

SUMMARY

Field Strategy

Title : Psychological Operations During Malayan Emergency (1948 – 1960)

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INTRODUCTION

The deployment of terror tactics as a strategy of political action is not a recent phenomenon. It has been used in the past and continues to be a characteristic trait on the world landscape today. Terror as a strategy to pursue power or as a means to maintain power inevitably causes disruption to the established social, political and economic pattern and rhythm of the society when and where it occurs. More than that, it inevitably causes damage to personal and public property as well as the unfortunate loss of innocent lives. The British strategy to combat this terror tactics is by means of Psychological Operations. It is a planned and calculated initiative, to convey selected information and indicators to audiences in influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately to influence the behaviour of organizations, groups, and individuals of a country. It examines the Psychological Operations dimension of its impact during the Malayan Emergency and constitutes the study of the Malayan Emergency in the context of Psychological Operations and evaluate how far Psychological Operations contributed to further understanding of the victory of the British over the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in the Malayan Emergency.

MALAYAN EMERGENCY

Malayan Emergency from 1948-1960 exemplified this observation given the fact that the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) was determined to overthrow the British, while the British were determined to maintain their power and authority. The Malayan Emergency began in February 1948 with terrorist attacks by CPM guerrillas on European settlers in the Malay Peninsula necessitating a state of Emergency to be declared in July 1948. It was only when the British responded with aggressive counter-attacks as well as search and destroy tactics that the CPM were forced to retreat.

MALAYAN SUCCESS

The concept of People's War was to mobilize the people to resist the CPM insurgents and to commit them in efforts towards nation building to include politics, social, economic, security and defence. As during the Malayan Emergency, it was the government all out efforts at winning the war against the CPM. The 'hearts and minds' approaches was successful in denying the support of the people to the CPM. The Government was determined to fight the CPM and winning the people's minds, emotions and loyalty by providing justice, human rights, equality of opportunity and a higher living standard.

The hearts and minds were conceived by General Templer and also made it known that he planned to make the campaign against the CPM insurgents was the responsibility of every Malayan citizen. This was done by conducting civil-military operations to isolate the guerrillas from the population both physically and psychologically and military operations in eliminating the guerrillas. The support from the people could be obtained by addressing their discontentment as a means of winning them over and brought them under the administrative control of government. It was this strategy which contributed to the success of the counterinsurgency campaign by the British under General Sir Gerald Templer.

Political Dimension. An understanding and conviction on the political process and confidence in the government machinery provides the people to support the government's effort to promote and strengthen national security. As was the case during the Emergency, there was significant number of soldiers from the British Commonwealth who fought in the jungle of Malaya. Malaya must take a lead in fighting the CPM insurgency. The CPM was unable to project an effective platform to win over the sympathy of the people to their cause. The vigorous measures undertaken by the political leaders to mobilize masses support in their outlook and thinking went a long way towards winning the population to the government side. A major feature used by the government machinery was ideology. Communism was portrayed as a foreign ideology which was totally unacceptable to the cultural practices, values and religious beliefs of Malaysians. Religion in itself poses a barrier to CPM ideology. The futility of their struggle was further undermined when their terrorist activities were denounced not only by Malay politicians but also by Malaysian ethnic Chinese politicians as well. If the CPM had hope for a moral alienation of the masses from the existing government, it was gradually becoming harder to achieve.

Socio-Economic Factors. British Government had geared towards providing benefits to the masses in the economic, social and political spheres and to uplift their living standards as a means of gaining their support. A free enterprise society like Malaya would certainly benefit those with good business acumen. The ethnic Chinese in this respect was well ahead of the other communities in Malaya. Though Malaya was predominantly Malay, it was the Chinese who had larger share of economic. During the Malayan Insurgency there was similar arrangement though the term for area free from CPM Insurgents was called 'white area'. It was effective means of motivating society towards getting their areas declared as 'white area' instead remaining in the 'black area'. Several restrictions such as random checks, road blocks and movements that imposed were lifted once black areas were declared as white areas. Military operations and curfews were discontinued and life in white areas will going as normal. The hearts and minds has always been the approach towards fighting the insurgent. This has been the features during the First Emergency as well as during the CPM insurgency of the sixties. Admittedly the various projects for the public were indeed costly. The

improved economy meant better standards of living which the CPM can never hope to provide. Indeed the threat is persistent when times are hard and less when the economy is strong. People war advocates the total support of the population in any campaign. As for measures undertaken to address the political, social, economic and cultural sphere of the population; it went long way towards mobilizing their support for the government. Their outlook changed for the better as the future ahead was more promising for them and their future generations. Given the choice as to which side to lend their support it was clear that the majority would align themselves to the government.

The role of military and police. The continued function of the military and police forces in an insurgency situation goes a long way to prevent anarchy. It helps to project that the forces of law and order still prevails which helps to promote public confidence. Intelligence in an insurgency situation can be pressing. It will also continue to erode public trust and confidence in the government. In so far as playing a significant role towards eliminating the CPM it was the special branch of the Royal Malaya Police and Military Intelligent who deserved special mentioned.

CONCLUSION

The successful use of Psychological Operations during the Malayan emergency serves as a classic reference on how it can be utilised to achieve the desired targeted objective. Historically, Psychological Operations was planned and used both as propaganda and affirmative action to address immediate as well as post insurgency phases. Historically, the application of humane Psychological Operations has proven to be almost as essential to the successful waging of war as in the use of manpower and weaponry. Despite its long history of successful employment, the potential potency for using the power of persuasion through Psychological Operations as an effective force multiplier to achieve national objectives with minimum destruction, has been recognized by only the most perceptive of military leaders and statesmen; although the enigma of Psychological Operations has come into its own as an effective weapon system since World War II (WW II). The astute deployment of Psychological Operations significantly reduced enemy morale and combat effectiveness; promotes dissension within and defections from enemy ranks, support cover and deception

operations; whilst proving its effectiveness to promote unity, cooperation and morale within the defending military rank and file, as well as its allies, to provide meaningful tactical and functional assistance to alleviate the suffering of affected groups and communities during an insurgent unrest.

It would be a gross generalisation to compartmentalise Psychological Operations as an initiative that was distinct or separate from the Police, Military or Administrative Operations that were realised during the Emergency to overcome and defeat the CPM. This is because Psychological Operations was at the root of the heart of all motivations be it in the Police, Military or Administrative functions during the period of internal war of political competition for leadership of authority in the Malayan Peninsular. On the other hand, to merely consider Psychological Operations as a propaganda exercise would be limiting or negating the vital and paramount role it played to bring law and order to a land that had descended into lawlessness with wide-scale loss of lives and destruction to property. It is the considered opinion of this thesis that the psychological operation was the soul that gave the desired motivation, impetus and action that saw the defeat of the CPM by the British.

Furthermore, by then the people had accepted the reality that the British could provide job and educational opportunities and was sincere in their efforts to improve the infrastructure as well as provide better amenities and facilities to the Malayan people, whilst the CPM could offer them nothing but threats, extortions and deaths in their quest for power that was not based on the aspirations of the majority of the Malayan people but for what the people came to perceive as for its own particular ideological aims. They had no plan or a blueprint of proposed development and administration for the Malay Peninsular. They had no continuous flow of resources from the CPM superpowers neither did they have the luxury of proximity to the geographical boundaries of these countries where Communism was on the rise.

The Malayan people viewed the disruption to previous shared values a hindrance and nuisance and wanted to get on with their lives. Above all, the British were perceived as benevolent rather than malevolent colonial masters of the Malay Peninsular. They were better and humane masters of authority rather than the ruthless hallmark of the CPM personality. The tactical, strategic consolidation tactics founded on the principles of human psychology were appreciated by the Malayan majority.