

MALAYA

*Stop
the War!*

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BY

HARRY POLLITT

THREEPENCE

MALAYA: STOP THE WAR!

By HARRY POLLITT

THE old, old story that we are only fighting against a "handful of bandits" in Malaya still persists in the official propaganda of the Tory Government. But it will no longer fool any serious-minded worker. Even Churchill admits that armed forces totalling 102,000 men are being used in Malaya, apart from thousands of armed Special Constables. The strongest British naval force east of Suez is concentrated around the coasts of Malaya.

Forces have been sent against the peoples of Malaya from all parts of the globe. Hundreds of special British police, trained to fight the people's movement, have come from Chiang Kai-shek's Shanghai and from the former Palestine Police Force. Land, sea and air forces have been sent from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Nepal and Africa. Pioneer forces have been sent from Ceylon. Head hunters from Sarawak, Iban trackers, and Special Constables from Borneo. From nearly a dozen countries, forces have been pressed into service against the Malayan people.

Such a mighty array of armed forces against a country the size of England, and with a population considerably less than that of Greater London, proves conclusively that the British Government is not engaged in a "police action against a handful of bandits" as the Government claims, but is waging a war against the entire Malayan people.

In stating: "The so-called emergency is in fact a War" (19.11.51) *The Times* is, in fact, admitting the falseness of the Government's propaganda.

Why is the British Government conducting a war against the people of Malaya? Because the natural resources of Malaya are immense, and British-owned tin and rubber companies have been making vast profits out of the cheap labour of Malaysians, Chinese and Indians. That is why the British

Government refuses to allow the Malayan people to govern their own country, and has been fighting a war against them for nearly four years.

Failure of a War

Lincolns, Spitfires and Tempests have conducted an unrelenting air offensive against the Malayan people. Napalm and flame throwers have burnt huts and whole villages to the ground, killing helpless old women and innocent children alike. The people have been pursued by Alsatian wolf-hounds and by head-hunting Dyaks. Armoured cars patrol the streets, 25-pounder guns thunder day and night. Armed planters shoot down rubber workers who dare organise for higher wages. In imitation of the Nazi destruction of Lidice, entire Malayan villages such as Jendaram and Tras Pahang have been razed to the ground, the villagers arrested, their property seized or destroyed, and the people thrown into concentration camps.

Only recently, in one comparatively minor operation lasting only a few days, 250,000 lb. of bombs were dropped and 12,000 rockets used.

Some 500,000 peasants, nearly a tenth of the entire population, are being put in concentration camps. The 1950 Annual Report for the Federation of Malaya (published in 1951) admitted that there were 140 such camps in existence, and that plans were being made to open a further 195. In all, 2,156 tons of barbed wire were ordered by the Federal Government during last year.

A total of at least 12,000 people have been deported, thousands arrested, over 3,000 killed.

After three and a half years' bitter fighting, of fierce repression and death, the heroic Malayan people stand on their feet, proud, defiant and unconquered. Fighting for a just cause, the liberation of their country, they have emerged from these three and a half years more determined and more united than ever.

By their heroic resistance they have caused the complete failure of all the imperialist plans. This is now admitted on all sides.

"General Briggs' plan to 'sweep' the peninsula northwards from Johore Bahru, opposite Singapore Island, driving the guerillas from district after district with soldiers and police, then using civil administrators to consolidate law and order in the cleared areas, failed dismally. The guerillas were soon active again behind Briggs' broom, and today the outskirts of Johore Bahru town itself figure frequently in official hand-outs in guerilla attacks." (*Daily Mail*, November 21, 1951.)

The Times wrote in its editorial columns on November 13, 1951:

"The cost in human life has been considerable; in money it is counted in millions. . . Several able and resourceful men have tried their hands at solving the problem, but none of the recent news has appeared to hold out better hope for the future."

The Tories have no solution to this crisis. Their only policy is to intensify this ghastly and disastrous war, and carry forward the policy initiated, to its everlasting disgrace, by the Labour Government.

Tory Defence of Rubber and Tin Profits

By his refusal in the House of Commons to declare himself in favour of independence for Malaya, Churchill reveals himself and his Tory party as the enemies of Malayan independence. For weeks the big rubber and tin interests in Britain have been clamouring for ruthless action in Malaya. By his emphatic statement that drastic "military and police action must come first", Lyttelton, himself a former direct representative of the big tin interests, exposes the Tory Government as the defender of the rubber and tin profiteers. The so-called Lyttelton Six-Point Plan is nothing other than a plan to intensify military and police repression in Malaya in the interests of the Tory profiteers. No wonder *The Times* says:

"Together with the usual colonial suspicions is a growing belief, hastened by the statements of rubber producers, that Malaya is regarded first as an investment area to be made safe for British capital." (November 30, 1951.)

The Special Correspondent from Kuala Lumpur also admits:

"It is a fact which the British Government cannot ignore that the Conservative Party is regarded here as a reactionary

body imbued with nineteenth-century colonial ideas." (December 5, 1951.)

And it is for this same Conservative Party and the parasitic profiteers it represents that British lads are sent to die in the jungle. If the Churchill-Lyttelton plans for Malaya are allowed to go through, the perspective is one of unremitting struggle, increased repression, more deaths—British and Malayan alike—and mounting expense.

So critical has the situation become in Malaya that the only outcome of this Tory policy is increased bloodshed. Lyttelton himself has in fact admitted this by stating that even with his six-point plan "the road to victory will be long."

Whose War?

This war in Malaya is not a war for democracy or to defend the interests of either the Malayan or the British people. It is, as the capitalist *Sunday Pictorial* has admitted, "a dirty war"—dirty not only in the brutal methods used against women, old men and children, but dirty to the core in its very nature and objectives.

The British rubber kings made fantastic profits last year out of the toil and sweat of the Malayan workers, and it is to safeguard these profits that they have demanded the ruthless prosecution of the war. Here, for example, is what the Chairman of the Bekoh Consolidated Rubber Estates, Ltd., said in announcing a 500 per cent increase in net profits over the previous years: "we must have a strong and reliable police-cum-military force, fully armed . . . and . . . turn what now appears to be a half-hearted campaign into a real ruthless onslaught." (*The Times*, November 27, 1951.)

Just look at some of the results of companies in Malaya in the past few weeks. Merlimau Pegoh Ltd. increased its profit from £85,812 in 1949-50 to £538,003 in 1950-51—a more than six-fold increase. It is indicative of the extent to which the Tory Government defends the interests of these companies that the Chairman of Merlimau Pegoh, in addressing the shareholders, stated that "Since the date of the accounts it had been possible, **owing to certain changes that had taken place in the Government**, for the Board to declare as an

interim dividend the 20 per cent which they had held up in the amount carried forward" (*Financial Times*, November 29, 1951). The group to which this Company belongs increased its profits in the same period from £167,758 to £928,808. The Strathisla (Perak) Rubber Estates, with a dividend of 40 per cent, announced its best results for forty years. The Southern Malayan Company announced profits of £1,212,000, more than double the previous year.

The Government pretends that it is in Malaya to defend the Malayan people, but during Lyttelton's tour one of the problems discussed was "the procurement of suitable weapons, such as American carbines" (*The Times*, December 12, 1951) for planters and mine managers. Yes, there are always arms to be had for the asking by the managers and owners of the rubber estates and the tin mines, but for the Malayan workers and peasants, the Government hands out prison sentences, arrests, torture and death.

A War for National Independence

The character of the war is not only revealed in the aims for which it is being waged by the British Tory Party. It is even more strikingly revealed by the national character of the resistance of the Malayan people.

Though we are commonly told that it is "only alien Chinese" who are causing the trouble, a recent report in *The Times* (December 27, 1951) describes how in one engagement a contingent of twenty guerillas were composed of all the four national groups in Malaya — Chinese, Indian, Malay and Sakai (Aborigines). This single contingent was not one specially selected or specially composed, but was a cross-section of the whole national liberation movement.

In the never-ending complaints of the military and police authorities that they can secure no co-operation from the civilian population, can be seen the devotion and loyalty with which the Malayan people are assisting their heroic Liberation Army. The late Sir Harold Briggs in fact admitted this, saying: "the strongest enemy force was that of the Communist cells established among the civilian population" (*The Times*, November 28, 1951). In doing what it can to organise and lead

the people's struggle for liberation, the Communist Party of Malaya is serving the interests of the people of Malaya, carrying out their wishes. Even when rounded up and placed behind barbed wire, the Malayan people successfully overcome all obstacles, and with incredible courage, initiative and skill continue to make common cause with their Liberation Army. In place after place peasants who have been forcibly evicted from their native village and placed under detention, have been later moved again because, despite police control, they continue to assist the Liberation Army.

On November 12, a Reuter despatch from Kuala Lumpur described the eviction of villagers from Bukit Changgang, in South Selangor, to which area they had been removed previously. The reason for this, said the Government, was the continued support given to guerilla fighters in the jungle. The report ends, "police and troops surrounded the area early today and the thousand Overseas Chinese settlers were told to pack and move to a new settlement at Pandan Maran, thirty miles away, where they could be given more protection" ("protection" is, of course, an old racket of American gangsters).

Less than a fortnight later villagers who had been removed earlier this year and placed in a camp in South Selangor, were moved into the Pandaram camp near Port Swettenham. The Government statement again says that these settlers had been co-operating with the guerillas despite being placed under police control, and laments that a "much larger police force would be needed than the community's size would warrant" unless the villagers were moved off to another camp.

It should not, after all, surprise us to find such courage displayed by these Malayan fighters for freedom. It was these same people who harassed and fought the Japanese right up until 1945, and eventually liberated the entire peninsula in August 1945, a month before British occupation troops arrived. It was they who carried on the anti-Japanese struggle after the British had abandoned them in 1942—an event described by the *Daily Express* of January 15, 1942 in the following words:

“Here is the great tragedy of Malaya. . . We could have had a native defence force in Malaya. . . But a pack of whisky-swilling planters and military birds of passage have forgotten this side of the population. They have handed it over to the Japanese, together with the radio station and stores. . .”

It was these same Malayan people who were decorated for their bravery, praised by Lord Louis Mountbatten as he pinned medals to their breasts, and cheered by the people of London as they marched in the victory parade down the Mall. And we should never forget that when they faced terrible privation and torture and death in order to drive out the Japanese occupation troops, they were upheld during all those difficult years by the promise of self-government made during the war, a promise that was renewed in October 1945 by the Labour Government. It was in response to that promise of the Labour Government that the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army laid down their arms at the end of the war. From 1945 to 1948 the Malayan people strove by peaceful means to win their independence. But the very strength of their movement struck terror into the breasts of the rubber and tin kings, who were able to persuade the Government in 1948 to turn to military force to crush the people's movement.

“Only Five Thousand”

Just look for one moment at the number of people against whom direct blows have been struck by the Government. Half a million are being placed in camps without charge and without trial; thousands are arrested, deported; many hundreds killed; in all, one-tenth of the entire population of Malaya. And still the Government complains that it receives no support from the people; and that more military equipment will be sent to Malaya, more ruthless measures used against the people.

And all this, we are told, “against a handful of bandits”! This must surely be the biggest and most persistent handful that has ever existed in human history. In 1948, when the Government launched its war against the Malayan workers and peasants, it was stated that it was a mere police action against, at the most, 5,000 people.

Nothing more vividly demonstrates the national character of the Malayan people's struggle and the complete isolation and lack of support which the British Government enjoys in Malaya than the extraordinary security precautions taken during Lyttelton's recent tour. *The Times* correspondent states: "At no time were fewer than 1,000 troops and police on guard, and when Penang was visited about 2,000 were directly involved. Outside Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Lyttelton was compelled to travel in an enclosed armoured car and one observer remarked that his progress was rather like that of a Nazi leader travelling through occupied Europe" (*The Times*, December 9, 1951).

A Poverty-Ridden Police State

The British lads who are sent thousands of miles away to Malaya are not defending Britain or safeguarding democracy. They are there to defend the corrupt colonial system under which two-thirds of the children receive no schooling, the workers' own trade unions have been suppressed, and real wages are only a third of their pre-war starvation level. Despite all the official propaganda about Malaya being the most prosperous British colony, for the Malayan people conditions are appalling. The Colonial Office Report, *British Dependencies in the Far East 1945-49*, states that, owing to malnutrition and overcrowding, tuberculosis is now a greater "killing" disease in the Federation than malaria. When one reads the descriptions of the housing conditions, both in the countryside and in large cities like Singapore, one can understand the reason why tuberculosis is so rife. The Report points out that in some parts of Singapore the net density of population probably exceeds 1,000 per acre, and that a survey carried out showed that "15 per cent of the population was living in 'spaces' (i.e., passageways, tiered bedlofts, sleeping shelves under or over staircases, etc.), 21 per cent in 'acutely overcrowded' conditions, and 28 per cent 'overcrowded'—a total of 64 per cent." The Report adds that squatters "live in huts, old boxes and rusty corrugated iron . . . without sanitation, water or any elementary health requirements."

Even according to the incomplete official figures which ex-

clude the rural areas, infant mortality rates have risen from 81 per 1,000 in 1949 to 102 in 1950. The Child Health Specialist states: "the chief clinical disorders met with in the children in Malaya are the result of malnutrition, worm infestation and tuberculosis". (Quoted in the Federation of Malaya Annual Report for 1950, published by H.M.S.O. 1951.)

It is by the maintenance of starvation wages and these appalling conditions for the people of Malaya that the rubber and tin companies make their huge profits. And it is to maintain this Tory paradise that war has been launched against the Malayan people and a ruthless Police State clamped down on them. So severe are the emergency regulations that the Government has not bothered officially to introduce martial law.

A War Not in Britain's Interests

This is the degraded Police State for which the Tories want to sacrifice more British lives. Already hundreds of British lads have lost their lives in Malaya. It is time for the British people to put an end to this cruel and ghastly war. The British people have nothing to gain from this war, not a single penny. For the Tory rubber and tin profiteers there is plenty to gain, but for the British people the only dividends are death, more taxation, cuts in social services, and attacks on wages and working conditions.

Every time the British Government announces some fresh move to intensify the war in Malaya, it is accompanied by some fresh attack on the people's conditions in Britain.

Mr. Churchill has already confessed that the British Government is spending £50 million a year on the Malayan war apart from the £20-£30 million spent already by the Government of Malaya itself. Now fresh burdens are to be added. It was no coincidence that Lyttelton's tour of Malaya and the announcement of his six-point plan for an intensified war came at the same time as the employers' rejection of the claims put forward by the dockers, miners and other British workers, the refusal to grant firemen parity pay with the police, the Government's announcements of £15 million cuts in education, and further cuts in rations and rises in prices.

The longer the war lasts, the worse it will get, and the

greater the sacrifices to be made by the British people. More and more young lads of eighteen years of age will be conscripted. Greater and greater financial burdens will be imposed.

And all for a war which is not only unjust, immoral and against the interests of the British people, but is in every sense a hopeless war. Throughout the entire colonial world, inspired by the historic victory of the Chinese people and the mighty advances of the multi-national Soviet State, the peoples are rising in undying hatred of their oppressors, determined to liberate their countries from imperialist rule and to develop their resources for their own advancement. The peoples of Malaya, Egypt, and Iran, and the rest of the colonial world, are determined to be free. The colonial people constitute the overwhelming population of the world. They have reached an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist consciousness which is driving forward hundreds of millions of people into the fight for independence. Nothing can halt this historic struggle for national liberation. The example of heroic Korea shows that despite all that foreign imperialism can hurl against them, no power on earth is strong enough to overcome a nation which is determined to be free. The war in Malaya represents the highest point of this world struggle for liberation reached so far in British-held colonies. The call of Churchill and Lyttelton for an intensification of the war in Malaya is nothing other than a demand that the British people should become more shamefully involved in a vain struggle to crush people who only ask the same rights as the British people themselves expect.

Common Struggle

The cause of Malayan independence is in the interests of both the British and the Malayan people. The Malayan people are not fighting against the British people, but on the contrary are fighting against the big business enemies of the British working class and people. Huge profits from Malaya do not go into the pockets of the British people, but strengthen the hand of the British ruling class against the British people. Malayan independence and the struggle to end the war is an

essential part of Britain's own struggle for peace and prosperity.

If the slaughter were stopped, friendly relations could be established with the Malayan people, and trade extended to the mutual benefit of both peoples. But this must be on the basis of a recognition that the Malayan people have the same rights as ourselves to rule their own country in the manner they themselves choose.

Stop the war in Malaya! Withdraw British troops! Let the people of Malaya rule their own country!

Let these slogans ring out from Land's End to John o'Groats. Let resolutions of protest against the Malayan war pour into the Government from factories, pits and docks, from trade unions, Labour Parties and Co-operative organisations, from peace committees and other democratic bodies.

The British people have a long-standing and proud tradition of opposition to unjust wars. Keir Hardie and others vigorously opposed the Boer War. Connolly, MacLean and Gallacher led the struggle against the First World War. The united strength of the entire British Labour movement swept Churchill's hand aside from the young Soviet Union in 1920. In 1926 the Hands Off China movement spread throughout the country. And in 1927 the T.U.C. passed a powerful resolution, strongly denouncing colonialism and demanding independence for all colonial peoples. Still later, a mighty Aid Spain campaign swept the British Isles.

Basing itself on these great traditions, the British Labour Movement has the power to stop the ghastly war in Malaya. Let it use that power now to bring peace to Malaya and open the way for the establishment of new friendly relations between the British and Malayan people which will benefit them both.

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MALAYAN MONITOR

*The Monthly Newsletter giving a commentary on the
Liberation Forces in Malaya. Edited by H. B. LIM*

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