CABINET

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON VISIT TO MALAYA AND SINGAPORE

MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES

Introduction

1. I propose, with the Secretary of State for War, to circulate as soon as possible for the information of the Cabinet, a general report on our visit to Malaya. We shall also be bringing forward individual matters in detail to the Malaya Committee.

2. Meantime, I wish to let my colleagues have this summary of the matters arising out of my visit on which immediate action is required and is being taken.

The Emergency

3. The Secretary of State for War and I are completely satisfied with General Briggs's operational plans. They are based on full co-ordination of the military, police and civil forces. The military forces will clear the peninsula area by area, from south to north: the job of the police and civil administration will be to establish effective control in each area as it is cleared to enable the military forces to move on to the next. Operations under this plan began in Johore on 1st June.

4. No timed programme can be worked out for "operations" of this kind, and it will be a lengthy task. An indication is that General Briggs (i) does not expect to have cleared the two southernmost States of Johore and Negri Sembilan before November of this year, and (ii) he does not contemplate being able to release any troops from Malaya before April 1951 without seriously prejudicing his own campaign.

5. The speed of the plan depends entirely on the capacity of the civil administration to consolidate behind the military operations: and that in turn is mainly a question of personnel. It is vital to the success of the whole campaign that Malaya should receive, within the next two to three months, the civil reinforcements needed, particularly for the Police. The Police calculate, with their present strength, to be able to implement the Briggs Plan in the State of Johore and partly in Negri Sembilan: they have no reserves to meet further phases of the Plan.

Police Reinforcements

6. The immediate Police requirements are:

   (i) 117 officers,
   (ii) approximately 175 British n.c.os.

The officers needed are trained policemen (United Kingdom inspectors or sergeants), of 30-35 years, particularly those with C.I.D. experience. The Federation Government is prepared to offer permanent appointments or contracts. The Colonial Office will seek to recruit from every possible source, but the bulk of these men must come from the United Kingdom Police Forces. I am in touch with the Home Secretary and I hope that there will be no difficulty in meeting this need, which must be regarded as the first priority. The British n.c.os. required
will be recruited through the Crown Agents in the ordinary way. The above requirements of officers and non-commissioned officers will enable the Police Force to meet their obligations under the first half of the Briggs Plan: there will be an additional demand for the second half but this will not be large.

7. In addition, General Briggs proposes to build up the Police "jungle squads" into 45 companies, which as a military branch of the Police will be able to relieve the military forces of internal security duties as the campaign progresses. He is not asking for United Kingdom help on this, but has sought assistance from the Service Chiefs in the Far East in recruiting national servicemen (w.o.s. and n.c.o.s.), about to take their discharge, for service on contract with the Malayan Police as Police Lieutenants (platoon leaders) in the "jungle companies."

8. It is most desirable, particularly in view of the large reinforcements from outside, to increase the number of Asian officers in the Federal Police Force. For this purpose, a local police officer training college is needed. The Federation Government are preparing plans for this college as quickly as possible: the Commandant of the College and the Chief Instructor will have to be recruited from the United Kingdom and I shall seek the assistance of the Home Secretary as soon as firm proposals reach me from Malaya.

9. The Federation Government have agreed in principle that a regular police force of about 40,000 men must be maintained after the emergency.

Administrative Reinforcements

10. The High Commissioner has asked that 25 administrative cadets allotted to Malaya this year should be sent out immediately without taking the usual year's training course. This is being arranged. About 15 of these officers were intended to be Chinese-speaking officers and they will be given a three months' intensive course in Cantonese before sailing. I am convinced of the need, both as part of the Briggs plan and for the future, for closer administrative coverage of the country at the "district officer" level, both in Chinese and Malayan areas. Future requirements are being reviewed on this basis; already, in addition to the 25 officers mentioned above, 30 others have been asked for by Malaya as immediate appointments.

Repatriation of Chinese detainees

11. I found all concerned in Malaya agreed, and I am convinced myself, that renewal of the repatriation of Chinese detainees to China is an essential prerequisite to the success of General Briggs's plan. The presence of detainees in ever increasing numbers—

(i) constitutes a most serious security risk,
(ii) wastes manpower on guard duties and, above all,
(iii) is a serious brake on information, through the Chinese population's fear of bandits still in the country in detention camps.

12. I discussed with the Commissioner-General, the High Commissioner and the Governor of Singapore, the prospects of resuming this traffic to China, through ordinary commercial channels. A first step might be made early in July, and I propose to take up this point immediately with the Foreign Secretary.

Information and Propaganda

13. There is room for improvement in the Information Services in Malaya, although they are by no means ineffective at present. There is need however for better direction of effort against the Communists in both (a) general propaganda work and (b) direct "psychological warfare" against the bandits. The latter is in its infancy, although a start has now been made by the appointment of a Public Relations Officer to General Briggs's staff and of a "propaganda section" of the C.I.D., which works in close co-operation with him.

14. I propose
(a) to investigate immediately the possibility of securing an anti-Communist propaganda expert for Malaya, whose appointment would be welcomed by the Federation Government;
(b) to see what additional financial assistance can be given to the Malayan Film Unit, since all concerned locally agree that films are the most effective medium;
(c) to pursue with the B.B.C. a suggestion that they post a permanent representative in Malaya, with a view to correcting the misleading impressions of the situation in Malaya sometimes given to the world by foreign correspondents who seldom move from Singapore.

15. There is little doubt that the most effective line of anti-Communist propaganda among the Chinese in Malaya is to play up the bad conditions of their relatives in China under the Communist régime. A certain amount of news of this kind is filtering through privately and is having a great effect: but it cannot be used in official propaganda in view of the present directive under which the local Information Officers work. I propose to re-examine this problem.

Financial and Economic

16. I found among all concerned in Malaya, from the High Commissioner downwards, a keen appreciation of the need for developing the resources of the country and improving the standard of living, as a long-term counter to Communism. Despite the emergency, the Federation Government is being imaginative and farsighted. A draft development plan has been prepared for consideration by the Councils of the States and Settlements, and it is hoped will have reached the stage of approval by the central Legislative Council in July. A major feature of this plan is a scheme for the establishment of a Rural Development Authority which, though not exclusively for the Malay section of the community, is aimed at developing the economic potential of the rural areas which are predominantly Malay.

17. I am convinced that, if these plans are not to be jeopardised (and it is to my mind essential that we should be ready to put them into operation as soon as the emergency is ended, if not earlier), the Federation must have additional financial assistance from the United Kingdom. The £3 million contribution for 1950 from the Exchequer towards the cost of the emergency was based on an estimate made in August 1949 that the emergency might end during 1950, and is clearly inadequate. The Federation is in fact rapidly running into a serious financial crisis. I have discussed the whole question with the High Commissioner who will be putting the financial situation in detail before me by despatch very shortly; he thoroughly appreciates the need for counterbalancing any increased contribution from His Majesty's Government by the maximum possible increase in local taxation. It will be necessary to clear the Federation's request very quickly when the High Commissioner's despatch is received and, if the principle of further help is then accepted, I shall probably have to ask for a supplementary estimate during the present session of the House.

J. G.

Colonial Office, S.W. 1.
13th June, 1950.