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COLONY OF SINGAPORE

# Report of the Singapore Riots Inquiry Commission 1951

together with a Despatch from His  
Excellency the Governor of Singapore  
to the Right Honourable the Secretary  
of State for the Colonies

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## PART I

### INTRODUCTION

1. On the morning of the 11th December, 1950, rioting broke out in Singapore and order was not completely restored until the 13th December. As a result of the disorders 18 persons were killed and 173 injured. Seventy-two motor vehicles were burned and 119 motor vehicles damaged by rioters, and compensation claims have since been submitted by members of the public in respect of personal property, other than motor vehicles, alleged to have been looted or damaged during the disorders, totalling Straits \$20,848 in value.

2. On the 16th January, 1951, His Excellency the Governor of Singapore announced that a Commission of Inquiry was to be appointed on the following terms of reference:—

To inquire into and report on the recent disorders in Singapore on the 11th December, and subsequent days, with special reference to the causes of those disorders, and to the measures taken to protect life and property and to restore law and order.

The Commission of appointment, which is printed in Appendix A, was set up in Singapore on the 5th February, 1951, and we arrived in the Colony by air on the 10th February, 1951. We are directed to render a report to His Excellency the Governor and to make such recommendations as we may think necessary.

3. On the 14th February a notice was inserted in the local press inviting all persons who were willing and able to give evidence relevant to the terms of reference of the Inquiry to communicate with us. The first session of the Commission opened at the Victoria Memorial Hall, Singapore, on the morning of the 14th February. In all, 19 sessions were held, 18 being in public in the Victoria Memorial Hall and one *in camera* at Blakang Mati Island, where the evidence was taken of five persons detained under the Emergency Regulations in force in the Colony. The Commission examined 136 witnesses. A diary of the sittings is set out in Appendix B.

4. Counsel who appeared before us were Mr. C. H. Butterfield, Solicitor-General, on behalf of the Government of Singapore; Mr. M. H. Brose, Crown Counsel, on behalf of the General Officer commanding Singapore Base District, Mr. A. D. Farrell, Crown Counsel, on behalf of the Singapore Police Force; Mr. A. H. Simpson, Crown Counsel, who assisted the Commission by examining witnesses not otherwise called Counsel; Mr. R. H. Green on behalf of Mr. H. L. Velge; Mr. R. L. Fisher on behalf of Sir Charles Murray-Aynsley; Mr. F. R. Massey, on behalf of Mr. J. M. Mason; and Mr. D. Murphy on behalf of Mr. W. S. G. Mason.

5. On the 16th February, we made a tour of the main areas in which rioting had occurred. We also visited the Beach Road, Geylang and Chiat Police Stations. On the 27th February, we visited the Radio Control Room of the Singapore Police at Pearl's Hill. On the 1st March, we saw a film of certain incidents in the rioting. On the 8th March we



attended a demonstration of anti-riot drill given by the 1st Singapore Regiment, Royal Artillery, on Blakang Mati Island and on the 10th March we visited Kandang Kerbau Police Station.

6. It was our original intention to take all evidence orally, but subsequently, in order not to delay the work of the Commission, it was decided that written statements received from 66 witnesses would be accepted as evidence. A list of these statements appears in Appendix C. A verbatim record of all oral evidence was taken as far as possible and the following report is based on a study of that record, supplemented by the 115 exhibits which were tendered to the Commission and the statements referred to in Appendix C. A list of exhibits appears in Appendix D.

7. The final session of the Commission was held on the 9th March, 1951, and on the 13th March we sailed for the United Kingdom on board H.M.S. *Warrior*, where, through the courtesy of Captain A. F. Pugsley, C.B., D.S.O., R.N., we were able to work on our report undisturbed.

8. In Appendices E and F are printed maps of Singapore Town and Singapore Island which will facilitate the reading of our report.

## PART II

### THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE

9. The Singapore Police Force is responsible for policing the whole of the Colony, which covers an area of 217 square miles and at the time of the 1947 census had a population of 938,144; but the main part of its work naturally lies in the Municipality of Singapore itself, which contains 75 per cent of the Colony's population within an area of only 31 square miles. It is estimated that by 1949 the population of the Colony had grown to 980,818, and included 761,962 Chinese, 119,623 Malays, 70,749 Indians, 10,923 Europeans, 9,716 Eurasians and 7,845 persons of other races.

10. The Island of Singapore is divided, for police administrative purposes, into six Divisions, A to F, the boundaries of which are shown on the map in Appendix F. The Police Headquarters are in the town of Singapore, from where the Criminal Investigation Department also operates. There are specialist Divisions for the Harbour, Marine, Radio Control and Radio Cars, and Traffic Control. In addition there is a contingent of Gurkha police and a Training School.

#### STRENGTH AND DISTRIBUTION

11. The strength and distribution of the Force available for duty on 11th December, 1950, is shown in the table below:—

Unit	Gazetted Officers	Chief Inspectors and Inspectors	Other Ranks
Headquarters (Administration)	6	11	6
A Division	3	4	265
B Division	— (1 on leave)	7	148
C Division	3	6	225
D Division	2	5	181
E Division	2	5	187
F Division	3	5	187
H Division (Harbour)	2	3	271
M Division (Marine)	2	4	191
R Division (Radio)	5	6	227
Criminal Investigation Department	18	30	366
Traffic Police	4	4	163
Gurkha Contingent	1	4	119
Training School	12	3	329
Special Constabulary	1	6	1,206
Deputy Commissioner, Superintendents			
Staff Officers	5	—	—
Total	69	103	4,071

Ten members of the Gurkha Contingent were not available for duty. The gazetted officers at the Training School were mostly cadets. Of the special constables 83 were attached to radio cars, chiefly as operators, and employed whole-time on monthly agreements. It will be noted that the proportion of other ranks to gazetted officers is very much higher in the



Uniform Divisions than in the Headquarters and the Criminal Investigation Department. It will also be noted that on the 11th December there was not a single gazetted officer available for duty in B Division, which adjoins A and C Divisions in which the main rioting occurred.

#### COMPOSITION

12. About four-fifths of the gazetted officers are British. There are seven Chinese, two Eurasian, two Ceylonese and one Malay gazetted officers. The rank and file of the Uniform Divisions are composed roughly of 90 per cent Malays and 10 per cent Indians. The number of Chinese in the Uniform Divisions is very small. On the other hand, of the 366 rank and file in the Criminal Investigation Department (excluding the Special Branch) only 47 are Malays. There are 44 Indians and the remainder are Chinese and Eurasians. It should be noted in this connection that only officers of and above the rank of inspector are entrusted with the investigation of crime and that the rank and file of this department are employed principally in gathering information.

#### GAZETTED OFFICERS

13. The total strength of gazetted officers on the 11th December, 1950, was 81, or 10 less than the authorised establishment of 91. As we have shown, of these 81, 69 were actually available for duty. Mr. Foulger, who was the Commissioner of Police from the 5th September, 1945, to the 5th November, 1950, and Mr. Wiltshire, who was acting as Commissioner at the time of the riots, both expressed the view that the number of gazetted officers was insufficient to exercise proper supervision over the rank and file. As the result of recommendations made by Mr. Foulger, 60 officers, in a newly-created non-gazetted rank of police lieutenant, have been added to the establishment since the riots.

14. The gazetted officers, below the commissioner, are distributed as follows:—

One deputy commissioner is in charge of the Uniform side of the Force and the other is in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department. One assistant commissioner is the senior staff officer at Police Headquarters, employed, we understand, principally on administrative work; one is in charge of the Radio Division and two are in charge of the Crime and Special Branches respectively of the Criminal Investigation Department. Of the three superintendents, two are in charge respectively of the North and South areas, into which the six Divisions of the Island are grouped. The third is in charge of the administrative side of the Criminal Investigation Department.

#### RADIO CONTROL ROOM

15. The Force is operationally controlled from a Radio Room at Pearl's Hill, which is situated about half a mile from the Police Headquarters Office. It is connected by a two-way wireless installation with police stations and mobile units in the shape of "radio cars". It also handles all "999" emergency calls received over the telephone network. There are direct telephone lines to a number of important centres and offices. There is a standing arrangement whereby, in the event of an emergency appearing to be imminent, an order, "Stand-by 1", is sent out by Radio Control to one or more or all of the six Divisions of the Force for the purpose

of putting them on the alert. This is followed, if necessary, by a second order, "Stand-by 2", on which action stations are manned and reserves are called in ready for immediate action.

#### THE RADIO DIVISION

16. This Division is equipped with 34 radio cars, which are, in fact, motor vans, each manned by a crew consisting of an N.C.O. (in charge), a driver, a wireless operator and two constables. Each member of the crew is armed with a revolver and each car carries a Sten gun. As their name implies, these cars are provided with two-way wireless equipment which keeps them in constant communication with the Radio Control Room. They patrol Singapore Town and such parts of the Island as may need their attention by day and night. During the hours of daylight they are, in fact, almost the only form of patrol in operation, an arrangement upon which we shall comment in paragraph 136 below.

#### CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

17. As we have already indicated, this department is divided into two branches, namely, the Crime Branch and the Special Branch, with separate functions. The Crime Branch, which is responsible for the investigation of all cognizable crime in the Colony, has an authorized establishment of an assistant commissioner, a superintendent (employed on administrative duties) and a staff of assistant superintendents, chief inspectors, inspectors and detectives, totalling 325. On the 11th December, 1950, the Branch was, however, short of seven assistant superintendents, two inspectors and 60 detectives.

18. The Special Branch, which is responsible for the collection, assessment and dissemination of information about all subversive political movements, is also under the command of an Assistant Commissioner and has an authorized establishment of 106 officers. It is sub-divided into six specialist sections dealing with the security problems of the principal races of the Colony. On the 11th December, 1950, the Branch was short of establishment by one chief inspector, seven inspectors, four detectives, one stenographer and eleven interpreters.

#### THE GURKHA CONTINGENT

19. This Contingent, consisting of an assistant superintendent, four inspectors and 119 other ranks, is held in reserve and specially trained for dealing with riots and disturbances. Each riot squad called out for duty of this kind is normally composed of two sections armed with wicker shields and riot sticks, a section carrying smoke and tear gas grenades and a section armed with Service rifles. The formation of this unit, first mooted in 1945 with a view to replacing a Sikh contingent which had been disbanded, actually began in the early part of 1949.

#### THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY

20. The Special Constabulary, on the 11th December, 1950, comprised a commandant and 1,206 special constables. Of the special constables some were employed whole-time on monthly agreements, while others were unpaid and did part-time duty. A great deal of voluntary unpaid duty appears to be done by members of this keen and efficient auxiliary force. In a considerable number of cases special constables do every week as many as three or four tours of duty, each lasting four hours.



## OTHER DIVISIONS

21. The other Divisions of the Force enumerated in paragraph 10 call for no special comment, although some of them were called upon to send reinforcements during the riots.

## HOUSING

22. Four-fifths of the rank and file of the Force are housed in well-built married quarters or, in the case of single men, in barracks. About 700 married men and a number of married inspectors, or about a fifth of the Force, are not provided with quarters and are obliged to live in such accommodation as they can find for themselves. This is not only unsatisfactory in itself, but the accommodation is often at a considerable distance from the police station to which a man is posted. Married men, for whom no family quarters are provided, are entitled to a rent allowance of Straits \$12 a month, but we were informed that they are obliged to pay from \$25 to \$30 a month for accommodation consisting of a single room with communal cooking and washing arrangements and scant privacy. The effects of the housing position on the members of the Force concerned will be discussed in paragraph 122 below.

## CORRIGENDUM

Paragraph 25, fourth line,  
For "annulled" read "invalid".

## PART III

## THE HERTOUGH CASE

23. For some weeks preceding the outbreak of the rioting on the 11th December, 1950, very strong feeling had been aroused in the minds of the Members of the Muslim community of Singapore by what is now generally referred to as the Hertogh case, which concerned the right to the custody of a thirteen-year old girl named Maria Huberdina Hertogh, the daughter of one Adrianus Petus Hertogh, a sergeant in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, and his wife Adeline Hertogh, a Eurasian who had been brought up in Java. Maria was born at Tjimahi, Java, on the 24th March, 1937. Her parents are Roman Catholics and she was baptized as such on the 10th April, 1937. When the Japanese invaded Java in 1942 Sergeant Hertogh was interned as a prisoner of war. On the 29th December, 1942, Mrs. Hertogh gave birth to a sixth child. In the course of the legal proceedings, she alleged that three days later her mother persuaded her to send Maria to stay for a few days at Bandoeng with her friend Che Aminah binte Mohamed, (hereinafter referred to as "Che Aminah") a Muslim and the wife of an Indonesian business man, who had previously shown an interest in the girl. Five days after Maria's departure for Bandoeng, Mrs. Hertogh was arrested by the Japanese and interned until the end of the war. When they were liberated, Sergeant and Mrs. Hertogh returned to Holland, having lost all trace of Maria. Che Aminah maintained that the girl was handed over to her for permanent adoption, but whatever is the truth with regard to the circumstances under which Maria came to live with Che Aminah, it is undoubtedly a fact that for over six years Che Aminah brought the girl up in the Muslim faith and in the Malay way of life. The girl was circumcised according to rites practised by some Muslims and was given the name of Nadra binte Ma'arof. For the sake of convenience we shall continue to refer to her as Maria, the name she first bore.

24. In the month of September 1949, it was discovered that Maria was living with Che Aminah at Kemaman, Trengganu, in the Federation of Malaya. On the 22nd April, 1950, Mr. Jacob Van Der Gaag, who was then acting as the Dutch Consul-General in Singapore and will be referred to by us as "the Dutch Consul-General", applied to the High Court of the Colony for an order under the Guardianship of Infants Ordinance directing that Maria should be delivered to the Social Welfare Department of the Singapore Government, pending the making of a further order. An interim order was made to this effect and the girl was placed in what is known as the York Hill Home, an institution of the Social Welfare Department. On the 28th April, 1950, Che Aminah obtained leave to be made a party to the proceedings and opposed the application. On the 19th May, 1950, the Court passed an order giving the Dutch Consul-General the custody of the girl with liberty to restore her to her parents in Holland.

25. Che Aminah appealed against this order and her appeal was successful. On the 28th July, 1950, the Court set aside the orders of the 22nd April, and the 19th May, 1950, on the ground that the proceedings were annulled because Che Aminah and Maria, who were necessary parties, had not been duly served with copies of the orders as required by the



Rules of the Supreme Court. The Appellate Court also pointed out that the Dutch Consul-General was not entitled to claim to be given the custody of the girl. Such a claim must be based on parental rights and he had not been specifically empowered by the parents to act in the matter. The result was that Maria was returned to the custody of Che Aminah.

26. On the 1st August, 1950, three days after the delivery of the Appellate Court's judgment, Maria, in the name of Nadra, went through a ceremony of marriage to a Malay Mohamedan named Inche Mansoor Adabi, a probationary teacher and the adopted son of one M. A. Majid, the president of the Muslim Welfare Association in Singapore, with whom Che Aminah and Maria were then living. Maria had reached the age of puberty. The marriage ceremony was performed by a Kathi, or Muslim priest, who claimed by virtue of his office to have the right to act as the guardian of the girl in the absence of her father, and therefore the right of giving consent to the marriage. Needless to say, no attempt was made to ascertain the wishes of Maria's father or of her mother. Mr. Justice Brown, in a judgment to which reference will shortly be made, said that he was satisfied that the girl was neither forced nor tricked into the marriage, but that it was a manoeuvre designed to prejudice the proceedings and was discreditable to all concerned.

27. On the 26th August, 1950, the Dutch Consul-General took out an originating summons in the High Court in the names of and on behalf of Sergeant Hertogh and his wife asking for (i) a declaration that the marriage was illegal, (ii) an order directing that Maria be delivered to him with liberty to restore her to her parents in Holland and (iii) an order directing that Maria be kept within the jurisdiction of the Court during the hearing of the case. On the 4th September the Chief Justice passed an order requiring Maria to be kept within the jurisdiction of the Court for the time being and adjourned the rest of the summons for hearing in open court. Che Aminah, Maria and Inche Mansoor Adabi were all made defendants. The hearing of the issues reserved for open court commenced before Mr. Justice Brown on the 20th November, 1950, and was concluded on the 24th November, 1950. Both Mrs. Hertogh and Che Aminah gave evidence. Judgment was delivered on the 2nd December, 1950. Mr. Justice Brown held that Maria was domiciled in Holland and under Dutch law had no capacity to contract a marriage under the age of sixteen. The marriage to Inche Mansoor Adabi was also invalid because it was not in accordance with the law of the Colony. The law of the Colony, although it recognizes Muslim law, could only substitute it for Dutch law in assessing the validity of the marriage if it could be shown that the husband was domiciled in Singapore and that Maria was a Muslim. In Mr. Justice Brown's opinion the husband was domiciled in the State of Kelantan, in the Federation of Malaya, and Maria had no capacity to become a Muslim because her father, who during her minority had the legal right to control her religion, was a Christian, and had stated in his affidavit that he would never consent to her becoming a Muslim. Mr. Justice Brown quoted Muslim legal authority in support of the view that a marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim would be invalid under Mohamedan law if it were invalid under the law of the Colony. As the parental rights of Sergeant Hertogh had not been abrogated he was entitled to the custody of his daughter. On this footing the Judge directed that Maria should be delivered to her mother, who was then in the Colony. Accordingly the girl was handed over to Mrs. Hertogh, who placed her for the time being in the Roman Catholic Convent of the Good Shepherd, Singapore.

28. Che Aminah and Inche Mansoor Adabi appealed and, pending the hearing of the appeal, applied for a stay of execution of the order contained in the judgment of the 2nd December, 1950. This application was heard by the Chief Justice on the 11th December, 1950, and on the 12th December, 1950, a formal order was passed dismissing it. During the hearing of the application the Dutch Consul-General gave an undertaking that if any Court of Appeal should so direct Maria would be produced to the British Ambassador to the Netherlands in order to ascertain whether she wished to remain in Holland or return to Singapore. The hearing of the appeal from the judgment of Mr. Justice Brown had not taken place when we left Singapore on the conclusion of the Inquiry.



## PART IV

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEELING AROUSED BY THE HERTOUGH CASE

29. The Muslim population of the Colony regarded the judgment of the Appellate Court of the 28th July, 1950, quashing the orders which were passed on the first application of the Dutch Consul-General (see paragraph 25) as constituting a victory for Che Aminah, and the marriage ceremony which Maria went through on the 1st August, 1950, added to the great interest which had already been aroused in the case. The news of the ceremony gave rise to much discussion among the Mohamedan population on the subject of the advisability of child marriages, but no doubt was cast in the community on the validity of the marriage. The Muslim Welfare Association took up the case with the object of helping Che Aminah in the further litigation which was inevitable and obtained police permission to solicit subscriptions from door to door from the 12th September to the 31st December, 1950. By a subsequent order the Police directed that the collections should be closed by the 30th September, 1950. M. A. Majid, the adoptive father of Inche Mansoor Adabi, was then President of the Muslim Welfare Association. As such he became responsible for the raising of funds and the engaging of counsel for the defence in the fresh proceedings initiated by the Dutch Consul-General on the 24th August, 1950, when he took out an originating summons on behalf of the parents of Maria and in their names. Although Mr. Justice Brown had declared against the validity of the marriage on the grounds that under her personal law, the Dutch law, Maria was not of an age to contract a marriage and that the marriage which she purported to have entered into was not in accordance with the law of the Colony, the judgment came to be regarded by the Muslim population as being directed against the Islamic law of marriage. There was in fact grave misunderstanding of all the issues involved in the case and no attempt was made by any responsible Mohamedan to correct the misconception. On the contrary, the course followed by the "Nadra Action Committee" which was formed on the 9th December, 1950, only added to the misunderstanding of the situation.

30. The person responsible for the formation of the Nadra Action Committee was one Karim Ghani and he was the moving spirit throughout. Other prominent members of this body were Dr. Burhanuddin, Mohamed Taha bin Kalu, Syed Ali Al-Attas, Darus Shariff and Mohamed Mustaza. The last named claims that he merely attended the meetings of the committee as the reporter. It has been said that there were other members of the committee, but their names have not been disclosed. Karim Ghani spent most of his life in Rangoon, where he became a parliamentary secretary when Dr. Ba Maw was prime minister there. Later in the war he went to Malaya and became the propaganda minister of what has been described as "The Indian Independence Government of S. C. Bose". He was imprisoned when the British re-occupied Malaya, but was subsequently released without trial. In September, 1949, he was the manager of "The Muslim Publishing House", the editor of the *Malaya Nanban*, a daily newspaper published in Tamil, and the editor of *Dawn* which was then a weekly newspaper published in English. His press also produced a Malay edition of *Dawn* under the name *Sinaran*. He was president of the Muslim League, the president of the All-Malaya Muslim Missionary Society and

an official of several other bodies. On the 17th November, 1950, he took over from Mr. M. A. Majid the duties which the latter had assumed in connection with the Hertogh case, and on the 6th December, he resigned all his offices, save that of the president of the Muslim League, in order to devote his whole time to the case.

31. Dr. Burhanuddin was one of the founders and a director of the Singapore newspaper *Melayu Raya* which was published in Jawi script. He had been closely associated with the Malay Nationalist Party, a left wing nationalist organization with strong Indonesian associations, which was banned by the Governments of Singapore and the Federation of Malaya in 1950. Mohamed Taha bin Kalu is an ex-inspector of police who resigned in 1946 to devote his full time to politics. He and Mohamed Mustaza had also been closely associated with the Malay Nationalist Party. Syed Ali Al-Attas and Darus Shariff were connected with Malay benevolent and welfare societies.

32. On the 18th December, 1950, all the members of the Nadra Action Committee were detained by an order of the Government of the Colony under Emergency Regulation 20 and were under detention when we visited Blakang Mati Island on the 8th March, 1951, for the purpose of recording their evidence. With the exception of Karim Ghani all of them had elected to give evidence orally. We deal with their statements in paragraphs 148 to 150.

33. Before the formation of the Nadra Action Committee the press of Singapore had devoted much space to articles and photographs, dealing with Maria's life in the Convent of the Good Shepherd, and some of these were of a nature likely to arouse strong feelings among Muslim readers. On the 3rd December, 1950, *The Sunday Times*, which is the Sunday edition of *The Straits Times*, a newspaper published in English, reproduced two photographs of Maria. One showed her sitting crying by the side of a nun; the other appeared alongside a photograph of Inche Mansoor Adabi. The adjoining photographs of Maria and Inche Mansoor Adabi, both of whom were pictured in downcast mood, were headed "Parted by the Law". Then followed a number of "happy" press pictures of Maria in the convent. On the 4th December, 1950, *The Singapore Standard*, which is also published in English, reproduced a large photograph of Maria in the convent with her mother and a friend. They were all shown smiling happily and the picture was headed "First Day in Convent, All Smiles". On the 5th December, 1950, *The Straits Times* reproduced a photograph of Maria playing dominoes in the convent with her mother and a friend. On the same day *The Singapore Standard* published on the front page a picture of Maria standing holding hands with the Reverend Mother of the convent. This picture was headed "At her Special Request". On page two of this issue appeared a photograph of Maria looking at pictures with her mother and another photograph of her knitting while sitting between two other girls. Alongside the pictures on page two was printed an article by "Standard Woman correspondent" headed in large type "Bertha knelt before Virgin Mary Statue". The article described her as having so knelt of her own free will.

34. As a counterblast to the photographs in the English press showing Maria in happy mood in the convent there appeared in the Malay vernacular newspaper *Utusan Melayu* of the 7th December, 1950, the reproductions of four photographs, in three of which she was shown to be weeping and being comforted by a nun, and in the fourth in a very serious mood talking to two nuns. In this issue of *Utusan Melayu* there also



appeared three articles about Maria's life in the convent. One of these articles, written by the newspaper's woman reporter, was headed "Nadra cries and begs for the *Utusan Melayu* reporter's help", "I am very miserable—forced to wear dress" and "Asks for news of Che Aminah".

35. These photographs and articles aroused strong resentment among the Muslims of Singapore at the placing of Maria in a Christian institution. They regarded Maria as being a Mohamedan and they felt that she was being forced to adopt the Christian faith. We consider it to be very regrettable that press photographers and journalists were permitted to enter the convent.

36. In these circumstances it is not surprising that on the 7th December, 1950, Mr. A. E. G. Blades, Assistant Commissioner of the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department, wrote to the Colonial Secretary (Mr. W. L. Blythe) pointing out the exacerbation which was being caused by the publication of such photographs and articles and suggesting that Maria should be removed from the convent. Mr. Blades added that there was no complaint made when she was staying in the York Hill Home, and that if she were removed from the convent criticism would subside. Mr. Blythe did not consider that it was necessary to take steps to secure the girl's removal from the convent. The Court had given the custody of the girl to her mother and without a further order from the Court he had no power to direct her removal. Moreover, there had been no representation by any of the Muslim leaders of Singapore that the presence of the girl in the convent was regarded by Mohamedan opinion as being improper and Mr. Blades's letter had given no indication that violence was likely to result from it.

37. It is now fully apparent that it would have been a wise move to have had the girl taken out of the convent and placed in some institution to which exception would not be taken. As it was, Maria's presence in the convent was kept constantly before the public eye. Karim Ghani proposed that 1,500 Mohamedan girls should march from the Sultan Mosque to the convent to present Maria with a prayer mat and a Koran but this idea was abandoned when it became obvious that the Police would object. Inscriptions on banners which rioters carried on the morning of the 11th December, 1950, calling for the girl's removal from the convent and an attempt made later by rioters to march on to the convent provide further evidence of the extent to which Muslim feeling had been aroused by Maria's presence there. On the night of the 11th December, the Colonial Secretary, after consultation with the Dutch Consul-General and with the consent of the girl's mother, did secure the girl's removal to St. John's Island, which lies some distance off the harbour and is used for detention purposes, and on the next day the mother and daughter left for Holland by aeroplane. If Maria had been removed from the convent earlier trouble may have been avoided on the 11th December. In the course of his evidence, Mr. Blythe conceded that in the light of subsequent events the opinion expressed by the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department in Mr. Blades's letter of the 7th December, was right and that the fact that the girl was kept in the convent was "a large factor in what actually did happen".

38. On the 9th December, 1950, Karim Ghani made a free issue of his newspaper *Dawn*. At the top of the front page was printed the statement that from that day *Dawn* would become "a tabloid daily voicing the Malay and Muslim viewpoint". In this issue was a report of a meeting "packed

to overflowing" held at the Sultan Mosque on the 8th December, when Karim Ghani had delivered a long speech in which he indicated the possibility that proceedings would be taken against him for contempt of court and that in consequence he might be sent to gaol. He also said:—

"A meeting of the Majlis Ulema was held on the 4th December, which the English Press had chosen to black out. In that meeting there was talk about Jihad and Fi-Sabeel (Holy War). Well, I tell you that it is not right to speak of Jihad. Our religion demands that we must use various methods, one after the other, Jihad is only the very last resort . . .

Mistrust begets mistrust. And when, willingly you sow the wind you reap the whirlwind. And I may be frank in telling you that the feeling to-day is not confined to the Muslim civilians, but also to the members of the Police."

A speech of this nature could obviously lead to a dangerous situation and it indicates that Karim Ghani already knew of the strong sympathy which the rank and file of the Malay police felt for Che Aminah.

39. On the morning of the day of the outbreak of the rioting Karim Ghani made another free issue of *Dawn*. This issue contained two open letters, which are reproduced in Appendix G. One to the police was headed in large type, "Muslim Leader's Open Letter to the Police" and the other, to the High Court Judges was headed, also in large type, "Open Letter to the Trinity who will sit in Judgment today". In the letter to the Police Karim Ghani requested them, "as their well-wisher", not to repeat "the Gurkha mistakes". He added "And if the Police want I can offer myself as a volunteer to control any Muslim mob". The letter clearly indicated the possibility of rioting that day, which was the day fixed for the hearing of the application for a stay of execution of Mr. Justice Brown's order of the 2nd December, 1950. It is not clear whether Karim Ghani was appealing to the Malay police not to follow the example set by the Gurkha police—he did not explain what he meant by "Gurkha mistakes"—or whether he was suggesting to the Commissioner of Police that he should not use the Gurkha police as he had done outside the Supreme Court on the 2nd December, when no disorders occurred. This edition of *Dawn* was bound to exert an inflammatory influence on uneducated Muslims, whose feelings had already been strongly aroused by the misconception of the issues in the Hertogh case and the placing of Maria in the convent.

40. From the 4th to the 11th December articles appeared in the *Melayu Raya* treating the Hertogh case as amounting to a religious issue between Islam and Christianity. During the whole of this time Karim Ghani was in close association with Dr. Burhanuddin and therefore in effective control of the *Melayu Raya*, which meant that he had a Jawi newspaper in addition to his Tamil newspaper *Malaya Nanban* and his English newspaper *Dawn*, with its Malay edition published under the title *Sinaran*. On the 11th December the *Melayu Raya* printed what it described as "general orders" issued by Karim Ghani on the night of the 10th December. Muslims were exhorted not to believe rumours, but to wait for orders from himself or through the *Melayu Raya*, *Dawn* and the *Malaya Nanban*. He had arranged to have his place filled if he should meet "with misfortune", in other words if he should be arrested. He ordered Mohamedans not to assemble near the Court. Should Muslims ignorant of this order assemble near the Court he hoped that they would be controlled by Malay police and



not by Gurkhas or others. Should any co-operation from him be asked for the purpose of controlling the crowds he would be willing to assist and would ask for the services of the Chief Kathi or other Kathis in Singapore, if necessary. He recommended that anyone who felt uneasy should not come near the Court building, but should go to the nearest Mosque to await his orders.

41. In view of the intense feeling which had been aroused Karim Ghani must have realised that a Muslim crowd would assemble at the Court on the morning of the 11th December and we cannot regard his prohibition as an honest one. We regard his offer of services in the control of crowds merely as an attempt to absolve himself should he be arrested. An agitated crowd did assemble outside the Court and considering the activities of the Nadra Action Committee and the conduct of the local press during the previous eight days it is not surprising that it became disorderly.

## PART V

### THE OUTBREAK OF THE DISORDERS ON THE 11TH DECEMBER, 1950

42. The disorders which broke out on the 11th December, 1950, had their beginning in front of the Supreme Court. As we have already indicated the Court was to hear that morning the application made by the defendants for a stay of execution of the order passed by Mr. Justice Brown on the 2nd December.

43. On the 8th December, Mr. K. L. Johnson, the Superintendent of Police in charge of the South Area of Singapore, and Mr. E. J. Linsell, Assistant Superintendent in charge of A Division, submitted to Mr. G. R. Livett, the Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Uniform Branch, the arrangements made for policing the Supreme Court on the morning of the 11th December. Mr. Livett informed us that he was quite satisfied with these arrangements, which provided for a force of one gazetted officer, three inspectors and 70 rank and file, all Malays, to be on duty in the area of the Supreme Court under Mr. Linsell.

44. Mr. Linsell went to the Supreme Court at 9 a.m. on the 11th December, with the force allotted to him and posted his men in the vicinity with instructions that they were to keep the crowds back off the roads surrounding the Supreme Court. At that time there were only small groups of people outside the Court, but their numbers gradually increased. At about 9.45 a.m. a procession approached the Supreme Court coming along St. Andrews Road from Bras Basah Road. It consisted of about 20 persons carrying three white cloth banners on which were slogans calling for the removal of "Nadra" from the convent, and a green flag bearing on it a crescent and star. Mr. Linsell approached the procession and told the persons forming it that they would not be permitted to proceed. They then turned round and made off in the opposite direction, but re-appeared some 10 or 15 minutes later coming along High Street to the Supreme Court from the direction of North Bridge Road. Mr. Linsell ordered his men to block the street against the procession immediately in front of the Supreme Court. They formed up across the street but took no action to stop the procession, which marched through their ranks and took up a position on the Padang, an open space across the road from the Supreme Court. In consequence of this incident, Mr. Linsell telephoned Mr. Livett and asked that a Gurkha riot squad be sent as a reinforcement.

45. At about 10.30 a.m. a Gurkha riot squad of 48 men arrived under the command of Assistant Superintendent Cowan. They formed up in front of the Supreme Court, but Mr. Johnson, who had also arrived by this time and had taken charge, immediately ordered them to be withdrawn to the Victoria Memorial Hall, which lies some 200 yards away from the Supreme Court. Mr. Johnson estimated the crowd on the Padang at this time to be about 1,000, of whom a group of 60 to 80 Mohamedans was gathered round the banners chanting and shouting slogans.



46. The crowd now rapidly increased in number and at 12.15 p.m. when M. A. Majid, the adoptive father of Inche Mansoor Adabi, came out of the Supreme Court, a mob of about 2,000 to 3,000 broke through the Malay police cordon and surged across St. Andrew's Road and on to the footpaths and lawns in front of the Supreme Court. The Malay police did nothing to prevent their doing so. Mr. Johnson called up the Gurkha riot squad under Mr. Cowan to clear the road, which they did without much difficulty, and the Gurkhas were also used to chase away a group of about 20 persons who were stoning Mr. Johnson and the police from the Padang. When the Gurkhas had completed their task, Mr. Johnson ordered them to return to the Victoria Memorial Hall.

47. Evidence was given by police officers to the effect that the behaviour of the crowd at this time was generally orderly and that there appeared to be no reason to expect the development of serious trouble. However, there seems no doubt from the evidence of other eye-witnesses that, although no serious incidents had occurred in front of the Supreme Court before 1 p.m., sections of the crowd by that time had already adopted a defiant attitude towards the police and there was sporadic stone throwing and the beating of passing cars with sticks.

48. At about 1 p.m. Mr. H. L. Velge, a sanitary inspector employed by the Singapore Municipality, who was also an officer of the Singapore Volunteer Corps and a member of the Special Constabulary, left his office in Municipal Buildings, which are situated next to the Supreme Court. He saw a large and excited crowd which was shouting and was throwing stones at passing cars. As he reached the pavement they shouted "Sini satu lagi" meaning "Here is one more" and several Malays jumped on him, belabouring him with their fists. Mr. Velge drew his revolver and succeeded in disengaging himself. He seized one of his assailants, whom he took across to two European police officers, Mr. Bevan and Mr. Longden. A hostile crowd surged round this group and Mr. Longden shouted to Mr. Velge to release the man and put the revolver away. Mr. Velge alleged that Mr. Longden also said "Get to hell out of this. I couldn't care less for you". Mr. Velge tried to evade the crowd, but he was assaulted from behind and fell to the ground. He turned and saw a Malay, who was beating him with a bicycle handle bar. Several others of the crowd also assaulted him. He managed to struggle to his knees (Mr. Linsell says with his assistance) and in doing so, as he considered that the police did not appear to "be on his side" and that he was going to be "badly beaten up and killed", he drew his revolver and fired three shots. Thereupon he was arrested by Mr. Bevan and taken to the Central Police Station. He was released after being detained for 15 days without any charge being preferred against him. Our account of this incident is based largely on the evidence of Mr. Velge himself. Mr. Longden was not available to give evidence before us as he had been allowed to proceed to the United Kingdom on sick leave (a matter on which we shall comment later), but we see no reason to doubt Mr. Velge's veracity. He gave his evidence in a straightforward manner and we accept it as being substantially correct. He certainly had reason for his fears.

49. Two Malays were slightly wounded in this incident. The anger of the crowd was aroused and they became more hostile to the police. There was more stone throwing and many seized large sticks from a fence

on the padang which they used to beat passing vehicles. Mr. Linsell and Mr. Johnson were hit by stones. Mr. Calderwood, the Superintendent in charge of the North Area of Singapore, who had arrived on the scene, was also hit and had to be admitted to hospital as a result. M. A. Majid returned and attempted to disperse the crowd without effect, and Mohamed Taha bin Kalu, a member of the Nadra Action Committee, to which we referred in paragraph 29, addressed the crowd through a police loud-speaker, urging them to "go back to the Mosque", advice which is of some significance when considered in the light of subsequent events. Taha Kalu told Mr. Johnson that he could manage the crowd if Mr. Johnson would withdraw the Gurkhas, who had by this time been called out again to assist in clearing the road. As the result of this suggestion, Mr. Johnson ordered the Gurkhas to withdraw to the Victoria Memorial Hall, preferring to do this rather than act on the advice of Mr. Calderwood to use the Gurkhas to disperse the crowd by force. As the Gurkhas withdrew the crowd became more aggressive and stones were thrown at the retreating men. At 1.20 p.m. the Gurkhas formed up once more at the junction of St. Andrew's Road and High Street but remained under Mr. Johnson's orders not to take action against the crowd. Five Gurkhas were injured by stones at this time as they stood in formation. Finally Mr. Johnson again ordered the Gurkhas to withdraw to the Victoria Memorial Hall. They did so in their vehicles under a hail of missiles and to the accompaniment of shouts of "Takut" or "Afraid". The rioters clearly regarded the withdrawal of the Gurkhas as a victory and many turned their attention to European spectators standing on the roof of the Cricket Club, at whom they threw sticks, stones and bottles.

50. At 1.40 p.m. Mr. Livett received a report from Mr. Calderwood of the shooting incident and learned that the crowd had subsequently adopted a more threatening mien. Mr. Livett then went to the Supreme Court himself where he received a report from Mr. Johnson that some stones had been thrown. By this time the crowd in the area of the Supreme Court had dwindled to 200 to 500, many of them having moved off in the direction of the Mosque. Mr. Livett ordered Mr. Parks, Assistant Commissioner, Radio Division, to take over from Mr. Calderwood and gave orders for "Standby No. 1" to be sent out. By 2.30 p.m. the situation outside the Supreme Court was completely quiet and the first phase of the day's disorders had ended.

51. In the course of his evidence, Mr. N. G. Morris, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department, indicated that, before the 11th December, his information was that the Malay police, almost without exception, were sympathetic to Che Aminah, but that he did not expect that they would not do their duty. We accept this, but early on the 11th December it became evident that they could not be relied on and, before long, that they were deliberately failing in their duty. At the same time the force of Gurkha police which was brought to the Supreme Court in the morning was, according to Mr. Cowan, their officer, sufficient to deal with the crowd, and Mr. Calderwood, who is a very experienced police officer, advised Mr. Johnson to use them. We consider that Mr. Johnson gravely erred in not doing so. The use of force is, of course, to be avoided if possible, but when force is called for it should be used. If it is not used, a mob is likely to take



it as a sign of weakness and go to greater lengths. This is what happened in front of the Supreme Court. We know that when Mr. Johnson ordered the Gurkhas to withdraw, the crowd jeered at them as they were moving off and actually shouted out that they were afraid. With this indication of weakness in the handling of the situation it is no wonder that the crowd became more violent and turned its attention to Europeans standing on the roof of the Cricket Club.

52. It was another error of judgment to allow the crowd to move on to the Mosque, as will appear when we deal with the rioting which took place in that area. The weakness in the handling of the situation in front of the Supreme Court was, we consider, responsible for much of what happened later.

## PART VI

### THE RIOTING IN THE SULTAN MOSQUE AREA

53. The second clearly defined phase of rioting occurred roughly between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. on the 11th December, that is from the time when the crowd left the Supreme Court until the civil authorities realized that the situation was out of hand and called for military aid. During this period the rioting was mostly confined to what we will call the Sultan Mosque area, although ugly incidents occurred elsewhere. The area to which we refer is that bounded by Bras Basah Road, Bencoolen Street, Rochore Canal Road and Beach Road. This part of our report can be divided into two sections, namely:—

- (i) incidents originating near the Mosque; and
- (ii) an abortive "three-pronged drive" by the police against the rioters.

#### INCIDENTS ORIGINATING NEAR THE MOSQUE

54. At about 2.15 p.m. Mr. Livett, Deputy Commissioner Uniform Branch, Mr. Parks, Assistant Commissioner Radio Division, and Mr. Haxworth, Assistant Superintendent in charge of C Division, left the Beach Road Police Station for the Sultan Mosque, each travelling by a slightly different route. Mr. Parks took with him 30 Gurkhas in two vans. He proceeded by way of Beach Road into Arab Street and parked his vehicles some 30 yards short of the Mosque and the intersection of North Bridge Road. Mr. Haxworth accompanied by 30 Malay police under Mr. Martin, Assistant Superintendent, went by much the same route to Sultan Gate, an open space just at the back of the Mosque. Mr. Haxworth went toward the Mosque to reconnoitre, leaving Mr. Martin and the men to form up and follow. Mr. Livett left Beach Road by car, turning into Middle Road and then into North Bridge Road. He proceeded along North Bridge Road as far as Kandahar Street where he too left his car and went forward on foot towards the Mosque. He saw a crowd of about 300 people in the verandahs of the Mosque and in the five-foot ways, which are covered and serve as footpaths. They were watching a truck burning. It looked like an Army type of vehicle to him, and he thought that it had been set on fire as the result of an accident, but he did not stop to investigate. About this time, another force was approaching from the north, under Mr. Glossop, a Cadet Assistant Superintendent. This force consisted of a newly formed "anti-terrorist detachment" of 22 Malays and 8 Punjabis, armed with revolvers, but not carrying riot sticks or shields. He went along Victoria Street and on reaching Arab Street he left half his men under a Punjabi sergeant, No. 2207, named Yar Mohamed, to guard a police telephone hut and took the rest of his men at the double down Arab Street toward the Mosque. Thus there were converging on the Mosque 30 Gurkhas under Mr. Parks, 30 Malays under Mr. Haxworth and Mr. Martin and 22 Malays and eight Punjabis under Mr. Glossop, a total force of 90 policemen and four gazetted officers.

55. Mr. Parks, who was the first to arrive, found a crowd of about 200 Malays and Southern Indians in a very excited condition, a few of them being armed with sticks. They were shouting that the police had



shot some of their people at the Supreme Court. He tried to reason with them and some of their leaders suggested that, if the Gurkhas were sent away, they could control the crowd. Mr. Haxworth and his Malays had come up and Mr. Parks sent his Gurkhas back to the Beach Road Police Station, although several hooligans had just smashed the windows of a Gurkha van. A moment later Mr. Livett arrived and, as the senior officer present, endeavoured to pacify the crowd. It is said that the leaders then suggested that if he would go into the Mosque and talk to the crowd all would be well. He decided to do so, but whether this was a wise course to adopt is another matter, considering what was happening in the immediate vicinity, and we cannot believe that Mr. Livett was in ignorance of all this.

56. Shortly before Mr. Livett made his decision to enter the Mosque, Mr. M. L. Abrams, a Cadet Assistant Superintendent, was proceeding towards the Mosque when he saw two motor vehicles overturned in Beach Road, but undamaged. On three occasions he saw an excited crowd of about 70 or 80 Indians and Malays trying to hold up European-owned vehicles. Then he saw a crowd between the junction of Arab Street and North Bridge Road and the entrance to the Mosque. A jeep had been overturned and rioters were pelting it with stones. As he went towards the Mosque to speak to the leaders of the crowd, he heard a roar and saw the jeep—a private Land Rover referred to later—go up in flames. Some people came out of the Mosque and incited the crowd to attack. Thereupon he was stoned by the rioters and hit several times, but a radio car, in the charge of a Malay sergeant, came to his assistance. The sergeant, who had himself already been attacked and was bleeding from wounds in the face, tried to reason with the crowd, but without effect, and he and Mr. Abrams were struck again and again with stones. As a result they were compelled to break through the crowd and retire into the radio car, in which they drove to the Beach Road Police Station to report the incident. The bravery of this Malay sergeant, whose name was not given to us but whose number is 204, is in striking contrast to the behaviour of the general rank and file of the Malay police that day. It is to be noted that the incidents deposed to by Mr. Abrams occurred at 2.10 p.m. or a little more than five minutes before Mr. Parks sent his Gurkhas away and Mr. Livett saw a crowd watching a Land Rover burn. And all this happened within a very short distance of the Mosque.

57. Mr. Livett and Mr. Parks went inside the courtyard of the Mosque and stood on the steps leading into the Mosque. The crowd followed them but Mr. Livett told the leaders that he would not take off his shoes and enter the building until all the crowd had done so. The police evidence is that at this juncture a commotion was heard outside and three or four military vehicles pulled up behind the burning Land Rover, whereupon a number of Military Police jumped out and began to belabour the crowd with their truncheons. Two of them, it is alleged, entered the courtyard of the Mosque and used their truncheons on persons there. Mr. Livett rushed out into the street and ordered Lieutenant Mortimer, the officer in charge of the Military Police, to get away as quickly as possible. He shouted "For God's sake, clear out of here, you are causing a riot". By this time the crowd were throwing stones and bottles at the Military Police and their vehicles. Lieutenant Mortimer obeyed Mr. Livett's order and commanded his men to return to their vehicles, which they did under a shower of missiles. Owing to the ferocity of the attack, the Military Police were unable to get two of their vehicles started and had to abandon

them. Shortly after, these two vehicles were set on fire by the mob. Standing nearby, in the charge of a sergeant, were eight or ten Malay police who took no action. After the Military Police had departed, the mob attacked Mr. Livett, Mr. Parks and Mr. Haxworth, who then realized that the situation was beyond their control. Under heavy stoning from the mob, they made their way back to the Beach Road Police Station by different routes. On arrival at the Police Station, Mr. Livett collapsed, but recovered a little later.

58. We will now turn to the circumstances which brought the Military Police to the scene and give their version of what happened at the Mosque. About 2 p.m. that day a covered military truck, in which were two European lance-corporals, was being driven along North Bridge Road by a Malay driver. Near the Mosque, they saw an overturned Land Rover, which they mistook for a military vehicle. They slowed down and several Malays, armed with sticks, ordered them to get out. When they refused, one of the Malays brandished a knife and others hurled various missiles, including a heavy iron bar, into the truck. The Lance-Corporal managed to drive away and his Unit reported the incident to Military Police Headquarters. The Provost Sergeant, believing a military vehicle had been set on fire, ordered a force of 30 Military Police to proceed to the spot. They left in four military vehicles, under the command of Lieutenant Mortimer, who had volunteered to take charge of the party and who followed them in his private car.

59. The main body of Military Police drew up behind the burning Land Rover near the Mosque and Sergeant B. Franklyn, who was at the moment in charge, saw a crowd of 300 to 400 people standing around the vehicle and, in the courtyard of the Mosque, another crowd, noisy but not then actively aggressive. His men alighted from their vehicles and a file of them advanced up the road towards the burning Land Rover, carrying truncheons, but not with revolvers drawn. The crowd retreated before them and, on getting close to the Land Rover, Sergeant Franklyn saw that it was a civilian vehicle and not a military one as he had been informed. Thereupon he ordered his men to retire, only to have planks hurled at them from the direction of the Mosque; a hail of bricks, stones and bottles followed. At this point either Mr. Livett or Mr. Parks appeared and accused them of starting a riot.

60. The Military Police account of the incursion into the courtyard of the Mosque was told by Corporal F. C. Smith. While Lieutenant Mortimer was talking to a police officer, Corporal Smith was struck in the back by a brick. He turned round and saw an Indian standing behind him three or four feet away. He drew his baton and struck him with it, but it broke in two. The Indian mingled with the crowd and Corporal Smith followed him inside the Mosque gate. He then noticed an Indian advancing towards him with a stick, which he was swinging round his head. Corporal Smith drew his revolver and retired to the street, where he was told by a police officer to put it away before he started a riot. The Military Police were being heavily stoned all the time.

61. There is a direct conflict of evidence on the question whether the Military Police took aggressive action against the rioters before they started throwing missiles, or whether the rioters stoned the Military Police as soon as they left their vehicles. We are inclined to the view that the stoning followed the move which the Military Police made towards the burnt Land Rover which they understood belonged to the Army, and, as the rioters were standing in front of it, it is likely that they used their truncheons in order



to clear the way. We do not think that they can be seriously criticised for this. The rioters had set the vehicle on fire and the Military Police had been sent to investigate. It would, however, have been better if they had sought the assistance of the Civil Police before getting engaged with the mob. Lieutenant Mortimer gave it as his opinion that his men could have given the Civil Police valuable assistance if they had been asked to render it. They were not called upon to do so, but were ordered to go away. We have no doubt that Lieutenant Mortimer was justified in his opinion and there can be no doubt that the withdrawal of the Military Police was regarded as a sign of weakness, just as the withdrawal of the Gurkhas from the Supreme Court early that morning was taken by the crowd to be. The fact that Mr. Livett, Mr. Parks and Mr. Haxworth had then to withdraw under heavy stoning provides additional support for this conclusion.

62. The arrival of the Military Police undoubtedly angered the crowd in the immediate vicinity of the Mosque and may have prevented Mr. Livett from carrying out his intention of addressing those who were in the courtyard of the Mosque. But praiseworthy though his intentions may have been it is more than doubtful whether his address would have had any beneficial effect. By then things had been allowed to go too far. There is trustworthy evidence of very ugly incidents within the area within which we are now dealing, but no useful purpose will be served by attempting to detail them. It will be sufficient to refer to a statement made at 7 a.m. on the 12th December by Mr. Haxworth in which he said that, when he left the Beach Road Police Station on the afternoon of the 11th December to take up his position at Sultan Gate, there were large angry crowds in the vicinity and burning vehicles were very much in evidence. Obviously there was here little scope for pacification, especially as the Gurkhas had been sent away and the mob knew it had nothing to fear from the Malay police.

#### THE THREE-PRONGED DRIVE

63. The three-pronged drive was designed by the Police to clear up the area referred to in paragraph 53 after Mr. Livett and his companions had been forced to retreat to the Beach Road Police Station at 3.30 p.m. At 3.45 p.m. Mr. Johnson received orders from the Radio Control Room to take 200 men to the northern end of the Padang to make three parallel drives up Beach Road, North Bridge Road and Victoria Street to clear away the rioters. He had, however, only 100 men available, all Malays, and had therefore asked for reinforcements. He waited near the Padang for these but as none arrived and he had been instructed to act quickly, he moved off with a riot squad of 27 men under Mr. Davies. Mr. Davies's men marched in "Riot Formation", i.e. five squads each of five men in line across the street, the first three squads armed with batons, the fourth with rifles and the fifth with smoke bombs. They marched up Victoria Street without incident until they reached the junction with Arab Street where they saw a burnt-out jeep. They wheeled into Arab Street and they saw four or five cars bunched together, some burnt out and others burning, at the junction of North Bridge Road. There was a noisy crowd of about 30 people 150 yards ahead. The men formed up in the road, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Davies and Inspector Sheik Abdul Majid in front and the squads drawn up just behind. Mr. Davies gave the order "Double March" and the three officers doubled forward. After going 30 or 40 yards, Mr. Johnson called out "The squad's not coming." Mr. Davies looked back and saw his men marking time at the starting point. The three officers

proceeded alone at the double along Arab Street to North Bridge Road where they were met with a shower of sticks, stones and iron piping. They withdrew and tried to reform their men, who were then clustered in the five-foot way near the starting point. The men were ordered to put on respirators and to advance. They put on respirators but did not advance. The officers made a third equally unsuccessful attempt to advance.

64. What happened to the balance of Mr. Johnson's force of 100 men is not clear. Generally, we have found it difficult to piece together the Police evidence in order to present a connected narrative of what happened that afternoon between 3.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. There is, however, evidence that at 3.30 p.m. Mr. Abrams was ordered by Mr. Parks to go with Mr. Longden and the A Division riot squad to Raffles Hotel. Mr. Abrams saw a crowd of Indians and Malays advancing down Bras Basah Road in the direction of Beach Road. Mr. Abrams took the riot squad into Bras Basah Road and as soon as the crowd saw the police they turned round and ran away. His men appeared to be sullen and obeyed in a slovenly manner the order to get out of their trucks and fall in. On arriving at the junction of Bras Basah Road and North Bridge Road, Mr. Abrams saw the rioters escaping in a blue van, which drove off into North Bridge Road in the direction of the Mosque. He reported this fact to the Radio Control Room. He then returned to the Beach Road Police Station via North Bridge Road and Rochore Road. At about 4.15 p.m. he again left with a riot squad of about 50 Malays for the Sultan Mosque. They alighted from their vehicles in North Bridge Road and marched towards the Mosque, pushing back an aggressive crowd which was armed with sticks and stones. The Malay police kept their formation and advanced, but when Mr. Abrams ordered them to charge they did not respond and when he looked round they had "disappeared". Some of them remained in the five-foot way, but took no action against the crowd. Mr. Abrams was forced to retire and was obliged to go to hospital for treatment of his wounds.

65. Mr. Haxworth left the Beach Road Police Station with 14 Malay police at about 4 p.m., intending to go to the Rochore Police Station in Crawford Street, but he says that this was no part of the three-pronged drive. His men showed no desire to march together; he had to spend much time trying to make them keep in step and to keep up with him, but without success. Eventually, he left them standing at ease at Jalan Kubor, two or three streets from the Mosque, where there was still a crowd, a great deal of noise and burning vehicles. He made his way on foot to the Rochore Police Station where he picked up eight more men and with them and the original 14 he returned to the Beach Road Police Station. At 4.45 p.m. Mr. Linsell left the Beach Road Police Station to search for Mr. Johnson and his party. Mr. Linsell had with him Mr. Cowan and 20 Gurkha police, three of whom were armed with rifles. They made their way to Victoria Street where they were stoned by a crowd of about 50 or 60 rioters. They dispersed this crowd with gas shells and, at this juncture, Mr. Johnson and his men appeared. Shortly afterwards the majority of this Gurkha force were withdrawn to their barracks for a meal.

66. To call Mr. Johnson's operation a "drive" is a complete misnomer. It left the Mosque area in the same state of disorder as it was in before the operation was ordered and there can be no doubt that this failure to cope with the rioters led to the rapid deterioration which then took place in the situation.



PART VII

THE RAPID DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION DURING THE AFTERNOON OF THE 11TH DECEMBER, 1950

67. While religious fanaticism may have been behind the rioting in its early stages, it is clear that by the afternoon it had assumed a racial basis and the main aim of the mob was to carry out murderous attacks on Europeans and Eurasians. Not only did these attacks increase in ferocity, but they began to spread over a gradually widening area, as can be seen from the analysis of rioters incidents on page 25.

68. It is obvious that Mr. Wiltshire, the Acting Commissioner of Police, had not appreciated the gravity of the situation or realized the extent to which the Malay police had failed to do their duty throughout the day, before 6.43 p.m. Otherwise he would not have declined the two offers of military assistance, which he received at 3.40 p.m. and 5.55 p.m. respectively, and he would not have reported to the Colonial Secretary at 3.50 p.m. and again at about 5.30 p.m. that he believed he could control the situation. At 6.43 p.m. he received information that a mob was advancing along Beach Road towards the Police Station and that an attempt to disperse it had failed. He then realized for the first time how serious the situation had become and three minutes later he telephoned to the Colonial Secretary asking for military assistance. At 6.43 p.m. and at 7 p.m. he instructed Mr. Livett, the Deputy Commissioner of the Uniform Branch, who was directing operations from the Beach Road Police Station, to defend the station by rifle fire, if necessary. According to Mr. Wiltshire's diary, Mr. Wiltshire spoke again to the Colonial Secretary on the telephone at 7.23 p.m. and was told by him that the defence of the Beach Road Police Station must be undertaken by the men on the spot and that a warning must be given before any resort to the use of firearms. According to the Colonial Secretary this conversation was at about 6.45 p.m.

69. Meanwhile, two Cadet Assistant Superintendents of Police, Mr. Martin and Mr. Glossop, had gone with a force of about 40 Malay police to meet the rioters in Beach Road and had succeeded in checking the mob by throwing some tear gas grenades among them. They then tried to follow up this advantage with a charge, but their men failed to respond. In the gathering darkness the rioters were seen to be pushing a motor bus in front of them and when almost 60 yards from the police they set fire to it. At this point Mr. Parks, Assistant Commissioner of Radio Division, arrived on the scene with Mr. Cowan and seven Gurkha policemen armed with rifles. They were followed by other Gurkhas, bringing the total strength to 40 men. Mr. Parks warned the rioters that, if they did not disperse, he would open fire. Firing was not necessary because, as Mr. Cowan and his Gurkhas advanced on the rioters, they dispersed. This incident in itself emphasizes the beneficial effect which resolute action had. But by this time the situation was completely beyond the capacity of the Police to control. From about 8 p.m. on the 11th December, the main work of restoring law and order passed into the hands of the Military.

TABLE 1  
ANALYSIS OF CASES OF ACTION BY RIOTERS REPORTED TO SINGAPORE POLICE SHOWING DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES CAUSED BY RIOTERS AND NUMBERS OF VEHICLES BURNT

Place	Time	11TH DECEMBER, 1950				12TH DECEMBER, 1950		13TH DECEMBER, 1950	
		Cases of Action by Rioters	Deaths	Persons seriously injured	Vehicles burnt	Cases of Action by Rioters	Persons seriously injured	Vehicles burnt	Cases of Action by Rioters
Supreme Court and St. Andrews Road Area	12.45-1.20 p.m. 11 p.m.	5 1	..	..	..	3	..	..	..
Mosque Area (Bras Basah Road, Bencoolen Street, Rochore Canal Rd., Beach Road)	2.15-7.40 p.m. 9.30-10 p.m.	59 2	3 ..	2 3	23 ..	6	1	2	1
Area of Serangoon Road, Lavender Street and Rochore Canal	5-8.15 p.m.	23	..	7	3	1	..	..	..
Orchard Road, Stamford Road and Clemenceau Avenue Area	7.30 p.m.-midnight	15	..	3	2	12	..	..	..
Thomson Road Area	3.30-8.15 p.m.	24	..	..	2	2	..	..	..
Bukit Timah Road Area	8.30-10.30 p.m.	12	..	2	2	Nil	..	..	..
Geylang Road, Joo Chiat Area	5 p.m.-midnight	48	5	9	16	19	1	..	..
Outlying Areas	7 p.m.-midnight	10	1	..	2	17	..	5	1
	Total ..	199	9	26	51	60	2	7	2



## PART VIII

### THE CALLING OUT OF THE MILITARY AND THE RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER

70. Major-General Dunlop, General Officer commanding the Singapore Base District, gave evidence before the Commission on the 5th March, 1951, and his testimony embodies a very clear account of the part played by the Army in suppressing the riots. We shall refer in this part to the main features of Major-General Dunlop's evidence, but as it is outstanding in character and may be helpful to Colonial Governments generally, we have reproduced it *in extenso* in Appendix H.

71. Major-General Dunlop assumed command of the Singapore Base District in July, 1948, and, except for a break between July and October, 1950, to organize and form a new South Malaya District, his command had been continuous. When he arrived in Singapore two infantry battalions were stationed there, but in November, 1949, they were no longer available for use in Singapore and consequently he had to devise other measures for maintaining internal security in an emergency. With this in view he ordered all base units in the Colony, including base installations and services, together with General Headquarters, and his own headquarters, camps, staffs and the 1st Singapore Regiment, Royal Artillery (stationed at Blakang Mati Island, which lies just off the harbour of Singapore) to undertake intensive specialized training in internal security duties. He directed that all officers and men were to be so trained in every Base Unit and that a proportion of each unit would be permanently available in platoons and companies to form part of two composite Internal Security Battalions which could be called out at short notice in aid of the Civil Power. These arrangements did, in fact, give him two battalions which could, in the early stage of any uprising, effectively take the place of the two regular infantry battalions which had been withdrawn to the Federation of Malaya.

72. As the result of the intensive training which the two Internal Security Battalions had gone through, there were trained troops in Singapore on the night of the 11th December to deal immediately with the situation that had then arisen and Major-General Dunlop gave it as his opinion that they alone would probably have been adequate to restore law and order, although the further steps which he took and to which we shall later refer ensured that it was restored with the minimum of delay. Major-General Dunlop pointed out in his evidence that combat troops, fully committed to jungle operations, obviously could not have the opportunities of training and practising for dealing with rioting mobs. They would not possess the necessary local geographical knowledge of the Police Divisions, districts and streets of Singapore and could have no opportunity of previous liaison with civil police officers alongside whom they might be required to work. The art of restoring law and order on the part of military force requested in aid of Civil Power lies in the use of minimum force as required by law. In the case of combat troops who have not received up-to-date, continuous and specialized instruction in this role, there might well be a risk of their using too great a degree of force. We draw special attention to these observations because of the complaints which appeared in the London and Singapore press to the effect that combat troops were not immediately available on the 11th December, but only internal security troops.

73. Major-General Dunlop made two inquiries whether military assistance was wanted before it was asked for at 6.45 p.m. on the 11th December. The first inquiry was made at 3.40 p.m. and the second at 5.55 p.m. The inquiry at 3.40 p.m. was prompted by a report which he had received at 3.25 p.m. that his Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal, Major Beadle, had been attacked by rioters and his car damaged. Although the reply to this inquiry was to the effect that military assistance was not required, Major-General Dunlop, as a precautionary measure, immediately ordered the two Internal Security Battalions to states of readiness, with one battalion to be at one hour's readiness to move. At 5.55 p.m. Major-General Dunlop spoke on the telephone to Mr. Wiltshire personally. The Chief Justice had asked for a military guard at his residence and Major-General Dunlop took the opportunity of inquiring again whether military aid was wanted. In spite of Mr. Wiltshire's assurance that the Police could cope with the situation, Major-General Dunlop, at 6.10 p.m. ordered one Internal Security Battalion to be in immediate readiness at their sub-unit location and the other to be in immediate readiness and concentrated from 7.30 a.m. on the 12th December. The wisdom of these orders was very soon apparent. A little over half an hour after they had been given the Colonial Government called for military assistance and it is obvious from what we have said earlier in this report that the situation was then entirely out of hand so far as the Police were concerned. Military assistance should have been accepted when it was first offered at 3.40 p.m.

74. On receipt of the request for military assistance, Major-General Dunlop ordered the Internal Security Battalion, which was already at immediate readiness at sub-unit location, to concentrate at the Shackle Club area in Beach Road and to establish contact with the Police Superintendent at the Beach Road Police Station as soon as possible. Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer, who commanded this battalion, arrived at the Beach Road Police Station with his headquarters at 7.40 p.m. The companies comprising the battalion arrived at the Shackle Club concentration area between 8 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. On the way there one of the platoons was called upon to disperse a gang of hooligans opposite the main gate of Government House. A military liaison officer was ordered to report at the Radio Control Room where he arrived at 7.30 p.m.

75. At this time Major-General Dunlop had no indication of the widespread disorders which were taking place, but as he was concerned at the apparent failure of a strong police force to break up the rioting mob in the Beach Road and Mosque areas, and bearing in mind that the safety of Singapore was of such paramount importance, he telephoned to General Headquarters and asked H.Q., Malaya District in the Federation to send two battalions of infantry and a squadron of armoured cars with maximum urgency. This request was immediately granted and the following troops were ordered to proceed to Singapore:—1st Green Howards, 1 squadron 13/18 Hussars, 2/6 Gurkha Rifles, 2/10 Gurkha Rifles, 1 company 2/2 Gurkha Rifles and a detachment of 1/2 Gurkha Rifles.

76. As the reinforcing regiments were fully engaged in anti-bandit operations and had not been warned to move to Singapore until after dark on the 11th December, Major-General Dunlop did not expect that anything more than a token force could arrive in Singapore during the morning of the 12th December, but he was informed at about 10 p.m. on the 11th December that at least fifty per cent of the reinforcing regiments were likely to arrive during that night and would be available for his purpose



at first light on the 12th December. About fifty per cent of the total strength of these units was either deployed or ready to deploy in accordance with Major-General Dunlop's plan at first light on the 12th December, and the remaining fifty per cent was nearly all available by noon on the same day. Considering that some of the companies of the reinforcing troops were actually taking part in jungle operations in Johore when ordered to proceed to Singapore, their arrival in Singapore so early was a remarkable achievement.

77. 'B' Squadron of the 13/18 Hussars, with armoured cars and armoured carriers, actually arrived before first light and were despatched on a flag march round the main trouble centres. They started at 7.30 a.m. and at once dealt very effectively with a riotous assembly, mainly Indonesians, which had assembled in the Cathedral grounds. Thirty of the rioters were arrested and handed over to the Police; the remainder were dispersed as a result of the liberal use of tear gas grenades. No shots were fired on this occasion. On six occasions military units had to open fire but the total expenditure of ammunition in the restoration of law and order was only 20 rounds. We are satisfied that fire was never opened unless it was absolutely necessary and, where possible, warning was given beforehand. Indeed, this might be regarded as an excellent example of the use of Military in aid of the Civil Power in that a minimum of force was used to restore order without undue delay.

78. With the arrival of the Military in force the situation immediately improved. Riotous incidents continued to occur on the 12th December but they decreased considerably both in number and in violence. Only two persons were seriously injured by rioters on that day. By noon on the 13th December law and order had been completely restored.

79. While the gazetted officers of the Police rendered all the assistance required of them by the Military, the credit for the restoration of law and order must be given to Major-General Dunlop and the troops under his command. In addition to dealing with hostile crowds, the Military were engaged in many other duties, namely, removing road blocks, rescuing beleaguered victims, providing escorts for persons and goods, conveying key personnel to and from work, arresting looters and curfew breakers, removing injured to hospital, recovering dead and removing derelict vehicles from the streets. The Royal Air Force also rendered valuable assistance in rescue work.

80. In a further statement Major-General Dunlop indicated the useful purpose which helicopters could serve when dealing with rioters. In June, 1950, he had arranged with the Air Officer Commanding Malaya that, in the event of the Military being called out in aid of the Civil Power, an R.A.F. helicopter would be allotted for his purposes, if a machine of this type was serviceable and available when required. He visualized that a helicopter would not only have a marked psychological effect by hovering, clattering and whirring close over the heads of rioters but, with a military or police officer on board with tear gas grenades, it would be a very effective instrument for the dispersal of such mobs, especially the rear sections of them. With radio contact with the ground it would also be invaluable for police or military reconnaissance purposes. At the request of Major-General Dunlop the Air Officer Commanding Malaya supplied a helicopter which landed on the football ground at Fort Canning at 1.10 p.m. on the 12th December. The pilot made several flights over the town area with Police or

Service officers on board that afternoon and during daylight on the 13th December. On one occasion on the 12th December, Mr. Buckle, a police officer, dropped one tear gas grenade over a mob of about thirty rioters, who immediately dispersed.

81. In his statement Major-General Dunlop stressed the exemplary and highly disciplined behaviour of the Malay troops under his command, of whom many were engaged as members of the Internal Security Battalions. They carried out their duties excellently and without hesitation, often under great provocation and physical strain.



## PART IX

### CASUALTIES

82. The casualties inflicted during the riots and the damage caused to vehicles may be summarized in tabular form as shown on pages 32-33.

83. The following are among the worst of the outrages committed by the rioters:—

- (i) At 3.40 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, a van belonging to the Telecommunications Department and driven by Mr. H. J. A. Guttridge was stopped by about 100 rioters in Rochore Canal Road. Mr. Guttridge was assaulted with sticks until he collapsed. He was then dragged from the van and again assaulted, this time with fatal results. His body was thrown into the canal and was not recovered by the Police until the following day.
- (ii) At 4 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, a Singapore Traction Company bus was stopped by rioters in North Bridge Road. Warrant Officer J. W. Davies, of the Royal Air Force, who was travelling in the bus with his wife and his eight year old daughter, was attacked, dragged from the bus and severely beaten with sticks. In an attempt to protect himself he jumped into a drain by the roadside and pulled a native bed over his head. The rioters pulled him from the drain and continued their assault until he fell unconscious on the road. He was sent in a taxi to hospital, where he died two days later. His wife was also assaulted but managed to escape. The child was taken to safety by an Eurasian lady.
- (iii) At 4.30 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, Corporal H. P. Bell, of the Royal Air Force, was dragged from a bus in Victoria Street and assaulted by 20 or 30 rioters. He was thrown into a drain unconscious, after which one of the rioters threw petrol over him and set it on fire. Corporal Bell was found by the Police at 5 p.m. He died in hospital at 8.45 p.m.
- (iv) At 7.30 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, Mr. H. F. Taylor, with his wife and small son, and Mr. T. G. Crowley and his wife, were stopped in a car at the junction of Mountbatten Road and Tanjong Katong Road. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Crowley were attacked and beaten into unconsciousness after which they were thrown into a roadside drain. Their bodies were found by the Police at 11 p.m. that night. Their wives and the child were rescued by a Malay and hidden by a Chinese in a neighbouring building until they were rescued by the Police.
- (v) Between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, Private James Verney of the Seaforth Highlanders was pulled out of a taxi by rioters in Geylang Road and beaten to death. His body was recovered from a drain next day.
- (vi) Between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, Mr. C. J. Ryan was assaulted and killed by rioters in the Geylang area.
- (vii) At about 8.10 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, Inspector Retnasingham of the Singapore Police was escorting a European lady to her home when his car was attacked on the Changi

Road by about 100 rioters. He was struck by a stone and the car became out of control and struck a tree. The rioters dragged him from the vehicle, robbed him and threw him into a drain. He died in hospital on the 19th December, 1950, from a fractured skull and other injuries. The lady whom he was escorting was assaulted until she was unconscious but recovered later and eventually managed to make her own way home.

- (viii) At 10 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, a Volunteer Special Constable found the body of Mr. F. Pereira in a drain in Geylang Road. Two Special Constables attempted to move Mr. Pereira, but they were threatened by the mob and further assaults were made on Mr. Pereira. Eventually Mr. Pereira was taken to hospital, where he died shortly after admission.

84. The rioters attacked women without compunction. In some cases the women were seriously injured, but fortunately none of these attacks had fatal results.



TABLE 2

## SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES CAUSED BY RIOTERS

	INJURED				DEAD			
	DECEMBER, 1950				DECEMBER, 1950			
	11th	12th	13th	Total	11th	12th	13th	Total
Europeans ..	79	7	..	86	5	1	..	6
Eurasians ..	31	..	1	32	1	1	..	2
Chinese ..	4	..	..	4	..	..	..	..
Indians ..	4	..	..	4	1	..	..	1
Malays ..	4	1	..	5	..	..	..	..
Total ..	122	8	1	131	7	2	..	9

TABLE 3

## SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES CAUSED BY POLICE OR MILITARY

(I)—Persons Shot

	INJURED				DEAD			
	DECEMBER, 1950				DECEMBER, 1950			
	11th	12th	13th	Total	11th	12th	13th	Total
Malays ..	3	5	..	8	..	3	..	3
Indians ..	..	2	..	2	1	..	..	1
Chinese ..	1	5	..	6	1	4	..	5
Total ..	4	12	..	16	2	7	..	9

(II)—Persons Injured by Gas Bomb Splinters

	DECEMBER, 1950				DECEMBER, 1950			
	11th	12th	13th	Total	11th	12th	13th	Total
	Malays ..	..	3	..	3	..	..	..
Indians ..	..	5	..	5	..	..	..	..
Chinese ..	1	17	..	18	..	..	..	..
Total ..	1	25	..	26	..	..	..	..

TABLE 4

## TOTAL CASUALTIES

	INJURED				DEAD			
	DECEMBER, 1950				DECEMBER, 1950			
	11th	12th	13th	Total	11th	12th	13th	Total
Europeans ..	79	7	..	86	5	1	..	6
Eurasians ..	31	..	1	32	1	1	..	2
Chinese ..	6	22	..	28	1	4	..	5
Indians ..	4	7	..	11	2	..	..	2
Malays ..	7	9	..	16	..	3	..	3
Total ..	127	45	1	173	9	9	..	18

TABLE 5

## VEHICLES

	DAMAGED				BURNED			
	DECEMBER, 1950				DECEMBER, 1950			
	11th	12th	13th	Total	11th	12th	13th	Total
Cars ..	80	22	1	103	32	3	1	36
Trucks, Lorries ..	7	1	..	8	8	8	1	17
Buses ..	1	..	..	1	3	..	..	3
Vans ..	5	..	..	5	2	4	..	6
Land Rovers, Jeeps	1	..	..	1	3	1	..	4
Motor-Cycles ..	1	..	..	1	4	2	..	6
Total ..	..	..	..	119	..	..	..	72

In addition on 11-12-50:—

1 Auto-cycle  
1 Motor-cycle  
1 Bicycle

} Missing; presumed stolen.



## PART X

### THE FAILURE OF THE MALAY POLICE DURING THE RIOTS

85. In describing the rioting outside the Supreme Court and the Sultan Mosque area we have referred to instances of deliberate inaction on the part of the rank and file of the Malay police and of disobedience to orders. This attitude was general and was maintained from the start of the rioting on the 11th December, until the Military took over the patrolling of the streets, as the following further instances will serve to show.

86. In a report made by him on the 20th December, Mr. Haxworth, Assistant Superintendent in charge of C Division, said:—

On the question of the rank and file generally, their behaviour left no doubt as to their intention. The attitude, once on the streets and in the vicinity of the trouble, was deplorable. One particular incident stands out very clearly—on hearing a voice suddenly boom out from the Mosque, one P.C. literally turned yellow and began to shake as though with ague. One could not get them to present any bearing whatsoever in the face of the hostile crowd, and even their marching was ragged. It was just a waste of breath trying to get them to take action. This was early in the action and was even then astounding. Later on it became common to all. Even drivers of vehicles would not 'get a move on' when things had to be done quickly. Anywhere in view of the rioters their actions became lethargic. A particular example of this was in the vicinity of Joo Chiat Police Station about 11.30 p.m. on the 11th December, 1950, when it was necessary to rush a barricade held by the mob. The P.C. driver just crept up to the scene. On the return journey a A/A.S.P., Mr. Anketell-Jones took over the driving.

87. Mr. R. V. Morris, an elderly civil engineer told us that he was on a motor cycle at about 3 p.m. on the 11th December, at the junction of Arab Street and Victoria Street, when he was attacked by two Malays armed with lengths of iron pipes. He got off his cycle to retaliate, but he was advised by some Chinese to run away. A Malay riot squad equipped with steel helmets and shields were within ten yards of him, but they did nothing to help him.

88. Mr. Glossop left part of an anti-riot squad in the charge of Sergeant Yar Mohamed, to whom we have already referred. When the crowd advanced to attack a motor vehicle the Malay members of this squad deliberately disobeyed their sergeant's order to defend it and bolted, although they were armed with revolvers.

89. A Sikh detective named Major Singh, who was patrolling in plain clothes in North Bridge Road on the afternoon of the 11th December and had been to the aid of several Europeans who were being attacked by rioters, found that a motor car had been set on fire near Raffles School. He drew the attention of the Malay corporals, who were in charge of two radio cars, to what was happening, but they refused to take any action until reinforcements arrived. Considering that the crews of these cars were armed with revolvers and that in each car was a Sten gun, the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from their refusal is that they were not prepared to take action against their co-religionists in the mob.

90. On the evening of the 11th December, 1950, Mr. Flynn who was in charge of E Division, was proceeding along Orchard Road with a force of 28 Malay police when they came upon a party of 15 or 16 rioters.

Thereupon Mr. Flynn put his men into riot formation—he had seven men armed with rifles with him—but when he gave the order to advance he found himself proceeding alone. He attributed the blame to his two Malay non-commissioned officers, who were subsequently placed under open arrest, but we doubt whether the blame rested alone on their shoulders. In view of the general attitude of the Malay police on that day we consider that the blame must be shared by the men themselves.

91. As far as we have been able to gather none of the crews of the numerous radio cars manned by Malay police took action against the rioters, although they were well armed and in a position to deal effectively with them. There is every indication that they were just as unmindful of their duty and, therefore, just as useless in the emergency as their fellow Malay policemen who were called upon to operate on foot. The crews of certain radio cars did take action against the rioters, but they were not Malays.



## PART XI

### THE FAILURE OF THE POLICE HIGHER COMMAND

92. The work of the Police Higher Command on the 11th December, 1950, is marked by two serious failures. The first is the failure of senior officers to take resolute steps to quell the riots in their early stages; the second is the failure of Mr. Wiltshire and his senior officers to appreciate the seriousness of the rioting until a considerable time after the situation had become completely out of hand.

93. It is clear that there were very serious errors on the part of officers on the spot dealing with the situations which developed in the morning and the afternoon of the 11th December. There was no attempt to arrest any of the ringleaders of the rioters in front of the Supreme Court or any of those in the vicinity of the Mosque; but what is even more astonishing is that no attempt was made to use the Gurkha police effectively in either area. Both in front of the Supreme Court and at the Mosque, the officer in charge withdrew the Gurkhas at the request of the ringleaders and the withdrawal on both occasions was followed by acts of increased violence on the part of the mob.

94. The handling of the reserve of the Gurkha police by Mr. Johnson in front of the Supreme Court was particularly timid and inept and Mr. Parks should never have consented to send away from the Mosque the Gurkha force which he had with him. Mr. Livett's handling of the situation from the Beach Road Police Station is also open to strong criticism in that he allowed matters to drift, but, in fairness to him, it should be mentioned that he was, at the time, a sick man, having only returned to full duty that day, and that, in the course of the rioting at the Mosque, he received numerous injuries. All these officers had had long experience in the East and we should have expected them to know that an outbreak of rioting in a large Eastern city can spread and intensify with startling rapidity, especially when fanned by religious fanaticism; they should know too, that criminals and hooligans are quick to exploit the situation, and that it is, therefore, highly desirable that prompt and firm action is taken at the earliest possible moment to bring the situation under control.

95. It is idle to suggest, as it has been, that the shots which Mr. Velge fired in front of the Supreme Court in his own defence and the arrival of the Military Police at the Mosque were the main causes of what followed. We are convinced that, if the Gurkha police had been used effectively in front of the Supreme Court, the crowd would have been dispersed and prevented from re-assembling at the Mosque, notwithstanding the anger of the mob at the shots which Mr. Velge fired and, if the Gurkha police had been used, with or without the assistance of the Military Police, they would have dispersed the rioters in the Mosque area. The situation in that area was so serious before the arrival of the Military Police that every effort should have been made to clear the streets, by the use of firearms if necessary, but, if proper action had been taken in time, there is strong reason to believe that firing would not have been necessary. The loss of lives of law-abiding citizens and the wanton destruction of much property were the direct results of the weakness displayed on these two occasions.

96. Presumably the orders which were issued from the Police Control Room for a force of police to carry out a drive from Bras Basah Road towards the Mosque were given by Mr. Wiltshire personally. As we have shown, the drive was a dismal failure because of the attitude of the Malay rank and file. The task should obviously have been entrusted to the Gurkha Contingent. Mr. Wiltshire does not appear to have received any information of the failure of the drive, but it was the duty of the officers on the spot to make sure that he did realize the position.

97. It appears, from Mr. Wiltshire's own evidence, that, even though the information which he received during the afternoon of the 11th December was inadequate and in some cases exaggerated or misleading, he did know by 2.20 p.m. when he arrived at the Radio Control Centre, of the revolver shots fired in front of the Supreme Court. At 2.45 p.m. he knew that there was rioting in Beach Road and that by 3 p.m. five cases of assault had been reported. Mr. Glossop, a Cadet Assistant Superintendent, said that he spoke personally to the Acting Commissioner at about 3 p.m. and informed him of an attack on a military policeman near the Sultan Mosque and on a Punjabi sergeant (No. 2207) who had fired five rounds from his revolver in defence of a jeep and had been badly injured by the mob. At about 3.30 p.m. Mr. Livett, the Deputy Commissioner of the Uniform Branch, informed him personally on the telephone of the rioting in front of the Sultan Mosque and in the course of this conversation he told him that the Malay police were "useless". Between 3.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. Mr. Wiltshire received several situation reports from Mr. Livett in which he said that he understood that the situation was deteriorating and that small bands of rioters were stoning cars and running away whenever a riot squad appeared. Throughout the remainder of the afternoon he received information of continued rioting, of buses being stopped and cars overturned, of people being injured and of two attempts of crowds to march up Thomson Road towards the Convent of the Good Shepherd. A detailed statement of the information which Mr. Wiltshire admits having received between his arrival at the Radio Control Room at 2.20 p.m. and his calling in of the Military in the late evening will be found in Appendix I. A copy of the record kept personally by Mr. Wiltshire appears at Appendix J. This record is very far from complete for, as Mr. Wiltshire pointed out, it was only when the pressure of calls for him momentarily abated that he was able to record anything.

98. Obviously the information reaching Mr. Wiltshire was scrappy and incomplete, but it was sufficient to indicate that rioting, accompanied by assaults on citizens and serious damage to vehicles, was in progress and showed signs of spreading. Nevertheless, when Mr. Wiltshire spoke on the telephone to the Colonial Secretary during the afternoon, as he did on several occasions, he assured him that he was confident of being able to control the situation. He stated in evidence that he did not, at this time, know how serious the injuries to persons were but, if this were so, we think he should have made it his business to find out. The fact that he knew at about 3.30 p.m. that Mr. Livett and other senior officers had been driven out of the Mosque area by showers of stones and bottles should alone have given him some idea of the severity of the attacks.

99. Mr. Wiltshire stated in evidence that he did not realize that the Malay police were adopting a passive attitude until after dark on the 11th December but, in our opinion, on the information available to him, he should have reached that conclusion much earlier. On the morning of the



11th December he had been informed by the Welfare Officer that the Malay police had asked for permission to subscribe to the fund which was being raised to help Che Aminah in her fight for the custody of Maria Hertogh, and this unusual request should, in itself, have put him on his guard, and at least suggested to him the likelihood that there was some connection between the spread of the rioting on the afternoon of the 11th December and the sympathy which existed between Muslim opinion and the Malay police over the Hertogh case. Admittedly, the information reaching Mr. Wiltshire was incomplete and, in fact, the only report to him on this subject that we can trace was the one made by Mr. Livett at 3.30 p.m. to the effect that the Malay police were "useless". Mr. Wiltshire stated that he thought that this meant that they were slow or indolent, but he did not get the impression that they were reluctant to do their duty. It seems strange to us that neither Mr. Wiltshire nor Mr. Livett considered that a clearer definition of this expression during the course of the conversation would have served some useful purpose. Mr. Livett's report, together with Mr. Wiltshire's previous knowledge of the sympathy which the Malay police felt for Che Aminah, should in our opinion, have put Mr. Wiltshire on immediate inquiry. If, therefore, we accept Mr. Wiltshire's statement that he did not realize that the Malay police had failed until late on the evening of the 11th December, we are bound to add that, in our opinion, he should have done so long before. The only information which caused Mr. Wiltshire to appreciate realities was that with regard to the threatened attack on the Beach Road Police Station, but the situation generally was completely out of hand long before that.

100. An officer in charge of a situation such as faced Mr. Wiltshire that afternoon must always be torn between the desire to go out and see the situation on the ground for himself and a feeling that, if he leaves his control centre, some urgent matter may crop up on which his decision is required. In deciding which course to adopt, an officer will often be influenced by the presence or absence of a reliable subordinate to leave in charge of the control room in his absence, if he decides to go out, and it may be that Mr. Wiltshire felt that on this occasion he had no one of sufficient experience to leave in charge. If that were so, and if he thought that the information which he was receiving by the ordinary communications channels was inadequate, it was open to him to instruct one or more gazetted officers to carry out personal reconnaissance on his behalf. No attempt appears to have been made to do this and when Mr. Anderson, one of his Superintendents, who is the Staff Officer I at Police Headquarters and who was on casual leave at the time, rang up at 5.15 p.m. and offered to come on duty, having heard of the rioting by accident, he was instructed to stand by in his quarters until sent for. He was not sent for until 5 a.m. the next day.

101. As we have already stated, during the afternoon of the 11th December, Mr. Wiltshire had several telephone conversations with the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Blythe, and, on each occasion he assured Mr. Blythe that the situation was within police control. We have considered whether any responsibility attaches to Mr. Blythe for the failure to call out the Military earlier on the afternoon of the 11th December, and have concluded that he was entitled to rely on Mr. Wiltshire's accounts of the position, and on Mr. Wiltshire's repeated assurances that the Police were fully capable of dealing with the situation which had developed. The responsibility for the failure to seek military aid earlier must, in our opinion, rest entirely with Mr. Wiltshire.

102. Mr. Wiltshire gave as his reason for not calling for military assistance earlier the fact that he considered it essential that order should be restored by the action of the Police Force alone. The afternoon of the 11th December was the first occasion for a long time on which the Police had been called upon to use force in the suppression of disorder. If they failed against what appeared to him to be only bands of hooligans, the Force would be discredited and would no longer be an effective instrument for maintaining security against the far greater dangers of Communist violence which were latent in Singapore. We see no force in this reasoning. The failure to call in the Military earlier exposed the morale and reputation of the Police Force to far greater risks than those which Mr. Wiltshire visualized. Mr. Wiltshire has an excellent record as a police officer, both in the Federation of Malaya and in Singapore. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why he failed to grapple with the situation. We can only assume that he was overwhelmed by the rush of events.

103. The Radio Control Centre, which has been described in paragraph 15 above, is said to be adequate for all normal communications traffic, but it seems clear that on the afternoon of the 11th December, it was swamped with messages and that a good deal of confusion resulted. The result was that Mr. Wiltshire was subjected to a barrage of messages with which he could not possibly deal personally. He admits that there were no arrangements for filtering these messages and ensuring that he received only those which were of importance, but there seems no reason why, even at that late stage, he could not have improvised a filter to separate the important from the routine, the trivial and the hysterical.

104. In addition to the failure of the communications system to provide a full and clear picture of the situation at the Radio Control Centre, there seems to have been a lamentable lack of information passed from the Control Centre to the Beach Road Police Station, where Mr. Livett was acting as the officer in charge of the operations on the ground. There is no indication that Mr. Livett received any information beyond that which he collected himself from officers operating from the Beach Road Police Station.

105. The Criminal Investigation Department cannot be held blameless. On the evening of the 12th December, 1950, Mr. Morris, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department had discussions with Mr. M. J. Namazie, a member of the Mohamedan Advisory Board, and with the Chief Kathi of the Sultan Mosque. Mr. Morris informed them that, according to all the information which he had received, the Sultan Mosque itself was the focal point of the rioting and that rioting was likely to continue until the Mosque itself was cleared of disorderly elements. This led to the Mosque and its grounds being searched by the Police in the presence of the Chief Kathi at noon next day, when a .303 Lee Enfield rifle, 40 rounds of ammunition, and a quantity of bottles, sticks, staves and brickbats were found on the premises. Subsequent events and information received confirmed the fact that the focal point of the rioting throughout was the Mosque, and it is regrettable that Mr. Morris did not seek the co-operation of Mr. Namazie and the Chief Kathi at a much earlier stage.

106. The failures of the Police Higher Command may be summarized as follows:—

- (i) Failure of the senior officers at the Supreme Court and at the Sultan Mosque and, in the later stages, of the Acting Commissioner, to take vigorous measures to disperse the rioters by the use of the Gurkha Contingent.



- (ii) Failure of the Acting Commissioner to appreciate the realities of the situation until nearly 7 p.m.
- (iii) The omission of the Acting Commissioner to make good the lack of adequate information, which arose to a large extent from the failure of the Malay crews of the radio cars, either by personal reconnaissance or by sending out Staff Officers to reconnoitre and report.
- (iv) The failure of the Acting Commissioner to appreciate the significance of the information which he had with regard to the attitude and behaviour of the Malay police.
- (v) The failure of the Acting Commissioner to improvise a filter for the large volume of messages received at the Radio Control Centre in order to sift the important from the unimportant.
- (vi) Failure of the Acting Commissioner to give to the Colonial Secretary full and frank reports of the situation.
- (vii) Refusal by the Acting Commissioner of offers of Military aid at 3.40 p.m. and 5.50 p.m.
- (viii) The belated action of the Criminal Investigation Department in searching the Sultan Mosque.

107. One explanation of much of the lack of grasp and quick decision on the part of senior officers may lie in the fact that many of them were interned for over three and a half years during the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Such a long period of moral and physical strain cannot have failed to leave its mark on some of them.

108. Our criticisms of the handling by certain senior police officers of the various situations which developed on the 11th December, cast no reflection on the personal courage of any of the officers mentioned. Many of the younger gazetted officers concerned in the riots, notably Mr. Cowan, Mr. Glossop and Mr. Abrams, showed conspicuous qualities of efficiency, initiative and personal bravery. Devotion to duty in the face of danger also marked the conduct during the riots of Inspector Retnasingham, Inspector Sheik Abdul Majid, Sergeant Yar Mohamed, Detective Major Singh and the sergeant whose number is 204 but whose name was not supplied. We do not wish to suggest that these qualities are not possessed by other officers, but we can mention only those whose conduct came to our notice.

## PART XII

### ERROR IN APPRECIATION OF SITUATION BEFORE THE 11TH DECEMBER

109. Evidence was given before us by the Police to the effect that the outbreak of violence on the 11th December was unexpected. We accept it that this opinion was honestly held, but that does not preclude consideration of whether that opinion was based on a proper appreciation of all the facts available.

110. The Police appreciation of the situation on the 11th December seems largely to have been influenced by the fact that no disorders had occurred outside the Supreme Court when Mr. Justice Brown delivered his judgment of the 2nd December, but many new factors had emerged to inflame Muslim opinion in the interval between the 2nd and the 11th December. Maria was not placed in the convent until the 3rd December and the public outside the Supreme Court on the 2nd December had not yet had their emotions aroused by the press photographs and articles dealing with Maria's life in the convent, to which we refer in paragraph 33. The violent campaign of misrepresentation conducted by the *Melayu Raya* did not begin until the 4th December; the first free issue of Karim Ghani's newspaper *Dawn*, entirely devoted to the Hertogh case, did not appear until the 9th which was also the day on which the Nadra Action Committee was formed. Karim Ghani's provocative speech mentioning "Jihad" or "Holy war", to which we refer in paragraph 38, was delivered at the Sultan Mosque on the 8th December. While it is easy to be wise after the event, we cannot but conclude that a proper appreciation of all the new factors which emerged between the 2nd and 11th December should have put the Police on their guard against serious trouble. The responsibility for the faulty appreciation of the likelihood of danger must lie with the Criminal Investigation Department, and particularly with the Special Branch.

111. The police officers who gave evidence before us stated that they saw no reason to expect a defection of the Malay rank and file on the 11th December. But the fact that the Malay police were in sympathy with Che Aminah was certainly known to Karim Ghani, as the issue of *Dawn* of the 9th December made it clear, and on the 11th December the Malay rank and file of the Police had even requested permission through their Welfare Officer to subscribe to the fund which was being raised to help Che Aminah to bear the costs of the legal proceedings then pending. If the significance of these facts had been promptly appreciated and communicated to all officers who were on duty in the streets on the 11th December, it might have enabled those officers to realize that their apathy became apparent—that is when Mr. Linsell's men failed to halt the procession carrying banners outside the Supreme Court at about 10 a.m. on the 11th December. As it was, no officer of the Uniform Division on duty with the Malay police on the 11th December seems to have been able to make the simple deduction that the rank and file had no intention of carrying out their duty, because their sympathies lay with the rioters, and to convey that deduction to Mr. Wiltshire in unambiguous terms until well into the afternoon.



112. On the 2nd December, the security arrangements made in the Supreme Court area had depended largely on the Gurkha Contingent, but, in the far more explosive situation which existed on the 11th December, no provision was made for the Gurkhas to be at the Supreme Court from the start of the proceedings. We can only conclude that their initial absence was due, either to a completely faulty appreciation of the relative dangers existing on the 2nd and the 11th December, or to the misguided belief that the presence of Gurkhas outside the Supreme Court might intensify feeling and so provoke rioting rather than prevent it. The concluding address of Counsel for the Police suggested that the Police decision on this point was influenced by the issues of *Dawn* of the 9th and 11th, in which Karim Ghani had made it clear that he regarded the presence of the Gurkhas outside the Supreme Court on the 2nd December as an affront.

113. The question also arises whether the Government of Singapore should not have taken action under the Emergency Regulations to detain Karim Ghani and the Nadra Action Committee before the outbreak of the rioting, for there is no doubt that, in the light of subsequent events, trouble would have been avoided if such action had been taken earlier. However, as the Government had no indication from the Police that violence was likely to result from the activities of the Nadra Action Committee, it is difficult to see what justification there could have been for earlier action in the circumstances existing at the time.

### PART XIII

#### FACTORS TENDING TO LOWER MORALE AND REDUCE EFFICIENCY IN THE POLICE FORCE

114. As we have shown, it became apparent at a very early stage of the Inquiry that there was grave dereliction of duty on the part of the Malay rank and file of the Police Force, deployed before riotous mobs, at the beginning and in the course of the disorders. There can be no doubt that the main reason why they refused to discharge their responsibilities lay in the sympathy which existed between them and the rioters over the Hertogh case, but it was made clear to us that there were other factors at work which tended to lower morale and reduce efficiency in the Police Force generally, thereby laying the rank and file more open to subversive influences.

115. A true appreciation of the condition of the Singapore Police Force and the lack of morale, which undoubtedly existed at the time of the riots, can be obtained only by considering it against the background composed of (i) the difficulties arising directly and indirectly from the effects of the occupation of the Colony by the Japanese; (ii) the problems inseparable from the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation necessitated by the occupation and (iii) the outbreak in June, 1948, of the campaign of violence by Communist bandits in the Federation of Malaya and the proclamation in the Colony of a state of emergency as a result of Communist activities in Singapore itself.

#### EFFECTS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

116. Singapore was occupied by the Japanese for over three and a half years. At the time of the re-occupation, such remnants of the pre-war Straits Settlements Police Force as had continued to serve under the Japanese are said to have been in a deplorable state. Their uniforms had mostly disappeared, their barracks were filthy and their discipline had gone. They were paid, we are told, a pittance on the tacit understanding that they could supplement this by corrupt means provided they were not found out. The conduct of the contingent of about 300 Sikhs, maintained before the war as a reserve for use in the event of disorders, is stated to have been "unsatisfactory" at the time of the Japanese occupation and the contingent was disbanded. By the time that the more undesirable elements of the pre-war force had been weeded out, the remainder were not very numerous.

#### PROBLEMS OF RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

117. The result has been that, since the war, the Singapore Police Force has had to be rebuilt practically afresh and, of necessity, the Force is both young and inexperienced. No less than two-thirds of the rank and file have joined the force since September 1945. Many of these are young Malays who left school at the age of 14 and then worked on their farms and rice fields before joining the Police at the age of 18, after spending their formative years during the period of the Japanese occupation. Mr. Foulger stated that, at the time of his handing over to Mr. Wiltshire in November 1950, one-third of the gazetted officers were new to police work and, out



of 123 Inspectors, only 15 had been Inspectors before the war. A strong cadre of seasoned and trustworthy non-commissioned officers is one of the most important requirements for the proper training of young and inexperienced rank and file and this is precisely what, in the circumstances created by the war, the Singapore Police Force has lacked. The position has been still further weakened by the disappearance of the stiffening of British Inspectors employed before the war.\*

#### THE EFFECTS OF THE PRESENT EMERGENCY IN MALAYA

118. A further difficulty in the proper training of the post-war entry has been caused by the interruptions arising from the necessity of finding men for numerous extra duties connected with the emergency, which arose in June, 1948, and for giving assistance to the Federation of Malaya Police. The following two examples show how serious some of these interruptions were:—

- (i) In the latter part of 1949 the whole of the Gurkha Contingent, of which the first party had arrived in Singapore only in March that year and which was then in the process of being trained, was sent to assist in the operations against bandits in Malaya, in spite of a protest from the Commissioner of Police, who was on leave in England at the time.
- (ii) Early in 1950 a force of about 450 officers and men was sent to the Federation of Malaya for "anti-bandit month" and this necessitated their being away from Singapore for two months. Moreover, although Malacca, the traditional pre-war recruiting ground of the Straits Settlements Police Force, is still open to recruitment for Singapore, the greatly increased demands for the Police and for the Malay Regiment in the Federation of Malaya, of which Malacca now forms a part, has meant that the Singapore Police has had difficulty in obtaining sufficient recruits there of the right stamp.

#### CORRUPTION

119. Several senior police officers, including Mr. Foulger, the former Commissioner, and Mr. Wiltshire, frankly admitted to us that corruption has been, and still is, widespread in the Force since the Japanese occupation. This cannot but have a most deplorable effect on morale.

#### PAY, ALLOWANCES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

120. We do not regard it as being a part of our task to enter into a detailed examination of the scales of pay and allowances authorized for the Police Force. We gained the impression, however, from evidence given by some senior officers, that the rank and file of the force are underpaid in comparison with the rates of remuneration in comparable occupations outside the Force. If this opinion is well founded, it is unnecessary to look further for the primary cause either of the corruption or of the low morale, which are admitted to characterize the rank and file of the Force. It is axiomatic that the minimum price of integrity and devotion to duty in the rank and file of a police force is a scale of remuneration sufficient to shield its members from temptation, and we think there are grounds for doubting whether this price is being paid in Singapore at present.

\* See paragraph 13 above on the subject of the creation, since the riots, of 60 posts in the new rank of Police Lieutenant.

121. Coupled with the possibility that the rank and file of the police are underpaid there is the certainty that they are over-worked, or, at any rate, that they have been kept on duty for an excessive number of hours. It is startling to find in present times that apart from their annual leave, they have no rest days at all, and work a seven-day week. In times of emergency, they have apparently been called upon to work an eight hour day, seven days a week, for protracted periods. Such long hours of duty, unrelieved by periodical rest days, would be indefensible in temperate climates; in the tropics it is even worse. Moreover, many of the men who are not provided with quarters and who are in consequence obliged to live at considerable distances from their respective police stations suffer the additional hardship of travelling time which does not count as duty. The daily hours of duty have now been reduced to six, but we are convinced that a system which does not normally allow a man a day free from duty at regular intervals must blunt keenness and eventually tend to lower morale.

#### HOUSING

122. The present housing position has been described in paragraph 22. Senior police officers, who gave evidence before us, laid great emphasis on the desirability of having all members of the rank and file housed in family quarters and barracks attached to police stations. They stated that this arrangement makes for greater contentment and they pointed out that it makes it much easier to instil and maintain discipline, to protect their men from undesirable and subversive influences and to check corruption. In addition the men are more readily available in an emergency and are not obliged to waste time in travelling to and from their work. The policy of housing policemen in "police colonies" does not generally commend itself in Great Britain, but we think that, in the different circumstances of a town like Singapore, the policy advocated is sound. Mr. Foulger, when Commissioner of Police, made repeated and urgent representations to the Government of the Colony on the subject, and, while we do not feel that we are concerned with the technical difficulties of finding funds and the necessary allocations of Public Works Department Services to build the additional barracks and quarters, we were left with the impression that there has been little sense of urgency on the part either of the Government or of the Finance Committee which deals with such matters. At all events, the only progress made so far is the inclusion in the current year's estimates of half the cost of the projects put forward by Mr. Foulger.

123. We are satisfied that there are no grounds for believing that lack of sufficient quarters was an important factor in the failure of the majority of the Malay rank and file to do their duty during the riots. Indeed, the police witnesses themselves do not support this and it is significant that the conduct of the Malay ranks of the Internal Security Battalions which suffer from lack of quarters in a similar degree, was beyond reproach. None the less, we think that there may be some ground for the contention that failure on the part of Government to provide quarters or to pay adequate rent allowance in lieu may have been a contributory cause of the low morale of the Malay members of the Police Force. It is obvious that policemen who are forced to live in undesirable surroundings must at times be subjected to subversive influences.



#### DELAYS IN SETTLING PENSIONS CLAIMS

124. Our attention was invited to a number of instances of delay in the payment of pensions and gratuities to dependants of policemen killed in the execution of their duty, and the Solicitor-General, on behalf of the Government, put in a statement which had been agreed between the Deputy Financial Secretary and the Commissioner of Police, setting out the facts of various recent cases. It is unfortunate that this was not put in until the last day's hearing, when we were unable to examine the Deputy Financial Secretary about some of its contents. The statement admits that undue delays occurred in several cases and mentions that arrangements are being made to enable cases of this kind to be dealt with more expeditiously in the future. It does not explain why arrangements were not made long ago to make interim payments in cases which seem *prima facie* to be covered by the Pensions Regulations and to make necessary adjustments after a more detailed examination of the claim. A passage in the agreed statement reads:—

Pensions have to be most carefully gone into in order that the pensioners may not be overpaid; in which case any refund would be an embarrassment to them, or underpaid, which would be equally embarrassing.

While we can understand embarrassment being caused by over-payment and subsequent recovery, we are at a loss to understand how embarrassment would be caused by under-payment, provided, of course, that short payments are made up with reasonable celerity.

125. One of the cases of delay brought to our notice was that of Inspector Retnasingham, who died of injuries received in the riots which are the subject of this Inquiry. On the morning of Saturday, the 24th February, we happened to ask whether a pension had been granted to this officer's dependants. No answer was forthcoming at the time, but we were subsequently informed by the Solicitor-General on the instructions of the Government, and the agreed statement confirms this, that a pension was approved for his mother on the morning of Saturday, 24th February. It was a remarkable coincidence.

126. Perhaps the worst of the cases mentioned in the statement is that of three constables, who, on the night of the 24th July, 1950, were knocked down and killed by a motor car driven by a drunken driver while they were controlling crowds at the scene of a factory fire. The Attorney-General, in forwarding the papers claiming pensions for the widows, expressed the view that the case was covered by the regulations. This did not, however, satisfy the Director of Audit in Kuala Lumpur, to whom pension claims have apparently to be passed before payment can be made. His minute is such an extraordinary one that we quote it in full:—

As the policemen were on duty at that particular spot conditions (a) and (b) of Pensions Regulation 19A clearly apply. But as regards condition (c) the cause of death cannot be said to be specifically attributable to the nature of their duties. In other words, it is not clear that the cause of death was more than indirectly due to the nature of the deceased's duties which were to keep the crowd from going down the steps.

In view of the above, I should like amplification of the Hon. A.G.'s statement that the circumstances of the death are specifically attributable to the nature of the duty of the deceased. It might be justifiably argued that condition (c) would apply if the deceased had been struck by lightning while on duty.

If the Director of Audit's interpretation of the regulation is correct, we would venture to suggest that a regulation which produces such callous

results is in urgent need of revision. It would be difficult to imagine a clearer case of policemen being killed in the performance of, and by reason of performing, their duty.

127. On the 24th November, 1950, that is to say, four months after these three men were killed, Mr. Wiltshire addressed to the Colonial Secretary a strong letter about this case, in which he said:—

This apparent disregard for the interests of those who have been killed on active duty, is having the gravest effect on the morale of the Police Force, who are given cause for considerable anxiety concerning their own dependants.

The letter had the desired effect, for directions for payment were given on the 29th November, 1950.

128. These matters may not seem to be of any great importance or urgency to officials who have to deal with them, but such instances of lack of concern for their welfare circulate rapidly among members of a police force and have an important bearing on morale. It is, after all, natural, as the Acting Commissioner of Police pointed out in his letter from which we have just quoted, that a man should be less willing to risk his life in the execution of his duty if he has good grounds for thinking that an ungrateful Government will leave his widow destitute or, at best, keep her waiting for her pension for months after his death.

#### LACK OF TOUCH AND OF SUPERVISION BY GAZETTED OFFICERS

129. One of the reasons put forward by some senior police officers for the low morale of the rank and file of the force was the lack of touch and the inadequate supervision by gazetted officers. This state of affairs is attributed to shortage of gazetted officers and to the large amount of paper work which keeps officers tied to their desks—a complaint which is not peculiar to Singapore. We have no doubt that the lack of touch and inadequate supervision were factors which contributed in no small degree to the failure of the Malay police of the Uniform Branch to do their duty during the riots. It is very significant that the Malay rank and file of the Internal Security Battalions, which had adequate complements of officers with time to devote to keeping in close touch with their men, behaved extremely well when employed in quelling the riots, as did the small complement of Malays in the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police Force, which has a much larger proportion of gazetted officers to rank and file than the Uniform Branch.

#### SENSE OF INFERIORITY ENGENDERED BY FAVOURED POSITION OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

130. The Criminal Investigation Department is in a favoured position in relation to the remainder of the Force. Indicative of this is the fact that, out of nine senior officers (excluding the Commissioner) of and above the rank of Superintendent, no less than four are allotted to the Criminal Investigation Department, although its numerical strength is only about one-eleventh of the total strength of the force. The former Acting Commissioner admitted in evidence that the Criminal Investigation Department had the pick of the force. The members of the Criminal Investigation Department of any force must, of course, be specially selected, but this is not the same as giving this Department all the best men, and we think