

Sinclair, Georgina: *At the end of the line. Colonial Policing and the Imperial Endgame 1945-1980*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 2006. ISBN: 978-0-7190-7138-6; 250 S.

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Academic research into theories and practices of policing has acquired new importance in recent years, not only in the field of historical study but also in the field of counter-insurgency studies. Georgina Sinclair's monograph provides a useful and informative overview of policing policies and strategies in British overseas territories during the late colonial period. She builds upon the work of other scholars and makes extensive use both of official sources and of interviews with former police officers and administrators. The overall effect is impressive, for the vividness and immediacy of the writing (and of the personal recollections) as well as for the thematic coherence of the work as a whole.

Policing in the colonies was inevitably influenced by practices within the United Kingdom, especially in Ireland. The Royal Irish Constabulary, formed in the 1820s, was notable for the range of its activities, which included intelligence-gathering as well as more conventional policing work. The peculiarities of the Irish situation encouraged the development of what would become in time a 'semi-military' rather than a strictly civilian-style police force. Networks of communication in Britain and in the Empire ensured that 'Irish' methods of policing, along with Irish personnel, came to be deployed in Northern Ireland (as part of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, from 1922) and in other, overseas colonial territories. Strikingly, recruitment for the British Section of the Palestine Gendarmerie (formed in 1922) was carried out in Dublin as well as in London. The author covers these developments concisely and effectively (the double misspelling of 'Garda Síochána' being a minor, though unfortunate, lapse).

Notwithstanding developments in Canada and in the British Caribbean (to which the author allots two chapters), events in Palestine arguably exerted a preponderant influence on colonial policing up to 1945 as well as during

the period of 'imperial endgame'. The Palestine Police force (as the Gendarmerie was renamed in 1926) had to deal constantly with civil disorder and was the object of criticism and attack from both Arab and Jew. The Palestine experience prompted efforts at police reform, in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness. It also prompted reconsideration of tactics, and initiatives such as the Palestine Mobile Police Force, formed in 1944. This unit demonstrated the necessity of recourse to paramilitary methods of policing in certain colonial situations. After 1945 this necessity would often become routine, not merely in Palestine, but in other territories also.

As the Irish policing experience influenced that in Palestine, so from the 1930s onwards Palestine methods influenced British colonial policing elsewhere in the Empire. Information-gathering became increasingly 'political' in character, in response to the activities of anti-colonial movements. Importantly 'Palestine became _the _unofficial training and recruiting ground for senior colonial policemen' (p. 115). In part this development was indicative of concern within the Colonial Office that policing techniques (and training) be standardized. But it was indicative also of the extent to which, especially after 1945, a colonial 'emergency' – as effectively pertained in Palestine – might make unprecedented demands upon the police. Techniques for dealing with such conditions required constant re-evaluation and reconsideration. In the late 1940s and 1950s States of Emergency would be declared by the governments of many colonial territories, including Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus.

The Cyprus Emergency demonstrated the difficulty for the police of dealing with a violent anti-colonialist movement in an ethnically and religiously divided territory. Conditions prompted attempts at reform, yet also hampered those attempts. Cyprus illustrates a key theme of this book: the argument that for the imperial authorities post-war colonial policing should be characterized primarily by 'British' values, of professionalism, of civility, impartiality and leadership. In the mid-1950s the Colonial Office arranged for seconding of British officers to Cyprus. By the end of the decade almost 1,000 had served the-

re. The aim was to effect a gradual improvement in local, colonial police practice. It was not realized. Invariably short of resources colonial governments were typically less concerned with long-term reform than with resolving more immediate problems. In any case policing – and police personnel – had of necessity to constitute an integral part of colonial societies. Temporary recruitment of police officers from Britain was merely a short-term expedient.

The difficulty of reform was exacerbated not only by 'emergency' conditions but also by differences in outlook between the authorities in London and those in colonial capital cities. The experience of senior police officer Arthur Young in Kenya is particularly instructive in this respect. Immensely experienced and not lacking in integrity, Young went from London to Nairobi in 1954 as a kind of 'troubleshooter', intent on reforming an inefficient and corrupt police force. He failed, due to lack of cooperation and support from police and colonial administration alike. The authorities in Nairobi were intent on retaining as much control as possible over all security matters, policing included. The activities of the Kenya Police Reserve were especially reprehensible; and the author notes (with reference to the work of David Anderson) the extent to which that organization was a law almost unto itself. It might have been useful to have drawn also, especially in relation to this aspect of policing, on the work of Brian Simpson, who has focused on the legal and human rights aspects of colonial States of Emergency.

The role of the police in States of Emergency was not always well defined. It was not always well controlled. The police worked in sometimes uncomfortable collaboration with military personnel, both British and colonial. Security conditions necessitated retention of control in matters political as well as of policing by Europeans. The 'wind of change' made a difference; but changes in policing were slow in coming – as events in Hong Kong (to take but one example) served to demonstrate. Circumstances during the 1950s did little to stimulate the development of indigenous police expertise. Some European police officers stayed on in their posts, as colonies became independent. Governments of new in-

dependent states (such as that of Kenya) were sometimes keen to adopt 'British' methods of policing. Yet as the author suggests in her conclusion (pp. 223-4), the idea of a 'British' model of policing is far from unproblematic. Certainly there were attempts from the 1930s onwards to standardize police procedures across the Empire. Yet post-war conditions saw reliance upon ad hoc tactics as well as upon proven methods; and coercion became an important characteristic of police behaviour. In that respect colonial policing after 1945 was both indicative and broadly representative of other aspects of British colonial rule: 'the *ethos* of colonial policing was essentially inconsistent' (p. 223).

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