

# Psychological Warfare in Malaya

by Flight Lieutenant A. F. Derry, MBE

c.1955

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Right: A Valetta, flying at 400 feet, showers leaflets over the Malayan jungle.

Below: Under the supervision of an R.A.F. signaller/dispatcher, leaflets are fed out into the slipstream.



## Psychological

by Flight Lieutenant

**I**N PLANNING a psychological warfare campaign the aim must be clearly established and maintained. It might be to cause panic, frustration, confusion, flight, disobedience, mutiny, defection, or to turn the enemy against its leaders. In Malaya, our aim is to destroy Communist morale, to induce the terrorist to surrender and, in surrendering, to spread defection amongst his fellows.

Soldiers, as a rule, do not defect from a victorious army, nor do they surrender if they expect maltreatment by the enemy: the Communist terrorist in the Malayan jungle is no exception. The main task of P.W. in Malaya is, therefore, to convince the terrorists that they cannot hope for victory and that if they

give themselves up they can be certain of good treatment.

The one outstanding advantage which the Royal Air Force has in Malaya in playing its part in psychological warfare, is complete command of the air. Under these conditions, it is possible to select at will the time, place, and strength of P.W. air operations. Another advantage is the intimate and detailed knowledge possessed by the security forces of individuals on the other side. This permits an approach to members of small groups almost on a man-to-man basis and, provided enough of their individual background is known, this can be very effective.

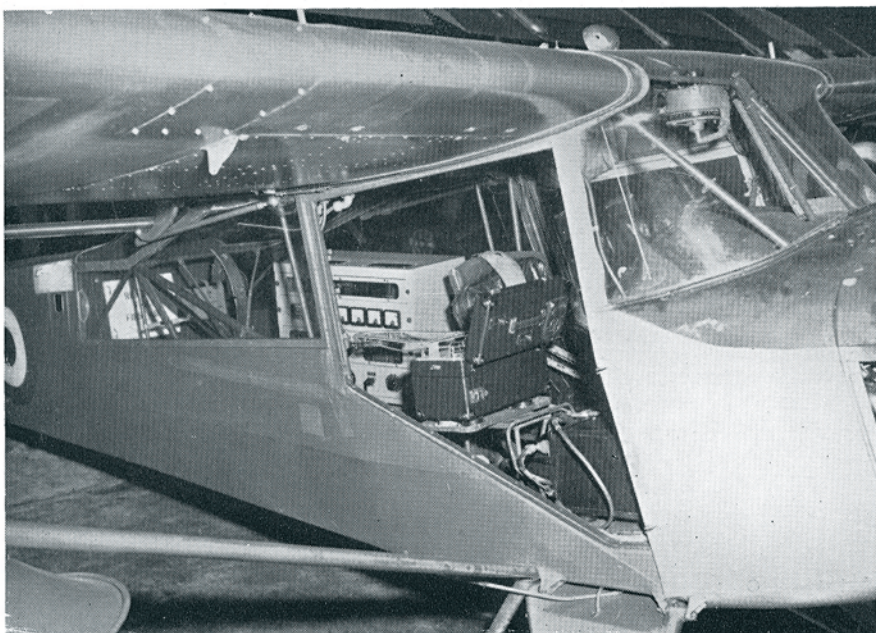
Not everything in Malaya is in favour

of P.W. however: a large middle section of the population sits on the fence for fear of reprisals or of finding itself backing the wrong side; a minority covertly helps the enemy; and only a very small proportion of the population takes positive action against the Communists. A good deal of effort of P.W. is therefore necessarily diverted to the negative task of encouraging the civil population to oppose the terrorists whole-heartedly.

Psychological warfare policy in Malaya is decided by a committee headed by the Director of Operations; plans are evolved and executed by a special staff responsible to him through the Principal Staff Officer. The P.W. staff consists of a civilian member of the Malayan Civil Service who is head of the P.W. section, a staff officer of the Information Service, who is the deputy head, a Royal Air Force squadron leader who is responsible for planning operations, and an Asian editorial staff. At state level, P.W. operations are

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The internal installation – tape recorder and converter – in the ‘voice’ Auster. The equipment is operated by the pilot who changes the tapes while holding the stick between his knees. No other crew member is carried and the pilot therefore has to cope with his own navigation.



*No matter how clever or satisfying to our own feelings our propaganda may be, or how it angers, depresses or scores off the enemy, unless it makes him react to our advantage it is a waste of time. From the following article it will be seen that, whenever possible, our efforts should be aimed coaxingly at the individual, using his own dialect, addressing him personally, and sometimes by his nickname.*

## **Warfare in Malaya**

**A. F. DERRY, M.B.E.**

planned and co-ordinated by the state information officer who is responsible to the state war executive committee. Local campaigns are planned within the framework of existing P.W. policy and calls are made on the Federal Department for support as required. In some of the larger states it has been necessary to appoint area information officers who are responsible to the state information officer. The area information officer handles all P.W. at the district level.

### **The weapons of P.W.**

Psychological warfare attacks the enemy by direct means such as leaflets

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*Flight Lieutenant Derry, who wrote this article, served for two years as R.A.F. staff officer with the Psychological Warfare Section of the Director of Operations staff in Malaya. The article was written before the amnesty offer was made to the Malayan terrorists and consequently the P.W. policy and methods he discusses here may now have changed. The article is interesting, nonetheless, for the account it gives of the technique of psychological warfare – and its effect on the enemy.*

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and 'voice' aircraft, and by an indirect campaign conducted through the Press, radio, films, and addresses to the civil population. Valetta supply-dropping air-



The voice of P.W.: An Auster 4 fitted with loudspeakers. The starboard speaker, which is not visible in this picture, is canted to port.

craft are used for most leaflet dropping and a recently devised technique of dispatching bundles of 5,000 leaflets at a time by means of a static line has increased accuracy. This method gives good distribution of leaflets in an area 1,000 yards square. Austers of the A.O.P. squadron are used extensively for dropping leaflets accurately upon small pinpoint targets, and occasionally

the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force have dropped leaflets from their Harvards.

There are two types of voice aircraft in use, the Dakota and the Mk 4 Auster. The Dakota is equipped with a diesel generator capable of supplying power to four specially-designed Tannoy loudspeakers for broadcasts over the jungle, and to remote areas where a

large area must be covered if the terrorists are to hear the broadcasts. The Auster, with a smaller power-unit and with a single speaker fitted under each wing, is used specifically for broadcasting to targets on the jungle fringes, to isolated villages, or to small targets near roads.

The Dakota, although now outdated in the R.A.F., was selected for this work mainly because its engine noise is less than that of the Valetta's and because it can be flown at a lower speed, thereby

repeated three or four times in normal weather conditions.

### “Come out and start a new life”

Voice Dakotas or Austers operate almost daily in all parts of Malaya, broadcasting short-term messages which have a tactical, as opposed to a strategic, function. These are usually messages to named individuals or groups and are aimed at exploitation of all incidents which lend themselves to our propaganda. News of surrenders, kills,

a surrendered terrorist to an ex-comrade. He explains that he is being well-treated and that he has met other former comrades who are safe and well. He assures his friends that it is quite safe for them to surrender. This type of operation calls for great promptitude over the target since, if time intervenes between the incident and the broadcast, the gang from which the surrendered terrorists came will probably have dispersed and their morale will have had time to recover from the effect of the incident.

The study of captured documents and the reports of local contacts provide information which can be used, printed in leaflet form, for short-term effect on the terrorists. The main theme for this type of attack is almost always proof of the safety of recently surrendered comrades and persuasive arguments for the recipient of the leaflet to follow suit.

The material used consists of the following –

The group photograph which shows the surrendered terrorists in obvious good health and in company with other surrendered comrades.

A personal letter written in the recognizable handwriting of a former comrade.

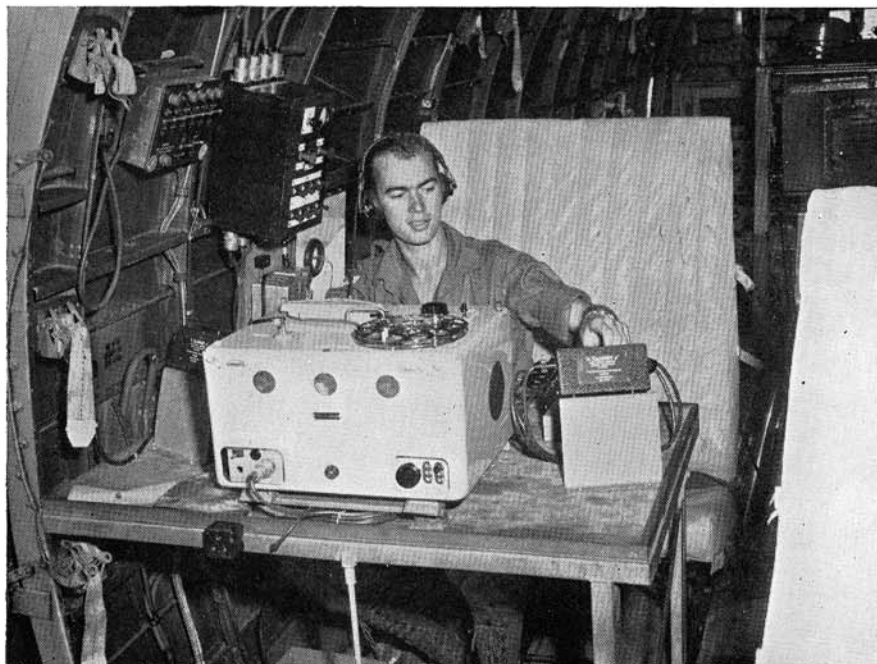
Appeals from relatives to an individual not to waste his life. When these appeals come from wife to husband, father to son, or from other close relatives, the effect can be great.

Declarations by leading personalities which point out the futility of further resistance and promise fair treatment to those who surrender.

Appeals to groups who are known to be suffering from jungle illnesses or starvation, promising them medical treatment and good food.

### Strategic leaflets

At regular monthly intervals, strategic leaflets are dropped on targets nominated by the police, Special Branch, or by military intelligence. The targets are those areas which are known to be hiding-places for terrorists, courier routes, or contact points. The themes of these leaflets are less direct in approach and sometimes stress the difference between the standard of living of the rank and file terrorists and their leaders. Some pose the question: “Why work against the masses?”; some include offers of medical treatment for those who are sick; others offer money to couriers who surrender their messages.



The broadcast equipment in the Dakota, for which a special operator is carried.

improving broadcasting audibility and clarity. It normally operates between 2,500 and 3,000 feet over the target and, in good weather, can be easily heard on the ground within an area up to 2,500 yards in width below and to port of the aircraft (the speakers on the Dakotas are offset to port – see picture, opposite). Normally a straight line is flown over the target with 2,000 yards between the flight lines. Full coverage is thus ensured, even in mountainous country, but a pinpoint can, of course, be circled to give continuous ground reception.

The Auster operates similarly, flying at between 800 and 1,500 feet and giving clear audibility up to 1,500 yards below and to port of the aircraft. A message can be clearly broadcast by an aircraft flying at 40 to 50 knots and it is usually

or woundings are the usual themes and a typical example of the text of such a message is:

*“Hello Vap Ching, Low Chen, Hoong Yee.*

*You know Lee San is dead.*

*There is no happy civilized life in the jungle.*

*Do not sacrifice yourselves.*

*Come out and start a new life.*

*Come together or singly.*

*Force your way to freedom if necessary.*

*Do not hesitate.”*

For technical reasons messages are standardized to 30 seconds' duration. They are written originally in English, then translated into Chinese, Malay, or Tamil and recorded in the studios of Radio Malaya on a tape. The broadcast may consist of a personal message from

## Translation of a

### Tactical leaflet

Comrade YUEN SAIK LEONG:  
YOU CAN SAVE YOUR SIGHT.  
YOU CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE.

The accident which damaged your eyes has put you in great danger.

The first danger is that you will lose your sight.

If you lose your sight you cannot move about safely in the jungle; you may run into all sorts of dangers – and then lose your life as well.

HEW KON SWEE may help you.

But is he himself fit to look after you? What will happen if he falls sick or is killed and cannot help you any more?

The second danger is that when you go blind entirely you will be an intolerable burden on your comrades. The Party does not like to carry useless burdens. It has often found an excuse to execute comrades who have become a burden.

The wise thing to do is to ask HEW KON SWEE to guide you safely out of the jungle before your sight goes completely. You can both self-renew and start a new life. When you do that the Government will get the very best eye doctors to do everything they can with modern science to save your precious sight.

Think carefully about this, Comrade. Make up your mind quickly and act wisely. Do not hesitate. Delay is dangerous.

# 雙目失明



# 危險萬分

袁石良同志！

雙目受傷有藥救！ 你的性命亦可保！

你不幸遭遇意外，傷及雙目，陷入危險萬分的境地。

最大的危險就是你的雙目會失明。

如果你的眼睛瞎了，就不能在森林裡隨意安然走動；而且還會隨時遭遇到各種危險，甚至會連你的性命也斷送！

你在這種情形之下，丘觀水或者能夠照顧你。但是，他可以擔當得起嗎？假如他生病或突然犧牲了，不能再照顧你的時候，你又怎樣呢？

另一種危險就是在你完全盲目的時候，你就會變成一般同志們難以忍受的“包袱”馬共是不喜歡背着無用的“包袱”走的，因此上級往往故意找些藉口，把那些變成“包袱”的同志們，任意亂加上一些罪名來把他們生生的處死！

目前最聰明的辦法是在你的雙目還沒有完全瞎掉以前，請求丘觀水帶你安然地離開森林。

這樣你們兩人就可以出來自新，開始過新生活了。

你出來自新後，政府當為你提供  
醫生，用最新式的科學方法  
使你重見光明

These leaflets seek to exploit general grievances and the worries which must be attendant on long periods in the jungle.

When there have been incidents in an area, or it is considered likely that incidents are about to take place, messages of strategic value are broadcast

by voice aircraft to remote kampongs, estates, and mines. The purpose of these messages is usually to remind the people of their responsibilities for helping the government and to encourage them to resist the terrorists.

Other operations are directed at cultivators.

The purpose here is to exploit the grievances of the would-be terrorist who is forced to work as a labourer in jungle cultivations to provide food for his comrades, and to bestir the villager who is accepting forced labour conditions under pressure from the terrorists. The leaflet points out the danger and futility of slave-like work for little or no reward since the crop will be destroyed by the security forces before it is ready for harvesting. Bundles of these leaflets are dropped on to pin-pointed cultivation areas by the Austers. These operations are usually followed by a voice aircraft which explains to the cultivators the direction in which they should walk to escape to freedom and a new life. This is important as it has been found that many cultivators in the deep jungle are

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The faired installation of four 500-watt loudspeakers under a 'voice' Dakota – it can be jettisoned for an emergency landing.



quite ignorant of their own position in relation to the nearest inhabited area.

The cartoons and drawings with which some of the leaflets are illustrated might appear crude and naive to the European eye but a large proportion of the terrorists are illiterate and the drawing must, by itself, convey the meaning of the leaflet. All cartoons and drawings are submitted to certain individuals of the P.W. editorial staff who are themselves surrendered terrorists and, if in their opinion the cartoon is effective, then it is accepted.

### **Terrorist reactions to P.W.**

Psychological warfare has been defined as "a communication process in which there is a planned attempt to alter, by means other than by force, the decisions and policies of the enemy organization".

When a campaign of this kind is launched, it is unlikely that the results will be either quick or spectacular. Not

until the enemy's morale has collapsed, and the surrenders reach the proportions of a major defeat, are the full effects of the long and patient campaign of psychological attack fully seen. Some of the terrorists who have surrendered have told of the extremely persuasive effects of leaflets and voice aircraft. For example, one said:

"After the attack on our cultivation area, we fled to another area where we saw many Government propaganda leaflets and safe conduct passes. I picked up some of the leaflets, intending to use them when coming out to surrender. A few days later we heard voices coming from an aeroplane calling on us all to surrender and offering good treatment. We all agreed to this suggestion."

Another surrendered terrorist described perfectly the state of mind which the P.W. campaign intended to create:

"My mind was full of thoughts of my girl friend, starvation, liquidation, the contents of Government leaflets, and voice aircraft. Finally the Government



Preparing leaflets for dispatch.

propaganda won and early in the morning I got up and ran away."

These examples can, however, give only an indication of success since the defections resulting from P.W. are only a proportion of the success achieved. The disruption of the terrorist organization, the doubt and suspicion, the harrying and dislocation of plans, all play a very important part in the overall effort to bring the emergency in Malaya to a quick and successful conclusion.

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