials and so on. It was our duty as the MSS to keep an eye on trade unions and try and identify communists amongst their officials. But remember that there was this sad effect, certainly in my mind, that we thought the communist threat in Malaya had been neutralised by the fact they were our allies during the war.[119]

Significant disillusionment began to emerge in late 1947 amongst Labour Department officers over the policies being pursued. Stenson finds these officers were now increasingly aligned with the attitudes of the employers who had confronted Thomas earlier in the year.

> Labour Department officials were virtually unanimous in the opinion that workers were basically satisfied, that union demands were usually 'unreasonable' or 'frivolous' and that union activities should be far more closely supervised.[120]

In addition to policy disagreement, there was organisational instability and career dissatisfaction. Staff lists in Houghton's 1947 Report show 22 members of the MCS in the Department, four in its head offices in Kuala Lumpur and 18 spread around the States. Of these 22, only two positions had benefitted from a sole occupant throughout 1947. Four positions had seen two changes in occupant.[121] Rea's memoirs reflect the doubts on how

[116] TNA, CO 576/76, *Annual Report of the Labour Department, 1947*. Both quotes.
[117] Stenson, *Industrial Conflict,* 198.
[118] TNA, CO 576/78, *Trade Union Adviser, Annual Report 1947*.
[119] UOBL, *End of Empire*, Transcripts, Vol 6, Interview with Madoc, 53.
[120] Stenson, *Industrial Conflict,* 163.
[121] TNA, CO 576/76, *Annual Report of the Labour Department*, 1947.

careers would develop in the new Labour Department, and a feeling that MCS in the Labour Department held a lower status to their Malay stream compatriots in the Secretariat and Districts.

> Some of those on the Malay side regarded us as a convenience to settle problems arising in the Chinese and Indian communities…technical in the same way as Medical, Education and Public Works…One saw little prospect for promotion to positions of influence and pay, outside the Timescale. Some tried to get out of the department by studying Malay, others by studying law and becoming judges...I myself "escaped" in 1952. [122]

Constitutional Negotiations

Gent's focus was on constitutional issues. He put returning internee, William Lineham, on 'special duty' as Chair of an *ad hoc* Committee to make recommendations on qualifications appropriate for MU Citizenship.[123] This work was unfinished business after the original citizenship proposals contained in the March White Paper had been withdrawn by the Government, as the price paid for the main constitutional proposals to pass unopposed in the Commons. Lineham had joined the MCS in 1916 as a Malay Cadet and in the 1930s had been British Resident in Perak. His Committee comprised the 9 Unofficial Members of Gent's Advisory Council who, given the Malay boycott of the MU, were all non-Malay. In addition, three senior MCS officers sat on the Committee, Gordon-Hall, Jomaron and Williams. All three, like Lineham, had joined the MCS as Malay Cadets in the inter-war period and had been interned. Given they were to address citizenship rights for the Chinese and Indian communities, it is at first surprising that no MCS officers with deep expertise of these communities were put on the Committee. However, Gent and the CO needed proposals to emerge from Lineham's Committee that would neutralise earlier Commons concern that citizenship proposals would render the Malays a minority amongst those enfranchised. As there were no Malays on Lineham's Committee, it presumably fell to the Malay-centred MCS officers to help Lineham craft more restrictive proposals in face of a likely enthusiasm amongst the Unofficials for generous citizenship rights.

[122] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Rea, *Correspondence*, letter Rea to Heussler 31st January 1981.
[123] School of Oriental and African Studies Archives, University of London, MS 169519, Papers of Sir Theodore Adams Papers. These contain minutes of the Committee's meetings May/June 1946 and an Interim Report, July 1946.

The White Paper proposal to give citizenship by birth was not challenged in Committee, so discussions centred on the provision to grant citizenship after 10-years' residence. This qualifying period was not lengthened but the Committee proposed it no longer be automatic. An applicant should additionally prove an intention to stay permanently in the MU, take an oath of allegiance, and speak Malay or English. The minutes of the Committee show its MCS members advocating these additional provisos, and doubting the long-term commitment of many would be citizens to the MU. According to Gordon-Hall, Resident Commissioner in Negri Sembilan State; 'once a Chinese, always a Chinese'.[124]

In contrast to Lineham's task, the development of new constitutional proposals would only involve official representatives of the MU Government, the Sultans and UMNO. A 'Constitutional Working Committee' was formed which drew its authority not from the MU Governor but from the conferences that had been held between Gent, MacDonald, the Sultans, and Onn in July 1946. The Committee was chaired by Chief Secretary Newboult, with the MU Government represented by its Attorney General (O'Connor), Financial Secretary (Godsall), and Lineham and Williams of the MCS. The meetings were attended by Hone (observer for MacDonald) and Adams (adviser to the Sultans). Gent could be assured of the Government side's alignment and loyalty to his and MacDonald's position. Newboult and Hone had already been party to the 'unanimous opinion' on a federal solution that MacDonald had reported to Hall in May 1946.[125] Their authorship of the original MU proposals whilst in the MPU was now distant history. Lineham and Williams had been hand-picked by Gent. Although sitting with the Sultans, Adams was also aligned with the direction proposed by Gent and MacDonald. The CO insistence that he only be an adviser to the Sultans seems to have weakened as there is evidence of his sharing information with Gent on the negotiating position of the Sultans and UMNO.[126] Gent subsequently praised 'the wise and experienced advice' that Adams had given to the 'Malay side'.[127]

In the circumstances, a pro-Malay British position was perhaps inevitable. The strength and danger of Malay opposition had obliged the British to negotiate solely with the Malays and hammer out a new constitution that would be acceptable to both. This goal would

[124] Ibid, minutes of meeting 1st and 2nd June 1946.
[125] TNA, CO 537/1529, telegram 5A, MacDonald to Hall, 25th May 1946.
[126] TNA, CO 537/1530, telegram Gent to Creech Jones, 27th October 1946.
[127] TNA, CO 537/1531, letter, Gent to Creech Jones, 21st November 1946.

not be achieved merely through the friendship and goodwill that Gammans had envisaged. It would require concessions to be made to the Malays that even those on the British side sympathetic to the Malay situation may not have anticipated. Nonetheless, none of the MCS on the Government side, or the ex-MCS advising the Malay side, had a career background which gave them an appreciation of the likely reaction of Chinese and Indian communities to constitutional revisions. The past practice of dividing MCS Cadets into three language streams immediately on arrival in Malaya had a profound impact on experience, and resultant thinking. The long period spent mastering a community language, and the series of jobs then performed in direct contact with that community, produced MCS officers intimate with the community to which they had been assigned, but blinkered to others.

Constitutional proposals were approved by the UK Cabinet on 2nd December. The Sultans would be restored as sovereigns of their 9 states, the British King remaining sovereign over the Penang and Malacca Settlements. All sovereigns would agree to cede some powers to a Federation of Malaya. The head of the Federal Government would be a British appointed High Commissioner who would head an Executive Council directing federal administrative functions. There would be a Federal Legislative Council comprising Official and Unofficial nominees, and an intention to eventually hold elections for the Unofficial positions. In each Malay State, there would be a Legislature and an Executive Council responsible to the Sultan. On citizenship, the recommendations of the Lineham Committee had been rejected and replaced with even more restrictive qualifications. There would be no citizenship right by birth for non-Malays, and the minimum period for Federal Citizenship by residence would be 15 years.

Now that proposals existed that were supported by the Sultans, UMNO and the British Government, Creech Jones[128] insisted that other communities be consulted before these proposals were put to the UK Parliament. The proposals were published on 24th December to an immediate hostile reception. The *Crown Colonist* reported that 'a storm of criticism has broken, transcending in intensity that which greeted the original, now discredited MacMichael proposals'. All communities were apparently displeased, including some sections of Malay opinion concerned at the return of the 'feudalism' of Sultan sovereignty. The new Federal and State Legislatures were 'assailed as devoid of the slightest trace of democracy'.

[128] Creech Jones was appointed Secretary of State on 4 October 1946.

With 10 differing sovereignties now at play (one British and nine Malay), citizenship of the Federation would only be a 'status', not a nationality, an arrangement 'without parallel anywhere else in the world'.[129]

Gent established a Consultative Committee comprising 'Government Nominees'. In selecting its leader, Gent turned not to the MCS, but to the MU's Director of Education, Harold Cheeseman. Cheeseman had been in the Education Department since 1907, working in Penang, Singapore, and Johore before being interned in 1942. Many organisations and societies joined a Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action (PMCJA) which refused to participate in the consultative exercise. Other than a Secretary, there were no MCS on Cheeseman's committee. The 'nominees' were all drawn from those in the Chinese, Indian and Eurasian communities still prepared to participate in the exercise.[130] Gent may have felt that placing MCS on the committee, as he had done on Lineham's, would have played to reports in the UK press of PMCJA objections of a pre-ordained outcome from committee members who 'cannot claim the status of representatives of the people of Malaya'.[131]

Cheeseman soldiered on, his Committee conducting six public meetings and considering 81 submissions from Associations and individuals, despite the PMCJA boycott. A split emerged on the Committee when two Chinese members dissented with the Committee's emerging recommendations which gave the non-official balance on the Federal Legislative Council to Malay representation, and made no substantial changes to the proposed citizenship laws. Despite this glitch, Gent reassured the CO that 'seven of the members were strongly of the opinion that the special rights and interests of the Malays in the country justified special additional Malay representations'. This surprising majority opinion amongst a non-Malay group must have resulted from Gent's careful selection of 'nominees' and Cheeseman's chairmanship. Their opinion would be used to justify a principle of Malay special rights.[132] Gent's Advisory Council met and simply endorsed the majority report, ignoring the minority opinion. British policy appeared to no longer pursue equal rights for all Malayan communities.

[129] *Crown Colonist*, March 1947. All quotes.
[130] TNA, CO 537/1532, biographical details on Consultative Committee members.
[131] *The Times*, 24th December 1946.
[132] TNA, CO 537/2141, *Report of the Consultative Committee*, 21st March 1947, and letter Gent to Creech Jones, 7th April 1947.

The Revised Constitutional Proposals were now put to Parliament.[133] Shadow Secretary of State Stanley was again happy to accede to the Government's desire to avoid lengthy Parliamentary debate, or a vote, whilst noting that the proposals 'depart very considerably from the fundamental principles which were laid down only a year ago'.[134] Gammans made no parliamentary statement on the new proposals. In an interview given to *British Malaya*, he reflected that, 'I unhesitatingly supported the Malays in their objections to the original proposals...I am therefore very gratified at the changes that have been made'.[135] Maxwell was sent a copy of the proposals by the CO. He replied hoping 'most earnestly that this new constitution will appeal to all communities, and that it will be the foundation of racial harmony and co-operation'.[136] Lord Marchwood, sent his copy by Creech Jones, replied in a similar vein.[137] Adams was now in Switzerland, his task apparently completed.[138]

Whilst the UK press would report the new proposals, there was little insightful comment. The new proposals for Federal Legislative Council membership were complex, their implications unclear other than to knowledgeable insiders. The recognition Gent had given to the special rights and interests of the Malays was likely not fully appreciated. It would fall to Winstedt to explain and celebrate the significant new elements.[139] There would now be Presidents of each State and Settlement Council who would also be on the Legislative Council, holding Official seats. However, they would have a special status allowing them, effectively, free votes. With these additional votes, the Malays would now hold a 'preponderance' of the, so called, 'non-Official' vote on the Legislative Council.[140] For Winstedt, this was a matter 'of the highest importance' as the British had conceded that no change in immigration rights could be made without the majority support of this non-Official vote.

[133] *Summary of Revised Constitutional Proposals*, (HMSO, July 1947).
[134] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 441, House of Commons, 29th July 1947, Mr. Oliver Stanley (Bristol, West), 285.
[135] *British Malaya*, October 1947.
[136] TNA, CO 537/2143, letter Maxwell to Bourdillon, 29th July 1947.
[137] Ibid, letter Marchwood to Creech Jones, 28th July 1947.
[138] TNA, CO 537/1563, letter Adams to Lloyd, 12th December 1946.
[139] *Crown Colonist*, September 1947, Richard Winstedt, *Proposals for the Federation of Malaya*.
[140] There were 50 'Unofficial' seats, 22 Malay and 28 non-Malay. When the 9 State and 2 Settlement Council Presidents votes were added, the Malays would have a majority as the 9 State Presidents were Malay.

Summary

The ex-MCS campaign against the CO's imposition of the Malayan Union had only an initial impact, that the CO and the Federation sought to contain. It was escalating Malay opposition which drove Gent's change of mind to propose a federal constitution. Gent then leveraged the ongoing ex-MCS attack on the Union to help him win over an initially resistant CO. Ex-MCS officers were influential in behind-the-scenes initiatives that brought Malay leaders to the negotiating table.

Malay opposition to the MU distracted Gent from the task of reestablishing effective British administration. As he struggled to agree a new constitution for Malaya, significant reliance was placed on returning internees to fill MCS leadership roles and address multiple urgent priorities throughout civil administration. Examples from District organisation, the Secretariat and the Labour Department show the administration struggling to stabilise in this period. The MCS task was made more complex by Gent's desire to diminish MCS influence and the organisational tensions between himself and MacDonald. Gent's inner circle of MCS advisors were pro-Malay orientated and he lacked the advice of MCS officers with a deep understanding of the Chinese community, and its potential reaction to his new policies.

Concerns were raised that many MCS leaders were still debilitated by their internment experiences, although MCS memoirs very rarely depict this as a deep rooted trauma or humiliation. Whilst the period ends with a new constitutional settlement, hopes that administrative order could now be fully re-established were to be dashed by the outbreak of a communist insurgency.

3. Off Balance

The Federation of Malaya was created on 1st February 1948. This chapter studies its first three and half years to October 1951. Many senior MCS officers now had diminished responsibility under the new Federal Constitution. A communist insurgency intensified whilst first tentative steps were made towards self-government. Despite the Service's contention that it contributed an important balance in maintaining Malaya's stability, MCS officers appeared increasingly off balance in their reactions to these developments, and their political leaders became increasingly concerned at their attitudes. Several ex-MCS officers still sought to influence outcomes.

A new High Commissioner

In the early months of the Federation of Malaya, Gent's authority as High Commissioner was weakening. In April 1948, the decision was made at the CO that Gent would not return to Malaya after his leave scheduled for later in the year.[1] His eventual departure was tragic. A collapse in confidence in his leadership after onset of the communist insurgency led to his urgent recall to London for 'discussions'. Gent died in July when his returning aircraft collided with another over North London. In the emotional aftermath, Lady Gent would claim that her husband had retained the confidence of local political leaders and that the 'whole affair was the result of scheming, mainly, so it was implied by service people, in the hope that a high service officer might be appointed as High Commissioner'.[2] Despite Lady Gent's contention, the collapse of confidence in her husband's leadership seems proven.[3] Whilst the decision to remove Gent cannot credibly be seen as an MCS 'plot', it did offer the opportunity for those in the MCS who had been with him since MPU days to distance themselves from his ideas and actions. MacDonald privately advised Creech Jones that 'in their loyalty to the High Commissioner, (Newboult) and his colleagues kept a lot of their misgivings and disagreements with him to themselves'.[4] Newboult became the Officer Administering the Government (OAG)

[1] TNA, CO 967/83, minute by Lloyd on his discussion with Lady Gent, 15th July 1948.
[2] Ibid, no evidence was offered by Lady Gent to substantiate her claim.
[3] See opinions expressed by, 1) Onn, (TNA, 537/3686, letter Macdonald to Creech Jones, 19th May 1948), 2) a London Delegation of European Businessmen to the CO, (TNA, CO 717/172/6, telegram Creech Jones to Gent 22nd June 1948), 3) the *Straits Times* editorial on 17th June 1948, *Govern or Get Out*.
[4] BDEEP, Malaya, Part II, CO 537/3756, No.1, letter MacDonald to Creech Jones, 24th August 1948.

in the temporary absence of a High Commissioner but the record shows no evidence that he was considered, or considered himself, a candidate to succeed Gent. There was, however, an ex-MCS contender, Lord Milverton.

Lord Milverton (Arthur Richards) had joined the MCS in 1907, initially working in District Offices, and progressing to the Federated States' Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur as Under Secretary.[5] He had left Malaya in 1930, moving through a succession of Governorships, serving the last five years of his career as Governor of Nigeria. As one of the most prominent Governors of his generation, he had been ennobled by Attlee in 1947. The day after Gent had started his fated return to London, MacDonald wrote to Creech Jones urging that Gent's successor be selected and announced as soon as possible. Expecting the insurgency to 'not last more than 6 months', MacDonald declared 'the name of Lord Milverton springs to mind…for a temporary period of, say, a year to deal with the emergency'.[6] Creech Jones replied that Milverton was 'not available', proposing instead Henry Gurney who, until British withdrawal a few weeks previously, had been Chief Secretary in Palestine. For Creech Jones, Gurney's qualities, demonstrated over a succession of African and West Indian colonial appointments, outweighed 'the fact that he has not before served in an Asiatic country other than Palestine'.[7] After Gent's sudden death, MacDonald pressed the case again for Milverton, adding that Newboult thought Milverton's candidacy 'an absolutely first-class suggestion'.[8]

Milverton was enthusiastic at the suggestion he go to Malaya as High Commissioner. Writing to Creech Jones, he declared it would be 'an honour and a privilege to be allowed to give my last service to the country which after absorbing 22 years – the best years – of my life has always held my affection as a second home'.[9] It was, nonetheless, Gurney who would arrive in Malaya as High Commissioner in early October. According to Milverton's biographer, Attlee had stepped in, unwilling to put Milverton in such a strenuous post, especially as he was making a promising start in home politics.[10] Some in the CO might also have been cautious at the apparent enthusiasm within the Federal Secretariat to welcome back one of its own.

[5] Richard Peel, *Old Sinister, A memoir of Sir Arthur Richards*, (Cambridge, 1986), hereafter Peel, *Richards*, 19-30.
[6] TNA CO 537/3686, telegram MacDonald to Creech Jones, 29th June 1948.
[7] Ibid, telegram Creech Jones to MacDonald, 30th June 1948.
[8] Ibid, telegram MacDonald to Creech Jones, 2nd July 1948.
[9] UOBL, Papers of Arthur Creech Jones, MSS. Brit.Emp.s.332, Box 57, letter Milverton to Creech Jones, 28th July 1948.
[10] Peel, *Richards, 137.*

Milverton's bucolic description of the Malaya of his halcyon days could also have felt out of touch with post-war reality.

Impact of the new Federal Structure

The MCS believed its officers contributed an important balance in maintaining Malaya's stability. In two pay review submissions made in the late 1940s, its representatives contended that 'on their acumen and drive depends…to a considerable extent the political stability of the country', and that 'this prime service…holds the balance between the others'.[11] However, it was becoming clear that the Service's authority within the 1948 Federal Constitution was much changed. British concessions in the negotiations leading to the Federation of Malaya had included a new division of responsibilities between federal and state administrations. New State Constitutions had been introduced, mirrored largely on the existing Johore Constitution and administrative structures. Johore had established its own legally binding Constitution in 1895, the first Malay State to do so. This vested executive authority in the Sultan but enabled it to be delegated to a Mentri Besar, or Chief Minister, who was the State's Senior Executive Officer. In the year Onn was born (1895) his father became Johore's first Mentri Besar. Under the 1948 State Constitutions, each of the 9 Malay States now appointed a Mentri Besar, a non-MCS position which replaced the MCS filled Resident Commissioner positions that had existed in the MU. Onn followed in his father's footsteps to become the 7th Mentri Besar of Johore. Only Malacca and Penang, which remained as Crown Colonies within the Federation, avoided this change and retained MCS filled Resident Commissioner roles responsible for civil administration.

In late 1947, Gent had prepared the MCS for the changes it faced, emphasising that 'the New Federation Constitution should not be misunderstood as in any substantial way a reversion to the pre-war position'. Each Malay State would now have a British Adviser who was to be the 'High Commissioner's representative…to advise on all matters connected with the Government of a State'. Gent concluded that the new Constitution should be considered a 'pronounced advance' as the central Federal Government now held constitutionally agreed executive authority over federal activities. Gent might have been pleased with the federal

[11] ANM, 1957/0579359. MCS Association submissions to 1) The Joint Salaries Commission Officer, 15th November 1948 and 2) The Secretary for the Special Committee on Salaries, 13th September 1949.

executive power he held but he explained that the British Adviser must strictly be advisory as it would be 'quite inappropriate and unconstitutional' for the Adviser to hold any executive post.[12] Each State's administration was now under the executive control of the Mentri Besar, who managed all positions (including those occupied by MCS Officers) within the State and its District administrations. It was only officers of Federal Departments working in the State who reported elsewhere, to their respective Federal Department Head.

Having been briefed by Gent on the new order, the instinct of the designate British Advisers seems to have been to try to strengthen MCS influence in the new authority structures. Gordon-Hall (in Negri Sembilan) expected the British Adviser's advice 'to be sought incessantly' and proposed the role should have a full-time MCS Secretary to prevent the Adviser becoming 'desk bound'.[13] Gurney was persuaded, proposing that 'experienced officers would be required (in the Secretary roles) in order to help the State Governments to get things working on the right lines'.[14] When Onn heard this, he was having none of it, arguing that if the purpose of filling the roles at such a senior level was to enable the officer to 'interfere with the executive work in the (State) Secretariat…I cannot see that such a step is compatible with the position or duties of the Secretary to the British Adviser'.[15] The outcome of these discussions varied State by State. All the British Advisers were allocated an expatriate MCS Secretary, but gradings varied from Class II to Class V.[16]

Some British Advisers had low expectations of the ability of Malays to assume executive roles in the State administrations and expected to continue to be extensively involved in steering the ships of state. Gordon-Hall's expectation of such in Negri Sembilan is confirmed in Gullick's memoir. Gordon-Hall, however, had greatly underestimated the determination of the State's Mentri Besar, Malek bin Yusof who sent him only one file in the first month of the new constitution.[17] Bryson recalled he was still struggling with the same issue when he succeeded Gordon-Hall in 1949.

[12] ANM, 1957/0472751, Memorandum by His Excellency, no.922/47, *Federal and State Administration*. All quotes.
[13] ANM, 1957/0636708, Gordon-Hall, memorandum, *Proposals for Revised Establishment*, undated 1947.
[14] ANM, 1957/0636714, letter Watherston, central Secretariat, to Pretty, Resident Commissioner Johore, 24th September 1947.
[15] Ibid, letter Onn to Godsall (Financial Secretary), 4th October 1947.
[16] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Establishment Staff List, 1948.
[17] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs, Part 2*, 13.

> He (Malek) was 'prickly', apt to resent any questions from the British Adviser lest this be a sign that the B.A. was trying to regain something of the former Residential power…In the end It was agreed that I should be sent the Council minute papers but only after they had been prepared for submission…the Adviser's signature was not going to appear on the file.[18]

Wilfred Corry, the British Adviser in Pahang, described a more constructive relationship with his Mentri Besar, Dato Mahmud. They had agreed that all State Secretariat files would be available to Corry as Mahmud appeared 'to like to have someone with whom he could discuss a difficult paper'. Corry was more suspicious of the State Secretary, who was responsible to the Sultan and the Mentri Besar for the State's Civil Service. Corry had unsuccessfully opposed his appointment on the grounds of lack of experience, and felt he was now 'very much H.H's (the Sultan's) man'. Corry's suspicions were further raised when he accompanied the Sultan and his retinue to Kuala Lumpur to attend the first Sultans' Conference under the Federal Constitution. Meeting with his fellow British Advisers, he heard suggestions that Onn was leading the Mentri Besars in a 'movement on foot…to reduce the status of the B.A.'. There were also rumours that the Advisers would have to hand over their residences to the Mentri Besars.[19] Aside from these concerns, Corry's diary entries reflect rounds of State visits and meetings, usually prefaced with 'The Mentri Besar and I'. Corry accompanied the Mentri Besar in these meetings but he must have been seen as holding the lesser authority of the two. Corry was one of 20 officers in the uppermost MCS 'Staff' Classes. After their pre-war careers in MCS roles which had 'fused' politics and administration, there was now a potential for frustration and disaffection amid the British Adviser group which represented almost half of this most senior MCS echelon. They found themselves still in high graded roles, but with much diminished political influence and only a limited 'advisory' impact on State administration.

Most of the remaining members of this most senior MCS echelon sat in the new Federal Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur.[20] The Secretariat had expanded to service the new Federal Constitution, its Executive and Legislative Councils, and an increase in the number of Federal Departments.[21] Nonetheless, it continued to funnel many decisions through to the

[18] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F2, hereafter UOBL, Heussler Papers, Bryson, *Memoirs*, *Negri Sembilan*, 16-17.
[19] TNA, FCO 141/7345 and 7349, hereafter TNA, Corry, *Diaries*, entry for 18th February 1948. All quotes. The diaries were compiled by British Advisers such as Corry, at Gurney's instruction, for submission as a monthly report, or as 'secret notes'. Only Corry's diaries seem to have survived.
[20] The exceptions were the Resident Commissioners of Penang and Malacca.
[21] Major new Federal Departments were formed, such as Social Welfare, Public Relations, and Trade Union Adviser.

Chief Secretary. Maurice Hayward, Principal Assistant Secretary in the Secretariat from 1946 to 1950, recalled how he tried to cope with these additional demands.

> The same Assistant Secretary (Hayward himself) shouldered single handed the task of servicing some ten out of some sixteen departments of government...For each piece of paper picked up from the 'in tray', the Assistant had to decide whether to cook up an answer with the aid perhaps of the Attorney General's or the Financial Secretary's offices, or to put up a recommendation for initialling by the Deputy Chief Secretary or the Chief Secretary of the High Commissioner, the last mentioned route being the only one likely to ensure quick and firm decisions'.[22]

Gullick moved to the Federal Secretariat in April 1948 and witnessed 'congestion and near chaos' around the Chief Secretary.

> (Newboult) concentrated his energies on getting through the appalling load of work which crossed his desk. He used to say complacently, and the complacency is the unforgivable part, that there were at most times 800 files awaiting his personal attention in his office at Carcosa– which he called his 'graveyard'. [23]

In addition to the 800 files awaiting his daily attention, Newboult had to address discontent emerging within the States on the working of the new Federal Constitution. Onn threatened to resign his positions in the Federal Government[24] over the issue. He contended that, before his death, Gent had broken the spirit, and even the letter, of the Federal Agreement by over-concentrating executive power in Kuala Lumpur and not consulting the States. MacDonald sounded the alarm to London. In another example of the MCS distancing itself from the Gent legacy, he reported that Onn's complaint had the sympathy of the 'Chief Secretary, Attorney General and other principal officials'.[25] Newboult then wrote to Onn suggesting a committee be formed to review the 'way the Federation is working (so) that any misunderstandings or differences in points of view should be carefully considered'.[26] Onn was only partly assuaged, insisting that before Newboult's Committee met, each State's view should first be gathered through the formation of separate State Committees on the topic. Consequently, when Newboult's Committee at last met, the Malay side was well prepared. Newboult now acknowledged that the practice of consultation with all the States had been

[22] UOBL, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.285, M.J.Hayward papers, hereafter, UOBL, Hayward, *Papers, Recollections*, 2.
[23] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs*, *Part 2*, 14.
[24] Positions he held in addition to being Mentri Besar in Johore.
[25] BDEEP, Malaya, Part II, CO 537/3756, letter MacDonald to Creech Jones, 24th August 1948.
[26] TNA, FCO 141/7436, letter Newboult to Onn, 17th August 1948.

based on a 'strict interpretation' of the Federal Agreement which was limited mostly to consultation on immigration matters.[27] Concessions were now made to State demands that they all be consulted and involved in the full panoply of federal initiative and legislation. As the Labour Government had reassured Parliament that the Federation of Malaya Constitution maintained the strong central government created in the MU, there was natural reluctance amongst the Federation's leaders to disclose the weakening in federal authority which had been conceded, especially as public expectation was for a firm response to the insurgency. Only in time was the CO's Legal Adviser obliged to give a confidential explanation of the implications of the changes agreed within the Newboult Committee. In a 1951 memo, he explained that, although the Federal Government was entitled in most federal matters to act without consultation with the States, it chose always to consult as 'it is the implementation of its policies which matters and this is frequently left to the State Governments'.[28] Such consultation, he advised, took place as an 'administrative action' rather than a constitutionally required one.

Consequently, the Federal Secretariat now had to take on the additional responsibility of organising the consultation of federal proposals with multiple State Secretariats and Legislative Assemblies. To address its organisational travails, the Federal Government turned to experts in the trusted technique of Organisation and Methods (O&M), that had been used in the British Civil Service since 1915[29] to ensure an efficient use of staff. Hayward was interviewed by one such expert and advocated the development of a 'Member System', as had been introduced in the Indian Government in the interwar years. Under such a System, appointees to the Federal Executive Council would each take responsibility for a group of Government Departments, forming a 'Cabinet' around the High Commissioner. Hayward saw this entirely as an administrative mechanism to relieve decision gridlock, leaving unchanged the ultimate executive authority of the High Commissioner.[30] He thought he had made an impact on the O&M expert's thinking, but the eventual report issued in 1950 concluded that the Secretariat's 'Top Organisation…has proved successful in operation and no major change

[27] Ibid, *Note of meeting of Committee to Enquire into the Working of the Administrative Machinery of the Federation*, 14th October 1948.
[28] TNA, CO 537/7250, Letter Roberts-Wray to Creech Jones, 23rd February 1951.
[29] C.R.Krishnamoorthy, Organisation and Methods in British Government, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, April-June, 1953, Vol. 14, No. 2, 113-122.
[30] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B14 F2, letter Hayward to Heussler, 1st April 1982.

is now recommended'. This surprising conclusion was caveated by the enigmatic rider that 'conditions change (and) as it cannot be predicted when these changes will occur…there would be little purpose in now recommending a long term organisation'.[31]

The Emergency

Conditions were, however, changing following the outbreak of an insurgency in June 1948. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP), led since May 1947 by Secretary-General Chin Peng, had previously sought to achieve its aims through political and trade union activity. With new restrictions about to be imposed through changes to the Trades Unions Ordinance, and the prospect of defeat in the elections, however distant, promised by the new Federation Agreement, the MCP faced an existential crisis. The Party decided to abandon its constitutional struggle in preference to an armed rebellion, to be fought as a guerrilla war by its military wing, the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA). MCP aims were to win independence for Malaya on behalf of all its peoples, and then establish a socialist economy. Whilst it sought to embrace all communities, the MCP and MNLA were largely drawn from the Chinese community. The outbreak of their rebellion is conventionally ascribed to the murder of three European planters on estates in the Sungei Siput area of Perak State, on June 16th. Caught by surprise, the Federal Government declared a State of Emergency in three stages over the subsequent two days. The situation became known as the Emergency.

MCS opinion was quick to place blame at Gent's door. Richard Broome, Deputy Commissioner of Labour in Negri Sembilan, recalled himself as a 'normal easy-going and non-political civil servant', but held an 'indignation (which) stemmed from Gent's appalling failure to believe all the signs of the approaching insurrection'.[32] MacDonald shared the view that Gent had 'underestimated the military strength of the rebel bands' but also believed that this had been the case for 'a good many of his Colonial Service Advisers'.[33] MCS opinion evolved to largely absolve itself of any responsibility for Gent's oversight. In 1975, Anthony Short would write that 'it is now practically an article of faith amongst many former members of the Malayan Civil Service…that the government knew all along that insurrection was

[31] ANM, 2006/0006699, *Organisation, Methods and Staff Survey Report, 1950*, Chapter 2. Both quotes.
[32] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F1, Broome letter to Heussler 23rd March 1983.
[33] UOBL, MSS. Brit.Emp.s.533/5, Transcript of MacDonald interview with Ivan Lloyd Phillips, 15th December 1972, 9.

coming'.[34] However, doubts on the existence of a long organised 'plot', and indeed over whether the initial attacks had been planned centrally by MCP leaders, have long existed.[35] In more recent research, Hack describes 'a foglike miasma of over-information'[36] facing Gent's security advisers, and Kenneison finds that 'nobody drew out this complex picture…into a single intelligence report'.[37]

The Emergency's impact was first felt by the MCS within the District Offices. Harold Luckham was a District Officer in the Kinta District of Perak, near the heart of the initial outbreak. The State's British Adviser, Innes Miller, told him that 'it was for the police to deal with…and that nothing special should be expected from the district administration'. Luckham was not convinced and tried to co-ordinate security measures with the local police forces, an attempt hampered by Police Circles in his area being non-coterminous with the administrative District, giving him no single local police officer to work with. He had little direct contact with the army and struggled to have its officers consult him about their actions. Luckham suggested he co-ordinate with the State Secretary but Miller told him to do so only if the State Secretary made an approach. The State Secretary neither visited Luckham's office nor summoned him for discussions.[38] Other MCS officers were prepared to take matters into their own hands. Journalist Noel Barber[39] would subsequently extol the actions of Robert Thompson, Assistant Commissioner for Labour for Perak State, based in Ipoh. On the day of the outbreak, according to Barber, Thompson rushed directly to the scene of the murders, and in the subsequent days organised night-time protection for bachelor planters.

In these early months of the Emergency, a better clarity emerged on the role to be played by the MCS in the Federal Secretariat. Watherston, who was already accountable for internal security support, was swiftly moved by Newboult to become Secretary for Internal Security, chairing a newly formed Internal Security Committee to co-ordinate action between Police and Federal Departments. Short describes it as

[34] Short, *Insurrection*, 77.
[35] 1) A.J. Stockwell, A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow government in Malaya: The origins of the Malayan Emergency, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 21:3, 1993, 66-88. 2) Hack, *Dialogues with Chin Peng*, Dialogues, Sessions V And VI, 116-143.
[36] Karl Hack, *The Malayan Emergency*, (Cambridge, 2022), hereafter Hack, *Emergency,* 73.
[37] Kenneison, *SOE*, Conclusion.
[38] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B16 F1, Luckham, *Malaya 1947 to 1951*, 3-4.
[39] Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs*, (London, 2004), originally published in 1971, hereafter, Barber, *Running Dogs*, 24-28, 61.

> essentially an administrative body. It dealt with essential but low level routine matters - barbed wire, planter's weapons, estate security (but) made no attempt to direct emergency operations on either the civilian or military level.[40]

Luckham's memoir reflects MCS grumblings over Watherston's rapid rise. 'There were a number of officers with proven ability and greater seniority, who would normally have been entitled to promotion'.[41] By 1950, Watherston had enjoyed a three-step promotion to Staff Class in the role of Secretary of Defence and Internal Security, bringing him to equivalence with British Advisers. That he had served with Newboult in the MPU, and had avoided internment, would surely not have escaped comment amongst some of his MCS colleagues.

Watherston's 'administrative body' supported the newly formed Local Defence Committee for Malaya, initially chaired by Newboult as OAG until Gurney arrived. This Committee brought together all the organisations combating the Emergency. In September, it produced a paper on how it was dealing with the Federations 'internal security problems'.[42] This made clear that the police were the 'predominant partners', accountable for obtaining information, protecting the public, and operating against bandits. The army was to provide support to the police and pursue bandit groups driven into the jungle. No general responsibility was designated to civil administration. The Committee indicated that a long-term plan was being drawn up to deal with squatters who were providing food and shelter to MNLA fighters. This plan was to be prepared by another committee chaired by, the apparently indefatigable, Newboult. Within the States, a variety of different co-ordination arrangements developed. In Johore, a State Liaison Committee was chaired by the Chief Police Officer and attended by Onn and the British Adviser, Arthur Sleep.[43] In Pahang, Corry's diaries record a weekly 'War Cabinet' held in the Chief Police Officer's office, attended by himself and the Mentri Besar*,* along with ad hoc meetings 'presided over by the Mentri Besar to discuss (the) bandit situation'.[44] Despite these early attempts at co-ordination, Short concludes that the early months of the Emergency remained a period of 'deep divisions of opinion and approach'.[45]

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[40] Short, *Insurrection*, 122.
[41] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Luckham, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 13th November 1974.
[42] TNA, CO 537/3688, paper, *Local Defence Committee*, 16th September 1948.
[43] Short*, Insurrection,* 123.
[44] TNA, Corry, *Diaries*, 9th November 1948, and 28th January 1949.
[45] Short, *Insurrection*, 153.

Some measure of improved co-ordination was anticipated from the appointment, in the third week of the Emergency, of Col. W. Nicol Gray as the new Commissioner of Police. He would subsequently preside over an 11-fold increase in police numbers and ostensibly take the lead in the counterinsurgency effort. Sunderland's research claims, however, that

> (Gray) was to exercise his guidance within the limits normally imposed on the powers of a commissioner of police. Many senior officials were to have a finger in the pie; he was merely the most knowledgeable of them.[46]

Some fingers in the pie were MCS ones. Not only those of Watherston, whose Secretary of Defence and Security portfolio included the police force, but also those of his boss, the Chief Secretary. Sunderland's research claims that, by early 1950, the Chief Secretary had been put 'in general charge of Emergency operations', albeit that 'as a staff officer (he) could not give orders to the military or police'.[47] Whilst the unpicking of the detailed police-military command structures is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to record that, at this stage of the Emergency, senior MCS officials still appeared to hold a degree of influence in the strategic conduct of the Emergency .

The Squatter Problem

Of the seven members of Newboult's 'Committee to Investigate the Squatter Problem', only one was Chinese. Although there were two senior expatriate MCS officers, they were both originally Malay Cadets, and were returned internees.[48] To bolster the Committee's experience of rural Chinese, the relatively junior John Davis, Deputy Commissioner for Labour in Pahang also joined. Davis was not only one of the small number of MCS officers with Chinese language skills but also had wartime experience of fighting the Japanese alongside the MCP, in the British Special Operations Executive's Force 136. The problem the Committee faced was that the Government had never administered the entire country, but only those parts that contained towns and villages with majority Malay populations, or those areas containing large commercial estates or mines. The remaining vast tracts of unadministered territory were variously termed State Lands, Malay Reservations, or Forest Reserves, and

[46] Riley Sunderland, *Organising Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 1947-1960*, Rand Corporation Memorandum RM-4171-ISA, (Santa Monica, September 1964), hereafter Sutherland, *Counterinsurgency*, 22.
[47] Ibid, 23, both quotes.
[48] ANM, 1957/0673131, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Squatter Problem*, list of Committee members, page 5.

were mostly primal or secondary jungle. For some time, the fringes of these areas had been occupied by large numbers of, predominantly Chinese, squatters.[49] Most farmed their own plots of land and many, in addition to feeding themselves and their families, sold surplus product or livestock to towns and villages within their reach. The Chinese had a long history of immigration into Malaya, but large numbers had started to arrive from the late 19th Century onwards to work in the tin mines. 'Squatting' had developed in the 1930s when these tin mines suffered in the world recession and then recovered through increased mechanisation. Redundant Chinese miners, who had earlier been allowed to bring wives to the country, realised they could create new livelihoods for their families as farmers, or transient labourers, squatting on the abundant jungle fringes or old mining lands. During the Japanese occupation, the abandonment of non-essential industry, together with the impossibility of returning to China, forced more Chinese to take to a squatting existence. By the time the British returned, squatter produce, and casual labour had become so integrated into the food economy of the country and the revived plantation and mining sectors, that there was little incentive, let alone administrative capacity, to do anything about the problem. The Emergency changed this perspective. Now that the MCP had retreated to the jungle, to use it as a base for MNLA attacks, the squatters were providing the insurgents with food, and intelligence on Government activity. That there was an overwhelming majority of Chinese amongst MCP members, and amongst squatters, implied an alignment of interests. Since 1945, most squatters had learnt to fear little from local authorities and had no real inducement to give them information about the MCP. Even those who were not MCP sympathisers could not expect federation protection against MCP intimidation, so would likely acquiesce to communist demands.

Newboult's 'Squatter Committee' reported in January 1949.[50] It recommended that the squatters should be 'settled', ideally in the areas they already occupied. By this they meant that established settlements would have to be constructed with road connections, police stations, schools, and health services, which could be integrated into existing civil administration. The settlements would be 'wired in' and guarded by security forces to prevent any food or information reaching the MCP. Where such settlements could not realistically be constructed in current squatting areas, then the squatters would have to be 're-settled' into

[49] Tan, *Barbed Wire,* 54. Of the 573,000 people who were eventually resettled, 86% were Chinese.
[50] ANM, 1957/0673131, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Squatter Problem*.

areas more suited to settlement and nearer existing areas of civil administration. As gaining legal tenure over land could be a major incentive for squatters to move, the Committee recommended that limited period land titles be issued, potentially leading to eventual permanent title. The stick to match this carrot would be that any squatter who refused settlement or resettlement would be 'repatriated' to China. The solution could be expressed in a few sentences but finding the political will to implement it was challenging as the Federal Government relied on the States to fund and implement the recommendations. Reluctance to change the system of land tenure and unwillingness to pay for land purchase and resettlement made most State administrations cautious in responding to the Committee Report.[51] There was extensive planning, but very limited progress.

Small-scale resettlements were, however, created at Mawait in Johore and at Titi in Jelebu District, Negri Sembilan State, although these depended on the energy and determination of relatively junior MCS officers. Although Mawait was abandoned due to its unsuitable location, District Officer Charles Howe, who had joined the MCS as a Cadet in 1946, was more successful in resettling the squatters in the areas around Titi. Howe recalled that he faced '1001 objections' to his plans but, as he made progress, 'Higher Authority' began to take notice.[52] Gurney visited and enquired 'what is your authority for all this?' As he had no authority, Howe wondered 'if I would get the sack or an MBE'. He got an MBE.[53]

Apart from these small-scale initiatives, it was mostly just discussion and planning. Malay leaders in the States, and some British in the Federation, remained attracted to the simpler option of detention and repatriation, which had been greatly enabled by Emergency Regulation 17D, issued in January 1949. Through this, and subsequent regulations, actions taken mainly by the police and army led to some 42,000 people being detained, and 31,000 subsequently repatriated, to China and other countries, between 1948 and 1956. The Communist Party victory in China in October 1949 had disrupted repatriations to China, but they were to resume in smaller numbers.[54] To try to stem the use of this option, Gurney had written to British Advisers urging them to play their part in tackling the squatter problem 'positively and constructively' and not leave the matter to the police and army and the

[51] Loh*, Tin Mines*, 112.
[52] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F1, Howe, *A Few Memories of 2 ½ years as District Officer – Jelebu*, 18. Both quotes.
[53] Ibid, letter Howe to Heussler, 11th October 1981. Both quotes.
[54] Hack, *Emergency*, 156, table 4.3.

'negative process' of detention and expulsion alone.[55] This appeal appeared to have limited effect and, by early 1950, the Federal Government had to accept that its strategy of leaving squatter resettlement to the States had clearly failed as only 18,500 squatters had been resettled.[56]

Into this malaise stepped Chief of the Imperial Staff, and Burma War veteran, Field Marshal William Slim who visited the region in October 1949. He was surprised at the lack of engagement with the Chinese community, and the attitudes of civil officers.

> A civil official who can speak Chinese is extremely rare… As a result the civil administration has no real touch with or control over a considerable portion of the vast Chinese population… A number of the pre-war British Malayan civil and police officers are, I think, obsessed with the idea that Malaya is a country for Malays only and that it is possible almost to ignore the Chinese…The Army is willing to play its full share but it is wasting its time unless urgent steps are being taken to bring Malaya under efficient civil administration…The whole Malayan civil administration should be re-oriented so that it pays at least as much attention to the Chinese as to the Malays. [57]

Slim's report was sent to Creech Jones who then wrote to Gurney. Creech Jones' letter made clear that 'the greatest single contribution which the Civil Government can make towards the end of these troubled conditions, is by bringing the squatter areas under effective administrative control'. In couched terms, he acknowledged to Gurney that 'a sympathetic approach to the administration of the Chinese does not come naturally to some of the Senior Officers of the MCS'. Nonetheless he wished to convey the 'anxiety of the Government' that everything practical should be done as soon as possible. [58]

When Gurney produced his January 1950 Situation Report he seemed not to have heard Creech Jones' subtle messages, let alone Slim's concerns. Gurney covered the military and political situation in detail but only on page four (of his six-page report) did Gurney offer two paragraphs on squatters. All he could offer on progress was that schemes were 'now going forward in all states where they are necessary and meeting with a good and encouraging response', adding that any resettlement scheme would only be effective if the threat of the bandit was removed from its door. Gurney conceded that 'a more rigorous

[55] TNA, 717/172/5, letter Gurney to British Advisers, 3rd June 1949.
[56] ANM, 1957/0618834, *The Squatter Problem in Malaya*, Paper no. 14, 1950, Appendix C.
[57] TNA, CO 537/4374, *Note on Tour of South East Asia*, *October 1949*, Part II, Malaya. All quotes.
[58] Ibid, letter Creech Jones to Gurney, 5th December 1949. All quotes.

civilian effort was needed', but this was to be only 'in support of stronger military pressure'.[59] Creech Jones must have been dismayed that Gurney seemed not to have acknowledged that bringing the squatter areas under effective administrative control was the most important action required of the civil administration.

The Briggs Plan

In February 1950, Gurney had advised Creech Jones of his idea to appoint one officer 'to plan, co-ordinate and generally direct the anti-bandit operation'.[60] With the rapid support of the CO, and the Chiefs of Staff, the proposal was approved by Attlee, now reinstalled as Prime Minister with a slim majority after the Labour Party's electoral success on 24th February.[61] A few weeks later, Attlee also agreed to the creation of a Ministerial Committee for Malaya to 'keep events in Malaya closely under review'.[62] When the appointment of Lieut.-General Sir Harold Briggs was announced, an assumption of one newspaper was that he would be a 'supreme commander of anti-bandit operations'.[63] However, he held the title 'Director of Operations', a civilian post equal in status to the Chief Secretary.[64] James Griffiths, newly installed as Secretary of State for the Colonies, as Creech Jones had lost his seat, explained Gurney's role in response to a parliamentary question from Gammans.

> Sir Harold Briggs will be responsible for the preparation of general plans for offensive action and for the allocation of tasks to the various components of the security forces…(He) will not be in direct command of troops or police (but) would have all the practical powers which a strategic commander required in this situation.[65]

These rapid developments, following hard on the heels of Slim's visit to Malaya, and coinciding with new incumbents as Secretaries of State for the Colonies and for War, cannot be understood simply as a response to Gurney's 'idea'. Whilst it may have been sensitively handled to prevent the appearance of a loss of faith in the Federal Government, it marked a major step up in the degree to which the UK Government (and its Chiefs of Staff) wished to assume a closer view, even control, over events in Malaya.

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[59] TNA, DEFE 11/34, letter Gurney to Creech Jones, *Review of the Situation*, 12th January 1950. All quotes.
[60] TNA, CO 537/5994, telegram Gurney to Creech Jones, 23rd February 1950.
[61] TNA, DEFE/11/34, memo Shinwell, newly appointed Minister of Defence, recommending Briggs' appointment to Attlee, 7th March 1950.
[62] TNA, CO 537/5997, minute by Shinwell, 27th March 1950.
[63] *Evening Standard*, 21st March 1950, *Malaya Finds the Man, Bandit-Buster Briggs*.
[64] Short, *Insurrection*, 234.
[65] Hansard Fifth Series, Volume 473, Commons Sitting 5th April 1950, 1182-1183.

Arrangements were now made for Briggs' arrival In Kuala Lumpur. Thompson had moved from Perak and now sat in the Federal Secretariat, as Assistant Secretary – Political Intelligence, MCS Class III. Barber would write that Thompson had the twin advantage of regular tennis games with Gurney and common experience of the Burma War with Briggs. These would lead to his being chosen to make the office preparations for the incoming Director of Operations and to Thompson and Briggs taking 'an instant liking to each other'. According to Barber, Briggs declared to Thompson that 'the whole key to the war lies in getting control of the squatter areas', and then gave the latter the task of drafting what would become 'The Briggs Plan'.[66] Barber likely took licence in inflating Thompson's role, as the depiction of him as a junior, but very capable and influential MCS officer, (and war hero), suited the story. This would, however, not be the last time in his unique career that Thompson would draw himself to a senior leader as confidential adviser on defence and security matters.

Whilst Thompson's star might have been rising, Briggs sought to circumscribe the influence exercised by senior MCS officers over Emergency planning. In the detailed order of precedence in the Federal Government, Briggs' civil rank was indeed equal to, but still 'after', the Chief Secretary.[67] This meant that Briggs had to approach the High Commissioner on civil matters through the Chief Secretary.[68] As additional complexity, the heads of the police or armed forces retained the ability to appeal his decisions to the High Commissioner or the respective Far East Commanders-in-Chief. Briggs' formation of a Federal War Council, and his eventual success in getting Gurney to chair it, partially addressed these issues. It gave him a legitimate direct access to Gurney, and created a forum in which decisions could be made that would be much less subject to subsequent appeal. In addition to Briggs and Gurney, the War Council comprised the Commissioner of Police, the Chief Secretary, army and air force commanders, the senior naval liaison, and the Secretary for Internal Defence and Security.

The finalised Briggs Plan was considered in the Cabinet's new 'Malaya Committee' in July 1950. The Plan maintained that long-term security could only be maintained in Malaya through Britain's continued commitment to defend the country and by 'extending effective administration and control of all populated areas'. Half the report detailed the 'action required by the civil authorities' which was needed to strengthen administration 'to the

[66] Barber, *Running Dogs*, 114-115.
[67] Sunderland, *Insurgency*, 33.
[68] Ibid, 35.

utmost extent possible'. The plan explained the newly formed Federal War Council (FWC). Reporting to it would now be State (and Settlement) War Executive Committees (SWECs), chaired by the Mentri Besar in each State, and the Resident Commissioner in each Settlement. Reporting to each SWEC would be District War Executive Committees (DWECs), each chaired by a District Officer. As the intention was to extend the net of civil administration to areas previously not covered, Briggs had estimated there would need to be a doubling, maybe, trebling of administrative officers in the field. Some of these were being found by 'raiding the less immediately essential Government Services' but it was already apparent that more would need to be recruited by the CO, an initial figure of 30 additional MCS officers being suggested. This enhanced District MCS capability would be focused on squatter resettlement, with Briggs planning to complete all 'essential resettlement' by the beginning of 1952.[69]

The significant expectations which the emerging Briggs Plan would place on Malaya's administrative capability had been concerning the CO for several months. Consequently, efforts were made to manage down Ministers' expectations of a rapid improvement in this capability. In April, a memo from Griffiths explained why the progress that Gurney had been able to make so far on resettlement had required 'time, tact and infinite patience' in persuading States to acquire land and provide funding for what most Malays still saw as an 'alien Chinese element'. Griffiths conceded another 'serious limitation' was shortage of staff, especially those with Chinese language skills. Existing Chinese speaking staff were, therefore, being found from the federal administration by closing down 'inessential departments'. Plans were also in place to teach 'kitchen Chinese' to existing officers but Griffiths warned that he did not see how 'spectacular success' could be achieved in meeting resourcing needs. The U.S. government had been approached to try to recruit missionaries who had been in China before the communists came to power, and the Governor of Hong Kong had been approached to release some of his officers. Even here there were problems, as the Chinese dialects needed in Malaya were not necessarily those used in Hong Kong.[70]

Griffiths received little sympathy from his colleagues. In the June Malaya Committee Meeting, the Minister of Defence questioned if 'the civilian set-up and administration in

[69] TNA, CAB/21/1681, *Federation plan for the elimination of the communist organisation and armed forces in Malaya*, (The Briggs Plan), 24th May 1950. All quotes.
[70] TNA, DEFE 11/35, *The Squatter Problem in the Federation of Malaya*, memorandum by the Secretary of State submitted to the Cabinet Malaya Committee, 22nd April 1950. All quotes.

Malaya were adequate for their task and had a proper appreciation of what needed doing'.[71] By September, Griffiths reported that the CO was trying to fill 46 vacancies for MCS Cadets in Malaya, a huge increase on the six Cadets it had recruited for Malaya two years previously. 25 candidates had accepted offers of whom nine were already in Malaya. Amongst this group, seven were taking a short course in Cantonese.[72] The days were now gone when newly recruited Chinese Cadets would be sent to China for two years to learn Chinese and absorb the culture.

Even at these higher recruitment levels, the influx of MCS Cadets would not resolve what were more deep seated attitudinal problems. One of the new Chinese Cadets was Iain Kinnear. After a brief Chinese language course, he was assigned to the Labour Department in Kelantan State. In a letter to Margery Perham, he described his first experiences.

> The anti-Chinese attitude amongst many of the older administrative officers is also very noticeable, an attitude often strengthened by the present emergency; some I think feel that the country has been let down by the Chinese and they point to the good behaviour of the Malays as a vindication of their attitude to the Malay.[73]

Briggs, aware of the same attitudes, returned unexpectedly to London in November, for discussions needed 'due to the growing urgency and seriousness of the situation'.[74] In his pre-submitted report, Briggs agreed that 'shortage of trained civil servants on the ground' was a problem but complained that his demands for 'reinforcements' from the UK had been 'scantily met and only by untrained officers'.[75] In his subsequent meeting with the Chiefs of Staff and CO officials, Briggs complained that not only was there a shortage of experienced administrative staff but 'there was also a lack of a sense of urgency and of the will to seek and solve difficult problems'. Almost in demonstration of Briggs' point, J.D.Higham, Head of the newly named South East Asia Department at the CO, responded that the CO was doing all that it could, but it could not make Malaya a priority over other similarly pressing issues in other territories, nor could it force people to go to Malaya if they did not want to.[76]

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[71] TNA, CAB 134/497, Minutes of Malaya Cabinet Meeting, 19th June 1950.
[72] Ibid, Griffiths' Memorandum, *The Present Situation in Malaya*, 22nd September 1950.
[73] UOBL, MSS. Perham Papers, letter Kinnear to Margery Perham, undated but estimated late 1950, early 1951.
[74] TNA, CO 537/6004, telegram from Foster-Sutton (OAG) to Gurney (in UK), 2nd November 1950.
[75] TNA, CAB 21/1682, Briggs, *An Appreciation of the Military and Political Situation in Malaya as on 25th October 1950*.
[76] Ibid, Chiefs of Staff Committee minutes, 23rd November 1950.

The CO was also facing challenges in Parliament over the composition of the MCS in Malaya. A frequent combatant on this issue was Labour M.P., and journalist, Woodrow Wyatt. In 1949, Wyatt had pressed Creech Jones on why the Service overwhelmingly relied on expatriate officers. This had evoked a spirited defence from Creech Jones.

> It is quite true that many of the persons engaged in the administration are tried servants of the pre-occupation period and undoubtedly many of them went through the most trying and terrifying experiences during that period. It may be that in some cases we cannot get quite that high quality of service which we would desire, but I think on the whole we can congratulate ourselves that (they) have played a great part in getting the country back to something like normal conditions.[77]

In October 1950, Wyatt pressed further, asking Griffiths 'would it not be better to reduce the age of retirement so that many of the senior and less enlightened officers can be cleared away and more recruitment can take place from local inhabitants in Malaya'. At his use of 'cleared away', Wyatt faced calls of 'oh' and 'withdraw' from other Members. Griffiths replied that 'in view of the circumstances in Malaya, wherever they can stay beyond retiring age they should do so'.[78] Parliamentary tempers were still frayed a week later at the 'uproar in the House' caused by Wyatt's statements.[79] Onn had also seized the opportunity to write to Griffiths in support of Wyatt's proposals on reducing retirement ages, complaining that 'the so-called Emergency has been a convenient instrument to make of Malaya a dumping ground for more and more expatriate officers'.[80]

Before he returned to Malaya, Briggs was able to present his arguments directly to Attlee, Griffiths, Slim, and John Strachey, Secretary of State for War.[81] With discussions on MCS performance in the Emergency now taking place in the highest Government offices, and the Service subject to attacks in the Commons and Malaya, overall confidence in the MCS in Malaya seemed to have reached a post-war nadir. Despite the best efforts of the CO to place State resistance, along with administrative officer shortage, as the reasons for delays in resettlement, military leaders and the Ministers on the Malaya Committee did not accept this as the full story. They saw an MCS problem, represented by anti-Chinese attitudes and a lack

[77] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 465, Commons Sitting 3rd June 1949, 2479, 2494.
[78] Hansard Fifth Series, Volume 478, Commons Sitting 25th October 1950, 2774.
[79] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 480, Commons Sitting, 3rd November 1950, 2781-2782.
[80] TNA, CO 537/6020, letter Onn to Griffiths, 1st November 1950.
[81] TNA, CAB 130/65, note by the Secretary, 4th December 1950.

of determination to get things done. These negative perceptions continued to be fuelled into 1951. MacDonald returned to London for talks in March and advised the Cabinet that Briggs had considered resigning, partly because of 'the lack of drive in civil administration'.[82] The same month, Gurney also offered to resign when MacDonald returned from his London talks and told him of the 'impatience and dissatisfaction felt…at the slow rate of progress'.[83] Both Briggs and Gurney were persuaded to stay.

Resettlement Success

It is remarkable that from this nadir, the squatter resettlement element of the Briggs plan now progressed rapidly. In October 1951, only 6 months after considering resignation, Briggs reported that 334,000 squatters had been resettled in 315 'new wired in villages'.[84] Resettlement efforts were now meeting the ambitious target set in his Plan to complete essential resettlement needed for security by early 1952. It is important to assess what had allowed such progress to be made, especially to determine if it had resulted from the desired 'reorientation' in civil administration attitude and a renewed 'drive'.

In late 1950, Briggs had gained Gurney's support to place the administration on a 'war footing'. Executive and financial control of Emergency activity now passed to the Federal War Council, henceforth to be chaired by Gurney himself, and enlarged with local community representatives. Leave was curtailed to maximise the people resources that could be put behind the Plan's implementation. Whilst this may have galvanised the MCS, one of the main reasons for the resettlement success was the sudden availability of money to pay for the costs. The Korean War began in June 1950, its demand for war materials driving up prices of rubber and tin. With Malaya's production forming some 30% of total world natural and synthetic rubber production, federal revenues, through taxes and licences, grew as the price of rubber rocketed from barely 12 (old) pence per pound in 1949, to 50 pence in 1951. The story was the same for tin, where Malaya's 35% of world production contributed handsomely to federal coffers, as prices rose from around £600 per ton to £1070 in the same period.[85] Nyce concludes that this was a turning point, as Gurney and Briggs now had the funds needed

[82] Ibid, Minutes of Cabinet, Malaya, 8th March 1951.
[83] BDEEP, Malaya, Part II, CO 967/145, letter Gurney to Lloyd, 19th March 1951.
[84] TNA, CO 537/7285, Director of Operations , *Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya,* 15th October 1951.
[85] White, *Business and Government*, Statistical Appendix.

to give 'the State Governments what they required…and demanded in return the successful completion of the resettlement program'.[86]

A success factor relating to civil administration in general was the implementation of a standardised design for settlements, enabling fast replication. Previous designs had been experimental and ad hoc, with several proving unsuccessful. Briggs prescribed that new villages were to be created on main roads, with rolling terrain to enable effective drainage. They were to be wired in, protected, and surveyed by a police post which commanded entry and exit, seeking to prevent any contact between squatters and the MCP. Squatters were to be moved as little distance as possible to enable their existing small plots still to be worked, and those employed in mines or on estates to continue to do so. Funds were also available from the Korean War boom for disturbance grants and short-term subsistence allowances to ease the transition for the squatters, although they were required to buy some of the materials needed for their new houses, and then to build them. The act of initial resettlement was a military activity, often conducted without notice by armed soldiers who, forcibly if necessary, transported the squatters, their belongings, and livestock to their new settlement, then burnt down their old houses. For those squatters whose small holdings around their old homes were now beyond reach, new agricultural land was purchased near to their new settlement and, in an acceptable solution to Malay sensitivity, a form of limited period tenure was provided. Squatters had no choice but to accept these new arrangements. For many it was a traumatic experience, with some forced to abandon areas they had occupied for over ten years.[87]

A success factor specifically attributable to the MCS was the performance of District Officers in the enhanced leadership role given to them under the Plan. These officers were expected to lead District administration and coordinate the resettlement action required by the police and army in establishing the new settlements. Newly created (non-MCS) civil administration roles of Resettlement Supervisors, Officers, and Assistant Officers were now accountable to the District Officer, and tasked with establishing the new settlements. These Chinese speaking officers had been transferred from the Federal Departments of Agriculture, Social Welfare, Survey, Customs, Veterinary, Labour and Forestry.[88] The Sultans had also

[86] Ray Nyce, *Chinese New Villages in Malaya, A Community Study*, (Singapore, 1973), xxxviii.
[87] Koh, *Tin Mines*, 123.
[88] Tan, *Barbed Wire,* 66.

agreed to second some Chinese employed in their State administrations in support roles such as translators. The few US missionaries with China experience who had been prepared to come to Malaya were considered by Gurney to be 'worth a brigade of troops'.[89] The balance of resources deployed were expatriate recruits on short term contract. When Briggs made his October 1951 report on the stunning progress made on resettlement, he gave credit not only to the pre-existing District Officers but also to those who had transferred to resettlement duties which he numbered at '57 seconded from the administration, 48 Resettlement Officers on contract and 263 Chinese Assistant Resettlement Officers'.[90] Frank Brewer was Deputy Commissioner of Labour for Penang. In his memoirs he gave similar figures, namely '302 Assistant Resettlement Officers and 51 other officers seconded from other government departments'.[91] Presenting a comprehensive account of all those who contributed to the administrative effort in the new settlements is complex. For example, Briggs does not mention the Malay Police Officers providing security in the settlements. After its largely unsuccessful attempts to find experienced officers elsewhere in the British Empire, the CO concentrated on providing new administrative Cadet recruits. By February 1951, even it was claiming it had 'very largely' met Malaya's increased requirements for MCS Cadets.[92]

Expectations placed upon District Officers under the Emergency were broader than resettlement. In the Briggs' War Committee structure each District Officer chaired a DWEC, which was accountable to the State's SWEC and comprised local senior police and army representatives. The degree to which District Officers were directly involved in the broader goals of the Briggs' Plan at this stage of the Emergency likely varied. District Officers had been given a clear priority to focus on resettlement, and much operational activity necessarily took place outside the DWEC meetings. Nonetheless, the DWEC acted as the prime District co-ordinating body. John Loch joined the MCS in 1948 when he was 25. In his memoirs he described the experience of chairing his DWEC.

> This chairmanship was challenging; one had to ensure there was no mistrust between the various forces and that no one acted on their own without the authority of the Committee. A good deal of planning and operational imagination was required and… it must have been hard

[89] TNA, CO 537/7270, Gurney letter to Paskin, 13th March, 1951.
[90] TNA, CO 537/7285, *Progress Report on the Emergency in Malaya*, Director of Operations, 15th October 1951.
[91] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F4, Brewer, *The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*, 11.
[92] TNA, CAB 130/65, Cabinet, Malaya, *Note by the Joint Secretaries, Summary of Meeting*, 26th February 1951.

> for senior military commanders to have to submit their plans to the authority of the Committee chaired by an administrator in his twenties.[93]

The total of junior MCS responsibility was onerous. Large working files, compiled in 1950 and 1951, are a testament to the volume and minutiae of administration needed to source materials, contract labour, and resolve disputes in the building of the new settlements. Two examples of these files were maintained by C.H. Wood, District Officer in Port Dickson (Negri Sembilan State), and M.A.McConville, Secretary to the SWEC in Johore.[94] Wood had joined the MCS as a Cadet in 1947, McConville in 1950. Both had been given significant responsibility early in their careers. Other memoirs give testament to the efforts required. Howe, who had risked taking the initiative in creating the early settlements at Titi, described his work as 'the most exciting, most tense, most thrilling and most rewarding 30 months of my life'.[95] Australian Ernest Fisk joined as a MCS Cadet in 1947. By 1950, having mastered Malay and made considerable progress in Cantonese, he was District Officer in Ipoh, Perak. He recalled the imaginative local responses that were required, such as overcoming the confiscation by communist forces of the identity cards that had been issued to squatters. 15,000 of these were rapidly replaced, enabling this effective method of population control to be sustained.[96] *Straits Times* journalist, Harry Miller, witnessed many of these efforts when making a tour through the Peninsula in January 1951.

> I met young British Civil Servants who had become old before their time, grey hairs thick on their heads and lines of weariness in their faces, but their eyes burned brightly with the sincere belief that the initiative was with them now.[97]

Articles on resettlement written by junior MCS authors at the time depict a somewhat idealised picture of the transition experienced by squatters. Oliver Wolters, Assistant Secretary for Chinese Affairs in the central Secretariat, wrote that the typical reaction of the squatters to relocation was 'one of genuine co-operation…within the limits which they dare display'. Wolter's contention was that the new life and opportunities provided by resettlement were so obviously beneficial, that it was only the ongoing fear of MCP reprisal that led those resettled to maintain a facade of unhappiness. Their true reaction was one of

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[93] John Loch, *My First Alphabet*, (Marlborough, UK, 1994), hereafter Loch, *Alphabet*, 32.
[94] ANM 1957/0537260, *Squatter Resettlement Port Dickson Area*, and 1979/0006491, *Squatter Resettlement and Regrouping Johore.*
[95] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F1, Howe, *A Few Memories of 2 ½ years as District Officer – Jelebu*, 21.
[96] Ernest Fisk, *Hardly Ever a Dull Moment*, (Canberra, 1995), hereafter Fisk, *Dull Moment*, 135, 143-153.
[97] Harry Miller, *Menace in Malaya*, (London, 1954), 163-164.

great appreciation.[98] Gerald Jollye, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Labour in Malacca, drafted an article for *Corona.*[99] In a similar vein to Wolters' account, Jollye described an initial reaction of 'every form of protest from the squatters, ranging from passive indifference to tirades from voluble old ladies who appeared to head the opposition'. This was followed by the day when 'resistance disappeared' and peace settled on contented villagers protected from armed bandits, holding secure tenure of their land and freed from 'communist claptrap…extortion and brutality'.[100] Jollye's article was never published in *Corona*, for reasons unknown. He was murdered in an ambush near Malacca on 13 December 1950, less than two months after its submission.

Despite these benevolent MCS depictions, later testimonial gathered by Tan Teng Phee shows that the forced uprooting of squatters 'entailed extreme economic loss, social disruption, and psychological distress'.[101] Hack finds that Initial living conditions were harsh, even insanitary, with only very basic amenity and accommodation provided for.[102] Whilst there was to be ultimate acceptance of the new arrangements, it often took much longer, and was more grudgingly conceded. The Government priority was resettlement as a security measure. Community building and facility development would follow, but the need was to move people fast to a place where they could be controlled. Nonetheless, the aim of weakening MCP forces through cutting off their food supply was successful. In October 1951 the MCP issued new Resolutions which reduced front line forces and moved its command centres deeper into the jungle, partly to enable jungle cultivation. In his own history, Chin Peng acknowledges that the MCP were now 'suffering debilitating food shortages'.[103]

[98] O. W. Wolters, Emergency Resettlement and Community Development in Malaya, in *Community Development Bulletin*, December 1951, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1-8.
[99] The monthly Colonial Service Journal, published by the CO.
[100] ANM, 1957/0299718, Jollye, *Squatter Resettlement*, report for *Corona*, 18th September 1950.
[101] Tan, *Barbed Wire,* 286.
[102] Karl Hack, Malaya – Between Two Terrors: 'People's History' and the Malayan Emergency, in Hannah Gurman (Ed) *Hearts and Minds*, (New York, 2013), 17-49. Hack incorporates into his chapter Han Suyin's record of initial conditions in one village, 23-24.
[103] Chin Peng, *My Side of History*, *as told to Ian Ward and Norma Miraflor*, (Singapore, 2003), hereafter Chin Peng, *History*, 289.

Attitudes towards Self-Government 1948/1949

During the 18 months to February 1948, there had been a broad political consensus in the UK on replacing the MU Constitution with a Federation. Whilst some limited capital was made by Conservative MPs at the Government's discomfort, the tempering hand of Stanley enabled a mostly bipartisan satisfaction to be declared over the outcome. Thoughts now turned to the next constitutional steps for Malaya. Apart from a manifesto commitment to Indian independence, Labour Party policy on empire was not clear, nor a priority. Stephen Howe argues it would subsequently develop 'less as the expression of a coherent and consistent philosophy of colonial affairs than in a fragmented, complex, often *ad hoc* fashion'.[104] MacDonald took the first initiative. In his unpublished autobiography he would ascribe his actions to the need to anticipate an independence movement arising in Malaya, as such movements were already developing around Asia. If the UK 'could positively cultivate the political ground', the British would continue to be seen as 'friends' in offering to Malaya's people an alternative to communism in meeting their aspirations.

> I therefore began to state not only in private discussions but also in public speeches that the British Government's aim in Malaya was a steady advance by its people to ultimate national Independence.

According to MacDonald, senior MCS officers believed this aim to be unrealistic.

> Almost all the experienced British members of the Malayan Civil Service expressed privately to me their opinion that, however worthy this aim might be in principle, it was absolutely unattainable...The characters, abilities, temperaments and ambitions of the different ethnic groups were so contrasting, and in some cases even mutually antipathetic, that it would be impossible to combine them in a harmonious nation.

MacDonald expressed little respect for the MCS. His memoirs and interviews are replete with criticisms of the 'superiority complex' he encountered amongst many of them, and within the wider British community in Malaya, demonstrated by their choice of social isolation in 'white-only' clubs. The MCS desire to re-establish pre-war conventions such as the 'antique ceremonial conduct' of bowing to Colonial Officers and the wearing of formal dress at social events infuriated him. MacDonald saw such behaviour as out of keeping with the times, driving him to go out of his way to flout such conventions through personal example. He

[104] Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics, The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964*, (Oxford, 1993), 143.

seems almost to have taken pleasure in proving himself unpopular in this way, and his recollections are maybe embellished to present himself in the heroic, but unloved, role of moderniser.[105] Nonetheless, MacDonald's Private Secretary in 1948/1949 also experienced resistant attitudes amongst the senior MCS.

> There was considerable opposition amongst these senior civil servants to the constitutional changes that were being proposed. Not only were they resistant to change, desiring a return to the old status quo, but they saw, sooner or later, the end of their careers. [106]

The declaration of a State of Emergency offered the opportunity, to those so minded, to push back against any talk of constitutional development. In the Commons, and in newspapers in the UK and Malaya, Gammans would become the Conservative Party's lead exponent on the communist threat to Malaya, on how it should be fought, and how a Malaya free of the insurgency should then be governed. He was Co-Secretary of the Conservative Party's Imperial Affairs Committee (IAC), and would become its Co-Vice Chairman from 1950. As such, his public exhortations might be considered the Conservative Party's official position, but this was not the case as a division in opinion on the future of empire was emerging in the Party. Whilst imperial sentiment was common to all Conservatives, not all were prepared to support the extremes of action to preserve the British Empire that Gammans would advocate. The early period of the Emergency cannot, therefore, be easily depicted as one in which the Conservative Party collectively sought to capitalise on the Labour Government's problems in Malaya. Other than amongst members of the British Communist Party of Great Britain, or on the pages of the *Daily Worker,* no Party or significant commentator had any sympathy for the claim that the MCP legitimately represented Malayan nationalism. A contention that the MCP insurgency had been hatched in Moscow gained broad currency, although evidence to prove this was very thin on the ground.[107] All mainstream UK political Parties could agree, in broad terms, that British Policy needed first to foster acceptable representative institutions amongst the Chinese community, and then find ways of drawing these into a constructive dialogue with Malay counterparts.

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[105] CUL, MacDonald, *Constant Surprise*, 275, 307-308. All quotes.

[106] Patterson, *Spoonful*, 149.

[107] Frank Furedi, Britain's Colonial Wars: Playing the Ethnic Card*, The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Volume 28, 1990. Issue 1, 70-89. Furedi sees no Soviet involvement (note 4) but argues that there are grounds to see MCP as the leader of a working class nationalist movement in Malaya, which the British wished to repress, (page 71).

In the July 1948 parliamentary debate on Colonial Affairs, Creech Jones explained that the insurgency was the work of 'gangsters' and by no means 'a movement of the people in Malaya',[108] and reassured parliament that the Federal Government had the 'fullest powers to cope with any emergency now'. Gammans was 'not in the least satisfied' by this statement, pointing the finger at the CO for a 'dereliction of duty' in allowing the situation to develop. He then took the opportunity to expand on his conceptions of empire. Gammans did not fully agree with the Government's broad policy to 'guide the territories to responsible self-government within the Empire'. If that policy allowed the possibility of self-government not within the British Empire, then 'the Empire will disappear bit by bit', a calamitous prospect as 'Great Britain is either a great Imperial Power or she is a lonely, friendless island in the North Sea, unable to feed herself and unable to defend herself'. No territory, Gammans maintained, 'can leave the British Empire when, by doing so, it imperils Imperial Strategy and Imperial Communications'. He reminded the House that not only were the desperately needed US$ earnings from Malayan rubber greater than those of all UK exports,[109] but the fight against the insurgency in Malaya was also saving all of East Asia from global communism. Gammans was clearly inferring that Malaya should be one of the territories debarred from ever leaving empire.

Both the *Straits Times* and the *Malay Mail* gave prominence to the debate but with differing orientations. The *Straits Times*, reported 'UK Government "Determined to Destroy Jungle Terrorism"'.[110] The newspaper was printed in Singapore, had a daily circulation of some 55,000, and was considered in government circles to be the leading English-language paper, supportive of Malayan political progress. The *Malay Mail* was printed in Kuala Lumpur and was considered to be conservative and of the *festina lente* (make haste slowly) school of thought.[111] It reported 'A disappointing debate', but found it 'reassuring' that Gammans, 'with his customary vigour' had put pressure on the Government.[112] Gammans was a regular contributor of articles and opinion pieces to the *Malay Mail*, including a regular half page,

[108] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 453, Commons, 8th July 1948, Debate on Colonial Affairs, 603-615. All quotes.
[109] A.J. Stockwell, British imperial policy and decolonization in Malaya, 1942–52, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1984, 13:1, 68-87. Stockwell states that, 'Malaya's dollar earnings were too important to lose. In 1947 rubber (of which Malaya was the world's top producer) led the list of colonial products that won dollars; it brought in $120m', (page 78).
[110] *Straits Times*, 10th July 1948.
[111] TNA, CO 1030/244, Savingram High Commissioner to Secretary of State 11th March 1954 gives the readership data and descriptions of the two newspapers.
[112] *Malay Mail*, 11th July 1948.

titled *London News-Letter*. He seems to have met with the newspaper's owners and/or staff reasonably regularly on their visits to London, and to have engaged an assistant to help him maintain his prodigious contribution.[113] His *News-Letter* report on the parliamentary debate was titled 'Government did not Satisfy the House on Malaya'.[114]

Despite his prominence, Gammans was not the only ex-MCS public figure expressing views on Malaya and the Emergency. In September, Milverton was elected President of the BAM. Gammans continued to serve an existing three-year term on the Association's Committee. He was now joined by newly elected committee member, Victor Purcell.[115] A year later Milverton would be re-elected to serve a second year as President, at the end of which BAM membership had surpassed 2000 for the first time.[116] Whilst all three had lengthy MCS careers in common, they held differing perspectives on Malaya. Milverton was, at least nominally, a Labour Peer although Muriel Gammans had commented with delight that he had made a 'non-Socialist' maiden speech. She and her husband had previously 'thought he was a Quisling'.[117] In this speech, Milverton had declared that he 'spoke as a representative of the Colonial Civil Service, a Service which knows no party'.[118] Despite this, he would move to the Liberal benches in little over a year and would transition again, declaring his support for the Conservative Party in 1951.[119] When the Lords debated Malaya in November, it was apparent that Milverton was not aligned with Gammans' views expressed in the Commons a few months previously. He was not prepared to blame the insurgency on Labour Government negligence since 1945. He identified instead 'four or five' policy errors, stretching back to almost the beginnings of British protection, to which all Parties shared responsibility. One of those was to have allowed unchecked Chinese immigration with no clear plan for subsequent integration into Malayan society. He desired a strong government in Malaya, not just to defeat communism, or to protect the status quo, but to settle the issue of future Malayan citizenship and re-build trust in government amongst all communities, especially the Chinese. Whilst Milverton maintained this was not the time for considerations of future self-

[113] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diaries*, Books 59 and 64.
[114] *Malay Mail,* London News-Letter, 17th July 1948.
[115] *British Malaya*, October 1948.
[116] *British Malaya*, October/November 1950.
[117] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diaries*, Book 53.
[118] Peel, *Richards,* 151.
[119] Ibid, 151-154.

government, as these would not extinguish the 'present conflagration' or create strong government, his speech contained no insistence on a long-term imperial future for Malaya.[120]

Purcell continued to rue the passing of the MU, which he argued had offered the prospect of a multi-racial 'Malayan Nation' with 'a common citizenship to all who made Malaya their home'.[121] He hoped such an outcome could still be attained by further constitutional development. He resigned from the BAM Committee in November 1950, citing 'pressure of work'.[122] His new book, *The Chinese in South-East Asia,* was published early the following year. A review in *British Malaya* noted his conviction that the solution to much of Malaya's problems lay in the Chinese achieving a 'complete integration into a common citizenship'.[123]

The BAM continued to publish its monthly journal, *British Malaya* and, from 1949, inaugurated an additional monthly mimeographed *Malayan Bulletin*, aimed at a quicker provision of information to its members than the journal allowed. However, in these publications there were now hardly any of the lengthy opinion pieces by ex-MCS grandees that had once appeared. Some grandees were still active, but their opinions were un-coordinated and expressed outside the pages of BAM publications. Richard Winstedt, for example, remained highly respected, his 72nd birthday being celebrated in a *British Malaya* article.[124] In the recently revised edition of his *Malaya and its History,* he had concluded that 'self-government belongs to the future…The mixed population of Malaya will make it exceedingly difficult'.[125] George Maxwell was now approaching 80. Although he had been a regular contributor to *British Malaya,* the journal published only a single letter from him in this period.[126]

Public comment on the Emergency was now increasingly informed by first hand reports of visits to Malaya. Gammans tacked an unofficial Malaya leg onto an official visit to Ceylon as a member of a parliamentary delegation. On his arrival, the *Malay Mail* reminded its readers that Gammans was not only a 'supporter of Malayan affairs in Parliament' but also

[120] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 159, Lords Sitting, 10th November 1948, 355-364.
[121] Victor Purcell, Malaya's Problems Today, *World Affairs*, Summer, 1949, Vol. 112, No. 2, 46-48.
[122] *British Malaya*, December 1950.
[123] *British Malaya*, March 1951.
[124] *British Malaya*, August 1950, H.R.Cheeseman, *Malaya's Debt to Sir Richard Winstedt*.
[125] Richard Winstedt, *Malaya and its History,* Revised edition, (London, 1950), 179.
[126] *British Malaya*, July 1951, letter from Maxwell. Maxwell wrote to clarify action taken by the Singapore Harbour Board during the Japanese invasion.

a former member of the MCS. He was hosted with a luncheon attended by three Sultans and Onn.[127] He also met with MacDonald. In his end-of-visit press conference Gammans emphasised the economic case for the British Empire, calling for better racial understanding in the interests of economic security.[128] As had been the case in 1947, Gammans told his wife about the trip on his return. Her subsequent diary entry focused on social status.

> The 'old sweats' are a bit jealous of Len – after all one of their comrades – and he comes out and stays as a matter of course with Governors! Len thinks that MacDonald is a bit of an unknown quantity, very genial, but he's not sure of him. He goes about in an open-neck shirt! [129]

Gammans spoke after his visit to a meeting at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In a rambling speech followed by discussion, he claimed no more troops were needed in Malaya as the terrorists were a 'miserable lot' of only some 5000. What was needed was to win the 'confidence of the people', as this would get the information needed to 'round up the bandits'. He was less clear on how this confidence was to be achieved, claiming time did not allow him to talk about the 'complicated story' of Malay-Chinese relations. Purcell was in the audience, and argued that unjust treatment of the Chinese under the new Federal Constitution was not going to win their support. Gammans retorted he 'did not think the Chinese…were very worried about the constitution'.[130]

Despite Gammans' self-belief in what needed to be done for empire's continuation, he was reminded on his return to the UK that not all in his Party were prepared to support his absolute position. Draft paragraphs that he had contributed for a planned Conservative Party 'Imperial Charter' had been extensively rewritten. His original draft had argued that 'The Empire…should be regarded as the supreme achievement of the British Race', and needed to be strengthened in its Commonwealth form in the face of totalitarian communism. For Gammans, it was 'fantastic' to talk of working for unity in Europe whilst 'acquiescing in the dissolution of the British Commonwealth and Empire'.[131] The Charter was being prepared in anticipation of the 1950 General Election, and was the responsibility of Lord Tweedsmuir, who appeared to ignore most of Gammans' draft section, even though Muriel considered her

[127] *Malay Mail*, 15th January 1949.
[128] *Straits Times*, 22nd January 1949.
[129] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary*, Book 60.
[130] RIIA, 8/1660, Gammans' speech, *British Policy in South-East Asia*, and notes of discussion 1st March 1949.
[131] LMA, Gammans, *Scrapbooks,* No. II/007, *Conservative Imperial Charter, Conclusions and Recommendations*, draft by Gammans.

husband's excised paragraphs as 'the best of the whole thing'.[132] The Charter was renamed and published as 'Imperial Policy' in June.[133] Some of Gammans' ideas had been retained, although they were now expressed in more nuanced and considered form. For example, Gammans' use of the term British 'Race' in his draft had been amended to British 'Peoples', to avoid any suggestion of racial domination.[134] Similarly, the Conservative Party could only try to keep Colonies approaching independence within the Commonwealth 'to the utmost of our power'. Muriel Gammans described the revised document as 'a sixth form effusion' upon which her husband had been quite 'frank' with his Party colleagues. However, she realised this was a 'delicate situation' and that her husband could not 'criticise further (and say) that because he did not write it all, he won't have it'.[135] Gammans had little choice but to follow the Party line and promote the document as best he could, as his Party prepared for the General Election.[136]

Gammans had further wind taken out of his sails when Attlee took the initiative in pledging his Government's commitment to Malaya.

> His Majesty's Government have no intentions of relinquishing their responsibilities in Malaya until their task is completed. The purpose of our policy is simple. We are working, in co-operation with the citizens of the Federation in Malaya and Singapore, to guide them to responsible self-government within the Commonwealth. We have no intention of jeopardising the security, well-being and liberty of these peoples, for whom Britain has responsibility, by a premature withdrawal.[137]

Attlee had been pushed to make the statement by a warning from Gurney that the absence of a clear statement of intention to stay and see the Emergency out was fuelling speculation that Britain was considering an early departure.[138] A *Daily Mail* campaign in March had also called for a clear Government statement.[139] Attlee's statement was received well in the UK,

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[132] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary,* Book 59.
[133] Conservative Central Office, *Imperial Policy, A Statement of Conservative Policy for the British Empire and Commonwealth*, (London, 1949).
[134] Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation, The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951 -1964*, (Oxford, 1995), hereafter Murphy, *Party Politics*, 43.
[135] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diary,* Book 61.
[136] *Malay Mail*, London News-Letter, 4th July 1949. Gammans introduced his Malayan readers to *Imperial Policy*, describing it as an 'important statement'.
[137] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 463, Commons Sitting, 13th April 1949, 2815.
[138] TNA, CO 537/4741, letter Gurney to Lloyd, 24th February 1949.
[139] *Daily Mail*, 24th March 1949.

as it met the immediate need for clarity.[140] Milverton, writing in the *National Review,* felt the statement had come 'not a minute too soon' but added a cautionary note on the very long road he envisaged to self-government. It was 'capacity to govern' that would be 'especially significant (and) the ballot-box contains no hope of help here in solving a racial question'.[141] In Malaya, the press response was mixed. The *Straits Times* believed Attlee's statement did not 'wholly please either those who looked eagerly forward to the establishment of responsible government, nor those who believed a long period of tutelage to be essential'.[142] The *Malay Mail* felt that 'there was a certain air of vagueness' about the statement.[143] Gammans described it as 'wishy-washy' in a subsequent *London-Newsletter*.[144] Nonetheless, the Government had calmed the waters and it was now less easy for Gammans to lay telling blows. Going forward he faced the challenge of explaining how a future Conservative Government's policy in Malaya (established within the 'Imperial Policy' statement) would be significantly different from what Attlee had announced.

Attitudes towards New Political Initiatives 1950/1951

The first quarter of 1950 marked a change in the personnel accountable for British policy in Malaya. The Labour Government won a second term but Creech Jones lost his seat and was replaced by James Griffiths. Griffiths had been Minister of National Insurance throughout the first Attlee administration and seemed to come to his new role with little relevant experience. The *Crown Colonist* reported the new Government's CO appointments as 'make do and mend (and) difficult to take seriously'.[145] In Malaya, Chief Secretary Newboult retired, the coincidence with the pending arrival of Briggs surely not accidental. The *Straits Times,* in its farewell to Newboult, credited his chairing of the Constitutional Working Committee that had led to the Federal Agreement, and his administering of the Government after Gent's death.[146] Gullick recalled that MCS views lingered that Newboult's rise had been more due to good fortune at escaping internment and landing a role in the MPU, rather than a result of his

[140] 1) *Evening News*, 13th April 1949, *We Stay in Malaya* 2) *Daily Telegraph*, 14th April 1949, *No Malaya Withdrawal*.
[141] *National Review*, June 1949, Lord Milverton, *Malaya Revisited*, 597-604.
[142] *Straits Times*, 16th April 1949.
[143] *Malay Mail*, 16th April 1949.
[144] *Malay Mail*, 2nd May 1949.
[145] *Crown Colonist*, April 1950.
[146] *Straits Times*, 8th March 1950.

innate ability.[147] He was replaced by Morobce Vincemzo del Tufo, whose MCS career had been non-standard. He had joined the Service in 1923 as an Indian Cadet, destined to spend several years in India learning Tamil, then returning to work in the Labour Department. In the late 1930s he passed legal exams to become a Crown Counsel. Interned during the war, he returned to Malaya to work for four years on the 1947 Census, the later part on secondment back to London. He was then promoted by three MCS Classes to become Deputy Chief Secretary.

Gurney's plans for federal governance heralded a diminution in del Tufo's authority. Writing to Griffiths in April 1950, Gurney proposed a 'Member System' in which appointees to his Executive Council would be given portfolios of Departments to manage. The function of the Federal Executive Council was to discuss issues of public policy and to advise the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner could reject its advice, but only after consulting with the Secretary of State in the Colonial Office.[148] The Chief Secretary, Attorney General and Finance Secretary would remain 'ex-officio' Members, whilst ten appointees (expected to be a mix of appointed Malays, Chinese and Indians selected from amongst non-official members of the Legislative Council) would now be official 'Members'.[149] Gurney developed his proposals in discussion with Onn, whose support and endorsement gave the plan legitimacy and enabled Gurney to get the Sultans and their State leaderships on board. Gurney hoped that the Member System would build trust amongst the States in the good intentions of the Federal Government, as most of the Federal Departments would now be under the direction of Malayan Members. Malay agreement to Gurney appointing the new Members from all communities was also a significant step forward towards a future of inclusive Malayan politics. An administrative advantage was that the chain of decision making would no longer flow solely through the Chief Secretary to the High Commissioner. There would now be multiple flows, via each Member to the High Commissioner, alleviating this bottleneck. Del Tufo would be directly responsible only for administration, external affairs and defence. Nevertheless, many of the Members, whilst able leaders in their own business careers and professions, would have little experience in managing government departments. The MCS

[147] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Memoirs*, *Part 2,* 14.
[148] Leon Comber, *Templer and the Road to Malayan Independence*, (Singapore, 2015), hereafter Comber*, Templer*, 20.
[149] TNA, CO 537/6026, letter Gurney to Griffiths, 9th April 1950.

working in the Secretariat would need to adapt to advise and support these inexperienced Members and make the new decision-making processes work. News of Gurney's Member System plans reached the Malayan press whilst Gurney was discussing them with the CO. They created surprise but were guardedly welcomed.[150] Frustratingly for Gurney, it would be a further year before he could get CO agreement to put the System in place.

The ebbing of MCS executive control over the administration of federal government thereby continued, but remained gradual, as is shown by the annual Federation of Malaya Reports and Colonial Office Lists. Up to March 1951, 'the day to day administration of the Federal Government was carried out by the three ex-officios on the Executive Council; the Chief Secretary, Attorney General and Financial Secretary'. After this date, the Member System had been introduced, much as Gurney had initially proposed, except that it had not materially altered the numbers balance on the Executive Council as three further MCS officers, the Secretary of Defence, Economic Secretary and Resident Commissioner Penang, retained their seats. The report contended nonetheless that the 'the pressure of work' on the three ex-officios had been reduced, and 'a significant advance was made towards self-government – the assumption of ministerial responsibility by non-official members of the legislature'.[151]

A second political initiative had been underway since early 1949, led by MacDonald. In time, it became known as the Communities Liaison Committee (CLC), but it had started through MacDonald's simple determination to foster informal dialogue between Onn and Tan Cheng Lock. Tan was a Peranakan[152] businessman who had long been active in representing the interests of the Chinese in Malaya. In February 1949, (with Tun Leong Yew Koh, and Colonel Lee Hau Shik) he had formed the Malayan Chinese Association, (MCA). Tan was not the sole Chinese community leader of this time, but he was the only one who could command some influence over the whole community. MacDonald broadened his early success in getting Onn and Tan to talk into a wider dialogue that embraced the leaders of other Malayan communities. In February 1949, the dialogue coalesced into the CLC. Singhalese lawyer, E.E.E. Thuraisingham, agreed to chair its meetings with MacDonald acting as facilitator, conciliator,

[150] *Straits Times,* 31st March 1950.
[151] *Federation of Malaya Annual Report 1953*, (HMSO, 1954), 375. Both quotes.
[152] Peranakan denoted descent from the first waves of Southern Chinese traders who had moved to the Straits Settlements in the 1700s and early 1800s.

and drafter of documents. Notes of the meetings were taken but kept confidential. In February, Thuraisingham had met with Gurney who agreed to send a directive to all Heads of Federal Departments to give whatever help the Committee might need. No mention of the MCS was made, and none of its officers appeared to be involved.[153]

In September 1949 and April 1950, when the CLC reached a consensus on issues, it made public statements. Whilst the CLC was unofficial, holding no formal power, its presentation of consensus positions apparently held by leaders of all Malayan communities was striking. In its September 1949 statement, the CLC spoke of achieving self-government and a Malayan Nationality for its citizens. As a first step to this goal, the CLC called for elections to Federal and State legislatures. There were reassurances to Malays that such proposals would not lead to their being 'swamped' by new Chinese Federal Citizens. The *Straits Times* recognised the significance of the statement.

> Those who hanker for the days when politics were taboo in Malaya must have felt lately that events are moving too fast for them, that old habits of thought are fast breaking down, and that a movement had begun that will question and later challenge the constitution of the Federation.[154]

The CLC's second statement made proposals on how more non-Malays would achieve Federal Citizenship. Again, the *Straits Times* was impressed, seeing the proposals as 'a most encouraging demonstration of the fact that it is already possible for Malays and non-Malays to agree on political issues at the highest level'.[155]

With the Member System proposals and CLC Statements in the public arena, James Griffiths visited Malaya in May/June 1950, accompanied by John Strachey, Secretary of State for War. This was the first time that a Secretary of State for the Colonies had visited Malaya and is testament to Griffiths' desire to understand and engage with the issues. However, he would have carried with him awareness of a visit made only six months earlier by Rees-Williams in his role as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Rees-Williams had subsequently reported to Griffiths' predecessor that he had found the European community in Malaya quite disconnected with 'the political aspirations of the people', and still inclined to 'hark back to the "old days" seen through a rosy mist of nostalgia'. Worryingly, he believed

[153] Institute of South East Asian Studies – Yusof Ishak Institute, hereafter ISEAS, *Papers of Tan Cheng Lock*, File 23, *Notes of Discussions of the Communities Liaison Committee*, 14th and 16th March 1949.
[154] *Straits Times*, 19th September 1949.
[155] *Straits Times*, 20th April 1950, leading article, *The Federal Citizen*.

there was 'no doubt at all that a good deal of trouble in Malaya was being caused by senior officials intriguing with the Rulers and others against Government policy'. Such intriguing was being fuelled by the 'constant denigration' of the British Government in Malaya's English press, with Gammans a 'regular contributor'.[156] In subsequent discussions in the CO, Rees-Williams expanded 'at length on the disloyalty of senior officials in Malaya to Government', mentioning three senior MCS officers by name and alleging that 'British Advisers incited the Malays to make trouble'.[157]

Griffiths' visit would provide an opportunity for these allegations to be further considered. He was briefed on the CLC's proposals by Gurney, with del Tufo and Watherston (as Federal Secretary of Defence) in attendance. The meeting debated whether the Federal Government should declare its public support for the CLC proposals. The consensus was that this was a matter to be discussed and settled between 'the peoples of the country', with the Government only presenting the facts. Gurney warned, however, that there was a problem amongst the Government's officers in regard to the pursuit of this strategy.

> His Excellency (Gurney) stated that he was writing to all British Advisers informing them that the Government could not tolerate its officers showing a reluctance to present the facts of the case on which persons could judge for themselves as to whether the (CLC's) proposals were right or wrong. [158]

It is not clear whether this implies that the British Advisers were themselves showing this reluctance, or if Gurney was writing to them as his representatives so they might make his views more broadly known to more junior officers. The latter interpretation seems the case from a reading of Gurney's subsequent letter to all British Advisers. He emphasised the need for Malay opinion to be 'instructed on the real issues involved and what are the alternatives,' and identified District Officers, 'particularly Malays' as the ones 'doing nothing to place the facts before the people of their Districts'. He urged the British Advisers to make the Government's position 'clear to all administrative officers'.[159] It is possible that Gurney also believed that some British Advisers were equally negligent in championing British policy. In a

[156] TNA, CO 537/4870, Rees-Williams, *Report on Short Tour*, 18th November 1949. All quotes.
[157] TNA, CO 537/4870, O.H.Morris (Principal Officer), minute of discussions with Rees Williams, 21st November 1949. The MCS officers named by Rees-Williams were Curtis (British Adviser, Selangor), Churchill (British Adviser, Kelantan) and Aston (Resident Commissioner, Penang).
[158] TNA, CO 537/6018, Minutes of Meeting 1st June, 1950. Both quotes.
[159] TNA, CO 537/5961, Letter Gurney to MacDonald, with letter to British Advisers attached, 5rd June 1950. All quotes.

later meeting he urged them to 'give increasingly strong and definitive guidelines in the course of discussions' and to do more in guiding junior officers and to abandon previous conventions of being somewhat distant from them.[160]

The key-note political meeting of Griffiths' visit took place a few days later when he attended MacDonald's Governor General's Conference.[161] Under the agenda item 'Tempo of transition to self-government', MacDonald reiterated his belief that the tempo was accelerating, and the British had 'little or no control' over the pace. If Britain wanted to control the actual transition it would have to accept that it was speeding up. Gurney agreed, but argued a 'time limit' should not be set on 'satisfying the demands of self-government'. Griffiths also concurred, concluding that the 'period of transition is likely to be a shorter, rather than a longer one', with the ending of the Emergency being the key to unlock 'very substantial advances'. Whilst the pace might be accelerating, the other agenda items for MacDonald's meeting discussed the rocks still lying on the road. Onn was struggling to get UMNO to agree to the CLC citizenship proposals and the Briggs resettlement plans were being delayed by people and skills shortages in civil administration.

On his return to the UK, Griffiths kept his thoughts on the state of civil administration private. There was no private minute on his visit, nor subsequent record in his biography.[162] However, Griffiths' companion on the visit, John Strachey, did express his concerns in a lengthy private memorandum to Attlee. In a section titled, 'Character of the British regime in Malaya' he was highly critical of

> a disastrously conservative bias in regard to the political, democratic and economic development of the country. Lip service is, of course, paid to our declared objectives in Malaya, but there is an intense reluctance on the part of, especially, the middle rank of officials and administrators to carry out the actual steps which it is necessary to take in order to begin the implementation of our plans…In a word our authorities in Malaya still hanker for the old colonialism and do not really believe in anything else.[163]

At one level Strachey's analysis is clear, at others less so. It is not clear if Strachey meant by 'middle rank' the District Officers described in Gurney's note to the British Advisers, or the level below Gurney and del Tufo, which included the British Advisers and officers in the

[160] TNA, CO 537/7254, *Notes of a Conference*, 23rd August 1951.
[161] TNA, CO 537/5961, *Minutes of Commissioner General's Conference*, 7th June 1950. All quotes.
[162] James Griffiths, *Pages from Memory*, (London, 1969), hereafter Griffiths, *Memory*.
[163] BDEEP, Malaya, Part II, PREM/8/1406/2, Minute by Strachey to Attlee, 11th December 1950.

Secretariat. Allowance also needs to be made for the likelihood that, like Montgomery and Slim before him, Strachey had been influenced by the opinions of military commanders perhaps anxious to deflect any criticism of their own performances in managing the Emergency. It would, nevertheless, be a very generous interpretation to suggest that the upper levels of the MCS were in some way totally excluded from Strachey's criticisms. Strachey's report does not, however, repeat Rees-Williams' earlier allegations of senior MCS disloyalty and incitement of Malay opposition. Neither do such allegations appear in other primary sources. The 'intense reluctance' that Strachey describes seems to fit better with the senior MCS attitudes earlier depicted by Briggs and Slim.

Resuming his work at the CO, Griffiths continued to be 'bombarded with questions, demands and protests about Malaya'.[164] Questioner-in-Chief on Malaya was Gammans who often complained that not enough parliamentary time was devoted to Colonial Affairs. Nonetheless, he became skilled in the art of raising Malayan Affairs.[165] In 1950, the CO received 773[166] questions in Parliament, not all about Malaya or course, nor all from Gammans, although he made a hefty contribution.[167] So as to avoid relying solely on the opportunity of set-piece debates on Colonial Affairs, Gammans became skilled at turning his speeches in Supply Debates to Malayan affairs.[168] As the CLC statements and Member System plans became known through 1950, Gammans now had refreshed opportunity to attack the Government's Colonial Policy, both generally throughout empire and specifically in Malaya. In November he took issue with the Government's 'doling out' of constitutions and not giving 'higher priority to prevent the Empire from slipping away'. Instead of the Government discussing a Council of Europe with European neighbours, Gammans proposed a Council of Empire in London, drawing the governance of the Empire safely into the metropole, away from any dangerous cliques of nationalist elements in each Colony.[169] Gammans' desires for

[164] Griffiths*, Memory,* 94.
[165] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 435, Commons Sitting, 8th July 1948, 606-607. Gammans calculated that in the previous year 'we have spent only seven hours discussing the affairs of 60 million of our fellow British subjects'.
[166] David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961*, (Oxford, 1971), hereafter Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 79. Goldsworthy also notes that questions to the CO outnumbered questions on any other subject, for long periods from 1945 to 1961, (page 98).
[167] LMA, Gammans, *Scrapbooks*. These contain Hansard extracts and newspaper reports on the many questions he asked.
[168] Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 99. One 'set piece' was the debate on the annual Colonial Office Report. Gammans achieved a yearly average of 4 Supply Debate speeches on colonial affairs.
[169] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 480, Commons Sitting, 3rd November 1950, 504-508. Both quotes.

Empire's unified governance were not echoed by Oliver Stanley, his Party's chief spokesman on Colonial Affairs, and Chairman of the CIAC. Stanley's conviction was that nationalist movements had to be taken into consideration, even if this led to 'imperial diversity rather than unity'.[170] Stanley's influence over Party thinking remained considerable until his early death in December 1950. At this point, of the two Vice Chairmen of the IAC, it was Lennox-Boyd,[171] not Gammans, who succeeded him as Chairman.

Returning to the fray in a February debate on Malaya, Gammans argued that Malaya needed the restoration of law and order, not a new constitution. His argument would be exactly the same as the arguments MacDonald had heard from Senior MCS Officers.

> I do not know how Malaya is going to attain self-government…because we are dealing with two races – Malay and Chinese. They are equal in number but differ in everything else…the only hope of Malaya evolving toward some form of self-government without risk of civil war is that in some capacity or another Great Britain remains a third and permanent partner. [172]

Evidence of explicit co-ordination between Gammans' publicly stated views and the privately expressed attitudes and opinions of the senior MCS in Malaya has not been discovered. A common Malay-centric MCS career experience would, however, explain their shared beliefs in the impossibility of inter-communal co-operation and the necessity, for the foreseeable future, of a British presence in Malaya.

Gurney and the CO remained concerned at the counterproductive influence that attitudes and opinions expressed by ex-MCS officers in the UK were having in Malaya. Nerves became particularly frayed when it was discovered that ex-MCS officers were in direct correspondence with community leaders in Malaya. The first so identified was Bryson, who had recently retired from the MCS after completing his final appointment as British Adviser, Negri Sembilan. Gurney was dismayed to receive a letter from the Sultan of Negri Sembilan challenging amendments made to the State's Nationality Enactment Bill by the Federation's Attorney-General.[173] The letter attached a memorandum of supportive advice to the Sultan, written by Bryson after his retirement. Gurney wrote directly to Griffiths complaining that 'too much damage has already been done by retired Malayan officers in the United Kingdon,

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[170] Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues,* 188.

[171] Lennox Boyd would become Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1954 and oversee the independence of the Federation of Malaya three years later.

[172] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 484, Commons Sitting, 27th February 1951, 2034.

[173] TNA, CO 537/7257, letter Abdul Rahman to Gurney, 19th May 1951. See Conventions (page 10 of thesis) for Royal Ruler Titles.

who are unacquainted with the present situation in Malaya'.[174] The CO, however, replied to Gurney that it had sympathy with Bryson's position, as 'establishing relations of confidence' with Sultans was a key expectation on British Advisers and it was 'a sign of grace' if a Sultan wished to maintain such a relationship after a British Adviser retired. [175]

Gurney then discovered a much more serious case of ex-MCS 'damage'. Victor Purcell and George Maxwell were corresponding directly with Tan Cheng Lock. As it became clearer that UMNO was not going to accept the CLC citizenship proposals, Tan had become uncertain how best to continue advocating the Chinese case for federal citizenship, and a fair stake in any future constitution. If MacDonald's local initiative seemed to be running out of road, perhaps he should look for individuals who could champion the Chinese case directly in the UK. In the 1948/1949 period, Purcell had raised the public profile of his thinking on Malaya, through letters and articles in national newspapers. One of his letters to *The Times* argued,

> the British have created a trench-line between the Malays and the Chinese behind which they are conducting what may turn out to be a 'last ditch' defence. This is colossal stupidity. A Royal Commission should be appointed without delay to devise a constitution and a citizenship which will give equality to Malays, Chinese and other races alike. [176]

Tan now considered Purcell 'almost the only active champion of the cause of the Malayan Chinese Community in Great Britain'.[177] In correspondence with Tan over the summer of 1949, Purcell acknowledged that they were aligned in view and that he admired Tan's 'good work'. However, he could not take up Tan's wish that he get more deeply involved, explaining that he was focusing on writing his new book and taking up his new lecturing duties at Cambridge.[178] Purcell had, nonetheless, influenced Tan's thinking. When Griffiths visited Malaya the following year, Tan presented him with a nine-page 'Memorandum on Malaya' which concluded with an appeal for a Royal Commission 'to evolve a constitution…in which an equality of status and rights will be ensured'.[179] Gurney and Griffiths concurred that the proposal should be rejected in line with the strategy agreed at MacDonald's Commissioner

[174] Ibid, letter Gurney to Griffiths, 28th May 1951.
[175] Ibid, letter Higham to Gurney, 27th July 1951. Both quotes.
[176] *Times*, 15th March 1949, Victor Purcell, letter, *Crisis in Malaya*. (Additional examples of Purcell's correspondence and articles are *Straits Times*, 6th April 1948, *Closer Sino-Malay Relations,* and *Manchester Guardian*, 25th May 1949, *The Chinese in Malaya, Case for a Royal Commission*.
[177] ISEAS, Papers of Tan Cheng Lock, File 3, letter Tan Cheng Lock to Lien, Ying Chow, 18th May 1949.
[178] Ibid, letters from Purcell to Tan Cheng Lock, 24th August 1949 and 5th October 1949.
[179] TNA, CO 537/6018, Tan Cheng Lock, *Memorandum on Malaya*, 22nd May 1950.

General's Conference in June. The British preferred a 'close consultation between the representatives of the various communities', believing that a workable, long-term solution could not be imposed top-down.[180] The Malayan press reported that Tan was 'deeply disappointed' by this rejection.[181]

The CLC discussions were not making further progress, mainly due to disarray on the Malay side. Onn had increasingly set himself against the traditional conservatism of the Sultans and, in a falling out with the Sultan of Johore in the summer of 1950, had left his role as Johore's Mentri Besar. To ensure his continued engagement in federal activity, Gurney made him Chairman of a newly created Rural and Industrial Development Authority,[182] a bridge until his appointment as Member for Home Affairs when the Member System was at last introduced in mid-1951. In this interlude, Onn's relationship with UMNO had finally broken down due to his continued failure to get its support for the CLC's citizenship proposals. Onn resigned from UMNO in August 1951 and was replaced by Tunku Abdul Rahman. Onn now announced the formation of a new, non-communal, Independence of Malaya Party (IMP). Its declared aims were to achieve independence for Malaya in seven years and to replace the Federation with a single united political and territorial entity. Onn had discussed his ideas for the new Party with Tan and invited him onto its Organising Committee. As Tan debated whether to align the MCA with Onn's new political venture, George Maxwell wrote to him.

Maxwell's career in Malaya had overlapped with Tan's from 1912 until his retirement in 1926. Their renewed correspondence seems to have started with a letter from Maxwell in November 1950 which has not survived. In reply, Tan sent Maxwell a copy of the 'Memorandum on Malaya' he had sent to Griffiths earlier in the year.[183] Maxwell replied with typical hyperbole, berating the Labour Government's 'vacillations…cowardice and ignorance' on Malaya Policy since 1945, and accusing MacDonald of having 'no conception of real statesmanship'. He acknowledged that he knew 'so little about the merits of the conflicting claims' between Malaya's communities but did support the idea of a Royal Commission to find a satisfactory solution founded on the common interests of all parties.[184] This was the

[180] TNA, CO 537/7296, telegram Gurney to Griffiths, 29th September 1950.
[181] *Straits Budget*, 18th January 1951, *Griffiths Disappoints Tan Cheng Lock*.
[182] RIDA was a federal agency tasked with rural improvement for Malays.
[183] ISEAS, Papers of Tan Cheng Lock, File 5, Letter Tan Cheng Lock to Maxwell 17th February 1951.
[184] Ibid, letters from Maxwell to Tan Cheng Lock, 23rd April 1951.

same Maxwell who, six years earlier, had co-ordinated the ex-MCS challenge to the MU White Paper, not least because it held out the prospect to the Chinese of an equality of citizenship. If Maxwell saw any irony in his now supporting a Royal Commission to potentially achieve the same outcome, he did not reveal it. In June, Tan wrote that he had shared one of Maxwell's subsequent letters with 'a few intimate Chinese friends' and had received from them a request to publish it in the *Singapore Standard*.[185] Maxwell, clearly alarmed, replied promptly asking that the letter remain private, for 'discretion is the best part of valour'. He meant all he had said, of course but had expressed himself in 'violent terms…as I was only pouring out my innermost feelings personally'.[186] When Tan next wrote that his discussions with Onn on the IMP were progressing quite well, as 'all my questions have been answered in the draft constitution',[187] Maxwell retorted with a stern warning. He advised Tan to be 'very careful in your dealings with him (as) it is suicidal madness to attempt to get self-government before (Malaya) is ready for it'.[188] Maxwell's advice appears to have had an impact as, by October, Tan had still not attended any meetings of the IMP Organising Committee, agreeing with Maxwell that it was 'necessary to be cautious'.[189]

Gurney had been aware of the Tan/Maxwell correspondence since the summer. The Maxwell letter that Tan had shared with his 'intimate friends' had found its way to the High Commissioner. Expressing his frustration, this time to the CO's Undersecretary of State, he bemoaned that 'one of the difficulties I have to contend with here is the part played by the old retired Malayans, years out of date, in encouraging locally the survival of their ideas'.[190] Lloyd's response, whilst admitting not much could be done, represents a rare acknowledgement by the CO that the activities of the ex-MCS had the potential to change the path of British Policy.

> We in the Colonial Office, as well as the authorities in Malaya, had a good deal of this to contend with at the time of the controversy over the Malayan Union…Even now no one can be certain whether, without this public encouragement from ex-Malayan civil servants, the

[185] Ibid, letter from Tan Cheng Lock to Maxwell, 13th June 1951. The letter shared was from sent from Maxwell to Tan on 16th May 1951.
[186] Ibid, letter from Maxwell to Tan Cheng Lock, 21st June 1951.
[187] Ibid, letter Tan Cheng Lock to Maxwell, 12th July 1951.
[188] Ibid, letter Maxwell to Tan Cheng Lock, 24th July 1951.
[189] Ibid, letter Tan Cheng Lock to Maxwell, 10th October 1951.
[190] TNA, CO 537/7257, Gurney letter to Lloyd, 27th July 1951.

opposition of UMNO to the Malayan Union Constitution would have acquired the strength it did.[191]

Ex-MCS opinion was now turning its guns on Onn's proposed timeline to independence. Eschewing its recent practice of not taking a position, the BAM Committee announced its 'considered' view to members, stating that 'conditions will not be ripe for the achievement of self-government in so short a time…entirely unrealistic in its brevity'. The Emergency would have to be ended before any final steps could be taken, with independence likely taking 'a generation to achieve'.[192] Gammans was like minded, writing in the *Malay Mail* that Onn's 'short cut (was) risking and possibly sacrificing his own race'.[193]

As the ex-MCS argued the folly of any British move to early self-government in Malaya, Gurney was assassinated by forces of the MNLA on 6th October 1951. The ambush was random, prepared on the approaches to the Fraser Hill resort for the first appropriate target that arrived. Gurney's death handed the MCP an unexpected coup. Chin Peng, who only days earlier had issued his October Resolutions ordering his forces deeper into the jungle, was both 'stunned' and 'elated'.[194] When news of the tragedy spread, those who argued a very long period was needed before Malaya was ready for self-government felt vindicated.

Summary

A significant number in the most senior MCS Class now held much diminished roles under the Federal Constitution. The creation of Mentri Besar roles denied executive power to the British Advisers. The appointment of Briggs, and his creation of a War Council, marked the start of a steady circumvention of those senior MCS officers who had earlier been closely involved in the strategic management of the Emergency. The initial response of civil government to the needs of the Emergency was considered by Briggs and military leaders to be inadequate. Nonetheless, the subsequent contribution of young MCS officers to meeting resettlement targets was notable, albeit that the overall resettlement success had depended on the contribution of officers from several Services

British policy recognised the imperative for the Chinese community to be clearly shown a future in a democratic Malayan nation. Pro-Malay attitudes amongst the MCS were

[191] Ibid, letter Lloyd to Gurney, 1st October 1951.
[192] *British Malaya*, October 1951. Both quotes.
[193] *Malay Mail,* 25th September 1951, Gammans, *Dato Onn has 'Boxed the Compass'*.
[194] Chin Peng, *History*, 289.

resistant, doubting any near term possibility of communal harmony. Such attitudes were considered counterproductive by political leaders, but only one described them as a disloyalty and an incitement of opposition to British policy. Ex-MCS opinion remained strident, but the two most public commentators, Gammans and Purcell, now held opposing visions for Malaya's future. The ex-MCS might have generally been portrayed by British officialdom as out-of-date meddlers but there was also a wariness over the influence that Gammans and Maxwell's actions might be having in Malaya.

The assassination of Gurney marked a nadir in a period in which the MCS appeared increasingly off balance. The next Chapter explores the impact on the MCS of the appointment of General Sir Gerald Templer and the subsequent path taken towards independence.

4. Wishful Thinking

This chapter studies the period from the Gurney assassination in October 1951 to the independence of the Federation of Malaya in August 1957. For the first two and half years of this period, the MCS were collectively enthused by the leadership of new High Commissioner, Sir Gerard Templer. Self-government within the Commonwealth remained the goal of British policy in Malaya. The exact constitutional structure that would be adopted, and timescale, remained opaque. This allowed a wishful thinking of long-term careers in Malaya to be sustained amongst MCS officers.

MCS dismay over del Tufo

Gurney's murder re-opened a debate within the War Office and the Cabinet Malayan Committee on unifying civil and military command structures in Malaya. Whilst agreement had been reached in late 1950 to leave the existing structures essentially unchanged, and instead to clarify existing authorities,[1] replacing Gurney now reignited discussion. A further stimulus was the imminent retirement of Briggs as Director of Operations, and his replacement by General Sir Rob Lockhart. Lockhart's initial expectations that he would be a 'supreme commander'[2] would be dashed. The election of a Conservative Government on 25th October 1951, 19 days after Gurney's assassination, brought fresh political perspective, in particular that of Oliver Lyttelton, the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies. His memoirs recount that he 'read and talked Malaya for two days' ahead of an early visit to the country, concluding that Britain was 'on the way to losing the country' with 'incalculable' repercussions, not least in terms of potentially lost dollar earnings. He also determined that the MCS remained seriously weakened by the long term effects of internment.

> Many of the British Civil Servants administering the country had been interned by the Japanese for 4 years…All inevitably bore the marks, the trauma of their suffering. Prisoners of war, even in tolerable conditions, can hardly escape an introspective and disenchanted outlook on life.[3]

[1] TNA, CAB 130/65, *Summary of Cabinet Meeting*, with Briggs, 4th December 1950.
[2] National Army Museum, Papers of General Sir Robert Lockhart, NAM.1983-10-154-119, Director of Operations, Notes of Discussion on 4th January 1952.
[3] Oliver Lyttelton, Viscount Chandos, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, (London, 1962), hereafter Chandos, *Memoirs*, 361-362. All quotes.

Military leaders were a significant source for Lyttelton's concerns over the MCS. He was told bluntly by CIGS, Slim, that 'the problem in Malaya was chiefly one of civil administration', and that his officers were not satisfied at the progress in providing military forces with relief 'from holding the ring'.[4] Slim's views were reinforced by his predecessor, Montgomery, who gave his views with characteristic bluntness, presumably basing his insights on his visit to Malaya in 1947.

> Malcolm MacDonald, of course must go. There has also got to a be a "clean out" of duds and unsuitable officers. The Chief Secretary to the Federation is one to go…(he) will not produce the results we need.[5]

This Chief Secretary was del Tufo, now the OAG in Malaya, and host to Lyttelton's visit. On arrival, Lyttelton quickly concluded that the situation was 'appalling…with divided and often opposed control at the top'.[6] He decided that Gurney's successor as High Commissioner should have direct control of both civil and military affairs and should be a General. Whilst Lockhart could fit under this role as a Deputy to the High Commissioner for Military Operations, Lyttelton determined that there would need to be a new appointment of a Deputy High Commissioner for Civil Affairs. This role would sit under the High Commissioner and above the Chief Secretary. He concluded that the self-evident lead MCS candidate for this new role, del Tufo, would not get it as 'he would not exactly fill the position…In all ordinary situations (he) would have been the man, but these were strange and extraordinary times.[7]
Del Tufo was told of this decision, accepting it with grace, although indicating he was not prepared to continue serving as Chief Secretary under a new Deputy High Commissioner, once the chosen incumbent arrived.[8] Meanwhile, he would continue as OAG and steer through the planned changes in leadership structure and appointments. Lyttelton decided that MacDonald would remain in position for a while, presumably to provide some degree of continuity given the, otherwise, wholesale leadership change underway.

Trouble arose for Lyttelton when it became necessary to disclose the new leadership structure and proposed incumbents to the Sultans and the Legislative Council. The unification of military and civil command under a new High Commissioner was welcomed, as was the

[4] TNA, DEFE 11/46, *Chiefs of Staff Meeting*, 7th November 1951.
[5] TNA, PREM 11/121, letter Montgomery to Slim, 3rd December 1951.
[6] Chandos, *Memoirs*, 366.
[7] Ibid, 373-374.
[8] TNA, CO 1022/101, telegram Del Tufo to Lyttelton, 19th January 1952.

proposed appointment of General Sir Gerald Templer to this role. Problems arose from Lyttelton's decision to appoint a Deputy High Commissioner. There was initial doubt amongst Legislative Council members as to whether a deputy was needed, in addition to the existing Chief Secretary.[9] When it became clear that Lyttelton would insist on this, Council members indicated that they would only accept such a role 'if a Malayan or del Tufo were appointed to the role'.[10] Lyttelton, intended, however, to nominate Donald MacGillivray for the role. MacGillivray had joined the Colonial Administrative Service in Africa in 1929 and had been Colonial Secretary in Jamaica since 1947. A crisis developed as it became apparent that the Sultans and the Legislative Council might block all the leadership structure changes to prevent MacGillivray's appointment. MacGillivray, now waiting in London for his appointment to be confirmed, offered his 'understanding' should it be decided that he could not after all go to Malaya.[11] MacDonald, clearly panicked, recommended on two occasions that plans be changed, and del Tufo be appointed as Deputy High Commissioner instead.[12] Lyttelton's response to MacDonald was initially firm, then exasperated.

- I maintain my former opinion that this (the creation of a Deputy High Commissioner role) is absolutely essential and the Deputy must be a man of drive and wide administrative experience from outside, repeat outside, the MCS.[13]
- I am frankly surprised that you should continue to urge me to go back on my decision.[14]

Ultimately, neither the Sultans nor the Legislative Council were prepared to create a constitutional crisis over the issue. The British decision to appoint Templer and MacGillivray was announced on 4th February, and the death of King George VI three days later proved a helpful distraction. When Templer and MacGillivray arrived in Malaya shortly afterwards, they moved quicky to impose their new order. The crisis had been short lived, and Lyttelton's self-confidence in sticking with his original decision to appoint MacGillivray had served him well on this occasion.

Senior MCS officers were dismayed. Humphrey, now Acting Secretary of Defence, subsequently described events as 'sinister'.

[9] Ibid, telegram Watherston to Paskin (Assistant Undersecretary), 14th January 1952.
[10] Ibid, telegram MacDonald to Lyttelton, 16th January 1952.
[11] Ibid, MacGillivray memo to Lloyd, 28th January 1952.
[12] Ibid, telegrams MacDonald to Lyttelton, 16th January 1952 and 31st January 1952.
[13] Ibid, telegram Lyttelton to MacDonald, 17th January 1952.
[14] Ibid, telegram Lyttelton to MacDonald, 1st February 1952.

> Del Tufo was brilliant by any standard and his ability was recognised throughout the service…To interpose a man with no experience of Asia between del Tufo and the new High Commissioner was more than del Tufo could accept. His record gave him an unrivalled claim to the new post. He resigned and his resignation was a blow to the morale of the Service.[15]

Corry maintained that 'I and many of my senior colleagues never really appreciated why Sir Donald MacGillivray had to be picked up from Jamaica and transferred to Kuala Lumpur'.[16] The *Straits Times* reported an unnamed senior MCS officer saying 'it was an insult to the service'.[17]

Rejuvenation under Templer

Simon Smith's analysis has re-emphasised 'the importance of the battle for 'hearts and minds' in which Templer was so actively engaged'.[18] The following sections will explore the mixed contributions made by the MCS towards this objective under Templer's leadership, and the criticisms he faced from ex-MCS officer Victor Purcell.

Templer arrived in Kuala Lumpur with a 'Directive' to work towards the creation of a 'united Malayan Nation' which would, in 'due course', become fully self-governing.[19] He would serve as High Commissioner until May 1954, committing to Lyttelton, 'there is one thing I can guarantee you. I will raise the morale of the whole place'. Lyttelton would subsequently conclude that he had 'more than fulfilled that promise'.[20] Prior to Templer's arrival, historian Northcote Parkinson concludes that the MCS had sunk into 'depression' as 'their immediate background was one of defeat and captivity…They showed no lack of courage but they were psychologically more prepared to die fighting than to beat the other side'.[21] Templer adopted two approaches to raising MCS morale. Firstly, he held rousing group meetings, as if addressing troops. Secondly, he held more private discussions with the most senior officers. The first group meeting was held on the 9th February. Although described as a

[15] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F2, Humphrey, *Heussler's History of the Malayan Civil Service*, 4-5, 5th October 1979. Both quotes.
[16] UOBL, W.C.S .Corry papers, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.215, transcript of interview with I. Lloyd Phillips, hereafter UOBL, Corry, *Phillips Interview*, undated, 29.
[17] *Straits Times*, 5th February 1952.
[18] Smith, *Templer*, 74.
[19] TNA, PREM 11/639, *Directive to General Sir Gerald Templer*, hereafter Templer Directive, 1st February 1952.
[20] University of Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, Lyttelton Papers, hereafter UCCAC, Lyttelton Papers, *Lord Chandos Speech at Dinner of The Ends of the Earth Club*, 20th October 1954. Both quotes.
[21] C. Northcote Parkinson, *Templer in Malaya*, (Singapore, 1954), hereafter Parkinson, *Templer,* 5.

'confidential talk', it was reported in *The Times* two days later. The newspaper's account emphasised 'the soldierly determination' in Templer's demand that 'he would depend on the advice and experience of his officials, but his orders would have to be obeyed unquestioningly; he would not tolerate half-heartedness'.[22] MCS officer Leslie Davis left an account.

> The first thing he did was…give us a jolly rousing pep talk. No words were minced, we were told to get off out bottoms and get cracking but not make any mistakes and if we all pulled together we would deal with the situation.[23]

Additional to his martial demeanour, Templer was able to exhibit a subtler side in these group meetings. He held a personal interest in historical artifacts and museums, and it did not go unnoticed by Davis that 'he also emphasised…that we've got to think about the other sides of administration, if you like the cultural side'. [24] Templer gave orders for the war damaged National Museum to be rebuilt, and later supported the creation of a Malayan Historical Society. This built trust amongst an MCS cadre that shared these cultural interests. Similar subtlety and interpersonal skills are evident from Templer's management of the most senior, and potentially most difficult, MCS officers. Sheppard described how Templer approached the British Advisers.

> Within a week he had invited all the British Advisers to spend a night at King's house – four of us at a time…(He) asked us what was wrong with the Government machine and what remedies we could suggest…None of us scored many marks. He then told us his priorities. I…returned…feeling like an electric torch that had just been fitted with new batteries. [25]

His impact across the MCS was also positive. Junior MCS officer, J.C. Bottoms, was Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary and had witnessed del Tufo's departure. He wrote to the CO shortly after Templer's arrival.

> Without wishing to draw any invidious comparisons, it is as though a breath of fresh air has blown through all the offices and also all our minds here, and the effect can only be described as dynamic…People are more cheerful and hopeful than they have ever been as far as I can remember in the last four years.[26]

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[22] *The Times*, 11th February 1952, *General Templer's Methods, Outline for Malayan Officials*.
[23] UOBL, *End of Empire*, Transcripts, Vol. 1, interview with Leslie Davis. Davis was Secretary to the Member for Education, 15.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Sheppard, *Memoirs,* 192.
[26] TNA, CO 1022/101, extract from a letter Bottoms to A.M.MacKintosh (newly appointed Head of the South-East Asia Department), undated.

John Davis pictured Templer in a letter to his parents as 'not a great man but he is the kind of man we need'.[27] Other MCS officers would recall Templer's impact in their memoirs. Hayward described Templer's 'triumph' as 'arousing universal confidence'.[28] Loch saw in Templer a 'natural authority that compels loyalty and admiration…gladly given because it was obvious that Templer would…achieve much that we cared for'.[29] Negative perceptions of Templer were held by some, but expressed in the context of a broader praise for his achievements. Corry described him as a 'martinet', [30] Cunyngham-Brown as a 'cold and angry tornado'.[31] For Band he was *facile princeps* (easily first), but 'he didn't come up to all MCS standards!'.[32]

Although Templer had swiftly won the MCS to his side, this did not mean that the MCS were to be impactful on Templer, even though he claimed that he would depend on the advice and experience of his officials. He had departed to Malaya already untrusting of the Service, telling Lyttelton that he had learnt from 'masses of people that the bureaucracy is extreme'. He asked Lyttelton to despatch immediately to Malaya 'a really skilled O&M Team of three or four Colonial Civil Servants who know their stuff, to examine the whole of the machinery'. This was a 'frightfully important matter' and Templer doubted that local civil servants 'would ever see the wood for the trees' if they were given the task.[33] His opinion of the MCS appeared unaltered by his experiences after arrival. In correspondence with Lyttelton, he declared the British Advisers were 'on the whole an uninspiring lot' but he considered that it would 'do more harm than good to have a mass sacking', however much he wanted to promote the 'younger types'. One or two would have to go, however, as Churchill, British Adviser Kelantan was 'an awfully nice fellow but quite gaga' and Falconer in Johore was 'absolutely burnt out and useless'.[34] Nonetheless, Templer believed it was 'very necessary that the post of Chief Secretary be built up', to remove any impression that the role had suffered through the creation of the Deputy High Commissioner role, and to create a strengthened Secretariat for enforcing his orders.[35] To 'build up' the Chief Secretary role,

[27] IWM, Documents, Colonel J L H Davis, hereafter, IWM, Davis, *Papers,* Box 1, letters to his parents, letter 20th May 1952.
[28] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F2, letter Hayward to Heussler 1st April 1982.
[29] Loch, *Alphabet*, 154-155.
[30] Corry, *Phillips Interview,* 28.
[31] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B11 F3, S. Cunyngham-Brown, *Mixing Bowl, The Clearing Gale,* 299.
[32] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F1, R.W. Band, *Views on my Seniors*, 12th August 1969.
[33] TNA, CO 1022/101, letter Templer to Lyttelton, 20th January 1952. All quotes.
[34] John Cloake, *Templer*, *Tiger of Malaya*, (London, 1985), 213, 267. All quotes.
[35] TNA, CO 1022/60, telegram Templer to Lyttelton, 28th February 1952.

Templer added the co-ordination of work related to the 'after-care' of resettlement areas.[36] With the Chief Secretary role redesigned, and del Tufo's retirement announced, a decision now had to be made on the incumbent. Lyttelton's Principal Parliamentary Secretary, Hugh Fraser, who had stayed on in Malaya to continue an assessment of the situation, suggested Corry for the role describing him 'the ablest of British Advisers'.[37] Despite Fraser's advocacy, there is no evidence that Templer and MacGillivray seriously considered Corry although, in time-served MCS career progression terms, he may have been amongst those next in line. Instead they chose the younger and less experienced Watherston, who would remain in the Chief Secretary role until independence in 1957. In a sign of how readily the MCS were prepared to accept Templer's decisions, there was now little of the grumbling that had been heard on Watherston's earlier career progressions. Only Luckham recorded a view that Corry, who retired the next year, should have got the job as the more experienced of the two.[38] In the *Daily Telegraph* Templer was praised for 'improvement in morale and organisation' and for overcoming 'an almost solid wall of pro-Malay Civil Servants' in his efforts.[39]

Attempted Administrative Service Restructuring

With Watherston installed, Templer and MacGillivray turned to the broader administrative organisation. A unification of all administrative services held the potential to enable Templer's directive of creating a Malayan nation. The MCS was not the sole administrative service in all parts of the Federation. It held this position in the Federation's Secretariat, in the two Settlements (Malacca and Penang), and for largely historical reasons it predominated in the 4 States that had formed the pre-war FMS, (Perak, Pahang Negri Sembilan, and Selangor). However, the 5 pre-war Unfederated States, (Johore, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Trengganu) had a long tradition of their own State administrative services into which only a few MCS expatriates had been seconded. Existing conventions that the Sultans insisted on were that non-Malay Asians were not able to join the MCS, and no Malay member of a State Administrative Service could transfer to another State Service.

[36] Ibid, telegram, Templer to Lyttelton, 27th February 1952.
[37] TNA, CO 1022/22, Fraser, Progress Report to Lyttelton, 16th January 1952.
[38] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Luckham, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 13th November 1974.
[39] *Daily Telegraph*, 24th April 1952, Denis Warner, Special Correspondent*, New Anti-Bandit Machine Emerging in Malaya*. Both quotes.

Templer presented the CO with a paper, 'Suggestions for a Reorganisation of the MCS', on his first return to the UK in June 1952. He proposed the creation of a single Senior Administrative Service, open to candidates from all Malayan communities, who could be deployed to any part of the Federation. It would be called the Malayan Administrative Service and would entirely absorb the MCS, marking the latter's end as a distinct service. He added some 'alternatives', in which the MCS might survive as a distinct entity, but the CO felt these were 'less satisfactory' and 'warmly welcomed' the main proposal.[40] The main proposal did not last long as, perhaps in anticipation of Malay resistance, a much watered-down alternative was put to the Sultans. This comprised the admission of non-Malay Asians to the MCS and only 'some measure of integration of the State Civil Services with the MCS'.[41] The CO expressed its disappointment that the 'original scheme' had been dropped for one of the less attractive alternatives.[42]

Even these modest proposals had unintended consequences. The Sultans set up a Special Committee of Malay Leaders (three Mentri Besars and one State Secretary) to consider the proposals. This Committee received an impassioned submission from the Malay Officers Association complaining that its members formed only 14% of the MCS, a reflection of the failure of the British Government 'to honour its obligation to train and guide the subjects of Their Highnesses'.[43] Admission of non-Malays to the MCS was viewed by the Association with the 'greatest concern'. Nonetheless, the Sultans were advised by the Special Committee to be cautious in siding exclusively with the interests of their Malay subjects. Recent changes to State Nationality Laws had made certain qualifying Chinese and Indian Malayans living in the Malay States the 'subjects' of each State's Sultan. This had been the outcome of the citizenship proposals first formulated through MacDonald's work in the CLC. By the circuitous route of first acquiring a State Nationality, as the subject of its Sultan, the individual would then automatically acquire Federal Citizenship under existing legislation. As a consequence of these new State Nationality Laws, the Sultans could not reasonably deny to their non-Malay Asian subjects the opportunity to join the MCS. However, to safeguard the development of Malays within the MCS, the Special Committee advised the Sultans to allow

[40] TNA, CO 1022/107, note from Higham to Templer, responding to Templer's Paper, which was attached, 24th June 1952.
[41] Ibid, Templer, *Memorandum to their Highnesses the Rulers*, 18th August 1952.
[42] Ibid, letter Higham to MacGillivray, 3rd September 1952.
[43] Ibid, *Memorandum of the Malay Officers Association*, August 1952.

MCS recruitment only in the ratio of 4 Malays to 1 non-Malay Asian. As regards the proposal to 'integrate' the State Administrative Services with the MCS, the Sultans were reminded by their Committee that the State Services were 'one of their greatest assets which should be jealously guarded and preserved'. The Rulers were counselled to accede nothing more than to 'experiment' with Malay State civil service officers joining the MCS, along with secondments between State Administrative Services facilitated by temporary MCS placements to cover the absent secondee.[44]

The Sultans endorsed these recommendations, leaving Templer, MacGillivray and the CO to salvage some credibility from the abandonment of their larger ambition. The CO reflected that what had started as a proposal for the creation of a single Federation-wide Administrative Service had resulted in little more than the acceptance of the 'principle of interchangeability between the State Services'.[45] Non-Malay Asians now qualified for recruitment to the MCS but this concession, almost obligatory on the Sultans as a result of recent changes in the State Nationality Laws, had been made in a way to frustrate any rapid increase in non-Malays within the MCS. For each such recruit, four Malays would now be joining the MCS. Some immediate press reporting anticipated that the MCS 'open door scheme may be a flop',[46] as large numbers of well qualified non-Malay Asians would queue to enter the MCS, with their ambitions frustrated by the absence of the necessary numbers of qualified Malay recruits. The initial recruitment results were very disappointing, but for the opposite reason. By November 1953, only three qualified non-Malay Asians had applied and been offered positions in the MCS, but all three had then withdrawn their applications. Meanwhile 14 Malays, (nine from State Services and four new applicants), had joined. In a further acknowledgement of the Malay career frustrations that had been inadvertently amplified by the initial proposals, the Federal Government agreed in June 1953 to establish a Committee on the Malayanisation of Government Services. This represented a clear opportunity for further pressure to be put on the Government over its continued employment of large numbers of expatriate MCS officers.

The broader restructuring initiative had been abandoned within weeks and no mention of it appears in MCS memoirs, suggesting that the idea was kept close between

[44] Ibid, *Report of the Special Committee to Their Highnesses*, 25th September 1952.
[45] Ibid, letter Higham to MacGillivray, 1st November 1952.
[46] *Straits Budget*, 8th January 1953.

Templer and MacGillivray, and probably Watherston. There is no evidence that the external O&M experts Templer requested ever arrived. The broad structure of Federal and State administrations, and the MCS and the State Administrative Services within them, remained largely unchanged for the balance of the colonial period.

New Villages

As part of his strategy to build up the Chief Secretary role, Templer had given Watherston the specific responsibility of social welfare within the new settlements. The Federal Government reported to the Legislative Council that it had taken the 'strategic initiative' through resettlement but acknowledged that 'a long vista is opened of social and administration work'.[47] The settlements were renamed 'new villages' in March 1952[48] and, in June, Templer returned to London to declare 'the most important of the social measures today is the consolidation of the new villages'.[49] The General needed to emphasise his sympathetic stance towards the villages as, in the previous months, he had created controversy with his actions at Tanjong Malim. A communist attack near to this village, on the Perak/Selangor border, had killed 12 people. One was an MCS Cadet, Michael Codner, who was serving as Acting District Officer. Codner was a well-known WW2 hero who had been a leading member of the 'wooden horse' escape from Stalag Luft III, the subject of a recent book and film.[50] The villagers denied any knowledge of the perpetrators of the attack, despite Templer's face to face entreaties with them to provide information. He then imposed a curfew and reduced rice rations in the hope that this might bring forward the information he wanted. Whilst his actions were broadly supported in Malaya, and presumably by the MCS,[51] his actions were attacked by the left-wing press in the UK.[52] In parliament, Lyttelton had to disingenuously defend the reduction of rice rations as being 'not punitive but…to enforce greater control of food distribution'.[53]

[47] TNA, CO 941/14, *Resettlement and the Development of New Villages in the Federation of Malaya*, *1952,* Paper presented to the Legislative Council, 2nd July 1952.
[48] ANM, 1957/0690500, *Chief Secretary Circular*, 15th March 1952.
[49] TNA, CO 1022/492, Templer Press Statement, Colonial Information Department, London, June 1952.
[50] Eric Williams, *The Wooden Horse*, (London, 1949), and *The Wooden Horse*, British Lion Film Corporation, 1950.
[51] Nonetheless, no MCS memoir yet studied discusses the incident, or mentions Codner.
[52] *Daily Herald*, 2nd April 1952, *Hitler's Way is not our Way*.
[53] Hansard Fifth Series, Volume 498, Commons Sitting, 2nd April 1952, 1669.

Watherston addressed his expanded responsibilities by creating a New Village Liaison Officer role filled by John Davis, who was tasked to work on 'all matters affecting the well-being and security of the new villages'.[54] Davis described this as 'a very curious job', a frustrating mix of enjoyable travels in the country and an inability to get anything done in the central Secretariat as it was 'completely stewed up in paper and pomposity and remote from the realities as could be'.[55] He worked under the guidance of a Committee, (on the Aftercare of Resettlement Areas), chaired by Watherston, and comprising several Executive Council Members. It focused on education, medical, land and agricultural issues, along with general amenities such as drainage, village halls, recreation space etc.

At local level, each DO retained overall accountability for the new villages within the District, and chaired the various District committees established for village management. In the resettlement phase, the DOs had been assisted by a rapidly assembled force of Resettlement and Assistant Resettlement Officers (ROs and AROs). To garner the support and the involvement of the villagers in village development, a different type of support was now needed by the DO. This would come from Chinese speaking officers who would be largely resident in the villages and would work directly with the villagers on the numerous social and welfare issues that needed to be addressed. The responsibility for recruiting a Chinese Affairs Officer (CAO) for each District, and an Assistant Chinese Affairs Officer (ACAO) for each village, lay with the Secretary for Chinese Affairs in the Federal Secretariat. The Secretary had in turn to work with each State's Chinese Affairs Officer. Once recruited and in place, however, the new CAOs and ACAOs would effectively fall under the DO's jurisdiction, and, along with the DO, would report through to each State's Mentri Besar. Whilst the Secretary for Chinese Affairs and the State Chinese Affairs Officers were expatriate MCS positions, the CAO and ACAO positions were filled by Chinese Malayans who became members of a new, non-MCS, federal service. The Secretary of Chinese Affairs believed it would be 'only the exceptional ARO' who would be able to qualify for the new service, as a change in focus and new skills were needed to move from resettlement to new village development.[56] The challenge of recruiting for these new positions was evident from the Monthly Administration Reports sent by the Chief Secretary to the CO. The report for January 1953 advised that only six out of 51

[54] ANM, 1957/0576109, Davis' appointment letter, 17th April 1952.
[55] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 1, letter to his parents, 20th May 1952.
[56] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 7, letter Oakeley to the Director of the ARO School, 11th September 1952.

applicants for CAO and 23 of the 68 applicants for ACAO had been accepted that month, and noted a recommendation that education qualifications be relaxed to boost recruitment.[57] Nonetheless, Stubbs reports that there remained an ongoing shortage of Chinese speakers for the new positions, with only 54 CAOs and 31 ACAOs appointed by early 1954. Additionally, he records accusations that the DOs were not making effective use of the limited number of recruits that had arrived, instead treating them as 'glorified Assistant Relocation Officers'.[58] To make up for the resource shortfall, missionaries with prior service in China continued to be sought from religious organisations worldwide. By October 1953, 132 had been deployed.[59]

Consequently, welfare development in the new villages progressed slowly. Davis only remained in the Liaison Officer role for 10 months and the position was discontinued on his departure. Watherston announced that administration of the over 400 new villages would now fall 'within the framework of the machinery of State and Settlement Governments'.[60] The role of the Federation was reduced to setting clear standards and expectations for the States to follow. An example of such is a document it produced on the General Priorities of a District Officer. The 8th (of 8) priority for the DO was to raise the standard of new villages to a 'general position' outlined in an appendix of some 15 points, covering issues such as agricultural land, water supply, schools, a community centre and 'a reasonably friendly and co-operative feeling'. If all 15 points were met, a new village could be considered 'properly settled'.[61] Realistically, meeting these standards required time and money and, whilst there were some policy successes, such as the agreement amongst all the Malay States to provide long term/permanent land title to new villagers, progress on the ground was hampered by lack of funds and conflicting priorities. The Federal Government boasted that it had spent Malayan$29m on new villages in 1952, contributing to 'an effective force in the battle to win the hearts and minds of these people'. However, it acknowledged that there remained an 'almost unlimited scope in the provision and expansion of measures'.[62] A boom in tin and rubber prices during the Korean war had helped fund the resettlement program in 1951. Now

[57] TNA, CO 1022/450, *Monthly Administration Report*, January 1953.
[58] Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds,* 162.
[59] TNA, CO 1022/379, extract from Savingram 1751, 17th October 1953.
[60] ANM, 1957/0576109, letter from Chief Secretary to State and Settlement Secretaries, February 1953.
[61] ANM, 1957/0469242, letter from Chief Secretary to State and Settlement Secretaries, May 1953. Both quotes.
[62] TNA, CO 1022/449, *Monthly Administration Report,* December 1952. Both quotes. M$8.5=GBP1.

a 45% fall in rubber prices and 25% in tin prices, between 1952 and 1953, [63] occasioned by the war's end, severely reduced the funds available for village agricultural land purchase and social facility development. Tan's study of new villages concludes that development outcomes varied considerably and only a few had reached 'properly settled' status by the mid-1950s, some having to wait until the mid-1960s for even basic services and amenities.[64]

The development picture was also slow moving in Malay kampongs. Available funding for Co-operatives had been affected by the fall in rubber and tin prices and the Emergency had also seriously disrupted plans. The Commissioner for Co-operative Development, senior MCS Officer T.F.Carey, reported that his Department was now supporting 1,663 Co-operative Societies, compared to 660 in 1939. However, he had only four more field officers and no additional administrative staff compared to pre-war staffing levels.[65] Similarly affected was the Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) which advanced projects specifically targeted at supporting Malays. Fisk, who became State Development Officer, Perak, described its work as 'puny efforts'.[66] In December 1952, Templer reported that RIDA had advanced only Malayan$1.25m to projects over the last 18 months and provided M$2m in grants for rural development.[67] These were tiny figures compared to the M$29m spent on Chinese new village development in 1952 alone. Both sets of figures were dwarfed by the military and security costs of the Emergency which rose from M$155m in 1951 to M$250m in 1953.[68]

Efforts to introduce local democracy in new villages also fell short of expectations. The goal had been stated by Templer in his initial address to the Legislative Council in March 1952, but in an off-the-record briefing on elections, he had told a journalist that there would be 'nothing above the village pump'. This intention was published, albeit the source unattributed, drawing immediate criticism towards Templer for holding such a modest democratic objective.[69] The tabling of a Village Council Bill soon followed, to apply to both

[63] Loh, *Tin Mines*, 140, data from Malayan Rubber Statistics Handbook and Bulletin of Statistics relating to the Mining Industry.
[64] Tan, *Barbed Wire*, 140.
[65] TNA, CO 941/23, Commissioner for Co-operative Development, *Annual Report, Year Ending 31st December 1953*.
[66] Fisk, *Dull Moment*, 188.
[67] TNA, CO 1022/493, Templer Press Statement, Colonial Information Department, 4th December 1952.
[68] Short, *Insurrection,* 347.
[69] Michael Davidson, *The World, The Flesh, and Myself*, (London, 1962), 295. Davidson was Foreign Correspondent of the *Observer*, and also published in the *Singapore Standard*.

Malay kampongs and Chinese new villages. As the idea of expanded democracy might not be universally welcomed within Malay States still ruled by the appointees of autocrat Sultans, reassurances were given that the Bill allowed the DO to 'adapt the details' for each village as might be required and to retain 'general powers of control'. It was not suggested that there be universal suffrage or compulsory use of ballot boxes. Instead a show of hands, or even appointment by the DO, would be sufficient to select Village Council members.[70] This mandate for DOs to make their own local decisions on the nature of democracy in each of their villages was immediately raised as a concern in the press.[71] As the new Bill could clearly be connected, albeit in first-steps terms, to Templer's Directive to develop Malaya towards self-government, MacGillivray championed the initiative to the CO, asking that the CO help ensure 'it gets some favourable publicity'.[72] Two weeks later, the *Observer* headlined the initiative as Templer's 'Best Move', exaggerating it as 'the most important thing he has done yet (which) will at one swoop allow nearly half a million Chinese, mostly aliens, a powerful voice'.[73] Whilst Templer limited his ambitions to the metaphor of building only the solid foundations of a future democratic house, the CO lauded the initiative as proof 'of the genuineness of H.M.C.'s aim to establish a real democracy in Malaya'.[74]

The passing of the Bill did not facilitate a rapid development of local councils. A Federal O&M report found that DOs 'fear that (the new Legislation) will increase work at a time that they are already overloaded'.[75] In 1954, Corry, who had by then retired, was invited back by MacGillivray to chair a survey of new villages. His report found that whilst almost all new villages had some form of informally nominated or elected Village Committee, only 142 of the 439 villages (33%) had a legally constituted Council. Corry did not believe that the pace of change to legally constituted Councils needed to be 'forced', as current arrangements were allowing a 'period of apprenticeship' in local government.[76] Pragmatism had created an outcome short of that originally trumpeted as the intention.

[70] TNA, CO 1022/296, Memo from the Member Home Affairs, Federal Government, to State Secretaries, 9th April 1952. Both quotes.
[71] *Straits Budget*, 15th May 1952, *Will the DO have too much power?*
[72] TNA, CO 1022/296, letter MacGillivray to Higham, 21st April 1952.
[73] *The Observer*, 4th May 1952.
[74] TNA, CO 1022/296, letter Jerrom (Principal Officer, CO) to Scrivener (FO), *Intel* attachment, 19th May 1952.
[75] ANM, 1957/0568712, *Survey of District Offices*, May 1953, 4.
[76] *A General Survey of New Villages*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1954), 38-42. All quotes.

The Emergency from 1952

In his final report on leaving Malaya, Briggs expressed frustration at working with the administration's Internal Defence Secretariat. He found procedure slow as many issues still had to be referred through the Chief Secretary to Gurney, as there was a limit to what could be put on the War Council agenda. Briggs had wanted to make changes in police policy and organisation to improve efficiency but rued that 'there are conflicting views on the Executive side (and) discussions and written representations have had no effect so far'. He complained that 'work is duplicated between the staffs of the Director of Operations and the Secretary of Defence', and concluded that 'a simpler organisation is required'.[77]

Templer's Directive now gave him 'complete operational command over all Armed Forces',[78] removing the restraint that Briggs had operated under that allowed military leaders to appeal his orders to their superiors. As High Commissioner, Templer also had authority over Internal Defence, most significantly the Malayan Police Force. Templer introduced a simpler organisation by unifying the Executive and War Councils, and issued a memorandum insisting that administrative duties and the Emergency could not be regarded as separate issues and henceforth must be 'completely and utterly interrelated'.[79]

Opportunities for significant changes in police and intelligence leadership had also been created by the resignation of Gray as Police Commissioner and Jenkin as Director of Intelligence before Templer's arrival. Gray was replaced by Colonel A. E. Young, who immediately began a major restructuring of police organisation and operations. Templer replaced Jenkin with Jack Morton. Morton was tasked with bringing all intelligence and information services under his coordination, and advising Templer directly. This included Special Branch, which was separated from the CID division, with Guy Madoc appointed as its Head.[80] The Police Commissioner and the Director of Intelligence sat on a Director of Operations Committee (DOO), also chaired by Templer. Historians of Malayan Intelligence operations[81] have explained the critical importance of these police and intelligence restructurings, and Templer's direct oversight of them, in the eventual defeat of the

[77] TNA, AIR 20/7777, Director of Operations, *Report on the Emergency in Malaya, April 1950 to November 1951,* Appendix G, 69-70. All quotes.
[78] Templer Directive, Article 10.
[79] J.B.Perry Robinson, *Transformation in Malaya*, (London, 1956), hereafter Perry Robinson, *Transformation*. Templer's memorandum is quoted on page 165.
[80] Hack, *Emergency,* 288.
[81] Comber, *Secret Police*, Walton, *Secrets*, and Hack*, Emergency*.

insurgency. There was much less space for influence in this new organisation for the Chief Secretary (Watherston) and Secretary of Defence and Internal Security (David, then Humphrey from 1953), even though they also sat on the DOO and the police force still nominally fell within the Secretary of Defence's portfolio. No significant contributions appear to be attributed to these two senior MCS officers in the military and intelligence histories of the period. Comber relates that MacGillivray 'would handle only the "routine" administration of the country',[82] the clear implication being that administrative matters of importance to the Emergency were under Templer's direct control.

Templer enhanced the next levels of the command structure of War Committees he had inherited from Briggs. He wrote to Lyttelton, flagging the importance of this structure, and his plan for its tacit extension to 'bypass the cumbersome Government machine which is imposed by the present Constitutional system'.[83] A year after Templer's departure, MacGillivray, now his successor as High Commissioner, explained how crucial the mechanism of 'War by Committee' had become.

> Every General who comes afresh to Malaya is horrorstruck at the thought of war by Committee, but it is not long before he comes to a realisation that it is the only way…Here is "War by Committee" with a vengeance!...It is responsible for the considerable progress that has been made.[84]

The DOO[85] drove its decisions down to the State War Executive Committees, (SWECs). A *Corona* article later written by Corry would claim the British Advisers played a significant role on the SWECs.

> It began to be tacitly established in many States that the British Adviser should take charge of emergency measures in the war against Communist terrorism, thus leaving the State Premiers free for normal administrative duties. This was a sensible arrangement in that it gave the Advisers responsibility for something of overwhelming importance.[86]

In a subsequent interview, Corry claimed to have 'frequently presided over meetings (of the SWEC) in place of the Mentri Besar'.[87] Shennan's biography of Davis shares this interpretation,

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[82] Comber, *Secret Police*, 173.
[83] TNA, CO 1022/60, telegram Templer to Lyttelton, 28th February 1952.
[84] TNA CO 1030/19, MacGillivray, *Address to the Imperial Defence College*, London, 22nd June 1955.
[85] Chaired by Templer to 1954, then by General Geoffrey Bourne (Director of Operations), and ultimately by Chief Minister, Rahman.
[86] *Corona*, April 1957, W.C.S. Corry, *The Passing of the British Advisers*.
[87] UOBL, Corry, *Phillips Interview*, 26.

explaining that although the State's Mentri Besar was the 'customary' Chair of the SWEC, the British Adviser was '*defacto',* in the role.[88]

State	Number of SWEC minutes studied 1952 to 1957	Number of Meetings where the British Adviser deputised as Chair	British Adviser deputised as Chair, as a percentage of all meetings
Johore	188	29	15%
Kelantan	31	9	29%
Negri Sembilan	204	42	21%
Pahang	65	5	8%
Perak	119	58	49%
Selangor	109	20	18%
Total/Average	**716**	**163**	**23%**

Table: Chairmanship of 716 SWEC meetings held in six Malay States, 1952 to 1957.

An analysis of the Chairmanship of SWECs recorded in the minutes of their meetings throughout the Emergency[89] only partly supports this contention. The SWECs in Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis were indeed formally chaired by their State British Advisers. However, these northerly States were less impacted by the Emergency, with their SWECs meeting at only a quarter of the frequency of those in other States. The Resident Commissioners chaired the SWECs in the Settlements of Penang and Malacca. However, in the remaining 6 States, (Johore, Kelantan, Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak, Selangor), the Mentri Besar was formally recorded as Chair of each SWEC, with the British Adviser only taking the Chair in their absence. These six States bore the brunt of the Emergency,[90] with their SWECs meeting an estimated total of 1,230 times.[91] 60% of the minutes of these SWEC meetings have been found in the Malaysian National Archives and their data on Chairmanship is shown in the table above.

[88] Margaret Shennan, *Our Man in Malaya, John Davis*, (Stroud, 2007), hereafter Shennan*, Davis*, 224.
[89] ANM, 1957/0537051 to 0537193 series and 2005/0018533 to 0018561 series. The archival record is very comprehensive but does not contain all the SWEC minutes of all States. All available minutes were, however, analysed.
[90] Districts were designated Black or White depending on the existence of insurgency. See David Baillargeon, Spaces of the Malayan Emergency 1954 for Black areas of insurgency. The Malayan Emergency: Digital Map · Cultures of Occupation in Twentieth Century Asia (cotca.org)
[91] The SWEC meetings of these six States comprise an estimated 73% of the total SWEC meetings held by all nine Malay States and two Settlements.

Whilst interpretation of these statistics can only go so far, the absence level of Mentri Besars from SWEC meetings in these States does not seem excessive, except in Perak. If the British Adviser was *de facto* the Chair, and the Mentri Besar diverted by 'normal administrative duties', more frequent absences by the latter might be expected. Corry's own state, Pahang, records the lowest level of British Adviser deputising. British Advisers were, however, much less frequently absent, so they would have provided an important continuity role in meetings. The actual contribution made in the meetings by Mentri Besars and British Advisers respectively cannot be judged by these statistics. The minutes offer little further evidence, as they contain mostly information on reports given and decisions made. Nonetheless, it seems difficult to concede that the Mentri Besars in these six States would decide to attend so many meetings, only to act in a 'nominal' capacity. They would surely have built up a significant knowledge of proceedings and been able to guide and lead the meeting to some, if not to a significant, degree. British Advisers may have been exaggerating their contributions to SWECs to compensate for what they acknowledged was, from 1948, a very diminished role in the State in other respects. It should be allowed that some may still have been influential within SWECs at an informal level, although evidence of specific instances has not been found. Some British Advisers were prepared to be more open about the reality they faced. One of Corry's successors as British Adviser Pahang was Maurice Hayward. He described his State's Mentri Besar as a 'forceful talent' and his own role as 'an unnecessary shadow of the past except as a representative of the British protective power'.[92] Sheppard became acting British Adviser in Kelantan in September 1950. He found the State's Mentri Besar, Dato Nik Kamil, to be 'such a brilliantly intelligent and outstandingly able leader that the temptation to infringe his authority (on the State's SWEC) did not arise.[93]

The other significant MCS officer on each SWEC was the State Secretary of Chinese Affairs. These positions, created in 1950, were staffed with Chinese speaking expatriate MCS officers. They sat within each State's administration and reported to the State Mentri Besar, whilst being under the informal co-ordination of the Secretary for Chinese Affairs in the Federation's Secretariat, a role filled for most of this period by David Gray. A prime purpose of the State Secretary of Chinese Affairs was to facilitate the recruitment and training of the District CAOs and village ACAOs, whilst generally fostering goodwill and sound working

[92] UOBL, Papers of M.J.Hayward, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.285, *Pahang January 1955 to July 1956*, 21. Both quotes.
[93] Sheppard, *Memoirs,* 177.

relations with Chinese community leaders in each State. Gray's 1956 report told that these officers were dispirited as 'all at some time, and some of them repeatedly and with feeling, expressed the desire to get out of Chinese Affairs into broader and more general administrative posts'.[94] The role had few formal powers, with Gray's deputy recalling that 'they achieved what they did only by their enthusiasm, dedication and readiness always to take the initiative'.[95] There was one further position on the SWEC open to MCS officers. This was the Secretary of the SWEC, an important position responsible not only for the organisation of SWEC meetings but also the flow of information upwards to the DOO, downwards to DWECs, and laterally to the various sub-committees and day to day operational meetings linked to SWEC activity. There were considerable differences between States on how the role was filled, either by MCS experienced officers or expatriate ex-military officers on short term contract. Sometimes, newly arrived MCS Cadets had to be used as a stop gap.[96] The MCS filling of the roles only gradually increased from a low base of two (of 11) in 1953 to seven in 1957.[97]

The District War Executive Committees were responsible for implementing the Emergency policies and directions promulgated by the DOO and SWECs. Each DWEC continued to be chaired by the DO, its area usually aligned with the administrative District. In some large Districts, the DO had one or more Assistant District Officers (ADO), who might chair their own DWEC where the District was subdivided. Templer's vision was to relieve the DO of much of the bureaucracy of 'completing forms for those higher up in the hierarchy,[98] although there is little evidence of Templer achieving this. In mid-1953, the findings of the Federal O&M report on DO activity were gloomy.

> It is apparent (that) the overall program of work is likely to be beyond the capacity of even the most energetic and experienced officers…Their main efforts will obviously depend to some extent on individual experience, temperament, and preferences.[99]

[94] TNA, FCO 141/7278, David Gray, *The Administration of Chinese Affairs*, January 1956, 38.
[95] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F4, Brewer, *Malaya - Administration of Chinese Affairs 1945-1957*, 17.
[96] ANM 1957/0537080, Memo from Director of Operations to Chairmen of SWECs, 30th October 1952. See also the account of McConville on page 132 of this thesis.
[97] 1) ANM 1957/0537166, SWEC Secretaries Conference, 16th/17th December 1953; 2) 2005/0018533 , List of Executive Secretaries, 1st July 1957.
[98] TNA, CO 1022/101, letter Templer to Lyttelton, 20th January 1952.
[99] ANM, 1957/0568712, *Survey of District Officers*, 22nd May 1953, 9.

DOs in the five States that had been Unfederated in the pre-war period were generally appointed from those State's own Administrative Services. As example, Rahman himself had been DO in Kedah's Kuala Muda District in the 1930s, and this DO position continued to be filled by members of the Kedah Civil Service throughout the Emergency.[100] MCS filled DO and ADO positions were concentrated in Pahang, Perak, Negri Sembilan, Selangor and the two Settlements. Their overall numbers are recorded in the table below.

Year	MCS District Officers	MCS Assistant District Officers	Total
1952	43 (8)	26 (4)	69 (12)
1956	38 (12)	31 (22)	69 (34)

Table: MCS District and Assistant District Officers (1952 – 1956)

Figures in Brackets are the numbers of non-expatriates within the total.[101]

In 1952, the ratio of MCS DOs to ADOs was near two to one, but by 1956 it was close to parity. The period saw only a small increase in the malayanisation of DO roles (from eight to 12) but a much greater malayanisation of ADO roles (from four to 22), suggesting that malayanisation was being achieved by retaining a smaller number of expatriate DOs responsible for a larger number of ADOs. Nevertheless, by 1956, one half of the combined DO/ADO workforce was Malayan (32 Malay and two Chinese), and an irreversible trend towards malayanisation of both roles had been established.

As local circumstances created much variation, a consolidated analysis of the 43 DWECs headed by MCS DOs has not been attempted. Instead, the profile of MCS DO leadership in one District, Tampin District in Negri Sembilan State, has been studied.[102] Additionally, one policy area, food control, has been researched to understand how it was implemented across Negri Sembilan.[103] The numbering of the minutes of Tampin DWECs started in January 1952 when J.M.Patrick was in the DO role. The other attendees were the

[100] Nadaraja, *Kuala Muda*, 117-124.
[101] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Establishment Staff Lists 1952 and 1956.
[102] ANM, 1957/0537061/0537070/0537104/0537119/0537134/0537144. Tampin was chosen as a full set of its minutes from 1952 to 1957 survive, numbered sequentially.
[103] ANM, 1957/0537100/0537101/0537158. Negri Sembilan was chosen as files on its Food Control activities have been preserved.

Officer Superintending the Police Circle, the District Information Officer, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn, Gordon Highlanders, and a small number of unofficial members. Patrick was MCS Class IV, aged 32, and had joined the MCS in 1950. He brought a personal touch to the authorship of his minutes. The minutes of the 25th meeting on Christmas Eve 1952 were titled the 'Christmas Number', and ended with an item titled 'Christmas Cheer' which recorded a unanimous vote of thanks to Mrs Patrick for baking mince pies for the Committee.[104] Patrick handed his DO role, and DWEC chairmanship, to F.G.Fathers in July 1953. Fathers was also 32 but more senior at MCS Class III, reflecting his longer service, having joined the MCS in 1946. He chaired the Tampin DWEC from its 40th to 87th meetings, leaving in May 1955. The DO for the 88th to 116th meetings was Tunku Ja'afar bin H.H.Tunku Abdul Rahman. He was 33 and, as his title suggests, a member of one of the State's royal families. He had joined the MCS in 1953, after 6 years in the junior Malayan Administrative Service.[105] As a consequence of this short MCS service he was only MCS Class V. He departed in mid-1956 to attend a one-year diplomatic course in London, after which he was appointed Chargé d'affaires in Washington DC for the newly independent Federation of Malaya. In 1967 he became the Ruler of Negri Sembilan State and from 1994 to 1999, he was elected by his fellow Sultans as the 10th Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King) of Malaysia. Tunku Ja'afar was replaced as DO Tampin in May 1956 by Noor bin Zainal, who had transferred to the MCS from the Kedah State Service in 1955. By 1956, large areas of Negri Sembilan had been declared free of all insurgent activity and the Tampin DWEC was able to reduce its meeting frequency to fortnightly, having kept to a weekly pace since 1952. Noor chaired the meetings on 29th August and 19th September 1957, neither of which mentioned the transition to national independence that had occurred between the two. This short analysis leaves Tampin DWEC at its 146th meeting in December 1957, but it likely continued its regular meetings through to the Emergency's end in July 1960.

Population control measures were a key responsibility of all DWECs, covering erection and lighting of village perimeter fences and watchtowers, impositions of evening curfews, limits to daytime egress, registration of villagers, issuing of identity cards, and food control. Of all these measures, it was food control that was the most complex and difficult to manage.

[104] ANM 1957/0537070, Tampin DWEC Minutes, 24th December 1952.
[105] The Malayan Administrative Service (MAS) was a Malay-only Junior Federal Service, created in the pre-war period as a feeder Service to the MCS.

Although the aim was simple, to avoid food getting from new villages to the communist fighters, the range of potential food sources and methods of smuggling were large. The SWEC in Negri Sembilan issued a booklet to explain its food control measures. Food Prohibited Areas (FPAs) comprised most land that was not used either residentially, for roads, or to grow food. No one could be in a FPA area between 7pm and 6am. Outside these times, no one could carry food in an FPA, apart from limited amounts of kanji (a fermented drink), tea and coffee (excluding milk or sugar) and 'any quantity of alcohol'. The new village residential areas were termed Food Restricted Areas (FRAs). There was a detailed list of food items that could be brought into and out of an FRA. Additionally, tinned food, cooking oil and rice was rationed. There were further limits on how much produce shopkeepers could stock and how much food could be stored in residences.[106] To try to ensure that these complex rules were understood, and restricted areas clearly delineated, the Negri Sembilan SWEC ordered 285 FRA and 93 FPA noticeboards for placement on roads and in villages.[107]

Food control was the subject of continued innovation. Sheppard was the British Adviser in Negri Sembilan who had felt like a torch with new batteries after his initial meeting with Templer in 1952. In May 1954, he devised a scheme for the central cooking of rice in a large kitchen built in each village. This replaced the provision of an uncooked rice ration to each villager. Once cooked, rice is bulky to transport and soon becomes inedible in tropical climes. Under the central cooking scheme, each villager would still have the same rice ration but, now cooked, it would be far less easy to smuggle the ration out of the village to feed terrorists. Sheppard convinced his SWEC to implement the scheme in all villages in Negri Sembilan, including those within the Tamlin DWEC area. On the abolition of his role as British Adviser in mid-1956, Sheppard was placed in the central Secretariat as the new head of a Food Denial Project, to expand the central cooking of rice to other States.[108]

MCS Pay and Career Security

An MCS career was not easily transferable to another territory, its owner having been recruited by the CO to serve in Malaya, as an employee of the Federal Government. Senior MCS officers approaching the end of their careers hoped for a remaining period of service

[106] ANM 1957/0537158, *Food Control in Negri Sembilan*, 24th April 1953.
[107] Ibid, letter Negri Sembilan SWEC Secretary to The Manager Wing Sun and Co., 25th June 1953.
[108] Sheppard, *Memoirs*, 219.

that would lead to the safe landing of pensioned retirement. Junior Officers, many survivors of the fighting in the recent global conflict, craved career continuity to support their young families.

Such wishful thinking would allow a collective MCS myopia to develop, a failure to see that the Federation's independence was now on the horizon. Only in retrospect did it become apparent to the MCS that the clock was ticking much faster towards independence than they had thought possible. When the compressed timescale became apparent, in 1955, issues of pay and career security came to the fore. The purpose of this section is to provide background on how these issues had developed from 1945 to 1955, to prepare for the subsequent narrative.

The MCS were no different from any other employee group in being concerned about pay. Opinions within the MCS varied on whether the Service was well paid. In 1969 the BAM sent a survey to its ex-MCS members asking, 'Did you at first, or later, have any feelings of dedication to your work or were you merely working for a salary?'. Responses varied, with most respondents taking the view that dedication was paramount.

- An M.C.S. Officer 'merely working for a salary' is inconceivable.
- I never consciously thought of working for a salary.
- Who for God's sake would ever consider sweating it out in the MCS for the miserable salary – it was a sense of dedication.

A smaller number were prepared to acknowledge the value of the salary, at least as a sentiment held by some of their colleagues.

- I suppose we chose it as a career that which would provide unusually interesting work with a reasonable salary.
- There were always the 'money boys' about but they were in a minority. [109]

As salaries in Malaya were reported by the CO in 1956 as 'high compared with those paid in other overseas territories',[110] it is important to understand how this favourable position had arisen. The MCS had kept a keen eye on post-war pay and pay differentials since the foundation of the Malayan Civil Service Association (MCSA) in 1947.[111] The Association was

[109] UOBL, Heussler Papers, responses to ABM questionnaire by J.I.Miller (B16 F2), A.V. Aston (B9 F1), J.S.H. Cunyngham-Brown (B11 F3), J.Falconer (B12 F1) and D.Gray (B13 F2).
[110] TNA, FCO 141/7487, telegram CO to Federation of Malaya, 9th October 1956.
[111] ANM, 1957/0472297, Letter from the MCSA to the Labour Office, attaching Constitution and Rules, 10th July 1947.

soon active in making representations on behalf of its members for improvements in expatriation pay and the maintenance of the existing differentials in pay scales between the MCS, which considered itself the 'premier' Service, and the Professional Services on the next rung down.[112] The MCSA struggled to make headway on both issues. Discussions on terms and conditions within the Federation were complicated by the need for the Federal Government to hold separate discussions with the representatives of each service.[113] Innumerable points of differential and comparison were debated, with the Government having no central personnel systems to measure the contribution of jobs or outside job market rates. Resort had to be made to regular 'Commissions' which heard representations from each employee group and then reported proposals in lengthy and detailed reports. All such proposals then had to be agreed by the Legislative Council, and the Finance Sub-Committee of the Executive Council, creating further argument and delay.

The European Civil Servants Association of Malaya (TECSAM) represented Professional Services such as Agriculture, Education and Medical. In 1950 the Federation agreed that officers represented by TECSAM be placed on identical timescale paygrades to the MCS, ignoring MCS submissions to retain existing differentials.[114] Subsequently, both Associations expressed their concern that salaries were inadequate compared to those paid in the UK.[115] In 1950, a joint MCSA/TECSAM delegation travelled to London to present their position to the Secretary of State, Griffiths, appealing to him as the ultimate 'protector' of their interests. The delegation received a blunt push back. The CO declared that 'an increase of pensionable emoluments would put Malaya out of scale with other territories'.[116] In the crisis that followed Gurney's murder, Lyttelton was lobbied intensely on expatriate terms and conditions issues when visiting Malaya in December 1951. He devoted a section to the Civil Service in his subsequent report to Cabinet, explaining that Malaya's pay code was 'unsuited to today's conditions', and was leading to expatriate vacancies, 'sluggish' recruitment, and early retirements. He warned that,

[112] ANM, 1957/0579359, MCSA submissions to 1) The Joint Salaries Commission Officer, 15th November 1948, and 2) to The Secretary for the Special Committee on Salaries, 13th September 1949.
[113] ANM, 1957/0471331. This file on *Civil Service Divisions* records 60 Services/Categories of Appointments in Division I, of which the Administrative Service (MCS) was just one.
[114] ANM, 2006/0006735, *Report of the Professional Officers Committee*, 14th April 1950.
[115] TNA, CO 717/201/3, del Tufo briefing note for CO, 30th December 1950.
[116] Ibid, letter Griffiths to Gurney, 21st June 1951.

> If the service disintegrates under our hands – and it is no exaggeration to say that that might happen – then the chances of achieving any of our long-term aims would indeed be finally destroyed.[117]

With Cabinet support, Lyttelton authorised Templer to open renewed negotiations with MCSA and TECSAM. Agreement on increases was reached within weeks, but it took a further 18 months to overcome the objections of the Finance Subcommittee.

Nevertheless, not only was the overall pay of MCS and Professional Officers now higher than that of their equivalents in other territories, but a backdoor method had also been found to restore pay differentials between the MCS and Professional Officers by moving MCS officers on the highest timescale into a new superscale. In April 1952, Templer sought Lyttelton's approval for redesignation of MCS positions into a newly created MCS superscale of Class IC, which was sandwiched between timescale Class II and superscale Class IB.[118] H.G Turner (MCS), a past President of the MCSA, explained that this served to 'rectify any anomaly' caused by the Federation's earlier decision to equalise MCS and Professional Officer timescales to MCS levels.[119] As a result of this 'rectifying' action, numbers in the highest MCS timescale (Class II) fell dramatically from 76% of the total of senior cadre roles in 1946, to 4% by 1955, with a corresponding increase in the proportion of numbers in the expanded superscales. (Appendix Chart 1). This change created a significant divide between the MCS senior and junior cadres. With so few officers in timescale Class II by 1955, there was effectively a pay scale gap of two Classes between junior MCS officers, seemingly capped at timescale Class III, and the MCS superscales starting at Class IC., (Appendix, Chart 2). This sense of increasing distinctiveness between the senior and junior MCS cadres was reinforced by the MCS senior cadre remaining static in number, whilst, by 1955, the junior MCS cadre had expanded by 73% on its 1946 numbers, (Appendix Chart 3).

In contrast to the concern and energy devoted by the MCS to their pay, there appeared to be little anxiety over career security before 1955. From 1945, both the CO and the Federal Government were at pains to give new recruits, and existing colonial civil servants, every career reassurance. In early 1945, the CO produced a booklet aimed at attracting those shortly to be demobbed from the armed forces to the 'large numbers' of positions urgently

[117] TNA, CAB 129/48/59, memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21st December 1951.
[118] ANM, 1957/0579447, letter Templer to Lyttelton, 21st April 1952.
[119] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B18 F1, letter H.G.Turner to Bryson, 4th September 1969, attachment *M.C.S. History*, 13.

needed for colonial service.[120] A year later, the CO published two policy documents. In the first the CO was absolute in its conviction that 'for a long time to come' staffing of the Colonial Service would continue to depend on expatriates, as territories would not be able to find sufficient qualified local staff 'to fulfil the requirements of modern administration'.[121] The second document, on training, announced the introduction of new programs for CO Administrative Cadets prior to their departure for overseas service.[122] In a Lords debate on the Colonial Administrative Service in 1948, Milverton saw no grounds for career concerns.

> The Colonial Administrative service…is not a diminishing body…No person who knows anything on the subject can believe that, in the life-time of anybody joining the service today, that (the) service will not provide an ample career. [123]

The MCSA and TECSAM also received continued reassurances. Gurney advised their respective Presidents that 'he had repeatedly indicated in public his opinion that there was a very definite place for the expatriate officer in a self-governing Malaya'.[124] Templer's focus, like Gurney's, was on the CO providing him with more expatriate MCS Cadet recruits. If necessary, he urged that this be achieved by 'resorting to certain expedients' such as lowering standards and widening the scope of potential recruits to include National Service officers and female graduates.[125]

In hindsight it is clear that such career optimism was misplaced. Charles Jeffries was one of the principal civil servants in the CO charged with making the new recruitment and training policies work. His memoir reflected that,

> looking back with the knowledge of what was to follow, one must admit that the whole impression created…was one of an ongoing service offering a permanent career as far ahead as anyone could see.[126]

[120] Colonial Office, R.D.W.6., *Post War Opportunities*, published 1945.
[121] Colonial Office, No. 197, *Organisation of the Colonial Service*, published 1946, Both quotes.
[122] Colonial Office, No 198, *Post-War Training for the Colonial Service*, published 1946.
[123] Hansard, 5th Series, Volume 155, Lords Sitting, 12th May 1948, 873-874.
[124] TNA, CO 717/201/3, Notes of Meeting with MCSA and TECSAM Presidents, 21st December 1950.
[125] TNA, CO 1022/492: 1) CO notes on a meeting with Templer on *Malayan Subjects*, 23rd June 1952; 2) Telegram Templer to MacGillivray, 23rd June 1952.
[126] Charles Jeffries, *Whitehall and the Colonial Service: An Administrative Memoir, 1939-1956*, (London, 1972), 34.

Attitudes towards Self-government 1952 - 1955

Throughout the Templer period, MCS officers appeared to consider the British gradualist approach to self-government as sound, it offering no immediate threat to their careers. They focused on their responsibilities in the Emergency and on adapting the processes of administration to the step-by-step implementation of democratic politics. Within the UK, however, the ex-MCS saw a continued role for their informed opinion to influence British policy on the pace to be set towards self-government. In 1952, commentators remained concerned at Onn's call for full independence within a matter of years. Winstedt warned that early independence would be a 'cruel kindness' as it would trigger 'a communal war of extermination' and would hand Malaya to Chinese communism.[127] In private correspondence with Lyttelton, Maxwell warned that self-government would be 'folly' whilst 'business life is in the hands of non-Malays'. The Malays, he argued, needed first to be trained in commerce and given support in starting their own businesses.[128] In the Lords, Milverton likened the possibility of self-government in Malaya in a few years to 'saying that a glass of water and a glass of oil could be mixed thoroughly together in a short time'.[129] Unlike earlier periods of ex-MCS activism, there was little in these opinions which disagreed with the prevailing view within the British Government.

In mid-1952, Lyttelton gave a cautious message to Parliament on Malaya's future self-government.

> Self-Government…must be an expression of unity that is built up (and) I give as my considered opinion that were we to grant self-government…to Malaya tomorrow the country would in six months be plunged into such racial strife, conflict and confusion as we have not yet seen.[130]

He also assured members of the Corona Club of Colonial Civil Servants at their annual dinner that 'European officers have for a great many years to come, far more than the lifetime of the career of any officer, great tasks to perform and a mission to fulfil'.[131] In December, Templer told the CO that there was 'no real desire for independence amongst any community in

[127] *Daily Telegraph*, 12th January 1952, Richard Winstedt, *Early Independence Would Make Malaya an Easy Prey.*
[128] TNA, CO 1022/463, letter Maxwell to Lyttelton, 22nd December 1951.
[129] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 175, Lords Sitting, 27th February 1952, 331.
[130] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 503, Commons Sitting, 17th July 1952, 2383.
[131] UCCAC, Lyttelton Papers, *Mr Lyttelton's Speech at Corona Club Dinner*, 17th June 1952.

Malaya'[132] and, in the following year, still maintained in a statement to the UK press that 'it is impossible to forecast the date for self-government'.[133]

Gammans had been neutralised as an opinion former on Malaya by his appointment as Assistant Post-Master General, a Ministerial position demanding his loyalty to government policy. Muriel Gammans' diaries express her husband's bittersweet experience at gaining a ministerial position but being 'out manoeuvred by Lennox- Boyd' for the role he had really cherished, that of Minster of State for Colonial Affairs.[134] Gammans left Government after the 1955 election, his elevation to Baronet (of Hornsey) being announced at the end of that year. He died in February 1957, a little over six months before Malaya's independence. Muriel Gammans became a politician in her own right in 1957, retaining for the Conservatives the Hornsey seat previously held by her husband.

Purcell had earlier declined to deepen his involvement with the MCA due to his academic commitments but, by 1952, he had accepted the Association's invitation to be their 'United Kingdom Adviser'.[135] In August, he advised the CO that he and Francis Carnell, (Lecturer in Colonial Administration at the Institute of Colonial Studies, Oxford), had been invited by the MCA to Malaya 'to take stock of the political situation'.[136] The visit was not to be a happy one, with Purcell quickly becoming the focus of Malay criticism for his known pro-Chinese views. Rahman instructed all UMNO branches not to meet the visitors.[137] Purcell's meeting with Templer went badly, although he initially gave a positive account in a press conference, saying he was 'most impressed with the personality, determination and sincerity of the High Commissioner (who) is trying his best to break down the racial barrier which blocks his plans and is meeting with considerable success'.[138] On their return to the UK, Purcell and Carnell promptly wrote their visit report for the MCA. They had heard very negative British attitudes expressed toward the Chinese community, with Templer quoted as likening any concessions to the community as mere 'political expediency'. Their report warned the MCA that Templer's focus on parish pump democracy would delay any progress towards self-

[132] TNA, CO 1022/86, CO minute, *Political Talk with General Templer*, 3rd December 1952.
[133] TNA, CO 1022 494, Templer, *text of UK Press Statement*, 18th May 1953.
[134] UOBL, Muriel Gammans, *Diaries,* Book 69. All quotes.
[135] TNA, CO 1022/176, letter Purcell to Paskin (now Assistant Undersecretary of State), 9th November 1951.
[136] Ibid, letter Purcell to Higham, 4th August 1952.
[137] *Straits Times*, 27th August 1952, *Do not meet him, orders Malay leader*.
[138] *Straits Times,* 30th August 1952, *Purcell talks with Templer*.

government, and that only a 'powerful, non-communal political movement' could bring pressure on the British to honour pledges made on self-government.[139]

Purcell's simmering anger over his experience with Templer surfaced in the press within days of his return. Challenging the 'idyllic picture' of new villages that Templer was painting, he wrote that he had seen many that were 'sordid congeries of shacks'. He alleged that Templer's 'rigid military dictatorship' was heightening communal tension and the only alternative to the spectre of a communist Malaya was to progress with determination towards a democratic independent Malaya.[140] These public comments rattled the Federal Government. It sought comfort from a view that Purcell was 'still suffering' from the lack of welcome he had received in Malaya, and was being 'encouraged' by an outspoken MCA member based in the UK.[141] Nonetheless, it wrote to Tan asking that he make a public statement distancing the MCA from Purcell's 'communist propaganda' on the poor state of the new villages.[142] Tan held back a reply, writing to Purcell to tell him that, whilst 'the Chinese in Malaya thoroughly appreciate the work you are doing', he would need to reply to the Federal Government that Purcell's views 'cannot necessarily be those of the M.C.A.'.[143] Purcell replied, arguing that 'with a ruthless enemy one has to be ruthless oneself', and outlining the 'unscrupulous efforts' taken by the Federation to discredit him, including Templer's threat to stop his MCS pension for advising the MCA.[144] Tan's attempts to calm matters were, anyway, stillborn as a new Purcell article had already been published accusing Templer of regarding the Chinese community 'with an enmity and fear deeply seated in misunderstanding'.[145] Tan felt obliged now to write to Templer explaining that Purcell was only an adviser to the MCA, and his views were his own. Nevertheless, Tan continued, Purcell was a friend whom he was counselling in private 'to modify his views' and he did not believe 'it necessary or wise to contradict him in public'.[146] Tan was clearly not prepared to publicly discredit Purcell, whose opinions were no doubt politically useful to him, but was equally

[139] ISEAS, Papers of Tan Cheng Lock, File 6, Victor Purcell and Francis Carnell, *Report of a Visit to Malaya, 20th August to 20th September 195*2, hereafter ISEAS, Purcell, *Report to MCA*, 11.
[140] *Daily Telegraph*, 15th December 1952, Victor Purcell, letter. All quotes. Also, *The Times*, 15th December 1952, Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya, Minority Problems and the Threat of Communism*.
[141] TNA, CO 1022/85, extract from Monthly Review of Chinese Affairs, December 1952.
[142] ISEAS, Papers of Tan Cheng Lock, File 10, letter Oakeley (Acting Secretary for Chinese Affairs) to Tan, 5th January 1953.
[143] Ibid, Tan letter to Purcell, 26th January 1953.
[144] Ibid, Purcell letters to Tan, 12th & 13th February 1953. All quotes.
[145] *New Statesman and Nation*, 17th January 1953, Victor Purcell, *Strong Arm in Malaya*.
[146] ISEAS, Papers of Tan Cheng Lock, File 10, letter Tan to Templer, 11th February 1953.

unprepared to become inveigled into the escalating dispute between Templer and Purcell. There now began an apparent cooling of the relationship between Tan and Purcell as no further correspondence of note between the two appears in Tan's papers.

Purcell approached the CO to try to reset his relationship with officialdom. He justified his anger by explaining that he had received a 'torrent of gratuitous insult and abuse' from Templer in their meeting, which had included the accusation that he was receiving money to press Chinese demands.[147] Templer, meantime, wrote to Lyttelton, describing Purcell as a 'disgusting creature'[148] and accusing him of spreading 'dangerous' teaching to Malayan students in the UK. The CO had investigated this activity, concluding that amongst students listening to Purcell's views on the urgency of Malaya moving to self-government, 'nobody seemed much impressed'.[149] By the autumn of 1953, Purcell apparently abandoned attempts at reconciliation with the CO. He launched his next invective against a book, *Jungle Green*, published by Major Arthur Campbell of the Suffolk Regiment. The publishers had somehow persuaded Templer to be quoted on the dust jacket of the Major's memoir of his campaigning in Malaya. Templer's declaration that 'This book is authentic', [150] together with his wish for its success, associated him, in Purcell's eyes, with the anti-Chinese sentiments expressed in the book. If Templer was trying to win the hearts and minds of the Chinese community, why, Purcell asked, had he declared as 'authentic', an account depicting this community as the 'real enemy?'.[151] Templer was clearly stung, and raised again his concerns that Purcell was spreading 'outrageous views bordering on the subversive' amongst Malay students in the UK.[152] In an echo of the McCarthyism then prevalent in the USA, Templer seemed to imply that Purcell was a communist. This was either a calculated and deliberate misrepresentation of Purcell's position, or one imagined by Templer's irrational anger and emotion. The CO, whose file dedicated to Purcell was now bulging with notes and correspondence, attempted once again to calm the situation. It did not believe that Purcell 'would propagate subversive or Communist views' and drew comfort from a meeting between Purcell and MacGillivray in the UK, from which the two had 'parted on friendly terms'.[153] The CO foresaw a 'much more

[147] TNA, CO 1022/85, letter Purcell to Paskin, 23rd June 1953.
[148] Ibid, letter Templer to Lyttelton, 19th August 1953.
[149] Ibid, Minute by R.L.Baxter, (Assistant Secretary), 26th August 1953
[150] Arthur Campbell, *Jungle Green*, second impression, (London, 1953).
[151] *Manchester Guardian*, 16th September 1953, Purcell, letter.
[152] TNA, CO 1022/85, letter Templer to Lyttelton, 23rd October 1953.
[153] Ibid, note, T.C.Jerrom, (Principal Officer CO), 7th November 1953.

serious danger'[154] in the book that Purcell was about to publish. This would be Purcell's *tour de force,* solidifying his argument that Malaya would fall to the communists if it was not allowed immediate free elections to determine its own future. Regrettably, he warned, the British had stopped the 'clock of progress' towards independence, substituting it only with 'charity and uplift'.[155] Hack argues that, by this stage, Purcell had 'strayed into the realm of the unbalanced',[156] but, alone amongst the ex-MCS, Purcell was identifying the fault lines in Britain's gradualist approach to self-government.

Losing the Political Initiative, 1952 to 1955

With clear signals being given by Lyttelton and Templer that the pace of democratic progress could only be gradual, MCS officers were tasked to put in place the rudiments of democracy. 'Civics Classes' were organised amongst Malaya's communities, aimed at overcoming the apparent 'deep ignorance of the average Malayan, especially in the rural areas, of the processes of Government'.[157] MCS officer K.J. Henderson joined the MCS in 1946. He became a Deputy Commissioner for Labour/Adviser on Chinese Affairs, and developed these courses in Malacca. By 1953, these were being rolled out countrywide,[158] and a description of one appeared in a *Corona* article. The Civics Day, in a Negri Sembilan Malay village, aimed 'to awaken interest in affairs of state, so that when the time comes for self-government, they (the Malay villagers) will be able to play a useful and active part in the machinery of government'. The article explained how the local DO had organised the classes, which were addressed by the State's Mentri Besar and British Adviser, both of whom stressed the importance of the prior achievement of unity amongst Malaya's peoples before further steps were taken.[159]

A unity, in the form of a political alliance, was developing, albeit that Templer and his officials were giving it little serious attention. Whilst Templer was focused on kampong and village democracy, he had inherited from Gurney an agreed recommendation that all towns of 10,000 inhabitants or more should hold elections for a proportion of their Town

[154] Ibid, minute by R.L.Baxter, 26th August 1953
[155] Victor Purcell, *Communist or Free?* (London, 1954), 1-19. All Quotes.
[156] Hack, *Emergency,* 334.
[157] *The Straits Times*, 14th August 1953, *A Course in Civics*.
[158] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B14 F3, K.J.Henderson, *Civics Courses and Community Development.*
[159] *Corona*, April 1953, Katharine Sim, *Malayan Notebook*.

Councillors. By mid-1951, new laws had been drawn up in preparation for elections in the municipalities of Penang, Malacca, and Kuala Lumpur. In the December Penang election, Onn's cross-community IMP had performed strongly, despite the MCA's anticipated appeal to this Chinese majority Settlement. As the Kuala Lumpur Town Council elections approached, and another strong IMP performance was anticipated, local UMNO and MCA leaders recognised that reliance on communal voting would deprive both of the electoral numbers needed to prevail over the pan-communal IMP in the first-past-the-post voting system. The two Parties therefore made an 'electoral pact'. They announced that they would be allies in the forthcoming election, putting up a single slate of 12 candidates, comprising citizens from both the Chinese and Malay communities. There would be only one UMNO/MCA candidate for each Town Council Ward. The ethnicity of each candidate was orientated towards the majority ethnic population in each Ward, but all UMNO and MCA supporters were rallied to vote for the UMNO/MCA candidate, whatever the candidate's ethnicity. This simple electoral formula delivered the UMNO/MCA pact nine of the 12 seats in the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Elections held on 16th February, within days of Templer's arrival. The IMP won only two seats. Similar local UMNO/MCA electoral pacts were agreed as the Town Council election program rolled out. By the end of 1952, their candidates had won 32 of the 43 seats contested.[160]

These electoral pacts were local, and there was as yet no similar agreement between UMNO and the MCA at national level. There is evidence that Purcell's urging of Tan to create a 'non-communal political movement'[161] stimulated the discussions that led to a national 'Alliance'. The tensions around Purcell's August 1952 visit prompted Tan to open a dialogue with Rahman, initially to give assurances that Purcell was not anti-Malay. Rahman would recall that,

> Sir Cheng-Lock Tan asked me to meet Dr. Purcell who had some proposals to make to me on behalf of the MCA…I sent a telegram (to Tan) suggesting that members of UMNO and the MCA meet in a Round-Table without the services of Dr. Purcell or any middle-man for that matter.[162]

This round-table did not occur until early 1953, so it is likely that clear evidence of election pact success at municipal level was the prime stimulus by then. Nevertheless, it might be said

[160] Fernando, *Alliance Road*, 27.
[161] ISEAS, Purcell, *Report to MCA*, 11.
[162] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Viewpoints*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), 90.

that Purcell's ideas had played some part in getting the two sides round the table.[163] Four round-table conferences in February and March 1953 transformed the ad-hoc local election pacts into a nation-wide pact which came to be called the 'Alliance'.

Templer offered the CO his own confidential assessment of the timeline for further elections. There would first be State Elections, starting with one State and one Settlement election in 1954, and the remainder in 1955. After a two year 'consolidation period' there might be Federal Elections by 1957. By 1960, at the earliest, there might be self-government by cabinet. Templer put forward no timeline for eventual full independence.[164] Nonetheless, with continued UMNO-MCA success in the Municipal Elections, anticipated timelines became compressed as the Alliance vied with Onn's political movement in proposing ever closer dates for Federal Elections. Templer's response, depicted by Parkinson as a 'counter-attack',[165] was to announce the creation of a Federal Committee 'to examine the question of elections to the Federal Legislative Council'.[166] At the same time, he urged the States to form their own Select Committees to make recommendations to their Legislative Councils on how State Elections could be conducted. In September 1953 he removed MacGillivray as Chair of the Federal Legislative Council and installed a Malay Speaker. A month later he expanded the Federal Member System by appointing two new Members nominated by the Alliance to the Federal Executive Council. This was Templer's second expansion of the Executive Council, which now stood at 22 members. Before Templer's arrival, MCS officers held five seats, around a third of the total. Now they held only three seats, barely 15% of the new total of 22 seats. Only the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and Secretary of Defence and Internal Security retained their seats.[167]

These might have been necessary actions for the British to regain the political initiative, but some UK opinion now turned against what it saw as continued delay tactics. *The Times* published two articles in October under the banner 'Stalemate in Malaya'. Whilst there were now 'committees inquiring into elections and other reforms', progress was hampered by the Federal Government's position that 'there must be national unity before self-

[163] Ooi Kee Beng, *As Empires Fell, The Life and Times of Lee Hau-Shik*, (Singapore, 2020), 170-171. Ooi's crediting of Lee as the instigator of the UMNO/MCA roundtable talks is a caution to giving too much credit to Purcell.
[164] TNA, CO 1022/86, CO minute, *Political Talk with General Templer*, 3rd December 1952.
[165] Parkinson, *Templer*, 33.
[166] TNA, CO 1022/86, *Federal Government Press Statement*, 6th May 1953.
[167] *Colonial Office Lists*, (HMSO, 1948 to 1952), sections on Federation of Malaya.

government and…that unity is impossible because of communal antipathy'. The article warned that Malayans were not prepared to wait 'for generations' for such unity to occur'.[168] In a new book, MP Woodrow Wyatt argued that, 'too many officials (in Malaya) are tired, because many of them were prisoners of war, and they are unreceptive to new ideas…They cannot seem to understand that it is their duty to help the Malays and the Chinese forward and not to repress them'.[169] Purcell aside, ex-MCS opinion appeared stuck in a groove. Corry wrote to *The Spectator* arguing that the *Times* articles were written by a 'frustrated intellectual' and that there was no 'mention of the many progressive achievements in Malaya during the past five years'.[170]

The Federal Elections Committee comprised 45 representatives, chaired by Chief Secretary Watherston. Apart from Watherston, and the Committee's Secretary, there were no MCS members, and no record has been found of informal MCS influence on the Committee's work. When its report was published in January 1954, its members were split in their recommendations. A minority proposed that Federal Elections be held in November 1954, whilst the majority felt it would be 'premature to attempt now to recommend the precise date' especially as 'the country is confronted with such serious problems as the Emergency situation'.[171] The Committee was also split between a recommendation that there should continue to be an Official nominated majority of all seats on the Legislative Council, and a dissenting view that the number of elected seats should represent a majority of the total, thus allowing one Party, or coalition of Parties, the possibility of controlling the Council. Alliance representatives and labour leaders comprised those who had dissented from the main report. Templer was under pressure to decide which of the recommendations to support. In a bold move, presumably aimed at retaining the initiative, he proposed that a variation to the dissenting report would be adopted and that the Federation move directly from an entirely nominated Legislative Chamber to a majority elected one. There would be 55% elected seats and 45% appointed seats. The likely British calculation was that the colonial power would continue to be able to hold the balance as the margin of seats required for one political group to achieve an overall majority was so narrow.

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[168] *The Times,* 1st and 2nd October 1953.
[169] Woodrow Wyatt, *Southwards from China*, (London, 1952), 152.
[170] *The Spectator*, 13th November 1953, W.C.S. Corry, letter.
[171] TNA, FCO 141/7413, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine the Question of Elections to the Federal Legislative Council*, 21st January 1954.

Concerned by the same calculations, the Alliance held out for a three-fifths elected majority of all seats and took its case to London to appeal to Lyttelton. In London, the UK's political and lobbying environment was now a mirror image of that in 1946. Then, it had been Conservative backbench MPs, aligned with ex-MCS officers, who had pressured a Labour Government to abandon the MU. Now, it was a group of opposition Labour politicians, liaising with Alliance leaders, who were pressuring a Conservative Government backed by ex-MCS opinion. The figure head of the Labour parliamentary group supporting the Alliance was Lord Ogmore, David Rees-Williams, whom Gammans had accompanied to the Peninsula in 1946.

One representative of ex-MCS opinion, Winstedt, advised against any concession to the Alliance.

> There is no evidence and no likelihood that a r*approchement* or manoeuvre between a few ambitious politicians (plus their 500,000 *ad hoc* followers) implies any permanent accommodation between the Malays and Chinese, who except for the British would certainly be at one another's throats until they were separated by us.[172]

Lyttelton declined to meet the Alliance delegation until Ogmore appealed for him to do so.[173] He then refused to accede to the Alliance representatives' demand that he amend the position being taken by Templer. His notes of the meeting suggest he felt confident in his position.

> My impression of the delegation is that they are three worried little men and on the evidence of their attitude when with me I should doubt whether they will in fact press their opposition…by the extreme measures which they have threatened.[174]

Whilst his thinking stemmed from a coherent long term aim of self-government, Lyttelton had misjudged the short-term situation. The delegation returned to Malaya and implemented the extreme measures they had threatened, announcing that its members were boycotting the Federal Government by withdrawing from active participation in government business. At the end of the month, Templer's assignment ended. He left Malaya, leaving the problem with his successor. Whatever MacGillivray's thoughts on the poisoned chalice he had been passed, he initially remained loyal to Lyttelton's position, writing to the British Advisers asking them to try and influence local Malayan opinion.

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[172] *The Times*, 26th June 1954, Richard Winstedt, letter.
[173] TNA, CO 1030/309, letter Ogmore to Lyttleton, 20th April 1954.
[174] Ibid, telegram Lyttleton to Templer, 15th May 1954.

> We had made an excellent start with our Local Councils and Town Boards…Now the Alliance leaders are undermining much of the confidence which was built up in these new instruments of democratic Government by using them as pawns in a game of politics rather than as training grounds in public service.[175]

This tortured argument, which seems to imply that action by popularly supported politicians was somehow anti-democratic, exemplifies the degree to which British officialdom had become entrenched in Templer's gradualist, foundations first, model of democracy. That British Advisers could have influenced public opinion at this stage seems unlikely, perhaps suggesting that MacGillivray was just going through the motions.

With Government business ground to a halt, there was no alternative to concession. For several weeks a solution had been available, proposed to Lyttelton by Ogmore, and also by his own parliamentary advisers, the Conservative's Commonwealth Affairs - Far Eastern Sub-Committee.[176] This would provide that, once the election results were known, the High Commissioner would allocate seven 'nominated reserve' seats (an existing part of the unelected block) in a manner that would 'not be out of harmony with major political opinion', i.e. the opinion of the largest elected Party. Such a move would have the effect of making three-fifths of all seats dependent on the electoral outcome. MacGillivray and Rahman sealed an agreement on this arrangement,[177] the British likely still believing that the multitude of Parties competing for seats would still not lead to any one Party or coalition holding the majority of all seats, even with an additional seven. Three weeks after his climbdown, Lyttelton retired from office citing his need to return to his business career and recoup the personal finances he had used to support his political career.[178] Churchill chose Lennox-Boyd to replace him. Amongst the many who now wrote to Lyttelton to wish him well was Gammans, saddened by the 'tremendous loss' that his departure represented.[179] One Labour MP had a different message, reflecting 'it was with some difficulty that we got the Colonial Secretary to walk past the winning post and make the final small concession that brought political peace to Malaya. [180]

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[175] TNA, CO 1030/311, letter MacGillivray to all British Advisers, 26th June 1954.
[176] TNA, CO 1030 310, 1) letter Gilbert Longden, MP, to Lyttelton, on behalf of the Far Eastern Sub-Committee, 18th May 1954; 2) Ogmore's proposal is acknowledged by Lyttelton in his letter to James Griffiths, 22nd May 1954.
[177] TNA, CO 1030/311, Telegram MacGillivray to Lyttelton, 7th July 1954.
[178] UCCAC, *Lyttelton Papers*, letter Lyttelton to Churchill, 3rd December 1953.
[179] Ibid, letter Gammans to Lyttelton, 7th August 1954.
[180] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 531, Commons Sitting 30th July 1954, 930, W.T.Proctor (Labour, Eccles).

Elections

One of Lyttleton's last acts was to approve the date for Federal Elections, 27th July 1955. MacGillivray pressed British Advisers and Resident Commissioners to advance State and Settlement Elections so that they would occur before the Federal Elections.[181] Organising all elections to such a tight timeframe required MCS expertise and imagination. Key building blocks were setting constituency boundaries, assembling electoral registers and, in the case of State Elections, passing new electoral laws through State Councils. Each State had to choose its own date for elections. Johore completed its process by October, the Alliance winning all 16 seats up for election.[182] Penang was the first Settlement to vote and, amongst all the 11 States/Settlements, was the only one that chose to elect the majority of seats on its Council. The Alliance won all 14 seats in Penang, thereby achieving its first elected majority.[183] Trengganu only met the deadline after its proposal to delay a year so it could complete its electoral registers was rejected. The elections went ahead without registers,[184] the Alliance winning all 15 seats.[185] As it became apparent that the remaining State Elections would not occur until after the Federal Elections, the Alliance chose not to protest plans in these States to retain unelected majorities of all seats. One newspaper speculated that their strategy was to win federal power and then press for further electoral law revision within the States.[186]

MCS effort was now directed towards the organisation of the Federal Elections. Corry was brought out of retirement (again), this time to serve with Lord Merthyr on a Constituency Delineation Commission. The Commission's remit was constrained as the January 1954 Elections Committee Report had already established the number of elected seats (52) and ruled that Constituencies should not cross State or District boundaries. Of its own volition, the Commission added a further simplification. It 'wholly ignored racial considerations' on the basis that the Federal 'aim is that in the course of time the several racial groups should as far as possible form a single community'.[187] Corry recalled that this reduced 'the task to largely

[181] UOBL, Hayward, *Papers*, *Trengganu 1952-1954*.
[182] *Straits Budget*, 14th October 1954, *Alliance Triumph*.
[183] TNA, CO 1030/223, letter MacGillivray to CO, 16th March 1955.
[184] UOBL, Hayward, *Papers*, *Trengganu 1952-1954.*
[185] *Straits Budget*, 4th November 1954, *The Alliance Wins Again*.
[186] *Straits Budget*, 3rd March 1955, *Some Lost Majorities*.
[187] ANM, 2006/0038492, *Report of the Constituency Delineation Commission*, 11th June 1954, 4, para. 14.

what one might call a mathematical one'.[188] The Commission produced its report within two months.

T.E.Smith (MCS, Class III) had been the Delineation Commission's Secretary and subsequently became the Supervisor of Elections. His report on the Federal Elections proudly recorded the establishment of 1,679 Polling Stations within 1,504 Polling Districts. 1,280,000 electors had been registered, (84% Malays, 11% Chinese and 5% 'mainly' Indian). 7,000 people had been selected as 'suitable persons' to staff polling stations, the majority being Government officers.[189] Smith's work exemplified a new MCS self-narrative depicting the Service not as Rulers of Malaya, but as the expert and impartial administrators who built, at breakneck speed and against multiple challenges, the important national civil processes that were guiding Malaya towards democratic self-rule. Praise from Lennox-Boyd to Watherston would frame this new narrative.

> It is clear…that the complex operation of registering the electorate and conducting the polling called for much resource and hard work on the part of your officers, and I wish to congratulate all of those concerned on the success with which they solved the many administrative problems raised by the elections.[190]

This narrative would be further promulgated by J.B. Perry Robinson, an Information Officer in the Federal Government. Robinson praised the MCS for having moved on from a 'Changi state of mind' to a 'new attitude…towards the public', and now forming an 'exceptionally efficient administrative machine'.[191]

The Federal Elections were a three-way contest between the Alliance, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), and Party Negara. Onn had launched Party Negara in February 1954, populating it with former leaders of the IMP. Gullick recalled that 'most people thought that Dato Onn's Party Negara would be the leading contender for power and they advocated a much slower timetable (to self-government) than the Alliance'.[192] John Davis typified this MCS aversion to the Alliance, expressing himself to his parents as 'rather proud that this is one of the two towns in the country which holds out against the Alliance'.[193] After election

[188] Corry, *Phillips Interview*, 31.
[189] T.E.Smith, *Report on the First Election of Members to the Legislative Council of the Federation of Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1955).
[190] TNA, FCO 141/7413, letter Lennox-Boyd to MacGillivray, 9th September 1955.
[191] Perry-Robinson, *Transformation,* 42, 167, 222.
[192] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 10th October 1981.
[193] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 1, letter to his parents 7th December 1954. At this time Davis was District Officer in Butterworth and had been organising Town Council Elections.

day, some senior MCS officers contended that Malayans had not understood the principles of democracy or used their votes wisely.

- I had four Presiding Officers staying with me. Each…said it was his main impression that voters had almost no idea what they were doing.[194]
- It is doubtful if many of the electors appreciated the issues or bothered much about the respective merits of the candidates.[195]

An alternative MCS account of the 1955 elections is provided by Mary Turnbull, one of only two female officers in the MCS at that time. In seeking more expatriate MCS recruits in 1952, Templer had suggested the CO consider female candidates. The CO had agreed but was only prepared to offer 3-year short term contracts. When Turnbull challenged this lack of career opportunity, she recounted a blunt reply from Ralph Furse, ex-Director of Recruitment at the CO, along the lines of the inability of women to cope with career challenges such as a 'howling mob of natives brandishing spears and knives at your front door and a leper clawing at your back gate'. Wanting to play her part in the election, Turnbull believed that she was only given a role as Presiding Officer at Tumpat, Kelantan State by asking a Malay colleague in the Elections Office to conceal her gender by placing her initials, not her first name, on the list of available officers. On the eve of the election, she recalled that her fellow officials anticipated an 'ignorant and probably indifferent' electorate and a split vote amongst Parties that would leave 'a fair amount of effective power in official hands'. Contrary to this expectation, Turnbull found the 'entire population' of the small fishing village outside the polling station, the fishing fleet having stayed in harbour for the day. Voters understood how to vote, and most wanted to put their cross against the picture of a ship (*Kapal*), which signified the Alliance candidate to the many voters who were illiterate.

> In the early hours of the morning (after the election) we set out wearily back to Kota Bharu, and as we assembled with our fellow-officials on the airfield at daybreak, we received another shock, because we learned that all their electors had also voted for the Alliance ship. There was no laughing and joking on the return flight. Everyone was exhausted, silent and apprehensive about the future.[196]

[194] TNA, FCO 141/7511, G.S.Rawlings, British Adviser Kelantan, report to MacGillivray, 28th July 1955.
[195] Ibid, F.V.Duckworth, British Adviser Selangor, report to MacGillivray, 1st August 1955.
[196] C.M.Turnbull, The Post-War Decade in Malaya, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1987,* Vol. 60, No 1 (252), 7-26. All quotes.

Two days after the elections, MacGillivray advised Lennox-Boyd that the Alliance had won 51 of the 52 seats up for election. Alliance candidates had received over 1m votes, 80% of the votes cast. The remaining seat had been won by the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). Onn had lost the seat he contested, and his Party Negara had failed to win a single seat. The British expressed themselves pleased that a 'large percentage' of the population had voted, giving 'much of the credit' for this to the federal authorities.[197] MacGillivray made appointments to the seven reserve seats, choosing individuals 'not out of harmony' with Alliance opinion, resulting in the Alliance controlling 58 of the 99 seats on the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council's role in the constitution remained to provide 'advice and consent'[198] to the High Commissioner and Sultans in making law, but its considerable influence on domestic policy making, especially within its many committees, would now be controlled by the Alliance.

As regards the High Commissioner's Executive Council, those roles previously termed Members were now Ministers. Rahman was Chief Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, a role accountable only to the High Commissioner, and prime in order of preference above all other Executive Council positions, including the Chief Secretary. After consultation with Rahman, MacGillivray appointed nine further Ministers, selected from Alliance elected members of the Legislative Council.[199] In what subsequently was called a 'diarchy', this form of emerging cabinet government would increasingly cede control of the domestic agenda to Rahman and the Alliance, whilst Britain retained control over Malaya's defence and security. For the time being, the three MCS members of the Executive Council kept their seats. Lennox-Boyd made immediate plans to travel to Malaya to meet with Rahman.

The New Political Order and Malayanisation

Lennox-Boyd arrived in Malaya in late August. Attending the opening of Malaya's first elected Legislative Council, he listened to Chief Minister Rahman demand independence within 4 years, little knowing that it would arrive in half that time. The Secretary of State called for calm discussion as 'many great problems lie ahead (and) the greatest is the danger of

[197] TNA, CO 1030/70, Commonwealth Relations Office Memorandum*, The Elections in the Federation of Malaya*, 26th August 1955.
[198] Comber, *Templer*, 20.
[199] TNA, 1030/225, telegrams MacGillivray to Lennox-Boyd, 29th July and 3rd August 1955.

subversion from within'. He was even more blunt with the Executive Council the next day, giving 'the clearest possible indication that Britain does not expect to be stampeded into premature transfers of power to an untested government in Malaya'.[200] The British Government insisted that the Emergency must be ended before self-government was attained. Rahman, frustrated by this pre-condition, offered an amnesty to the MCP whilst pressing for direct discussions with its leader, Chin Peng. This initiative alarmed the British, and was an early reality check on their inability to control the pace of change, now the Alliance held most of the levers of domestic policy. In the event, the so called 'Baling' talks held with Chin Peng in December were skilfully handled by Rahman and a reality check for him on communist intransigence. There was no agreement on an amnesty and no concessions made to the MCP. Amongst the MCS, only Davis was involved, chosen as one of the few individuals who knew Chin Peng from the wartime personal relationship forged in Force 136. He was responsible for Chin Peng's safe conduct but was given no formal responsibility in negotiations. In informal dialogue with Chin Peng, he gained some useful insights but his attempts to maintain this informal contact after the talks ended inconclusively were unsuccessful. There were to be no further talks between the Federation and the MCP before independence.[201]

With Lennox-Boyd's public statements still advocating a gradual pace of change, the prospects for long-term expatriate MCS careers were further buoyed by the Report on Malayanisation which had been published in August 1954. The Committee, chaired by Watherston, had two senior expatriate[202] and two Malay MCS officers amongst its 15 members. It found that there were very few Malayans ready for 'appointment to higher posts'. Although it anticipated that this would improve with time, the Committee was 'unanimous' that there be no short cuts applied or lowering of standards of progression. Furthermore, the Committee saw disadvantages in creating additional positions for training Malayans, believing instead that 'malayanisation should not, as a general policy, proceed faster than the normal occurrence of vacancies'.[203] The latter point was most important for expatriates, as it implied, even if a Malayan candidate was ready and available, that the

[200] *Daily telegraph,* 2nd September 1955, *Malaya Policy Reminder by Mr. Lennox-Boyd*.
[201] Shennan, *Davis,* 210-221.
[202] N.Ward, Malayan Establishment Officer, and D.K.Daniels, Deputy Chief Secretary. Neither left memoirs.
[203] *Report of the Committee on the Malayanisation of the Government Service*, *29th August 1954,* (Kuala Lumpur, 1954).

candidate would not replace an expatriate until the expatriate retired or chose to leave. After the Report's publication, MacGillivray continued to hold the view that 'it does not yet appear that expatriate recruitment (to the MCS) can cease entirely'.[204] The modest proposals aroused critical voices, with a Malayan columnist in the *Malay Mail* opining that 'the Committee is miles off the mark and makes me suspect they are reserving the plums for others while throwing the left-overs to the local officers'.[205]

By 1955, malayanisation was only gradually impacting the MCS, and mostly at junior levels. Despite retirements and promotions, the profile of the Senior MCS cadre was little changed from that in 1946. Senior MCS positions were still overwhelmingly filled by expatriates; 93% in 1946 and 88% in 1955, (Appendix Chart 4). The senior cadre, (comprising only expatriates and Malays, as there were as yet no Chinese or Indian Malayan members), was still overwhelmingly composed of officers who had been recruited to Colonial Service in the pre-war period; 85% compared with 91% in 1946, (Appendix Chart 5). Of the expatriates in the senior cadre, a significant number still carried the memories of internment; 50% compared with 77% in 1946, (Appendix Chart 6). In the junior cadre the numbers of Malayans might have grown significantly, from 16 to 88 since 1946, but the large increase in the overall number of MCS junior officers, and continued CO Cadet recruitment, meant that expatriates still comprised 68% of the junior cadre in 1955, (Appendix Chart 7).

The outcome of the 1955 Federal Elections had little impact on those MCS officers working in the Districts, who remained primarily focused on the Emergency and local development. The biggest change was in the central Secretariat, which now supported the Chief Minister and his team of Ministers, which still included two MCS official appointees.[206] One senior MCS officer likened this to 'a radical change from the ordered dispassionate administration of a colonial governor to the high emotional political atmosphere of Ministerial rule'.[207] Another, who became Secretary to the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, believed that not enough was done to bring the best MCS officers to these new responsibilities.

[204] TNA, CO 1030/230, letter MacGillivray to Lennox-Boyd, 11th February 1955, 5.
[205] *Malay Mail*, 15th October 1954, Column by S.H.Tan, *Talking about K.L.*
[206] These were the Minister of Economic Affairs, O.A.Spencer, and Minister of Defence, A.H.P.Humphrey.
[207] UOBL, Papers of W. Goode, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.323, *Notes of lecture at Syracuse University, New York*, August 1965.

> The Service's best senior men should have been much more strongly represented in these new jobs. It wasn't fair to the Ministers to give them so many juniors, combined with a few seniors of very varying calibre.[208]

Few accounts have been left by the relatively junior MCS officers who served as Secretaries to Ministers after 1955. Those that exist give mixed perspectives. Loch, Secretary to the Minister for Commerce and Industry, was made uneasy by a 'supressed resentment regarding the special standing of Europeans'.[209] Ivan Lloyd Phillips was Secretary to Rahman, who had dual responsibilities of Chief Minister and Minister of Home Affairs. He had to adapt to Rahman's refusal to read long minutes, by 'telling him the story in essentials'. Nonetheless, he recognised Rahman as a 'commanding figure'.[210] Gullick, recalled that several of the MCS had to be 'shunted out' by the Chief Secretary as their 'seniority exceeded their ability in these posts'.[211]

With the Alliance holding a commanding position, the British acceded to the Alliance demand for a Constitutional Conference on Malaya, to be held in London in early 1956. At the Conference, representatives of the Alliance and the Sultans would negotiate directly with the British Government. A few months before the Conference, Rahman briefed the Legislative Council on the Alliance demands. Setting a date for independence and establishing a Constitutional Commission topped his list. All other demands related to transferring, limiting, or abolishing responsibilities held by senior MCS officers. Chief amongst these was for control of malayanisation in the Public Service to be removed from the High Commissioner and Chief Secretary and passed to a Public Services Commission. A second demand was the abolition of British Advisers.[212]

Sheppard was asked to gather thoughts from his colleagues on how the British Government might respond to this second demand. His paper defended the work British Advisers had done since 1948, especially the initiative taken 'to assist and often take the lead in Emergency work', but he accepted that this was not 'a full day's work' and some consolidation with other activities, and perhaps renaming of the role, might be appropriate

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[208] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F1, R.W.Band, *Random Reflections of an Ex-Malayan Civil Servant*, 4, 12th August 1969.
[209] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F5, A.D.Loch, letter to Bryson, 9th August 1969.
[210] Ibid, I.L.Phillips, letter to Heussler, 17th February 1980.
[211] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick*, Memoirs, Part 2,* 51.
[212] TNA, CO 1030/70, *November 1955 Monthly Intelligence Report extract*, Rahman's speech to the Legislative Council.

to enable the incumbents to continue.[213] MacGillivray did not accept Sheppard's recommendations, acknowledging to the CO the political necessity of conceding to the demand for abolition.[214] Having abandoned the British Advisers, MacGillivray's concerns turned to the remaining expatriate MCS officers. A compensation scheme for those officers who would leave a self-governing Malaya voluntarily was needed but MacGillivray insisted that 'we must…resist' any attempt by the Alliance to have the option to compulsorily retire officers.[215]

The Final Months to Independence

The London 'Conference on Constitutional Advance' ran from 18th January to 6th February 1956. Lennox-Boyd reported in the Cabinet that the British insistence that the Emergency end ahead of constitutional advance had been abandoned, and agreement had been reached that the 'full self-government and independence within the Commonwealth should be proclaimed by August, 1957'. A Commission would be established to propose the Constitution for an independent Malaya. Lennox-Boyd added that the London Conference agreement 'contained satisfactory assurances on external defence, internal security, finance and the position of expatriate officials'.[216] A Public Services Commission, free and independent from political influence, would be established from July 1957. It would replace the Colonial Public Services Appointments and Promotions Board. The period up to July 1957 would be considered a Phase I, in which expatriate officer conditions had not 'radically changed'. However, from July 1957 (Phase II), the creation of the new Public Services Commission would be considered a radical change, impacting 'prospects of a career covering the working life' of expatriate officers and meriting the payment of compensation to those officers who left the Service.[217] Consequently, a second Malayanisation Committee would now be tasked with determining the period that the future independent Federation of Malaya would need to retain its expatriate officers. This expectation of future service need would then be advised individually to each officer, who would have the choice to retire from service

[213] TNA. FCO 141/7241, Sheppard, *The Future of British Advisers*, 28th October 1955.
[214] TNA, CO 1030/410, letter MacGillivray to MacKintosh, 22nd December 1955.
[215] TNA, CO 1030/75, letter MacGillivray to MacKintosh, 29th December 1955.
[216] TNA, CAB 128/30/9, *Conclusions of Meeting 8th February 1956, Malaya*, 6.
[217] TNA, CAB 129/79/47, *Federation of Malaya*, Lennox-Boyd memorandum and annex A, 21st February 1956, 8-12.

from August 1957, with compensation 'for loss of career', or to remain in service for the period of further employment offered. The Federation would honour this further period of employment and the officer would be entitled to the same compensation for loss of career at the end of this period, or could voluntarily leave at any time, and still receive compensation. Contrary to MacGillivray's original wishes, the Federal Government would have the power to retire those officers who wanted to stay but whose services were not required after independence.[218]

Whilst most expatriate officers had security of tenure during Phase I, the British Advisers and the Financial Secretary would go sooner but would still qualify for compensation terms. Britain had agreed to transfer ministerial responsibility for Malaya's defence and security to the Alliance immediately, with Rahman now taking on the additional role of Minister of Internal Defence and Security. The Secretary of Defence role (still filled by Humphrey) survived as an MCS appointed role but was no longer on the Executive Council. Apart from the Chief Secretary, there were now no MCS officers serving on the Executive Council. Rahman's Ministerial Team, running day to day domestic affairs, was entirely composed of elected politicians. From holding a third of the Executive Council seats in 1947, the MCS now held only one of 13 seats, (Appendix Chart 8).

The news that independence would arrive in 18 months' time took the MCS by surprise. Gullick would reflect to Heussler that, prior to 1955, most had 'simply averted our eyes from what was obvious.'[219] R.L. Peel, President of the MCSA at this time, recalled that he had not expected independence 'to come until much later than it did'.[220] Even with reality dawning, the timeline seemed unachievable. Blake's recollection was that 'it hardly seemed credible that within 18 months there could have been a smooth transition to complete independence'.[221] An end of empire malaise settled over all expatriate civil servants. Anthony Burgess used his experience as a Malayan Education Officer in this period to write a trilogy of fictional works on the final days of empire in Malaya. The first of these was published before independence and went into several printings. Burgess attributed its success to giving

[218] FCO 141/7485, letter Watherston to Sultans, attaching *Malayanisation of the Public Services, a Statement of Policy*, 12th September 1956.
[219] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick*, Correspondence,* letter to Heussler, 10th October 1981.
[220] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B17 F1, R.L.Peel, *Notes for the History of the M.C.S*, 5th August 1969.
[221] Blake, *View from Within,* 160.

'painless information about a British Territory that the British would soon be abandoning'.[222] For some in the MCS, however, his depictions of colonial life, such as British Advisers being 'mostly colourless, uxorious men, with a taste for fishing or collecting matchboxes',[223] would create long-held hostility towards his work.

There was little option for the MCS but to wait for information on which expatriate positions would be retained, for how long, and what the compensation terms would be. The second Malayanisation Committee was chaired by Rahman, with Watherston as Deputy. Reporting in mid-1956, having completed 55 meetings, it overturned several of the principles established by its predecessor. New officers still needed to be 'guided and assisted by experienced officers (but) the Public Services should be Malayanised as fast as the availability of suitable and qualified Malayans permits'. To achieve this, present qualification levels would be maintained 'as far as possible' but more 'extensive examination' would be made of the depth and nature of qualifications required, and of experiences not currently credited. A direct entry route into the MCS for those Malayans holding an honours degree was recommended. The report gave a clear timeline by which each of the 66 federal services would reach full malayanisation. This was one of three dates, either by 1960, 1962 or 1965. From September 1957, each expatriate who wanted to remain in service, and for whom there was a continuing need, would be given a new contract granting security of tenure according to the malayanisation timeline for the individual's Service. MCS officers learned that their Service was planned to be fully malayanised by 1962.[224]

As the Malayanisation Committee deliberated, the MCSA and TECSAM, supported by the UK based Colonial Civil Servants Association, joined forces to negotiate with the Federal Government on the compensation terms to be applied for loss of career. The ex-MCS would also press the UK Government to have this matter quickly settled. Corry was now a member of the Conservative Commonwealth Council's, Malaya Sub-Group. The Commonwealth Council had been established in 1953, with a membership of over 100 selected from Conservative supporters, including former officials with overseas service.[225] Corry described

[222] Anthony Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God*, (New York, 1987), 402.
[223] Anthony Burgess, *Time for a Tiger*, (London, 1956), 27-28, *Malayan Trilogy* edition, (London, 1984).
[224] *Report of the Committee on Malayanisation of the Public Service*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1956).
[225] Murphy, *Party Politics*, 150.

the Council's role as 'working as back room boys to the Parliamentary Party'. [226] Prior to the Constitutional Conference, he and his colleagues on the Malaya Sub-Group presented a report listing matters on which the 'Metropolitan power' should enter agreement with the Federal Government, and others where it should limit itself to attempts at persuasion. The only item it recommended as demanding 'agreement' was the 'treatment of Expatriate Government Officers'. [227]

The compensation terms proved long in gestation, only being known by November 1956.[228] They provided for a lump sum compensation for loss of career, calculated as a multiple of an officer's 'final pensionable emoluments'. The multiplication factor varied, depending on age and years of service, with a maximum factor of five for officers in their late 30s, with eight or so years' service. This was the point at which officers were believed to suffer most from loss of career. Pensions accrued to date were guaranteed to be payable by the Federation on the officer's eventual retirement. Officers who chose to transfer to another Colonial Service would have to waive their compensation rights but would receive a lump sum equivalent to five times any loss of pensionable emoluments incurred as a result of the transfer.

The transition to independence moved inexorably forward. Lord Reid and nominees from several Commonwealth countries assembled as the Constitutional Commission, visiting Malaya, and then moving to Rome, under the auspices of the UN, to complete their report. Harold Cheeseman, ex Director of Education in Malaya and now retired but active in the BAM, offered his services to the Commission. He suggested that his experience, as Chairman of the Consultative Committee on Constitutional Change in 1947, enhanced his qualifications. He also mused that as a non-MCS civil servant, he could present himself neutrally and avoid any 'idea of a "colonial bias" if ex M.C.S. were appointed'. Cheeseman was way off the mark, as no ex-MCS were appointed to the Commission and his own offer was politely declined.[229] Indeed, the CO seemed concerned to avoid any ex-MCS thinking having influence on the Commission. In his pre-briefing of Reid, MacKintosh (Head of the South-East Asian Department at the CO)

[226] UOBL, Conservative Party Papers, COB 2/2/1, Imperial/Commonwealth/Foreign Affairs Committee, 1945-1967, Commonwealth Affairs, Far Eastern Sub Committee minutes 1955-1962, minutes of 21st November 1955.
[227] Ibid, minutes of 30th January 1956.
[228] TNA, FCO 141/7487, Federal Government Press Statement, November 1956.
[229] TNA, CO 1030 /129, letters Cheeseman to McKerron, Mckerron to MacKintosh (CO) and MacKintosh to Cheeseman, 16th, 17th& 24th January 1956.

gave, as historical background, a copy of Emerson's 1937 critical study of British Indirect rule in Malaya. Bastin notes that its original publication had been 'greeted with a chorus of hostile criticism from former British members of the Malayan Civil Service'.[230] The self-justifications and obfuscations of the established historical works by ex-MCS authors such as Swettenham and Winstedt, appeared to have been deliberately overlooked by MacKintosh, in favour of the American academic's history.[231]

The Constitutional Commission report was published in February 1957, followed by a hurried three-month period in Malaya devoted to further negotiations and the hearing of representations on the proposals, in preparation for a final London Constitutional Conference to be held in May. Arrangements for expatriate officers after independence had not been discussed by the Commission, as it had fully accepted the relevant recommendations of the earlier London Conference.[232] Nor did they feature in Lennox-Boyd's report to the Cabinet on the final Constitutional Conference held in May 1957.[233] As anticipated, he confirmed that an independent Federation of Malaya within the Commonwealth would come into existence in 3 months' time. The Sultans accepted that they would transition to Constitutional Monarchs on the British model. In a rotational system, they would periodically elect one of their number to serve a fixed period as Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King), and constitutional Head of State.

When the British Advisers held their last meeting with the High Commissioner, only six of the nine remained. Hayward was one of these and recalled that the group photograph taken had portrayed 'a controlled withdrawal permitting no drama'.[234] On introducing the Bill abolishing the British Advisers to the Legislative Council, Watherston generously described their withdrawal as 'a tribute to the success of their work'. They were 'men who have loved this country and given it devoted and able service'.[235] Those expatriate MCS officers entitled to stay weighed up their options. Davis wrote to his parents to say that the compensation terms were 'pretty generous' although 'old unemployables like myself have elected to stay!'.[236]

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[230] Emerson, *Malaysia*. The quote is from the introduction to the 1969 edition, written by John Bastin, University of London.
[231] TNA CO 1030/129, letter MacKintosh to Reid, 14th March 1956.
[232] *Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission 1957*, (HMSO, 1957), 66.
[233] TNA, CAB 134/1555, memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8th May 1957.
[234] UOBL, Hayward, *Papers*, *Pahang January 1955 to July 1956*.
[235] Jean Falconer, *Woodsmoke and Temple Flowers*, (Bishop Auckland, 1992), hereafter Falconer, *Woodsmoke*, 214, extract of *Report of the Debates at the Federal Legislative Council, 12th July 1956.* Jean was the wife of John Falconer, British Adviser Johore, 1949-1952.
[236] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 1, letter to his parents, 18th December 1956.

How many officers would elect to stay or go was now building into a frenzy of speculation and concern, particularly to MacGillivray and Watherston who were responsible for ensuring that a functioning Civil Service remained in place at independence. In theory, all expatriates could choose to go and take the compensation and there was nothing that could prevent this. MacGillivray looked for a retention solution in the recent changes made by the CO in unifying of the many branches of the Colonial Service into Her Majesty's Overseas Colonial Service (HMOCS).[237] In response to a crisis that had arisen in Nigeria over expatriate officers leaving before its planned independence in 1960, the CO was developing a 'Special List' of HMOCS officers who would be employed by the UK Government as a 'pool' available to lend to overseas governments as required. Being on this Special List could also serve as a retention tool for those officers serving in territories approaching independence, as they would be assured of a next job and would be attracted by a higher salary. MacGillivray urged the CO to include Malaya in the embryonic Special List Scheme as, otherwise, he believed that departures of expatriate officers 'could easily lead to a breakdown of administration'.[238] Corry went one step further, suggesting to the CO that, in 'an imaginative gesture', it take all expatriate officers into 'the service of H.M.G. in one fell swoop' and only subsequently 'weed out…the less employable officers'.[239] The CO poured cold water over all these ideas, counselling that the pay rises enjoyed since 1952 in Malaya made it impossible 'to offer comparable attractions to officers serving in Malaya'. [240]

By December 1956, the MCS retention figures were anyway looking manageable. Of 208 so called 'entitled officers', 147 (71%) had elected to stay, if allowed. There was much more to be concerned about amongst some of the other Services, such as Medical, where 40% had elected to go.[241] A list was also drawn up of 27 MCS officers 'to whom further employment is not to be offered' even if they wished to stay, on which the British Advisers and Resident Commissioners featured heavily. [242] It appears that many, if not most, on the list had already indicated that they did not want to stay, and there is no record of controversy or difficulty arising from its compilation.

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[237] Colonial Office No. 306, *Reorganisation of the Colonial Service*, (HMSO, 1954).
[238] TNA, FCO 141/7487, letter MacGillivray to John Martin (Assistant Undersecretary of State), 29th July 1956.
[239] TNA, 1017/401, minute of meeting with Corry by H.A.H.Harding (Assistant Secretary), 4th July, 1956.
[240] TNA, FCO 141/7487, savingram Lennox-Boyd to Watherston (OAG), 9th October 1956.
[241] TNA, CO 1030/642, summary sheet recording officer numbers, by Service, electing to remain or to retire, 29th December 1956.
[242] TNA, FCO 141/7487, memo Watherston to MacGillivray, 5th November 1956.

To offer some degree of alternative support to officers making decisions on their future options, two measures were implemented. A 'Public Officers Agreement' was drafted between the Federation and the UK Government protecting the terms of service and payment of eventual pensions for those staying beyond independence.[243] Secondly, a Malayan Services Re-employment Bureau was created in the UK. It was opened in June 1957, under the leadership of R.L.Peel, the now retired MCS Officer who had been the President of the MCSA. By July, 46 expatriate officers from all the Federation's Services had registered. A Committee was formed of members of the Bureau's staff and representatives from the CO, Ministry of Labour, Treasury, Foreign Office, Commonwealth Office, and the Civil Service Commission to support the Bureau's activities. From information given to the Bureau by the CO, it appeared that MCS figures were little changed from those of the previous December. From the numbers reported in December, only one less MCS Officer would be staying on.[244] There was not going to be the 'breakdown in administration' that MacGillivary had feared.

MCS Officers have left few memoirs of the last weeks before independence. The last days were undoubtedly emotionally difficult, and many may have preferred not to recall them. Davis wrote to his parents warning that the 'the loss of so many experienced officers is going to have its effect fairly soon'.[245] Blake later reflected that 'there is an element of tragi-comedy in work cut off at the point that it starts to be put to positive use.' [246] Rahman was generous to the MCS, privately at the last Annual MCS Dinner,[247] and in public at the Merdeka Stadium where he acknowledged that his new nation 'took as a source of much gratification…that British civil servants will continue to serve in this country'.[248] The UK Parliament sent its best wishes to the new country in its sessions of 12th July (Commons) and 27th July (Lords), when both Houses passed the Federation of Malaya Independence Bill. In the Commons, Lennox Boyd used the opportunity to specifically praise the MCS.

[243] TNA, CO 1030/644, *Federation of Malaya Public Officers Agreement*, 1959.
[244] TNA, LAB 8/2357, *Memorandum from the Colonial Office*, Appendix II, undated.
[245] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 1, letter to his parents, 1st September 1957, the first full day of Malaya's independence.
[246] Blake, *View from Within,* 159.
[247] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F4, E.O. Laird, letter to Heussler, 14th January 1980.
[248] TNA, CO 1030/845, *Text of Speech Tunku Abdul Rahman at Declaration of Independence, 31st August 1957*.

> Our thoughts should also be in a special sense with those of earlier generations whose work has made this Bill possible, and who, over many years, have made the Malayan Civil Service – M.C.S. – a service of honour throughout the world.[249]

Milverton did not contribute to the Lords' debate. He had already grudgingly conceded that 'nascent nations…do not accept Western time-tables of the proper or prudent timing of independence'.[250] *Corona* published a 'Greeting to Malaya'[251] whilst *Malaya* published a factual 'Merdeka Supplement', devoid of any editorial comment.[252] In the CO, the Malaya files were closed, as new ones were opened in the Commonwealth Office on the Federation of Malaya as an independent Nation.

Summary

Templer acted quickly and effectively in raising MCS moral. His force of personality was a key ingredient to the change in MCS attitudes, although MCS concerns over status were addressed through a significant pay increase and restored differentials. The MCS seemed unaware of Templer's thwarted attempt to restructure Malaya's entire administrative organisation. Consequently, MCS attitudes became increasingly aligned with a British policy of winning the Emergency and taking gradual steps towards self-government. Nonetheless, Senior MCS officers experienced a further period of declining influence. The consolidation of political, military, and administrative power in Templer's new role gave him direct access to military, police and intelligence leaders, circumventing much of the need for MCS involvement in strategic discussions. An expansion of the Members System, and the introduction of Ministerial Government in 1955, made administration increasingly the servant of Malayan leaders. Junior MCS officers continued to make significant contributions in DWECs and new villages, albeit that their efforts focused on population and food control.

Purcell maintained a high profile, angering Templer and possibly nudging Tan and Rahman towards mutual co-operation. Pro-Malay ex-MCS opinion had limited influence. When the Alliance boycott of the Federal Government forced concessions from the CO, most

[249] Hansard, Fifth Series, Volume 573, Commons Sitting 12th July, 1957, 634.
[250] *Corona*, December 1955, Lord Milverton, *Thoughts on Nationalism in Africa.*
[251] *Corona*, October 1957.
[252] *Malaya*, August 1957. The Association of British Malaya had changed its name to the British Association of Malaya the previous November.

ex-MCS opinion supported the Government. It was the members of the Labour opposition who helped resolve the standoff.

The remaining vestiges of the fusion of political and administrative power within senior MCS roles were progressively extinguished in this period, and a new narrative of exemplary administrative service to government emerged. Statements by British political leaders on the gradual pace of change and the long-term need for expatriate MCS officers, gave indications of long term career security which would not be fulfilled. Whilst only 29% of the expatriates in the MCS left Malaya at independence, the remainder would stay only for a few more years. The next chapter investigates the decisions they took on their return, including having a history of the MCS written.

5. Closure

This chapter considers the period from 1957 to 1983. The ranks of the ex-MCS now included large numbers of younger, more junior officers who had spent only a part of their career in Malaya, and who sought new opportunity. From the 1960s, some ex-MCS officers began to reflect on the MCS legacy in Malaya. They would contribute memoirs to a history of the post-war MCS. In their minds, its eventual publication in 1983 marked a fitting closure to the MCS record.

Returns to the UK, Redeployment and New Networks

The MCS was a Colonial Administrative Service, its expatriate members recruited by the CO. The end of British Rule in Malaya, on 31st August 1957, marked the effective 'discharge' of this Service. In the period shortly before the Federation's independence, there had been 221 expatriates in the MCS. Over half of these were aged 30 to 39, with an average of 8 years' service. Only 14% of the total were aged 50 or above, and able to fall back on an adequate accrued pension entitlement (Appendix Chart 9). It was clear that the large majority would have to find new employment. For most, this challenge was deferred for a few years as they had accepted fixed-term offers to continue working in the Federation, whilst the malayanisation of their roles was completed. There may have been hopes that malayanisation timescales would slip, allowing a longer period of continued employment. Such hopes were forlorn as the target set of retaining expatriates in the MCS only up to 1962 was, in the very large part, achieved. The Standing Committee on Malayanisation, chaired by Rahman, held its 74th meeting in October 1959, continuing to critically review every proposal for the extended use of an expatriate beyond the plan.[1] An unattributed paper was submitted to the Committee a year after independence expressing concern that 'in the near future Malayan officers will be gaining promotion to the (MCS) superscale with as little as 5 years' experience'.[2] Nonetheless, within 18 months of independence, half of the remaining MCS expatriates had left. Only nine expatriates remained in the MCS by January 1963, the Malayan Staff List for that year showing all but one in specialist superscale roles, and two already on

[1] ANM, 1997/0014711/712/713, *Minutes of the Standing Committee on Malayanisation*, 1957-1959.
[2] ANM, 1997/0014712, *Training of Malayans for Senior* (MCS) *Posts*, August 1958, 3.

their final leave before 'retirement' (Appendix Chart 10). In a paper published in 1959, ex-MCS officer T.E. Smith concluded that the Federation was 'well on the way' to overcoming any transitional problems.[3] Tilman's 1966 study of 'Bureaucratic Transition' within the Federation's new civil service found that the change in composition of the administrative services had 'provided one of the most dramatic evidences of the results of the Malayanisation program'. His study concludes that the feared mass exodus of expatriate officers had been prevented by the guarantee of eventual loss of career compensation for those expatriates who stayed. Whilst there may have been some lowering of professional standards, and imbalances in the recruitment and development of those Malayans who would replace expatriates, effective civil government had been sustained.[4]

Compared to the multiple memoirs of pre-independence service, only two expatriates appear to have left a record of their post-independence service. John Davis stayed until April 1960, writing regularly to his parents. He painted a bleak picture of his last years in Malaya, rueing that expatriate officers were 'dwindling rapidly' and friends were 'very thin on the ground'.

> All the worthwhile civil servants have gone except a few of the more carefree youngsters…For the rest…they are just fogies long in the tooth which the Government is too kind to kill off [and I am afraid I am in the last category – aged 48!].[5]

Davis chose his own time of leaving rather than waiting out his guarantee of continued service up to 1962. Even those offered service beyond the 1962 deadline were uncertain. D.J. Staples declined, citing 'the difficulty I am likely to experience in finding alternative employment if I delay my departure'.[6]

Robert Thompson's post-independence career experience was in marked contrast to Davis', even though they had had very similar earlier careers as Chinese speaking MCS officers serving in labour and Chinese liaison roles. As earlier described, Thompson was working only a few miles away from the location of the Sungei Siput killings which marked the outbreak of the Emergency in 1948. Barber's account of the Emergency would give Thompson a central role in the events of that day and map his subsequent marriage to Chief Secretary Newboult's

[3] T.E. Smith, *Public Service*, 272.
[4] Tilman, *Bureaucratic Transition*, 68, 77-79.
[5] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 1, letters to his parents, 6th February 1958, 30th January, and 20th June 1959. All quotes.
[6] ANM, 1974/0000134, letter Staples to Secretary to the Minister of Rural Development, 25th April 1960.

daughter and apparent proximity to Gurney, Briggs, Templer, and MacDonald in the following years.[7] By contrast, on the same day, Davis was working on the opposite side of the Peninsula.[8] His career followed a different trajectory as he became involved in new village welfare development and was briefly involved ushering Chin Peng to the Baling talks. By 1959, Davis saw little purpose in remaining, whilst Thompson was the Federation's Deputy Secretary of Defence in Kuala Lumpur. Thompson was further promoted by Rahman to Secretary of Defence before leaving in 1960, at which point he accepted a request that he visit the Republic of Vietnam to advise on the tactics used in Malaya to confront the communists. Davis had departed a month earlier, in the opposite direction, towards the UK and an uncertain future.

In the UK, the Malayan Services Re-employment Bureau had grown into the Overseas Services Resettlement Bureau (OSRB). It now supported colonial civil servants returning to the UK from more territories becoming independent, principally Nigeria, Ghana, and Singapore. Peel remained as the Bureau's Head, with an expanded staff of seven. Gaining Treasury support for even this modest growth had been difficult. One unsupportive Treasury official considered the Bureau's activities as 'extremely odd' and was worried that, once expanded, it would be difficult to dismantle.[9] Early data from the Bureau was only partly encouraging. It estimated that about half of the colonial officers returning from Malaya were registering for the Bureau's services.[10] The remaining officers were assumed to have either retired or were finding their own next jobs in the UK or overseas without the Bureau's help.[11] Only partial progress in finding new jobs was being made by those who had registered. In the last month when the Bureau reported Malaya only figures (September 1958), only 197 (46%) of the 425 who had registered from Malaya since July 1957 had found employment.[12] Even in subsequent months, when figures included returnees from all territories, the success rate had still not exceeded 50% by August 1959. The Bureau was finding the unsuccessful group

[7] Barber, *Running Dogs*.
[8] Shennan, *Davis,* 152.
[9] TNA, CO 1017/461, letter A.D.Peck (Treasury) to A.R.Thomas, (Assistant Undersecretary, CO), 21st May 1958.
[10] Ibid, *Table of Retirements and Registrations with the Overseas Service Resettlement Bureau,* December 1957 to January 1959.
[11] TNA, CO 1017/463, hand written notes, anon., *Retirements on Compensation*, 1959/60.
[12] TNA, CO 1017/461, table, *Overseas Services Resettlement Bureau*, July 1957 to August 1959.

burdensome, describing them as 'old registrants (who) keep coming back for further information (and) who take up so much time'.[13]

Several issues were hampering the search for new jobs. Firstly, any MCS officer wanting to transfer to CRO or FO Service had to sit competitive exams and undergo an interview to demonstrate a constructive attitude of mind towards the leaders of newly independent states.[14] Secondly, Peel cited unhelpful attitudes amongst potential employers in the industry and commerce sectors.

> There is frequently an unreasoning prejudice against men who have spent all their working life abroad in government service. In addition to the fact that they have no commercial experience, it is sometimes maintained that they have only been dealing with backward peoples, that they are used to calling on others to work for them and have lived a life of sybaritic ease.

The support of the CO was sought to overcome such prejudice, with Lennox-Boyd writing to 'a selected number of prominent industrialists' to champion the work of the Bureau.[15] Ex-Secretary of State Lyttelton, (now Lord Chandos), wrote to *The Director*, alerting the journal's readers to the availability of a 'valuable pool of skilled administrators'.[16] Lastly, the Bureau often found that it had not been notified by the Department of Labour of vacancies in industry and commerce, as such had already been reserved for members leaving the armed forces. Peel's protests to the Ministry of Labour for more structured support from its regional offices led to discussion on co-ordination and information sharing on vacancies.[17] As the Bureau's responsibilities expanded to more territories, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify Malaya data from OSRB reports. By the late 1960s the Bureau had, in total, placed 5911 of the 6508 names registered on its books, almost half into industry and commerce.[18]

To better understand the future career directions of ex-MCS officers the analysis must turn to other sources, although these are varied, and offer only a partial picture. Memoirs include some detail of life after independence. The careers of those who rose to some degree of public prominence can also be traced. An informal 'Malayan Civil Service Address list' was

[13] Ibid, letter R.H.Hobden, (Principal Officer, CO), to F.W.Ward, (Treasury), 8th October 1959.
[14] Kirk-Greene, *Administrators*, 264.
[15] TNA, CO 1017/664, Peel, *Progress Report on the OSRB*, February 1960.
[16] *The Director*, July 1959, Chandos, letter.
[17] TNA, CO 1017/463, Minutes of Meeting, 1st May 1959.
[18] Kirk-Greene, *Administrators,* 271.

in circulation in the 1970s.[19] Although it contained only addresses, these identified individuals working in an overseas government service. Taking the 221 expatriate MCS working in the Federation in Q2 1957, the post-independence life choices of around a third of this number have been traced.

British Colonial/Diplomatic/Commonwealth Service	21
Assumed Retired (50 years+ old in 1957 with c30 years pensionable service)	20
Industry/Commerce (incl. Chambers of Commerce)	13
Academia/Education/Historical and Cultural Societies	10
Civil Service of Independent Nations	6
Employer/Employee/Pensioner Representative Associations	3
Church/Ministry	2
Total	**75**

Table : Post-Independence Career Choices

Given the limited sources of the data, these figures probably underestimate the proportion who found work in UK industry and commercial sectors, as the OSRB reported that half of its clients had found careers in these sectors. 15 ex-MCS (not included in the table) had overseas addresses or c/o addresses with Crown Agents, banks or clubs, suggesting either permanent emigration or some form of temporary overseas employment. Some members of the civil service in Malaya were recruited into MI5, although it has not been possible to establish whether these had been members of the MCS, or had been in the Police Service, the employer of police, special branch and other intelligence staff in Malaya.[20] The preponderance, other than retirement, of continued careers in British overseas colonial, diplomatic or Commonwealth service, or in university and school education/administration, aligns broader with the findings of Kirk-Greene for administrators from the African colonial services.[21]

Within this data lies a varied degree of second-career fortune. Chief Secretary Watherston was quickly re-engaged by the Federation of Malaya as a 'Special Counsellor'

[19] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B8 F3, *Malayan Civil Service Address List 1970*, annotated 'from Gullick, Oct. 74'.
[20] Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, (London, 2009), 333.
[21] Kirk-Greene, *The Ultimate Diaspora*, Table 8, 148.

attached to its High Commission in London. He worked with the CO on the recruitment of British technical staff, especially engineers, needed for short-term contracts in Malaya.[22] From this start, he joined the Personnel Department of Tube Investments in 1959, and was made the company's Personnel Director in 1964. He moved again to become the Chairman of the Electricity Supply Industry's Training Board from 1969 until 1973.[23] In contrast to Watherston's smooth transition, Charles Howe found difficulty in carving out a second career. After receiving his MBE for his pioneering work in the resettlement at Titi, he had progressed to the lower levels of the MCS superscales, as an Assistant Secretary. His return to the UK in 1959 was,

> quite a traumatic experience to lose a marvellous career in mid life and to have to make a new start in life at 40 as so many of us had to do…To rebuild a career was quite a problem for a family man with family responsibilities.[24]

Howe made a start by teaching for 10 years in a UK preparatory school, whilst taking a part-time honours degree in French at London University. With his degree he was to secure a teaching post at a girls public school. Still active in the 1980s, he would, unlike Watherston, be an active contributor to the MCS history initiative.

Many of the MCS who left Malaya from 1957 to 1960 chose not to subscribe to ongoing networks. As the majority were under 40, with less than 10 years' MCS experience, this was perhaps not surprising as they could look forward to more years in their new careers than they had given to the MCS. Ties were much stronger in the 40+ age group who were bonded by long MCS careers, that for many had encompassed pre-war Malaya and internment experiences. Networks that continued after independence were, therefore, dominated by older, more senior ex-MCS officers. The main network remained the BAM. In the initial years after independence, the Association was in robust shape. It renamed itself the British Association of Malaysia in 1964, after Singapore had joined with Malaya, North Borneo, and Sarawak to form the new Federation of Malaysia the previous year. It changed its name again, in 1968, to the British Association of Malaysia and Singapore, several years after Singapore had left Malaysia to become the independent Republic of Singapore. Although the Association continued to alternate its annual Presidency between those with

[22] TNA, CO 1017/436, telegram MacGillivray to Lennox-Boyd, 30th August 1957.
[23] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B19 F2, obituaries for David Watherston.
[24] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F1, letter Howe to Heussler, 11th October 1981.

business links to Malaya and those with past administrative service, its inner workings were under the control of ex-MCS officers. Bryson was Secretary until 1967, and was then replaced by Corry. The first sign that the Association was struggling came at its 1968 AGM, when advice was given that the loss of members due to death or resignation now 'greatly exceeds intake'.[25] The subsequent years witnessed appeals for new members, with increased subscriptions barely mitigating the effects of inflation. The Association's monthly journal, renamed *Malaysia,* was reduced from 12 to six issues a year. By 1971, individual membership had fallen to 1587.[26] Those who valued the continued connection to past colleagues remained loyal to the Association but their numbers reduced due to the inevitable consequences of age. In early 1973 the Association announced that it would 'cease existence' later in the year.[27] The final issue of *Malaysia* included a membership list.[28] Of the 221 expatriate MCS who had served in Malaya in Q2 1957, only 65 were BAM members. Of these, 55 (85%) had been in the senior cadre at the time that they left the Federation. It was apparent that the very large number of younger and more junior ex-MCS officers had not been members of the Association.

Three other ex-MCS networking opportunities were, however, available to all age groups of ex-MCS officers after the BAM closed. The first was an annual MCS dinner, for which purpose the MCS address list appeared to have been maintained. In 1974, the keeper of the list was ex-MCS officer, Stephen Kemp, Secretary-General at the Royal Commonwealth Society. Kemp's list of c. 200 MCS names and addresses contained over 80% of the expatriate MCS who had been serving in the Federation in Q2 1957.[29] Whilst many of the junior MCS of the late colonial period had chosen not to join the BAM, they continued to be part of this looser network, or at least had provided their addresses. There were 41 attendees at the 1973 MCS dinner held at London's Naval and Military Club, about 20% of the numbers on the address list. Attendance was dominated by those who had left the MCS as members of the senior cadre. Only six attendees had left Malaya whilst still in junior MCS grades. How long the dinners continued is not known, the last record of a dinner being in 1981.[30]

[25] *Malaysia*, November 1968.
[26] *Malaya*, July 1955, List of Members, and *Malaysia,* September 1971, BAM Annual report.
[27] *Malaysia*, January 1973.
[28] *Malaysia*, May 1973.
[29] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B8 F3, letter Kemp to Heussler, 30th September 1974.
[30] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 12, *MCS Dinner*, Friday 13th November 1981.

The second networking opportunity was the Corona Club, which had been founded by the CO in 1900 to organise an Annual Service Dinner between Colonial Service officers on leave or retired in the UK, and CO officials. This dinner's status was bolstered by the attendance each year of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who used it to announce new policies or initiatives concerning the Colonial Service. A short history of the Club[31] provides no record of social events other than the annual dinner, but Club membership must have offered opportunity for broader networking and maintenance of contacts. In 1958 the Club reached a high point of 4,000 members, although the split between active and retired members was not stated. The last Corona Club Dinner was held in 1974, the year after the BAM folded. Henceforth, the Club would hold only an annual cocktail party. Whilst no mention of the Corona Club has been found in MCS memoirs, it might have continued as a conduit for networking amongst some of the ex-MCS. In 1990, it still had 2,500 members.[32]

The last, and most enduring, network was the Overseas Service Pensioners' Association (OSPA). OSPA had been created in 1960 through the amalgamation of several distinct pensioner associations. One of these was the Malayan Pensioners' Association, created in 1949.[33] Membership of OSPA was an active choice, as an individual subscription was to be paid. Whilst not all Malayan pensioners chose to join, the pages of the bi-annual OSPA members' journal suggest a healthy Malayan participation. Articles were devoted to Malayan pension issues such as pension payment arrangements, the effects of sterling devaluation, and Malayan income tax.[34] In the 1970s, OSPA was successful in persuading the UK government to take over the payment of overseas service pensions, and the UK Government started paying Malayan pensions from 1st September 1979.[35] Unlike the declining BAM, OSPA went from strength to strength. Its first AGM in June 1961 was attended by 700 members,[36] and a survey of members in 1980 returned an almost unanimous view that the Association should continue, giving it the mandate to set membership contributions at a level that would ensure robustness.[37] By 1982, membership was 14,000, representing

[31] A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *The Corona Club, 1900 – 1990: An Introductory History*, (London, 1990).
[32] Ibid, 38.
[33] ANM, 1957/0575367, letter T.P. Coe, Secretary Malayan Pensioners Association to the Chief Secretary Federation of Malaya, 26th February 1949.
[34] OSPA *Journal* No.13 (May 1967), 15 (May 1968), and 20 (November 1970).
[35] OSPA *Journal* No.38 (November 1979).
[36] OSPA *Journal* No.35 (April 1978).
[37] OSPA *Journal* No.39 (May 1980).

over 30% of the estimated total number of overseas service pensioners being paid their pensions by the UK Government.[38] Even in 1993, its membership base was at 9,413, with 760 members from Malaya.[39] Two years later, the OSPA *Journal* listed all organisations and groups in the UK representing or connecting retired members of overseas colonial services. Other than OSPA itself, there was no organisation or group listed as covering ex-Malayans.[40]

When the initiative was taken to write a history of the MCS, it was only those who had chosen to participate in these networks who would hear the call to contribute.

Histories of the Colonial Era

To understand the momentum that developed amongst the ex-MCS towards creating a history of the MCS, it is necessary to follow three strands in the historiography of Malaya, (Malaysia from 1963), in the years after independence. The first strand was general histories of Malaya containing depictions of the colonial era. Winstedt's *Malaya and its History* was already established as a leading contribution, having been through two impressions in 1948 and 1951. Winstedt had been President of the Royal Asiatic Society, and of the BAM, and had published many other volumes on Malay culture and language. The dust jacket of his revised and updated *History of Malaya*, published in 1962, proclaimed his 'foremost authority' over the subject matter. The colonial period occupied 50 pages of the 263-page work. Winstedt held that its start was justified by an increasing chaos within the Malay States. The British Resident system had then brought an era of beneficial peace, law, and administration which had facilitated economic growth. The loss of Malaya to Japanese invasion, (which occupied a mere six pages), had required sacrifices that were 'not in vain', as the British capitulation could be likened to the heroic retreats at Mons and Dunkirk. Winstedt then briefly covered the period through to independence with no mention of his often stated grave concerns that Malaya had not been ready for independence, its communities likely to descend into immediate conflict should the British withdraw. He did, however, allude with some prescience to the 'chief menace' in Malaya being the little progress that had been made in fusion between communities.[41]

[38] OSPA *Journal* No.43 (April 1982).
[39] OSPA *Journal* No.65 (April 1993).
[40] OSPA *Journal* No.70 (Autumn 1995).
[41] R. O. Winstedt, *A History of Malaya*, (Singapore, 1962), 248, 260.

Among the many general histories of Malaya/Malaysia that were published after Winstedt's latest edition,[42] three by ex-MCS authors, none offered an interpretation of the colonial period that differed significantly from Winstedt's. Even Purcell's work allowed that the pre-war British Resident system had established the order needed to 'accelerate' economic development. He rejected the suggestion that Malaya had been economically exploited by British enterprise but held Britain to account for creating Malaysia's problematical plural society.[43] Few of the authors mentioned the constitutional concession of continued Malay privileges made by the British in the final months before independence, in recognition of the weak economic position of Malays. Significant among these privileges were Malay land reservations, quotas for admission to the public services, and preferences for educational scholarships and bursaries. Where these were mentioned, no suggestion was made that their continuance might build dangerous levels of inter-communal acrimony. Even Purcell accepted that the Malays needed a 'transitional period' of protection against 'the more commercially minded immigrants'.[44]

These volumes of general history appeared to create little concern amongst the ex-MCS. Most were reviewed in the BAM's monthly journal, often by ex-MCS members. Occasionally, a matter of detail might be challenged, but comments such as 'sound', 'comprehensive', 'fair and balanced' and 'excellent background reading' were made.[45] The review of Purcell's work took a more critical line, noting that not all would agree with his depiction of a dismissive British attitude toward the Chinese.[46] As the books were aimed at the general reader, and several were specifically marketed towards schools, there was no space to depict the work of the MCS, other than the achievements of the very few who had risen to become Residents and Governors. This might have been acceptable to the ex-MCS, had two accounts critical of the MCS not emerged.

Parkinson's *British Intervention in Malaya* only covered the early period of British Intervention and the establishment of the Resident System, from 1867 to 1877, but criticised

[42] J.Kennedy, *A History of Malaya*, (London, 1962); J.M.Gullick (ex-MCS), *Malaya*, (London,1963); N.J.Ryan, *The Making of Modern Malaya*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1963); Victor Purcell (ex-MCS), *Malaysia*, (London, 1965); Harry Miller, *The Story of Malaysia*, (London, 1965); T.E.Smith (ex-MCS) and John Bastin, *Malaysia*, (London, 1967); Richard Allen, *Malaysia Prospect and Retrospect*, (Oxford, 1968).
[43] Victor Purcell, *Malaysia,* (London, 1965), 78-95.
[44] Ibid*,* 95.
[45] Reviews of the works of: Kennedy in *Malaya,* May 1962; Gullick, in *Malaysia*, September 1963; Ryan, in *Malaysia,* July 1964; Miller, in *Malaysia,* October 1965; Smith and Bastin, in *Malaysia*, December 1967.
[46] *Malaysia*, September 1965, review of Purcell, *Malaysia* by David Gray, ex-MCS Secretary for Chinese Affairs.

the attitudes and actions of the early British colonial officers. Parkinson contended that 'if the aims were pure, the means were not. There were those who, in seeking to spread civilisation, order, and law, did not hesitate to prevaricate, conceal and confuse'. This hardly represented a damning critique of the entire colonial era, especially as Parkinson allowed that no long-term damage was caused by early British actions, and that men of 'higher character' had followed the early British pioneers.[47] Nonetheless, sensitivities amongst the ex-MCS were rising at the tenor of some of the histories now appearing. The reviewer of Gullick's work praised the author for offering an account which stood in contrast to the 'ignorance, political bias or sheer improbable rubbish' that was blighting Malayan history writing.[48] The reviewer of Ryan's work praised him for achieving a 'much greater fairness and detachment' than Parkinson.[49]

If the ex-MCS were discomforted by Parkinson's work, James Allen outraged them. The relationship between the BAM and Allen had started positively when he consulted its secretary, Bryson, and used the resources of its library,[50] for his research on the MU. His subsequent monograph[51] was well received in the pages of *Malaysia,* as its conclusions were aligned with ex-MCS views. The Union had been ill conceived from the start, its problems compounded by the failure of the British Government to consult and listen to MCS opinion.[52] Allen's reputation amongst the ex-MCS plummeted, however, when he presented a paper at an International Conference on Asian History in Kuala Lumpur in August 1968.[53] Unbeknown to Bryson, Allen had conducted a detailed study of the MCS between 1874 and 1941, presumably in part by reference to materials accessed at the BAM library during his MU research. One contention in Allen's paper was particularly damning. He maintained that a Government Report issued in 1919 had revealed that the most able candidates for Colonial Service at the time had chosen to sit the India Civil Service exams. Even amongst those who had chosen to sit Eastern Cadetship exams, the preference had been for Ceylon and Hong Kong over Malaya. Allen's conclusion was that the MCS thus represented 'the scrapings of the eligibles' barrel'. His paper was not all negative, as he acknowledged that the MCS's *esprit de*

[47] Parkinson, *British Intervention*, 1964 reissue, xx, 322.
[48] *Malaysia,* September 1963.
[49] *Malaysia*, July 1964.
[50] The BAM occupied offices near Trafalgar Square which included a library and reading room.
[51] Allen, *Malayan Union*.
[52] *Malaysia*, February 1968.
[53] The paper was subsequently published, see Allen, *Colonial Bureaucracy*.

corps was 'an undoubted asset in preserving high standards'.[54] Nonetheless, when reporting on the Conference, the *Straits Times* ran with the headline, 'MCS men were scrapings of the barrel he says', and then asked 'did Britain send third-rate men to man the Malayan Civil Service?'.[55] When Bryson eventually read a copy of Allen's paper there was more to disturb him. Although Allen's study covered the 1871 – 1941 period, he had added a few paragraphs on the post-war period. In these he contended that the MCS, already humiliated by the Japanese occupation, had buckled under the 'last straw' of the post-war Emergency and had been forced to 'make way for policemen and army officers'. He mischievously pondered if the post-war weakness of the MCS had contributed to 'the relative smooth handover of power' at independence.[56] In a subsequent letter, Bryson made his feelings known to Allen.

> I was, as you will have expected, angered in places but on the whole my feelings were more of disappointment that in a paper claiming to be by an historian for other historians there should have been so many errors and misdirections.[57]

In later life, Gullick suggested that it was the wish to counter Allen's account which motivated the ex-MCS towards having a history of the MCS written.[58] Before concurring with this opinion it is important to assess the two other strands of Malayan historiography that were influential.

Histories of the Fall of Malaya

The second historiographical strand that was keenly followed by the ex-MCS concerned histories of the Japanese invasion. In 1947, the President's Address at the first BAM Annual Dinner since 1939 revealed that the wounds of past criticism concerning the fall of Malaya were still fresh amongst the Association's members.

> The tragedy was heightened for all of us in this country by the cruel and unjust accusations hurled in that moment of shock against the defenders of Malaya…we never accepted those stories which were so recklessly bandied about. [59]

The determination to rebuff attacks on the record of civilian defence remained undiminished in subsequent decades. The first salvos came from Despatches[60] released by the military

[54] Ibid, 165. Both quotes.
[55] *Straits Times*, 9th August 1968. Both quotes.
[56] Allen, *Colonial Bureaucracy.* All quotes.
[57] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F4, letter Bryson to Allen, 14th March 1969.
[58] Private Papers of Anthony Stockwell, letter Gullick to Stockwell, 10th September 1984.
[59] *British Malaya*, June 1947.
[60] Military Despatches were produced by the Superior Officer in the field and sent to high command to report the events of a military operation or campaign. Most relating to the WW2 were written post-war, a necessity

leaders involved, and then an Official History published in 1957. Despite the aura of detachment and careful weighing of evidence that are implied by the writing of such accounts, the ability of military leaders to publish their own record of events, and the UK Government to select the historians to write Official Histories, can never fully escape accusations of some bias. The authors were, however, obliged to send their drafts to the Government and to consider proposals for amendment. Drafts sent to the CO were forwarded to former Governor Shenton Thomas for comment.

Lieutenant-General Percival had been General Officer Commanding in Malaya. His draft Despatch was produced in 1947. Thomas expressed his discomfort with the draft and the whole process.

> The average reader will conclude that the civil government and the civilian population, taken by and large were a poor lot…who required constant prodding by the Services to make them realise their responsibilities…I cannot believe it to be right or useful to impugn in a public despatch those who have not the right to reply.[61]

As a counter to Percival's account, Thomas wrote his own 34-page Review, 'Malaya's War Effort', as 'a statement of facts…placed on record for common fairness to the civilian population who suffered so terribly through no fault of their own'.[62] He then sought agreement to have his Review officially published in the UK and was 'very distressed' when this idea was rejected by the CO.[63] Creech Jones subsequently explained to Thomas that the CO did not want such an 'apologia' to appear to give undue prominence to what were 'no more than the personal views' of military officers.[64] Thomas gracefully accepted this explanation 'without reserve'.[65] The CO was prepared to ask the Governors of the Malayan Union and Singapore if they would publish Thomas' Review locally. The Governors declined, accepting a recommendation from MacDonald's office that 'it was better to let sleeping dogs lie and let bygones be bygones'.[66]

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in Percival's case as he had been a POW. Despatches were published in the *London Gazette,* an official journal of record.

[61] UOBL, Papers of Sir Thomas Shenton Whitelegge Thomas, MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.341, hereafter UOBL, Thomas, *Papers*, Box 2, Thomas, *Comments on General Percival's (draft) Despatch*, 1948.

[62] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/15/3/1/2, Thomas, *Malaya's War Effort*, July 1947, Introduction.

[63] UOBL, Thomas, *Papers*, Box 3, letter Thomas to Creech Jones, 29th September 1947.

[64] Ibid, letter Creech Jones to Thomas, 12th December 1947.

[65] Ibid, letter Thomas to Creech Jones, 16th December 1947.

[66] TNA, CO 537/2170, *Minutes of Governor General Conference, 28th November 1947*.

When Percival's Despatch was published in early 1948, Thomas' entreaties and detailed comments had been effective in removing, or toning down, some of their more damaging comments on civil government. Percival acknowledged that much of the criticism levelled at the civil administration had been unjust but still spoke of 'an artificial and unwarlike atmosphere' that prevailed and a 'lack of a united effort'.[67] The Straits Times noted that Percival's Despatch contained neither 'sensational charges or bitter criticisms',[68] and focused instead on his account of lack of team spirit and the uneasy relationships amongst the key leaders of the time. *The Times* recorded that an initial suspicion that the Despatch's publication had been delayed due to 'the gravity of its disclosures', had not been proven by the eventual content.[69] It appeared that no significant criticism of the MCS had been stirred up by the publication. Nonetheless, Thomas, and possibly several senior ex-MCS members in the BAM,[70] had understood what Percival had originally thought to say. They were now alert to the limited support in defending the record of Malaya's wartime civil administration that might be expected from the CO and the Federal Government in Malaya, should similar opinions be presented for publication in the future.

A similar process unfolded six years later when Major General S. Woodburn Kirby was commissioned to write Volume I of the Official History of the War Against Japan. When Woodburn Kirby's draft was issued for comment, Thomas considered it a history 'written with a personal bias against the civil government'.[71] He protested to the CO that he was not allowed to see the official documents upon which the history was based.[72] Whilst Woodburn Kirby's work was to be reviewed by an Advisory Panel, Thomas was frustrated to hear that the Panel contained no civilian, even though the history would cover both military operations and civil government. He asked for his comments on the draft to be copied to the Panel but this proposal was rejected by the Cabinet Office.[73] Final publication of the history was delayed until a few months after independence but Thomas' commentary and protest had once again led to a more restrained final version. Woodburn Kirby saw lack of unity as a central factor

[67] Percival, *Malaya Command*, 294. Both quotes.
[68] *Straits Times*, 27th February 1948.
[69] *The Times*, 27th February 1948.
[70] CUL, BAM Archives, files in 103/15/3 contain many of Thomas' notes and letters.
[71] UOBL, Thomas, *Papers*, Box 3, Thomas' notes on Woodburn Kirby's draft.
[72] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/15/3/1/3, letter Thomas to Martin, 14th October 1954.
[73] UOBL, Thomas, *Papers*, Box 3, letter from J.R.M.Butler, (Cabinet Office), to Thomas, 15th February 1955.

'which appears to run like a thread through the whole of the many tragic blunders'.[74] Leaders of the civil administration contributed to this lack of unity but were not singled out for exceptional criticism.

The Military Despatches and Official History may not have fully redeemed the reputation of civil administration during the Japanese Invasion, but they appeared to have softened the rough edges of the immediate harsh criticisms that had been made in 1942. The muted response to the publications suggested that there was little public interest in revisiting past events. Even Duff Cooper (now Viscount Norwich) had chosen not to revisit the issue in his memoirs.[75] Those who chose to mock Malaya's colonial era also seemed to be quietened. Burgess had published the remaining two volumes of his fictional Malayan Trilogy in 1958 and 1959, but these were not as commercially successful as the first.[76] *Malaya* chose to review only the second volume, reflecting that it provoked merely 'a mixture of amusement and distaste'.[77] The 1960s now saw a passing of those who had promoted themselves as the lead historical and cultural authorities on Malaya, in some part by virtue of their long MCS service in the country. Maxwell died in 1959, Purcell in 1965, and Winstedt in 1966. Amongst Malaya's retired colonial leaders, Shenton Thomas and Stanley Jones died in 1962, followed by Newboult and McKerron in 1964, and then MacGillivray in 1967. When controversy resurfaced on the Japanese Invasion, the civil administrative record would be defended by the next generation of ex-MCS officers.

In 1968, controversy arose over the publication of an account by Noel Barber, foreign correspondent for the *Daily Mail*. In writing of the fall of Malaya, Barber had interviewed Brigadier Ivan Simson, Chief Engineer Malaya Command during the Japanese Invasion. Simson was adamant that the full story had not yet been told as none of the information he had provided Woodburn Kirby with had been included in the Official History. As Simson's own account, published two years later, repeated much of what Barber had related, the contents of both publications are considered together. The authors depicted the fall of Malaya as a military failure, compounded by infighting amongst political, civil, and military leaders in Malaya and interference from the UK Government. Their uncomplimentary portrayals of

[74] Woodburn Kirby, *British official military history, 468.*
[75] Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, (London, 1955).
[76] Anthony Burgess, *You've Had Your Time*, (New York, 1990), 24-25.
[77] *Malaya*, June 1959, review of Burgess, *Beds in the East*.

Percival and Duff Cooper mirrored ex-MCS opinion, but their criticisms of Thomas and senior MCS officers were of deep concern. Simson recounted that 'officialdom was generally chairbound and lacked the drive and urgency needed to get things done quickly', finding particular fault in the actions of two MCS leaders. He alleged that Arthur Jordan, Secretary of Chinese Affairs, had been so unpopular with Chinese Associations that he severely hindered the gathering of the Chinese labour forces needed to dig civil defences. Stanley Jones, Colonial Secretary, had given Simson 'a point blank refusal of help in any way', after Simson had been appointed Director General of Civil Defence on the War Council and had sought help in establishing his new office.[78] Barber's own conclusion was that Jones 'had much to answer for', as his obstructionism had delayed the evacuations in Malaya and the preparations for the defence of Singapore, thus justifying his recall to London.[79] On learning that Simson would be following up Barber's work with his own volume, Bryson wrote to ex-MCS officer E.D.Fleming expressing concern at 'even more vitriol gushing out'. He now sought 'useful recollections' from Fleming and others so as 'to find informed statements to counter some of Simson's work'.[80] Although Bryson sent these to Simson, they seemed to have little impact on Simpson's draft. A year later, Bryson wrote a last appeal to the author, as he was still 'anxious to do something, if at all possible, to soften your strictures on certain civil government officers'.[81] Judging by Simson's published work, these final entreaties had little impact.

In the following years, the Japanese Invasion was frequently revisited. Official historian Woodburn Kirby published a second, independent, history of the fall of Singapore, the dust cover explaining that he was now able to write in terms 'not possible in the volumes of the Official History'.[82] Biographies of Percival and Thomas were published arguing their subjects had been unfairly castigated.[83] History blurred with fiction, as the depiction of incompetence amongst Malaya's leaders acted as a backdrop to a novel.[84] Hack and Blackburn conclude that 'in the end a better understanding comes not from trying to reduce the arguments to one "Fall of Singapore" but from understanding why and how so many different

[78] Simson, *Singapore*, 83-90. All quotes.
[79] Barber, *Sinister Twilight*, Readers Union Edition, (London, 1969), 88.
[80] CUL, BAM Archives, 103/15/4/2/1, letter Bryson to E.D.Fleming, 31st July 1969. All Quotes.
[81] Ibid, letter Bryson to Simson, 22nd September 1970.
[82] Woodburn Kirby*, Chain of Disaster.*
[83] 1) John Smyth, *Percival and the tragedy of Singapore*, (London, 1971). 2) Brian Montgomery, *Shenton of Singapore*, (London, 1984).
[84] J.G.Farrell, *The Singapore Grip*, (London, 1978).

explanations for the Fall have been generated'.[85] Amongst the ex-MCS a desire was growing to have their own explanation recorded.

Histories of Post-war Malaya and the Emergency

The final bibliographical strand concerns accounts of the post-war period in Malaya, and particularly depictions of the Emergency and the final years before independence. The Ex-MCS considered the Emergency to have been justly and effectively fought and took pride in their contribution. Whilst the acceleration towards independence was unexpected, there was satisfaction that the transition had been smooth and peaceful. The ex-MCS believed that the new country benefitted from a constitution based on British democratic principles, within which communal tensions had been well managed and set on a diminishing path. The ex-MCS were to be unsettled by the emergence of histories that challenged this depiction of the post-war colonial period.

In the early 1960s ex-MCS officer Robert Thompson was the foremost authority on civilian counter-insurgency in Malaya. In sharing his experience with Vietnam's President, Ngo Dinh Diem, he had to manoeuvre between a British Government anxious to ensure the durability of its political influence in South-East Asia, (and its 'special relationship' with the USA), and an American military hostile to any perceived British encroachment on what it considered to be its task. Within a year of his first visit, Thompson's role had been formalised into leadership of a three-man British Advisory Mission (BRIAM). This continued until 1965, when the Vietnamese War took a new direction on the arrival of the first American ground troops. Although Thompson was knighted for his work on behalf of the British Government in Vietnam, by his own admission he struggled to have his advice heeded. He proposed that Vietnam adopt the same structure of war committees, resettlement and population control measures first conceived in the Briggs Plan. Some of these initiatives were tried by the Vietnamese administration, such as the problematic Strategic Hamlets Program, but did not achieve the same success as they had in Malaya.[86]

[85] Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, *Did Singapore have to Fall, Churchill and the impregnable fortress*, (London, 2004), 187.
[86] Peter Busch, Supporting the War: Britain's Decision to send the Thompson Mission to Vietnam, 1960-61, *Cold War History*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (October 2001), 69-94.

Busch argues that Thompson's approach was symptomatic of a broader British attitude that 'saw the Vietnam conflict very much through the prism of its own experience in Malaya', [87] thereby disinclined to see differences between the two insurgencies and the need for significant strategic and tactical adaptation. Nonetheless, Thompson published his own counter-insurgency methodology, containing five basic principles and associated operational concepts, largely taken from the Briggs Plan. He maintained it could be applied to all counter-insurgency initiatives.[88] Frustrated by the communist ascendency in Vietnam, he later attributed the poor progress of American strategy to 'the failure to understand the nature of the war', reasserting that the principles of his methodology would have 'still held good for the period from 1956 to 1968', had they been adopted.[89] Thompson's frustration was likely shared by some of his ex-MCS colleagues. Here was another example of 'informed' ex-MCS experience and advice being ignored. Furthermore, any British public appreciation of what had been achieved in the Malayan Emergency might now be eclipsed by the Vietnam debacle. There was some hope that this would be rectified by a major history of the Emergency being written by Anthony Short, but this work was being held back from publication. Short had been researching under an agreement between the University of Malaya and the Federation Government which had given him access to the Federation's confidential and secret archives. At the point his manuscript was ready, (October 1968), permission to publish was refused by the Federation and it would take until 1975 for the work to be published.[90]

Whilst Short's work was awaited, public perception of the Malayan Emergency took a negative turn. The 1968 My Lai Massacre of unarmed Vietnamese civilians by American forces had been exposed in November 1969. British Foreign Secretary George Brown professed on BBC Radio that he did not know if there had been anything comparable in British colonial history, but allowed that 'people when they are fighting, when they are frightened, do terrible things'.[91] To many in British society, this was an appalling statement, a slander against British military forces who were believed to have consistently maintained high standards of conduct.

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[87] Ibid, 70.
[88] Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, (London, 1966).
[89] Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, (London, 1969), 122, 163.
[90] Short, *Insurrection*, Preface. Short explains that the Malaysian Government had cited 'security concerns' over its publication. In the aftermath of communal riots in Kuala Lumpur in 1969, there was likely concern in Malaysia that depiction, albeit accurate, of the actions of the different communities during the Emergency could be used unscrupulously to create more instability.
[91] Anthony Short, The Malayan Emergency and the Batang Kali Incident, *Asian Affairs*, Vol. XLI, No. III, November 2010, 337-354. Quote from page 346.

The People newspaper challenged Brown to provide evidence, but it was to be an ex-member of the Scots Guard who gave a report to the newspaper of his patrol shooting 25 unarmed suspects at Batang Kali, Malaya in December 1948. After gaining corroborative statements from three other members of the patrol, the newspaper published the story.[92] *The People* then continued its investigations suggesting there had been a subsequent cover up by the Federation Government, contrived through a perfunctory local inquiry, and the provision of limited, even misleading, information to the local press. Shortly after the shootings, *Straits Times* journalist Harry Miller had travelled to Batang Kali to interview those involved, reporting the incident as a successful killing of 'bandits', under the headline 'Forces Success in Malaya'.[93] Now living in the UK, and editor of BAM's *Malaysia*, he appeared to defend the past federal administration by writing in the *Daily Telegraph* that he had been told that those shot had been terrorists attempting to escape, an explanation he had had no reason to doubt.[94] Attention turned to Sir Stafford Foster Sutton, the Federation's Attorney General at the time, who had considered reports of the incident and decided that the Federal Government would take no action. Foster Sutton was not MCS but, as a member of the Malayan Legal Service, could be considered part of Malaya's administrative cadre at the time. He was still active in ex-colonial service circles, as Chairman of the Executive Committee of OSPA, remaining on the Association's Council until his death in 1992. He was interviewed by BBC Radio shortly after the story broke in *The People* and was reported as saying 'everyone who knew anything about it (agreed that) a bona-fide mistake had been made'.[95] Such unconvincing statements by Miller and Foster Sutton only raised further questions on the actions taken in the federal administration and, in particular, what Chief Secretary Newboult knew and what actions he may have taken to suppress the story. A British investigation into the allegations was stopped shortly after the election of a Conservative Government in June 1970. The new Attorney General decided there was no possibility of gaining evidence to justify criminal proceedings, as so much time had passed since the incident.[96]

[92] *People*, 1st February 1970.
[93] *Times*, 13th December 1948.
[94] *Daily Telegraph*, 3rd February 1970.
[95] *People*, 8th February 1970.
[96] In October 2018 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that it may have been a war crime but had happened too long ago for any prosecution to be pursued.

The narrative of British exemplary conduct of counterterrorism was, however, clearly under strain. Developments now put equal strain on the narrative that the British had left Malaya with sound constitutional mechanisms to manage its plural society. This narrative had been articulated in an account written by ex-MCS officer T.E. Smith on how the British democratic model had adapted to the circumstances of Malaya, and to a number of other British territories approaching independence.[97] The *Malaya* reviewer of Smith's work found it 'gratifying to learn that the English invention of representative government has been successfully transplanted in large areas of two continents'.[98] However, when Ratnam's thesis was published expressing concerns at the potential instability of the communal political system in the Federation,[99] its reviewer in *Malaya* was not convinced.

> One is left with the impression that the dangers and difficulties that can face a multi-racial society may have tended in the end to obsess him, with the result that his study perhaps gives too little credit for the real progress that has been achieved since World War II and for the positive goodwill that prevails among the majorities of all communities.[100]

Communal riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur in May 1969, shattering comfortable assumptions of political harmony in Malaya. The riots followed elections in which the ruling Alliance had prevailed but performed poorly. Many in the Malay community were concerned at the weakening of the political coalition that they believed underpinned their community privileges enshrined in the Constitution. Members of non-Malay communities were emboldened, taunting Malays that their days of privilege might eventually end. Poor decisions around the routing and timing of community marches led to clashes that turned into rioting. The official tally was 196 killed in the resulting inter-communal violence. A State of Emergency was immediately declared, reinstating the restrictive laws of the Emergency.

Whilst the Federation dealt with the riot aftermath, ex-Malayan Police officer John Slimming quickly published an account proclaiming the 'death of a democracy' and 'an end (to) the multi-racial experiment'.[101] An immediate piece in *Malaysia* on the riots had rejected such a conclusion, arguing that multi-racial co-operation remained the only way forward, and

[97] T.E.Smith, *Elections in Developing Countries*, (London, 1960). Smith was Secretary of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies when the work was published.
[98] *Malaya*, March 1961.
[99] Ratnam, *Communalism.*
[100] *Malaya*, October 1965.
[101] John Slimming, *Death of a Democracy*, (London, 1969), Title and page vii. Slimming had been a police officer in Malaya from 1951 to 1954.

the size and impact of the riots were exaggerated as they had been confined to Kuala Lumpur and there was no national trend.[102] The subsequent *Malaysia* review of Slimming's work warned that 'the reader should not be misled' as all communities in Malaya were working to ensure no recurrence and there were enough 'wise heads' in Malaysia to ensure this.[103] In some respects, the interpretations conveyed in the pages of *Malaysia* in 1969/1970 proved accurate. There were no further significant disturbances, and Malaysia's communities found ways to continue to peacefully co-exist within the constitutional system. However, the new State of Emergency was not lifted, and Malaysia's democracy continued to function under restrictive laws. Malay nationalism took a more radical direction with the emergence of a new leader, Mahathir Mohamed. He would start his rise to prominence from this point and become Prime Minister in 1981. In his seminal work, published in 1970, he identified the solution to racial tensions as further economic support for Malays, through an affirmative action plan. In a challenge to many of the histories written by ex-MCS, he did not accept that racial harmony existed in the period up to 1941, arguing instead that there had just been a reluctant racial tolerance and accommodation by the Malays. This was their only way to cope with what Mahathir saw as unjust British immigration decisions which had abrogated the unique right of Malays to their country and its land. The special privileges enshrined in the constitution to protect the Malay economic position had only 'caused a minute dent in the armour of non-Malay economic hegemony'.[104] By 1971, criticism of the British colonial legacy in Malaysia was being openly expressed within Malaysia's new government, headed by PM Tun Abdul Razak. A speech by Minister of Information, Ghazali Shafie, on 5th March 1971 created such concern in the British High Commission in Malaysia and the FCO that a detailed note was subsequently prepared within the FCO to help counter such thinking. It argued that Ghazali's criticisms 'are not borne out by the facts of history'.[105]

[102] *Malaysia*, July 1969.
[103] *Malaysia,* January 1970.
[104] Mahathir bin Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1970), Singapore, 2003 reprint, 43.
[105] TNA, FCO 24/1153, *Tan Sri Ghazali's View of History*, 30th July 1971, 8.

A History of the MCS

The Allen paper had angered the MCS but the continued debate over the Japanese Invasion, and challenges to the positive narratives of British conduct and achievement in post-war Malaya, can be credibly depicted as additional contributions to the ex-MCS desire to have their own history of the MCS written.

The idea of a 'cultural effort' first appeared in the BAM report of its 1961 AGM. Members were told that donating personal papers retained from service in Malaya 'will earn the thanks of the scholars of tomorrow'.[106] Over 100 separate documents were subsequently received, and were passed to the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) for safekeeping.[107] In 1963, the launch of the Oxford University Colonial Records Project (OCRP) was a similarly intended, but much wider and structured effort whose project leaders expressed concern at the potential loss of documentary evidence in the 'prevalent anti-colonial atmosphere and the rapid dismantling of the British Colonial Service'.[108] American Academic, Robert Heussler was involved with the OCRP from the start, concerned that 'almost wholly artificial and imagined' histories might emerge if papers of the colonial period were lost.[109] In these early days, those minded to contribute papers from their time in Malaya might have been confused as to which appeal to respond to. Those who read the OSPA *Journal* would see appeals to 'submit diaries, letters and papers of all sorts' to the OCRP,[110] whereas readers of *Malaysia* were urged to submit the same to the BAM Committee.[111]

After Bryson passed the BAM Secretary role to Corry in 1966, he turned his attention to this collecting of past papers and documents from members. As he began to catalogue donations, he steadily built the resources of the BAM archives. Harry Miller was said to have then urged Bryson and others in the BAM to go one step further and 'write notes at least of their life and work'.[112] Bryson picked up this idea, working with ex-MCS colleagues Corry and Gray. All three had similar profiles and experiences, having been recruited to the MCS in the pre-war period, interned during the War, and then serving in the post-war period before

[106] *Malaya*, November 1961.
[107] *Malaya*, August 1963.
[108] John J. Tawney, Personal Thoughts on a Rescue Operation: The Oxford Colonial Records Project, *African Affairs*, Oct. 1968, Vol. 67, No. 269, 345-350. Quote from page 345.
[109] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B3 F2, Heussler, *Notes for Miss Perham: Colonial History Project*, August 1962.
[110] OSPA *Journal,* No.5, (February 1963). Also, No.10, (Autumn 1965).
[111] *Malaya*, August 1963.
[112] *Malaysia*, January 1973, *History of Malayan Civil Service to be written*.

retiring several years before independence. All had reached the Staff Officer Class, Bryson and Corry as British Advisers, Gray as the Secretary of Chinese Affairs. Bryson explained he would not work in conjunction with the OCRP.

> I think there would be no hope – or desire – to fit in with the Oxford Colonial Project. They are far too hide-bound, thirty-year rule, Official Secrets and all the rest!...I shall in due course ask to be allowed access to (their) Malayan papers that would be relevant to our plans.[113]

The initiative was launched in 1969. Bryson wrote to all ex-MCS members in the BAM, on behalf of 'The Committee of the Association'.[114] He explained the aim was to gather personal recollections which 'might eventually' produce a history of the Service. His letter included a pro-forma questionnaire for those who preferred to answer briefly but Bryson encouraged recipients to write longer memoirs, giving as inspiration the successful publication of the history of the Indian Civil Service in the 1950s.[115] He sent out a total of 153 letters to retired 'European' members of the MCS staff, and 'a slightly different form' of letter to 33 Malay and Asian members. By April 1970 he had received 43 replies from 'Europeans' and 1 from a Malay.[116] Henceforth, there seems to have been no effort to seek further contribution from non-European ex-MCS members. The project was given wider publicity six months later in a *Malaysia* article. Readers were told that contributions received so far were of material that 'any writer would envy'. Furthermore the project organisers had 'been fortunate in finding a most acceptable man to write the history…Professor Robert Heussler of Princeton University'.[117]

Bob Heussler had been a U.S. Army Air Force pilot in WW2. After leaving the forces, he worked in the 1940s and 50s for an oil company and then an aerial photography company. This work took him to Asia, the West Indies, tropical Africa and the Arab States, where he met many individuals with current or past Colonial Administrative Service experience. In 1959, he moved to Oxford as a Fulbright Scholar to write a thesis on the the evolution of the CO's recruitment and training programs from the 1920s. This was published in 1963, at the time that Heussler was making an early contribution to the OCRP. It contained a clear statement of his attitude towards those who had been in the Service.

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[113] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B12 F2, letter Bryson to Andrew Gilmour, 19th April 1969.
[114] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F1, example letter from Bryson to Arthur Aston, April 1969.
[115] Philip Mason, *The Men who Ruled India,* published in two volumes, *The Founders* (London, 1953) and *The Guardians* (London, 1954).
[116] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F2, letter Bryson to Heussler 17th April 1970.
[117] *Malaysia*, November 1970. Both quotes.

> I greatly admire many in its ranks. In fact the egg was hatched in well-remembered talks with administrators in the jungles, deserts, and islands of the colonial empire. I am not objective. My regard for these men does not remove the fact, however, that I salute their *accomplishments* more than their *aims*, various as the latter have always been.[118]

Heussler continued his close association with Oxford, and the colonial papers being collated by the OCRP, researching a history of the Colonial Administrative Service in Northern Nigeria. He drew extensively on the papers and memoirs of ex-colonial servants, together with interviews of those still alive. When published, Heussler included a criticism on recent trends in colonial history.

> Whereas traditional students of the area had been gatherers of facts and had seen theory as an essence rising off the warm body of reality, latter day social scientists seemed to be reversing the process: they come already supplied with theory…into the various openings of which they would place factual data selected for their apparent appropriateness to the pre-conceived mould.[119]

One ex-Nigerian Colonial Service officer considered Heussler's 'a definitive work' written with 'shrewd insight'. Heussler's narrative style gave significant space to personal testimony, anecdote and vignette, the reviewer declaring that 'the roll call of officers with which the book begins is a positive joy'.[120] Nonetheless, these same facets of Heussler's writing drew criticism from other reviewers. For one, Heussler's portrayal of the 'human side of colonialism' had some merit, but overall it was a limit on the work's scholarship as it gave only an 'impressionistic' picture.[121] Heussler's objectivity was often drawn into question, one description holding that he had taken a 'eulogistic position (with) Colonial Administrative practice seen through the lens of its own patronising rationalisation'.[122]

It is unlikely that Bryson would have been concerned by these negative reviews, had he even read them. He had sought to engage an established historian as he doubted 'there is any ex-MCS man capable of writing such a book'. This was surprising, as both Thompson and Gullick had published several works by this stage. Mason, whose work was an inspiration to

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[118] Heussler, *Yesterday's Rulers*, xxv. Margery Perham's *Introduction* to this work is the source of the biographical information on Heussler, page xvi.
[119] Heussler, *Nigeria*, 5-6.
[120] D.J.M. Muffett, *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1970), 221-225.
[121] Jeremy J. White, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (December 1969), 169-172.
[122] John A. Ballard, The *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Dec. 1969, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Dec. 1969), 756-758.

Bryson, had been a member of the Indian Civil Service. Bryson, nonetheless, felt that Thompson and Gullick were too busy, the former writing for 'a much more profitable market', and the latter engaged with his law practice.[123] As Heussler had interviewed Bryson in the early 1960s when researching his thesis, Bryson could build on this earlier contact. He wrote to Heussler seeking 'advice and, perhaps assistance', adding that he and his colleagues had been 'impressed by the way you brought out in your books the spirit of the service and put real life into the historical record'.[124] From this tentative approach, an agreement in principle was quickly reached that Heussler would write the history of the MCS. Using seed corn funding provided by businessman T.B.Barlow, a past President of the Association, Heussler travelled to London, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to scope out the work. It would, however, be Heussler's responsibility to find independent funding for the actual research.[125] He arrived in London in September 1970, his meetings restricted to 'the organisers of the scheme', namely Bryson, Corry, Gray and Barlow,[126] before travelling to South-East Asia. Inspired by these initial meetings, Bryson sent a further round of letters seeking ex-MCS memoirs and experiences on specific topics and themes that Heussler had requested. Despite this promising start, Bryson reported 18 months later that the writing had been held up due to lack of funds.[127] It took two years for Heussler to gain a grant from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), topped up 'by a very generous offer from a member of the (BAM) Association'. In what would be one of the final issues of *Malaysia* before the BAM closed, readers were advised (again) that the History of the MCS was being written. Heussler was reintroduced as the author who had accepted the invitation to write the MCS history 'with alacrity'.[128]

As work started in earnest on the history, Heussler identified limits to its scope. By mid-1973, he had returned to Malaysia and was staying with Barlow's family in Kuala Lumpur. He wrote to Bryson explaining that the history could only be written provided 'enough of your colleagues can be persuaded to help' as local archives in Malaysia were going to be of limited help due to their being 'fantastically disorganised and uneven as to content'. Most significantly, Heussler felt he would only be able to complete the history from the British

[123] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F1, letter Bryson to Band, 10th August 1969.
[124] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F2, letter Bryson to Heussler, 20th February 1970.
[125] Ibid, letter Bryson to Heussler, 17th April 1970.
[126] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B19 F3, letter Bryson to Newnham Worley, 30th September 1970.
[127] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B9 F3, letter Bryson to Blake, February 4th, 1972.
[128] *Malaysia,* January 1973. Both quotes.

intervention in the late 1860s to the Japanese conquest, the same period that had been covered by Allen. A second volume on the remaining colonial period would only 'come later, if possible'.[129] Why Heussler felt unable to cover the full colonial period, and whether his decision to limit the work was a major disappointment to Bryson, are not recorded. Heussler may have felt that the condition of the Malaysia archives, and continued closure of many relevant Government files, was problematic. Bryson had originally sought pre and post-war recollections from ex-MCS members, so he and others must have felt some regret at Heussler's position. There was, however, little choice but to press on and pass to Heussler all the memoirs and papers collected, and to put him in direct contact with those who had offered to make further personal contributions. Heussler was now Chair of the History Department at the State University of New York at Geneseo, so much of the research would have to be conducted through personal correspondence, backed up with occasional visits to the UK. One such visit took place in late 1973, when Heussler attended the annual MCS dinner. This was the first dinner to be held after the closure of the BAM. Watherston was at the dinner but, apart from a small correspondence with Heussler on one specific issue, never took apparent interest in the history, dying three years later. Aside from Watherston, Thompson had perhaps the highest public profile amongst the ex-MCS, having been knighted for his BRIAM work. He was not at the dinner, however, and there is no evidence of contact between Thompson and Heussler. Only a handful of the 41 attendees at the dinner subsequently corresponded with Heussler.

It would take another eight years before Heussler's history of the MCS from 1867 to 1942 appeared in print. In the years before its publication, Bryson, Gray, and Corry had died, perhaps giving Heussler some relief from their expectations. Heussler specifically thanked seven contributors for reviewing his first draft of the work.[130] Although this group acted as an informal 'editorial board', with which Heussler seemed happy to work, they had only limited personal experience of the period of colonial history concerned. Almost all the active contributors to Heussler's work at this time had started their MCS careers in the 1920s at the earliest, more often in the 1930s. Although Heussler could draw upon memoirs and official documents written in the earlier colonial period, the views and memories of his active contributors could only authentically cover the later inter-war period, when most were junior

[129] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F2, letter Heussler to Bryson, 17th June 1973. Both quotes.
[130] Heussler, *British Rule*, Preface.

officers, often in field locations and distant from the centres of power. Part of the work's eight-year gestation period had been devoted to trying to find a publisher. Gullick wrote to Heussler lamenting that the Oxford University Press had rejected it for publication 'without even the courtesy of an explanation', and speculating this was to avoid creating sensitivity between the University and Malaysian leaders critical of the British record in the colonial period.[131]

A publisher (Clio Press, Oxford) was eventually found, and the work appeared in 1981. Heussler maintained that he was presenting a study in which MCS officers provided 'a rich panoply of insider views that can be weighed in the scales'. He concluded that 'the MCS held the ring' in the colonial period to 1941, sustaining the 'British linchpin'.[132] Some reviewers concluded that Heussler had produced a scholarly, well documented and impressive history.[133] The review in the OSPA *Journal* considered it a 'cool, objective yet sympathetic appraisal'.[134] A larger number of reviewers were not so convinced. Criticisms echoed those of Heussler's earlier work on Nigeria. In relying on the personal testimony, one reviewer felt 'too much is left out of the story to consider it an objective assessment'.[135] Another felt that, as a biography, the work was a delight but 'Heussler has a tendency to accept uncritically public statements by British officers'.[136] After her brief service in the MCS in the early 1950s, Mary Turnbull had been an historian in the Universities of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and had published her own history of Singapore.[137] She was unconvinced by Heussler's MCS history.

> The author speaks of 'an embarrassment of riches' but the lack of other material to develop general themes results in a surfeit of anecdotal history…(He) seems to have entered into the spirit of the MCS of the 1930s to the point of adopting its prejudices and blind spots, its patronising paternalism and "time standing still" nostalgia…The author fails to stand back to put the service in perspective, to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses'.[138]

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[131] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 21st April 1979.
[132] Heussler, *British Rule*, 322-323. All quotes.
[133] 1) Philip Mason, *Times Literary Supplement* 19th February 1982. 2) John Bastin, *History*, Vol. 67, No. 220 (1982), 293-294.
[134] OSPA *Journal* No.42 (November 1981).
[135] John F. Cady, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, July 1982, Vol. 462, 163-164.
[136] J. Norman Parmer, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, May 1983, Vol. 42, No. 3, 721-722.
[137] C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore*, (Kuala Lumpur, 1977).
[138] C. M. Turnbull, *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1982), 152-153.

Undaunted, ex-MCS officers H.G.Turner and A. Gilmour now turned to the possibility of a second volume of MCS history covering the post-war period. Turner wrote to Heussler opposing a second volume.

> (It is) difficult to conceive that a farrago of different papers compiled by different hands and a number of potted biographies of leading figures in the post-war MCS would form a worthy follow up.

In this letter, Turner quoted an opposing view he had received in a letter from Gilmour.

> I had hoped to see recorded the triumph of the MCS nucleus, over the combined ravishing of the Nipp and the BMA and the ineptitude of the Colonial Office and its minions, which prepared the countries (Malaya and Singapore) for the most successful emancipation exercise in the whole colonial empire. [139]

Turner died in July 1981 and, a year later, Heussler's first draft of a post-war volume was circulating amongst a new 'editorial' team of ex-MCS officers, including Gilmour. None of the ex-MCS involved in the review process appeared to take a lead role, although Gilmour on at least one occasion felt it 'incumbent' on him to pass comment to Heussler as 'the oldest of your select band of critics'.[140] Gullick's recollection was that Heussler had not been 'pressed' to produce the second volume,[141] which suggests that the enthusiasm for it was as much his as that of some of the ex-MCS still involved.

The writing of a second volume of MCS history presented Heussler with methodological challenges. One was the shortage of official archival material, as many British Government documents had still not been released for public viewing. He would subsequently explain that he had, therefore, determined not to produce a 'full blown history' but a 'portrayal of the work and the thinking of the men on the ground'.[142] His second challenge was how to depict the quite different constitutional structures and histories of Malaya and Singapore in the post war period. Up to 1942, Colonial Malaya had been an integrated British administration, encompassing the Straits Settlements and Malay States under a single Governor/High Commissioner, with the MCS being a Service that had spanned this entire administration. It had, therefore, been relatively straightforward in the first volume of history to portray a single MCS history within this unified structure. From 1946, however,

[139] Heussler Papers, B18 F2, letter H.G.Turner to Heussler, 23rd February 1979.
[140] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B12 F3, letter Gilmour to Heussler, 30th November 1982.
[141] Private Papers of Anthony Stockwell, letter Gullick to Stockwell, 10th September 1984.
[142] Heussler, *Stewardship*, 7.

the Federation of Malaya and Singapore had become constitutionally separate, with distinct Governors/High Commissioners and civil services. In 1949, the MCS Association AGM had minuted its declaration of Singapore as a distinct Division of the Association, giving it 'complete autonomy in handling its domestic affairs'.[143] Whilst MCS officers remained contractually obliged to transfer between the two administrations, if required, the volume of officers transferring was not significant. Where it did occur, it tended to be from Singapore to Malaya, as the latter's needs in the Emergency took precedence.[144] Heussler's challenge was how to portray what were two distinct post-war MCS histories. His solution was to concentrate very largely on the MCS experience of the Federation's constitutional development and response to the Emergency. The inclusion of Singapore experience in the shorter chapters on the war years, and in the final chapter on the years leading to independence, seemed to satisfy the two of his reviewers whose careers had largely been in Singapore, especially as he applied his generous high-level conclusions to both territories.

Whilst official sources might have been limited, there appeared to be a wide range of MCS testimonies available to Heussler for the post-war volume. On closer inspection this was not so clearly the case. The contributions of 111 ex-MCS members are held in the *Heussler Papers* at the University of Oxford, including those contributions made directly to Bryson in the period 1969 to 1972. Of the total, 50 are from contributors who only served in the MCS in the pre-war period, or whose contribution formed little more than a short letter of anecdote or an unfulfilled promise of future contributions. Bryson was less diplomatic, describing some of these contributions as 'completely useless'.[145] Nonetheless, for his second volume, Heussler was able to work with the contributions of 61 ex-MCS members whose experience covered all or part of the 1942 to 1957 period. This was not a diverse group, however. 48 had first been appointed to the MCS in the pre-war period and most of these had been interned. All but six had retired from the MCS having reached the senior cadre. Younger, more junior officers who had joined the MCS in the late 1940s/early 1950s, and who had moved on to new careers after 1957, were much less represented. Typically, these officers had not joined the BAM and so had not received Bryson's letter in 1969. They were

[143] ANM, 1957/0472297, *Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Malayan Civil Service Association*, 25th March 1949.
[144] UOBL/CUL, MCSLs, Malayan Establishment Staff Lists 1950 to 1953. 12 MCS officers in the superscales transferred from Singapore to Malaya between 1950 and 1953.
[145] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B10 F2, letter Bryson to Heussler, 17th April 1970.

also less active in other MCS networking activities, such as attending the MCS dinner, which might have brought them to Heussler's attention.

Where contributions were made by junior officers, one example reveals that they were not readily accepted by Bryson and his colleagues. J.D.H. Neill had joined the Service in 1946, leaving in 1953 whilst still in the timescale grades. He had been recruited as a Chinese Cadet and had published an account of his early years learning Hokkien in China.[146] As a BAM member, he replied to Bryson's call for memoirs with a six-page letter. Whilst, he admired some of the senior officers he had served under, others had disappointed him.

> There were some dead beats and there were some very haphazard mistakes in the immediate post-war period…An upbringing in the Malay network (those who had joined as Malay Cadets) did produce in some officers some very strange blind spots in the context of an impartial assessment of the requirements and rights of other communities'.[147]

Bryson, disturbed by Neill's letter, wrote immediately to eight of his ex-MCS colleagues explaining that 'a contribution received today from a post-1945 man has certain comments on which I think comment should be made for historical accuracy'. Setting a tone for the replies he expected, Bryson added that, from his own experience, Neill's contentions were 'just not true in general'.[148] Three replies to Bryson endorsed this view.

1. Your Chinese cadet is talking nonsense.
2. Your correspondent seems to draw conclusions from singularly little knowledge.
3. I do not think we need pay any attention to criticism of the administration from anyone who had not served in a Secretariat for some considerable time.[149]

Only one response to Bryson argued that Neill's was a valuable contribution, arguing 'there is room for many shades of opinion'.[150] Nonetheless, Neill's account was not used in Heussler's second volume.

Comments on Heussler's draft were detailed, often running to four or five pages. One respondent circulated his draft amongst a further five ex-MCS officers for comment.[151] When the work was completed, Heussler would acknowledge a special indebtedness to 16 of the

[146] Desmond Neill, *Elegant Flower, First Steps in China*, (London, 1956).
[147] UOBL Heussler Papers, B17 F1, letter Neill to Bryson, 14th June 1969. Both quotes.
[148] Ibid, letters Bryson to Howith, Reid, H.G.Turner, Gracie, Falconer, Ramsay, Harvey, Cator and Cunyngham-Brown, 20th June 1969, and 23rd June 1969. Both quotes.
[149] Ibid: 1) letter Falconer to Bryson, 28th June 1969; 2) letter Cator to Bryson, 28th June 1969; 3) letter Harvey to Bryson, 20th July 1969.
[150] Ibid, letter Cunyngham-Brown to Bryson, 1st July 1969.
[151] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F1, letter Howe to Heussler, 14th September 1982.

ex-MCS who had supported him on the second volume. 12 had joined the MCS before the War, and eight of these had been interned or held as a POW. All but one had left Malaya as a member of the senior MCS cadre. Heussler had built strong connections with most of these contributors, with some of their correspondences spanning a decade. Several had written significant memoirs of their own or written lengthy papers on specific topics. Those who were reviewing the draft had, therefore, also provided a significant part of its source material.

Apart from comments and corrections on multiple points of detail, their reaction to the draft had been extremely positive, although with some reservations over Heussler's proposed title.

1. First thoughts – if only dear old Hugh Bryson could have been with us to read it - his brainchild taken shape. I think the 'Stewardship' title is a touch of genius, so very apt. We were stewards, 'wise stewards', I hope, and what a privilege it was to be such a steward.
2. 'Completing a Stewardship' is appropriate as a chapter head, but to my mind is inadequate for this history of a successfully accomplished task. It lacks bite and is too low key.
3. I congratulate you…on putting down the record of the MCS in the post war period in such a clear and balanced way. [152]

Heussler moved swiftly to completion. By the end of 1983, *Completing a Stewardship* had been published in the USA, by Greenwood Press, Connecticut. In the work's Introduction, Heussler regretted that the reading public was being given 'little that is realistic' in terms of imperial history and governments were being 'thrown back on embarrassed apology more than on informed and forthright explanations of what has taken place'.[153] He explained that his study was not a full history as 'the focus of the study is on the spirit, the values and the working posture of the MCS'.[154] Nonetheless, he was clear in his view that the MCS had 'held the lion's share of power down to the end of the British phase and…relinquished it according to an orderly plan worked out in co-operation with local leaders'.[155]

[152] 1) UOBL, Heussler Papers, B15 F1, letter Howe to Heussler, 14th September 1981. 2) UOBL, Heussler Papers, B12 F2, Gilmour, *Comments*, November 1982. 3) UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Correspondence*, letter to Heussler, 26th August 1982.
[153] Heussler, *Stewardship*, 6.
[154] Ibid, 3.
[155] Ibid, 7.

The reviews of *Stewardship* varied from faint praise to criticism. Whilst there was no review in the OSPA *Journal*, two ex-MCS reviewers sought to accentuate the positive in other journals. One noted the 'extraordinary understanding and sensitivity' Heussler had shown to his subjects in conveying 'what life felt to them'.[156] Mary Turnbull reflected that Heussler had written a 'unique testimony of individual experience' conveying a picture of the MCS 'as its members saw themselves'.[157] A critical reviewer was, however, troubled by Heussler's unchallenging acceptance of the MCS view.

> There is no doubt in the minds of the MCS, and virtually none in the book itself. If the blame is to be apportioned for mistakes the lion's share must go to the Colonial Office and the successive British governments which from the 1940s adopted a policy of 'London knows best'.[158]

Anthony Stockwell concluded that 'this is not a definitive study; it is more a source book which historians of the last years of British rule in Malaya will use with gratitude'.[159]

The final letters in Heussler Papers are from his main contributors, dated December 1983 and January 1984, thanking him for complementary copies they had received. Heussler died very shortly afterwards, in February 1984, aged 59. The publication of this second volume of MCS history had represented an achievement for those ex-MCS who had sought to have their history recorded, despite setbacks and multiple changes in leading ex-MCS personalities over 14 years. Their working relationship with Heussler had been constructive and they concurred with his conclusions. The fall of Malaya, and Gent's missteps over the MU were the result of errors of British policy and military strategy, compounded by ignoring MCS advice, and unfair scapegoating of the Service. The post-Gent period was 'a triumph of responsible stewardship' by MCS officers who, 'in the face of armed insurrection…supervised the transition' to independence.[160]

Postscript

A sense of 'closure' must now have been felt amongst those ex-MCS associated with the production of the second volume of MCS history. Nevertheless, the study of colonial history

[156] Dennis Duncanson, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 395 (Apr. 1985), 475.
[157] C. M. Turnbull, *Journal of Asian History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1986), 85-87.
[158] Barbara Watson Andaya, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, July 1984, 297.
[159] Anthony Stockwell, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), 163-164.
[160] Heussler, *Stewardship*, 6-7. Both quotes.

continued, as did the participation of some ex-MCS in it. As the large majority of the ex-MCS had not been personally involved in the second volume, there was a possibility that some ex-MCS voices were yet to be heard. Whilst *Stewardship* was being completed, Brian Lapping was conducting interviews for *End of Empire*, a TV series of 14 programmes eventually transmitted on Granada Television between April and July 1985. A book accompanying the series was published in the same year.[161] Two of the episodes covered Malaya, one on the Japanese Invasion and the second on the post-war period to independence. Lapping retained the transcripts of interviews held, from which it is known that six ex-MCS were involved,[162] one of whom described his experience to Heussler.

> I spent two days last week in Manchester with my friend Leslie Davis being interviewed on camera by two young men who did their best to get provocative or controversial statements out of us; - and probably succeeded…But perhaps what I gave them will be dull enough not to survive the ruthless cutting. The trouble is that like many of us I delight in talking about my time in Malaya and so am easily led on![163]

The episodes did not explore the role of the MCS in post-war Malaya. The thorny issue of civil defence, and the dismissal of Jones, did not feature in the episode on the Japanese Invasion. The episode on post-war Malaya was focused on the communist insurgency with John Davis dominating the MCS contribution, due to his knowledge of the MCP and Chin Peng. Of the other MCS interviewed, only a few snippets were used. The post-war episode was not an entirely sympathetic account, especially regarding events at Batang Kali and the difficult early experiences for new villagers. Nonetheless, it conveyed a sense of ultimate British magnanimity and good will. Templer was said to have persuaded the British Government to give Malaya an independence 'which it had not even asked for', whilst Lennox Boyd, (now Lord Boyd), recounted that in 1955 he had seen 'no reason whatever' to stand in the way of independence.[164]

Within months of the publication of *Stewardship*, articles in the OSPA *Journal* advised former colonial servants that a new Oxford Colonial Archives Project (OCAP) had started and that Anthony Kirk-Greene, Senior Research Fellow at St Antony's College, had been appointed

[161] Brian Lapping, *End of Empire,* (Manchester, 1985).
[162] UOBL, *End of Empire,* Transcripts.
[163] UOBL, Heussler Papers, B13 F1, letter Goode to Heussler, 8th August 1981.
[164] British Film Institute, TV Archives, *End of Empire, Malaya*, broadcast on 13th May 1985.

its Director.[165] From this point, Kirk-Greene regularly informed OSPA *Journal* readers of initiatives and developments being undertaken, appealing to them for new memoirs and collections of papers to supplement those already assembled at Oxford. Whilst the volume of official and personal papers that were collected under Kirk-Greene's Project was impressive, his subsequent works did not rival or supplant Heussler's history, as no specific work on Malaya was produced. His urging of former colonial civil servants to publish their memoirs did, however, bear some Malayan fruit. Christopher Blake, Jean Falconer (wife of John Falconer), John Loch, Geoffrey Mowat, and George Patterson, all published memoirs in the 1990s.[166] Of these, only Blake had earlier contributed to Bryson and Heussler. These new memoirs provided valuable records of individual experiences but not a changed perspective of the MCS, or its contribution to post-war Malaya.

Despite Lapping and Kirk-Greene's praiseworthy initiatives, the mood reflected in ex-MCS personal papers throughout the late 1980s and 1990s is one of honouring the past, not re-opening it. The ex-MCS raised funds for a plaque in St Andrew's Cathedral Singapore to commemorate the 40 members of the MCS who had lost their lives in WW2.[167] After the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the HMOCS was 'discharged' and its associated 'Corona Club' closed. Only OSPA now remained as a membership body for ex-colonial civil servants, until its closure in 2017. Now in advanced age, those senior ex-MCS who had contributed to the MCS histories turned to final reflections. Sheppard was in his late 80s and had become the doyen of those ex-MCS officers still living in Malaysia. His past service to the country's National Museum and Archives had been recognised by several awards and honorifics. He remained in the Malaysian public eye in affectionate articles describing him as a 'scholar, historian and writer' on Malay culture, and acknowledging his 'love of Malaysia'.[168] Sheppard would have been dismayed had he known that, by 2024, the National Museum in Malaysia would be educating its visitors on 'The British Occupation'.[169] One of the last platforms for public sharing of MCS experience was provided by the University of London in a 1999

[165] OSPA *Journal* No.47 (April 1984).
[166] OSPA *Journal* No.61 (April 1991), A H.M.Kirk-Greene, *Colonial Service Memoirs an Opportunity to Publish*. The ex-MCS memoirs subsequently published were: Blake, *View from Within*; Falconer, *Woodsmoke;* Loch, *Alphabet;* Mowat, *Rainbow*; and Patterson, *Spoonful*.
[167] IWM, Davis, *Papers*, Box 12, booklet, *Service of Dedication*, 29th January 1989.
[168] 1) *Straits Times*, 8th February 1989, *Englishman's mission to keep Malay culture alive.* 2) *AsiaWeek*, 12th January 1994, *For Love of Malaysia.*
[169] A gallery, titled *Penduducan British,* (British Occupation), contains displays on the Colonial era.

conference *on British Colonial Service in Retrospect*. Of the 23 papers presented, two were by ex-MCS officers. Gullick spoke on the impact of businessmen on post-war Malaya, and Mary Turnbull spoke of the MCS and its experience of malayanisation in the final years before independence. For Turnbull, the process had been challenging, but 'was not a disaster and the country made a more successful transition to independence than practically any other colonial territory'.[170]

The last article published during the lifetime of an ex-MCS officer seems to be a short article provided by Gullick to the OSPA *Journal* in 2009, written on his experience in the BMA on the British return to Malaya in 1945.[171] Gullick died three years later, aged 96. It is perhaps fitting that a last MCS word might be attributed to Gullick, as his was always a balanced perspective. In his private correspondence with Heussler, Gullick had avoided MCS dogma. He wrote of the 'pretensions' he had seen amongst senior MCS officers, which he considered a legacy from the 'first generation who were an arrogant lot'. These pretensions had encouraged the MCS of the post-war period to 'live on the capital accumulated by an earlier generation instead of coming to terms with the current situation'. Nonetheless, *esprit de corps* mattered to Gullick. He added 'you will appreciate that these remarks are written for your eyes alone. I would not wish to offend colleagues whom I hold in respect and affection'.[172]

In his final years, Gullick returned to his memoirs, *My Time in Malaya*, written in 1969-70 in response to Bryson's first initiative. These had not been published but were used extensively by Heussler. He now re-read and revised them and they were published posthumously. They contained several new or amended passages explaining tensions within the MCS, such as resentment felt among the interned MCS at the career advantages gained by those, like Newboult, who avoided their fate. Gullick believed that the criticisms of MCS conduct during the Japanese invasion had 'made bruises on the collective MCS self-esteem', as there were some 'episodes' such as the evacuation of Penang and the behaviour of Jones that could not be so easily dismissed as scapegoating. Finally, he described the enduring, and unproductive, sensitivity of the senior MCS cadre to any erosion of their pre-eminence over

[170] John Smith (Ed.), *Administering Empire*. 1) John Gullick, Colonial administrators and businessmen in post-war Malaya, 287-294; 2) Mary Turnbull, The Malayan Civil Service and the transfer to independence, 271-286. Quote from page 284.
[171] OSPA, Journal No.98 (October 2009).
[172] UOBL, Heussler Papers, Gullick, *Correspondence,* letter Gullick to Heussler 11th July 1974.

the Professional Services.[173] It is to Gullick's credit that he explained these issues more explicitly in his final contribution, opening a door to future research. *Stewardship* might have created a sense of 'closure' amongst those ex-MCS who had served in post-war Malaya, but no work can provide the final word.

Summary

This last chapter has explored the redeployment options available to ex-MCS officers in the later 1950s, and the life decisions they took. Junior MCS officers concentrated on developing new careers which loosened any remaining ties with their former colleagues. It was largely members of the senior cadre of MCS officers who chose to maintain a strong affinity with their former Service and colleagues. From the mid-1960s a small caucus of ex-MCS officers started a project to have a history of the MCS written, partly to counter recent publications which they considered uninformed histories. Despite the early genesis of this idea, it would take until 1983 for the second volume of the MCS history to be published, covering the period 1941 to 1957. Whilst the publication of their history appeared to create a final sense of closure on the MCS record for those ex-MCS who saw the project through to its end, Heussler acknowledged that he had not produced a full history.

The main findings of this chapter, and its predecessors, will now be drawn together in the conclusion.

[173] J.M. Gullick, Recollections of My Time in Malaya, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS).* Published in three parts. Part 1, Vol. 86, Pt. 2 (2013), 59-76; Part 2, Vol.87, Pt. 1 (2014), 53-81; Part 3, Vol. 87, Pt. 2, (2014), 47-89. Quote is from Part 3, page 50.

Conclusion

The Colonial Period, 1942 to 1957

This thesis first asked what influence active and retired members of the MCS were able to exert over the development of the post-war Malayan Union and Federation of Malaya, and the path to independence.

The events of the 1942 to 1946 period were the genesis of a collective MCS dismay that their advice and experience was continually ignored by the CO and political leaders. Whilst this was a useful device for the MCS to absolve itself of accountability for the discredited ideas behind the creation of the MU, it is largely borne out by the historical record. The large majority of senior MCS officers were interned during the war and had no opportunity to influence policy. Once Gent had been persuaded by Hailey on post-war policy for Malaya, he appeared impervious to any further change. The experience of interned MCS officers at having their offers of help rebuffed by the banana colonels of the BMA solidified the main narrative that MCS advice and experience had been ignored throughout.

Nonetheless, those MCS officers who did have the opportunity to challenge Gent's thinking between 1942 and 1945 failed to present coherent and forceful argument. Within the MPU, Newboult in particular lacked the confidence to take an impactful stance independent of his MCS colleagues who were forceful in their support of Gent's plan. Consequently, Willan and Purcell were able to make a significant contribution to preparing the ground for the British return and imposition of the MU.

The reconstituted MCS in Malaya in 1946 was led largely by senior officers who, only six months previously, had been released from three and a half years of gruelling captivity. Facing the huge challenge of rebuilding the country's administration and economic infrastructure, some were seen as unfit for the task. Medical analysis would suggest that many were suffering from PTSD, as well as lingering physical effects of malnourishment. There is, however, less evidence of enduring humiliation amongst MCS officers. Concern at the loss of British prestige due to the failure to honour Protection Treaties was assuaged by the eventual Allied victory, and a mostly warm welcome of the British return by Malayans. MCS officers then disassociated themselves from the new loss of British honour and prestige created, in their eyes, by the forced imposition of the MacMichael treaties on the Sultans.

Nonetheless, they remained highly sensitive to the accusations of civil administrative failure during the battle for Malaya and their portrayal as Colonel Blimps. Conclusions on the state of mind of returning MCS officers must be made cautiously as these MCS officers were typical of a war generation that often preferred to keep their feelings about past traumas private.

Organised Malay opposition, and its threat to security, was the determining factor in Gent's decision to champion a federal replacement to the MU, which he held could maintain the advantages of the Union. During war-time, ex-MCS officers in the BAM had not been able to create a durable consensus of ideas on the future of Malaya to present to the CO. In the MU period the ex-MCS were more sure footed, playing an important part in helping Gent to persuade the CO to agree a change of direction. The Proconsul letter, the publicity given to Malay demonstrations during Gammans' visit to Malaya, and the effective use Gammans made of subsequent speaking platforms in London, all chipped away at Hall's resolve. When the Secretary of State agreed to negotiations with the Sultans to replace the Union, he turned to another ex-MCS, Adams, to help craft a mutually acceptable basis to start discussions. Once the discussions had started, however, Gent involved only a few hand-picked, pro-Malay, MCS officers whose support could be assured. Chief Secretary Newboult was the main one but he struck a lonely figure as the only senior officer who could be closely associated with the now discredited decision to create the MU. Purcell could have offered a contrary voice to Gent, as he regretted the MU's passing. However, he had resigned from colonial service. In the eyes of most MCS officers, the end of the MU served to vindicate their opinion that it had been a reckless mistake. Despite the centralised and unified structure of the MU, Gent had determined to prevent a restoration of the pre-war fusion between MCS roles and political control. With limited experienced resources, his administration struggled in serving the new co-ordination requirements between multiple British leaders in the region, and in creating effective labour policies.

The history of the MCS from 1948 is one driven by developments largely unanticipated by the MCS. The revised constitutional arrangements of the Federation of Malaya anticipated an eventual electoral democracy, with administration as its servant. The roles of Mentri Besar in the States, and of Members in the Federal Government, removed authority from the British Advisers, and the senior officers in the Secretariat. The implementation of the War Committee structure by Briggs began a gradual process of reducing the influence of other senior MCS officers over the strategic direction of the Emergency. Attitudes counter-productive to British

Policy implementation were attributed to senior MCS officers. In their belief that the British obligation was to attend solely to the position of Malays, these officers were seen to exhibit a lack of understanding and consideration towards the Chinese community. Such MCS officers were depicted as nostalgic for pre-war days. These attitudes were apparent amongst senior MCS officers in both the States and the Secretariat but were more prevalent amongst those who had been trained as Malay Cadets and continued to work alongside State Malay leaders. As these MCS attitudes were apparent to both MacDonald and Gurney, and to the CO officials and military leaders who visited Malaya, awareness of the problem grew in the metropole. Despite this, no action was taken to change personnel due to the demands of the Emergency, and the lack of alternative resources. More serious allegations, of MCS disloyalty and scheming, were occasionally mooted but no hard evidence of systematic or intended MCS action of this kind has been found. Nonetheless, British and Malay political leaders increasingly took their own counsel, or that of others, and paid less attention to senior MCS advice. The MCS claim that it was the prime service, holding a balance that contributed to Malaya's stability, was thereby weakened. At its senior levels, it also appeared to be a Service inwardly focused on its status, holding sensitivities over perceived British Government insults dating back to the treatment of Colonial Secretary Jones in 1941, and rekindled by the appointment of outsiders such as Gurney and MacGillivray over qualified MCS and ex-MCS Officers.

In the UK, ex-MCS opinion maintained its stridency but its lobbying coherence was weakened by the increasingly divergent views being expressed by Gammans, Winstedt, Milverton, and Purcell on the future path for Malaya. At the extreme, a pessimistic view was that that racial tensions between Malays and Chinese would require Britain to remain a permanent third party to government. Gurney and the CO remained alert to ex-MCS meddling, believing that it still had the potential to affect attitudes in Malaya through articles in Malayan newspapers, or private correspondence such as that between Maxwell and Tan.

In contrast to concerns expressed over the attitudes of senior MCS and ex-MCS officers, the work ethic and performance of junior MCS officers in the period 1948 to 1951 was praiseworthy. The junior ranks of the MCS were much expanded with young and inexperienced expatriate recruits. Many were quickly placed into DO and ADO roles and made significant contributions to meeting Briggs' resettlement targets.

Templer shook the senior MCS out of its funk, and raised morale overall. The MCS believed that his policies to combat the Emergency were sound and worthy of full support. Templer, in turn, needed a civil service that would do his bidding. On the potential sticking point of pay, the CO delivered a large increase for all civil servants and Templer restored the pay differentials of senior MCS Officers. Nonetheless, Templer was unable to constrain what he considered to be an excessive bureaucracy. In his failure to have the MCS and State Administrative Services subsumed within a new Administrative Service, and to quickly introduce non-Malays into the MCS, Templer lacked his characteristic assurance and success in driving through change.

During the Templer period, Senior MCS officers experienced a further declining influence. The consolidation of political, military, and administrative power in Templer's new role reduced the opportunity for the Chief Secretary and Secretary of Defence to intervene in police and intelligence matters. Claims by some British Advisers that they played influential deputy-leadership roles on some SWECs are contested. It is feasible, however, that some continued to exercise an important informal influence before their positions were abolished. At District level, DOs were required to lead separate multi-disciplinary teams tackling the Emergency and working on village welfare initiatives. Whilst this remained a significant contribution, the dual burden on DOs of DWEC chairmanship and local civic co-ordination was little mitigated by the growth of Village Councils which proceeded at a slow pace. To avoid being overwhelmed, each DO had to decide their own priorities. The imperatives of population and food control often came first, ahead of the fostering of local democracy and the improvement of village facilities and quality of life.

Before 1955, the statements of British political leaders in the UK and Malaya continued to predict a lengthy period before Malaya was ready for self-government and a continued need for expatriate officers after this point. Amongst the MCS, expressions of pride in the rigour and impartiality of the electoral processes that the Service was building were often combined with a condescending and dismissive attitude to the Alliance, and those who voted for it. Whilst apparently enlightened views were expressed on the prospects of future self-government, many expatriate officers remained comfortable in the belief that they would be needed for many years to come, and that the slow process of malayanisation of roles would not involve enforced replacement of expatriate officers willing to stay. Ex-MCS statements in the UK press were now made mostly by Winstedt, Corry and Purcell. Winstedt and Corry were

well aligned with the gradualist and cautious approaches to constitutional change propounded by the British and Federal governments. Amongst the ex-MCS, this view was countered only by Purcell, who warned that Malaya would turn towards communism if it was not granted its immediate independence. Although Purcell may have had an impact on bringing UMNO and MCA together for early talks, his subsequent conflict with Templer made the MCA wary of his further involvement. In Parliament, Gammans was silenced from 1951 by his ministerial obligation to support his government. Milverton's statements echoed those of Winstedt in foreseeing a long period before the differences between Malaya's communities could be safely reconciled. Parliamentary challenge to policy in Malaya was led by the Labour opposition.

From 1954, successful electoral co-operation between a small group of Malayan politicians in the Alliance forced the British down a faster path towards independence. Senior MCS officers in the Secretariat had for several years seen their roles change as a Members System was introduced by Gurney and further expanded by Templer. The 1955 Federal Elections ushered in further change, with a ministerial government in which most domestic Departments were managed by Malayan Ministers. Administration was increasingly the servant of elected politicians and the MCS narrative began to focus on the quality of its service to these new forms of representative government. MCS officers who were responsive to the needs of the new ministerial system, and the personalities of its Ministers, were the ones able to work effectively in their new Secretariat roles. The biggest casualties were the British Advisers, who continued to represent a significant proportion of the most senior and experienced MCS Staff officers. Alliance leaders bluntly held that the British Advisers had made no valuable contribution for some time. The demand for their immediate removal was conceded with no British protest. Whilst the concession needs to be seen within the broader constitutional negotiations, it suggests that the Advisers' own contentions of their importance and usefulness had been exaggerated.

In the final months before independence, Chief Secretary Watherston was the sole MCS officer on the Executive Council, and the only one serving on the various committees creating the framework of an independent Federation of Malaya. This was in marked contrast to earlier colonial periods when MCS membership of the Council and committees of the day had been both ubiquitous and numerous. As Emergency work continued, it was apparent that the insurgency was largely defeated and the British government no longer insisted on full

victory ahead of independence. The important work of maintaining civil administration continued but the publication of malayanisation plans revealed that there would only be a short-term continued need for expatriate MCS officers. Officers were forced to focus on career prospects away from Malaya. This final period in Malaya was dispiriting for many.

The Post-colonial Period

This thesis addressed a second question on what influence the MCS exerted over the shaping of the subsequent record of their contribution. After settling into new careers, or retirement, some in the ex-MCS remained connected through membership of associations or attendance at annual dinners. These were predominantly individuals who had reached the senior level of the MCS before independence, many of whom had started their careers in the pre-war period and had been interned in the war years. From the mid-1960s, concerns grew amongst this group that public ignorance and lack of interest in the achievements of the British Empire had opened the door for critical histories of the colonial era to move into the mainstream. Allen's work had arguably downgraded the significance of the MCS in Malayan history and questioned the quality of its officers compared to those who had served in other Colonial Administrative Services. Questions of the British legacy in Malaysia were raised by accounts of the outbreak of racial conflict in Kuala Lumpur and allegations of British military brutality during the Emergency. Added to these concerns was a desire to refocus public attention away from newly published accounts of administrative failures during the Japanese invasion, and onto the successes achieved in Malaya in defeating communist insurgency. The latter were seen as containing important lessons relevant to the new war in Vietnam. In a desire to better 'inform' the record, a small caucus of ex-MCS officers resolved that a history of the MCS should be written, based on the collation of memoirs from as many ex-MCS as could be contacted and persuaded to put pen to paper.

In writing their memoirs, ex-MCS officers in this period were embarking on a different exercise than their predecessors. Gammans, Winstedt and Purcell had been attempting to influence British policy of the day by using their experience to justify opinions on what were the best next steps for empire and Malaya. In contrast, the post-Independence memoir writers were looking backwards, giving their personal testament and opinion on what had already transpired. The volume of MCS history covering the period from 1942 to 1957 was eventually published in 1983, its long gestation period sustained by the continued enthusiasm

of its author and ex-MCS contributors. It depicted the post-war period as a triumph of responsible stewardship by the MCS, a triumph even more remarkable for it being achieved in the face of initial policy mistakes made by the CO and BMA, and the subsequent challenges of the Emergency. One of the smoothest retreats from empire was claimed to have been the consequence of the constructive actions of the MCS, which had been appreciated and recognised by those Malayan leaders taking power after independence. This depiction reflected a broad consensus on the post-war colonial period in Malaya held amongst those senior ex-MCS officers who had contributed their memoirs. More uncomfortable aspects of the post-war record, such as the British failure to create a plural, multi-racial society in Malaya, were not given prominence. Experiences of Malay members of the MCS, or of expatriate members of other Colonial Services were not recounted. Only a few junior officers contributed memoirs. Amongst these, Neill's memoir offered alternative views but was quickly dismissed as ill-informed. The memoir of one of the very few female MCS officers was not written until 1987. Heussler held a conviction that the opinions and recollections of former colonial civil servants should be heard in the weighing up of colonial history. Consequently, he was able to work sympathetically and effectively within an ex-MCS community highly suspicious of academic scrutiny and immensely proud and defensive of their heritage. Academic reviews of his history focused on it being incomplete and over reliant on personal memoir and opinion.

Contributions to the Historiography

So as to articulate the contribution this thesis makes to the historiography, the final part of this conclusion returns to the historical perspectives on colonial Malaya and the MCS which were discussed in the Introduction, together with the MCS self-belief in British exceptionalism in managing end of empire in South-East Asia.[1]

The historiography is now provided with an assessment of the influence of the MCS and ex-MCS on the colonial path taken in postwar Malaya. A combination of State empowerment in the 1948 Federal Constitution and progressive restructuring of Federal decision making processes by Gent, Gurney, Briggs, and Templer, constrained the autonomy of senior MCS officers and weakened their ability to be influential in leadership circles. In the

[1] Pages 16-35 of the Introduction.

final years before independence, the implementation of Ministerial Government largely completed the MCS transition from partner, to servant, of political leadership. The ex-MCS followed a similar path of overall decline in influence, partly self-inflicted by a lack of co-ordination, and the expression of increasingly extreme views amongst the main contributors. The CO and Federation Government were able to cast them as unhelpful meddlers and warn Malayan leaders away from continued dialogue with them. Harper's depiction of end of empire in Malaya as driven by responses to a succession of largely unseen post-war crises is the one which best maps to the events described in this thesis. Whilst British policy sought to develop a plural democracy in Malaya, senior MCS and ex-MCS opinion (excluding Purcell) counselled only caution, as it believed this policy would not be feasible for a considerable time. The Alliance would take the lead in demonstrating a workable structure for communal politics, thereby hastening the pace towards independence.

Whilst this overall picture is one in marked contrast to the pre-war fusion of politics and administration, areas of important MCS contribution are identified. Willan and Purcell made impactful contributions within the MPU. Ex-MCS public protests and behind-the-scenes lobbying influenced official actions taken to extricate the British Government from its commitment to the Malayan Union. Gammans and Adams in particular were used by Gent and the CO to rebuild Malay confidence in British good intentions towards negotiating a way out of the Union. MCS District Officers were instrumental in meeting resettlement targets and implementing successful population and food control measures in the new villages. Purcell incited Templer's fury and drew uncomfortable attention to the weaknesses in British policy towards the Chinese.

Nonetheless, these mitigating areas of important MCS influence still do not readily fit into the 'completing a stewardship' frame used by Heussler in his history of the MCS. Heussler maintained that he was not writing a 'full-blown' history of British administration, but was focused on the 'spirit' and 'values' of the MCS in the post-war period. Nonetheless, the tenor of his title, and the claim that the MCS had held the 'lion's share' of power whilst relinquishing that power in accord with an 'orderly plan', do not accord with the findings in this thesis, which show a continued and significant diminution in senior MCS power and influence from 1945 onwards. Almost the entire post-war period proved an unpredictable series of crises, with a clear plan of transition existing only in the final months after the publication of the Reid Commission report. Furthermore, from 1945 to 1951 many senior MCS and ex-MCS

officers had either opposed British policy or counselled that it was misguided and unachievable. British politicians had felt only lip service was being given by these officers to British objectives. Briggs had complained of a lack of urgency and unwillingness to solve problems. Senior MCS officers may have felt some justification in their attitudes but such does not accord with the idea of an ordered stewardship. Additionally, analysis presented in the thesis can directly challenge some of the historical narrative originally advanced by ex-MCS officers, for example over the influence exerted by British Advisers over State administrations and within the SWECs. Heussler may have sought to introduce some balance to what he saw as ill-informed public debate on the history of empire but, in doing so, his unchallenging acceptance of MCS interpretations of their history swung the scales too far in the opposite direction. This thesis has offered a new balance which is respectful of MCS memories but now also informed by other records and sources.

Works were cited in the Introduction that argue that the forces driving British decolonisation, and the manner of the end of British Empire, were not as distinct from those of other European powers as earlier writers had argued. In the Far East the failure of the Dutch police actions to prevent a swift end to its empire in the Netherlands East Indies, and the subsequent comprehensive military defeat of the French in Indochina do, however, stand as points of distinction with the British experience in Malaya. The postwar rejection by national populations experienced by French and Dutch colonial administrators in the Far East, contrasts with the largely warm, or at worst muted, welcome reported by MCS officers to have been given by Malaya's peoples. Unlike their Dutch and French equivalents, the MCS then had the time and opportunity to restore colonial administration, to support the defeat of insurgency, and then to create administrative and institutional systems based on British models that could endure after a peaceful independence. Thompson took this exceptional narrative one step further, arguing that the administrative structures and controls put in place to support the fight against the insurgency in Malaya contained universal lessons that could be applied in Vietnam. Whilst the reasons for the MCS self-belief in their largely peaceful administrative exceptionalism in Malaya are clear, the thesis has argued that the darker, and more coercive, side of the European decolonisation record also touched the Service. Hack's 'iron claws' analogy depicts the focus given by the British to controlling Chinese village populations during the Emergency, and his belief in the major contribution this tactic made to the defeat of the insurgency. In its analysis of the work of DOs in the enforcement of

population and food control measures, this thesis has shown the major contribution made by the Junior MCS cadre to this comprehensive and repressive civil control exercised by Britain in Malaya. It was acknowledged in the Introduction that an inter-empire comparison of the role and influence of postwar colonial administration and administrators was beyond the practical scope of the thesis. It is hoped that the insights now provided on the role of junior MCS officers in the Emergency might contribute to future comparative studies by other researchers.

As a contribution to the historiography of British colonial administration, this thesis draws on a combination of the official record, including that held in the Malaysian National Archives, and MCS personal memoirs to provide a comprehensive survey of administration in Malaya in the post-war period. This builds on the work of Kirk-Greene by adding missing detail on Malayan administration and giving renewed attention to colonial administration, and the comparison between the experiences and contributions of British administrators in different territories. The Malayan colonial administration functioned under significant disadvantages during the postwar period. The immense rebuilding task was made more difficult by a shortage of experienced MCS officers and the crisis over the Malayan Union. During the Emergency, the lack of Chinese language skills and the dismantling of the Chinese Protectorate limited the impact MCS officers could make within the Chinese community. As the pace quickened towards independence, significant changes to administration structures were needed to work under the direction of newly elected local politicians. It can be argued that these administrative weaknesses and challenges were either routed in past decisions made on staff training and organisation within the Service, or caused by political developments beyond the control of administrators. Nonetheless, the thesis has revealed how the attitudes of many senior MCS officers hindered their ability to adapt to new circumstances. Examples are their dismissive attitudes towards the Chinese community, and their distraction by concerns over status and authority. Effective working relationships with other civil service branches seem to have been affected by the desire of some senior MCS officers to retain their supremacy within the overall civil service, and to maintain senior pay differentials over the Professional Services.

Areas of comparison between colonial administrators in differing British territories were discussed in the Introduction, concerning constitutional change, pay, and postcolonial career paths. Concerning constitutional and institutional development, it was explained that

the nature and durability of the postwar liberal principles, advocated by the CO across all territories, was dependent not only on the specific challenges within each territory, but also on the circumstances in which it ultimately achieved independence. In Malaya's case, its postwar circumstances were particularly defined by rebuilding from the war damage caused by the Japanese occupation, and then fighting the communist insurgency. In the MU period, there was a significant attempt made by the restored British administration to expand and liberalise trade unionism in line with the principles championed by the Labour Government. It has been shown, however, that many MCS officers in the MU's Labour Department soon became disenchanted with these changes, advocating instead more restrictive trade union laws so as to restrain communist infiltration and disruption to industrial relations. Templer considered that community politics was best concentrated on the parish pump. His legislation to introduce Village Councils gave considerable latitude to DOs as to the nature and timescale of implementation, which many took as an opportunity to delay. Analysis has shown that the imperatives of fighting the Emergency led DOs to become largely focused on population control over local community development. Additionally, local economic development was further constrained by the meagre funding of RIDA and Co-operative Department budgets. Upon the larger constitutional framework, there was only limited MCS influence. It was Gent who provided the lead on constructing the MU, and then its replacement by a Federal Constitution, albeit with the willing contributions of Willan on the MU and Newboult on the Federation. The thesis description of the Civics Classes designed by Henderson appear to be an example of a local initiative by a young postwar MCS recruit, perhaps inspired by liberal principles imbued during his training in the UK. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of other MCS officers remaining sceptical that Malayan voters possessed the political maturity to make informed choices, or to be ready to transition quickly to self-government. Heussler's MCS history does draw attention to the work done by MCS officers, in the final years before independence, of organising elections based on British constitutional practice. This work, however, was done under strong central direction, offering little opportunity for local MCS initiative. When Corry was given an influential role on the Boundary Commission, he seemed content to follow the line of least resistance in reducing the work to what he called a mathematical exercise. It is the case, however, that the Malayan independence constitution has largely endured, albeit that it was constrained by emergency powers for a long period after the 1969 riots.

On pay issues, concerns in Malaya over retention of expatriate colonial administrators at independence reveal some similarity with African examples discussed in the Introduction. The design, and subsequent retention success, of the end of service compensation scheme described by Rathbone for Gold Coast civil servants, was closely paralleled in Malaya. However, the CO was not prepared to grant Malaya the Special List provisions it was designing to address retention in Nigeria. The pay grievances made to Lyttelton in 1952 had caused him such concern that pay levels in Malaya were subsequently made higher than those in other territories. By 1956, the CO felt the Special List scheme could not offer MCS officers comparable incentives.

The last contribution to this comparative historiography of British colonial administration concerns MCS postcolonial career paths and experiences. Amongst the existing works covered in the Introduction, the preponderance, (other than retirement), of new careers in British colonial, diplomatic or Commonwealth service, or in university and school education/administration, aligns broadly with the findings of Kirk-Greene for administrators leaving the African Colonial Administrative Service. The difficulties experienced, by Howe for example, in using colonial skills and qualifications to gain new work, add an MCS dimension to Buettner's findings of similar difficulties experienced by ex-colonial officers.

Turning to the historiography that has focused on the traits of British colonial administrators, and particularly their common educational experiences, a contention has been pursued in this thesis that it was career experience, and not educational background, that most determined thinking and attitudes amongst MCS officers in the post-war period in Malaya. Career experience in turn was significantly determined by the language stream which each MCS officer entered as a Cadet. Analysis has shown that for the 10 years to 1955, the senior MCS leadership cadre continued to be dominated by officers with pre-war experience, many of whom had been interned. This group was also dominated by officers who had been trained as Cadets in the Malay language stream. The opinions of those senior MCS officers who counselled against British policy can be linked to these common experiences. To visitors to Malaya, they were seen as pro-Malay, debilitated by internment, and nostalgic for pre-war days. Those ex-MCS officers who made major contributions to Heussler's work also came from this senior MCS cadre. They held to the belief that they had made a central contribution

to the defeat of communism and the construction of a peaceful, multi-communal future for Malaya.

Attention has also been given to colonial networking of opinion in the post-war period. The extensive use made of newspapers and academic journals by the ex-MCS in propagating their views has been demonstrated. Those expressing pro-Malay views, Gammans and Winstedt in particular, have been shown to be closely aligned with those expressing pro-Malay sentiment within the MCS. However, no evidence of organised opinion co-ordination between MCS and ex-MCS groups has been found, reinforcing the contention of common career experience as the origin of shared opinion. Gammans' skilful combination of his political and media platforms and Purcell's leverage of his MCA mandate have been explored. Both individuals were active contributors to the UK and Malayan press. The study of Maxwell's and Winstedt's correspondence has shown the great effort invested in letter writing to achieve co-ordinated ex-MCS action against British policy in 1946. The analysis of the BAM's journal output over the late colonial period has revealed the different phases of its use by the ex-MCS to convey their opinions. Its subsequent use to initiate and sustain interest in an MCS history, and to inspire ex-MCS officers to write memoirs, has been demonstrated. Once Bryson had built a network of contributors, it was largely through a significant volume of correspondence with each contributor that he, and then Heussler, were able to maintain momentum. The ultimate decline of the BAM as the prime association for retired MCS officers has been explained, along with the emergence of OSPA as its successor.

Within the historiography of decolonisation, Kennedy's critique of it having been unduly focused on British government decision making processes was explored in the Introduction. He explains how recent decades have seen a broadening of historical study into other sources of agency in end of empire. This thesis contributes to this trend. The MCS can now be better understood as having their own colonial identity in the post-war period, thereby providing a distinct frame of reference from which to study decolonisation in Malaya. Whatever might have been the case pre-war, many senior MCS in the post-war period did not share an 'official mind' with the political leaders in Britain and Malaya. The opinion and counsel of senior MCS and ex-MCS officers was often opposed to British policy in the 1942 to 1951 period. The largely unsung contribution of young MCS officers to their DWECs and new villages was many steps removed from strategic decision making but, nevertheless, has been shown to have had important agency in the conduct of the Emergency. In the laying down of

imperial legacy, the ex-MCS took their own initiative in having their own history told, one that simultaneously sought MCS credit for the manner in which end of empire was achieved in Malaya, whilst illuminating those areas where many MCS had considered British policies on Malayan self-government ill-considered.

Lastly, concerning the history of the book, works on the influential role of memoirs in creating the historical record were also outlined in the Introduction. Although Heussler's work is one step away from actual memoir, this thesis has explained its extensive, and largely uncritical, use of MCS memoirs. In conducting his studies, Harper noted an enduring rhetoric of a successful British 'stewardship' in Malaysia, suggesting that Heussler's work is an important example of the impact of memoirs on the historical record, and particularly on the narrative of a British liberal exceptionalism at the end of empire. This thesis has explained the post-independence influences which sustained the motivation of many ex-MCS officers over a 15 year period from conceiving the idea of a history to the publication of its second volume. Such motivation partly related to protecting the past honour of the MCS. However, it also sought to articulate their self-belief in a record of their having guided Malaya to a peaceful and robust independence, based on British democratic principles. The strength of this motivation is evidenced by the practical challenges that successive groups of ex-MCS officers overcame in persuading their colleagues to write memoirs, and to then pass the torch on as their numbers dwindled, always ensuring that sufficient of their number remained engaged with Heussler to support his final work. This account of the determination of ex-MCS officers to have their story told makes an important contribution to the literature around the history of the book.

An understanding of end of empire in Malaya requires an appreciation of the multiple parts played by all British and Malayan actors. This thesis has concentrated on the influence of a small number of British Administrative Service officers (and ex-officers), never more than several hundred strong. Although their influence was declining in the post-war period, it was not unimportant or without consequence. The MCS contribution to managing end of empire in Malaya remains distinctive, and well-deserving of its place within the historical understanding of all contributing influences.

Appendix

Alt+left arrow to return to main text

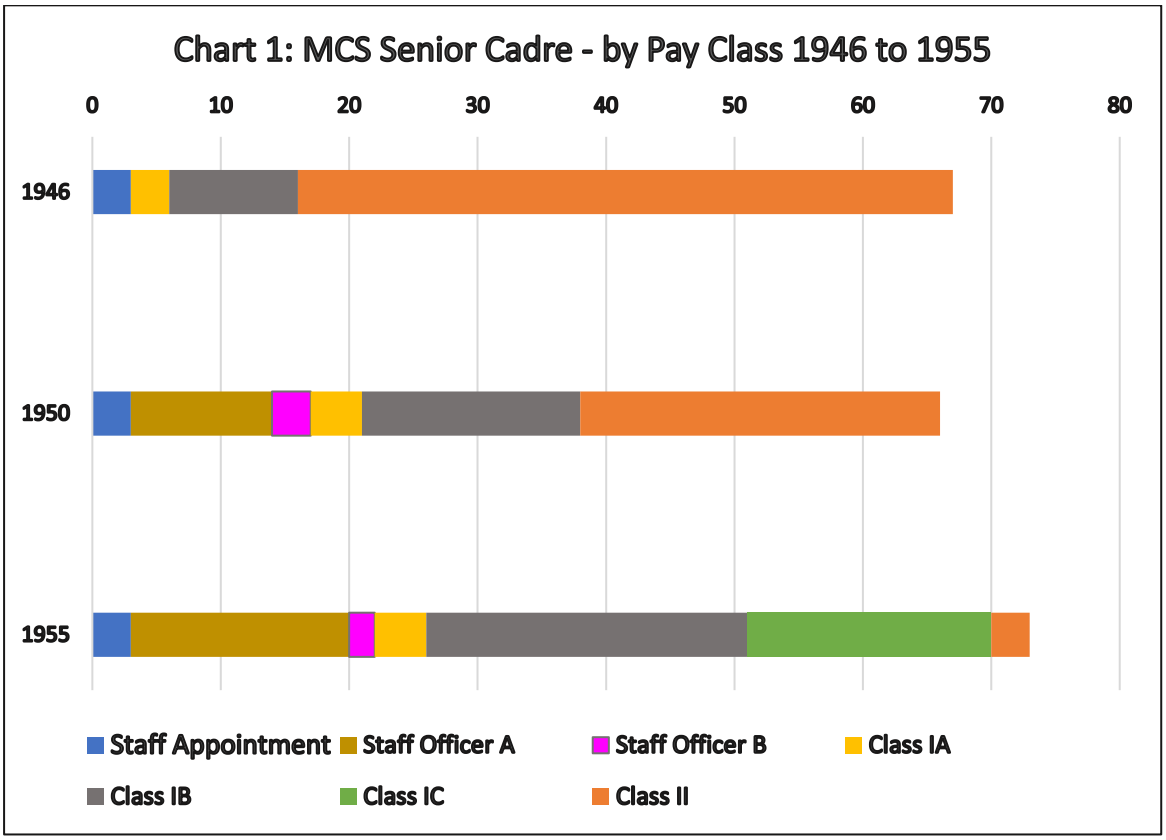
Definitions

MCS Senior Cadre: defined as Superscale Classes of Staff Appointment, Staff Officer A, Staff Officer B, Class IA, Class IB, Class IC, and Timescale Class II.

MCS Junior Cadre: defined as: Timescale Classes III, IV and V and Cadets.

Data Source for all Charts

UOBL/CUL, *Malayan Staff Lists,* Malayan Establishment Staff Lists 1946 to 1963.



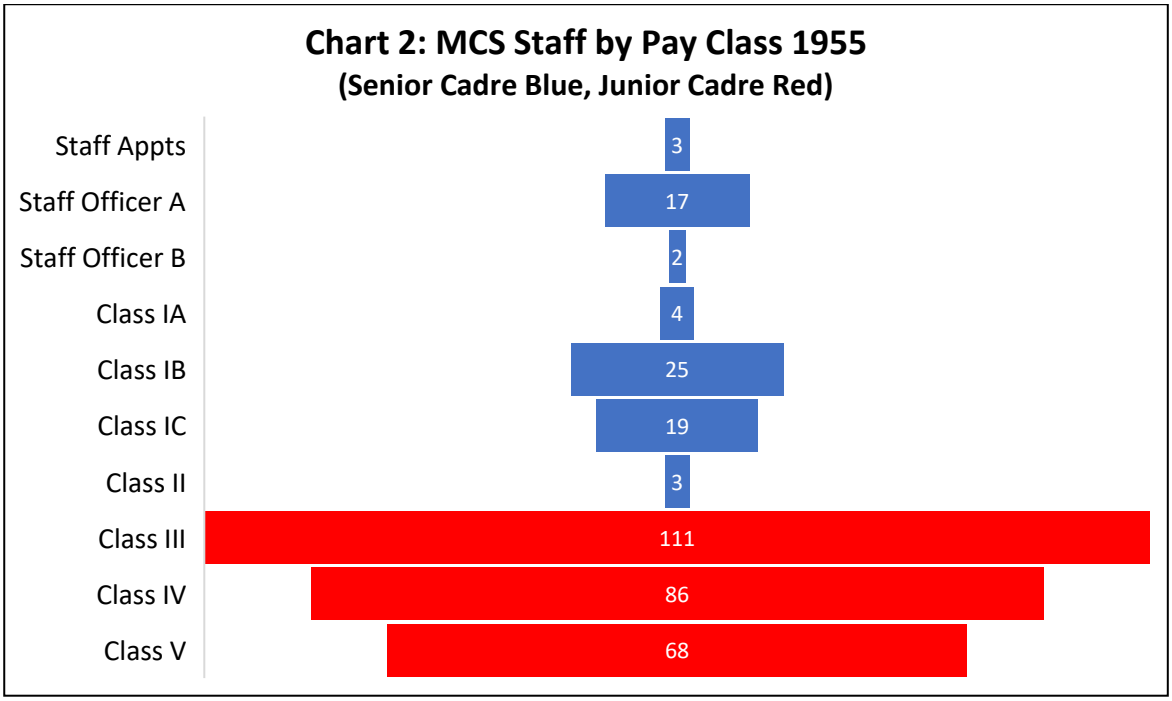


Chart 2: MCS Staff by Pay Class 1955
(Senior Cadre Blue, Junior Cadre Red)
Staff Appts
Staff Officer A
Staff Officer B
Class IA
Class IB
Class IC
Class II
Class III
Class IV
Class V
3
17
2
4
25
19
3
111
86
68

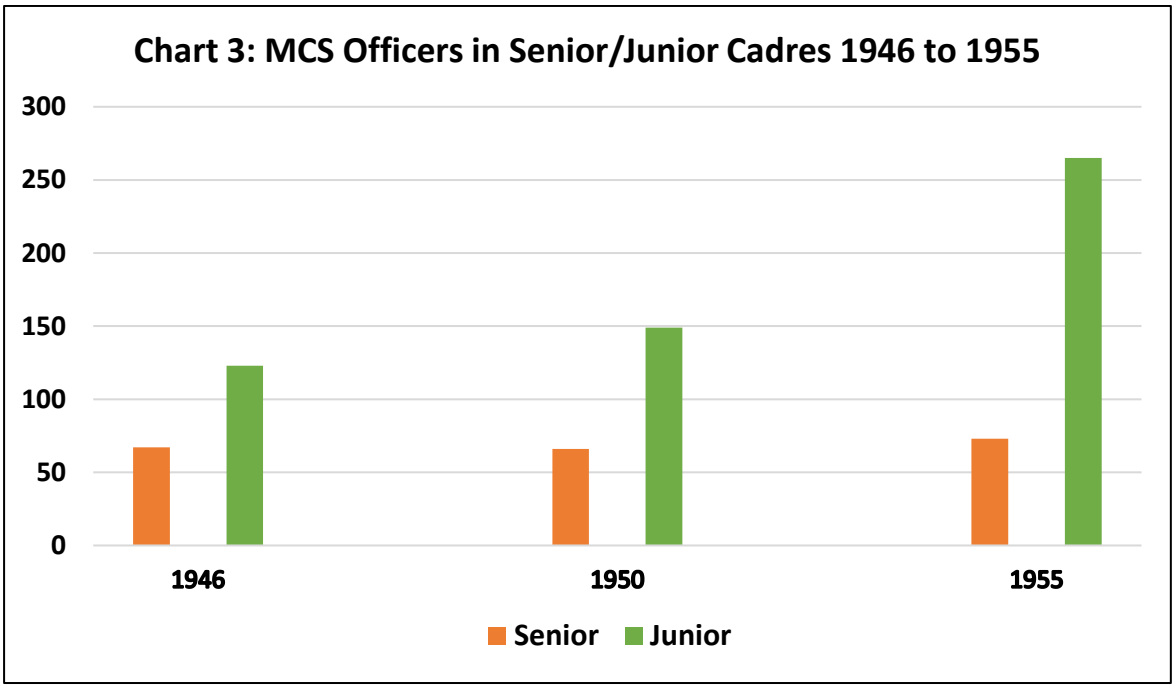


Chart 3: MCS Officers in Senior/Junior Cadres 1946 to 1955
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
1946
1950
1955
Senior
Junior

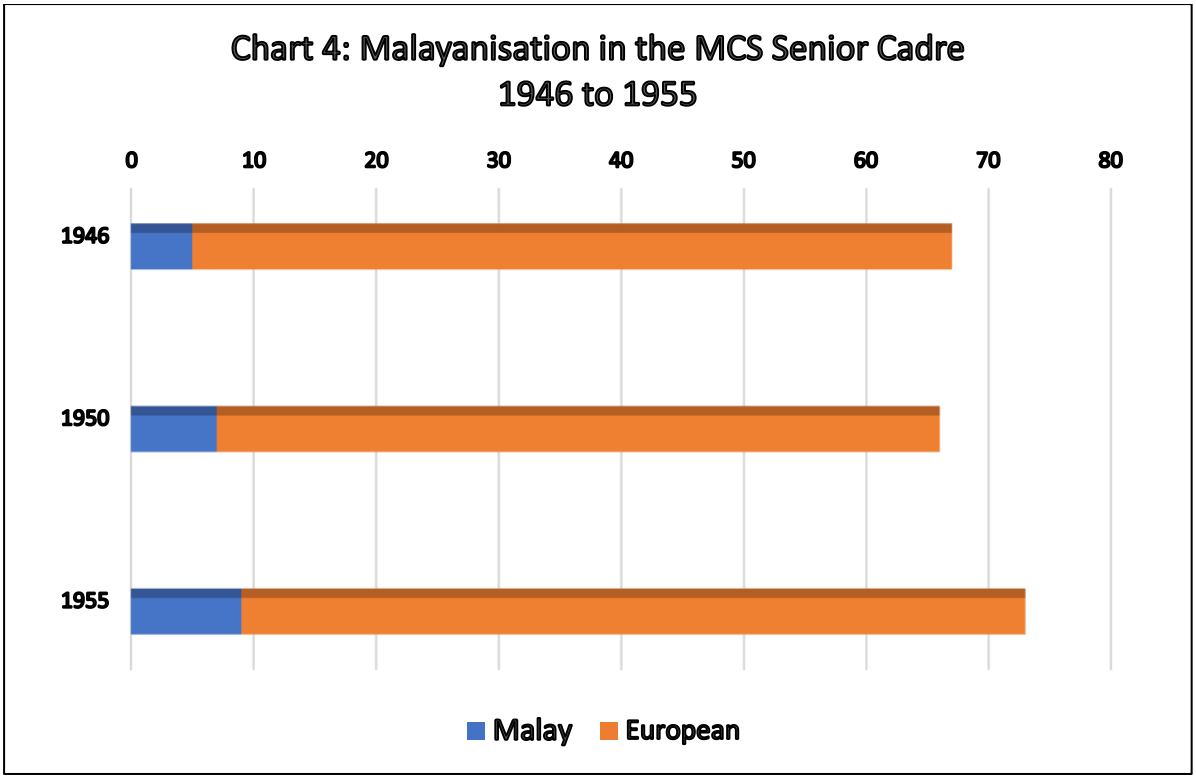


Chart 4: Malayanisation in the MCS Senior Cadre
1946 to 1955
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
1946
1950
1955
Malay
European

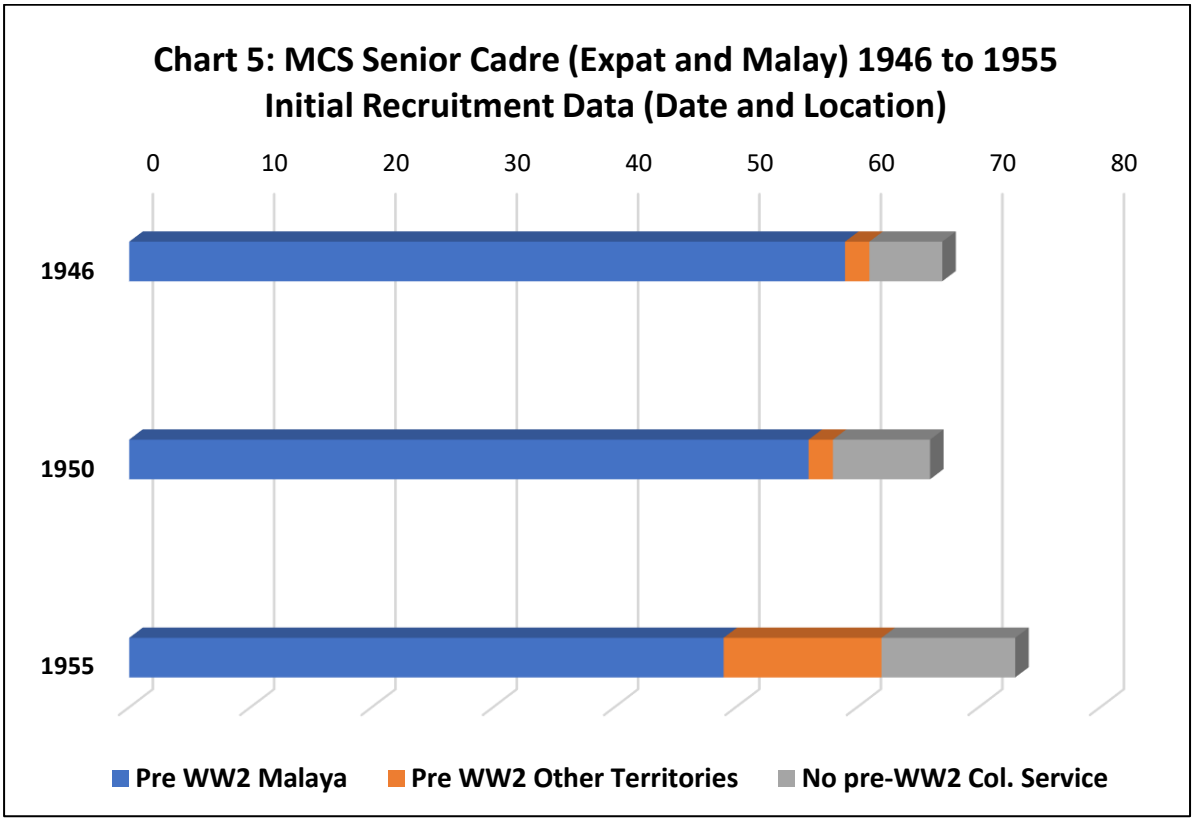


Chart 5: MCS Senior Cadre (Expat and Malay) 1946 to 1955
Initial Recruitment Data (Date and Location)
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
1946
1950
1955
Pre WW2 Malaya
Pre WW2 Other Territories
No pre-WW2 Col. Service

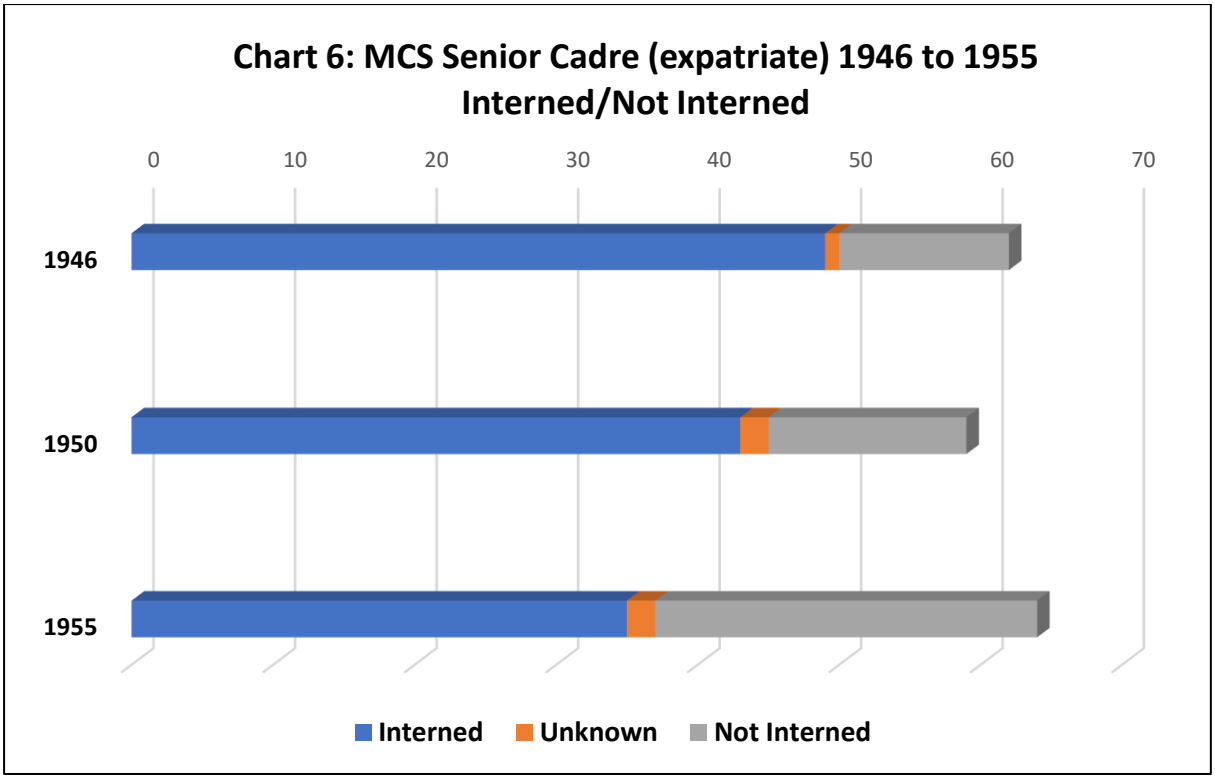


Chart 6: MCS Senior Cadre (expatriate) 1946 to 1955
Interned/Not Interned
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
1946
1950
1955
Interned
Unknown
Not Interned

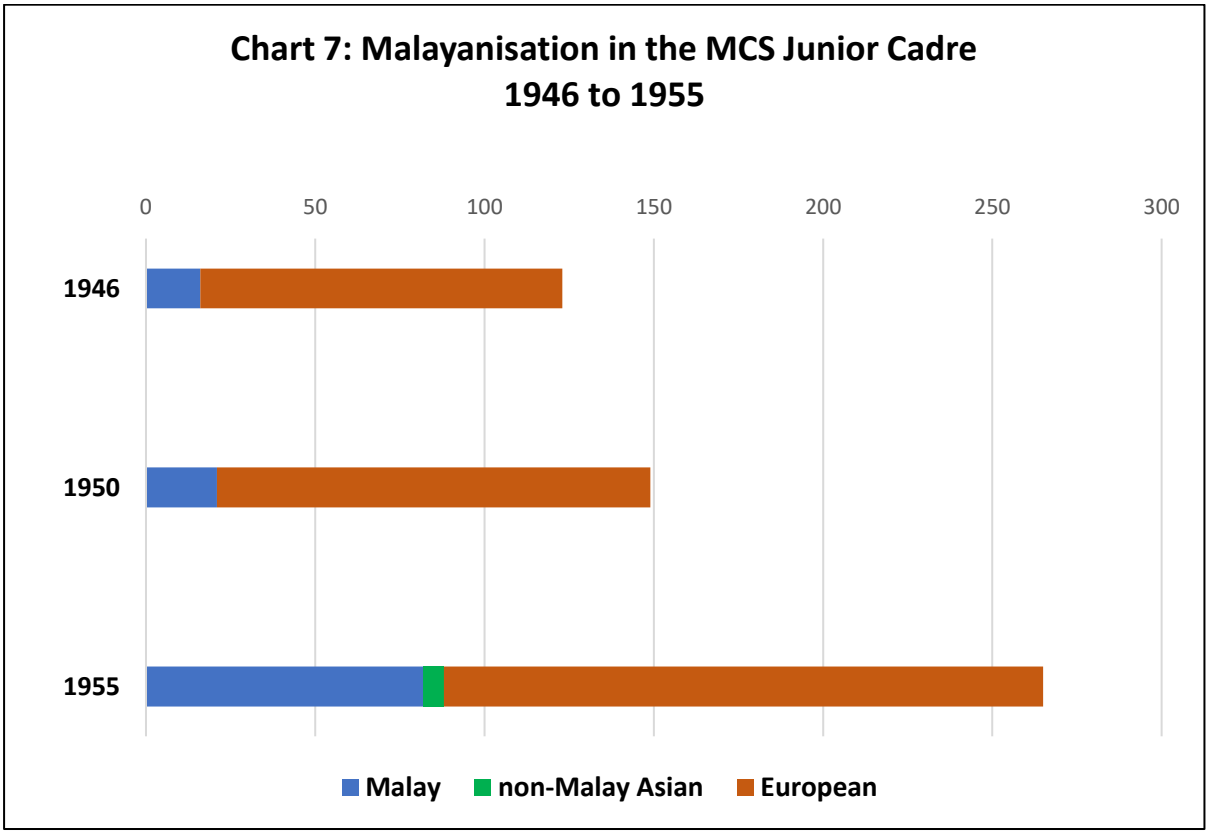
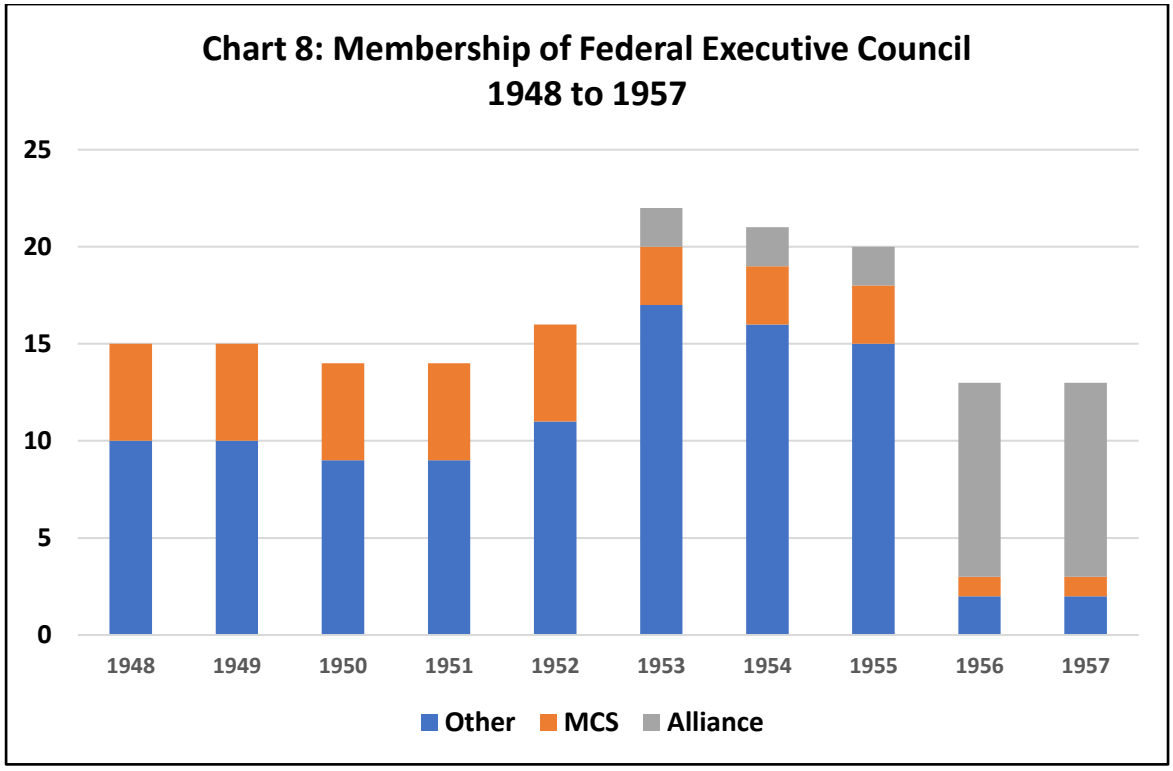
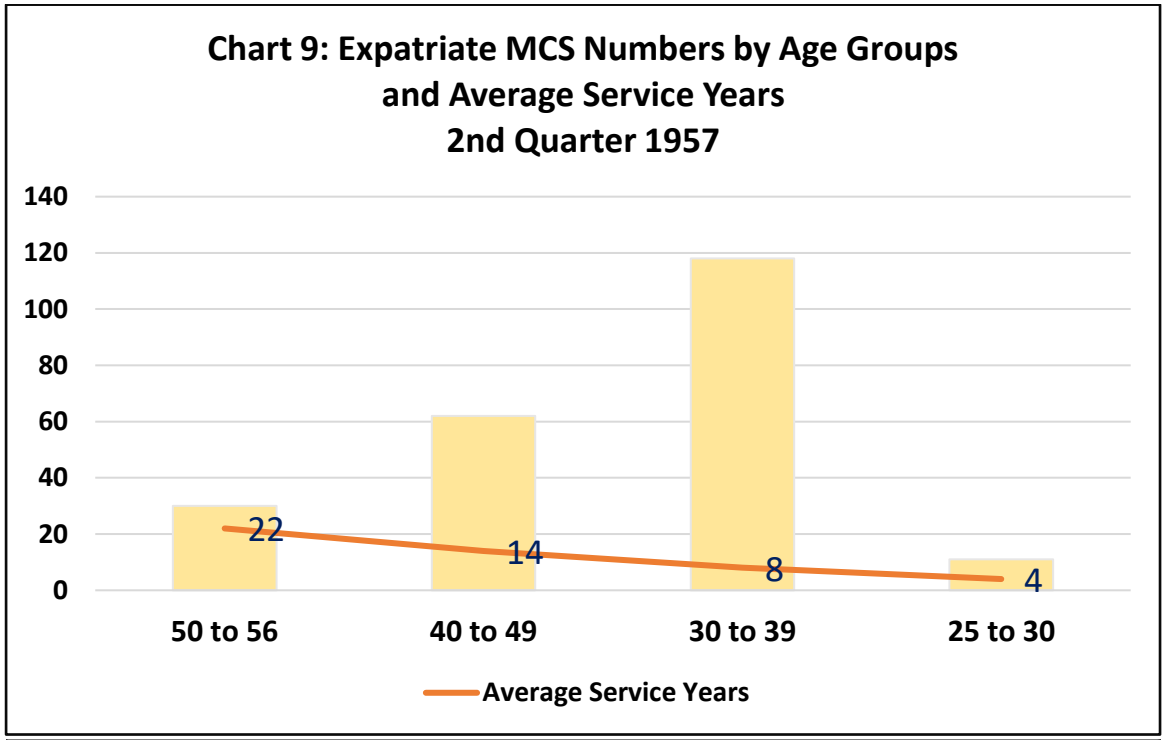


Chart 7: Malayanisation in the MCS Junior Cadre
1946 to 1955
0
50
100
150
200
250
300
1946
1950
1955
Malay
non-Malay Asian
European





The Y axis denotes numbers of expatriates. The X axis denotes age. The numbers on the Average Service Years line denote the average service years for each age group.

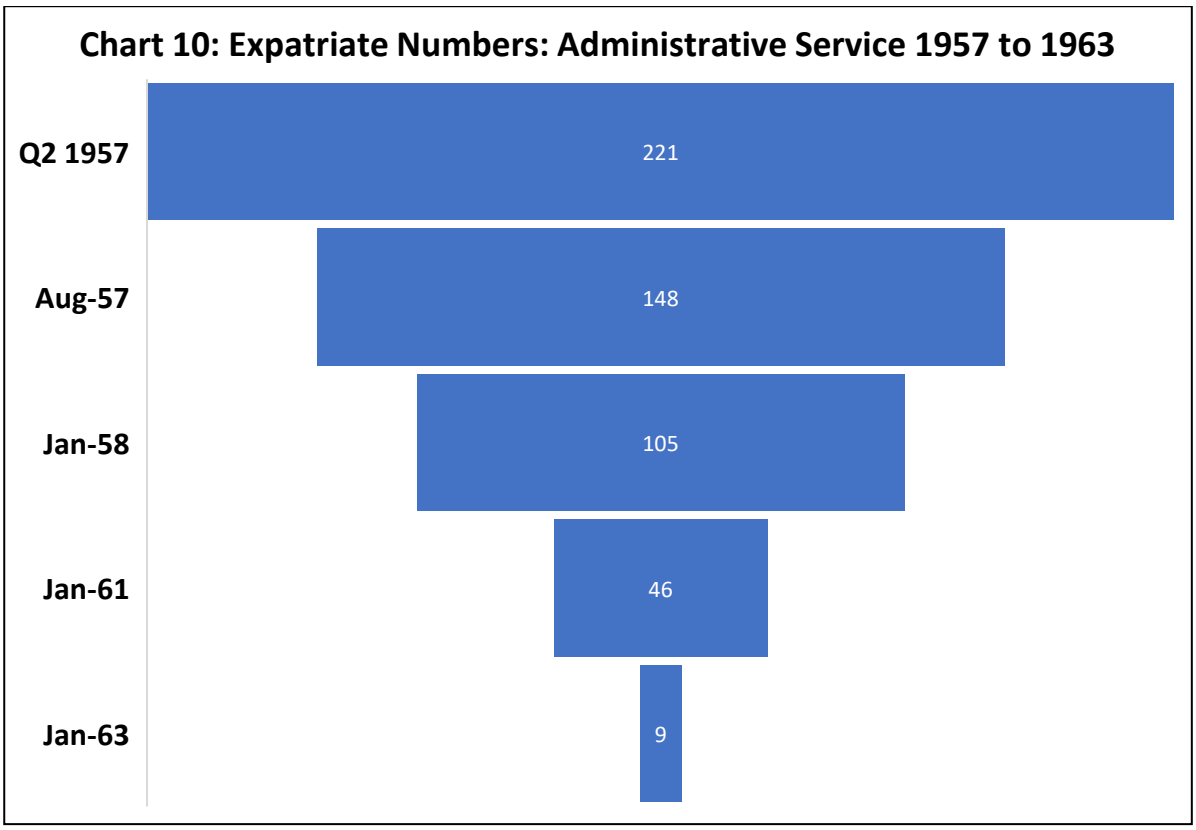


Chart 10: Expatriate Numbers: Administrative Service 1957 to 1963
Q2 1957
221
Aug-57
148
Jan-58
105
Jan-61
46
Jan-63
9

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Acronyms for holding institutions used in footnotes are shown below in brackets.

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CO 717 Federated Malay States: Original Correspondence 1941 - 1951

CO 825 Eastern Original Correspondence 1941 - 1951

CO 941 Federation of Malaya: Sessional Papers 1946 - 1957

CO 959 Various Private Collections

CO 1017 Colonial Service Division, later Overseas Service Division 1948 to 1960

CO 1022 South East Asia Department: Original Correspondence 1951-1953

CO 1030 Far East Department Registered Files 1953 – 1957

Migrated Files

FCO 141 Malaya 1941 to 1957

Ministry of Labour

LAB 8 Overseas Services Resettlement Bureau 1957 - 1960

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AIR 20, DEFE 11, WO 32, WO 203, WO 216, WO 220

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following MCS officers have been studied for this thesis: A.Aston, R.Band, E.Barrett, E.Bingham, A.Birse, J.Black, R.Black, M.Blacker, C.Blake, W.Blythe, J.Brander, F.Brewer, R.Broome, H.Bryson, W.Corry, J.Creer, T.Cromwell , S.Cunnyngham-Brown, R.Curtis, C.Danby, J.Duncanston, J.Falconer, R.Gates, A.Gilmour, W.Goode, A.Gracie, D.Gray, J.Gullick, M.Hay, J.Harvey, M.Hayward, D.Headley, K.Henderson, W.Horne, C.Howe, H.Humphrey, E.Laird, I.Phillips, A.Loch, H.Luckham, J.Mackie, J.Miller, J.Neill, R.Peel, J.Reid, J.Rea, E.Ross, T.Sheppard, C.Shorland, T.Smith, D.Somerville, G.Turner, H.Turner, R.Turner, N.Ward, D.Watherston, and O.Wolters.

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9) W. Goode, (MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.323).
10) M.J.Hayward, (MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.285).
11) Sir Herbert Ralph Hone, (MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.271).
12) H Luckham, (MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.169).
13) Dame Margery Freda Perham, (MSS. Perham Papers).
14) Sir Thomas Shenton Whitelegge Thomas, (MSS. Ind.Ocn.s.341).
15) Robert Noel Turner, (MSS. Ind Ocn.s.259).

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276 separate files were accessed and studied at the Malaysian National Archives. The index numbers of those whose content is cited are recorded in the footnotes. The Malaysian Archives use a filing index that records a year, followed by a unique 7 digit identifier, e.g. 2006/0006735. Many files from the colonial era have the year prefix 1957 (the year of Malaya's independence), but many relevant files have different years, such as in the example. The year used in the index does not denote the date of the papers in the file. It denotes the date of each file's accession to the archives and its indexing on the system. This complicates the search for relevant files.

However, the title of the file, and sometimes additional explanatory text, is included in the index system, meaning that a word search is by far the best way to find relevant files. The archives web site includes an Online Finding Aid (OFA) tool which is a good place to start such a word search.

https://ofa.arkib.gov.my/portal/index.php/en/

At the Archives themselves, there are multiple workstations where a different system, called *Compass,* can be used to access the catalogue. Word searches on *Compass* tend to produce more finds than the OFA tool, so use of the Compass system is recommended where possible. As explained, the file index follows no clear sequence of dates, government departments or subjects. Nonetheless, once a relevant file is found it is often rewarding to explore the files numbered above and below it, as these can be on a similar subject or from the same department. The *Compass* system is more practical for this task.

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