

Field Marshal Lord Harding of Petherton (1896-1989)

Lord Harding prepared the following autobiographical notes in instalments in 1974, which he sent to Hanna Nicholas

July 1947-49	<p>COMMANDER IN CHIEF SOUTHERN COMMAND. Rebuilding the army on a post-war basis - problems on the Territorial Army - future of National Service - training establishments - their functions and policies - Shinwell as CofS - Essentials of discipline and leadership - changes in philosophies stemming from social and economic developments.</p>
July 1949-51	<p>COMMANDER IN CHIEF FAR EAST LAND FORCES. The Malayan emergency - jungle warfare - command and responsibility in subversive operations. Problems of relationships between civil administration - police -armed forces - integration essential, co-operation not enough. Appointment of Director of Operations - leading to eventual combination of all function of government in one person - Gerald Templer. Contribution of Gurkhas - significance of SE Asia - Malcolm MacDonald's contribution.</p> <p>War in Korea - British contribution</p> <p>Situation in Indo-China - visit to Tonkin - week with de Lattre de Tassigny. Staying in Hanoi.</p> <p>Far East problems generally - Hong Kong - Malaya - Singapore - a very interesting and instructive period.</p> <p>Evils of partition - India - Korea - Vietnam - a political device to stop fighting but really a counsel of failure.</p> <p>General conclusion - no possibility of compromise between communist doctrines and western concept of a free society.</p>
Aug 1951 - Sept 1952	<p>COMMANDER IN CHIEF BRITISH ARMY OF THE RHINE. Very interesting period coinciding with change from army occupation to army of co-operation in defence of west. Problems with Belgian and Dutch contingents comprising Northern Army Group. Incipient problems of German re-armament and integration as Allies alias enemies. Meetings with German generals - Speidel and Heusinger - varying attitudes of German people - cowed and arrogant in turn. Inter-service and inter-allied arguments. Exchanges with Americans - French - Belgians - Dutch colleagues - logistic problems - nationalistic prejudices and "commercial" interests - the "not invented here" stumbling block to ----- rationalisation and armament standardisation - realisation of the strength of national frontiers based on commercial advantage.</p>
Summer 1952	<p>Interviewed by Winston and Alex in connection with appointment as Chief of Imperial General Staff. Fortunate in fact discussion never got beyond First World War before PM had to leave to vote in local government elections!!</p> <p>Main contender Brian Robertson, a good friend and colleague in Italian campaigns. Most grateful that friendship never suffered from own selection for post.</p>
Oct 1952	<p>Appointed Chief of Imperial General Staff in succession to Field Marshal Lord Slim.</p>
1952-55	<p>CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF</p> <p>An exacting but intensely interesting 3 years as professional head of the army, involving regular meetings of the Army Council, Chiefs of Staff Committee,</p>

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	<p>Defence Committee (presided over by the Prime Minister) and occasionally meetings of the Cabinet.</p> <p>United Kingdom and Germany - periodical visits to Army units and formations further afield ie Middle East and Far East. Attendance at meetings of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) Military Committee and occasionally the NATO Council in Paris; personal contacts with NATO and Commonwealth Chiefs of Staff and occasionally Ministers of Commonwealth and Allied Governments.</p> <p>Visits overseas included Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Kenya 1953 and 1954 in connection with Mau Mau rebellion, Malaya and Singapore in connection with anti-terrorist operations, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. Finally, Turkey and Cyprus in early summer of 1955.</p> <p>(Visit to Cyprus was accidental as my wife was very anxious to see the island. As we flew out I said to her "You've seen Cyprus, you'll never see it again" -the following October we went back there for 2 years to try and restore law and order and effect a political settlement!!)</p>
Sep-Oct 1955	<p>Preparing to say goodbye to the Army and to hand over to General (now Field Marshal) Templer.</p> <p>Last big argument with Government over duration of National Service - succeeded at Cabinet meeting on retaining 2 years - on grounds of sheer inefficiency of any shorter period - delighted - then a bombshell - sent for by Prime Minister (Eden) and pressed hard to accept appointment Governor Cyprus - First reaction to refuse - but persuaded to accept for strategic reasons - and to go at once. Handed over CIGS to Templer and left London with wife and small staff arriving Cyprus early Oct (see "Bitter Lemons" by Lawrence Durrell page 209 et seq).</p>
1955-57	<p>CYPRUS</p> <p>Two years of hard work, great anxiety, some personal danger, some failures, a few successes, learnt a lot, made some firm and lasting friendships.</p> <p>Task was two-fold - to restore law and order i.e. defeat Grivas and EOKA - or at least to convince them they couldn't win their way - and to lay the foundations for a lasting and peaceful solution of the political, racial and social problems of the island.</p> <p>FIRST SIX MONTHS - dual policy - reorganisation of police - development of intelligence organisation - training of security forces - integration as opposed to co-operation between civil administration - police-armed forces - coupled with search for political agreement - 8 meetings with Archbishop Makarios - no result - conclusion concentrate on security operations - get Archbishop out of the way - detention followed by deportation agreed by HMG and carried out.</p> <p>SECOND PHASE - Concentrations against EOKA - new tactical methods - introduction of helicopters - tightening of control of arms, ammunition and explosives, expansion of publicity etc success against mountain gangs - problems of urban murder squads - case of Nicos Sampson, a "dedicated" killer if ever there was one</p>
Summer 1956	<p>Interruption in anti-terrorist operations caused by Suez - diversion of attention</p>

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	and interest - a serious set-back.
March 1957	EOKA call it a day - resumption of political discussions with Athens and Ankara - slow and limited progress - Makarios released from Seychelles with freedom to go to Athens, London etc but not to return to Nicosia.
Aug 1957	Labour party conference agreed at instigation of Barbara Castle would grant self-determination to Cyprus on return to power. Result - Greeks and Turks for opposite reasons retired to their trenches and productive political discussions came to a halt.
Sept-Oct 1957	Reported to HMG future prospects and developments primarily in political field and asked be relieved - having served agreed term of 2 years and succeeded in containing EOKA which best could be done by Security operations. HMG reluctantly agreed - handed over to Hugh Foot (now Lord Caradon) early Nov 1957 and returned to UK.