GABINET

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
ON VISIT TO MALAYA

Note by the Secretary of State for the Colonies

I circulate, for the information of my colleagues, the text of a statement which I propose to make to the House on Monday, 19th June, on my recent visit to Malaya and Singapore.

J.C.

Colonial Office, S.W.1,
16TH JUNE, 1950.

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House will appreciate that I must confine myself to the salient impressions which I bring back from my tour of Malaya and Singapore. I am indebted to all those responsible for the admirable way in which it was arranged. I was able to meet and talk with people from every section of the community, to see the situation for myself in many different parts of the country, and to discuss with the leaders, official and unofficial, their present and future problems.

The first object of the Secretary of State for War and myself was to see what more could be done towards ending the emergency. We discussed fully with General Briggs, and the civil and military authorities, the plan of operations on which General Briggs has now embarked. It would not be in the public interest for me to give details of this plan,
which involves complete co-ordination between the Army, the Police and the civil administration. But we are convinced it is a realistic and effective plan and our confidence in General Briggs is shared throughout Malaya. I am not going to say how long the plan will take to succeed. I must warn the House not to expect quick and spectacular results: the aim is steady and deliberate progress, consolidating the gains at every stage - and that is the right way. Having seen the difficulties of terrain and communications for myself, I do not underestimate the task: on the other hand, I know it is a task that we can face squarely and confidently.

In saying that, I am encouraged by the undoubted fact that the vast majority of the people in Malaya, of every community, are opposed to the Communists. We have their good-will in this joint battle, to which they are making a great contribution. The terrorist movement has no roots in any legitimate national aspirations - I want to make that clear - and indeed the Malays themselves have sent thousands of men into the security forces to defend their towns and villages.

I do not ignore the fact that threats and intimidation make certain sections of the community fearful to withhold aid from the terrorists or to supply information to the authorities. It is vital in this campaign to cut the terrorists' channels of supply and communication and to improve our own sources of intelligence. That is very largely a problem of providing protection for the civilian population and of bringing scattered communities within the orbit of administration, by such measures as the settlement schemes which are now under way. It is one of the main objectives of the Briggs plan to create the conditions in which effective action to that end will become increasingly possible.

Man-power requirements for the police and civil administration have been reassessed in the light of the Briggs plan, and urgent steps are now being taken to recruit in the United Kingdom nearly 300 police
officers and N.C.O's. within the next few months, as well as additional administrative officers.

I found in the administrations of Malaya and Singapore, as well as among the people everywhere, not only a determination to end the emergency as soon as possible, but also a keen appreciation of the need for developing the resources of the country, for improving the social services and standard of living, and for steady political and constitutional progress. Despite the emergency, plans for social and economic development are being laid which are imaginative and far-sighted. In particular, I welcome the schemes for meeting the vastly increased demands for education both in the Federation and in Singapore, and for the economic development of the rural areas of Malaya. The Federation of Malaya put to me a request for further financial assistance towards the emergency, in order that those plans should not be hampered. That request is being considered urgently and sympathetically by His Majesty's Government.

In the political sphere, I found on every hand the warmest friendship towards Great Britain and a firm desire that the association between the peoples of Britain and Malaya should be maintained and strengthened. I found also, in the work of the Communities Liaison Committee on constitutional and political problems, in the Trade Unions, in the Police Force, and in every aspect of everyday life, a most encouraging spirit of co-operation between the various communities. It is for the peoples of Malaya, in their progress towards self-government within the Commonwealth, to build up for themselves a democracy which is firmly rooted in agreement and common loyalty among the communities: and there is good hope that the main lines of constitutional advance in the future will increasingly evolve from such agreement.
I should like to pay tribute to the planters and miners, and all those responsible for the remarkable economic recovery of Malaya since the war: and to acknowledge the great contribution they are making, despite difficulties and dangers, to the economic strength of the Commonwealth. As an old trade unionist, I was also greatly encouraged by the talks I had with Trade Union representatives in Malaya and Singapore. They reaffirmed to me their unqualified support of the Government in the campaign against the terrorists; and made plain their recognition of the responsible part which they had to play in the democratic development of their country.

I was concerned to find in some quarters that the clear and unequivocal meaning of the statement made by the Prime Minister to the House last March about Great Britain's intentions in Malaya had not been fully appreciated. I took every opportunity of assuring the people of Malaya that we should be at their side not only in winning the emergency but also in building the Malaya of the future.

In conclusion, I should like to express my gratitude for the kindness and hospitality with which I was received everywhere in Malaya and my admiration for all those who are so courageously and resolutely carrying on with their daily tasks and keeping the economic wheels of the country turning.
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The attached paper is relevant to Item 1 of the agenda for the meeting of the Cabinet on Monday, 19th June, at 11.0 a.m.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1,

16TH JUNE, 1950.