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**'*Voice of the Malayan Revolution*':
The Communist Party of Malaya's
Struggle for Hearts and Minds
in the 'Second Malayan Emergency'
(1969-1975)**

Ong Wei Chong

Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies

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ABSTRACT

This working paper is the inaugural attempt at the examination, interpretation and analysis of the Communist Party of Malaya's (CPM) first serious endeavour at Strategic Propaganda; *The Voice of the Malayan Revolution* (*VMR*). Accessing the *VMR* transmission transcripts for the very first time, the objective of this study is to examine, interpret and analyze the CPM's most sophisticated attempt at mass ideological conversion and relate it to the revolutionary struggle of the Malayan Communists. As a corollary, this study will establish that the methods and nature of Revolutionary Psywar are very different from those practiced by Western democracies. This study will further prove that the Western 'words and deeds' model is highly inadequate for the purpose of explaining Revolutionary Psywar; which adopts the 'thought determines action' approach. However this work is not an authoritative study of the CPM's strategic propaganda efforts during the Second Malayan Emergency. Such an authoritative study would require an analysis of the effects of the CPM's mass persuasion campaign, and access to archival sources that are at this point in time, closed to public access. Nevertheless by providing an introductory glimpse into the *VMR*, this study hopes to generate an interest in a subject that has until now received scant attention.

Note: Whenever explicit quotation of the *VMR* transcript enclosure and page number is not possible, the author has endeavoured to provide an accurate a reference as is practicable.

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Ong Weichong is a recent graduate of the Masters in Strategic Studies programme at IDSS, where he also served as a Graduate Research Assistant with the Maritime Security and Revolution in Military Affairs programmes (2006). In addition, he holds a Certificate in History from the University of Hull, UK (2003), and a Bachelors in History from the University of East Anglia, UK (2005). His research interests include Military History, Imperial and Commonwealth History, Diplomatic History, International History , Strategic History and Strategic Thought, War Studies, Information Warfare, Media in Conflict, Revolution in Military Affairs, and Insurgency/Counter-insurgency. He is currently completing his Full-time National Service at HQ 6 Div.

A Revolution is an Idea Which Has Found its Bayonets - **Napoleon Bonaparte**

Chapter I: Introduction to the '*Voice of the Malayan Revolution*'

In the words of Julian Paget, the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) is a: 'classic example of a communist takeover bid, based on insurgency and guerrilla warfare'.[1] It is also a classic example of how an insurgency can be defeated by the state. The Malayan Emergency as a paradigm of a success in counter-insurgency (COIN) has become a term in itself in the COIN lexicon. As a corollary, there is in existence an extensive literature on the subject. Sir Gerard Templar's concept of 'winning hearts and minds', or in less euphemistic terms, the conduct of successful psychological warfare (Psywar) has been thoroughly dissected by scholars such as Susan Carruthers and Kumar Ramakrishna. However to date, not much academic work has been done on the 'Second Malayan Emergency' (1968-1989). The Communist Party of Malaya's (CPM) decisive defeat in 1960 has led many historians to overlook the 'Second Malayan Emergency' as a non-event and the historiography of this period, particularly that of the extensive propaganda campaign of the CPM is sorely lacking. Moreover any attempt at interpreting the psychological battles between the CPM and the State authorities has largely been through the minds of the 'Western Psywarrior' and not that of the 'Revolutionary Psywarrior'.

In the bid to shed some light on this much neglected period and theme in history, this paper shall examine the '*Voice of the Malayan Revolution*' (*VMR*); the first serious, concerted attempt by the CPM and their Chinese comrades to employ strategic propaganda to win the hearts and minds of Malaysians and Singaporeans, subvert their respective societies and states and bring about the establishment of a People's Republic of Malaya (PRM). The atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution in China provided the perfect opportunity for the CPM to resurrect its revolutionary activities in Malaya and set the stage for the emergence of the *VMR*. In his

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[1] Julian Paget, Emergency in Malaya, in Gerard Chaliand (ed.), *Guerrilla Strategies: A Historical Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982), p.270

autobiography, *My Side of the St*ory, Chin Peng, Secretary-General of the CPM wrote that:

Shortly before the Tonkin Gulf incident…I told the Chinese that the CPM had received Hanoi's agreement for the establishment of a clandestine broadcasting station in North Vietnam…Could they possibly supply the transmitting equipment? The answer…was a rejection…Thus my idea for starting up our own revolutionary radio network had run into a substantial brick wall…but the situation would turn positive for us in the long run…By late January 1967, we had seen Mao. We were to be given the radio station facilities we had been seeking for three years. [2]

The CPM's clandestine radio network made its first official broadcast on 15 November 1969, from a restricted Chinese military base in Hunan, China, under the codename Project 691, transmitting as '*Suara Revolusi Malaya*' or *VMR*. Chin Peng was the de facto force behind the *VMR*. He vetted all broadcast transcripts, and personally ran the station. The *VMR* broadcasts were made in all four common languages of the Malayan Peninsula: Malay, Chinese, English and Tamil while the total workforce of the station, including Chinese nationals, exceeded eighty.[3] The CPM's *VMR* campaign was in retrospect far more sophisticated than any of the propaganda methods employed by the Malayan Communists in the 'First Malayan Emergency'.

According to the Clandestineradio website, US$50 billion was spent by the Chinese in creating and maintaining the facilities between 1969-1981.[4] This piece of evidence reveals two compelling insights: Firstly, the aim of the MCP's revolutionary war in Malaya was more than just setting up a 'People's Republic' in Malaya, it was to be part of the greater Southeast-Asian revolution under the 'Red Banner' of Mao Tse-Tung. Secondly, subversive propaganda was an important weapon in the pan-global revolutionary war waged according to the precepts of Mao Tse-Tung thought. Two compelling reasons for embarking on this research topic thus emerges; the need

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[2]Chin Peng, *My Side of the St*ory, (Media Masters, Singapore, 2003), p.442-9
[3] C.C Chin & Karl Hack (ed), *Dialogues with Chin Peng: New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*, (Singapore University Press, Singapore 2004), p.368
[4] http://www.clandestineradio.com/intel/station.php?id=114&stn=258

to alleviate the dearth of research on revolutionary Psywar methods, and the significance of the particular period. With the spread of revolutionary fervour from the Chinese Communists to their Cambodian, Burmese, Thai, Laotian, Indonesian and Malayan comrades, the 1960s and early 70s was truly an era of revolutionary war in Southeast-Asia. The application of Psywar techniques in a revolutionary war not only of local but regional proportions makes the Second Malayan Emergency a compelling case study in the art of war. The 'Second Malayan Emergency' was certainly no non-event but part of a greater revolutionary war in Southeast-Asia.

The *VMR* transcripts examined in this discourse provide an unprecedented insight into the mindset of the CPM and indeed its CCP sponsors in the 1960s and 1970s, two decades which saw tumultuous changes in the global arena. 1969-1975 was for Southeast-Asia, a momentous period that bore witness to the following historically significant events particularly in the development of the Cold War in Southeast-Asia. In the Malayan Peninsula, 1969 marked the launch of the CPM's *VMR* campaign in tandem with the revival of its armed struggle. 1969 also heralded the initial reduction of U.S. ground forces in Vietnam that ultimately culminated in the complete withdrawal of the American presence from Indochina. By 1975, with Communist regimes ensconced in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the 'People's Revolutionary War' looked poised to overrun the whole of Southeast-Asia. Indeed by 1975, it did seem that the whole of Southeast-Asia was on the verge of turning Red. Considering the significant of this period, this study shall examine the *VMR* campaign from 1969-1975. In order to chart the *VMR* campaign in perspective of wider regional and global developments, this paper will adopt a chronological framework in its analysis. It will analyse the CPM's efforts at mass persuasion from 1969-1975, and its significance in the greater struggle to establish a socialist PRM in the respective chapters: Chapter II, which defines the concepts of Psywar; Chapter III will give an overview of the CPM's armed struggle in Malaya and Chapters IV to VI forming the chronological examination of the *VMR* transcripts proper. The key objective of this inaugural study of the *VMR* is thus to examine, interpret and analyze the CPM's most sophisticated attempt at mass ideological conversion and relate it to the revolutionary struggle of the Malayan Communists.

Drawing from empirical evidence provided by the *VMR* transcripts, it will be made evident that the CPM's campaign on the psychological battlefields of the Second Malayan Emergency was fought along the Maoist dictum that: 'thought determines action' rather than the 'words and deeds' approach advocated by western Psywar authorities such as Harold Lasswell and Philip Taylor.[5] Through the lenses of the *VMR*, we shall see that the Maoist and CPM's model of Psywar was one whereby the tenet, 'thought determines action', underpinned all efforts to create a 'new socialist man' in a 'new socialist state' for a 'new socialist order'. This paper will establish that the CPM's efforts at mass persuasion in Malaya, was attempted via the Maoist methodology of 'thought determines action', which in turn depended upon the constant reiteration and reinforcement of the five following messages: first, the CPM was a party of the masses both locally and globally; Second, the masses were being oppressed and neglected by the Singapore and Malaysian governments in favour of the capitalist elites and foreign powers; third, the practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism under the leadership of the CPM was the only way for the masses; fourth, the people of a small country can defeat aggression by a big country; and finally a call for the masses to unite under the CPM against their oppressors. As a corollary of the analysis, this paper shall prove that Psywar was an integral component of revolutionary war, and that the strategy and methodology of the 'Revolutionary Psywarrior' was fundamentally different in nature and scope from that of his western counterpart.

Chapter II: Psywar Defined and its Practice

According to William Daugherty, the term psywar first appeared in English in a 1941 text on the use of propaganda, fifth column activities, and terror by the Third Reich.[6] Psywar itself however is a modern name for an ancient strategy. The 'importance of destroying the enemy's will to fight' is stressed in Sun Tze's *The*

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[5] Frederick Yu, *Mass persuasion in Communist China*, (Pall Mall Press, London, 1964), p.4
[6] Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945-1960*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994), p.11

Art of War.[7] Paul Linebarger views psywar in its broadest sense as 'the application of parts of the science called psychology to the conduct of war'.[8] At the strategic level, Daniel Learner conceives Psywar as 'a struggle for the attention, beliefs, and loyalties of whole populations'.[9] Christopher Simpson further elaborates on the concept of psywar as 'a group of strategies and tactics designed to achieve the ideological, political, or military objectives of the sponsoring organization…through exploitation of a target audience's cultural-psychological attributes and its communication system'.[10] In short psywar can be defined as an instrument of war or struggle to influence the mind of the enemy for a strategic, operational or tactical purpose.

In Lasswellian terms, the 'most distinctive act' of Psywar is the use of 'means of mass communication in order to destroy the enemy's will to fight'.[11] Much along the same lines, Linebarger puts forth the notion that Psywar 'is simple enough to understand if it is simply regarded as application of propaganda to the purposes of war'.[12] To that end, Linebarger groups propaganda at all levels, strategic, operational and tactical into the following four categories: Conversionary Propaganda that is designed to change the allegiance of individuals from one group to another; Divisive Propaganda that is designed to split apart the enemy; Consolidation Propaganda that is designed to insure compliance and finally Counter-propaganda that is designed to refute enemy propaganda.[13] Propaganda can be further classified according to its source as: White (overt) propaganda, whereby the true source is clearly acknowledged; Black (covert) propaganda which originates from a source 'other than the true one'; and Gray propaganda which avoids identification.[14] If the objective of Psywar is to influence the mind, propaganda can be defined as an overt, covert or unidentified 'deliberate attempt to persuade People to think and behave in a desired way' through the forms of Conversionary, Divisive, Consolidation and

[7] Harold D Lasswell, Political and Psychological Warfare in William E Daugherty (ed), *A Psychological Warfare Cas*ebook, (John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1964), p.21
[8] Paul M.A.Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, (Arno Press, New York, 1972), p.25
[9] Daniel Lerner, *Psychological Warfare Against Nazi Germany: The Sykewar Campaign, D-Day to VE-Day*, (MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1971), p. 8
[10] Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion*, p.11
[11] Harold D Lasswell, *Political and Psychological Warfare*, p.22
[12] Paul M.A.Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, p.40
[13] Ibid, p.46
[14] William E Daugherty (ed), *A Psychological Warfare Cas*ebook, p.2

Counter Propaganda.[15] Philip Taylor argues that: 'if war is essentially an organized communication of violence, propaganda and psychological warfare are essentially organized processes of persuasion'.[16] Indeed propaganda is often taken for granted as the very embodiment of persuasion and of Psywar itself.

In introducing the concept that effective propaganda, or persuasive communication is the correlation of both words (psychological) and deeds (physical), Lasswell expounds that:

What we say to the masses through the instruments of communication can be effective, in the long run, when it is correlated with our deeds of diplomacy, economy, and strategy. Words without deeds are sooner or later falsified, even as deeds without words are often misunderstood.[17]

In concurrence Taylor adds that: '[Propaganda] works most effectively when words and deeds (the propaganda and the policy) are synchronous'.[18] Many scholars schooled in the Western thought of Psywar have thus used the concept of 'words and deeds' to define Psywar and as a metric of its success or failure. This analysis agrees that physical deeds by themselves do indeed communicate a message just as well as words and the 'propaganda of the deed' is in itself a 'powerful persuader'.[19] This analysis would go so far as to define propaganda as the total sum of words and deeds employed to influence the minds of a targeted audience. What this analysis does not concur with is the use of the 'words and deeds' concept as a paradigm on which on all forms and aspects of Psywar can be explained and used as a metric of its success or failure.

Since the end of the Second World War, Western military thinkers saw Psywar or Psyops, be they in the 'hearts and minds', or 'words and deeds' mould, largely as tactics to be employed in a theatre of operations, whereas Communist theoreticians regarded mass persuasion and political agitation as a key component of

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[15] Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003), p.6
[16] Ibid, p.9
[17] Daniel Lerner, *Psychological Warfare Against Nazi Germany*, p. 255
[18] Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, p.8
[19] Ibid

class struggle and the people's war. The objective of a Western Psywarrior is primarily to seek limited military or political gains without the use of military force. The aim of the Maoist Revolutionary Psywarrior however is to revolutionize the masses towards the complete destruction of an existing socio-economic-political-cultural system, and in its place establish a whole new way of life. Maoist Revolutionary Psywar in the form of mass persuasion is the one singularly crucial process upon which the success of revolution depends. Seeking to analyse and comprehend the Revolutionary way of Psywar by solely utilizing the Western 'words and deeds' approach is therefore to trip into the proverbial pitfall of comparing apples with oranges; particularly in the case of Maoist Psywar which was a new phenomenon both to the world and the global communist movement.

The Maoist method of Psywar is in essence mass persuasion utilizing 'all feasible vehicles of human expression and means of influence' in order to bring the largest possible number of people into close contact with the revolutionary Party.[20] Mao clearly understood that in order for mass persuasion to be effective, 'psychological warfare output must be a part of the everyday living and fighting of the audiences to which it is directed'.[21] According to Mao, communication must be to be 'from the masses to the masses'. Mao advocates that: "In all the practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily 'from the masses, to the masses'. This means: take the ideas of the masses…and concentrate them…then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own'.[22] To Mao everything depended on the masses which constituted both the audience and the vehicle of mass persuasion. The key to understanding Mao's revolutionary mass persuasion is the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist dictum that 'thought determines action' and that 'if people can be made to think correctly…they will naturally act correctly'.[23] Rather than synchronizing words with deeds, The Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Psywarrior operated on the principle that the thoughts of the masses must first be revolutionized upon which a new social, political, economic and cultural order would then emerge. Fundamental to the Chinese Revolution is

[20] Frederick Yu, *Mass persuasion in Communist China*, p.4
[21] Paul M.A.Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, p.26
[22] Mao Tse-tung, Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership (June 1943), Selected Works in *Mao Tse-tung on Revolution and War*, M. Rejai (ed), (Doubleday & Company, New York, 1969), p.282
[23] Frederick Yu, *Mass persuasion in Communist China*, p.4

the process of class struggle and the concept of class consciousness, thus the main purpose of propaganda is to 'awaken, heighten, and sharpen the class consciousness of the masses'.[24] In short, Maoist mass persuasion is the socialization of the minds creating the 'new Socialist man' for the building of the 'new Socialist state'.[25] Rather than seeking to influence a target audience through an effort coordinating 'words with deeds', the Maoist mass persuasion approach attempts to socialize the minds of the masses which in itself is an integral part of the greater proletariat revolution.

In the battle for the 'truth', propaganda is a potent psychological weapon that presented the platform for transforming aggrieved feelings into revolutionary thoughts and action. It must be noted that to a Revolutionary Psywarrior, half-truths were as good as the whole truth so long as they are persuasive enough to be credible, and most importantly persuasive enough to agitate the thoughts of the masses. The 'truth' is thus defined by the power to socialize the minds and actions of the masses rather than matching words with deeds. Revolutionary Psywar methodology is a blend of White, Black, Grey, Conversionary, Divisive, Consolidation and Counter Propaganda adapted to meet the requirements of a protracted revolutionary war. Revolutionary Psywar is in essence 'Plug and Play Psywar' which each component utilized according to the various scenarios and stages of the protracted revolutionary armed struggle.

Franklin Houn observes that frequent shifts in Maoist propaganda policy should not obscure the underlying consistency in its objectives underpinned by Marxist-Leninist doctrine and that any slight modifications should be rationalized as adaptations to the special conditions of the Chinese Revolution.[26] Houn's observation is useful in the analysis of both the CCP's and CPM's propaganda. If the Chinese Revolution was the adaptation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine to Chinese conditions, the CPM's armed struggle and strategic propaganda campaign in Malaya, exemplified the CPM's efforts to replicate the success of the Chinese Communists in Malaya. The significance of the role that propaganda played in the

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[24] Ibid, p.11
[25] Ibid, p.6
[26] Franklin W. Houn, *To Change a Nation; Propaganda and Indoctrination in Communist China*, (Crowell-Collier, New York, 1961), p.7

containment of the Malayan Emergency from the Brigg's Plan to Templer's 'hearts and minds' approach has been extensively documented. However this is certainly not the case with the CPM's propaganda efforts in both the Malayan Emergency and the Second Malayan Emergency. Nonetheless, both Susan Carruthers and Kumar Ramakrishna, in their seminal works on propaganda in the Malayan Emergency do provide a useful glance into the CPM's propaganda methods of that particular period.[27]

During the Malayan Emergency, the CPM published a newspaper, *Freedom News*, and made extensive use of leaflets which government analysts considered to be 'nothing more than routine Communist claptrap'.[28] On the other hand, the CPM's 'enforcement terror', punishment of actual or suspected 'running dog sympathizers', fused the propaganda of the word with the propaganda of the deed.[29] On this issue, Ramakrishna opines that: 'despite its voluminous leaflets suggesting that it represented the oppressed masses in the fight against British Imperialism, the MCP's basic inclination to violence only destroyed its credibility in the eyes of most rural Chinese'.[30] He further notes the prevalent contemporary observation that: the CPM leaders 'lacked brains and were amateur revolutionists', and that this 'basic intellectual deficit' of the CPM leadership accounts for its failure to successfully adapt Maoist theory to Malaya.[31] Indeed, the CPM's approach in its armed revolution during the Malayan Emergency often ran contrary to Mao's preachings. Although Mao realized that terror as the propaganda of the deed is in itself 'persuasive', he insisted that its application must be selective and certainly not in the form of indiscriminate 'enforcement terror' that the CPM inflicted on the Malayan Chinese.

Ramakrishna emphasizes that while Mao saw political education as absolutely necessary in eradicating backward bourgeois tendencies amongst the

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[27] See Susan L. Carruthers's *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944-1960* and Kumar Ramakrishna's *Emergency Propaganda: the Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-1958.*
[28] Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944-1960*, (Leicester University Press, London, 1995), p.89
[29] Ibid, p.90
[30] Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda, The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-1958*, (Curzon, Surrey, 2002), p.205
[31] Ibid, p.34

party ranks and masses, the CPM regarded political education more as a strategy for imposing tight control amongst the rank and file, and seriously neglected it with respect to the wider masses.[32] Mao declared that he had no use for communists who would: "never go out to weather the…storm of mass struggle", and further advocated that: "we should go into the midst of the masses, learn from them, sum up their experiences so that these experiences will become well-defined principles and methods, and then…through agitation work…call upon the masses to put them into practice".[33] The failure of the CPM to apply this key tenet of Maoist thought in its armed struggle meant that mass socialization and mass persuasion of the people of Malaya was out of the CPM's reach during the Malayan Emergency. It is clear that the CPM's inclination towards wanton violence, and its failure to engage in political work among the masses, meant that rather than being persuasive, the CPM's propaganda efforts of the Malayan Emergency served only to discredit its cause.

Chapter III: History of the CPM's Armed Struggle

Before delving into the CPM's *VMR* campaign, it is necessary to examine the historiography and the context of the CPM's armed struggle in Malaya. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was founded in 1930 and during the 1930's, its primary aim was fermenting unrest against the colonial government of Malaya. After 1937, the Japanese threat caused a shift in MCP policies toward 'national as opposed to strictly labour issues' and the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) was formed to resist the Japanese occupation.[34] The MCP's active role against the Japanese during the Second World War meant that it had a sizable weapons cache for future guerrilla actions, and more significantly the MCP was now a leader of Chinese nationalism in Malaya. The MPAJA was eventually disbanded, but it was replaced with a number of communist front organizations. One of the MCP's key post-war strategies was gaining political control through the control of labour. The MCP founded a multitude of trade unions, infiltrated older

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[32] Ibid, p.27
[33] Frederick Yu, *Mass persuasion in Communist China*, p.16
[34] James Robert Mallette Jr, *Operational Art in the Success of the Malayan Counterinsurgency Campaign*, (Naval War College, Newport, 1997), p.3

unions, formed federations of unions in each of the nine Malay States, and a General Labour Union embracing the whole of Malaya.[35] The trade unions thus became the MCP's main instruments in its efforts to control the masses. However no mass urban uprising occurred and from thereon, the MCP switched its attention and strategy to mobilizing rural populace.

The Fourth Plenary meeting of the MCP in Singapore from 17-21 March 1948 marked a turning point in the party's strategy: three resolutions; the 'struggle for independence [taking] the form of a people's revolutionary war'; exhortation for the party to abandon its former 'ostrich policy of surrenderism' and preparation of the masses for an 'uncompromising struggle for independence without regard to considerations of legality' were passed.[36] The MCP's armed struggle against the British government began in June 1948 which thus sparked the declaration of the Malayan Emergency. By July 1960 the MCP was decisively defeated both military and politically and the Emergency was declared over. In 1961 however, the MCP was persuaded by Deng Xiaoping to resurrect its revolutionary war in Malaya. According to Chin Peng: 'Strategically, the whole region, Deng insisted, would become ripe for the sort of struggle we had been pursuing in Malaya for so long [and] there could be no question Deng had been persuasive'.[37] Aloysius Chin, Deputy Director of Special Branch (Operations) noted that since early 1964, the Malayan Communists were paying less and less attention to the 'constitutional struggle' and had developed a 'South Vietnam atmosphere of illegal militancy'.[38]

By 1967 the Malayan Communists felt that the moment had come for the initiation of preparatory moves towards the eventual revival of the armed revolution in Malaya. The resurgent tide of revolutionary armed struggle sweeping throughout the whole of South-east Asia unequivocally spurred the Malayan Communists into action. In 1 June 1968, in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of their armed struggle, the Malayan Communists (now known as the CPM), officially announced their intention to revive the armed struggle in

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[35] Ian Morrison,The Communist Uprising in Malaya, *Far Eastern Survey*, 17 (24) (1948) , p.282
[36] John Coates, *Suppressing insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954*, (Westview Press, Oxford, 1992), p.7
[37] Chin Peng, *My Side of the St*ory, p.429-30
[38] Aloysius Chin, *The Communist Party of Malaya: the Inside Story*, (Vinpress, Kuala Lumpur, 1995), p.145

Malaya. The CPM's revived armed revolution during the Second Malayan Emergency lasted for twenty-one years from 1968 to 1989; nine years longer than its initial one in 1948. It was only in 1989, after forty-one long years of armed struggle did the CPM finally lay down its arms and disbanded its guerrillas for good.

Chapter IV: Breaking the Revolutionary Airwaves (1969-1970)

When the CPM revived its armed struggle in the Second Malayan Emergency, it also launched its first concerted strategic propaganda campaign. The *VMR* broke the airwaves of Malaya and Singapore on 15 November 1969. On that day, the socialist editorial, *Mimbar Rakyat* proclaimed the birth of the '*Voice of Revolution*' radio station and that the government's monopoly of radio broadcasts had been broken. It further claimed that for the first time, the people of Malaya were able to listen to the 'people's own' radio station, which in itself represented a victory in the Malayan people's revolutionary war, and urged the revolutionary people of Malaya to:

Raise high the great red flag of Mao Tse-Tung's thought, fiercely retaliate against and expose the counter-revolutionary statements and deception of the U.S. and British imperialists, the soviet revisionists and the puppet cliques of Rahman-Razak and Lee Kuan Yew, expose their policies of Malay chauvinism and racial split, their unpardonable crime of racial massacre and their paper-tiger nature.[39]

This particular editorial piece reveals the core strategy and methodology of the CPM's efforts at mass persuasion in Malaya. The CPM's practice of the Maoist concept of 'thought determines action' was via the constant reiteration and reinforcement of the five following messages in its propaganda: the CPM was a party of the masses both locally and globally; the masses were being oppressed and neglected by the Singapore and Malaysian governments in favour of the capitalist elites and foreign powers; the practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism under the leadership of the CPM was the only way for the

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[39] Broadcasted Editorial, *Mimbar Rakyat*, Issue No.84, 15/11/1969

masses; the people of a small country can defeat aggression by a big country; and finally a call for the masses to unite under the CPM against their oppressors. These five recurrent themes form the main platform on which CPM sought to socialize the thoughts of the masses and mobilize them into action. This particular chapter will chart the beginning of the CPM's mass persuasion campaign from the inaugural launch of the *VMR* to its first anniversary.

1969-1970 was the opportune moment for the CPM to advance its revolutionary cause on both the domestic and international front. By 1969 it was clear that the U.S. position in Vietnam was becoming untenable, and Nixon initiated the process of gradual disengagement from the quagmire in Vietnam. Equally significant developments were afoot in the Malayan Peninsula itself. The outbreak of the May 1969 Riots in Malaysia became the precursor to three landmark decisions in Malaysian state policy: the New Economic Policy (NEP), the *Rukunegara* which laid down the five principles of national harmony for the Malaysian nation, and the declaration of a State of Emergency on 14 May 1969 which were to suspend parliamentary government until 1971. While the NEP aimed at improving the economic situation of the indigenous Malays, the *Rukunegara* asserted indigenous rights such as 'respect for Islam and indigenous custom', and the prohibition of discussion on the sensitive issues of the 'special position of indigenous peoples', the national language and citizenship rights.[40] In an effort to undermine the Malaysian government, the first two policy decisions became for the CPM, the epitome of social injustice, and were extensively exploited by the CPM's propaganda to agitate, politicize and revolutionize the thoughts and actions of its audience.

The MNLA saw itself as a revolutionary army of the masses and with the *VMR* as its mouth-piece, appealed to the 'farming and labouring classes to unite' and 'launch an armed revolution in order to achieve their final victory'.[41] In order to plant the seeds of revolution into the minds of the masses, the *VMR* portrayed the Rahman-Razak administration as a 'mere puppet of the British imperialists' that looked after

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[40] Mary C Turnbull, *A History of Malaysia Singapore and Brunei*, (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989), pp. 268-9

[41] *Summary of the VMR Broadcast*, 22/11/1969 (I)

the interests of the 'feudal landlords, capitalists, bureaucrats and ministers' rather than that of the masses.[42] The CPM further held that the rationale behind the NEP was to 'give concessions to foreign imperialists' and 'further suppress the toiling masses so as to strengthen the position of the Malay bureaucratic capitalists'.[43] The *VMR* claimed to have exposed the Rahman-Razak administration as a 'tool of foreign monopoly capitalists' 'plundering the Malayan wealth and squeezing out super-profits' through the supply of cheap industrial raw material to foreigners at the expense of the peasants.[44] By playing up the notion of social injustice and exploitation, the CPM sought to instil a sense of class consciousness in the minds of the Malayan proletariat and sow the seeds of revolution. Success of the CPM's armed revolution in Malaya hinged upon its ability to create a class conscious proletariat in Malaya and the inaugural *VMR* broadcasts of 1969 reflected the CPM's first strategic attempt at mass socialization.

The CPM sought to present itself both as a local as well as a global party, and its armed struggle in Malaya in the same perspective. The CPM viewed the various 'People's Revolutionary Struggles' that raged throughout Southeast-Asia in the 1970s as inter-related and interdependent. According to a *VMR* transmission towards the end of 1969: 'success of the people's revolutionary struggles…in Southeast-Asia has greatly inspired the people of Malaya…in contributing to the success of the revolutionary struggle'.[45] The CPM clearly saw itself as a part of the wider 'Peoples' Revolutionary Struggle' in Southeast-Asia, as well as the global progressive revolutionary mass movement. The CPM asserted that: 'Mao's thought had spurred the oppressed people all over the world to carry out their revolutionary movement more effectively…and…grasp the great truth about political power growing out of the barrel of a gun'.[46] Drawing from global developments in the past decade, the *VMR* declared that the 'era of the 1970s would see the surging tide of people's revolution, the acceleration of total disintegration of imperialism and a sharp fight between the rising revolutionary force and the collapsing counter-revolutionary force'.[47] It stressed that while the American war effort in Vietnam faced severe setbacks, 'great

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[42] *Summary of the VMR Broadcast*, 22/11/1969 (II)
[43] *Summary of the VMR Broadcast*, 26/11/1969 (I)
[44] *VMR* Broadcast, *VMR Exposes US, British Imperialist Plunder of Malayan Resources*, 19/12/1969
[45] *Summary of the VMR Broadcast*, 24/12/1969
[46] *VMR* Broadcast, *New Year Broadcast: To Usher in 1970 with New Victory*, 01/01/1970
[47] *VMR* Broadcast, *Welcome to the Great Era of 1970s*, 08/01/1970

socialist China, being the centre of world revolution, stood like a giant in the East'.[48] The CPM never lost sight of the vision that its armed struggle in Malaya was a crucial cog in the global revolutionary machinery. The CPM strove to impress upon the Malayan population that by taking up arms with the MNLA, its participants were not only liberating Malaya, but playing a role in the greater emancipation of the global proletariat.

On 28 February 1970, a review of the *VMR*'s progress since its inauguration claimed that: the *VMR* was the 'People's Radio' and 'trusted spokesman of the people of Malaya', had boosted the 'morale of the broad masses', 'thoroughly crushed the broadcasting monopoly enjoyed by the enemy', and that the broad masses in Malaya were now fully aware that the '*VMR* always propagates the revolutionary truth of armed struggle'.[49] The CPM's strategy clearly was to engage the government in a battle of truth and undermine the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the masses. Exploiting the local grievances of farmers and labourers, the CPM's propaganda sought to disenchant them from the government (divisive propaganda) and from thereon attempt to socialize their minds (conversionary propaganda). One such broadcast claimed that peasants in Kelantan unhappy with the governments' FAMA irrigation project 'have now realized that they must launch an armed struggle under the leadership of the CPM to fulfil their hope of land to the tiller'.[50] In another programme condemning the Malaysian Government's indigenous rights policy, the CPM declared 'all labouring people of various races' to be the 'actual masters of Malaya' and called upon the people to 'strengthen their unity, to struggle for equality among the various races and to expand their armed struggle under the leadership of the CPM'.[51] The manifold nature of the *VMR* thus allowed the CPM to employ its strategic propaganda in the full spectrum of conversionary, divisive, consolidation and Counter-propaganda roles.

To mark its 40th anniversary, the CPM issued the party's outlines for its 'New Democratic Revolution' detailing six main objectives:

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[48] *VMR* Broadcast, *Unite and Strive for the Further Advance of the People's War*, 01/02/1970
[49] *VMR* Broadcast, *Boost the Morale of the People and Dampen the Spirit of the Enemy*, 28/02/1970
[50] *VMR* Broadcast, *Awakening peasants of Kelantan*, 04/04/1970
[51] *VMR* Broadcast, *The Labouring People of all Races are the Masters of Malaya*, 11/04/1970

1. Overthrow the colonial rule of the British imperialists and their puppets and establish a Malayan People's Republic.

2. Safeguard the people's democratic rights and respect freedom of religion and creed.

3. Confiscate and nationalise the enterprises of the imperialists and their running dogs, and protect national industries and commercial enterprises.

4. Abolish the feudal and semi-feudal land systems implant the system of land to the tiller and abolish usury.

5. Improve the livelihood of the workers and poorly-paid employees and implement the policy of parity of treatment to both male and female workers.

6. Implement the policy of equality in all respect for people of various races, oppose racial discrimination and strengthen the unity among the races.[52]

Upon the accomplishment of its 'New Democratic Revolution', the CPM planned to 'implement socialism in Malaya and ultimately establish a communist Malaya'.[53] The appeal of the CPM's 'New Democratic Revolution' rested on the premise an inclusive proletarian democracy would eventually be established according to the local multi-cultural, multi-ethnic environment of the Malayan Peninsula. Particularly the room for 'freedom of religion' in the CPM's 'New Democratic Revolution' can be interpreted as the Malayan Communists' attempt to adapt Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to suit the local socio-political climate in the opening phase of its mass socialization campaign.

With the declaration of the CPM's 'New Democratic Revolution', the *VMR* propaganda campaign against the so-called exploitation and oppression of the 'imperialists and their running dogs' was further intensified. According to one such broadcast, many unemployed Malay youths were frequently shot or detained for trespassing upon British tin mines, and the Malaysian Government instead of solving the grave unemployment problem, did 'everything possible to protect the interest of the foreign monopoly capital'.[54] Another transmission along similar lines spoke of 'rampant Japanese economic expansion and infiltration' in Malaya and Singapore that the CPM attributed to the 'traitorous and sell-out acts of the Rahman-Razak and Lee

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[52] *VMR* Broadcast, *Outline of the CPM's Struggle for the Fulfilment of a New Democratic Revolution*, 30/05/1970

[53] *VMR* Broadcast, *CPM is the Nuclear Force Leading the Revolution of our Country*, 06/06/1970

[54] *VMR* Broadcast, *Only by Carrying out an Armed Struggle will there be a Future*, 08/08/1970

Kuan Yee puppet regimes'.[55] As a result, 'capitalists were able to live in luxury while thousands of the labouring people can hardly keep their body and soul together with their meagre income'.[56] In line with the fundamentals of revolutionary Psywar to awaken, heighten, and sharpen the class consciousness of the masses, the perceptions of social injustice, of oppression and exploitation at the hands of an avaricious elite few, were constantly reiterated to agitate the *VMR*'s listeners who it was hoped, would eventually develop a sense of class consciousness and take up the mantle of armed struggle.

In order to persuade its target audience to partake in the armed revolution and bolster the morale of its own cadres, the *VMR* ran frequent 'Combat News' reports and articles on the progress of the 'People's Revolutionary Struggle' in Malaya and the world over. On the MNLA's actions in the first half of 1970, the *VMR* declared that: 'By putting into full play the strategy of people's war and guerrilla warfare tactics…The MNLA has from February to June eliminated nearly 250 enemy troops, shot down three planes and captured a large quantity of military equipment and supplies. The MNLA is growing with each battle'.[57] To the Revolutionary Psywarrior, it certainly did not matter that the combat reports were only half-truths so long as they were persuasive enough to be credible. Such reports conveyed the message that a small guerrilla force like the MNLA were able to match the superior manpower, firepower and resources of the Malaysian and Thai armed forces. More importantly, in tandem with developments in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the *VMR* reinforced the idea that 'the people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country, if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of the country'.[58] In short via a steady stream of 'Combat News' and other reports, the *VMR* attempted to persuade its audience that the 'people's revolutionary struggle' was a 'David and Goliath' tussle in which the smaller of the two would ultimately prevail.

To mark the first anniversary of the *VMR*, the following broadcast was issued:

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[55] *VMR* Broadcast, *Down with the Puppet Cliques: Crush the Plot of Japanese Militarism*, 08/07/1970
[56] *VMR* Broadcast, *The Working Class and Revolutionary Masses in Singapore are Waging Struggle Against Persecution by the Lee Kuan Yee Clique*, 12/08/1970
[57] *VMR* Broadcast, *MNLA Grows with Each Battle*, 22/08/1970
[58] *VMR* Broadcast, *The Chinese People Continue to Achieve Brilliant Success Under the Great Call of Chairman Mao to Unite and Win Greater Victory*, 13/09/1970

The *VMR* has stood firm with the proletarian internationalist spirit, fervently supported the righteous struggle put up by the peoples of various countries against imperialism, revisionism and colonial rule and for national liberation. Revolutionary flames are burning and war drums are being sounded throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America, volcanoes have erupted one after another on the heart of imperialist regions; crowns have fallen to the ground one after another; and imperialism revisionism and reactionaries will be buried in the revolutionary war waged by the people all over the world.[59]

The 'proletarian internationalist spirit' and the 'New Democratic Revolution' embodied the CPM's efforts to apply Mao's 'united front' concept in its strategic propaganda both internationally and domestically. Mao asserted that: "one must rely on two types of united front, one internal and the other external. There is, on the one hand, a united front…within the country and, on the other, a united front of all non-imperialist or anti-imperialist Countries Outside".[60] The united front concept was an all-encompassing strategy that unified all actions and approaches towards the creation of the new socialist order. The emphasis that Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties place in the truism that 'thought determines action' meant that propaganda was to be a crucial component of the united front. Unlike the CPM's haphazard attempt at strategic propaganda during the Malayan Emergency which was limited in scope and outreach to a small segment of the Malayan population, the launch of the *VMR* was a milestone in the CPM's history. The *VMR* working at the same time on domestic and international sentiments and audiences alike, allowed the CPM to truly embrace a united front approach on the psychological battlefields, both within and without the boundaries of the Malayan Peninsula.

Chapter V: Expansion of the 'New Democratic Revolution' (1971-1972)

The period of 1971-1972 witnessed the accelerated withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from Vietnam as per Nixon's doctrine of Vietnamization. By August 1972, the

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[59] *VMR* Broadcast, *Unify Ideology, Determination and Action under the Guidance of the Revolutionary Voice*, 15/11/1970
[60] *VMR* Broadcast, *Mao Tse-tung on Revolution and War*, M. Rejai (ed), p.312

last U.S. ground troops had left Vietnam and with the exception of U.S. air-support, the main burden of the war effort in Vietnam fell on the shoulders of the South Vietnamese themselves. In Spring 1972, North Vietnamese forces threatened to overrun the whole of Vietnam, but overwhelming American air power kept the determined North Vietnamese offensives in check, and for the time being ensured the survival of the Saigon regime. In Malaya, the CPM similarly expanded their armed struggle. By 1971, from its original 500 survivors, the CPM guerrilla strength had grown to an estimated 1,200 with another 3,000 cadres in the villages.[61] By 1971, the Malayan Communists had infiltrated their former village-bases in Kelantan, Kedah and Perak and were operating along the same lines as they had done in the 1950s. In a broadcast commemorating the twenty-second year of the MNLA's existence in January 1970, the *VMR* declared that:

The most important task of the MNLA and the CPM for this year is to arm the masses with Mao Tse-Tung thought and expand the guerrilla bases…we must make greater effort to expand the people's war and achieve greater victory. Go deep into the broader rural areas to do propaganda work among the masses, organize them, arm them and further consolidate and expand the base areas and guerrilla areas.[62]

The CPM strategy for 1971 clearly was to expand its internal united front, propagate its ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, thereby achieving the high level of mass socialization necessary for the success of its armed struggle. On the external united front, the 'solidarity' and 'inexorable advance' of the 'proletarian internationalist spirit' against imperialism was the key to victory. According to the *VMR*:

The national liberation war waged by the Malayan people is part and parcel of the revolutionary war over the world against all reactionaries and imperialism headed by the U.S. In our protracted revolutionary armed struggle, the people of our country

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[61] Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict & Violence in Singapore & Malaysia: 1945-1983*, (Graham Brash, Singapore, 1984), p.285

[62] *VMR* Broadcast, *Hold Still Higher the Great Red Banner of Armed Struggle and March Forward Triumphantly to Mark the 22nd Anniversary of the Founding of MNLA*, 30/01/71

have all received strong support from the people of China and Vietnam. Any victory achieved by them is also our victory.[63]

The perceived link between the CPM's revolution in Malaya with the greater international proletarian struggle allowed the Malayan Communists to assume a sense of legitimacy, and with that, an influence on international opinion; particularly in countries that were aligned to Peking and the various communist parties in Southeast-Asia. The *VMR*'s projection of the CPM's armed struggle in Malayan onto the international stage allowed the Malayan Communists to operate on the external united front; a capability that they lacked in the Malayan Emergency. This particular chapter will therefore examine the expansion of the CPM's Malayan Revolution on both the internal and external fronts from 1971-1972.

The CPM believed that as an international proletarian party, it must be a 'genuine Marxist-Leninist party', and as such, 'learn from international experience, [although it] should not be copied mechanically…[but] develop its own experience in the light of the realities of its own country'.[64] According to the CPM, of all the 'experiences and lessons', the most fundamental one was to 'persist in the line of villages encircling towns' and 'achieve political power with armed struggle'.[65] The CPM believed that its 'revolution will suffer setbacks if this course of line is shaken' and only through this would the CPM 'achieve the historical role of neo-democratic revolution'.[66] Success stories of such a strategy home and abroad were heavily incorporated into *VMR* broadcasts to persuade the masses to adopt similar action. Going by a *VMR* broadcast in June, mass mobilization activities were carried out by the MNLA in the kampongs of Perak, Kelantan and Kedah which ultimately resulted in the consolidation and expansion of the MNLA's rural bases.[67] To espouse the CPM's stance of 'revolution is the main trend in the world today', the *VMR* announced that:

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[63]*VMR* Broadcast, *The So-called Closing the Gap Between the Rich and the Poor is Actually a Term for Further Plundering*, 20/03/1971

[64] *VMR* Broadcast, *Revolution is the Cause of the Masses in their Millions*, 25/03/1971

[65] Broadcasted Editorial, *Barisan* No. 432, 02/05/1971

[66] Ibid

[67] *VMR* Broadcast, *The MNLA is Growing Stronger with Each Passing Battle, Wiping Out Many Enemy Soldiers and Strengthening and Expanding its Bases and Guerrilla Zones*, 19/06/1971

The Indochinese battlefields have merged into one. The fifty million Indochinese people fighting shoulder to shoulder…have made the situation of the region more and more favourable to the people and unfavourable to U.S. imperialism and its running dogs. Inspired by the remarkable successes of the three Indochinese peoples…the revolutionary armed struggles of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America, particularly the people of Southeast-Asian countries have been developing flourishingly.[68]

Through the unrelenting reinforcement of the message that armed revolution was the only viable solution for Malaya and the world at large, the CPM had hoped to drill such a belief into the minds of the masses thereby inciting them into revolutionary action.

According to the *VMR*'s summary of the CPM's armed struggle during the period of 1971, the MNLA had with the 'full support of the broad peasant masses in Kelantan', crushed a series of large-scale government offensives.[69] The same report also stated that the CPM's Min Yuen cadres had 'carried out extensive propaganda activities and organized the people in the guerrilla zones' along the Malaysia-Thai border, and in the rural areas of Perak, Kedah and Kelatan.[70] The CPM further claimed to have 'opened new battlefields on Perak, Kedah and Kelatan, [forged] closer links with the broad masses, and [spread] the raging flames of guerrilla war to the enemy's heartland'.[71] The fact that the CPM had infiltrated many of its former village-bases in Kedah, Kelantan and Perak by 1971, and were making its presence felt in the surrounding areas would lend further credence to its claims. This expansion of the CPM's armed struggle into the so-called 'enemy's heartland' was intended as a clear signal that the Malayan Revolution was gaining ground in terms of territorial expansion and popular mass support; a message that the *VMR* was quick to amplify and exploit at the government's expense.

On the external front, the *VMR* declared that: 'Over the year, the armed struggle of the three Indochinese peoples has been surging forward vigorously. The

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[68] *Hsinhua Daily News Release*, 28/05/1971
[69] *VMR* Broadcast, *Combat News*, 29/12/1971
[70] Ibid
[71] *VMR* Broadcast, *Welcome 1972 with New Victory*, 01/01/1972

liberated areas of the peoples have become more consolidated than before, and expanded speedily to form an integral part of a revolutionary storm against U.S. imperialist aggression'.[72] To further reiterate the point, the *VMR* made the following broadcast of the 1972 New Year's Day Editorial as published by the People's Daily:

Never before has U.S. imperialism been landed in such an invidious position. Its counter-revolutionary global policies have constantly met with reverses. The great victories of the people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in their war against U.S. aggression and for national salvation…have enormously weakened the U.S. powers of aggression…Gone are the days when the two superpowers could decide the destinies of other countries at will. More and more medium sized and small countries have risen against the hegemony and power politics of the two superpowers.[73]

This assiduous propagation of positive developments on the Communist united front, both internal and external, served a two-purpose; to convert the undecided masses to the CPM's cause (conversionary propaganda), and consolidate the hold on its existing cadres (consolidation propaganda). In short the constant reinforcement of the 'victory on the united front' and 'the people of a small country can defeat aggression by a big country' message was the CPM's adaptation of strategic conversionary and consolidation propaganda in its Malayan Revolution.

Heavy emphasis was placed on putting across the message that the progress of the 'People's Revolutionary War' in Indochina, particularly Vietnam, was an unequivocal sign that a communist triumph over the capitalist powers in Southeast-Asia was inevitable. The *VMR*'s assessment of the situation in Indochina in May 1972 was that: 'the people of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have…smashed the military adventures of U.S. imperialism and its lackeys repeatedly, thus bringing U.S. imperialist schemes of…Vietnamization, Laotianization and Khmerization to still more disastrous defeat'.[74] The *VMR* was quick to point out that the 'liberated' areas in South Vietnam had become the 'reliable base of the South Vietnamese people in their

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[72] *VMR* Broadcast, *Excerpts from Mao Tse-Tung Works 'On Coalition Government'*, 28/12/1971
[73] Broadcasted Editorial, *New year's Day Editorial by People's Daily, Red Flag and Liberation Army Daily*, 08/01/1972
[74] *VMR* Broadcast, *People of the World Bound to Win*, 17/05/1972

war against US aggression and for national salvation'.[75] It further claimed that Communist offensives from Quang-Tri-Thun Thien to the Mekong Delta in from April to July, 1972 resulted in the loss of 220,000 enemy troops; the liberation of Quang Tri province, the greater part of Kuntum and Binh Dinh provinces, most of Thy Ninh, Binh Long and Phuoc Long provinces.[76] The North Vietnamese did indeed threaten to overrun the whole of Vietnam in their Spring offensive of 1972 but the casualty figures in this case were over exaggerated. Moreover, the initial gains made by the North Vietnamese during the offensive were short-lived. With the aid of overwhelming American air superiority, the South Vietnamese forces were able to push back the North Vietnamese and retook Quang Tri by September. This particular combat report was certainly a half-truth; but one that was persuasive enough to be credible and influential enough to agitate minds. The CPM certainly exploited the North Vietnamese Spring 1972 offensive in such a manner. Vietnam was the perfect example of how the 'people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression of a big country if only they dare to rise in struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country'.[77] It was a clarion call for the Malayan masses to follow the example of their Vietnamese brethren and the half-truth in itself was persuasive enough to be credible.

By aligning their cause with that of the Vietnamese Communists, the CPM had the opportunity to sell its Malayan Revolution as a legitimate struggle against the oppression of the 'imperialists' and their 'running-dogs', while at the same time, undermine the legitimacy of its adversary's actions. The *VMR* certainly portrayed the Singapore Government as a puppet of the Americans; one that cooperated in the slaughter of the Vietnamese people. One such *VMR* report noted that:

To meet the needs of its aggressive war in Indochina, U.S. imperialism is currently stepping up its collaboration with the Lee Kuan Yew clique to turn Singapore into its rear area…Fifty US warships sail to Singapore every year, [and] Singapore [is] the U.S. dispersing centre for its old military equipment ferried from Vietnam. To render political support to the U.S. imperialist war of aggression in Vietnam, the Lee Kuan

[75] *VMR* Broadcast, *The Firmly Consolidated Liberated Areas of South Vietnam*, 10/06/1972

[76] *VMR* Broadcast, *220,000 Enemy Put Out of Action in South Vietnam in Four Months*, 27/08/1972

[77] *VMR* Broadcast, *People of the World Bound to Win*, 17/05/1972

Yew clique bans anti-war demonstrations and processions…To top it all, Lee Kuan Yew when interviewed by Newsweek in mid-July said that he would like the U.S. to maintain sufficient pressure in Southeast Asia to stop another power or groups of powers from gaining complete hegemony over the area.[78]

Hence while the CPM tried to legitimize its struggle on the local and international stage, it also attempted to challenge the credibility of its adversaries in both those spheres. The CPM's propaganda sought to impress upon its audience the belief that its adversaries were oppressors of the masses both home and abroad, whereas the CPM was the true defender of the people.

Chapter VI: Triumph of the 'Peoples' Revolutionary War' in Indochina: From the Paris Peace Accords to the Fall of Saigon (1973-1975)

The signing of the Paris Peace Accords on 27 January 1973 marked a significant turning point in the annals of the 'People's Revolutionary War' in Southeast Asia. The endorsement of the Paris Peace Accords was the unequivocal affirmation of the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam, and the subsequent fall of Saigon, its ultimate defeat in Indochina. In Laos, the Vientiane Treaty of 21 February 1973, followed by the Pathet Lao Communists' complete takeover of the country in November 1975, were events that mirrored those in Vietnam. Similarly, by 1975, Cambodia was firmly in the hands of the Cambodian Communists, the Khmer Rouge. Indeed it did seem that the 'Domino Theory', whereby the fall of one Southeast-Asian nation to the communists would inevitably lead to the collapse of others was coming to pass in 1975. The Paris Peace Accords, the Fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975, and parallel developments in Cambodia and Laos was a huge propaganda coup for the global communist movement. The CPM particularly needed the external political oxygen from Indochina to sustain its own Malayan Revolution. This final segment of the analysis will examine the *VMR* campaign from 1973 to 1975, a period that witnessed the triumph of communism in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and one

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[78] *VMR* Broadcast, *Lee Kuan Yew Clique is Running Dog of US Imperialism*, 09/08/1972

whereby the Malayan Communists intensified its exploitation of the external united front to maintain and expand its internal front.

The *VMR* pronounced the signing of the Paris Peace Accords as 'a great victory for the Vietnamese people, and the people of the world, and a disastrous defeat for U.S. imperialism and its lackeys'.[79] It further declared that: 'The Vietnamese people's victory eloquently proves that the people's war is invincible and it powerfully encourages the entire oppressed nations and oppressed peoples in their revolutionary struggles'.[80] On 21 February, 1973, a peace treaty was signed between the Pathet Lao Communists and the Laotian monarchist government. The *VMR* was quick to proclaim the signing of the treaty as 'the bankruptcy of the U.S. policy of interference and aggression', as well as a 'resounding victory of the Lao people's hard but very valiant struggle…achieved through the spirit of militant solidarity and mutual support and assistance among the Lao people, and the fraternal Vietnamese and Khmer peoples in the struggle for independence and sovereignty'.[81] By April 1973, the CPM judged that:

The development of the international situation is becoming more and more favourable to the people…U.S. imperialism has suffered serious defeat in its war of aggression in Vietnam. Great victories have been achieved by the Laotian people in their struggle against U.S. aggressions who together with their lackeys have been badly battered in Cambodia. Let us rejoice the favourable situations both within and without the country.[82]

The insidiously intense propagation of commentaries on developments in Indochina were to communicate to the Malayan masses, the idea of the 'Southeast-Asian Peoples' Revolution', thereby increasing their political consciousness and develop their revolutionary thoughts that would eventually be translated into action.

The perceived notion of a greater development in social consciousness amongst the masses was further amplified to encourage its growth. A *VMR* broadcast

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[79] *VMR* Broadcast, *The VMR Greets Vietnamese People for Great Victory*, 01/02/1973
[80] Ibid
[81] *VMR* Broadcast, *Desperate Struggle of British Imperialism*, 01/03/1973
[82] *VMR* Broadcast, *Struggle for Greater Victories*, 28/04/1973

in February 1973 announced that: 'The political consciousness of the people of various communities is daily increasing. They love the CPM and support the MNLA wholeheartedly…With the backing and cooperation of the people, our storm-troopers…smashed the offensive of the enemy by closely relying on the masses'.[83] As the Malayan Revolution wore on, the *VMR* broadcasted evidence of the increasing social consciousness of the masses in areas where the Malayan Communists were most active. One such broadcast in April 1973 noted that:

'Feeling indignant at the criminal acts committed by the puppet regime, the broad peasant masses in Kedah are now waging a sharp struggle by grabbing the so-called state land and resisting the puppet police sent there to suppress them. More and more peasants are currently joining the struggle for the abolition of the feudal and semi-feudal land scheme and for the implementation of land to the tiller system'.[84]

The above broadcast is the quintessence of how Maoist mass persuasion was adapted to Malayan conditions for the socialization of Malayan minds to create the 'new Malayan Socialist man' for the new socialist People's Republic of Malaya.

The broadcast commemorating the forty-third anniversary of the CPM presented the apparent growing social consciousness of the Malayan masses and how these thoughts were increasingly being acted upon by the people. According to the broadcast:

The working class in our country has deeply realized that only by relying on a national democratic united front…can…the task of the new democratic revolution be fulfilled…Since the beginning of 1973, the struggle against suppression, exploitation and persecution by the working class in our country was intensified. Class consciousness of the working masses in our country has been greatly raised. Twenty strikes and other forms of struggles were carried out by workers in the First Three months of 1973.[85]

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[83] *VMR* Broadcast, *The Heroic Storm-troopers March Forward*, 03/02/1973
[84] *VMR* Broadcast, *Splendid Struggle of the Peasants*, 19/04/1973
[85] *VMR* Broadcast, *Struggle for Greater Victories*, 28/04/1973

The CPM further claimed that: 'the fact that the Razak clique has gone all out to win the hearts of the masses with their tricks shows that they are alarmed by the strength of the revolutionary-army-civilian unity'.[86] This palpable surge of class consciousness amongst the Malayan people was necessary to maintain the momentum of the CPM's Malayan Revolution. The *VMR* was in fact, a vital tool in the development, maintenance and expansion of the Malayan class consciousness, and ultimately, the whole mass socialization effort fundamental to the success of the Malayan Revolution. In the revolutionary process whereby the principle of 'thought determines action' is sacrosanct, the *VMR* was an indispensable component of the CPM's united front.

While western Psywarriors tend to be specialized operators playing a limited specific role in a larger operation or campaign, revolutionary Psywarriors were multi-roled 'storm-troopers' equally adept at guerilla warfare, propaganda work and most importantly, political work among the masses. This fundamentally opposed approach to Psywar reflects the crucial role of Psyops in revolutionary war. The CPM argued that:

In order to consolidate and expand the united front, it was necessary to…launch mass movement in all fields…thus integrating the revolutionary armed struggle with the revolutionary mass movement. It was necessary to…mobilize to the fullest extent the broad masses and carry out in a wide-spread manner a mass campaign to support and join the National Liberation Army. In enemy-dominated areas, it was necessary to make efforts to consolidate and continuously expand all revolutionary mass organizations, encourage the masses to tune in to the *VMR*, intensify revolutionary propaganda and use various forms and methods to make close contacts with the people of all social strata.[87]

In short, unlike the highly specialized and restricted western approach to Psywar which was distinct from the military campaign, Revolutionary Psywar was a symbotic

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[86] *VMR* Broadcast, *Frustrate the Counter-revolutionary Plot of the Enemy*, 10/05/1973
[87] *VMR* Broadcast, *CPM is the Force of the Core Leading the Revolution in Malaya in Commemoration of the Forty-fifth Anniversary of Founding of CPM*, 29/04/1975

part of the united front in which the guerrilla and Psywarrior were one and the same, and the physical and psychological battles fought on the same plane.

On 7 January 1975, the *VMR* aired the New Year's Day editorial of the People's Daily which asserted that 'the third world countries have become the main force in the new struggle against the two hegemonic powers…[who] are having a tougher and tougher time'.[88] With the establishment of Communist regimes in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from Indochina, 1975 certainly signified the epoch of the 'People's Revolutionary War' in Southeast-Asia. The *VMR* had throughout its broadcast history, linked the Malayan Revolution with that of the greater 'People's Revolutionary War', but 1975, in terms of the actual socio-political developments in Southeast-Asia and impact on the CPM's armed revolution was particularly significant.

In view of recent contemporary developments in Indochina, 1975 was the opportune moment for the CPM to expand its revolution in Malaya on all fronts, in both the physical and psychological realm as well as in terms of interior and exterior manoeuvre. Indeed 1975 hinted at the possibility that the CPM might finally be able to establish strong enduring physical links with its Communist comrades in Indochina, thereby inordinately increasing its united front and prospects of success in its revolutionary struggle. The *VMR* hailed the 'liberation' of Phnom Penh on April 17 by the Khmer Rouge as a 'great victory of historical significance [that] has given a big inspiration and strong support to the revolutionary struggle of the Malayan people and the oppressed people and oppressed nations the world over'.[89] On 1 May 1975, the central committee of the CPM sent a lengthy congratulatory telegram to the Central Committee of the Vietnam worker's party for the successful 'liberation' of Saigon and whole of South Vietnam. The telegram was incorporated into the *VMR* broadcast for 8 May which stated that:

By persisting in the protracted people's war to crush the counter-revolutionary strategy of U.S. imperialism, the Vietnamese people have made big contributions

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[88] Broadcasted Editorial, *New year's Day Editorial by People's Daily, Red Flag and Liberation Army Daily*, 07/01/1975

[89] *VMR* Broadcast, *Most Warmly Hail the Great Victory of the Cambodian People*, 22/04/1975

towards the anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle of the Southeast-Asian people and the people the world over…The great victory of the Vietnamese people…is also the common victory of the Malayan people and the revolutionary people of the world. The great victory of the Vietnamese people has once again testified to us that an oppressed nation, though weak and small can thoroughly defeat any enemy equipped with modern weapons, so long as its people dare to take up arms, stand together, fear no sacrifice and staunchly persevere in protracted people's war.[90]

It is obvious that the CPM strove to establish an image of correlation between its own revolution with that of the Vietnamese to increase the legitimacy of its struggle, and strengthen its united front. The same telegram further declared that:

In face of the great victory of the Vietnamese people, imperialism and its lackeys have now become rattled. The Razak and Lee Kuan Yew cliques are no exception…these two traitorous cliques have served whole-heartedly U.S. imperialism in its aggressive war in Vietnam and Indochina…The great victory of the Vietnamese people is a new and great inspiration to the revolutionary armed struggle of the people of Malaya. Under the leadership of the CPM…the Malayan people are determined to continue to stand together with the Vietnamese people and the revolutionary people of the world, persevere in smashing all the counter-revolutionary plot of the enemy and carry the revolutionary armed struggle in our country through to the end.[91]

Events in Indochina in 1975 certainly did inspire the CPM in their own revolutionary struggle, and there is no doubt that: 'the great victories of the national liberation wars in Vietnam and Cambodia have exerted a great influence on the revolution of the Southeast-Asian countries including Malaya'.[92] The fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh was the penultimate vindication of the CPM's line that 'the people of a small country can defeat aggression by a big country', by 'using the countryside to encircle the cities'. Building upon the momentous events in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, 1975

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[90] *VMR* Broadcast, *Congratulatory Message from CPM to the Vietnam Workers Party and South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation*, 08/05/1975
[91] Ibid
[92] VMR Broadcast, *Resolutely Support the Important Statement of the CPM, Issued by the Central Committee of the Malayan National Liberation Front*, 05/06/1975

provided the perfect platform for the CPM to further revolutionize the minds and actions of the Malayan masses, expand the Malayan Revolution, and establish greater links with the Communists in Indochina. By 1975, the spectre of the 'Domino Theory' loomed menacingly over the Malayan Peninsula.

Lee Kuan Yee and Abdul Razak, Prime Ministers of Singapore and Malaysia respectively, however believed that the 'Domino Theory' "was now obsolete".[93] According to Razak: "there is no such thing as the 'Domino theory'. It may give some encouragement to the [communist] terrorists lurking in our jungles but beyond that I do not think there will be any effect on us".[94] Razak was confident that: "Malaysia [faced] no immediate danger arising out of the communist victories in South Vietnam and Cambodia [as] the situation in Indochina and that in Malaysia [were] different".[95] While the CPM clearly perceived their Malayan Revolution to be part of the greater 'People's Revolutionary War' in Southeast-Asia, both Lee and Razak made no immediate connection between the CPM's armed struggle with that of the Indochinese peoples. In order to cut off the CPM from its external political oxygen, and undermine the relationship between the Malayan Communists and their Indochinese comrades, both the Singapore and Malaysia Governments were prepared to officially recognize the communist regime in South Vietnam. From 1975, the CPM's revolutionary struggle carried on for another fourteen years, but unlike their Vietnamese comrades, the Malayan Communists failed to see their revolutionary armed struggle 'through to the end'. With the signing of the Haadyai Peace Accords on 2 December 1989, the CPM finally gave up its armed struggle and the Second Malayan Emergency drew to a close.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

It cannot be emphasized enough that the Western 'words and deeds' approach to Psywar is fundamentally different from the Maoist dictum that 'thought determines action'. To analyse the CPM's one and only serious foray into strategic Psywar using the 'words and deeds' methodology would therefore be incongruous and ultimately

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[93] 'Lee, Razak Hold Talks on Vietnam Issue', *The Straits Times*, 01/05/1975
[94] 'Lee: We Can Adjust to a Red Indochina', *The Straits Times*, 02/05/1975
[95] 'Red Victories Pose No Threat', *The Straits Times*, 05/05/1975

misleading. To a Revolutionary Psywarrior, propaganda has to be persuasive enough to agitate minds and thoughts, and its truth is defined by the power to socialize the minds and actions of the masses rather than matching words with deeds. Revolutionary Psywar therefore does not fit into any western-centric model, but is a blend of White, Black, Grey, Conversionary, Divisive, Consolidation and Counter Propaganda adapted to meet the requirements of a protracted revolutionary war. Revolutionary Psywar has to be 'Plug and Play Psywar' to meet the various stages and conditions of the protracted revolutionary armed struggle. The manifold nature of the *VMR* thus allowed the CPM to employ its propaganda in the full array of conversionary, divisive, consolidation and Counter-propaganda roles in accordance with situational changes.

The CPM's Psywar campaign in the Second Malayan Emergency was fought along the Maoist tenet that 'thought determines action' via the constant reiteration and reinforcement of the five following messages: first, the CPM was a party of the masses both locally and globally; Second, the masses were being oppressed and neglected by the Singapore and Malaysian governments in favour of the capitalist elites and foreign powers; third, the practice of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism under the leadership of the CPM was the only way for the masses; fourth, the people of a small country can defeat aggression by a big country; and finally a call for the masses to unite under the CPM against their oppressors. The penultimate aim of the campaign was to revolutionize the masses towards the destruction of the existing socio-economic-political-cultural system of the Malayan Peninsular, and in its place, establish a new socialist order in the form of the People's Republic of Malaya.

Such a feat was only possible through the development of a sense of class consciousness and class struggle amongst the Malayan people. In the CPM's attempt to advance the class consciousness of the masses, and the cause of its armed revolution, the *VMR* was an indispensable tool. The *VMR* was vital to the development of the Malayan class consciousness, and the whole mass socialization effort on which the success of the Malayan Revolution ultimately hinged upon. However despite its sophisticated propaganda campaign, the CPM failed to generate any significant level of class consciousness amongst the greater majority of the

Malayan and Singaporean population. Moreover just as in the Malayan Emergency, the CPM's armed struggle in the Second Malayan Emergency was isolated from the wider 'People's Revolutionary War' in Indochina thereby depriving the Malayan Communists of any substantial external support in terms of manpower, logistics and equipment. The fact that the *VMR* station had to transmit from China spoke volumes about the difficult conditions under which the CPM operated. Dennis Bloodworth noted that while victory for the CPM depended on 'using the countryside to encircle the cities', 'the Botanic Gardens [in Singapore] were not countryside'.[96] In his autobiography, Chin Peng provides a most telling epilogue of the CPM's armed revolution, and perhaps of the fate of any other revolutionaries that might follow:

'A revolution based on violence has no application in modern Malaysia or Singapore. None of the conditions favourable to armed struggle exist today in relation to these territories. You need complementary international and internal situations to set hearts burning for armed revolt. If the people lead reasonable lives and feel accepted in society, how can you ask them to put their lives on the line?'[97]

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[96] Dennis Bloodworth, *The Tiger and the Trojan Horse*, (Times, Singapore, 1986), p.312
[97] Chin Peng, *My Side of the Story*, p.515

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