

the post of Chief Secretary who acted as assistant to the High Commissioner. Nevertheless, the powers of the Malay Rulers did not change. They were merely ordinary members of the Federal Legislative Council. Their presence was not important because the Council could meet without their attendance. The 1909 reform only brought about a distribution of power.

Lawrence Guillemeard, the Federation's High Commissioner, began efforts to restore power in 1920. He had suggested the post of Chief Secretary be abolished and power be given to the respective Residents. All administrative powers of government departments should be handed over to State Councils except those concerning the Railway Department, Customs and Excise, Telegraph and Post. The Sultans agreed with Guillemeard's suggestions but they were opposed by the business community which feared that business might be hampered by an inefficient state government under a State Council headed by a Malay Ruler. The British government considered the reservations expressed by the business community valid and that the British government too might be at risk if a State Council was ineffective. As a result, Guillemeard's proposal was rejected. To appease the dissatisfaction of the Malay Rulers, the British Government suggested that the Rulers withdraw from the Federal Legislative Council and send representatives to act for them. The Malay Rulers agreed to the reform and signed a new treaty in 1927. From then on, the position of the Malay Rulers improved.

In 1931, new High Commissioner Cecil Clementi also took steps to restore power. He suggested that the Federation be replaced by a union that included the non-federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements; but this suggestion was not supported by the Malay Rulers of the non-federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements. A year later, the British government sent Colonial Secretary Samuel Wilson to study Cecil Clementi's proposal. Following this, a more effective system began to be implemented. The Chief Secretary's post was abolished and the post of Federal Secretary introduced. The power of the Chief Secretary was handed to the Residents. The State Councils were given the power to legislate law. The implementation of the law would be the responsibility of departments headed by British officials. In 1939 state government powers were fully returned, except in some areas which still came under Federal government control, i.e. the Police Department, Customs, Finance and Defence. This situation continued until the Japanese Occupation which began in 1941.

► The Unfederated Malay States

In these states the advisory system was adopted. In theory, this system differed from the Residential System because the Sultan did not necessarily have to accept the advice of the British Adviser. Kelantan received British advice

officially in 1910 through a treaty signed by the two parties. Accordingly, Kelantan became a British protected state. J.S. Mason was appointed as the first British Adviser. In Trengganu, the British tried to impose their influence by pressing Sultan Zainal Abidin to receive a British Adviser. The British, however, only managed to place a representative, W.L. Conlay. It was only in 1919 that Sultan Muhammad Syah II was prepared officially to accept a British Adviser, J.L. Humphreys. Kedah officially received a British Adviser, W. Peel, in 1923. In Perlis, the British officially placed their Adviser, L.A. Alklien, in 1930, while Johor accepted its British Adviser in 1914. Having successfully expanded into the Unfederated Malay States, the British effectively controlled the whole peninsula.

► Opposition from the Local People

The British administration provoked dissatisfaction and resentment among the local chiefs and the people as it was felt that their positions had been eroded.

In Perak, the British met with opposition from Sultan Abdullah himself as well as Datuk Maharaja Lela, Menteri Larut, Datuk Sagor and other chiefs. This opposition climaxed with the murder of J.W.W. Birch, the Resident. However, the British were able to crush the opposition. In Negeri Sembilan, opposition came from the chief of Seri Menanti, Yamtuan Tunku Antah who did not like the British intervening in Sungai Ujong. This problem was similarly snuffed out by the British. Conflict between Negeri Sembilan and the British had in fact occurred earlier in 1831 when the British in Malacca claimed that Nanning fell within their territory. Penghulu Dol Said rejected the claim, triggering an armed conflict between the people of Nanning and the British. This show of opposition was also suppressed.

In Pahang, the British were opposed by the Pahang chiefs, especially Datuk Bahaman of Semantan, Tuk Gajah and Mat Kilau. These Pahang chiefs resented British intervention in the affairs of their state. Datuk Bahaman's opposition received the blessings of Sultan Ahmad who felt his position challenged by the British. The people supported the struggle because they were angered by the British who had imposed taxes on things which were hitherto non-taxable. Nevertheless, Sultan Ahmad was eventually forced to bow to the British when the revolt was put down. In Kelantan, the taxation system introduced by the British angered the people of Pasir Puteh. Meanwhile, the district chief of Jeram, Engku Besar Tuan Ahmad felt threatened when he was no longer allowed to administer the district. Finally, Haji Mat Hassan, or more popularly known as Tuk Janggut, arose to oppose the British. However, his struggle was not supported by the Kelantan Sultan. Instead, Tuk Janggut was branded a traitor. Tok Janggut lost his life in his revolt against the British.

In Trengganu, taxation and other regulations imposed by the British were not well received by the local people too. Conflict took place in 1922, 1925 and 1928. The 1928 conflict with the British received wide-scale local support which

Nevertheless, from the political point of view, the country did benefit in some aspects from the Japanese Occupation. The Japanese encouraged the development of nationalism. Leaders of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) imprisoned by the British were released. These activists were able to strengthen their position and instil political awareness among the Malays. Among the most prominent of these leaders was Ibrahim Yaacob. In 1943, he formed a paramilitary force known as Pembela Tanahair (PETA). This enabled the local people to gain experience. The Japanese also promised to grant independence to Malaya together with Indonesia, hoping that this would encourage the Malays to oppose British attempts to reconquer the country. Following this, Ibrahim Yaacob formed the Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung (KRIS) to arouse consciousness among the Malays that they were a part of Greater Indonesia. But this plan to achieve independence with Indonesia failed when the Allied forces defeated Japan in 1945.

► The Malay Union

The British returned to Malaya with a plan to form a *Malayan Union*. This plan was announced in October 1945. The British wanted a union of the states in Malaya so that there would be uniformity in administration as well as lower administrative costs. Their failure to defend the country from the Japanese made the British realize that the lack of a unified government weakened their defence. The union, it was hoped, would correct this weakness. Furthermore, it would make Malaya more politically stable because it would have a centralized government. Economic development would also benefit from a unified administration, and resources from rich states could be used to help develop the tin and rubber industries. Consequently, British investments in this sector would reap faster returns. The plan would also prepare Malaya for eventual self-government. The proposed *Malayan Union* would combine the four Federated Malay States, the four Non-federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. Singapore was to remain a separate colony.

Under the Malayan Union concept, there would be a Legislation Council at the central level comprising the Governor, official and unofficial members who would be selected by the Governor. The head of the Malayan Union government would be the Governor who would have full administrative and legislative powers. The Malay Rulers were retained as heads of their respective states, but only in the capacity of advisers. They only had powers in matters pertaining to the Islamic religion and Malay customs. A Council of Rulers was to be formed as an advisory body for the Governor. A Central Advisory Council made up of members appointed by the British government would also be set up. In each state, a Residential Commissioner would be the chief

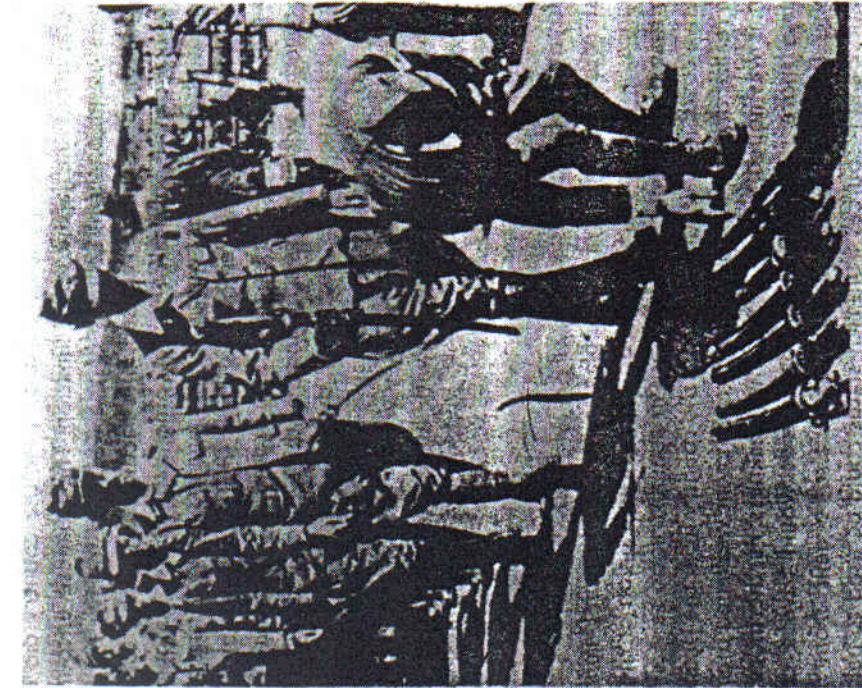
included that of a well-known religious leader, Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong. Nevertheless it did not succeed. Most of the religious leaders who participated were arrested and imprisoned. Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong was exiled to Mecca.

In Sarawak, James Brooke's expansion of influence through military actions aroused the anger of the local people, especially the Malays and the Ibans. Syarif Masahor, the governor of the district of Sarikei, with the help of Datuk Patinggi Abdul Gapur, led a resistant campaign against Brooke. This was also squashed, and Syarif Masahor was exiled to Singapore. Among the Ibans, Libau, better known as Rentap led the resistance in Ulu Skrang, which, too, came to no avail. Meanwhile, in Sabah, Mat Salleh, a chief of upper Sungai Sugut, arose to oppose British rule because his position was challenged and his people saddled with unfair taxation. Mat Salleh was among those who were killed in the anti-British struggle.

► The Japanese Occupation

The Japanese occupied the country in 1942 after defeating the British. The Japanese treated the Malay Rulers well because they believed that the Malays would cooperate with them if the Rulers were well-treated. The Japanese also treated the Malays well because the Malays had supported them at the time of the invasion. However, the Japanese were hard on the Chinese at the beginning as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese conflict in China since 1937. This harsh treatment eventually changed because the Japanese needed Chinese cooperation in the economic sphere. Furthermore, Japan's objective in conquering this country was to exploit its rich natural resources.

The position of the Malay Rulers changed during the Japanese Occupation of the country. They no longer chaired the State Councils. This responsibility was held by the Japanese Governor. The Rulers merely functioned as deputies. Membership composition of State Councils was based on the total population of each racial community in a state. Except for Perak where the Sultan was well-respected by the Japanese, the other states which had large Chinese populations would have many Chinese members in their State Councils. The Japanese ceded Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand to return a favour to the latter for the use of Thai territory to launch their invasion of Malaya. The Japanese ruled Malaya and Sumatara as a single unit. Throughout their rule, they implemented a policy of Japanization using the education system, mass media and the economic system. Their promises of 'Asia for Asians' and 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' remained mere slogans. The people faced great hardship and suffering as a result of Japanese cruelty and economic depression.



Japanese soldiers laying down their arms in Malaya following their surrender in 1945

Source: G.E. Saunders & N. Rajendra (1975)

executive empowered to administer directly without obtaining the advice of the Sultan, unlike in the pre-war days. Citizenship would be based on the *jus soli* principle, i.e. determined by the territory in which a person was born. This means that anyone born in the country after the formation of Malayan Union would be entitled to citizenship.

Following the announcement of the proposal on 10 October 1945, the British government sent Harold MacMichael on 12 October 1945 to Malaya to obtain the signatures of the Rulers of the nine Malay states. Through intimidation, MacMichael succeeded in getting the Rulers' signatures. The contents of the Malayan Union constitution and the underhanded tactic employed to obtain the Malay Rulers' consent caused the Malays to oppose the

proposal. In November 1945, eight Malay associations in Johor combined to form the Johor Malay League (Liga Melayu Johor). Meanwhile, in January 1946, Dato' Onn Jaafar formed the Peninsular Malay Movement (Gerakan Melayu Semenanjung). All efforts were centralized to oppose the Malayan Union.

The Malays could not compromise on two matters in the Malayan Union constitution, i.e. the violation of the Sultans' power and the award of citizenship through the principle of *jus soli*. To galvanize opposition, a conference of Malay organizations was held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1946. This Pan-Malayan Malay Congress resolved to form a political party to force the British to withdraw the proposal. The press joined in to play a role in getting the proposal repealed. The Malay opposition here received support in Britain from a group of former British officers, businessmen and Britons who had served in Malaya. These people openly condemned the *Malayan Union* in the British press and even sent their protest to the Colonial Office in London. The British government ignored all protests and *Malayan Union* was proclaimed on 1 April 1946. At the second Pan-Malayan Malay Congress in Kuala Lumpur, all Malays appointed to *Malayan Union* Advisory Councils at central or state levels were asked to boycott the Councils. The Malay Rulers were also requested to stay away from the installation of the Governor of the *Malayan Union*. The Congress's call for the boycott was carried out.

A third Pan-Malayan Malay Congress was held in Johor Bahru on May 1946. At this conference, UMNO was established, and henceforth opposition became more vigorous and orderly. Demonstrations were staged frequently, and UMNO leaders travelled throughout the country to rally support for the opposition. The Malays also went into mourning for seven days by wearing a band around their songkoks as a mark of grief over the loss of Malay self-respect and the Malay Rulers' power. As a result of the hostile opposition the British were forced to dissolve the *Malayan Union* two years after it was formed. A new constitution was drawn up to replace the *Malayan Union* constitution.

► The Federation of Malaya 1948

About three months after the proclamation of the *Malayan Union*, in July 1946, the British decided to set up a Working Committee to draw up a new constitution which would replace the *Malayan Union* constitution. The Committee was made up of four representatives of the Malay Rulers, two from UMNO and six British officials under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary of the *Malayan Union*. The Report of the Committee was published in December 1946. The non-Malays objected to the British intention to change the *Malayan Union* constitution. They formed the Pan-Malayan Council of Joint Action (PMCJA) in December 1946 under the chairmanship of Tan Cheng Lock. Organisations which made up the PMCJA included the *Malayan Democratic*

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Union (MDU), the *Malayan Indian Congress* (MIC), the *Malayan New Democratic Youth League* (MNDYL) and several trade unions.

The PMCJA put forward the following six suggestions:

- 1 Malaya should be united with Singapore.
- 2 A Central Legislative Assembly should be established and its members elected by the people.
- 3 Equal rights to all who consider Malaya their homeland and focus of their loyalty.
- 4 The sovereignty of the Malay Rulers can continue but should be based on the principle of constitutional monarchy.
- 5 Matters concerning the Islamic religion and customs should be left to the Malay community.
- 6 The Malays should be given special attention to advance.

A group of Malays with radical orientation also opposed the proposals contained in the Working Committee Report. Most of these were members of the *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaysia* (PKMM), the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API) and the *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS). These parties were later incorporated to form the *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (PUTERA) under the chairmanship of Dr Burhanuddin Helmi. PUTERA and PMCJA later reached an agreement to unite to oppose the new constitution. These two organizations accepted each others' suggestions, and PUTERA's four suggestions were added to PMCJA's six for a ten-point PUTERA-PMCJA joint proposal. PUTERA's suggestions were:

- 1 The Malay language would be the official language of the country.
 - 2 Foreign Relations and Defence would be jointly shouldered by Malaya and the British government.
 - 3 The term 'Malay' would be used to describe the nationality of the people of Malaya.
 - 4 The national flag would contain the national colours of the Malay people.
- The British ignored the PUTERA-PMCJA protest. PUTERA-PMCJA reacted by organizing a *hartal* (closing of shops and offices as a sign of protest). They also drew up a constitution based on their ten-point proposal which they called *People's Constitution*.

Since protests also came from the non-Malays, the British formed a Legislative Committee comprising non-Malay members, including Britons. The recommendations of this Committee were presented to the Working Committee in March 1947. Taking into consideration the views expressed in the report of the Legislative Committee, the Working Committee made certain

changes to the new constitution being drawn up, and this constitution was subsequently accepted by the British. In January 1948, the British obtained the signatures of the Malay Rulers, and on 21 February 1948, the Federation of Malaya government officially replaced that of the *Malayan Union*.

The 1948 Federation of Malaya Constitution contained the following principles:

- 1 The Federation of Malaya would comprise 11 states, including Penang and Malacca.
- 2 The head of the federal government would be a High Commissioner appointed by the British.
- 3 A Federal Legislative Council and an Executive Council to be formed would both be under the chairmanship of the High Commissioner. The Federal Legislative Council would comprise 3 ex-officio members, 9 Menteri Besar, 2 representatives of the Settlements (Penang and Malacca), 11 official members and 50 unofficial members appointed by the High Commissioner.
- 4 The High Commissioner had the power to put into effect proposed draft laws not yet approved by the Legislative Council provided it had been discussed for a considerable period of time.
- 5 The Majlis Mesyuarat Kerja or Executive Council was to advise the High Commissioner but its advice need not necessarily be accepted by the High Commissioner.
- 6 A Council of Rulers was to be formed to advise the High Commissioner. It had power on matters related to immigration. The 9 Malay Rulers participated in this Council.
- 7 Each state would have a State Council which had power to legislate and pass laws which could take effect with the Sultan's approval.
- 8 Citizenship by operation of law would be conferred to:
 - (a) Any subject of the Malay Ruler of a state.
 - (b) Any British subject born in Penang or Malacca who had resided for a continuous period of 15 years in the Federation.
 - (c) Any British subject born anywhere in the Federation whose father had also been born there or had resided there for a period of 15 years, continuously.
 - (d) Any person born in the Federation of Malaya who habitually spoke the Malay language and conformed to Malay customs.
 - (e) Any person born in the Federation of Malaya both of whose parents had also been born in the Federation and had resided there for a continuous period of 15 years.

- (f) Any person whose father was at the time of his birth a citizen of the Federation of Malaya.

Application for citizenship could also be made by:

- (a) Any person born in the Federation who had been resident there for 8 out of 12 years preceding his application.
- (b) Any person who had resided in the Federation for 15 out of 20 years immediately preceding his application.
- (c) Any person whom the High Commissioner believes is of good character, has knowledge of the Malay language or English and is 18 years old or more.

1.1.5 Towards Independence

Community leaders in Malaya realised that unity of the people was extremely important for the attainment of self-government. They were also aware that the British would not grant independence unless the various communities made unified and integrated demands. For this reason, Dato' Onn Jaafar changed the principle of his struggle. Before 1949, Dato' Onn Jaafar fought aggressively to ensure that Malaya belonged to the Malays. His battle-cry now was 'Malaya for Malaysians'. Dato' Onn's change of attitude received the support of the British. The British had hoped that inter-communal harmony and unity would check communist influence. The communists had in 1948 began their armed struggle against the British, making it necessary to declare a state of emergency in the country. At that time, too, communal tension had developed between the Malays and the Chinese following the *hartal* incident, and for security reasons the British had set up an intercommunal relations committee in Penang in 1949. In this committee the Malays were represented by Dato' Onn while the Chinese, by Tan Cheng Lock. Later, this committee was enlarged to include representatives from the other communities so that it comprised 6 Malay representatives, 6 Chinese, and one representative each for the Eurasian, Indian, Ceylonese and European communities.

In line with this inter-racial concept, Dato' Onn, the president of UMNO, decided to open the Malay party membership to the other communities. He proposed that the name of the party, *United Malays National Organization* (UMNO) be changed to *United Malayan National Organization*. However, his proposal was strongly opposed by UMNO members. Frustrated by the reaction of the members, Dato' Onn resigned from his leadership post in 1950. Persuaded to resume leadership a few months later, he again raised the issue of opening up UMNO to non-Malay membership. When UMNO members once again resisted his plan, Dato' Onn left the party on 27 August 1951. Almost immediately on

16 September 1951, he formed the *Independence of Malaya Party* (IMP). UMNO found a new leader in Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra. Initially, Dato' Onn's IMP showed promise of becoming an influential party among the country's plural population. It attracted the support of many important leaders from various communities, including Tan Cheng Lock himself, Datuk E.E.C. Thuraisingham, Abdul Wahab bin Toh Muda Abdul Aziz (Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang) and K.L. Devaser. However, it faced great challenge when UMNO and MCA decided to form an alliance in Selangor to contest the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council elections in 1952, and subsequently to build on this alliance countrywide.

Towards the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, the British in Malaya had to contend not only with communist insurgency but also with pressure and challenges from various political parties and communities within the country. To gain the cooperation of the local people in their efforts to destroy the communist threat, the British had to accede to holding elections. The first elections were held in 1951 in Penang to elect members for the Georgetown Municipal Council. Then, in 1952, elections for the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council followed. Dato' Onn's IMP lost badly to the UMNO-MCA alliance in these elections.

This UMNO-MCA pact in Selangor marked the emergence of the countrywide Alliance Party. The Malayan India Congress (MIC) soon joined the pact, and in the 1955 General Elections for the Federal Legislative Council, the UMNO-MCA-MIC Alliance Party won 51 out of 52 seats contested. The 1955 elections were a preparation towards self-government. The success of the Alliance, which represented the three major communities of the country, clearly showed that the people supported multi-racialism. It also signalled to the British that there was no longer any reason to entertain doubts about political stability or to be hesitant about granting independence to Malaya. To withhold or delay independence now would be to play into the hands of the communists. The communists could then claim that their objective was to rid the country of colonialism. Sympathy and support for the communist cause might then increase.

In early 1956, talks on the independence of Malaya were held in London. The talks were participated by four leaders of the Alliance, four representatives of the Malay Rulers and four representatives of the British government. The British announced that they were prepared to grant independence to Malaya. However, British troops must be allowed to remain in the country for security reasons. The Malayan government had to pay compensation to British officers who would have to vacate their posts. The British government promised to appoint a commission to draw up a constitution for Malaya.

A Federation of Malaya Constitution Commission formed soon after the London talks held its first meeting in June 1956. Headed by Lord Reid from

The idea of a merger of Singapore with Malaya was raised in 1955. David Marshall, the Chief Minister of Singapore at that time, suggested the idea but Tunku Abdul Rahman rejected it. Later, when Lee Kuan Yew became Prime Minister, the idea was revived but once again Tunku Abdul Rahman did not respond favourably.

However, at a Foreign Press Association function in Singapore on 27 May 1961, Tunku Abdul Rahman made what was to be a historical speech when he suggested that Singapore be merged with Malaya in a wider federation which would include Brunei, North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak. Tunku Abdul Rahman's change of opinion was brought about by several developments taking place at that time.

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, the communists were intensifying their activities throughout Southeast Asia. Although the end of the emergency in Malaya was officially proclaimed in 1960, it did not mean that communism had been exterminated in the country and its activities totally crippled. Indeed, the communists were still hiding in the jungles of South Thailand and continued to be a threat. But it was their activities in neighbouring territories that caused concern to the Malayan government.

In Singapore, the communists had successfully infiltrated political parties and trade unions. Although non-Communist Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party (PAP) controlled the government, it seemed possible that the democratic forces in Singapore might not be strong enough to contain them. And, if the communists gained control of the island, the peace and security of Malaya would be jeopardized. Tunku Abdul Rahman was also apprehensive that if Singapore eventually gained full independence by itself, it might become a base for Chinese racial activists. With Singapore in the Federation, such racial activities could be controlled. As for Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew was also concerned about the increasing problem posed by the communist or pro-communist elements. But more significantly, Lee Kuan Yew felt that a merger with Malaya would enable Singapore to gain independence from Britain immediately.

However, Tunku Abdul Rahman felt that a straight-forward merger of Singapore with the Federation of Malaya would upset the racial composition of the country. The Chinese community would then outnumber the Malays because 75% of the population of Singapore were Chinese. For this reason, Tunku Abdul Rahman wanted to include Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak as well in a wider Federation of Malaysia. These three Borneo states would increase the total population of Malays. Furthermore, communist threat in these states had already been contained. Sabah and Sarawak were rather pleased with the proposal because joining Malaysia would bring British rule to an end. They also felt that with the cooperation of Malaya and Singapore, there would be greater economic development.

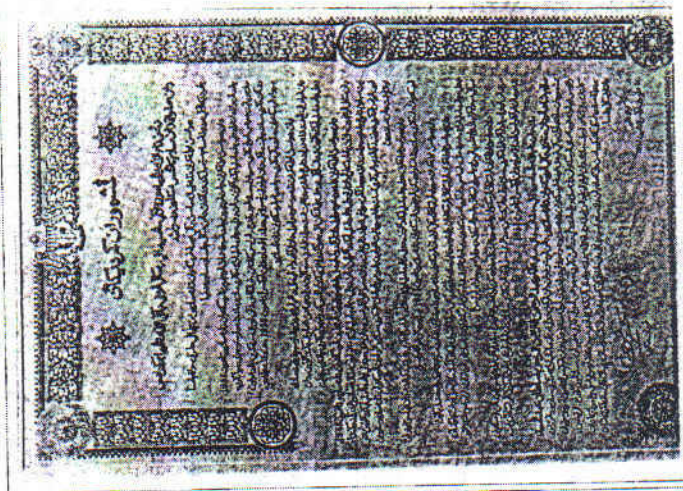
Britain, the Commission members comprised two Britons, an Indian, a Pakistani and an Australian. Based on memorandums and feedback from parties in the country, the Reid Commission drew up a constitution and released it in February 1957. Through negotiations, compromises were reached among the various communities in the country. The draft constitution was amended accordingly, and passed on 27 August 1957. On 31 August 1957, the British declared the independence of Malaya.

1.1.6 The Formation of Malaysia

The Federation of Malaysia formed on 16 September 1963 comprised Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. Several interesting developments preceded its formation.



(a)



(b)

Picture (a) Ceremonial signing of the Federation Treaty by Tunku Abdul Rahman ibni Almarhum Tuanku Muhammad, the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan and Sir Donald MacGillivray, the High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya. Picture (b) Document proclaiming independence, signed by Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj as written evidence that the Federation of Malaya was then an independent sovereign state and no longer a colonial territory.

Source: Mahdi Shuid (1996)

The Tunku's suggestions were welcomed immediately by Lee Kuan Yew. Nevertheless, there was strong opposition from left-wing leaders in Singapore who condemned the idea as a British strategy to preserve their influence in this region. In Borneo, too, there were initial doubts. Sarawak's political parties like the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Parti Negara Sarawak (PANAS) opposed the plan. Only the Barisan Rakyat Jati Sarawak supported it. In Sabah, where political parties had yet to emerge, community leaders voiced their opposition. In Brunei, the Sultan, in his private capacity, accepted the idea, but its Parti Rakyat, led by A.M. Azahari, strongly opposed it.

The leadership in Malaya as well as Singapore understood the reasons for the opposition. The Tunku himself had visited the Borneo states to study the reaction of the people there. He found out that opposition to his proposal was caused by a lack of understanding of the concept. Consequently, during a Commonwealth meeting in July 1961, also attended by leaders of the three Borneo states, officials from Malaya and Singapore took the opportunity to explain the Malaysia plan to the representatives of Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei. Their efforts were obviously successful because soon after this, a Malaysia Solidarity Consultative-Committee, with members from Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei was set up to explain the concept to the people of the respective states, gather information about public reactions, and submit suggestions for the Federation of Malaysia. Subsequently, the Committee submitted a memorandum incorporating several basic matters to be used as a guide for the drafting of a constitution for Malaysia. Among these was the acceptance of the 1957 Federation of Malaya constitution as a basis for the constitution of the proposed Federation of Malaysia.

In October 1961, Tunku Abdul Rahman left for London to obtain the British government's agreement for the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. The British government agreed on principle to the formation but wanted feedback of public opinion in the territories that would be united with Malaya. For this purpose, a commission headed by Lord Cobbold was formed. After studying the views of the public in the Borneo states, the Cobbold Commission submitted its report to the British government which administered Sabah and Sarawak and to the government of Malaya on June 1962. The report stated that only 20% of people in the territories concerned opposed the formation of Malaysia. The Commission therefore approved the formation. Meanwhile in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew conducted a referendum on 1 September 1962 to gauge the views of the public. The results of the referendum showed that 70% of the people of Singapore supported the island state's participation in the Federation of Malaysia. On the other hand, in Brunei the Cobbold Commission had found that

a large section of the people objected to Brunei's participation in the Federation.

After studying the Cobbold Report, the British government set up an intergovernment committee, known also as the Landsdowne Commission, to draw up a constitution for the Federation of Malaysia. Five sub-committees were also formed to handle matters concerning the constitution, finance, law, public services and matters relating to the forms of federal departments. The Landsdowne Commission's draft constitution was refined and later accepted as the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia.

Final negotiations among Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and the British were held from 7 to 9 July 1963. It was decided that an official announcement of the formation of the Federation of Malaysia would be made on 31 August 1963, and an agreement was signed to this effect. Brunei, however, did not sign as it did not want to join the Federation following an armed revolt staged by the Brunei Parti Rakyat of A.M. Azahari on 30 August 1962. Although the revolt was put down, with the help of the British and Malayan governments, Brunei decided to pull out of the Malaysia plan to avoid a recurrence of unrest in the state.

The Philippines and Indonesia strongly objected to this development. Malaya was condemned as a neocolonialist state and a tool of the British to control Southeast Asia. In Indonesia at that time, the Parti Komunis Indonesia (PKI) wielded much influence over the republic's president, Sukarno. The PKI felt that the formation of Malaysia was a great stumbling block for the development of communism in Southeast Asia. As a result of this, the communists influenced the government of President Sukarno to oppose the formation, despite the fact that at the early stage, Indonesia had said that it was unconcerned over the Malaysia plan. The Philippine objection was because it considered Sabah its territory. Even before the Malaysia idea was mooted, the Philippines had laid claim to Sabah on several occasions, but had been ignored by the British. To address the problem, a Foreign Ministerial Meeting was held in Manila in July 1963 between Malaya and the Philippines and Indonesia. At a later conference between the Tunku and both President Sukarno and President Macapagal (of the Philippines), an agreement was reached to seek the view of the United Nations as to whether the people of Sabah and Sarawak were in favour of Malaysia. U.N. Secretary-General U Thant sent a mission, headed by Michaelmore, to study public opinion in Sabah and Sarawak. Following the UN mission's positive report, the Federation of Malaysia's formation was officially proclaimed on 16 September 1963. Despite this, Indonesia was unwilling to back down on its opposition. Instead, it launched a military confrontation on the new nation which lasted until 1965.