

Malaya A.Milward 1951-52

Recollections of a surrendered Chinese Communist Bandit, with whom I spent many hours chatting to as he spoke very good English and was very friendly.

I first asked him how he became involved with the communist terrorists fighting in the jungle, this was his story.

" I was working at a tin mine, but became very unhappy, my boss made my life a complete misery and I hated every minute of every day.

One day a worker at the mine could see how unhappy I was and said, 'why don't you join our comrades in the jungle and help to drive the British out of Malaya?'

He made it sound so exciting, plenty of food, girls, a good time and no nasty bosses. He talked me into giving it a try, and arranged with the bandits to come to the edge of the jungle and take me into their camp, deep in the jungle.

This was the biggest mistake of my life! I had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. To start with, everyone was starving, the only woman belonged to the gang leader who was very vicious and ordered that anyone trying to leave the camp would be shot.

I was now in a desperate state and was trying to find a way out of the mess I had put myself in. Eventually I decided on a very risky plan, it was to make myself seriously ill, as I knew that a sick bandit was a hindrance to the rest of the gang.

I proceeded to eat berries that I knew to be poisonous, and as a result became very ill. The gang leader instructed that I was to be taken to the edge of the jungle, and I was to make my way to the nearest village and report to the local doctor who was an undercover communist supporter, but unknown to the police.

When I had been treated and returned to health, I was to return to camp in the jungle, but instead of going to the doctor I gave myself up to the police, who promptly passed me over to the military. As soon as I was able to do so, I lead a British patrol to the bandit camp and an engagement ensued. From that moment on I was a condemned man, known to all the local people including many undercover communist supporters, and also the bandit death squads who were there to eliminate any police informers.

As a result, for my own safety, I was given accommodation in a military base camp and agreed to act as a guide to lead the British troops to the camps in the jungle that I had visited while being with the bandits.

I was also asked if I would agree to pick out any communist undercover suspect villagers and rubber tappers, from the safety of an armed troop carrier. I fulfilled all the requests of the military commands then was given a new identity and safe passage to a place of my choice".

It so happened that the young bandit when he regained his health, was handed over to the 1st Btn Worcestershire

Reg, of which I was a regimental signaller, attached to any jungle patrol that required one. The mission of the jungle patrol I was with, was to assist the young bandit in locating the camp deep in the jungle where he had been a member of a group of communist bandits.

He led the way through the jungle until we were getting closer to the camp, then handed over to our leading scout, who was armed with a Bren light machine gun.

The patrol lads were travelling light so that they could move fast down the narrow pig trail, while I had a 68 Wireless set with a heavy battery to carry as well as my rifle and 50 rounds etc. Suddenly a burst of firing came from the front of the patrol, and I was left all alone as the lads raced into the camp after the bandits.

I had no choice but to follow the path into the camp which was empty apart from at least five escape trails, strewn with discarded weapons, packs etc. As I was unable to help the lads in their clash with the bandits, I proceeded to explore what was in the packs which was mainly items to help them survive in the jungle. One pack contained anti British propoganda, which had been printed on a printing press set up in a bandit camp somewhere in the jungle.

I could not let an opportunity like this pass unnoticed, as the leaflets helped me to understand the reason for my being stuck in the middle of the Malayan jungle, more than 10,000 miles from home and liable to be killed at any moment! So I promptly acquired a few samples of the leaflets to take home if ever I made it.

I collected the rifle, ammunition, packs and Japanese grenades etc together, and waited for the lads of the patrol to come back to the bandit camp, and then return to our base camp.

It never ceases to amaze me when I think back to that incident in the jungle that I few days later I received a letter from my mother with a clip from the Sentinel Evening News describing the event that I had just been involved in! The date was Whit Sun June 1st and Whit Monday June 2nd 1952.

See copies of the actual documents taken from the bandit packs after a skirmish with our patrol.





Andrew Milward.

Chemor

1952

A platoon of the Worcestershire Regiment patrolling in the Ipoh area of Perak found an occupied camp under construction. There was an immediate exchange of fire during which one terrorist was wounded. He managed to escape with the rest of the gang. A rifle, ammunition, a grenade and six packs were recovered.

Terrorists burned an estate here in the Jelebu district of Negri Sembilan on Monday morning.

A report from Kuala Trengganu states that a number of suspected terrorist agents have been arrested.

1952.

Evening Sentinel
Paper

Another story involving the surrendered bandit I was friendly with.

The story starts way back in 1941 when the Japanese troops invaded Malaya, and most of the British troops were forced to surrender.

A few of our officers had prepared for this, and had made provisions with the gangs of Chinese communist troops who had fled into the jungle to engage in a guerrilla war against the Japanese troops.

Our officers arranged for air drops of arms, ammunition, and explosives to be stored in dumps ready for use as required. The trouble started when the war ended with Japan, the Chinese bandits refused to hand over the British guns etc and started killing English rubber planters, traders, and then our service men. Hence the anti British propaganda leaflets that I obtained from the packs in the bandit camp.

The British Briggs plan was the denial as much as possible, the supply of food from the native local farmers who had cleared areas of the jungle, to the bandits. Any crops and buildings were to be burnt (See Leaflet) . All the local people were gathered together into camps called (Kampongs), surrounded by high watch towers and barbed wire, there were large gates where everyone was searched, going in and coming out. At night everywhere was lit up with high power lamps, which leads up to the next part of the story.

It was explained to me by my bandit friend as we rested on the side of a steep hill, overlooking a Kampong , just how the bandits managed to obtain food from the Kampong without the guards knowing.. The Kampongs were mainly square with high observation towers on each corner, with powerful lamps high up on the guard platform, arranged in a square pattern, eg Top Left space Top Right . Bottom Left space, Bottom Right .

Which can be arranged to form a code, for example an inside communist supporter could switch off any of four bulbs for a short while, which could mean, Top Left out, it is safe to come down and collect food, or other prearranged codes. This system must have worked for quite a while, until fate decreed otherwise for a young Chinese bandit.

The story starts when I was with a patrol just returning from a mission in the foot hills overlooking Ipoh, It had been a six day patrol and nearly all our food had run out, as we approached the Kampong near to our base camp our Iban tracker detected two large metal tins concealed in the undergrowth. On investigation they were found to contain rice.

Our officer decided to leave two young lads of our patrol in ambush positions, with orders to open fire on anyone approaching the tins of rice, and we would return with supplies as soon as possible.. We had just arrived back in our base camp, which was nearby, when gunfire was heard coming from the ambush site, Immediately a fresh patrol was formed and raced to the ambush site, to find a dead bandit and to escort the two lads back to our base camp.

The bandit was taken to our base camp, tied to a 15cwt truck on a pole. I shall never forget looking at the young bandits brains slowly forming a pyramid on the concrete floor. Before feeling sorry for the dead bandit, please spare a thought for the young lads who had to kill another young lad, In cold blood! ?.

To counterbalance the above incident, I was asked a few days later, if I would volunteer to act as a pallbearer to a young (Conscripted) British Soldier who had just been killed by the bandits. I had to decline as I had started with Dysentery, and was going into hospital for treatment. One of my mates took over my place as pallbearer.

When he came back from the Military Cemetery in Singapore his best uniform was stained with the young soldiers blood.!



My Iban friend from Borneo. See picture.

I got to know this Iban very well, and we spent a lot of time chatting together.

He explained, that he had come to Malaya with the sole purpose of obtaining a head, to prove his manhood

He was now very sad as his contract with the British army had come to an end, and he had to return to Borneo "HEAD LESS ".His only possessions were his army pay, and his head hunters parang, which he prized.

He then asked me if I would buy the parang from him, we agreed on a price and shook hands on it. Then off back to Borneo with a smile on his face, to his Dusky Maiden.

I often think about him, and wonder if he still retains HIS head. Which leads me to say that he nearly had my head to take back to Borneo, the story is that a 15cwt truck was to take our patrol to a stop off point down a rough unmade track, we were packed like sardines in a can, our rifles pointing to the sky and pressing into our sides, my Iban Friend? had his rifle very close to my head and he had a round up the spout and his finger on the trigger. When the truck went down in a rut, his finger pressed the trigger and the blast went right up the side of my face, he gave me a big smile, and most likely thought Better luck next time