PRINCE and PREMIER

A Biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra

HARRY MILLER



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and
PREMIER

PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU ABDUL RAZAK
PAR/P
MALAYSIA

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HARRY MILLER

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TO
MY DAUGHTERS
LORRAINE AND AUDREY

Foreword

Mr Harry Miller is well known throughout Malaya as a sound observer who works and lives by facts. This is his story of my life, in the writing of which he has gone to considerable trouble, spending much time in interviews with many people, and, of course, with me, in order to bring together the scattered incidents of my career and place them in perspective.

I have given him all the help I can, and have done my best to answer his questions. He has checked episodes and events with me, so that I believe this to be as complete an account of my life as it is possible for another man to write. Mr Miller was unsparing in his efforts to be accurate in recording events, but any opinions he expresses are, of course, his own.

I hope that the story he has told will help towards a clearer understanding on the part of those who do not fully appreciate all the facts of Malaya's constitutional struggle for freedom and the wish of her people for an equal place among the nations of the world.

I have wanted all my life to do something for the people of Malaya, and in particular to better the lot of my own race, the Malays. If I am accredited with nothing more I can at least thank God that I was able to lead our country along the path to independence, and beyond, without one drop of blood being shed.

In Malaya, with the complications of its multiple races, we have come to understand that the basis of our peace and happiness is tolerance and goodwill among our fellow-men, and I trust that this may be remembered by all those who are called to play their part in the service of Malaya and the Malayans.

KUALA LUMPUR
1959

Preface

This is the story of a Malay prince who was pitchforked into national politics in Malaya by a coterie of personal friends and admirers. They induced him to take on a job which no leading politician of his race wanted. It was the presidency of the national Malay political party (the United Malays National Organization), which had been rent by a difference of opinion on racial policy.

He justified the faith of these few. He set straight the issue, closed the ranks of the members behind him, and re-formed the party so that it soon became again the most powerful in the country.

Within six years of assuming its leadership he persuaded the British Government to yield their benign and benevolent protection of his country in favour of a state of proud independence within the British Commonwealth. He became the Federation of Malaya's first Prime Minister.

This is an unsurpassed achievement in the free, democratic world. It becomes the more noteworthy when considered against the first forty-five years of his life — for they were ordinary, if not mediocre.

He gained a Bachelor of Arts degree at Cambridge University after earning the lowest possible marks for a pass. He failed his Bar examination because he preferred horse-racing, the 'dogs,' and dancing. He finally passed them when he was forty-five years of age, and he chuckled because it had taken him twenty-five years to become a lawyer. As a District Officer in the Civil Service of his father's State he was only moderately able, but he was tremendously popular with the peasantry.

Those qualities which make him a South-east Asian leader of

statesmanlike cast were deeply latent in him. They manifested themselves only under the compulsion of the leadership that was thrust upon him.

This is Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, son of a former Sultan of Kedah, and the first Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya. He remains humble.

Tunku Abdul Rahman considers that his greatest achievement was to bring independence to his country without the kind of violent crisis which marked the pre-independence history of most countries in Asia and Africa which are now free; nor was any blood shed. Independence came with the greatest goodwill between Great Britain and Malaya.

Abdul Rahman is not an emotional or torrid politician; it is against his nature. He is probably the only Eastern politician who used only friendliness, charm, persuasion, tact, and some firmness to gain his goal.

He persuaded the Malays and Chinese, the two predominant races in Malaya, to attempt to live together in political harmony. He persuaded the nine Malay Rulers in the small country that independence was inevitable, but that it would not mean that they would lose their sovereign rights and privileges. Finally, he persuaded the British Government that Malaya was able to govern itself, and therefore deserved independence.

In the first years of his presidency of the United Malays National Organization (U.M.N.O.) Tunku Abdul Rahman gave the impression that he was rather a playboy at politics — for instance, he always consulted the racing calendar before agreeing to an important political or Government engagement — and therefore would not make a serious foe to any opposing political party or to the Government.

His metamorphosis after elections had elevated him to Chief Minister was startling. He increased in stature so immeasurably and took his duties so seriously that fears of instability under his government were quickly banished. Confidence reigned instead.

This biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman must of necessity be set against the background of the political development of Malaya and of what might be called the national struggle. The Tunku, as he is familiarly known, was a child when Malaya began to emerge from conditions that, in places, bordered on the medieval. He saw

it injected with the beneficial drugs of British administration and democracy, and he watched it advance through an early series of constitutional changes. The climax of these was his own participation in the final steps to independence.

However, the sole aim of this book is to introduce this prince of Malaya to the world. It offers no verdict on him and his stewardship as Prime Minister; this must wait some years.

Abdul Rahman nevertheless is a great Malay. His faults are overshadowed by his charm and, above all, by his fervently sincere desire to do nothing but good for his country and for the peoples of every race in it — the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians, and others.

I am grateful to Tunku Abdul Rahman for having found the time from the pressure of his official and political duties to assist me with his recollections.

I also express my thanks to the many Malays, Chinese, and British people living in Malaya and abroad — the politicians, the British and Malay civil servants, and the personal friends of the Tunku — for willingly assisting me with the compilation of this biography. Among them were Lord Ogmore, Sir Ivor Jennings, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, Mr Neil Lawson, Q.C., Dato Abdul Razak bin Hussein, the Tunku's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Colonel Sir Henry Hau-shik Lee, the Minister of Finance, Dr Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, Minister without Portfolio and Malayan Ambassador to the United States, Inche Mohamed Khir bin Johari, the Minister of Education, Inche Senu bin Abdul Rahman, the Malayan Ambassador in Indonesia, and Mr T.H. Tan, the Executive Secretary of the Alliance Party.

Finally, I wish to thank the Federation Government for permission to use certain letters and documents.

H.M.

KUALA LUMPUR
1959

Contents

Foreword (vi)
Preface (vii)

1.	Born Under A Lie	1
2.	Boyhood Of A Prince	13
3.	In School	24
4.	Undergrad At Cambridge	32
5.	In England Again	40
6.	Civil Servant	48
7.	A Sultan Kidnapped	57
8.	The Occupation Years	66
9.	Birth Of A Party	74
10.	In London Again	84
11.	Barrister At Last	91
12.	A Law Officer	98
13.	Political Nadir	104
14.	President Of The Party	111
15.	An Alliance Formed	119
16.	First Step To Freedom	127
17.	A Portfolio Declined	134
18.	A Critical Year	138
19.	A British Lion Bearded	144
20.	Political Crises	153
21.	A Boycott Launced	159
22.	Drama About A Warship	169
23.	The Road To Independence	176
24.	The Elections Won	185
25.	Chief Minister	194
26.	Date With A Communist	203
27.	"Everything On A Gold Plate"	213
28.	Independence	223
29.	Whiter Man And Country	233

CHAPTER ONE

Born Under a Lie

When Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was born in Alor Star on February 8, 1903, there was little excitement in the lovely Malay State of Kedah. To the peasants working in their paddy-fields he was just another son born to a prolific father who happened to be their Sultan, Abdul Hamid Halim Shah, and who, though still only thirty-nine years of age, had already been on the throne for twenty-one years.

Sultan Abdul Hamid died in 1943 at the age of seventy-nine. The eight women he had legally married at various stages had borne him forty-five sons and daughters, who themselves gave him ninety-two grand- and great-grand-children — quite one of the most extensive royal families in Malaya.

Abdul Rahman's mother, Makche Menjelara, had been the Sultan's sixth wife.* She was Siamese, which was not unusual in view of the close historical and social affiliations that existed between Kedah and Siam. Menjelara remained the Sultan's favourite wife until she died in April 1941. When Abdul Rahman was born she had already presented her royal consort with three sons (one of whom died very soon after birth) and three daughters. In the next nine years until 1912 she had another six children.

For many years the Sultan was seriously ill mentally. Indeed, from 1896 to his death in 1943 he lived the life of a recluse, and a Regent looked after the affairs of State. Yet, in spite of his illness, he outlived some of his wives whom he had not divorced, and a

*Under Islamic law a man may marry as often as he wishes so long as he does not have more than four wives at any one time, and so long as he is able to maintain them.

very large number of his children, including three heirs-apparent, as well as three Regents, one of whom had been a younger brother.

Therefore when Abdul Rahman was slapped into his first cry by a buxom Malay *bidan* (midwife) who was primitive in her methods the only stir he really caused was in his home, and within the bosom of his mother, because this fourth son of hers had been conceived in circumstances which lead Abdul Rahman to-day to exclaim laughingly, "I was born under a lie. That's what my mother often told me."

It is a delightful, and perhaps significant, story. One day Sultan Abdul Hamid was told that the Keeper of the Ruler's Seal had misused the Seal by selling State land without authority, and had retained the money. Punishment lay with the Sultan. He ordered death for the Keeper, and as a taint on his family for the rest of their lives he decreed that the right thumbs of the Keeper's wife and all his children should be chopped off.

It was a harsh and horrifying punishment which ordinarily would have been accepted with Koranic philosophy about the divine rights of the Sultan. However, the Keeper of the Ruler's Seal was dearly loved by his wife. She did not wish him to die, and she was revolted at the prospect of her children going through life without a right thumb, a visible stigma of their father's crime.

She sped to Menjelara, then known to be the Sultan's favourite among his wives, and implored her intercession. Menjelara rebuked her, saying, "It is not my place to interfere with the Tuanku's justice, and your husband deserves his punishment." But the sobbing supplicant pleaded that punishment should not be imposed on her innocent children.

Menjelara was also a mother. She finally promised intervention. She had an audience with her husband, and told him she was pregnant again, and her pregnancy would be seriously affected if he persisted in punishing the Keeper and his family. She feared that her child might be born without a thumb — perhaps without a limb.

Menjelara was subtle in her plea, for there is a Malay superstition that a husband should do nothing evil during his wife's pregnancy, otherwise a dark spirit would enter the child in the womb. Menjelara's news had a double effect: the Sultan was so elated that his favourite was to present him with another child, and

so anxious at the same time that nothing evil should befall it, that he ordered the ex-Keeper to prison instead and suspended the punishment on the family.

The truth, however, was that Menjelara was not pregnant at the time. Fortunately, she conceived very soon afterwards. The child born was Abdul Rahman. The many orthodox Malays in Kedah who believe in signs, omens, and portents like to say that Menjelara's grace and charity in interceding on behalf of the unhappy wife of the Keeper were passed into her next child, and that is why Abdul Rahman is the kind, generous, open-hearted man he has always been.

The Kedah royal family is perhaps the oldest in Malaya. The dynasty has been unbroken through more than a thousand years, and is traceable through nine Hindu Rulers and sixteen Muslim Sultans. Kedah princes and princesses are taught that their first ancestor was Marong Mahawongsa, a Mongol prince from India, who was on his way to China to marry a Mongol princess when his ship was wrecked in the Straits of Malacca. He was among the survivors who landed on the shores of Kedah. The people took to him and accepted him as their Paramount Ruler.

It is an historic fact that more than two thousand years ago Pallava traders from the Coromandel Coast of India sailed eastward looking for spices, sandalwood, ivory, gold, camphor, and tin. They found that if they anchored their ships on the west side of the narrow part of the Malay country — what is now the Kra Isthmus — and carried their cargo overland to the east and loaded it on ships waiting there, they would have markets right up the coast and into China.

It was, however, cumbersome to haul cargo across Kra, and inconvenient to arrange for ships on the east side. The Pallava traders began sending their fleets farther south to look for a route to China. They eventually found a passage round the uninhabited island that is now Singapore.

On their way south to Singapore through the Straits of Malacca they became very familiar with a landmark which they could see from twenty to thirty miles out to sea. This was Jerai Mountain in Kedah. Modern ocean liners still use Jerai as their northern Malayan landmark. They know it as Kedah Peak.

The ancient traders anchored their great two-hundred-foot sail-

ing-ships in an estuary at the foot of Jerai, and came ashore for fresh water. Here, just before World War II, an archaeologist discovered the sites of twenty-one Hindu temples and other buildings dating from the fifth to the twelfth century. These are believed to have been on the site of a Hindu city which had the Sanskrit name of Kataha. The ancient Chinese knew it as Kietcha. The Pallavas called it Kadaram. The modern Malay word is Kedah.

The Indians came first as sailors, but they were followed by traders who settled at the revictualling ports along the west coast of Malaya, and also along the east coast of the opposite island of Sumatra.

Malacca and Palembang became rich ports and the centres of kingdoms. Kedah itself became the heart of the kingdom of Langkasuka. Its towns were walled and had double gates. Its inhabitants wore just sarongs around their waists. Their nobles, long-haired in the Hindu fashion, slung flowery-designed cloth over their shoulders and wore golden ear-rings.

The eighth century saw the rise of the kingdom of Sri Vijaya. Its Maharajah sat in Palembang. Kataha became one of its subordinate States, but it was given an honoured position because of its importance on the trade route. Indeed, the empire was sometimes called Sri Vijaya and Kataha.

This association lasted until the eleventh century, when a new enemy came down the Straits in the shape of the warlike Chola Kings from Tanjore, along the Coromandel Coast. They had conquered all South India, had raided Ceylon, Bengal, and Burma. Now they turned south to Sri Vijaya. They first attacked Kataha in 1017; eight years later they launched a much bigger attack and captured the King of Kataha, a man with the long name of Sangramavijayottungavaman. On a stone in Tanjore to-day is a record of the Chola Kings' capture of this King of Kataha. Soon afterwards Marong Mahawongsa became the new Ruler of Kataha.

Two hundred years later Sri Vijaya was attacked on the north by the Siamese and conquered. For centuries Siam claimed overlordship not only of Kedah, but also of the other northern Malay States of Kelantan and Trengganu. This suzerainty was broken only in 1909, when Siam handed over its rights of protection to Britain.

By 1516 Kedah was reported as exporting "much pepper, good and fine" to the great Malay empire of Malacca, to the south of the

peninsula, and also to China. Then in the sixteen-hundreds the Dutch came on the scene and placed restrictions on trade in ports along the coast. Kedah, however, was perhaps a little too far to the north for the conquerors of Malacca to interfere, so it continued to send tin from its hills, elephants from its jungle, and bolts of calico across the Bay of Bengal to an English trading organization in Calcutta known as the British East India Company.

In those days jungle stretched solidly from the north of the Malay peninsula to the south. The Malays of Kedah and the other Malay States lived in huts clustered round the mouths of the larger rivers. They fished and grew rice. They also indulged in piracy. The 'State' of Kedah and each of the other Malay 'States' were represented by these huddles of huts along the rivers. The Ruler was little more than a big chief with a grandiose title. Under him were the other village chiefs, who lived by collecting taxes and declaring war on one another, backed by their spear-carrying followers. Every man was armed with a kris, the Malay sword, for law did not prevail and life was cheap. The swiftest with the kris survived.

The British had learned of Kedah's tin around the turn of the seventeenth century. In 1609, nine years after the East India Company had received its charter from Queen Elizabeth I, a report now in the Company's archives declared that "tin from Quedah in blocks of some 50 lb., or some very great quantity, may yearly be sold."

In September 1610 Samuel Bradshaw, a merchant, wrote to the Company that "at Queda and Perak is great store of tin and lead to be had." He added that the Malays "usually truck it for cloth of Suratt or other places." Thus tin was the keynote of the East India Company's early association with Kedah.

The stalwart British Indiamen began to make frequent journeys across the Bay of Bengal, their captains anchoring at the mouth of the Kedah river. Just over forty miles south was the jungle-clad island of "Peenang," which within a hundred years was to figure so prominently in the story of the British in Malaya.

Remnants of a fort exist to-day at the *kuala* (mouth) of the Kedah river. Through this fort passed the races that contributed to the history of Kedah between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries — the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Achinese from Sumatra, the

English, the Bugis from the Celebes, and the Siamese. They came to trade or to conquer; the Malays were there to defend their homeland, generally ineffectually.

Kuala Kedah, the fort, with its Malay homes built of wood and with interlaced nipah palms as roofing, stood through the centuries until the advent of Penang, under British influence, as the principal seaport for North Malaya. Kedah exported tin, gold, pepper, and elephants through Kuala Kedah. The annals tell of elephants that either died at sea en route to Sumatra or India or "fell overboard." Into and through Kuala Kedah came Indian cloth which attracted traders from Java, Malacca, and elsewhere.

The first English private trader in Kedah was a Mr Lock, who in the sixteen-sixties brought in cloth and other merchandise and was paid in tin. English frigates and Indiamen took elephants to the Indian port of Masulipatam. Despite this intermittent trading the English were never able to hold their own in Kedah against the Dutch.

A piquant description of Kedah and its Sultan remains to-day in an account by a Scot, Alexander Hamilton, who had anchored at Singapore at least a century before Sir Stamford Raffles, its founder, and had declined to accept the island as a gift from the Sultan of Johore. Thus he threw away his chance of being the first 'White Rajah' in the Far East.

Writing about 1700, Hamilton described Kedah as "both small and poor." Its principal town stood on the banks of a small navigable river, deep but narrow. "The King resides in it but shews no Marks of Grandeur, besides arbitrary governing," said Hamilton. The people he considered "deceitful, covetous and cruel." The country produced pepper, elephants and "elephants' teeth" (tusks), and canes and damar, a gum used for making pitch and tar for ships.

Hamilton has left a diverting picture of the Sultan, who, he wrote, was

> poor, proud, and beggarly, he never fails of visiting stranger Merchants at their coming to his Port, and then, according to Custom, he must have a Present. When the Stranger returns the Visit, or has any Business with him, he must make him a Present, other-

> wise he thinks due Respect is not paid to him, and in Return of these Presents, his Majesty will honour the Stranger with a Seat near his sacred Person, and will chew a little Betel, and put it out of his royal Mouth on a little gold Saucer, and sends it by his Page to the Stranger, who must take it with all the Signs of Humility and Satisfaction, and chew it after him, and it is very dangerous to refuse the royal Morsel.

The only extant manuscript of ancient Kedah laws drawn up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries gives an indication of the enlightened but severe injunctions that prevailed. The laws laid down four immutable rules for Rulers: first, to pardon the sins of their slaves; secondly, to be generous; thirdly, to inquire into offences; and fourthly, to carry out the law strictly. Rulers were also deemed to have four attributes: first, courtesy of manners; second, to issue orders without revoking them; third, to do good works; and fourthly, to suppress evil works.

The Rulers delegated to their Temenggong, a very high chief, the duties of building prisons, "arresting thieves, robbers, smugglers, opium smokers, cock-fighters and gamblers." Intrigue was so rampant in those days that Rulers and chiefs took the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their jobs.

For instance, they imposed a form of curfew to stop people walking around at night. They appointed watchmen, who beat gongs to warn the residents that curfew hour had come and they should not wander out of their huts unless they had important business. If they did venture out they were expected to carry flaming torches of damar, so that when challenged they could be identified. If they failed to carry torches they could be arrested, and, if they resisted, slain, even if they were emissaries of the Sultan or chiefs.

Laws protected a house-owner against trespass by a stranger. If a visitor entered the compound of a hut by day without permission he could be killed by the owner; "so too any stranger who goes as far as the verandah of a house when there is no man in the house may be killed." If a visitor entered a compound at night without calling out he could be "lawfully slain." The outside fence or boundary of the compound of a house was said to be marked by

"one cross-bar."

The laws laid down Court etiquette. There were, for example, certain forms to be observed when dispatching letters to a Rajah, who received them ceremonially. Letters from neighbouring Rajahs were delivered in the company of sixteen standards, two white-fringed umbrellas, a betel-casket, ornamental yellow napkins, and music from gongs, trumpets, flutes, and drums. However, a letter that came from the "Governor of Malacca" was first placed on a cushion, and then carried on an elephant over which was raised a "Chinese umbrella." The retinue included twelve standards, and music came from drums and flutes only. On arrival at the *balai* (the audience hall) the letter was saluted with five guns, "because salutes are a higher honour for an infidel."

In 1765, when "John Company" was looking for a new port of call and repair station for its ships east of the Bay of Bengal, a young ex-naval officer named Francis Light, trading in Kedah as the representative of a Madras firm, wrote to his company principals that its Ruler wished to grant them the seaport of Kedah and the fort near it, in consideration of assistance against his enemies, the Bugis in Selangor.

This letter was sent on to the East India Company, who took no action on it: the great Warren Hastings was too preoccupied in India "turning a trading company into an empire and had no time for the trade or politics of Malaya." However, Light persisted, and finally in 1786 succeeded in persuading the Company to accept the Sultan's offer of the uninhabited island of Penang, opposite Kedah, as a trading station. A treaty was signed with the Sultan, and Light took formal possession of Penang on August 11 of that year "in the name of His Britannic Majesty and for the Use of the East India Company."

Thus the beginnings of British influence in Malaya were ushered in by Abdul Rahman's great-great-great-grandfather, Sultan Abdullah II. Abdul Rahman could be forgiven, therefore, when as Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya he received from the British Secretary of State for the Colonies the promise of independence for his country by August 31, 1957, for declaring, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I will thus right the 'wrong' done by my ancestor." Whatever else the import of *merdeka* (independence), it was indeed a strange coincidence that it should be accomplished by a

direct descendant of Sultan Abdullah II after just twenty days short of 171 years of British influence and government.

In view of subsequent history, the Sultan of Kedah's letter offering Penang is worth repeating. He wrote:

> Whereas Captain Light, Dewa Raja, came here and informed me that the Raja of Bengal ordered him to request Pulau Pinang from me to make an English Settlement, where the Agents of the Company might reside, for the purpose of trading and building ships of war to protect the island and to cruise at sea, so that if any enemies of ours from the East or the West should come to attack us, the Company would regard them as enemies also and fight them, and all the expenses of such wars shall be borne by the Company. All ships, junks, or prows, large and small, which come from the East or the West and wish to enter the Kedah river to trade, shall not be molested or obstructed, in any way, by the Company, but all persons desirous of coming to trade with us shall be allowed to do as they please; and at Pulau Pinang the same.
>
> The articles of opium, tin, and rattans are monopolies of our own, and the rivers Muda, Prai, and Krian are the places from whence tin, rattans, canes, besides other articles, are obtained. When the Company's people, therefore, shall reside at Pulau Pinang, I shall lose the benefit of this monopoly, and I request the Captain will explain this to the Governor-General, and beg, as a compensation for my losses, 30,000 dollars a year, to be paid annually to me as long as the Company reside at Pulau Pinang. I shall permit the free export of all sorts of provisions, and timber for shipbuilding.
>
> Moreover, if any of the Agents of the Company make loans or advances to any of the Nobles, Chiefs, or Rajas of the Kedah country, the Company shall not hold me responsible for any such advances. Should any one in this country become my enemy, even my own children, all such shall be considered as enemies also of the Company; the Company shall not alter their engagements of alliance, so long as the heavenly bodies continue to perform their revolutions; and when any enemies attack us from the interior, they also shall be

> considered as enemies of the Company. I request from the Company men and powder shot, arms large and small, also money for the purpose of carrying on the war, and when the business is settled, I will repay the advances. Should these propositions be considered proper and acceptable to the Governor-General, he may send a Confidential Agent to Pulau Pinang to reside; but if the Governor-General does not approve of the terms and conditions of this engagement, let him not be offended with me. Such are my wishes to be made known to the Company, and this treaty must be faithfully adhered to till the most distant times.

The Company was not prepared, however, to endorse any promises which the unfortunate Light may have made personally to the Sultan about receiving military assistance. In 1791 a more definitive treaty was signed between Britain and Kedah, promising the Sultan 6000 Spanish dollars a year as long as the British occupied Penang. It again made no mention of defence.

In 1800 the next Sultan of Kedah ceded to the East India Company at its request a strip of territory on the mainland opposite Penang for a further 4000 Spanish dollars a year. That strip was named Province Wellesley.

All this while Kedah had lain in fear of attack either by Siam or by Burma, but it had pinned its faith to British assistance.

In 1821 the expected attack by Siam finally materialized. Without warning a fleet of Siamese boats landed at the fort at the Kedah river. The Malays in the fort cried, "We are betrayed. Let us attack them furiously," and began a counter-attack. They were, however, overwhelmed. The Siamese went up the river, killing, raping, pillaging, torturing, destroying. The Sultan of Kedah, Ahmad Tajuddin Halim Shah II, barely escaped on elephant-back. He had been attending a wedding. After "infinite privations," as Sir Frank Swettenham puts it, he finally made his way to Province Wellesley, and then into Penang, where the Governor gave him succour. The British, however, made no effort to stop the Siamese over-running Kedah. The Sultan died in exile. His favourite son was captured in Kedah and taken as hostage to Siam.

This breach of faith, says Sir Frank Swettenham, "sullied the British name and weakened its influence with Malays for very

many years." The British were not prepared to go to war with Siam, but only to negotiate a settlement if possible. Siam was quite a powerful country at that time.

In 1825 word reached Singapore, which had been founded six years previously and had become the headquarters of the Government, that Siam intended to dispatch forces to conquer Selangor and Perak. This time the Governor of Singapore and Penang began rattling a sabre in a bluff to make the Siamese believe that British forces would defend the two States. The bluff succeeded: Siam did not embark southward.

A few months later, in 1826, she signed an agreement with Britain in which she undertook not to interfere in Selangor and Perak. This, however, did not mean that the unfortunate Sultan of Kedah would be able to regain his State. It was all very regrettable and very harassing to the Sultan, who did not return to his country until 1842.

Siam claimed absolute suzerainty, a change from the centuries-old 'friendship' that had existed between the two countries. Throughout these centuries Siam had every three years received from the Ruler of Kedah, and from other Malay States, the *bunga emas* — trees and flowers created from gold and silver. The Malay States looked upon these as gifts. Siam put a different interpretation: the *bunga emas,* she said, was a tribute from a vassal. They were the traditional gold flowers of submission. The Malay States did not argue: Siam was much too powerful a neighbour. Nevertheless the *bunga emas* was a costly and elaborate token. A description of one remains to-day: in 1869 the Ruler of Kelantan dispatched to Bangkok *bunga emas* which had eight branches, thirty-eight flowers, 908 leaves, four snakes, and four pairs of birds, all in gold.

In 1882 Sultan Abdul Hamid Halim Shah, Abdul Rahman's father, ascended the throne of Kedah. Twelve years later he prevailed upon the Siamese Government to agree to a British Consul being appointed to his State. It was the thin end of a wedge that he was determined to drive between himself and the Siamese. Fifteen years later, in 1909, Sultan Abdul Hamid finally drove it in. He signed a treaty with Britain which brought British influence directly into the highly feudal State of Kedah itself.

Abdul Rahman was six years old when his father signed the

Anglo-Kedah Treaty. Forty-eight years later, as Chief Minister, he witnessed the end of British rule not only in Kedah, but in the whole of Malaya. It was a moment for which he had worked unceasingly during the six years he had been a politician.

Abdul Rahman does not remember the details of the ceremony which transferred the suzerainty of Kedah from Siam to Britain — he was too young — but he tells of the gesture his father made to Britain immediately after the change in overlordship. Prior to the signing of this treaty Kedah had already prepared the trees of gold and silver for the triennial presentation of *bunga emas* to the King of Siam. This generally had been carried by elephant from Alor Star to Singgora, a port on the east coast of South Siam, and then by ship to Bangkok. Kedah decided to ask the British Government if "our good friend" (King Edward VII) would be pleased to accept the tribute of two trees, as they might be deemed to have a special interest by reason of the fact that they were the last of a series which had extended back for centuries.

The reply was that His Majesty would be pleased to accept the tribute. The two trees were packed into wooden cases and shipped to London, addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He personally presented the trees to the King, who expressed his admiration of the workmanship.

CHAPTER TWO

Boyhood of a Prince

Abdul Rahman's mother, Menjelara, was a Siamese commoner. Her father, Luang Nara Boriraks, had been Governor of Meaung Nontaburi, a small province in Siam. Its 'capital,' Park-Kret, is an hour's journey by car north of Bangkok. Luang Nara Boriraks' ancestors originated in Pegu, in Burma, so the Siamese-Malay-Burmese mixture in Abdul Rahman's blood accounts for his dark, swarthy complexion. He is, indeed, as he himself admits, darker than any of his brothers and sisters. His very close family connexion with Siam has inevitably engendered a feeling of affinity with that country.

Menjelara had come to Kedah during her childhood. One report is that she had been sent to Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin as a ward. She lived with Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin's sister, Tunku Harimah, who later arranged the marriage between Menjelara and the next Sultan, Abdul Hamid. Menjelara was about nineteen years of age when in 1887 she became the sixth wife of Abdul Hamid. She bore the Sultan twelve sons and daughters.

Menjelara is still reckoned by those in Kedah who remember her to have been one of the shrewdest women in the State. In her own right she was a rich woman, as riches were computed in her day. She owned houses in Bangkok left her by her father; she also owned land and houses in Alor Star, the State capital, given to her by her adopted father and also by her husband.

She was discerning enough to realize that Kedah's new-born association with Britain would lead to development in the State. Alor Star was then, indeed, no more than a large village surrounded by jungle, with two metal roads leading north and south, the northern road travelling thirty-three miles to the boundary with the

Siamese province of Singgora. Menjelara laid a road through some of her land in Alor Star, and flanked it with brick shops. It received the name Jalan Bahru (New Road). It still exists in Alor Star as one of its more crowded thoroughfares. She also established a central market in the town, but this no longer exists. The road and its shops and the market proved most profitable enterprises for Menjelara.

At the time of Abdul Rahman's birth she lived in a three-storeyed brick building named Istana Kota Lama ("Palace of the Old Fort"), which stood in the centre of Alor Star. It was designed and built by a Chinese architect about ninety years before in the only style that he knew well — that of a Chinese pagoda. It must have been a unique building in the Malay-Siamese atmosphere of Alor Star.

Abdul Rahman still has memories of playing hide-and-seek and *tangkap* (catch-as-catch-can) in its spacious rooms and down its squeaky stairs. He remembers particularly the glazed tile dragons which ferociously snorted their way round the outside walls on each storey. His home was known more familiarly to the people in Alor Star as Istana Tiga Tangga ("Palace of Three Staircases or Floors"). It was pulled down in 1914, when he was eleven years old, because the site had been allocated by the Kedah Government for the home of the State Council and the Secretariat.

When Abdul Rahman was born an Indian named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was thirty-four, was practising as a barrister in South Africa, and was talking of independence for India. In India itself a boy named Jawaharlal Nehru had reached the age of fourteen, and his father, Motilal, a fervent admirer of things English, was sending him to Harrow. In Malaya another little boy, Onn bin Ja'afar, aged eight, in his home in Johore Bahru, in the very south, was preparing to leave for school in England. His father was Mentri Besar (Prime Minister) of Johore. He also had an adopted father, the autocratic Sultan of Johore.

These three individuals were in their respective ways to influence Abdul Rahman's later life as a politician and to play a part in his own fateful steps into the history books of Malaya. He was to be inspired by Gandhi's efforts to achieve independence "without bloodshed" for mighty India. He was to admire Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, and was at first to model his

thoughts and his actions as closely as possible on "my favourite politician." He was, quite unexpectedly, to take over from Onn bin Ja'afar the leadership of the Malays of Malaya, and instinctively and fatefully lead them to their own *merdeka* (independence). Onn, considered by many to be head and shoulders above any other Malay in intellect and ability, was to become a bitter political opponent as he lost gamble after gamble.

By 1903 Malaya had moved into its complex and fascinating modern history. The pace it took was slow and steady, almost lazy, the pace that was typical of Malaya's most familiar animal, the grey *kerbau* (buffalo), which prefers as little work and as much wallowing as possible in each day of its life.

A man named Stamford Raffles had long before set the pace for the new era. On January 28, 1819, he had sat cross-legged on the wooden floor of the home of a Malay chief and had bargained successfully for the cession of the completely jungle-clad island of Singapore. He paid Sultan Hussain of Johore, the southernmost Malay State, 5000 Spanish dollars for the island. The British have rarely made such a good bargain.

In 1867 Singapore and the earlier British settlements at Penang and Malacca were grouped as a Crown Colony in the Empire. Very soon afterwards the British Government forsook their principle of rigid abstention from the affairs of the Malay States in the hinterland because conditions in them were far from tranquil and British trade and traders were being badly affected by the internal strife that rent most of the territories.

In succession, the British signed treaties with Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang, each of which agreed to accept a British officer to assist and advise in all matters relating to the government of each State except Malay custom and religion. Peace gradually reigned throughout Malaya, and political development began.

In 1895 Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, and Pahang joined together into the "Federated Malay States," and started on their way to undreamed of prosperity with the orderly expansion of the tin industry and the development of rubber. The former owed its success first to Chinese miners, who employed hundreds of their countrymen to dig the precious ore by hand. British capital then invested in tin and imported mechanical equipment, and pro-

duction rose rapidly. British enterprise also opened rubber estates.

The other Malay States of Kedah, Perlis, Trengganu, Kelantan, and Johore signed treaties with Britain, but remained aloof from 'Federation.' They preferred their own independent course, viewing political union with suspicion. They drifted along in their own streams of progress and development — some much more slowly than the others — and developed individual and distinct personalities.

Because of its proximity to Penang and to the more advanced States of Perak and Selangor — and also because of the appearance of the railway — Kedah made greater headway socially and economically than the more isolated States of Kelantan and Trengganu, which were content to maintain the atmosphere of the ancient Malay countryside. However, it was not principally because of its geographical position that Kedah kept apace with modern development. Even before British intervention in the Malay States Kedah had achieved a reputation for being, according to Sir Frank Swettenham, "more advanced in its institutions, in the observance of order, the well-being of its people, and the general development of the country, than any other State in the Peninsula."

The reason lay in its intelligent and politically able princes, who guided their country with skill and wisdom. People in Kedah still speak with reverence of two royal relatives of Abdul Rahman who more than any others brought Kedah to high state. They were Tunku Mahmud, an uncle, and Tunku Ibrahim, the eldest son of the sick Sultan. Both became Regents and inspiringly guided the destiny of Kedah. Tunku Ibrahim, as Regent, was virtually Ruler from 1914 until his death in 1934.

However, for a decade prior to Abdul Rahman's birth the financial affairs of Kedah had been torrenting downhill. His father had not paid much attention to affairs of State, principally because of his illness, but at the same time he had been too liberal with the royal income. In fact, he lavishly squandered it. One result was that Government salaries were not paid regularly.

The financial climax came in 1904, when he arranged the most elaborate and expensive celebrations for the wedding of his eldest son, Tunku Ibrahim, born from his first wife, a Siamese, Che Spenchandra. He also arranged the weddings of four other sons at

the same time. The Sultan borrowed large sums of money from Indians in Penang. For three months whole days and nights were set aside for feasting and merry-making. Government offices were closed for days. The town of Alor Star was beflagged, decorated, and lit up at night by hundreds of candles. Never had there been such festivities. Inevitably, when the bills were presented, the Sultan was unable to settle them. All sources of further credit disappeared. The principal creditors, the Indians, happened also to be British subjects. They appealed to the Resident Councillor of Penang, who was also acting as British Consul for the Western Malay States. He pressed their claims. Bankruptcy seemed imminent for Kedah.

With the consent of the Sultan, who had retired into seclusion, his Regent applied to Siam for a loan. He asked for a fortune. Siam agreed to lend $2,600,000 (£306,000) at 6 per cent interest, but only on condition that there should be radical reform in the administration of Kedah. Also, Siam appointed a Financial Adviser to Kedah, whose advice the Sultan agreed to follow "in all matters relating to finance." This officer was to remain in Kedah until the capital and interest on the loan had been paid. Curiously enough, the first Financial Adviser was a Britisher, Mr W.J.F. Williamson.

The reform began with the immediate establishment of a State Council to govern Kedah. The Financial Adviser was a member. Kedah records show that in its first year the State Council made "considerable progress." Most of the work was devoted to introducing audit and treasury rules on British principles to ensure a check on money received by the various Government departments. No money could be spent by any department unless the expenditure had been approved by the Council.

By the second year the revenue collected, says the report, was "enough to keep in comfort a more than sufficient staff to carry out the duties of government, to pay the interest on the loan to Siam, the privy purse of His Highness the Sultan, and a civil list of a large number of members of the Ruling house, as well as to leave some balance for works of general improvement."

The Government servants were highly paid, although they were untrained. It was not that they were unaccustomed to methodical work: they were unaccustomed to work of any kind. One official report put it thus: "Education in the past has been of the most

elementary kind, and officials are usually considered sufficiently well-trained to be eligible for any post under government provided they can read, write and know the four simple rules of arithmetic." This was understandable, because the education of boys in Kedah had been of the most primitive kind. Those who could read the Koran and write an intelligible letter were considered highly educated.

Physically, Kedah was in a parlous state. At no time had any of its Government buildings and earth roads been repaired. An irrigation canal that had been dug twenty years before, and ran southward for miles through a rich rice plain, was in a shocking condition. The official report glumly commented: "There are, therefore, some twenty years of accumulated arrears of repairs to be effected."

The labourers repairing the roads were chiefly Tamils from South India, who had become so lazy under mismanagement that they generally took well over a year to re-metal one mile of road. Their overseers were under the impression, to quote once again from the frank official report, that "their principal duty was to store up a modest competency for their old age by lending money at exorbitant rates of interest to those who laboured under them." When a British State Engineer finally took charge and started his own reforms he met with strong opposition from the senior member of his office staff — whom he dismissed — and with passive resistance from the outside overseers and other members of the staff, "who saw their former life of ease and plenty threatened with extinction."

The State was not healthy. It was riddled with cholera, malaria, yaws, and scabies. Abdul Rahman as a boy succeeded in avoiding cholera, but he suffered from bouts of malaria and was badly affected by yaws, a particularly unpleasant disease which, in spite of the great advances of medicine, still afflicted whole Malay communities in the hinterland of the peninsula in the 1950s.

Under the State reforms a British doctor was seconded from the Federated Malay States to Kedah as Chief Medical Officer, and he began a systematic attack on malaria, trying to win the people over from beliefs in their *pawangs,* the experts in the use of magic, and their *bomohs,* their village medicine-men who specialized in the healing art.

So Kedah began to move forward in more orderly channels. More and more Chinese arrived because of the attraction of the tin in its hills and the prospect of opening up profitable rubber estates and businesses in Alor Star, Yen, and Kuala Muda. All in all, it was in a bustling atmosphere of promise for his home State that Abdul Rahman began to grow up.

Abdul Rahman may have been born in superstitiously auspicious conditions, but physically he was a frail boy, and for many years he was not able to participate in games like football and tennis, in both of which in later years he achieved some prowess. He lived in the hothouse atmosphere of a feudal royalty. His mother's home was filled with retainers who sank to their knees and paid obeisance every time they approached a royal presence. This was part of the *hormat*, the honour and respect which everybody was expected to pay to royalty. Tunkus, the princes and princesses of the royal family, learned that they too were expected to *memberi hormat*, to do honour to their parents and their elders. They imbibed the innate courtesy of their elders, which was also a heritage of their race and a legacy of their religion, Islam. They realized that they held a special position among the *rakyat*, the commoners in the State. They were royalty, and when they walked outside their Istanas, the commoners gave way to them and, after doing obeisance, humbly watched them pass. Older people, indeed, lowered themselves to their knees before raising their two palms to their foreheads in deep obeisance.

Malay royal children led a very detached existence, and if a father had many sons and daughters he would not see a great deal of them. Abdul Rahman did not see much of his father in his childhood. "I became very attached to my mother," he comments. His father lived in his palace at Kampong Bahru, two or three hundred yards from Menjelara's house, visiting his four wives in turn. He regularly came to Menjelara on Friday after prayers in the State mosque near her home. His food was cooked by his own staff in a special kitchen behind Menjelara's house.

By the custom of Malay royalty and commoners, Abdul Rahman and his brothers and sisters did not eat with their parents. A Malay eats by himself when he is ready, served by his wife, who may sit and talk to him or just watch him.

In the first five years of his life Abdul Rahman played only with

his royal brothers and sisters and with the children of courtiers and retainers. It might have been considered inevitable, therefore, that he would develop into an insufferable brat, because there were so many opportunities inside an Istana for children to be cosseted and allowed to have their own way, particularly by their mother, but Menjelara does not appear to have followed the pattern of royal consorts.

Her children were not free from any form of discipline. Perhaps it was the much more matter-of-fact treatment she and her brothers had received in their Siamese homes that influenced her in the upbringing of her own children. She never spared the rod. Both Abdul Rahman and his elder brother, Tunku Mohamed Jewa Haji, confirm this. Mohamed Jewa Haji still describes with some awe — in spite of his years — a thrashing his elder brother, Tunku Yussuf, received from his mother for daring to smoke in her presence. "She considered that young princes should not smoke in the presence of their parents," said Mohamed Jewa. "She gathered an audience of us children and the courtiers and retainers, strung Yusuff to a rafter by the hands, and then herself beat him with a cane until he cried for forgiveness and promised to respect her." The beating must have made a tremendous impression on Mohamed Jewa Haji, because he was only six years old at the time. Abdul Rahman had not been born then; he says that later in life he heard about this beating.

Abdul Rahman's mother, relatives, and close friends nicknamed him Awang, a name generally given to a country boy. The nickname stuck until after his return from Cambridge with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. He did not mind it. In his childhood there was nothing he liked better than to run out of the Istana and play with boys of his own age in the kampongs which lay so peacefully around Alor Star in the shade of their own fruit-trees and coconut-palms. He says, "I used to find happiness in their midst." It was not the behaviour expected of a little Tunku, but this freedom that he gave himself was really the beginning of a characteristic which has marked the whole of his life: he has no 'side.' He is probably the most approachable prince in the whole of Malaya. He holds no class distinction.

He played barefooted in the kampongs, and Menjelara gave up beating him for it. He leapt into the crocodile-infested river and

shrieked with joy. It was on exciting trips with his kampong friends that young Abdul Rahman learned about the animals and birds of his State. He waited in ambush with his little friends and their elder brothers or their fathers to catch birds.

There was the Sintar Api, a Malayan banded crake, a handsome rufous bird with resplendent red eyes which gave it its Malay name, "the fiery sintar." Abdul Rahman learned how to call the sintar towards evening into a patch of ground in which were erected slight converging fences of twigs. After dark he and his friends drove the birds into a rotan basket trap placed at the apex of the fences. The sintar made good eating.

For cage birds they caught the Merebah Bidan, the yellow-crested bulbul, a fine songster with clear, melodious tones. Along the road they saw the Segan, the nightjar. The Malays call it *segan* (lazy) because of its apparent laziness in waiting until the last possible moment before flying out of harm's way. It never worries to make a nest: it just lays its eggs in any depression in the ground.

He heard romantic tales about some birds. There was the Sepah Puteri, the scarlet-backed flower-pecker. In the Malay romances of the ancient days the *sepah*, which is the chewed quid of betel, was often given as a mark of affection by a girl to her lover. The flower-pecker had been born out of a quid. Abdul Rahman was told that the Tuan Puteri Bulan (the Moon Princess) once expectorated her quid of betel-nut, and the crimson stream fell to earth, where it was turned into the scarlet-backed flower-pecker.

One day he watched an old woman smearing herself with an oily-looking substance. She told him that it came from the Kambing Gurun, the serow bird, which dwells on inaccessible limestone crags in the plains of Kedah. Its spittle or any oily extract from its meat is believed by Malays to be a valuable healing unguent for wounds, fractures, or rheumatic ailments.

Large grey sea-herons were also familiar to Abdul Rahman. He heard tales of heron-egg-collecting picnics by Kedah princes who were mounted on elephants which slushed through the marshy areas where the birds nested on top of the dense beds of high *peripok* reeds.

Perhaps one of the strangest aspects of life in the peculiarly Malay State and Court of Kedah in those days was that royalty and members of the State Civil Service wore, not Malay costume, but

Western dress. Abdul Rahman wore baju and sarong only when he was inside the Istana. For a trip to the outside world he donned a British-cut coat and shorts or trousers. Sometimes the cloth was heavy tweed.

The men wore heavy frock-coats and cravats, but the shining top-hat was replaced by a velvet Malay cap in deference to the Muslim religion. This custom of wearing Western clothes, made either in drill for office wear or in tweed for very formal occasions, had been borrowed from the Siamese Court. Twice a year an English tailor from Pritchard's, a firm in Penang, travelled the sixty miles to Alor Star to measure members of the royal family for new clothes. He returned a few weeks later for fittings. Tunku Mohamed Jewa Haji says, "We always insisted on the English tailor. We never had our clothes made by local Chinese tailors because they could not give us a good cut." Of course, it was hot wearing tweeds in Kedah's 90° F., but the Sultan decreed it, and the royal word was law.

The change came in 1911, when Abdul Rahman was eight years of age. The occasion was the Coronation in London of the King-Emperor, George V. The new association between Kedah and Britain had resulted in a royal invitation to "my friend" the Sultan of Kedah to attend the ceremony in Westminster Abbey. Kedah broke into a hubbub with the news that the Sultan had accepted; it would be the first time any member of Kedah royalty had gone to Britain. The only formal trips royalty had made outside Kedah had been to Bangkok every three years to deliver the *bunga emas*, the tribute of gold.

The Sultan sailed for London with his brother, Tunku Mahmud, who was president of the State Council, his cousin, Tunku Bahadur, who was his aide-de-camp, and a retinue which included cooks and servants.

The royal party equipped itself with all the formal trappings it thought necessary — black tail-coats for banquets, black frock-coats and pin-striped trousers for the Coronation in the Abbey, and tweed coats and trousers for less formal occasions. In London the Colonial Office, according to report, lifted surprised eyebrows over the fact that the Malay Ruler of Kedah had no Malay national costume — well, like the Sultan of Perak, who was also in London with his retinue.

Let Tunku Mohamed Jewa Haji describe the rest: "The Sultan finally agreed that his party should wear Malay costume in the Abbey, but we could not find in England the necessary rich gold-threaded cloth. Then some Colonial Office official suggested silk as a last resort. So a tailor from Savile Row hurried to our hotel with bolts of silk and started to cut and sew the costumes on our direction. He even made us a form of *tengkolok* (headcloth) to replace our black caps."

After the return of the Kedah party to Alor Star with the Sultan a newly created Honorary Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, Tunku Mahmud visited Perak and brought back fashions used by the Perak Royal Court. Slowly the frock-coats and tweeds disappeared, although Kedah retained its Civil Service uniform in white drill, which closely followed the pattern of the Malayan Civil Service.

CHAPTER THREE

In School

Young Abdul Rahman, aged eight, viewed with some alarm his mother's decision to send him to school in Alor Star. He reconciled himself to it though when he learned that some of his playmates outside the royal walls were to be fellow-students. But he was appalled when his mother insisted that he should not walk to school, but be carried on the shoulders of a retainer. He considered this royal custom an indignity. He wanted to walk the short distance to the school.

Just for once, his mother felt that royal dignity should be sustained: his place in the confined world of Kedah was that of a Tunku, and young Tunkus did not dirty their feet. She expected him to arrive at school clean and tidy. Tuan Syed Omar Shahabudin, a childhood friend of Abdul Rahman, recalls that the boys in the school teased Abdul Rahman. They catcalled him when he arrived riding the shoulders of a tall retainer: "You're a big kid! Why do you want an old man to carry you? Haven't you got legs?"

Close to tears, Abdul Rahman angrily called back, "What can I do? My mother wants me to come horseback on this man's shoulders." He sighed with relief on the day he no longer had to ride 'horseback.'

He went to the only English school in Alor Star — indeed, in the whole of Kedah. It is now the Sultan Abdul Hamid College, one of the finest institutions in the country. Its establishment had been part of the reform in administration. Until then education had been well-nigh non-existent in Kedah. Only one Malay school stood in the capital of Alor Star; there was another in Kulim and a third in Siputeh, both in the south. The head, and only, master of the Alor Star Malay school was a clerk whose salary was $30 a

month. He was, an official record admitted, "irregularly paid," and he "instructed at irregular intervals a class of from thirty to forty pupils who came or stayed away as they pleased."

The existence of these four schools justified the establishment of a "Department of Education," which naturally had initial staffing difficulties. There had to be a "Superintendent of Education" to guide the destiny of the schools and schoolchildren, so, following the custom of keeping the reins of power in royal hands, the job was given to a youthful royal scion. His qualifications were nil. His last job had been that of Assistant Auditor, where the few simple rules of arithmetic he knew came in useful. He did not last long in education. The official report already quoted commented glumly that he had "proved both lazy and dishonest," and that finally he was "found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to imprisonment."

Abdul Rahman began to learn his Arabic alphabet of thirty-two characters and his English alphabet of twenty-six. He struggled to understand the differences between each group, repeating first after his Malay teacher. "Alif, ba, tha, da....." and later in the day after an Indian who pronounced the English alphabet with a marked accent, "Yeh, bee, see, dee, eee, yeff....."

Abdul Rahman's mind was not on his lessons. It wandered out of windows to the small playing-field and into the shades of the kampongs or to the cool river in which he liked to swim and to fish.

The school was set in pleasant surroundings in the heart of Alor Star. On one side stood the Balai Besar, the Siamese-styled audience hall where his father or his representatives came regularly to hold public audiences. Near by was the Balai Nobat, the hall where on ceremonial occasions the Court musicians played their flutes and their drums. A little distance away was the State mosque, where the Sultan led his people in prayers every Friday at 1 p.m.

As part of their initial education in school the children learned that Muslim months were lunar months, while the English had Gregorian months of thirty or thirty-one days, and that there was a place called England 8000 miles to the west which had a king named George the Fifth.

At home in the Istana the women took Abdul Rahman's knowledge of things Malay a little farther. For instance, they told him that the moon's appearance in the sky is used descriptively —

almost poetically — by Malays to identify the period of the month. The one-day-old moon, *sa-hari bulan,* is the symbol for an eyebrow; the fourteen-day-old moon, *empat belas hari bulan,* suggests a fair and radiant countenance. So Abdul Rahman began to learn of the poetry and romance that radiate through the life of rural Malays.

In 1913 Abdul Rahman left his home for the first time for a long journey abroad under the charge of his eldest brother, Yussuf, who had returned home after being in Siam and England for many years. When very young he had, according to the prevailing custom, been adopted by the King of Siam, Chulalongkorn, and spent most of his early life in the atmosphere of the Royal Siamese Court. One of his closest friends then was Prince Prajadhipok — they bore a remarkable resemblance to each other — who was to become the last absolute King of Siam. Yussuf was eventually sent to England as a King's Scholar — a prize honour. He went to Rugby School, and as he was destined for a career in the Siamese Army he was accepted at Woolwich as a cadet, and was later commissioned in the Royal Engineers.

At the end of his course he returned to Alor Star for a short holiday with his family. He brought with him his wife, an Englishwoman. He thus made family history, because he was the first Kedah prince to marry a white woman. It was not a popular break with tradition so far as his family were concerned. Yussuf eventually decided to return to Bangkok earlier than planned.

Sultan Abdul Hamid and Menjelara agreed that Abdul Rahman should go to Bangkok also. She wanted him to meet her family. Also, although political ties with Siam had been broken, there still existed the closest royal friendship between the two States. It was an opportunity for another son of Sultan Abdul Hamid to build friendships in the Siamese Court, and in Bangkok Abdul Rahman would be put in school and kept under the vigilant eye of his brother.

For a youngster of Abdul Rahman's age the journey to Bangkok was full of adventure. First a ride by car from Alor Star northward to Singgora, in south Siam. Then from Singgora an exciting journey by ship across the South China Sea. The ship dropped anchor outside the bar at the mouth of the river Chao Phraya, and later began slowly chugging up the winding reddish-brown river which

flowed between thick jungle that broke sometimes to give occasional glimpses of open plains.

Eventually the spires and turrets of the numerous temples of Bangkok appeared on the horizon. Rafts, boats, junks, and ships filled the harbour. In Bangkok one of the first sights was the long, thick, low white wall that ringed the great Royal Palace. That wall was familiar to Abdul Rahman, because similar Siamese-inspired walls ran round each royal home in Alor Star.

Bangkok with its canals and their teeming life fascinated him; they were ripe for exploration. He visited the Wat Phra Kaeo, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the King of Siam's private chapel. He gaped at its brilliance and decorations, and sadly compared it with the bare, almost frugal, simplicity of the State mosque at Alor Star.

One of Abdul Rahman's new friends was Luang Tavil Guptarak, who was a permanent secretary in the Siamese Government. "We roamed Bangkok on our bicycles and went shooting," says Abdul Rahman. "I had a happy time." Both also became Boy Scouts.

It is not strange to learn that Abdul Rahman made friends not only with the sons of princes and noblemen, but also with the old betel-chewing Siamese women hawkers who squatted by the roadside selling betel-nut and green oranges. He says, "I used to squat by them, chatting. The old ladies seemed to take to me."

He went to the Debsirindir School (named after the mother of King Chulalongkorn), where he continued to study elementary English and was also taught Siamese, a little of which he still speaks.

Then the world experienced its first modern upheaval. The Great War broke out in Europe. The tremors did not reach the peaceful atmosphere of Siam, but the officers of its Army, who had learned the principles of modern warfare in the military schools of Britain or France, began rattling their swords. There was no doubt then about the direction in which their sympathies lay. King Rama VI sent a large donation to his old English regiment, the Durham Light Infantry, and subscribed to many English charities. It was not until 1917, however, that Siam took action and declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary.

By then Abdul Rahman was back in Kedah. In 1915 he had suffered his own personal upheaval when his brother Yussuf died

of pneumonia. Yussuf was buried in the Mahanag Muslim cemetery in Bangkok. Regretfully, Abdul Rahman packed his belongings, boarded a ship for Singapore, and from there returned overland to Alor Star. He was fondly welcomed by his mother and his friends. His father was still a sick man and living in solitude.

Soon after his return to Alor Star Abdul Rahman was sent to school again, this time in Penang. His old friend Syed Omar was already in that bustling British Colony as a boarder in what was even then a very fine school, the Penang Free School. Some of Abdul Rahman's brothers were there too.

Abdul Rahman went to Penang in 1916, and entered another new world — the truly British Colonial world. There had been too few Britishers in Alor Star to bring the full essence of their "world in exile" to the growing royal capital, but Penang, with its port, its traders, and its Colonial Government officers, possessed it in full flavour. It was a British world of horse and carriage, of dainty parasols and long skirts, and of moustachioed Englishmen, severe in stove-pipe trousers and straight-cut coats which buttoned up under the chin and gave them a heated, if not strangled, look. It was also a world of Chinese long queues — and wearing top-hats or bowlers with their mandarin costumes.

The Penang Free School was 'free' only in the sense of being open to pupils of all races and all religions. It had been founded in 1816, thirty years after Francis Light had obtained his concession from Abdul Rahman's great-great-great-grandfather. Financial assistance for the school came from the East India Company. People of the Church of England also rallied to its support, and it flourished, prospered, and expanded. It still gives its pupils a magnificent grounding for their future life.

In his dormitory Abdul Rahman was heckled principally because his mother could not stop sending him comforts. Once she sent him pillows for his bed, not because he had complained of having hard ones, but because she felt that a prince of Kedah should use the kind of pillows he would use at home. Their bottle-green velvet coverings were heavily embroided in gold thread in a pattern of flowers and leaves. This was too much for the boys, and Abdul Rahman sought relief every night by offering his pillows to his room-mates with the remark, "You have my pillows, and I will have yours." He found some acceptances. How many boys could

resist the temptation to lay their heads on a royal pillow so that they could boast about it the next day?

It was inevitable that Abdul Rahman and his friends from the 'wilds' of Kedah should be teased and ragged for a few weeks after their arrival in the school. The smart boys of Penang looked upon them as country bumpkins with little knowledge of the ways of the Penang world. Syed Omar recalls that Chinese boys used to pounce on Abdul Rahman and say to him, "Why don't you go back to your kampong?" Syed Omar adds, "However big the boys, he would go for them. So did I. We always had bloody noses."

School hours were long: they lasted from 9.30 in the morning until four in the afternoon, with a fifteen-minute break at 10.30 and a lunch recess from one to two. Standard II (the class in which Abdul Rahman was placed) was run by a Chinese teacher whom the pupils nicknamed "The Owl." A hard taskmaster, "The Owl" kept a cane in his desk, and produced it frequently to administer punishment. Abdul Rahman laughs to-day as he says, "I was one of those who used to be caned on the hand regularly."

Abdul Rahman's bugbear was mathematics. A pupil teacher used to take the Lower IV (to which Abdul Rahman had now been promoted) in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. He was a young man named S.M. Zainal Abidin, who many years later was to become chairman of the Penang division of the United Malays National Organization under the presidency of his former pupil. Zainal Abidin did not consider the slender, delicate-looking lad either intelligent or of unusual ability. He told him so again when he became Chief Minister.

The Chief Master of the Lower School was Mr H.R. Cheeseman, who after the Japanese War was Director of Education in the Federation of Malaya. Mr Cheeseman recalls that Abdul Rahman in the Lower School was "a boy for whom I had a weak spot, not because he was clever — he wasn't by any means — nor because he was a very good-looking, attractive youngster, but because he was the typical Malay, a courteous, friendly youth. Tunku Putra, as he was called, had a host of friends."

Mr Cheeseman adds, "Of course, he was full of mischief, possessing that typically English characteristic that makes the Malay so like us!" The Kedah boys were up to all sorts of tricks. One story tells how Abdul Rahman and others used to keep fighting-cocks

hidden in the top of their mosquito-nets until their housemaster went out. Then the dormitory became the scene of "right royal cockfights."

Abdul Rahman participated in extra-mural activities. He was a patrol leader in the school Boy Scout troop, then became a junior officer in the School Cadet Corps. Here he learned shooting, which became a passion with him later in life, when he went out at weekends shooting snipe and other birds.

When Abdul Rahman passed his examinations it was not by dint of any unusual exertion or incentive. Syed Omar described Abdul Rahman's passage through examinations thus: "He was never very good, but he scraped through."

In Alor Star the Kedah Government came to a far-reaching decision on the subject of higher education. It inaugurated State scholarships to send promising boys to a British university. Menjelara set her heart on her favourite son receiving this distinction. She was not worried, as other royal Malay mothers were, about letting her son go to England, 8000 miles away. She considered it important to broaden his mind. Educating her sons was her passion. Her second son, Mohamed Jewa, had gone through the Malay Boys' College at Kuala Kangsar, about 150 miles south of Alor Star.

With the help of Mohamed Jewa, and with the collaboration of the highest Kedah Government officials, including the British Adviser, Menjelara succeeded in getting the first State scholarship granted to Abdul Rahman. A necessary qualification was a pass in the Seventh Standard examination. Abdul Rahman did not know this when he sat for the examination. He passed it.

One day the headmaster, Mr R.A. Pinhon, summoned him. It was with some trepidation that Abdul Rahman knocked on the office door; he could not guess why he had been sent for. Mr Pinhon said to him, "How would you like to go to university in England?"

Perhaps for the first time, Abdul Rahman was at a loss for words. He finally stammered out, "Very much, sir."

Mr Pinhon went on: "I am recommending you for a Kedah scholarship. Good luck!"

A depression descended on Abdul Rahman. As he puts it, "Of course, there was nothing strange about young men leaving home,

but when I thought of being 8000 miles away I became quite depressed about having to leave my mother." He was frank enough to add that he did not remain depressed for long.

An excited Abdul Rahman returned to Alor Star to an even more excited mother. The man from Pritchard's in Penang was summoned to fit the sixteen-year-old prince with suits.

Although the War had ended more than a year before, shipping to and from Europe was still difficult. The few liners that steamed between Southampton and Singapore were always fully booked. Royalty had to accept what was available. For Abdul Rahman it was a berth on a freighter, the *Rhesus*. In May 1920 he boarded it. He shared a cabin with three midshipmen. Ahead was another new adventure — England, about which he had heard so much from Yussuf, and a completely new life.

So, immature in outlook and average in educational standard, Abdul Rahman left Malaya. The *Rhesus* took him to London in six weeks, via Colombo, Aden, the Suez Canal, and Gibraltar.

CHAPTER FOUR

Undergrad at Cambridge

The first part of the journey to England was unpleasant. When the *Rhesus* sailed westward malaria was on Abdul Rahman. He tossed about in his bunk in high fever and alternately shivered with cold spells. The Indian Ocean was not in good mood either, and the *Rhesus* bucked and swung, tipped and slid, until the unhappy Abdul Rahman felt it was perhaps worth while dying.

He recovered in sufficient time to look longingly at Colombo from the deck. The immigration authorities would not let him ashore, because he had no proper papers. All Abdul Rahman carried was an identity certificate. The fact that he was Malay royalty did not impress immigration officers. It was Abdul Rahman's first experience of the value of a passport. He was not to get ashore until the *Rhesus* docked at Tilbury.

Abdul Rahman still remembers the day vividly, not because it was a bright June day and Tilbury wore a pleasant welcoming air, but because it was the day after the Derby. Aboard the *Rhesus* he had been inculcated into the importance of Derby Day. He noticed the excitement with which Britishers aboard waited for news of the winner. That year it was Spion Kop. Abdul Rahman had had his first little flutter, but he had not drawn Spion Kop. He had, however, been injected with the Turf bug, and from then on took every opportunity to be present at horse-racing in Britain and in Malaya. His one great relaxation after he became Chief Minister was to go off to the races on a Saturday if he could, even it if meant flying south to Singapore or north to Penang.

Abdul Rahman travelled to Little Stukeley, a pleasant village about three miles from the county town of Huntingdon, which lies fifty-nine miles north of London by rail. His tutor was the Rev.

Edgar A. Vigers, who had his living in the district.

At Huntingdon Abdul Rahman thought to himself, if Alor Star is a country town, this is all country. Huntingdon even now consists of only one street about a mile long, with a market-place in the centre. He clambered into a horse and trap and was driven up hill and down dale through rich agricultural land until he arrived at the rectory in Little Stukeley.

He was depressed when he saw the village, because, as he recalls to-day, "there was nothing, not even a shop." But he grew fond of the cottages and the countryside and the even tenor of life, the green beauty of early summer and the glories of autumn. He still remembers his first meal in Little Stukeley — beef sausages and crispy lettuce "the like of which I had never tasted before, and perhaps since."

At supper that first night he met the half-dozen fellow-students who were being groomed by Mr Vigers for entry into a public school. Only one has remained a firm friend. He was a Siamese, Choop Jotikastara, who graduated as a doctor and came into world limelight in 1946, when, as surgeon in the Siamese Government, he performed a post-mortem on the young King Ananda Mahidol of Siam, who had died from a bullet in his head. Dr Choop Jotikastara pronounced that the wound could not have been self-inflicted and the King had been murdered.

Abdul Rahman was known as "Bobbie" in Little Stukeley. It was more convenient than "Abdul Rahman," which was pronounced in a variety of ways. He also became a stalwart in the Stukeley football eleven, a team from the village of Little and Great Stukeley. The villagers thought Bobbie a grand right-winger, fast and nippy and a quick scorer. He turned out for only one season, because after a year under Mr Vigers it was decided that he should try to matriculate for entry into Cambridge University.*

An elder brother, Badlishah, was in Wadham College, at Oxford, to which he had been sent by the King of Siam as a "King's Scholar." Badlishah was destined for service in the Kedah Treasury. His presence in Wadham was part of a far-sighted policy of Kedah's royal house, on the advice of the then British Adviser, Mr (later

*In 1956 Abdul Rahman, as Chief Minister, revisited Little Stukeley and met the widow of Mr Vigers and her daughter.

Sir) George Maxwell. Kedah's royal sons were all earmarked for service to their State. Abdul Rahman was to be in the administrative service. Another elder brother, Yaacob, came to Cambridge to take a degree in science. He was channelled into agriculture, where he had a distinguished career, finishing as the first "Member for Agriculture" when the Government of the Federation was reorganized in 1952 to give Ministerial responsibility to people outside the Government.

Abdul Rahman did not want to enter Cambridge from any impelling desire to gain distinction in studies. His later course through Cambridge proved this, because he did not take his books seriously enough: he rarely attended lectures. He was caught by the glamour of Cambridge. He was a healthy extrovert and gregarious. He felt that Cambridge would give him what he wanted – the company of men and lots of fun. He found both. But before he could find them he had to pass the entrance examination. That meant studying Latin and slaving at maths.

He moved to Cambridge, found lodgings in Hardwicke Street, and studied under a young English tutor who specialized in English and Latin. An Indian student in Magdalene College coached him in geometry; a third young man crammed him in arithmetic and algebra. With a little more determination than he generally displayed Abdul Rahman achieved the minimum pass necessary to get him into the University. He was admitted to St Catharine's College, and immediately applied for residence in the college.

Here developed what might have been a misunderstanding on all sides, but it led Abdul Rahman to assert later that a 'colour bar' existed in the University. He could not get residence even though he applied, as requested, at the beginning of each term. He admits that he felt that each refusal was given because he was an Asian, and it seemed to him that the rooms were reserved for Britishers.

St Catharine's is one of the smallest colleges in the University, and, according to a college authority, from 1919 onward it had far more applicants than it could possibly take. It could therefore reserve only a limited number of places for students from overseas. Vacancies for the British Empire, as it then was, were often referred to the Colonial Office.

However, Abdul Rahman declares that the Dean's final remark made him furious. After once again telling the young Malay that

rooms were "not available," he added, according to Abdul Rahman, that they would continue to be unavailable because, he feared, "this college was built for Englishmen, and I cannot let you in."

An angry and insulted Abdul Rahman replied, "Thank you," and walked off. He fumed for days, and fumed again to Sir William Peel, the British Adviser in Kedah, who was on leave in England and was visiting him.

Sir William promised to do something. He complained to the Colonial Office, who, in turn, reminded the College Authorities that Abdul Rahman was a prince and a son of a Malay Ruler. Abdul Rahman says, "They were prepared then to make amends. They offered me a room, but it was too late. I refused it." Abdul Rahman adds frankly, "I was offended at the time, but it passed." He says, however, that he could not for a long time get rid of the thought, If this is how they feel about us here, why shouldn't we feel the same about them in our country?

Some of Abdul Rahman's followers like to say to-day that this incident first made him "anti-British." They err. Abdul Rahman himself asserts that he has never been anti-British; he was always anti-British Colonialism, which is quite a different thing.

Nevertheless, when he tried to enter the football world of the University he again felt there were a prejudice against Asians. He was undoubtedly a good footballer. He became one of the main-stays of the College second eleven. His ambition was to get a Blue for football, and he had sufficient confidence in his prowess as right-winger to feel that at the very least he was worth a place in the freshmen's trials. His name was finally put up, but that, he says, was "as near as I got to playing in the trials." He could not apparently even make his way into the College eleven.

Abdul Rahman read law. A contemporary was Ivor Jennings, a Scholar of the College, and to-day Master of Trinity Hall. Just over thirty years later Sir Ivor Jennings, as a constitutional expert, was to meet Abdul Rahman, then Chief Minister, and to sit in a commission of constitutional experts who recommended the form of constitution for an independent Federation over which Abdul Rahman was to be first Prime Minister.

It is interesting to record that of the nine Prime Ministers in the British Commonwealth when the Federation became independent two were Oxford men and five were from Cambridge. Abdul

Rahman was the fifth from Cambridge, but, as an old Cambridge man was to say, "This was not because Cambridge set out to make Prime Ministers or encouraged young men to take themselves seriously." None of his contemporaries in the University had ever taken Abdul Rahman seriously.

Ivor Jennings knew Abdul Rahman well, but in the usual offhand undergraduate way. Abdul Rahman's particular friend in the College was H.V. Davies, who became a schoolmaster in Bristol. The link between Jennings and Abdul Rahman was George Brown, a cheerful young man from Bombay who also read law. The ambition of Abdul Rahman, according to Cambridge report, was to pass with the minimum of work. It was apparent that he never had any enthusiasm for academic law.

Ivor Jennings recalls that Abdul Rahman the undergraduate was "very small and slender." Fellow undergraduates describe him as "a cheerful extrovert, taking life easily, amusing himself and everybody else." He knew every one in the College, and was very popular. He was not unduly interested in politics. Ivor Jennings was President of the Junior Common Room in his second year, and therefore organized the political debates, but he has no recollection of Abdul Rahman ever attending a meeting. Abdul Rahman certainly knew of the Indian students' Majlis and had friends in it, but he did not take them too seriously, although it was in these circles that "Home Rule" movements were hatched and "Pakistan" was invented. It is possible, as Ivor Jennings suggests to-day, that Abdul Rahman thought politics too serious a matter for undergraduates.

What his contemporaries remember most about Abdul Rahman was his car, an open Riley sports model with an aluminium body and scarlet wings. In it he used to streak through the streets of Cambridge and London. When the Cambridge Rugby team was to play in London he offered to drive his friends to the match. They said very politely that they would be most happy to be driven to London in his car, provided that some less enthusiastic person did the driving.

It is a matter of interest that soon after Jennings, Abdul Rahman, and others went down from Cambridge the University decided to put restrictions on undergraduates' cars. Some of his contemporaries are sure that it was the well-remembered sight of his car

roaring down the King's Parade which had induced the change in the University regulations! Abdul Rahman finally totted up twenty-eight convictions for speeding and other traffic offences during his ten years in England.

On the only occasion that Abdul Rahman participated in a political campaign in England he found his scarlet car useful for "getting away" from an angry crowd. His friend Davies, a Welshman, was a great admirer of Lloyd George, the wartime Premier, who as a Liberal leader had become a fiery leader of the Opposition. In the General Election of 1924 Davies and Abdul Rahman one day went to a Labour district to campaign for Lloyd George. Davies produced a soap-box out of the boot of Abdul Rahman's car. He stood on it, and began to speak enthusiastically on the subject of Labour versus Liberalism. As Abdul Rahman recalls it to-day, "The Labour supporters started to roll up their sleeves. In those days political crowds used their fists and threw stones. I yelled to Davies, 'This is no time for fighting. Come on, jump in and let's get off.' " It was only at the last minute that Davies jumped into the car. That, says Abdul Rahman, was the last of his political campaigning in Britain.

In the University Abdul Rahman had switched from law to history. It seemed an easier subject with which to pass the examinations. Came June 1925 and the day he was to sit for his last paper in history. He remained in his rooms mugging.

Up the stairs and into the room burst a Malay friend, who exclaimed, "Tunku, why aren't you at the examination to-day?"

Abdul Rahman replied mildly, "Don't be silly. It's not to-day."

"*Mana boleh*, what do you mean, 'not to-day'? I've just come from the hall."

Abdul Rahman raced to the examination hall, but naturally was not allowed in. "It was a real disgrace," he says. "It was nothing but carelessness on my part. I had not worried to look at the time-table. You know, carelessness is still one of my characteristics." He could not admit to his College Master the true reason for being late at the examination hall. "I said I had had colic. What else could I say?" So he had to wait another six months before he could take the examination.

While waiting he decided to continue to read law. He moved to the more exciting life of London, and — he is quite frank about it

— he dribbled away his time. On this occasion he forgot about the history examination syllabus and time-table. When he finally remembered two weeks before the examination he found that the syllabus had been changed. He had never thought there could possibly be a change. The alteration faced him, among other things, with reading up the life of one of three great men — Napoleon, Caesar, or Mahomet — and he had not even got the appropriate textbooks. He went to a local library, found a book on Mahomet, and read it assiduously. He turned up at the examination hall well on time, but encountered a near-catastrophe. He had forgotten to inform the examiners which "Life" he intended to sit for. "When they distributed the papers they growled at me, 'You were supposed to let us know.' "

Abdul Rahman was surprised to hear he had passed and could write B.A. after his royal name. That was in December 1925. He was the first Kedah prince to gain a degree in any British university, so he was justifiably proud.

He could look back on Cambridge as a most interesting phase in his life. Actually he had not wasted his time there. The main advantage of Cambridge, especially in a small college like St Catharine's, was that an undergraduate got to know and learned to get on with people of diverse types. Abdul Rahman's circle of friends was wide and their characters varied. The academic side of life was not important to him, but the close mingling with different types of people was the sort of 'education' which appealed to him. From this life in Cambridge he undoubtedly began to find his ability to mix with and handle people.

He was as healthy in his escapades as most undergraduates of his age. He was fond of dancing, and every week he used to sneak to Bedford, about thirty miles south-west of Cambridge, to dance at a place called The Swan. There was a University restriction about dancing, so every time he went off to Bedford his excuse was that he was joining a friend in studies.

After six years in England Abdul Rahman decided to return to Kedah. In Alor Star, four months later, a stern Regent, his eldest brother, Tunku Ibrahim, ordered him back to London to complete his law studies. It was fortunate that Tunku Ibrahim did not have the gift of clairvoyance. Had he possessed it he might have changed his mind and put Abdul Rahman to work immediately. As events

turned out, Abdul Rahman was not to pass until a little over twenty-two years later, when he was a middle-aged man of forty-five.

CHAPTER FIVE

In England Again

Abdul Rahman admits that when he returned to England he found the allure of horse-racing and dog-racing irresistible. He just did not settle down to his law studies. He never passed an examination in the first three years.

There was perhaps a lot in what a close friend who was with him in England at the time has to say of his life at this period. "He tried to emulate the habits of young English gentlemen. They were sports-loving. They had their rounds of the Turf and the dogs. Their motto was 'Let's drink and be merry, for to-morrow — who knows?' And as for education, they felt that a general knowledge was all that was necessary."

So Abdul Rahman, young, handsome, with a waist that led one young English friend to remark, "What a waste of a waist!" only occasionally permitted himself to delve into the complexities of Roman, criminal, and constitutional law and legal history, and — the bane of his life — English real property and conveyancing. He felt it was all — certainly conveyancing — so unnecessary for the administrative career planned for him.

Indeed, when he returned to Alor Star briefly in 1930 his elder brother, Mohamed Jewa, admonished him, "Why didn't you try to get your degree?" Abdul Rahman's reply was frank, "I don't like law." Many years later an English friend remarked with a laugh, "I am not sure that in the long run it was not a bad thing that he did no work, because he conserved his mental energies!"

The number of Malay students in England had grown. In London itself Abdul Rahman's contemporaries included a quiet, perceptive young Malay named Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was destined in a few years to become the Ruler of the Negri Sembilan,

confederation of nine little States, and who upon independence was elected the first Paramount Ruler of Malaya. Others were Haji Abdul Wahab, a tall young Malay from Perak, who was to become Mentri Besar (Prime Minister) of that State, and also for a time a political opponent of Abdul Rahman; Raja Musa bin Raja Bot, a young Selangor Malay, who was to become the first Malay judge in the peninsula; Nik Ahmad Kamil, an exceptionally handsome little Malay from far-off Kelantan, who was to become its youngest Mentri Besar, another political opponent of Abdul Rahman, and eventually the Federation's first High Commissioner in Australia, and later in London; and Syed Sheikh Barakbah, of Kedah, who was also to be appointed a judge. There was also a young Chinese, H.Y. Teh, of Ipoh, who left England in 1933 with law and medical degrees; he became a firm friend of Abdul Rahman.

Another contemporary was Neil Lawson, who would don silk with chambers in the Temple. Lawson many years later was to become adviser to the Malay Rulers when discussions began on the future constitution of an independent Malaya. On the other side of the table at these meetings would sit Abdul Rahman as leader of the Alliance Party, which was seeking independence for Malaya. Lawson thought then that in the years between Abdul Rahman had not altered much in personality. "He still has that odd laugh and also that nonchalant and happy air he possessed when a student," he said. "We used to meet quite regularly until about 1931."

As a law student Abdul Rahman shared a flat in Warwick Road, Kensington, with his elder brother, Yaacob, taking his degree in agriculture. Most of his friends, like Teh and Haji Abdul Wahab, were in Nevern Square, across the way. On many evenings Abdul Rahman welcomed them in his flat, which had a kitchen. He liked cooking and was a good cook, and Malayans yearned for Malayan food, for they found English cooking dull and unimaginative. Rice and curries figured largely in the Abdul Rahman cuisine, and the exciting aromas of Malayan spices used to waft through the building to tickle sensitive English noses.

Horse- and dog-racing, food, and another new high-powered car, which he often drove to Brighton for a week-end, comprised the major pleasures of Abdul Rahman's life. Musical concerts bored him, and he shunned ballet. The time came when as Chief Minister he had to grace concerts and ballet performances in Kuala Lumpur,

and he put on his most pleasant smile and learned to appreciate both, even if only slightly. Where music and dancing were concerned, he preferred the plaintive melodies of Malay *keroncong* (love songs) and the grace of the Malay-Siamese *ramvong* dance.

Abdul Rahman stayed out very late at night, and he remained in bed most mornings. He used to telephone the friends who coached him, including Lawson, and say, "Look, would you mind coming at three o'clock this afternoon instead of eleven this morning, as I am in bed?" He often had his lessons wearing pyjamas and dressing-gown. His friends read aloud to him. Sometimes he listened intently. He seemed to find it easier to imbibe the profundities of law through the ear. He found it almost impossible to concentrate by reading silently, and he could not read for long. Even to-day he grasps points much more rapidly when listening than when reading.

Lawson endeavoured to coach Abdul Rahman in Roman, criminal, and constitutional law. The Bar lectures at the Inner Temple were not compulsory, and he recalls that he rarely saw Abdul Rahman at any which he attended. Abdul Rahman was "a nice and polite pupil, but I did not succeed in teaching him very much," Lawson remembers with a chuckle, adding, "He really was a playboy, but by saying that I do not want to give the impression that he led a dissolute life. He just wasn't interested in law." Lawson adds, "I don't think it occurred to anybody then that he would achieve the status he has reached to-day."

As Lawson and others said, Abdul Rahman was not interested in law. Every so often he used to rebel and say, "What the hell's the use of this in my career?" He broke off the session with a "How about a game of billiards?" and moved to the small billiards table in his flat. At other times he controlled his desires and said sombrely, "I must train myself because I shall need to know some law in the administrative service."

There was a serious side to his life. With remarkable perception, he had put his finger on one of the more regrettable aspects of Malay life in Malaya; there was no unity among the Malays. They lived and worked within the fastnesses of their State boundaries, their eyes turned inward, their daily life revolving around their own tiny microcosms — charming, courteous people who were satisfied if they had enough food for themselves and their family

for the next twenty-four hours, who prayed to Allah as the Koran instructed, and who looked upon Malays from other areas as friendly intruders. There was no feeling that they all belonged to the same proud race whether they were fishermen in Trengganu, paddy-planters in Kedah and Malacca, Government clerks in Perak, or budding administrators in Kuala Lumpur.

This lack of unity became an obsession with Abdul Rahman, and he used to divert political conversations to the question, "How can we Malays unite?" There clearly was no answer then. Politics and political thought had not troubled the luscious serenity of life in Malaya. The only interest in the subjects was shown by the British officers. The Colonial Office considered that the simple people of Malaya should be protected from politics, otherwise they would be 'spoilt.'

To Abdul Rahman, living among people who were utterly immersed in outpourings from the House of Commons, and listening and talking to them in London pubs, the unity of Londoners, Yorkshiremen, Lancastrians, and the Scots and the Welsh, welded into one nation under a single flag, was the kind of national consummation to be desired for Malaya.

Even in London very few Malay students were getting together. He thought there should be some form of unity among them, particularly as they were so far from home. At his inspiration many met in London one day and formed the "Malay Society of Great Britain." At the inaugural meeting Tunku Abdul Rahman, of Negri Sembilan, was elected its first president, and Tunku Abdul Rahman, of Kedah, its first honorary secretary. It was indicative of Abdul Rahman's determination to inculcate a pride in things Malay that it became a rule that when members were together they should speak Malay only. "Remember you have a national language of your own. Use it when you are together, otherwise you will forget most of it while you are in England," he said. One amusing sidelight is that before long the thirty-odd members of the Society were speaking "Kedah Malay," because most of them were from that State. As a patriot of Kedah, Abdul Rahman, mischievously, was highly delighted.

With two Malays in London whose titles and names were similar, it was inevitable and unavoidable that there should be confusion, both in Britain and in Malaya. Occasionally the Negri Abdul

Rahman was mistaken for the Kedah Abdul Rahman, but the former was broadminded enough to laugh it off. When the future Ruler of Negri Sembilan passed his law examinations a couple of years later people in Kedah sent their Abdul Rahman congratulations. Indeed, many wrote to him saying they wished to honour him with a big party, so could he say when he would be returning to Kedah? This was more than embarrassing to Abdul Rahman, who, of course, had failed again. Twenty-seven years later the same confusion recurred. As president of the U.M.N.O. and leader of an Alliance delegation to London, Abdul Rahman had stopped at Colombo, where the Press described him as "Tunku Abdul Rahman, Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan." It was an understandable comedy of errors. In England the boners and bloomers ceased when Tunku Abdul Rahman of Negri Sembilan returned home. At the next annual meeting of the Malay Society Abdul Rahman of Kedah was elected president. Haji Abdul Wahab became honorary secretary.

In 1930 Abdul Rahman sat for his law examination. He was taking Part I. He managed to get through the first three papers — Roman, criminal, and constitutional law and legal history — but he failed miserably in the last paper — English real property and conveyancing.

He had not concentrated on these subjects, principally because (so he excused himself) he was not going in for private practice and a civil servant would not need to know anything about conveyancing, anyway.

Abdul Rahman tells a delightful anecdote about his failure. His tutor sent for him and asked him what he would do if he failed in his efforts to become a lawyer. Abdul Rahman replied that presumably he would continue to be a civil servant.

"My advice to you," said his tutor, "is to go back at once to the Civil Service, because never in all my life have I seen such bad papers and such complete absence of any knowledge whatever of the law."

Abdul Rahman took his advice — but the culminating riposte came in 1956, when, during a Malayan constitutional conference in London which he led, he was the guest of honour at a guest night in the Inner Temple.

It was with regret that Abdul Rahman packed up in London and

boarded a ship back to Penang. He hated to give up wearing his twenty-two-inch Oxford 'bags' and the sports coat that sat so comfortably on his slim shoulders. But the streak of seriousness latent in him told him it was time he attempted to settle down.....

Among the friends to whom he said good-bye, or at least *au revoir,* was an English girl, Violet Coulson, whom he had met in London. They had become fond of each other. Abdul Rahman was not prepared to marry her yet, because he did not know what his future was going to be in Kedah. He had also first to get the permission of his royal parents to marry some one not of their choice or race. That was a duty — and problem — that lay in front of him. He was independent-minded enough to assert that even if they did not give him permission he would marry Violet, whatever the consequences. Already his parents had learned of his deep friendship with Violet, and also some quarters in the Kedah Government disapproved. The future in this direction did not seem promising.....

Abdul Rahman returned to Kedah, which had already declared as its goal the creation of a model Malay State. Its administration would be only by Kedah-born Malay officers. Kedah was not prepared to lose its Malay character, and it was not anxious to increase the power and the prestige of the immigrant Chinese. The membership of the State Council was still limited to Malays, the only exception being the British Adviser. The Malays numbered two-thirds of the population, and the Chinese and Indians under one-third. The State was in a good financial position. Its surplus in the middle of May 1930 was nearly £700,000.

Malaya in 1931, the year Abdul Rahman began earning his living as a cadet in the Kedah Civil Service, was embroiled in proposals aimed at obtaining greater cohesion among the nine Malay States. There was also an intention to create a customs union which would eradicate the customs barriers that existed at practically every State and Settlement boundary. It was political turmoil for the first time in the modern history of Malaya. Into the arena also for the first time moved the Chinese, who were alarmed at the threat to their aspirations.

The progenitor of the reforms was the new Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner of the Federated and Unfederated Malay States, Sir Cecil Clementi, a man of intense

realism. His programme called for a "Malayan Union" and for decentralization of the Federated Malay States so as to include the other political entities of the Peninsula. He saw such a step leading to increased understanding between all States in matters of common interest and "to the emergence of a brotherhood of Malay nations, each proudly guarding its historical individuality and autonomy, but joining hands with the rest in enterprise that may be for the good of the Malays of this Peninsula as a whole and of the immigrants of other races who have made this country their home."

It is pertinent to note that the Labour Government was in power in Britain, and Clementi's proposed reforms received their approval. Fourteen years later the Labour Government imposed a Malayan Union on the country, but this, in contrast to the 1931 scheme, took from the Malay Rulers their rights, privileges, and sovereignty. It created some bitterness among the Malays than the Clementi reforms projected among the Chinese.

In 1931 the Malays stood on the sidelines while political 'hostilities' were waged between the Chinese and British. Clementi's proposals gave the Malays greater opportunities. Chinese fears were succinctly expressed in the Straits Settlements Legislative Council by a young Chinese named Tan Cheng Lock, who in postwar years became a champion of Malay-Chinese unity in his role as president of the Malayan Chinese Association. Tan said, "One fears that the decentralization scheme will tend to develop, produce, and perfect in the Malay States a purely autocratic form of government based on the taxation of the people whose energy, labour, capital, and enterprise are the mainstay of those States, without their adequate and effective representation therein, as is largely the case in the Unfederated Malay States." He received the rather vague reply that the British aimed to promote the welfare of all British subjects. This did not calm Chinese fears.

Among the Malay States, Kedah and Johore were the most vociferous against the proposal for a Malayan Union. Johore did not wish to lose its traditional independence. Kedah, on the other hand, feared it would lose its Malay aims and character because union would open the State to large-scale development by Chinese capital, as had occurred in the Federated Malay States. Eventually the Sultan of Johore and the Regent of Kedah received an official

British assurance that "His Majesty's Government have no intention of requiring the Ruler of any Unfederated State to enter against his will into any kind of Malayan League or Union." The end result to the political furore and intensive opposition in the country was that Clementi's proposals were modified. The State administrations were strengthened and State Councils were expanded. The Unfederated Malay States continued along their own streams. The Malayan Union scheme was dropped, so was the proposed customs union.

It is interesting to note Abdul Rahman's attitude to these contentious political proposals in view of his own feelings on the need for "Malay unity." As a patriot of Kedah, he confessed to being against the Malayan Union on the ground that the independent Malay States, particularly Kedah and Johore, had proved able to remain stable and prosperous outside the 'Federation.' While in England he had written to a Kuala Lumpur newspaper protesting vigorously against the proposed customs union because it would take from Kedah the revenue it received from export duties on rice, cattle, and other commodities used by the rest of the country.

Thus Abdul Rahman became a District Officer at a period in Malaya which one historian described as "the passing of an age of innocence and a transition to a less happy age of political realism."

CHAPTER SIX

Civil Servant

Abdul Rahman was not a good civil servant in the sense that he accepted absolutely and faithfully carried out the dictates of his father's Government. Throughout most of his career he jibbed at authority. This is a common enough convention among junior civil servants, but Abdul Rahman went a stage further and strongly aired his views — many times injudiciously so. It did not make him popular with his seniors, and it is safe to suggest that if he had not come from the royal house he would have found himself out of the Service. A Kedah Malay who at that time was close to affairs of State says to-day, "One Regent actually wanted to get Abdul Rahman out of Kedah because he was always criticizing the Government."

Within a few months of joining the Kedah Civil Service in April 1931 he was appointed Assistant District Officer in Kulim, a district about fifty miles south of Alor Star. He came to know Kulim extremely well, and a few years later he returned to it as a full-fledged District Officer — transferred at twenty-four hours' notice because he refused to carrry out an order!

At the end of 1932 Abdul Rahman was promoted District Officer and was sent to the little town of Kuala Nerang, which was the headquarters of the north-eastern district of Padang Terap. Kedah is divided into ten districts. The two largest are Padang Terap and its southern neighbour, Sik. They adjoin Siamese territory, and are largely jungle, with kampongs nestling in the foothills of Malaya's main mountain-range, which begins its line southward in this area.

In the nineteen-thirties they were rugged places to work in, and full of malaria. Kuala Nerang is twenty miles by road north-east of Alor Star. Abdul Rahman's district headquarters was at the end of

the road, which did not venture farther.

The district was interesting principally because of its unique community, the Samsam Siamese. To-day they still live a primitive life and are behind the peasant Malays intellectually, socially, and economically. In the thirties they were literally a neglected people.

Their origin is a mystery. They are believed to be the descendants of Siamese soldiers and civilians captured by Kedah forces in the wars of bygone days and brought to Kedah as slave labour. They speak a mixture of the Malay and Siamese languages and profess a crude form of the Buddhist religion.

Their huts stand on stilts six feet from the ground, out of reach of wild animals. The walls are plaited bamboo or tree-bark, and the roof is jungle thatch.

In Abdul Rahman's day they were not a clean people. Their pigs and cattle lived at night under their homes, literally under their sleeping-rooms. The people existed under the most insanitary conditions, as Abdul Rahman became too well aware.

He learned some of the customs and superstitions of the Samsams. 'Witch doctors' abounded; they traded ruthlessly on their countrymen's gullibility. They dispensed with insouciance pills to make enemies ill and pills to make sick friends well. Some 'doctors' professed extraordinary powers. One expensive pill they offered as a most effective way of getting rid of an enemy. The pill, they said, was a buffalo which they had bewitched. It had dwindled to pill size. They instructed their client: "Give this pill to your enemy. When he swallows it it will begin to expand back to its original size." They left the terrifying result to the imagination. A recipe they sold was a "sure cure" for snake-bites. It was the mixture of the tail of a fish, a piece of the bone of a peacock, a piece of the bone of a goose, a piece of the jaw of a wild pig, and the head of a venomous snake.

Life among the Samsams was bound by superstition. The children grew up believing that every natural phenomenon and every event in their life was under the control of an invisible spirit.

Since the end of the Japanese occupation, however, life for the Samsams has improved. Roads have gone out to some settlements, and schools have been established.

As District Officer, Abdul Rahman tried to inculcate elementary hygiene into the Samsams, but drains and cleanliness remained

strangers to them. He spoke of the advantages of Western medicine, but failed to persuade expectant mothers to travel to the Alor Star hospital for their confinement.

His worst enemy was malaria, which later caused the death of his first wife. Padang Terap district was so malarious that it was avoided by all people except its inhabitants. "Nobody liked to go there," says Abdul Rahman. One of his first acts was to survey the malarial situation. He sent recommendations to the Government urging anti-malarial measures in the larger villages, but the Government was unable to accept them.

In 1933 Abdul Rahman married. Although Violet Coulson and he corresponded regularly, a law in Kedah, which still exists, forbade royalty marrying outside the Malay race without the permission of the Sultan. The Regent of the day, Tunku Ibrahim, was against Kedah princes marrying Europeans.

His mother had been urging him to get married. "You are getting old," she said to him. She wished him to marry a daughter of one of the Malay Rulers. Abdul Rahman instead wed Meriam, a Siamese-Chinese, daughter of a Chinese tin-dealer whom he knew well in Alor Star. He took his bride to Kuala Nerang.

A year after the wedding Meriam gave birth to a daughter, Kathijah. To-day Kathijah is the wife of a Malay in the Government, and mother of two children whom Grandfather adores.

A year later a boy was born, and a delighted Abdul Rahman marked the occasion by naming him after the town in which he had been born. The infant, Tunku Nerang, is to-day an officer in the Federation Army.

Thirty-three days after Nerang's birth Meriam died as a result of catching malaria. Abdul Rahman says to-day, "There was one sequel: the Government finally approved my recommendations for anti-malaria control measures."

Meriam was buried in the royal cemetery at Langgar, in Alor Star. Abdul Rahman's mother took the two children to Alor Star and engaged a Siamese woman, Tok Ichip, as their nurse. Tok Ichip remained with the family for many years. She was followed by Chinese amahs, one of whom is to-day serving in Abdul Rahman's home in Kuala Lumpur, looking after one of his adopted children.

Abdul Rahman likes to claim to-day that no District Officer of

Padang Terap travelled around the district as extensively as he did. He covered it on foot and on elephant-back, and became thoroughly acquainted with every Malay and Samsam kampong.

One of Abdul Rahman's close friends among the Samsams was a cattle rustler. "I sought him out, spoke to him, he gave me a promise not to steal any more, and we became the best of friends," relates Abdul Rahman, adding, "These people have a sense of honour. Certainly my friend gave up cattle-stealing, at least while I was District Officer."

A few months after Meriam's death Abdul Rahman went on leave to Singapore. Violet Coulson had arrived there from England. He married her secretly in Singapore according to Muslim rites. He knew he was taking a risk. He had not received permission from the Regent. If he was found out he faced the penalty of being officially disowned by being "struck off the register of royalty," which is how he put it. To avoid trouble Violet lived in Penang and Abdul Rahman in Kuala Nerang, but he visited her frequently.

"Of course the news leaked out," says Abdul Rahman. "Everybody knew, but nobody bothered to make any noise about it. Then the Regent died, and my uncle, Mahmud, became Regent. He was less strict on such matters. I asked permission to marry Violet, and he gave it. We did not go through a second ceremony. It was unnecessary."

Nevertheless it was not a popular marriage, particularly with some leading Government officials. Abdul Rahman found himself transferred to the Langkawi Islands as District Officer. He sighed with relief, because Langkawi was a much more salubrious place for a white wife. It was heaven compared with Kuala Nerang, even if it was lonely.

Both found relaxation in the beautiful group of islands which lie about ninety miles north-west of Penang. The main island, Langkawi, is surrounded by a host of smaller islands. The whole setting caused a British naval officer in the eighteen-thirties to describe Langkawi as "an emerald set in seed pearls." The Malays, noted for their apt descriptions, speak of the innumerable islands as *Lada* (pepper-corns).

Romantic legends are linked with the Langkawis, and Abdul Rahman and Violet spent hours listening to elderly Malays recounting them. Across the beautiful blue bay from Kuah, the only

town on Langkawi, is the uninhabited Pulau Dayang Bunting (the Island of the Pregnant Princess). The first legend the Abdul Rahmans heard was of the Kedah princess who threw herself into the lake on Dayang Bunting because she was forbidden to marry her young Malay lover.

The lake is a jewel surrounded by forest. Its water is still and clear, its bed a grotesque pattern of trunks of innumerable dead trees. It is a Mecca for the barren: the Malays believe that a woman has either to bathe in the lake or to drink its water and she will bear children. Malay husbands come miles from their kampongs to Dayang Bunting to fill a bottle with the water and take it home.

There is another legend, dating back to the Hindu period, of a great boa-constrictor which was said to be as long as the bay in Langkawi. The Rajahs of Kedah were bound by law to sacrifice a royal virgin to it on State occasions. If this was done the snake left Kedah alone and instead despoiled the country of the Siamese or the Burmese. When Kedah changed its religion to Islam sacrifices were forbidden. The snake attacked Langkawi. The people seemed doomed, when along came a holy Arab who said he would drive the snake away or die. He placed his faith in the Koran he carried. The snake swallowed him, the legend goes on, but it was attacked by agonizing convulsions and rushed away to the hills of Siam and died. Peace reigned in Langkawi ever afterwards.

In more recent days Langkawi was a favourite hideout for Malay pirates until British warships harassed them and freed Malayan waters of their depredations.

There was not much a District Officer could do on Langkawi except improve the roads and look after the needs of the people. Its rubber estates were run by British planters — who became close friends of the Abdul Rahmans — and the Malay peasants grew their paddy. The Chinese fished and sent their catches to the mainland for sale, either fresh or salted.

The islands still remember Abdul Rahman for one thing. He had the imagination to build a jetty at Kuah, so that passengers on the small boats from Kedah and Penang could come ashore in comfort, instead of having to walk through about three hundred yards of soft mud whenever they arrived at low tide.

For the rest, Abdul Rahman played football in the evenings with

the local teams and either gossiped or played mahjong at night. Violet grew brown from daily swims in the green waters of the bay.

After two years Abdul Rahman was transferred again. He returned to civilization, to the growing township of Sungei Patani, in the district of Kuala Muda. But while both Abdul Rahman and Violet welcomed a return to town life it portended the end of their marriage. The stresses and strains became great, and both accepted the inevitable — a separation. Violet returned to England in 1937. Abdul Rahman saw her again when he went to London the next year to take another law examination. He returned to Kedah just before the European War broke out.

Consequently it was not until 1946 that Abdul Rahman and Violet were divorced. In the meantime, in 1939, he married again. As a Muslim there was no need for him to divorce Violet first. His bride was Sharifah Rodziah, daughter of a well-known family from Alor Star which originated in Arabia. This dainty, attractive, and charming woman has been a powerful influence in his life.

In Sungei Patani Abdul Rahman came into his own as a District Officer, as a man of the people. It is a popular saying that a District Officer must be "all things to all men." He must be a Jack of all trades in a big and thriving district such as Sungei Patani. He not only collects land revenue, but administers thousands of people. He ensures that the peasants plough their land and plant paddy seedlings. He designates harvest-time after consultation with the Agriculture Department. He sits as a magistrate once a week, and in the town he is chairman of what was in Abdul Rahman's day known as the "Sanitary Board," and to-day is an elected body with the more delectable name of "Town Council."

Abdul Rahman abhorred the paper-work he was forced to do. He preferred tramping through the rice-fields and the kampongs, or bicycling along the byways to meet the people. His home was open house. Office hours may have been 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but he was ready even late at night to discuss a problem with a peasant who might have come miles to see him.

It was a strange experience for the kampong Malays to find a prince, son of a feudal family, ready to eat and drink with them in their home or in the local coffee-shop, or offering them a chair in his home. He became the most popular officer the district could remember. He gained a tremendous following, which was cement-

ed when he started a fund to erect a brick mosque in Sungei Patani town. He himself assisted in its construction, and worked waist-deep in the river passing lengths of timber from boat to shore. The people named the mosque "Rahmaniah" after him.

In the more vigorous climate of a town Abdul Rahman became more critical of the shape of government in his State. He publicly expressed disapproval of some aspects. He did not just voice his criticisms; he went to the extent of writing to the Penang newspaper, the *Straits Echo*, whenever he felt he should express disapproval. He was often summoned to Alor Star to explain his actions to the Mentri Besar and to the British Adviser. Both threatened him with severe disciplinary action.

He particularly resented appearing before the British Adviser, whom he considered the symbol of Colonialism, a form of government which offended him. He objected to the power of veto of the British Adviser, although he appreciated that a careful and conscientious officer would never use it except as a last resort.

Clashes occurred between Abdul Rahman and the Kedah Secretariat. The climax came when he refused to obey an order to cancel the licences of taxis in Sungei Patani and to instruct them to form a company. Abdul Rahman was wrong in his stand, whatever he may have felt about the policy; he was there to obey orders and not to flout them. And he should not have encouraged the taxi-drivers not to worry if police should drive their vehicles away from the public taxi-stands. Indeed, he himself once drove a taxi back to its position after it had been moved by the police. When the drivers were hauled before him in his capacity as a magistrate he merely cautioned and discharged them, which provoked a bitter conflict with the Officer in Charge of the Police District.

Two courses were open to the administration — to ask Abdul Rahman for his resignation or to transfer him immediately. The first was rejected, because it might be an unpopular move with the people in Sungei Patani. The second was adopted. Abdul Rahman was transferred to Kulim and told "report there within twenty-four hours." Kulim is forty miles south to Sungei Patani.

In Kulim he could not disobey the instructions about taxis, because his predecessor had already carried them out! When Abdul Rahman left Sungei Patani the next morning a convoy of taxis escorted him to Kulim town — which delighted him.

But even after they left him he had not finished with the taxi-drivers. A few days later some of them appeared before him in the Kulim court. They had punched a bus-company inspector on their way back to Sungei Patani. Abdul Rahman had little alternative here. He fined them, although not as severely as he could have.

The people of Kuala Muda district never forgot Abdul Rahman. When he chose the district as his constituency in the Federal elections in 1955 they ensured him a landslide victory.

In 1938 Abdul Rahman left for England on a long holiday and also to take a Bar examination. He was determined then to get out of Government service. He managed to pass his Part I examinations as the war clouds began to gather in Europe and he was summoned back to Kedah.

In Kulim his little house was crowded with Malays and Chinese. His popularity grew, as did his friendships with British planters and Britishers in Butterworth and Penang.

A British officer who commanded the Royal Air Force station at Butterworth says, "Many Europeans I met at that time mentioned him with pride as a character 'well worth knowing.' The Malays respected him naturally as a result of his blood, the Chinese and Europeans no less so. The easy way he had with all he met was invaluable schooling for his present duties. Probably one of the more endearing characteristics he showed was his great sense of humour, which again is of such great value to him now. He always seemed ready for anything unusual, and, as an 'irresponsible' R.A.F. officer, I found this a delightful trait. I took his motor-boat to repair for him — and promptly lost it to the Japs. He never bore me ill-will over that, and, in fact, typical of him, treats the matter to this day as a joke in which I, a Malayan Civil Service officer under his Prime Ministership, still 'owe him a motor-boat.' "

After Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, Malaya swept into defensive preparations, although there was confidence that the European conflict would not extend to Malayan shores. Nobody thought in terms of attack from Japan, and the Japanese barbers, photographers, and estate-owners in Kedah smiled and sucked their teeth and were very friendly while they quietly continued to supply their Government with information about the defences in Kedah, the position of R.A.F. bases and barracks and of Army garrisons, and the gossip concerning a "line of defence

around Jitra," in North Kedah. They went off on week-end jaunts not to Penang or other resorts, but into the jungle to reconnoitre tracks from Siam into Kedah. They drew little maps and sent them to Japan.

As District Officer, Abdul Rahman became a Deputy Director of Air Raid Precautions. He gathered volunteers who were prepared to devote some hours each week to training in putting out hypothetical incendiary bombs, in rescuing people from still-standing buildings, in controlling non-existent crowds, and in racing to their posts on the wail of a siren.

The Government gave orders for paddy stores to be built in case food-supplies from overseas should be reduced or cut by German attacks on shipping. Abdul Rahman, with intuition, urged the Government also to build evacuation centres. This idea was rejected because there did not seem to be any need for them in the foreseeable future.

He decided to do something himself. He instructed an officer on the Sanitary Board of Kulim to set up long houses in hilly country two miles away from Kulim. Six dormitory blocks for about 5000 people were built and stocked with rice and tinned food. When the Japanese suddenly attacked Malaya a year later and marched into Kedah from Siam — along the routes suggested by the Japanese barbers and photographers — Kulim was the only district in Kedah with evacuation centres. Into these went the people from Kulim and the countryside, and they lived in the long houses until a "peace treaty" was signed between the Sultan of Kedah and the Japanese conquerors.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Sultan Kidnapped

The War in Kedah began with a 'blitz.'

At 7.30 on the morning of December 8, 1941, a Japanese squadron of medium-size bombers attacked Sungei Patani aerodrome. They hit Royal Air Force planes on the ground, severely damaged barracks, and blew up a petrol-dump. Kedah's first columns of battle-smoke and destruction spiralled into the blue sky.

The British war plan had called for strongly dug-in positions to the west and north of Jitra, a town ten miles north of Alor Star. These were held by a brigade of British and Indian units which had been garrisoned there for months. The flank rested on the sea. This strongly prepared territory was never tested, because the Japanese began in Kedah the behind-the-lines infiltration tactics which were to prove so successful in the rest of their southward drive to Singapore.

They came down narrow jungle paths and foothills in the east. Siamese guides and Japanese who had once lived in Kedah led small enemy parties round the flanks of the waiting units. Ultimately the brigade was forced to withdraw.

That Monday evening, the first of the War, the order was passed to all homes in Kedah that European women should leave. At seven o'clock the next morning the mournful evacuation began.

In Alor Star itself life looked normal. All shops were open. Even petrol was available to the public. The Army, however, did not give Kedah long to last, and the Government began to distribute rice to the people. In the kampongs the people began to construct their own wood and attap store-houses.

A more ominous decision was taken by the Government and by

the Army. It was to remove the aged Sultan of Kedah for his own safety to Penang, away from the dangers of the War and capture by the Japanese. Whether it was a wise decision it is not for this book to decide. Some British officials were unhappy about the Ruler's leaving his people. They secretly felt that this would affect morale. The decision was, however, approved by the highest Malay authorities in Alor Star, so the plan to evacuate him was put into action early on Tuesday morning. Secrecy was essential to prevent enemy agents warning the Japanese.

A few Malay officials, including Syed Omar, were entrusted with the news and became incensed when they heard it. They felt that the Sultan should remain with his subjects. Syed Omar telephoned the news to Abdul Rahman in Kulim. Abdul Rahman lost his temper. "They're crazy," he shouted down the telephone. "The Sultan will either be marooned in Penang or run the risk of being bombed. We must stop them."

He telephoned the Regent, Tunku Badlishah, saying, "Father's place is with his people even if he is a sick man." The Regent said that nothing could be done.

Abdul Rahman then telephoned Syed Omar: "Keep me in touch. Let me know the time they're leaving. I'll stop him somehow." It was simple for Syed Omar to learn the time of the Sultan's departure, because he was a central figure in A.R.P. headquarters in Alor Star. At four o'clock on Tuesday morning he was told that the Sultan would be escorted out of Kedah in three hours' time.

Abdul Rahman seemed impelled by the desire to prevent his father leaving the State. He considered that Penang would not be safe, as it would undoubtedly be attacked by bombers; his R.A.F. friends in Butterworth thought so too. Finally, he felt strongly that his father should stay with his people and face whatever fate was in store.

By seven on Tuesday morning Abdul Rahman had completed his plan. For effrontery and audaciousness it was unequalled in Malay royal history. That morning Abdul Rahman was a determined man prepared to take on the British Government and the British Army to justify his contention that the Sultan should remain in Kedah.

Syed Omar had guardedly told him the order of evacuation: the Sultan would travel in his own car, the yellow Rolls-Royce, in a

convoy. The vehicles would drive two minutes behind each other, so as not to attract the attention of early Japanese bombers. The route was the normal one to Penang.

Abdul Rahman stationed himself at a fork in the road at Kepala Batas, about fifty miles south of Alor Star. Here the main road leads straight to Butterworth, from which the Straits of Penang are crossed to get to Georgetown, the capital of Penang. The left fork goes to Kulim, twelve miles away.

The rest of the story is told in Abdul Rahman's own words: "The cars passed one by one. I was standing inside a hut at the junction, so that none of the Kedah Government people would see me. I wore A.R.P. overalls and a steel helmet. Then I saw my father's car coming in the distance. I walked into the centre of the road, held up my hand, and halted it. I had to act quickly.

"I revealed myself to my father. With him was a younger half-brother of mine, Tunku Yahya, who asked me, 'What's the matter?' I told my father that the orders had suddenly been changed, and I had been instructed to take him to Kulim instead. I don't think Yahya believed me, but my father nodded agreement. I paid a quick obeisance, instructed his driver to follow me, jumped into my car, and headed for Kulim."

He was just in time, for as the Rolls turned a corner of the road to Kulim the next car in the strung-out convoy appeared on the Alor Star-Penang road. Abdul Rahman took his father to his house in Kulim. There he confessed that he had kidnapped him because he felt that he, the Sultan, should stay with his own people no matter what might happen to him personally.

Meanwhile no one in the convoy had been aware of the neat extraction of the Sultan until he failed to arrive. Their alarm and consternation are best left to the imagination. The British and Malay officials knew that the Sultan's Rolls had not been attacked, because there had been no untoward reports. The telephone between Penang, Alor Star, and Kulim buzzed. Eventually Tunku Badlishah, speaking from Kedah House, the royal residence in Penang, turned from the phone and said, "His Highness was taken to Kulim by Abdul Rahman."

Badlishah called Abdul Rahman. "Where is His Highness and why did you kidnap him?"

Calmly, almost boldly, Abdul Rahman replied, "Tuanku is all

right. He is here with me. I did it because I considered it shameful that he should leave his people. I am planning to send him to a safe place. He will not be safe in Penang. It is sure to be bombed, and bombed far more heavily than any town in Kedah. I am planning to take him to a village where he will be safe."

"I order you to send him to Penang. If you don't you will be in serious trouble."

"You can come and get Tuanku over my dead body."

It was perhaps fortunate for Abdul Rahman that Japanese bombers were at that moment winging southward from Siam for the first of two devastating raids on the fighter airfield at Butterworth, opposite Penang. To the experts this spelt a preliminary to a grim attack on Penang, which was what happened on the Thursday, when twenty-six Japanese aircraft rained bombs on the town.

Dead and injured seemed to lie every few yards in the streets. There was an immediate exodus of the population, and eventually of the Government itself. Had the Sultan been in Penang he would have had to suffer the ignominy of being taken south to Singapore.

But these reflections came later, and they may have reconciled the authorities to the fact that Abdul Rahman had acted with a little more foresight even if he had acted precipitately.

That Tuesday night Badlishah arrived in Kulim. By then Abdul Rahman had heard from Mohamed Jewa in Alor Star that the Kedah Government was planning to issue a warrant for his arrest. Naturally, therefore, there was constraint between him and Badlishah when they met in Kulim.

Abdul Rahman had selected the village of Siddim, in a pleasant valley deep among the hills of south-east Kulim, for his father's retreat until it was safe for him to return to Alor Star. The next day he took his father and Badlishah to Siddim.

The old Sultan had not visited the district for years. Indeed, a new generation had never seen him. His arrival was greeted with reverence and with silence. The old and sick man was carried into a house prepared for him. Abdul Rahman took leave of him, but not before he had taken aside the *ketua kampong* (the headman) and the village elders and adjured them to "guard the man who is your Sultan and my father with your lives if necessary should the Japanese come here." They gave him their solemn promise. Abdul Rahman left Siddim for Kulim, as he put it, "to await my fate."

He was satisfied that he had done a service to his father and to his State. He was philosophical about the warrant of arrest. He muttered the old Malay phrase, *"Tak apa, apa boleh buat"* (literally, "Never mind; there's nothing one can do about it"). The warrant of arrest was never executed. For one thing, the pace of the Japanese Army had quickened.

Japanese bombers destroyed all aerodromes in Kedah. Infiltration through the east developed considerably, and at about three o'clock on Friday afternoon, the British Army issued the code warning for the Government to evacuate Alor Star.

So against a background of gunfire and columns of smoke the Mentri Besar of Kedah, the British Adviser, and other senior officers jumped into motor-cars and moved south. That night Kulim became the seat of government.

In the north British troops fought desperately and gallantly, but the Japanese advanced rapidly. Large enemy parties were led through Kedah by fifth columnists. It was not very long before British civil servants, led by the British Adviser, were ordered to leave Kedah. They went to Kuala Lumpur. Within one week of the opening blitz on Sungei Patani aerodrome Kedah was in the hands of the Japanese.

The War bypassed Kulim. The evacuation camps which Abdul Rahman had set up in the hills were occupied in an orderly manner. Whatever the senior Government officers had thought of Abdul Rahman's ideas, it was a fact that there had been no disorder, no looting, no panicking, in Kulim.

The Japanese bombers flew overhead, but kept on a flight southward. Down the road from Alor Star poured truckloads of Japanese troops, all going south. The War in Kedah was over for the people. They faced an unknown future under new masters.

In Kulim Abdul Rahman ordered his A.R.P. squads to maintain the food-supplies, to guard the evacuation camps, and to form squads to keep peace in the town. In Alor Star a Japanese Military Government took over under a Japanese Governor.

On December 19 the Sultan was brought to Kulim, where he signed an agreement with the Japanese Governor. He was ordered back to Alor Star. Abdul Rahman accompanied him and Badlishah to Alor Star. It was a terrible journey through torn country. Every bridge between Alor Star and Kulim had been blown up by the

withdrawing British and Indian units. The royal party took twelve hours over a journey normally covered in an hour.

The Japanese Governor 'recognized' Sultan Abdul Hamid as the Ruler of Kedah, but the Japanese were masters. Their orders had to be obeyed, or there would be 'serious trouble.' Every Malay Government officer was to return to the job he had been doing under the British. Indeed, a proclamation issued to all districts setting out arrangements for government added the curious phrase, "according to the customs of the British."

Abdul Rahman returned to Kulim. A Japanese unit was in garrison. Because he was a District Officer a Japanese interpreter, who as a point of interest had formerly been a barber in Alor Star, was attached to him and lived with him.

On February 15 the incredible news arrived that Singapore had surrendered. In a brief seventy-seven days Malaya had been captured.

In the weeks that followed Abdul Rahman came close to losing his life in encounters with the Japanese either through brashness or because he tried to intercede for Chinese and Malays arrested under suspicion and condemned to execution. He certainly risked his life a few times to save Malay and Chinese friends.

An old machine-gun was found in the house of a Malay land officer, whose execution was ordered. Abdul Rahman persuaded the Japanese that the Malay was no enemy and that the machine-gun was very old and practically useless.

Once he was in his house when he saw Japanese soldiers leading a Chinese whose hands were tied behind him. It was a party on its way to an execution. Abdul Rahman knew the Chinese well. Although by then he should have realized the dangers of interference, he rushed out and stopped the corporal in charge of the party. It was touch and go whether the corporal considered himself within his rights in plunging his bayonet into the presumptuous Malay. He certainly made a gesture which indicated to Abdul Rahman that if he did not desist he would find himself alongside the Chinese. Abdul Rahman ran to the office of the Japanese garrison commander and assured him that the Chinese was neither anti-Japanese nor a Communist, and that he had been wrongly accused. His intervention saved the Chinese. The order staying execution reached the corporal just in time.

One incident Abdul Rahman still cannot forget. As District

Officer, he continued to sit as magistrate. Thirty-six men and boys had been arrested for offences ranging from breaking the curfew to riding their bicycles at night without a light. They were due to appear before Abdul Rahman the next morning. For some reason, they were not released on bail, but were placed in the police-station lock-up for the night. Just after dawn Japanese military police arrived at the station on inspection, saw the thirty-six delinquents, jumped to the conclusion that they were *orang jahat* ("bad men"), as the Communists were called, dragged them to a field, made them dig graves, and then bayoneted them. Abdul Rahman took a long time to get over the horror of this appalling exhibition of Japanese inhumanity. As long as he remained District Officer in Kulim he made certain that the station cells were empty every night.

Soon after the capture of Singapore Abdul Rahman received a letter from his sister, Tengku Baharom, who was staying in Jelebu, in north Negri Sembilan. She expressed anxiety over the fate of her husband, Captain Rajah Aman Shah, an officer in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. She had heard, she said, that he either had been executed or was a prisoner-of-war.

Abdul Rahman received Japanese permission to drive to Jelebu to see her. On the way with a friend an incident occurred which had a profound effect on him and changed his attitude towards an afflicted race of people.

A Malay standing on the roadside in Negri Sembilan asked for a lift. He wore sun-spectacles and kept his hands in his *baju* (coat) pockets. He said he was on his way to Jelebu.

"Oh, I'm going to Jelebu. I'll take you there," replied Abdul Rahman.

When they parted Abdul Rahman asked the Malay whether he suffered from eye-trouble. The man raised a hand to take off his spectacles. He had no fingers; he also had ulcers around his eyes. He was a leper in the most repulsive stage of his affliction.

Abdul Rahman was horrified. He had never seen leprosy at close quarters before. He felt revolted, and, in his ignorance then, alarmed at the possibility of infection. That evening he and his friend used two gallons of precious petrol they were carrying as spare in petrol-hungry Malaya to 'disinfect' their car. They scrubbed the floors, the sides, and the seats with petrol.

Abdul Rahman could not erase the picture of the leper. After the reoccupation and his return from England as a barrister he and his wife, who were childless, adopted two infants of parents who were inmates of a leper settlement. Every Malay New Year he sends gifts to lepers.

In Jelebu Abdul Rahman promised his sister that he would go to Singapore to look for her husband. He did so a short time later, accompanied by Syed Omar. Abdul Rahman carried a Japanese travel permit and also a pistol — which nearly cost him his life.

The scenes in Japanese-occupied Singapore were indescribable. The city had had an agonizing seven days of shelling and bombing before it had surrendered. Rubble and rubbish were piled high in the streets. British and Indian prisoners-of-war were working as labourers.

Abdul Rahman was able to confirm the report that Captain Rajah Aman Shah had been executed. He had died with seven other Malay officers in the Volunteers and the Malay Regiment because they refused to discard their British uniforms and join the Japanese Army, or alternatively put on civilian clothes and accept release.

Abdul Rahman and Syed Omar began the return to Alor Star. They stopped at a Japanese barrier at the Johore Bahru end of the causeway. The sentry gruffly ordered the two occupants out of the car while he examined it. In the dashboard he found Abdul Rahman's pistol.

Abdul Rahman recalls, "The sentry did not ask me if I had a permit for it. He thought I was a Chinese Communist escaping from Singapore. He seemed intent on summary justice. He pointed his gun at my head and was about to shoot when Syed Omar came between us. Had the sentry fired Syed Omar would have got it.

"During the next few awkward moments I succeeded in getting out my permit and showed it to the sentry. He took us before an officer, who finally let us go, but retained the gun."

The rest of the journey was uneventful.

A few months later Japanese agriculturists decreed that cotton should be grown in Kedah for exports to Japan. They earmarked a large area of jungle at Padang Serai, in Kulim district, for cotton-growing. The Japanese ordered Abdul Rahman to indenture Malays to clear the land and plant cotton. He asked whether they would be

paid. He was told, "They should be proud that the Emperor has asked them to work for him."

Abdul Rahman replied, "That's all very well, but how are they going to live? The Malays will not come unless you are willing to pay for their labour."

A few days later Abdul Rahman was ordered to pack up and report to the Audit Department in Alor Star. There he found that his house had been requisitioned as a mess for Japanese subordinates. He rented a small house, then reported to the State Auditor, who told him he had instructions to give him a clerk's job. There was little auditing to do, anyway.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Occupation Years

The people in Alor Star watched curiously as truckloads and trainloads of Allied prisoners-of-war went through the town towards Siam. The reports said that they were being used as forced labour on a railway-line the Japanese wanted to build from Siam into Burma. The prisoners were followed by Indonesians from Sumatra and Malays and Indians from Malaya, on their way north as labour for that notorious line which was eventually completed — but never used — at the expense of thousands of lives. Many Malays and Indians who lived through the ordeal came to play a part in Abdul Rahman's life.

After the freedom of speech and the uncensored newspapers experienced during the British regime the people found it frustrating not to know what was happening in the world outside their towns and villages and beyond the shores of Malaya. The Japanese banned, under sentence of death, listening-in to British or United States radio news. Nevertheless radio-sets began to operate secretly. In Alor Star some were hidden in homes; others were in derelict attap huts in the paddy-fields.

Abdul Rahman found the Audit Department boring and longed for a change. He found himself a job when Malays and Indians returned from the railway construction. They had run away and were destitute, ridden with malaria, scratching with scabies, and scarred with sores.

They had walked miles back to Malaya, and Alor Star was their first haven. They began to litter the pavements, the market, and the playgrounds.

Abdul Rahman rallied a few friends to help him assist the destitutes. Two of these associates were a few years later to figure

largely in his political career.

One was Senu bin Abdul Rahman, a teacher in a Malay school in Alor Star before the Japanese occupation. The other was Mohamed Khir bin Johari, who during the war had been in the Civil Defence department. Senu, after the Japanese occupation, worked his way by ship to the United States, where he worked to pay his way through college. He returned to Malaya in 1955 to become Secretary-General of the United Malays National Organization; on independence he was appointed Ambassador to Indonesia. Khir Johari in 1955 was a candidate in the first general elections, and won his seat by the biggest majority polled by any candidate. He became a junior Minister in Abdul Rahman's Cabinet, and on independence he was promoted to Minister for Education.

Senu, Khir Johari, and Abdul Rahman became the hub of a small welfare group. They collected money and bought food for the destitutes, and it was cooked in Abdul Rahman's home by his wife, Sharifah Rodziah.

In 1943 the Japanese formally 'handed' Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu back to Siam. By permitting Siam to take possession of Kedah the Japanese said that they were rectifying the 'injustice' done in 1909, when Britian had 'forced' Siam to give up the Malay State. It was a political move which did not fool the Kedah Malays, but it meant a more stable existence under their old friends the Siamese.

The Siamese set up a military regime in Kedah and the other Malay States. Over them was appointed a "Chief Administrator" who had the rank of a Siamese Army major-general. A Siamese Administrator was placed in each State, but they were not of high rank. For instance, the Administrator in Kedah was a police major; in Kelantan there was a first lieutenant.

Among the Siamese officers sent to Kedah, Abdul Rahman joyfully found friends of his Bangkok and Cambridge days. He used their influence to get him away from the Audit Department. He was appointed "Superintendent of Education, Kedah," and it was with pleasure that one of his first orders was to halt the teaching of the Japanese language in the schools. The children were taught solely in Malay.

A Malay who was a teacher for the remaining days of the occupation said that Abdul Rahman introduced into the curri-

culum the unusual subject of "Manners." The teacher said, "Abdul Rahman considered courtesy and good manners paramount assets in everybody's life."

A piquant note was that the younger students were taught "table manners," which included the art of using a fork and knife. Malays eat with the fingers of their right hand only; they never use the left hand. Many Westerners in Malaya have taught themselves to eat with their fingers as a gesture to Malays hosts.

Abdul Rahman gave Senu a job as a clerk in his office, then finally made him his personal secretary. This was most convenient, because they and Khir Johari had become deeply involved in succouring the growing number of destitutes. More and more money was required; the Government declined to help, and public donations did not meet the bills.

The group launched a *sendiwara*, a concert party, to travel from kampong to kampong, playing Malay *keroncong* (romantic melodies) and putting on comic sketches. About thirty young Malays entered into the spirit of the scheme, and very soon there was enough money to erect long houses as dormitories for men and women.

Among the labourers was a Kelantanese Malay who claimed to be a clairvoyant. He repeatedly said to Abdul Rahman that he would one day be the leader of Malaya. Abdul Rahman chuckled and said, "How nice!"

In 1943 Abdul Rahman's father died. He had reigned for sixty-one years. The State mourned. The Sultan was buried in the royal cemetery in Alor Star, but before his bier was carried from the Throne Room in which he had lain in State his successor was proclaimed.

He was Tunku Badlishah, who had been Regent since 1937. He was a staunch upholder of the rights of Malays, and in particular of the rights of the individual Malay States.

He went to Bangkok as a youth, entered the Topeat College for Royal Pages, and then in 1912 was sent to Europe by King Rama to study economics in Wadham College, Oxford. On his return to Siam he entered the Ministry of the Interior, where his work earned him promotion to the Third Degree of Siamese nobility. In 1926 he finally came home to Alor Star and was appointed State Treasurer. In 1936 the C.M.G. was conferred on him, and in 1941

he was appointed an Honorary Knight of the Order of the British Empire.

At that time there was little affection between Badlishah* and Abdul Rahman; they became good friends, however, and within a few years Badlishah was to confer Kedah's highest award, the gold order of Merit, on Abdul Rahman. As head of the State, first as Regent and then as Sultan, Badlishah was critical of Abdul Rahman's attitude towards the Government and of his open criticism. He could not perhaps be blamed, for he was Ruler of a feudal State, and feudalism brooks no opposition.

The Japanese planted the seed of nationalism into younger Malays in the country. They spoke glibly of "independence," and gave independence to Burma, Siam, Indonesia, and the Philippines — but independence according to the spirit of Japanese Bushido.

The intense nationalistic currents that flowed through Indonesia — which after the Japanese surrender launched her into a war against the Dutch — were felt across the waters in Malaya. Indonesian politicians, who were either sincere or dangerous opportunists, crossed over to the Malay States to sound local Malay leaders about "cooperation" in creating after the War a Malay Republic consisting of Sumatra, Java, and Malaya.

A deputation went to Johore to see a man who was destined to become the first leader of Malaya's Malays, Onn bin Ja'afar, scion of a noble Malay house in Johore. He fobbed them off because he foresaw the dangers of union with the hot-blooded Indonesians.

Other Indonesians went to Kedah and spoke feelingly of *merdeka*, a word culled from the Sanskrit, meaning "freedom." Eleven years later the word was Abdul Rahman's clarion call to Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

In those late days of 1944, however, *merdeka* struck a discordant note in Abdul Rahman. Khir Johari and Senu were more receptive, and they and other young Malays began to think of *merdeka* for Malaya.

They formed secretly an association called *Saberkas* (Unity), but as political parties were not approved by the Government, they gave it the guise of a co-operative store, which they named "Saberkas Company." Abdul Rahman became a patron of Saberkas,

*Sultan Sir Badlishah of Kedah died on July 13, 1958.

although his personal wishes lay not in having independence for Malaya, but in creating a more democratic form of government for Kedah.

Saberkas was socialistic in theory, but almost extremist in its plans for the future of Malaya. It wanted *merdeka* right after the end of the War, if possible.

In the jungles of Kedah and the other Malay States a much more dangerous group of people and had already decided that Malaya should be a Communist Republic. They were the leaders of the Malayan Communist Party, who had formed a resistance army to fight the Japanese.

Every State had its corps of guerrillas who were fed by Chinese vegetable garderners working on the fringes of the jungle. Money, medicines, and clothes came from Chinese in towns and villages. The lines of communications had been laid with the typical industry of the Chinese.

The Allied command in South-east Asia headquarters in India reluctantly accepted these Communist guerrillas as allies. So by submarine and from the air officers and men of Force 136, a guerrilla unit, were infiltrated into the Malayan jungle. They contacted the Communist leaders, offered them arms, ammunition, and equipment, and began to train their men.

The Communists were ardent pupils of the art of ambushing, of surprise in attack, and the other fundamental aspects of jungle warfare. These lessons they turned to their own advantage not more than four years later, when the Malayan Communist Party called for a revolution against "British Imperialism" in Malaya.

Ten years later their leader, Chin Peng, was to meet Abdul Rahman, the Chief Minister, and unsuccessfully ask for an "honourable peace." Abdul Rahman, an enemy of Communism, wanted total surrender.

Word seeped through to Saberkas that a unit of Force 136 was operating in South Kedah and that it wanted recruits. Abdul Rahman began a secret recruiting campaign. His home became his headquarters. Occasionally a motor-car sped from Alor Star to Kuala Nerang at three o'clock in the morning to deliver a recruit or two to an agent, who led them into the jungle.

One day in August 1945 the Japanese officer in charge of a supplies department summoned Abdul Rahman and Khir Johari.

He made a simple but dramatic announcement to them: "Japan will surrender in a few days."

Both Abdul Rahman and Khir Johari can still remember the relief that swept through them. For a few moments they felt sorry for the officer in front of them. He opened a safe and showed them bundles of Japanese occupation currency. "You have been doing welfare work here," he said, "so take this money and continue the work." He also offered them hundreds of bags of rice and bolts of cloth.

Khir Johari says that Abdul Rahman and he decided it would be dangerous to accept the money, but they took the rice and the cloth to their co-operative store. In the days that followed they sent destitutes back to their homes with good British money obtained from selling the rice and cloth, and also with a ration or rice and lengths of cloth for new clothes.

Amid this transfer of rice and cloth came ominous reports that on the day of surrender Communist guerrillas would emerge from the jungle and take possession of Kedah towns and villages. They would draw the Japanese flag down and hoist their own three-starred red emblems.

When he heard the news Abdul Rahman used a common and expressive Malay phrase: "*Mana boleh.*" This really means "How can?" but with various intonations it can also mean either "Let them try" or "What the hell!" Neither he nor any of his youths in Saberkas was prepared to let either Alor Star or any Kedah village fall into Chinese Communist hands.

It was Abdul Rahman's first resistance to Communist tactics; the news had injected him with the first seeds of his final consuming hatred of Communism.

The question, however, was: How were the Communists to be stopped? Obviously Force 136 had to be informed of the Communist intentions. A messenger went off to the agent in Kuala Nerang.

In some villages in Kedah Communist units had begun open domination, which raised tension between the Malay and Chinese inhabitants. This engendered among Malays a determination to prepare for action. *Parangs* (the long Malay knives) and axes were sharpened in anticipation. Abdul Rahman sent members of Saberkas to the villages to urge the elders of both races to form

"peace committees" with the aim of avoiding trouble.

In Alor Star itself members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce walked into the police station and said they would take over control. Abdul Rahman rushed to the station. He found Malays milling outside. He stood on a table and urged them to keep calm. Inside the station he found some extremely worried Chinese. Their audacity, brashness, and arrogance had been pricked like a balloon. They asked for assistance to get home safely. They were given safe conduct, and the immediate threat of racial troubles in Alor Star disappeared.

A few hours later Abdul Rahman received a letter by a messenger. It threatened him with death if he insisted on interfering in the affairs of the Communists. His friends urged him to stay at home. He replied that he was not going to be threatened. He cycled off to attend a meeting in the village of Tandok, three miles away.

Abdul Rahman later sought out the Japanese garrison commander and told him of Communist plans to descend on Alor Star, probably on the morrow. Would the Japanese stop them? There was nothing the Japanese soldiers would have liked better than having a final crack at their enemies, the Communists.

Japanese troops were sent to Jitra, from which the Communists planned to start their 'triumphant' march to Alor Star. The Japanese took up positions. Agents reported back to the Communists, who never marched. . . . .

Force 136 was also ready to make its appearance in Alor Star. Abdul Rahman spent precious Malayan dollars hiring motor-cars which he dispatched to Kuala Nerang to bring the Force 136 men into Alor Star. Before they arrived the next morning, however, the Kedah flag was flying from the masthead outside the Balai Besar, the audience hall, in the heart of Alor Star. It had been hoisted by Saberkas youths.

British and Malay guerrillas drove into Alor Star. Their commander alighted at the Balai Besar, where Abdul Rahman greeted him. A "guard of honour" stood "ready for inspection." It consisted of members of Saberkas armed with wooden staves. Abdul Rahman took the commander into the State Secretariat to meet the Mentri Besar of Kedah.

In the confusion that reigned in Kedah upon Japan's surrender Abdul Rahman's defensive preparations — particularly placing

young men into villages and police stations outside Alor Star — gave rise to reports that he planned a coup d'e´ tat, and that only the return of the British saved the State from falling into his hands.

Abdul Rahman was never a revolutionary. As far as he was concerned, Badlishah or any of his other older royal brothers could reign over Kedah. He was too far down the line of succession to expect ever to ascend the throne constitutionally — and he never thought of reaching it in any other way.

The gossip, however, was ugly enough to strain further the relations between Badlishah and Abdul Rahman.

CHAPTER NINE

Birth of a Party

Malaya returned to peace, an uneasy peace as it proved.

The Allied forces reoccupied capital towns and took the surrender of Japanese units, who later dejectedly marched in disciplined ranks into wired-in prisoner-of-war camps.

The process of resettling to post-war life was aggravated by the shortage of food. The expectations of the people that the end of the War would bring food-ships to Malaya collapsed into an irritated acceptance of rice-rationing.

In the world around Malaya 'peace' was a grim overture to the continuance of some form of war or of civil trouble. India and Burma agitated for independence. In Indonesia the people began a civil war against their masters, the Dutch, and British and Indian troops were unwillingly sent to help restore order.

In Malaya political consciousness had awakened. Strong undertones began to reveal themselves.

In Kedah Saberkas had towards the close of the occupation secretly passed a resolution to "oppose" the British when they returned. To-day its original members — some hold important positions in Abdul Rahman's party — assert that bloody revolution was far from their minds.

Rumours became current that the British Government had reshaped Malaya's constitution. These were confirmed in October 1945, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr George Hall, announced that the British Government had decided on "the constitutional union of Malaya and the institution of a Malayan citizenship which will give equal citizenship rights to those who can claim Malaya to be their homeland." He added that the Colony of Singapore "at this stage requires a separate constitutional treat-

ment," and because of its special economic and other interests it would therefore become a separate colony. Penang and Malacca would form part of the Malayan Union, but as British Settlements.

Mr Hall announced that Sir Harold MacMichael had been appointed a special representative of His Majesty's Government to "arrange agreements with the Malay Rulers."

The day after this announcement Sir Harold MacMichael arrived in Kuala Lumpur, inspected a guard of honour, and in an incredibly short time began the work that was to project his name into the vocabulary of Malaya as an adjective of political insult. MacMichael had his brief, and he carried it out inexorably.

He said at a Press conference in Kuala Lumpur within twenty-four hours of arrival that his mission was a "perfectly straightforward one," and it was necessary to ensure "the co-operation" of each Malay Ruler. He thought his negotiations would take two to six months. As it turned out he was in Malaya less than two months – and he left behind a seething cauldron of outraged Malay humanity.

The agreement which each Malay Ruler, beginning with the Sultan of Johore, the oldest reigning monarch in the country, had to sign contained a pertinent clause that the Sultan "cedes all powers and jurisdiction to His Majesty King George the Sixth." This gave the British Government the right to introduce a new constitution taking away all sovereign powers from the Rulers and converting their States into Colonies.

MacMichael gave no Ruler the opportunity to consult his advisers, in spite of the fact that each was bound either by ancient unwritten law or by written constitutions not to surrender his State or any part of it to any foreign Power.

Every Ruler questioned MacMichael's haste and declared his wish to consult his advisers. MacMichael used varying forms of persuasion to get the Rulers to sign.

In Kedah, for instance, the Sultan was told that unless he signed he would not be recognized formally by the British as the rightful Sultan, and that MacMichael had the power to replace him with some one who would be ready to accept the agreement.

In his royal Istana Sultan Badlishah put the situation to his brothers and his advisers. Abdul Rahman heatedly said that Badlishah should sign under protest and "in front of all the people."

Wiser counsels prevailed, and Badlishah later affixed his signature to the unpleasant agreement in the restrained presence of some of his brothers.

A few weeks later the House of Commons was told of the way in which the Sultans had been forced to "consent" to the Malayan Union. The stories came from the Rulers themselves. They had taken the unprecedented regal step of permitting their feelings to become public. Sultan Badlishah, for example, said in a letter read to the House:

> I was presented with a verbal ultimatum with a time limit, and in the event of refusing to sign what I call the instrument of surrender, my successor who would sign would be appointed. Members of the State Council were compelled to sign, undertaking they would advise me to sign. I was told the matter was personal and confidential, and I was not allowed to tell my people what had taken place.

Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak, a man of wisdom, learning, and loyalty to Britain, wrote:

> One cannot help regretting the necessity for extreme speed in deciding the destiny of a nation when a little delay would have been conducive to wiser counsel. I signed because I was caught in an atmosphere of haste and because I was engrossed in my unshaken loyalty to the British Crown, with full confidence that my rights and the rights of my people would not be disturbed. It cannot be said I have agreed to the serious implications in the proposed Malayan Union.

The criticisms that began to be levelled by world and Malayan opinion against the Malayan Union were directed principally against Britain's undue haste and reluctance to recognize the need to consult local opinion before placing new agreements before the Rulers.

Whatever the reason for the precipitate act against the Malay Rulers, who were among Britain's most fervent admirers and great-

est friends, the British Government actually broke treaties which recognized the full sovereignty of the nine Rulers. The new treaties which MacMichael obtained turned the Rulers into figureheads, which they were not at that stage prepared to be, and their States into Colonies, which the people were not prepared to accept.

The MacMichael treaties caused the political consciousness of the Malays to erupt. Political parties and associations blossomed, and the most potent one was created in Johore, the southernmost State. There Onn bin Ja'afar formed the "National Movement of Peninsular Malays" to protest against the Malayan Union. Onn at that time was District Officer in the district of Batu Pahat, on the west coast of North Johore.

Onn came from a distinguished Malay family. His father and grandfather had been Mentri Besar of Johore. He himself followed their footsteps in two years' time, and became the third member of the family to hold the great office.

The National Movement of Peninsular Malays gathered a quick and ardent membership which eventually reached 110,000 in Johore, with 35,000 in Batu Pahat alone.

Inspired, Onn wrote to the *Utusan Melayu,* a Malay newspaper published in Singapore, suggesting the amalgamation of all Malay political associations into a "United Malays Organization" which would give Malays tremendous political strength with which to fight the imposition of the Malayan Union.

As a result of his letter, the first "All-Malay Congress" was held in Kuala Lumpur on March 1, 1946. It was attended by representatives of forty-one Malay associations, including Saberkas. Abdul Rahman was unable to be present.

Malay political history was made. The associations formed not the "United Malays Organization," but, more significantly, the "United Malays National Organization." The emphasis was on the nationalistic purpose of the union.

Onn was elected first president, which gave him the honour of being the first patriot of modern Malaya and the acknowledged leader of over 2,000,000 Malays. It is only fair, while acknowledging Abdul Rahman's vital role in bringing independence to his country, to recognize the part that Onn bin Ja'afar played in launching the country towards the goal it eventually reached. Abdul Rahman himself had once said, "The Malays owe a lot to

Onn."

The U.M.N.O. rejected the Malayan Union treaties on the grounds that they were "not executed in accordance with the Constitution, Traditions, Customs, and Usages of the respective Malay States, and are therefore null and void and not binding on Their Highnesses and Their Highnesses' subjects."

It invited the British Government to withdraw its proposals "immediately" and to "restore the status quo with no change whatsoever for the present."

In a speech Onn uttered for the first time the theme which his successor, Abdul Rahman, was to repeat so often later. Onn said, "There have been suggestions that the unity of the Malays will be a danger to the other communities. I can assure these other communities that there will be no danger. The Malays have always been looked upon as a simple and law-abiding people, and we propose to live as such, but at the same time, like every other nation, we hope we still claim a place in our country."

The British Government, which had denied charges of breaking faith and also allegations of coercion against the Malay Rulers, declared that it had no intention of postponing the establishment of the Malayan Union on April 1, 1946, when civil government was restored.

Never for a moment did the Labour Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Creech Jones, appreciate the intensity of feeling among the Malays and the lengths to which they were prepared to go to restore constitutional rights and privileges to their Rulers and their own birthright to themselves.

The Governor-Designate of the new Malayan Union, Sir Edward Gent, who had been in the Colonial Office for more than twenty years, was to be ceremonially installed on April 1. Invitations to attend were sent to each Ruler, and on March 30 they were all in a hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

That afternoon Onn personally conveyed to the Rulers a message from the United Malays National Organization that it was "the desire of their people" that they should not attend the Governor's installation, and, indeed, they should "desist from taking part in any function connected with the Union."

The message went further: If the Rulers insisted on meeting the Governor they would be disowned by the people, who were deter-

mined to boycott the Malayan Union. The Malays who had been invited to become members of the central legislature, the Malayan Union Advisory Council, not only had declined to attend the installation, but had also withdrawn their acceptance of their seats. They wrote that they found it "impossible to attend the funeral rites" of their "birthright and liberty."

The U.M.N.O. also decided that all Malays would go into mourning for one week to mourn "the loss of faith and confidence of probably the only race in the world to-day who would voluntarily remain loyal to the British Empire."

The next day, when Gent was installed, the only Malay who witnessed him take the oath of office was his aide-de-camp, an officer of the Malay Regiment and therefore under British Army discipline.

A mile away another drama was enacted. Hundreds of Malays wearing a white band of mourning around their black velvet *songkoks* (caps) stood in front of the hotel where the Rulers were staying and cried, "*Daulat, Tuanku!*" ("Long live the Sultans!") and "Long live the Malays!"

It was an incredible scene, without parallel in the history of the country. The Rulers walked down to the crowded great porch to receive the obeisance of the demonstrators.

This was also a touching scene, although the more unyielding of the leaders in the U.M.N.O. said later, "We brought them down those stairs to teach them a lesson. They were lucky we did not destroy them completely for having signed the MacMichael treaties. As it was, we told them we would support them."

That, therefore, was how April 1, 1946, opened a new phase in Malaya against an ominous background.

A few days later news came from London that two Members of Parliament, Captain L.D. Gammans (Conservative) and Lieutenant-Colonel D.R. Rees-Williams (Labour), would visit the Malayan Union to ascertain the views of the people. This was significant news for the U.M.N.O. It was also interesting for Abdul Rahman.

The U.M.N.O. felt that through the two Parliamentarians they could bring home to the British Government the strength of Malay opposition to the Malayan Union. Abdul Rahman, on his part, had in David Rees-Williams an old friend from his District Officer days in South Kedah, to whom he felt he could emphasize the intensity

of Malay feelings. In the nineteen-twenties Rees-Williams had practised in Penang as a lawyer, and had a reputation as a defence counsel in murder trials. His work took him to the mainland, where he met Abdul Rahman often. They grew to like each other.

Rees-Williams had returned to England to enter politics, and had been successful as a Labour candidate. After the Japanese War he became Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. He finally received a peerage, and is now Lord Ogmore.

As Rees-Williams, M.P. — just before he became Under-Secretary — he was to listen to Abdul Rahman about the Malayan Union crisis. Later, as Lord Ogmore, he was to help Abdul Rahman, the ardent Malay leader and politician, in his quest that ended in independence for Malaya.

The choice of Gammans and Rees-Williams as a mission of inquiry was as shrewd and clever a move by those who had selected them as it was a little reassuring to the Malay leaders, many of whom knew Gammans personally. Gammans had been in the Co-operative Department of the Malayan administrative service before he too had resigned to enter politics in England with the Conservative Party.

There also arrived another former Malayan civil servant, Sir Theodore S. Adams, who came at the invitation of the Rulers to act as their adviser. Sir Theodore had been not only one of the most able administrators in the Service, but also a staunch champion of the Malays. He had retired in 1943 when Chief Commissioner, Northern Provinces, Nigeria.

However, before Gammans, Rees-Williams, and Sir Theodore had begun their assessment of Malay feelings the Rulers had also snubbed the installation of the first Governor-General of Malaya, Mr Malcolm MacDonald, who, however, gave immediate signs that he planned to have early consultations with the Rulers about a form of constitution more to their liking.

Late in May Gammans started motoring northward from Singapore. Rees-Williams flew to Penang, his former home, to work southward. Both met again in Kuala Kangsar, the capital and royal town of Perak, for talks with the Malay Rulers and with Onn and his U.M.N.O. leaders.

Abdul Rahman drove to Penang from Alor Star to see Rees-Williams. To-day Lord Ogmore has a piquant tale about seeing his

old friend jumping off a broken-down lorry which had puffed its way up the drive of the Residency, where he was staying. As Abdul Rahman, in the days when Rees-Williams first knew him, had always driven a smart Bentley the sight was somewhat amusing.

Abdul Rahman told Rees-Williams that the Malays were bitterly hurt over what they felt was the unsympathetic and brusque way in which their Rulers had been made to sign the new treaties. He added that the Malays were on the verge of violence. Rees-Williams promised to do what he could to persuade the British Government to restore the situation.

Onn had motored northward at the same time as Gammans. He travelled in an old Army truck, and his journey was a triumphal procession. In every village and town Malays gathered with banners which protested against "MacMichaelism," listened to Onn, and shouted the battle-cry of the day, *"Hidup Melayu!"* ("Long live the Malays!"). No wonder Gammans described it as "an amazing journey" for him. It was an equally amazing journey for Sir Theodore Adams, who never in his public service had seen Malays in such mood.

For both of them and for all those who witnessed the Malay nationalist movement in those days the most remarkable feature was the part Malay women played. They were challenging, dominant, vehement in their emergence from meek, quiet roles in the kampongs, the rice-fields, the kitchens, and the nurseries. In Kuala Kangsar, where the U.M.N.O. had arranged the biggest demonstration, even the wife of the Sultan of Perak headed a mile-long procession of protest past a dais on which sat all the Malay Rulers, the Parliamentarians, and Onn.

The women carried banners which declared, "Down with the MacMichael Treaties!" "MacMichael employed Jap Diplomacy!" and "Long live the Malays!"

Sir Theodore said later, "Seven speeches delivered by Malay women rank with anything that I have heard in Malaya since my arrival as a cadet in 1908. They seem a forecast of the great assistance which women will bring to the future welfare of the whole country. A revolution has come about."

That day at Kuala Kangsar more than 10,000 people stood in the great open *padang* (playing-field) to listen to speech after speech, each firm about Malay determination not to have anything to do

with the Malayan Union, but all characterized by typical Malay dignity and courtesy. Later that day the Parliamentarians had a seventy-five minute discussion with the U.M.N.O. leaders, and then met the Rulers.

Gammans and Rees-Williams found this meeting with the Rulers a difficult one. Although courteous to the utmost, the Rulers were constrained and waited for the Parliamentarians to make the opening moves. Lord Ogmore recalls that Gammans and he tried to do everything they could to restore the friendliest possible relations. They succeeded to some extent, for at the next meeting the following day the atmosphere was very much more relaxed. This session lasted three hours.

When they left Kuala Kangsar for the final stage of their journey through Malaya Gammans and Rees-Williams had received certain proposals from the Rulers and the U.M.N.O. which could lead to the restoration of the status quo between the Malays and the British Government.

Abdul Rahman came to Kuala Kangsar, but he took no part in the U.M.N.O. discussions with the Parliamentarians. He sped back to Alor Star before they left on their journey to Kedah, to complete in his capacity as patron of Saberkas the arrangements for their reception.

The Kedah Malays exceeded all others in their demonstrations. Every second tree along the thirty-mile road from the Province Wellesley-Kedah border to Alor Star bore a slogan. Almost every vehicle in Alor Star, from rickshaws and bullock-carts to motor-buses, carried banners of protest.

Nearly every Malay in the State walked or rode to Alor Star to welcome Onn and to give Gammans and Rees-Williams the final picture of Malay unity.

Later in the House of Commons both declared that the objects of the Malays and of the British Government were similar, but that the crisis had been provoked by the plans having been rushed through without adequate consultation with the Rulers and the people.

Gammans warned the British Government of the determination of the Malays to continue a policy of non-co-operation. This would extend from refusal to pay land rents to resignation of every Malay in the police force. He also warned of the possibility of the destruc-

tion for ever of racial harmony for which Malaya had been noted.

In Kuala Lumpur Malcolm MacDonald and Gent began preliminary discussions with the Rulers on a solution to the crisis. MacDonald's approach was friendly, sympathetic, and understanding. The fact that the situation eased can to a large extent be attributed to his statesmanship and sincerity, and also to Gent's tact and affability.

Before formal discussions opened, however, Abdul Rahman left for England, depressed about his own future in the Kedah Civil Service and feeling unwanted politically.

CHAPTER TEN

In London Again

Abdul Rahman had had a conflict of opinion with the hotheads of Saberkas over the Malayan Union issue. They wanted outright opposition — if necessary, violence — against the British Government. They asserted that the Rulers showed weakness in agreeing to negotiate with the British; they considered the U.M.N.O. weaker still for participating in the discussions.

Abdul Rahman failed to persuade them that the Malays could not, and should not, resort to violence: they were too weak morally and physically after the stresses and strains of the Japanese occupation to start violence. Negotiations, with the Rulers and the U.M.N.O. showing absolute firmness, were the proper and constitutional course.

Abdul Rahman had taken a leading part in discussions which had led to the U.M.N.O. becoming participants in the official talks. The young men of Saberkas protested, and bitterly criticized him for having done so without their approval.

Abdul Rahman resigned his patronage of Saberkas.

Added to this unpleasantness was despair over his own future in the Kedah Government. He was still unpopular with certain senior officers, and there did not seem to be any prospect of the situation improving. Abdul Rahman felt that he had to assert himself somehow.

He decided to try to pass his Bar examination and go into private practice. The Government approved his application for study leave. He told his wife, "I am going to England to finish my law. If I don't pass you will see the last of me; I won't come back to this country any more." She told him not to be a fool.

In January 1946 Abdul Rahman boarded a ship at Penang and

waved good-bye to his wife and children.

The Malay Society, which he had helped to found, was alive, but only just. He discovered that it had about thirty members, twelve of whom were in London. Most of the Malay students were young men who had been caught in Britain first by the outbreak of the European War, then by the Japanese War. They had been through the stark days of the German Luftwaffe's onslaught on London. They had cheered with the rest of Britain when "The Few" saved England. They had joined the hysterical crowds in Trafalgar Square on VE-day, and for some moments thought how much more hysterical they themselves would be when their own country was freed.

They heard of Force 136, which was sending young Malay volunteers back into their country as guerrillas. The atom bomb obliterated Hiroshima, then another burst over Nagasaki, and in days Japan surrendered — just as a mighty army had left the shores of India to recapture Malaya.

The Malay 'exiles' read the stories about conditions in Malaya, and now Abdul Rahman and a few others had arrived to satisfy their hunger for more personal news.

They were also hungry for news about the United Malays National Organization and about Onn's leadership and the course of the fight against the Malayan Union.

Abdul Rahman had a room in Burns' Hotel in Barkston Gardens, Kensington. About every ten days he went to Russell Square, where Malay students lived, to eat Malay food, cooked either by the boys or by himself. Abdul Rahman was appalled when he heard that the Malay Society met rarely because it had no "recognized meeting-place." One Malay student says, "I still remember Abdul Rahman's retort. He declared, 'The members of the Society should meet even if it has to be on the roadside.' " So the Society began to meet fairly regularly in the rooms of members.

To the younger Malays Abdul Rahman was, as one put it, "more like an uncle." Some 'touched' him frequently for loans, which he cheerfully gave despite the fact that this time he was living on a strict monthly allowance he had granted himself.

Abdul Rahman rejoined the Inner Temple. Early fears that he would be the only "old man" in it were swept away as men in their thirties and forties who had fought in the War studied for the Bar.

Abdul Rahman laughs to-day as he says, "However, none of them could compete with my record of having first tried for the Bar twenty-three years before." He was not as happy-go-lucky then as he had been in his earlier years in the Temple, and this time he really meant it when he said, "I shall pass."

He asked Malay law students to his room, and they studied together — or, rather, Abdul Rahman made them read aloud to him. He also bethought himself of Neil Lawson, who had helped to coach him in 1931 in Roman law, criminal law, and constitutional law. Lawson, who was in chambers in the Temple, helped him again.

Lawson found Abdul Rahman "obviously much more serious than he had been in the thirties. He had decided that it was about time he really did something with his life." Lawson also noticed Abdul Rahman's serious interest in politics.

They had long discussions over the future of Malaya. Here, again, destiny took a hand, because a few years later Lawson became adviser to the Malay Rulers in the discussions between them and the British Government and the Alliance political party, led by Abdul Rahman, over the form of constitution for an independent Malaya.

In September 1947 a young Malay who later played a leading part in Malayan politics beside Abdul Rahman arrived in London. His name was Abdul Razak bin Hussein. He was twenty-five and son of a leading Malay in the State of Pahang. Indeed, his father was then advising his Sultan, Abu Bakar of Pahang, in the negotiations over the revocation of the Malayan Union.

Abdul Razak was destined first to become the youngest Mentri Besar of Pahang, then Minister of Education in the Government over which Abdul Rahman was Chief Minister, and later Minister for Defence in the independent country.

Abdul Razak had heard of Abdul Rahman, but had never met him. So soon after he settled in Barkston Gardens, near Burns' Hotel, he called on the Kedah prince to pay his respects. They became fast friends.

Abdul Razak joined Lincoln's Inn. It was an indication of his brilliance that he passed all his law examinations in eighteen months, instead of the normal three years; he had to wait until May 1950, another thirteen long months, before he could be called to

the Bar.

Abdul Razak unhesitatingly helped Abdul Rahman in his studies, taking his turn at reading aloud. He was one of the few to whom Abdul Raman confided his ultimate ambition — to make a career in law in Kedah and Penang, and to enter politics.

The group of Malay students then in London now like to say that they formed "a little U.M.N.O." in the heart of Britain. They discussed 'independence' for their homeland.

Abdul Rahman and Razak and their friends frequently met Indian and Sinhalese students, who were excited by events in New Delhi and in Colombo which were to lead their countries to independence in 1947 and 1948. The Malays saw no reason why Malaya also should not get independence soon.

Abdul Rahman had resumed his old friendship with David Rees-Williams, who introduced him and Razak to leading members of the Labour Party, men who in seven years' time were to become useful political friends when both returned to London to talk to the Conservative Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Oliver Lyttelton (now Lord Chandos), about constitutional matters.

In 1947 Abdul Rahman and Razak and other students were pro-Labour and highly critical of the Conservative Party. The reason was simple: the Labour Government seemed to them liberal in granting independence to Asian countries.

At the next British elections Abdul Rahman accepted the freedom given him to vote and backed the Labour candidate in his constituency. For all his admiration for Winston Churchill and for his war-time leadership, he and his compatriots privately booed his speeches which deplored the forthcoming loss of such valuable members of the British Empire as India, Ceylon, and Burma.

Abdul Razak said later, "Oh, yes, we looked upon him as Chief Imperialist and his gang of Conservatives as woolly men who were against independence."

Ironically enough, Abdul Rahman gained independence for his country through the Conservatives. Even then his supporters said, "Oh, well, they had to give it to us in any case. Sure, sure, they haven't been too bad, but we had to struggle a bit."

The apparently irreconcilable differences between Hindus and Muslims in India as independence grew nearer forced the Malay students to solemn thoughts about the racial problem in their

country. They were divided on whether Malays and Chinese could live side by side as members of a united nation.

The Malays invited Chinese and Indian students from Malaya who were members of "The Malayan Students' Union" to private discussions on the subject. One Chinese, with a measure of pride, pointed out that one of the greatest proponents of Sino-Malay unity was a Chinese, Mr Tan Cheng Lock. Tan, who lived in the historic old town of Malacca, was one of the most active, independent, and cultured minds among Malayan Chinese. To-day, he is Sir Cheng-lock Tan, K.B.E., until recently president of the Malayan Chinese Association.

As far back as 1926, the Chinese student recalled, Tan Cheng Lock had declared in the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements, in which he was one of the youngest and also one of the most dominating members:

"Our ultimate political goal should be a united self-governing British Malaya with a Federal Government and Parliament for the whole of it, functioning at a convenient centre — say, Kuala Lumpur — and with as much autonomy in purely local affairs as possible for each of its component parts. I think it is high time that we commence to take action towards forging the surest and strongest link of that united Malaya by fostering and creating a true Malayan spirit and consciousness among its people to the complete elimination of racial and communal feeling."

Tan proved a political problem. In 1955 he saw independence come to Malaya, a central government functioning from Kuala Lumpur, each of its component parts given as much autonomy as possible — but he has yet to see deep and true racial amity between the Chinese and the Malays.

His passionate thoughts of 1926 quoted solemly twenty-one years later impressed the Malays, including Abdul Rahman, who hardly knew Tan Cheng Lock, except as an intellectual "Baba Chinese" in the somnolent colony of Malacca. But they were to hear of him soon as the political leader of the Chinese in Malaya. He became Abdul Rahman's partner in a political alliance.

To the Malay students in London it was a sobering thought that a Chinese should so long ago have thought of racial amity, or have even discerned in those halcyon days that all was not right in relations between the two races. Their subsequent discussions on

this sensitive subject were frank but temperate.

Both Abdul Rahman and Razak were to say later, "In the end we decided there was no alternative for Malaya. Either the various races should come together or the country would have to be subdivided, which would be quite unthinkable because it would be accompanied by bloodshed." It is clear what had inspired the idea of 'subdivision': that was to be the lot of India and Pakistan, partition for the Hindus and the Muslims.

Through the newspapers, but principally through letters from home, the students in London followed the course of the constitutional talks in Kuala Lumpur. Abdul Rahman and Razak received long letters from their relatives and friends.

Razak's father was particularly informative, and his letters gave an indication of the difficult, but none the less cordial, negotiations that were being pursued by the Rulers, the U.M.N.O., and the British Government.

In July 1947 the White Paper on the proposed constitution was published. In this document lay twelve months of public discussion and consultation over the constitutional, racial, and political problems of post-war Malaya.

To the great disappointment of many people in Malaya, it did not admit the thin wedge of democracy into the structure of the new Malaya. Hopes had been hinged on an early introduction of elections. The White Paper merely made the declaration that His Majesty's Government "note with satisfaction that the proposals in their latest form contain a firm expression of intention regarding the early introduction of elections to both the central and the State and Settlement legislatures."

The students were unmistakably impatient. "We're not getting anywhere," declared Abdul Rahman. "Malaya should have elections."

Controversy arose in London pubs whenever students met. A more conservative Malay produced a clipping of an editorial from the *Straits Times* which had been sent to him,-and read aloud:

> It cannot be said that the new constitution bears the stamp of democracy. That could only have been given by a constituent assembly, as was done in India and Burma, but a country in which nobody was even allow-

> ed to vote for a parish councillor before the War can hardly be ready for elections for a constituent assembly to-day.

The Chinese in Malaya expressed bitterness. The promises in the Malayan Union of abolition of racial privilege in Malaya had not been retained in the new constitution. Citizenship would be more difficult for them to obtain, and in the great central legislature of seventy-five members the Malay majority was to be restored.

It was after publication of the White Paper that Razak and a few friends put a question one day to Abdul Rahman. They were familiar enough now to call him by a nickname that meant no disrespect — "Ayah Hitam" ("Black Uncle"), partly a reference to his dark skin.

"Ayah Hitam, will you play a greater part in the U.M.N.O. when you go back? It will need men like you."

Abdul Rahman replied sincerely, "Yes, I am keen to serve my people — that is, if I am wanted."

The critical year of 1947 ended with the knowledge of a new era beginning in 1948.

For Abdul Rahman's brother Badlishah, Sultan of Kedah, a man bitter against the trend of events since the end of the Japanese occupation, the new year opened auspiciously when his friend King George VI created him an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George.

The United Malays National Organization heralded the year of the new constitution with joyful celebrations on January 1. In London on January 2 Abdul Rahman and friends joined Burmese students in hailing the hoisting of the flag of the first new State in South-east Asia as Burma was proclaimed an independent republic. The British Empire was saying the first good-bye to its members in the Far East.

As they watched the banner of Burma fluttering against the wintry sky of London, Abdul Rahman wondered how long it would be before the flag of an independent Malaya would ripple excitingly from the mast on Malaya House, which stands in its magnificent site at one corner of Trafalgar Square, looking towards St Martin's-in-the-Fields and the bustling Strand.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Barrister at Last

A movement began in London to get Abdul Rahman made the Mentri Besar of Kedah, under the new constitution in which every Malay State would have a Malay as chief executive.

Kedah, like Johore, Trengganu, and Kelantan, had traditionally had a Malay chief executive officer. In the three other states he was known as 'Mentri Besar' (Prime Minister), while in Kedah he was 'Secretary to the Government.' The incumbent in Kedah after the War was Tuan Haji Mohamed Shariff, who had been Secretary to the Government for many years. He 'ruled' brilliantly and autocratically, which had not made him popular with certain sections in the State.

The Kedah students in England were all for a change when they learned that the new constitution provided for a 'Mentri Besar' in each Malay State as head of the service. A number of them wanted "Ayah Hitam" as Mentri Besar. He might not make a brilliant administrator, but he would be a good leader, they thought. So they began an agitation from London; they wrote letters to people in Kedah urging them to petition the Sultan.

One day as 1948 opened a message was broadcast to Kedah over the network of the British Broadcasting Corporation. It was strange material to come from these traditionally neutral microphones. The talk opened with references to the appointments of Mentri-Mentri Besar and State Secretaries in the Malay States, and went on:

"The Malays here in Britain realize to the full the importance of these two highest Malay appointments for the future of each of the Malay States, and above all we realize how important it is that the right Malays should be appointed.....

"We in Britain have been highly pleased to see that the name of one of us here has been mentioned in connexion with the appointment of Prime Minister of Kedah. That name is Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman, the president of our Malay Society in Great Britain. Tunku Abdul Rahman is now in England studying law.

"We here are filled with admiration and pride that the Tunku should have the desire, the ability, and the courage to qualify himself in law. He is well past the ordinary student age, and it is difficult to think of him undergoing all that is required of a student who is keen on getting through a series of difficult examinations in the shortest possible time. Moreover, as his friends well know, Tunku Abdul Rahman, like most Malays, loves all the good things in life.....

"When discussing with Tunku Abdul Rahman the future of the Malays one is immediately struck by his unbounded faith in God and in the inherent goodness of his own people. He has seen with his own eyes the hardship, the sorrow, and the suffering of the Malay people all these years since the War, and has forseen the dangers that his people will go through if nothing is done to help them.

"He knows that the hand can guide these simple people can only come from among the Malays themselves. He has realized that to be of service to his people and to be a true guide to them requires a degree of qualification which he can find only in Britain.....

"We have no desire to interfere in the internal politics of Kedah. We write of a nominee for the appointment of Prime Minister of that State for the simple reason that the Malays in Britain have the privilege and the good fortune of knowing him personally and having him in our midst at the present time.

"Should he become the Prime Minister of Kedah, we know that the choice would be a good one. We know that Tunku Abdul Rahman would serve the people to the best of his ability with honour and the greatest devotion."

The broadcast intrigued people in Kedah who heard it, but it could not help Abdul Rahman. A week later the Sultan announced that Tuan Haji Mohamed Shariff would continue to steer the State through the first years of its new role as an integrated unit in the comity of Malaya.

Personally, Abdul Rahman had never expected to become Mentri Besar. He himself admitted that Tuan Haji Shariff was a brilliant administrator, however autocratic he might be, and the needs of the State came first.

On January 22 Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak, and many Malay students sat in front of radio-sets and listened to the description of the signing in Kuala Lumpur of the Federation's new treaty with Great Britain.

The historic ceremony took place in the mahogany-panelled dining-room of King's House, a lack-lustre setting which was made brilliant by the rich gold- and silver-threaded costumes of the Rulers and their Mentri-Mentri Besar, State Secretaries, and Malay witnesses. The colours of the costumes ranged from mid-night blue and purple to pearl and gold. In striking contrast were the white colonial uniforms of the Governor, Sir Edward Gent, and of the officers of the Malayan Civil Service.

The privileged few who watched the proceedings felt that the strain between Malays and the British had eased; underlying every-thing was exultation among the Malays. Onn bin Ja'afar, who had become Mentri Besar of Johore and been elevated to a Dato-ship (the Malay knighthood) by the Sultan of Johore, wore an air of quiet satisfaction and confidence. He was the architect of the scene.

The signing lasted two hours. Each Sultan and his witnesses placed their signatures and their seals first on State Agreements which revoked the unpopular MacMichael treaties and returned to the Rulers all their rights and prerogatives, their control over land, and their power over life and death. Then they signed the Federa-tion Agreement which gave the British Government jurisdiction only over external affairs, external and internal defence, and ap-peals to the Privy Council.

On February 1 the new Federation of Malaya, the union of nine Malay States and two Colonies, formally came into being. Sir Edward Gent donned the plumed helmet of "High Commissioner" and addressed a new Federal Legislative Council in which Malays were present, their boycott over after two years, their satisfaction clearly on their countenances.

In royal towns each Ruler went through the ceremony of grant-ing a new constitution to his people.

Onn himself, in a public statement, called for "a spirit of goodwill, a better understanding of each other's problems, and a determination to face the realities and the legitimate aspirations of many."

The most realistic note was struck, however, by a Chinese member of the Federal Legislative Council, Dr Ong Chong Keng, of Penang, who a few months later was brutally murdered by Communists. He looked forward to self-government, he said, but how near or how distant that should be would depend upon "how quickly or how slowly the many races domiciled in Malaya can forget racial prejudices and learn to think, talk, and act as true Malayans.

"As long as the Malays are afraid that the Chinese and the Indians may swamp them, and as long as the Chinese and the Indians are jealous of the privileges given to the Malays as the sons of the soil, Whitehall will have to keep on sending out British officials to Malaya to act as referees and umpires in the political game," he added.

So the Federation in that month of February 1948 turned its face solemly towards "self-government," with Onn and a few others like him thinking there was a great deal in the maxim "Make haste slowly," although conscious that the form of democracy being practised in Malaya was somewhat archaic for the modern world.

Within a few months, however, any thoughts of taking measured strides towards self-government were forced out of men's minds as the Malayan Communist Party plunged the country into an era of terror, arson, and murder in its declared intention of wresting control from the "British Imperialists" and turning Malaya into a "People's Republic."

The Malay Society of Great Britain held a celebration dinner and invited as guests the men who had contributed to Malaya's first step towards maturity — Rees-Williams and Gammans. Abdul Rahman made a speech of hope for the future, and pledged himself to work with others to achieve independence constitutionally.

In the weeks that followed Abdul Rahman received disturbing news from Kedah, news of labour troubles on rubber estates, of murders, of Chinese and Indian youths drilling, using poles as rifles. There was news of rubber estates in Johore in which groups of armed Chinese intimidated labour and killed labour foremen

and also European managers.

Tension in Malaya mounted, and the chamber of the Legislative Council heard hard words directed against Whitehall and Sir Edward Gent. The British Labour Government, which was in power, refused to accept the evidence that the terrorism was created by the Malayan Communist Party working to plans laid during the Japanese occupation. Russia was still an ally of Britain, and nothing was to be done to spoil the relations.

Finally, however, on June 16 Gent was forced to declare an Emergency to exist in the Federation. The country went on the defensive. The Malayan Communist Party's plans had fortunately gone off at half-cock. Its own date to begin its war had been September 1, 1948. It had drawn up detailed plans to murder European estate and mine managers, senior Government officers, police officers, trade unionists, and men in charge of estate and mine labour. Just how narrowly Malaya escaped wholesale murder was confirmed only months later when documents containing these plans fell into Government hands.

The leader of the Malayan Communist Party was — and still is — a Hakka Chinese named Chin Peng. During the Japanese War he had been a top guerilla in Perak, and had acted as liaison officer between Lord Louis Mountbatten's representative, Colonel J.L.H. Davis, of the Malayan Police, who had insinuated himself into the jungle after landing by submarine on the Perak coast, and the then Secretary-General of the Malayan Communist Party, an Annamite named Loi Tak.

Davis and his colleagues considered Chin Peng the man most to be trusted among the Malayan Communists. After the War Chin Peng was awarded the Order of the British Empire, but before he received it he was in the jungle conducting his revolution. The award was revoked.

In those early days of the Emergency the popular feeling was that the Communists would be thrown back within months, and Malaya could return to stability and prosperity, and move on to self-government. In the event, political progress had to be halted a few years while the Communists were thrown back into the jungle.

Towards the end of June Gent was recalled to England. He was killed in a collision over London between his aircraft and another. The Malay students in London had planned to meet him. A few

weeks later they met his successor, Sir Henry Gurney, who himself was doomed to die within three years in a Communist ambush on a Saturday afternoon as he drove up to the cool resort at Fraser's Hill for a week-end of rest and relaxation.

Abdul Rahman was fated not to come into very close contact with Gurney, but he acknowledged his brilliance as an administrator and his political far-sightedness. Gurney's aim was to get the political wheels of Malaya turning despite the terrorist campaign; he also knew above all men in Malaya how essential it was for the Malays and Chinese to come together and to think alike of the country they called their home.

The final law examination was due in December, and Abdul Rahman bent to his books. He sat for his examination, making certain that he knew the time and the venue. He emerged at the end anxious as to whether he had done as well as he should. However, his natural buoyancy of spirit asserted itself. "Come on, Razak, let's go to Freddie Mills for dinner."

One day the telephone rang in Abdul Rahman's hotel room. A friend told him the results were out.

"You've passed, Tunku."

"You're not bluffing, are you?"

"No; come and see for yourself."

"You're a pal. Thank you very much for phoning."

Abdul Rahman lifted the phone and dialled. "Hey, Razak, I've passed. Let's have a party. Get the boys together."

Abdul Rahman was justifiably proud of himself. At forty-five years of age he had proved to himself that if he got down to a job with a purpose he could do it. Now he could launch himself on another career — although he doubted whether he would be, to use his own expression, "great shakes" as a lawyer.

In due time he came to be called. Abdul Rahman asked Neil Lawson to suggest a Bencher who would sponsor him. Mr F.W. Beney, Q.C., in Lawson's chambers, was pleased to do so. Lawson lent Abdul Rahman his robes.

As senior student, having been the longest in the Temple, Abdul Rahman had to make a speech to mark the occasion. Usually, it is a very formal speech, with the speaker expressing appreciation of the honour at being called at the Inn and promising to do everything in his power to uphold and maintain the traditions of the

English Bar.

An English lawyer who was present at the dinner said Abdul Rahman made "a most memorable speech," memorable because it departed from tradition.

"To-night," said Abdul Rahman, "is an unique occasion for the Inn, because it is the first time a student has been called after staying with it for twenty-five years. To-night I not only celebrate my being called to the Bar, but also my silver jubilee as a student at this Inn."

This quite unorthodox departure from the usual formality dissolved the solemn gathering.

Only one outsider heard Abdul Rahman's speech. Standing outside the hall with his ear to the slightly open door was Abdul Razak. He knew what Abdul Rahman planned to say, and he was determined to hear him say it. Razak says that when he left "the august crowd was laughing uproariously."

CHAPTER TWELVE

A Law Officer

Abdul Rahman returned to Kedah early in 1949, prepared, if necessary, to earn his own living as a barrister. He was not without misgivings about the prospects, however.

He was forty-five years of age, not perhaps the age at which to start a new career, and particularly one in which there would be much competition. The young men of post-war Malaya were invading universities to graduate either as lawyers or as doctors.

Whether Abdul Rahman would have become a successful lawyer is a moot point. He would not have made a powerful leader or prosecutor. He was not the kind of man who could spend hours in office or at home poring through the law books, looking for technical loopholes or precedents. He would probably have left much of the law to the judge, although he would have made his submissions lucidly.

He also returned to Kedah a budding politician. A flame had been lit in him — the desire to introduce 'democracy' as seen in Britain and in some countries of the Continent through which he had travelled. Although in London he and other Malay students had talked of "independence for Malaya quickly," Abdul Rahman's immediate ambition encompassed only the rectangular State of Kedah.

Although Kedah had become a unit in the Federation, it still remained aloof and autocratic. Its constitutional structure followed the pattern of the other Malay States, but differed in certain striking respects, which was its method of indicating its determination to be independent in some way.

Its Civil Service was still a preserve of its own Malay sons; indeed, the executive officers were still recruited from different

branches of the royal family.

Apart from the British Adviser, there was no other British administrative officer. From the first year of its acceptance of British influence and advice Kedah had set its face against British District Officers, and this tradition continued in the new relationship. Kedah and its tiny neighbour, Perlis, are the only Malay States which have never used British officers to administer the rural dwellers.

However, Kedah asked for British technical and professional experts such as engineers and educationists, but even so some top jobs in these places were reserved for Malays.

Another feature was Kedah's insistence on working to the Mohammedan calendar, which rather complicated life. The Kedah Government paid its Muslim officers according to the Hejira calendar, so they received eleven days' extra pay a year. It collected all revenue according to the same calendar — a gain for its coffers — but its expenditure was worked out according to the Gregorian calendar. This curious system continued until December 31, 1956, when elected members of the Council of State forced a change from tradition and brought Kedah into line with the rest of the country. This made the accountants happier because they could stop keeping two accounts, one according to the Hejira calendar and the other according to the Gregorian.

Government minute papers were by law written in Jawi. However, because British officers were not expected to be experts in Jawi a concession was made for their benefit. Every minute paper was divided into two columns. Jawi was written in the right-hand column and was transliterated into romanized Malay in the left-hand column. The British officer wrote his reply in English, and it was duly translated into Jawi.

Such anomalies did not perturb Abdul Rahman. He felt that the spirit and culture of the Malays should be encouraged and kept alive for eternity. He felt that Kedah had maintained a reasonable standard of administrative efficiency despite the minimum number of British officers.

He was proud of Kedah's ability to stand on its own feet. But he was against the sway of autocracy, the remoteness that existed between the Sultan and the peasants, and the power of the Sultan.

Abdul Rahman found the Malayan political world pulsating,

with Dato Onn's star at its highest and the United Malays National Organization at the peak of power.

He found, too, that the Malay Rulers were beginning to go sour on the U.M.N.O. Although they had put their signatures to an agreement which had promised independence to the country, they abhorred the surge of Malay nationalism which threatened to bring *merdeka* to the country long before they considered it would be ready.

They could not be blamed for their feelings and suspicions. They believed implicitly in the destiny of their race in the world of the morrow, but as Sultans they wished the morrow to be delayed as long as possible. They had seen what had happened to Rulers in other independent movements in the Far East.

In the great maharajahs had been forced to sign Instruments of Accession to the central government. In Indonesia, Sultanates had been obliterated. Some of Malaya's Rulers had watched in anguish their own kinsmen either humiliated or killed in the Indonesian lust for freedom from the monarchical system in the native States.

Two things happened almost simultaneously to Abdul Rahman after his return to Alor Star. He was offered the chairmanship of the Kedah division of the U.M.N.O., and the Kedah Government offered him an appointment in its Legal Department. He accepted both.

The first would permit him to play that "greater part in the U.M.N.O." he had expressed readiness to do when in London. The second would enable him to get some grounding in Malaya's laws while he decided whether to branch out as a lawyer.

He had accepted the possibility that there was little likelihood of an encouraging career for him in the Kedah Civil Service. Jealousies and intrigues still prevailed, and the fact that he had succeeded in passing his law examination at forty-five years of age had not improved personal relations.

His expectations that he would merely "fill a job" in the Kedah Government were fulfilled. He was given a desk in a small office in the Legal Department. He spent his days poring through papers.

Politically, Abdul Rahman, unlike some Kedah politicians, did not adopt a creed against Colonialism or use the British as his whipping-boys. Instead he criticized feudal Kedah and royal Malaya; his targets were the Sultans and the Mentri-Mentri Besar. In May

1949 he leapt into the limelight with a scathing article published in the Malay newspaper, the *Utusan Melayu,* which then backed the U.M.N.O. Some of his statements are enlightening; they point to his line of thought, and also to his political immaturity.

The first part was a bitter attack on his Sultan-brother and a warning to the Rulers generally. He then took a slightly anti-British line, but ended his article with another warning to the Rulers of what could happen to them if they did not back the U.M.N.O.

It was not the sort of article to encourage brotherly love or to receive Government approval. Inevitably, the split between Badlishah and Abdul Rahman widened. They were not to come together again until after Badlishah had accepted the ironic fact that his younger brother had become Chief Minister, and therefore held power greater than he, and also after Abdul Rahman himself had realized that without the backing of the Rulers he would never get the British Government to agree to independence.

We should pause here to see what else had been occuring in Malaya. In January the headquarters of the Malayan Communist Party had issued "open letters" — many of which never got to their destinations — announcing its plan to establish a People's Democratic Republic.*

However, although the Chinese in Malaya abhorred the Communist system, they were reluctant to take any offensive action against the Malayan Communist Party because of the absence of Government protection and security. Unfortunately this failure to resist the Communists, even morally, raised doubts in the minds of the other races about Chinese loyalty to Malaya.

Sir Henry Gurney quietly urged Chinese leaders to organize the community to protect its own interests and also to hold out the hand of friendship to the Malays.

In February 1949 the Malayan Chinese Association was established. The predominant theme of the speeches at its inauguration was "one nation in Malaya." Mr Tan Cheng Lock, after being elected president, called upon his countrymen to "make up and unite not only among yourselves, but also with the Malays and other communities, to make this land one country and one nation."

He went on: "It is a matter of supreme significance and indispens-

*See *Menace in Malaya,* by Harry Miller (Harrap).

able necessity that a basic purpose of this organization must be the attainment of inter-communal understanding and friendship, particularly between the Malays and Chinese."

There were two reactions to the formation of the Malayan Chinese Association. Some sections of the U.M.N.O. expressed fears that one day the M.C.A. might be stronger than they. The Malayan Communist Party took immediate alarm, and showed its dislike by throwing a hand-granade six weeks later into a meeting of the Association in Ipoh, in Perak. The explosion wounded Mr Tan Cheng Lock and four other prominent Chinese.

After the formation of the Chinese Association Dato Onn suggested that the U.M.N.O. should admit non-Malays as associate members. He found immediate opponents. This was the issue on which two years later he was to throw over the U.M.N.O., a step which brought Abdul Rahman in as his successor as president.

Onn was driven by a sincere desire for unity among races in Malaya, and he plunged into this theme in full voice. Malays, he said, must accept as nationals peoples of other races who "are prepared to give their all to the country." It was a historic statement, a crossing of a watershed, as the *Straits Times* put it.

Onn called for a Malayan nationality instead of a Federal citizenship. He went further — and these remarks found acceptance in the heart of Abdul Rahman, who was listening — and stressed that ways and means had to be found to "end feudal rule and replace it by constitutional methods of government."

"I think one of the ways open to us," he said, "is to demand that the promise, held out in the Federal Constitution, of free elections to the legislatures of the country should be immediately implemented."

One day when he was sitting in his little office in Alor Star, Abdul Rahman had a visitor. It was the Attorney-General, Mr (now Sir) Stafford Foster-Sutton.

"How would you like to come to Kuala Lumpur and be a Deputy Public Prosecutor in my office there? I want a Malay D.P.P.," said Mr Foster-Sutton.

Somebody in Kedah must have spoken to him about this new barrister who seemed to be wasting his time in the Kedah Legal Department. Abdul Rahman says now he learned that it was a British officer in the Malayan Civil Service. "I am thankful to him,"

he adds.

Abdul Rahman accepted the opportunity opened to him. It meant an upset in his personal life; it meant moving out of Kedah, which he loved so much, but it was a chance he had to take.

He travelled to Kuala Lumpur, reported to the Attorney-General, was shown to his office — and then he went to see the Government housing officer.

An empty Government house was a rarity in the Federal capital. British officers returning from leave in England spent months in a hotel waiting for the word from the housing officer which told them that they had crept up to the top of the long queue and had a home at last.

The housing officer was a young Australian who had known Abdul Rahman in Alor Star. It was like having influence at Court, but the housing officer played fair: he offered Abdul Rahman a house which many civil servants had turned down. It was ramshackle and badly in need of repair and paint.

"Oh, that'll suit me fine," said Abdul Rahman when he saw the house. "After all, I don't need very much," which was the same kind of comment as he made five years later when he became Chief Minister and was asked if a house which really was beneath his new-found dignity would suit him temporarily.

The new Deputy Public Prosecutor's house was in Kia Peng Road, in a suburb littered with the bungalows of senior Government officers. It was in this house one year later that his close friend Abdul Razak persuaded him to accept nomination as president of the United Malays National Organization.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Political Nadir

Kuala Lumpur was thrumming with political activity. It was the headquarters of the United Malays National Organization, and Onn bin Ja'afar was a forceful and forthright president. He was proud of the political advancement of the Malays. To him they could be fashioned into a powerful nation which other nations would respect.

However, he prejudiced their predisposition to walk the political road in partnership with other races, principally the Chinese. He did not seem to appreciate fully that the Malays had become suspicious of the Malayan Chinese Association, and felt that they should, to use the words of the chairman of the Batu Pahat (Johore) branch of the U.M.N.O., "strengthen their unity" because "there is the possibility that the Malayan Chinese Association might become stronger than the U.M.N.O."

The Malays were concerned over Chinese demands of a "right" to Federal citizenship, and over the Chinese condemnation of the Federation Agreement. Tan Cheng Lock declared that the constitution breathed "a spirit of distrust and discrimination against the Chinese and the other non-Malay races as an unwanted and undesirable class of people to be tolerated, to live in this country on sufferance."

It was against this background of mutual Malay and Chinese suspicion and distrust that Onn wanted to admit non-Malays as associate members of the U.M.N.O.

At this period Abdul Rahman, politically, could only stand at the sidelines. His departure from Alor Star on transfer to Kuala Lumpur meant that he had had to resign as chairman of the U.M.N.O., Kedah. As a member of the Legal Department he was

barred from participating in politics. The two-year period between his arrival in Kuala Lumpur and his elevation to president of the U.M.N.O. was his nadir politically. He wrote despairing letters to Abdul Razak in London.

He was, anyhow, kept busy as Deputy Public Prosecutor. He had a tiny room, ill-lit as all the others were, in the Federal Secretariat. The department was understaffed. Its work had increased enormously because of the Emergency. The number of trials of captured terrorists and supporters increased every day.

Abdul Rahman was not completely happy in his work. He appreciated that he could become a judge eventually if he showed exceptional aptitude. A new policy declared that "indigenous officers of exceptional aptitude for law" should be assisted "so as to fit themselves for progress towards the higher judicial and legal posts."

The Federation Government wished to appoint a Malay judge. They had not been able to find a successor to Abdul Rahman's Cambridge contemporary of the nineteen-twenties, Raja Musa bin Raja Haji Bot, who had died during the Japanese occupation. Abdul Rahman was among the Malays being 'tried out.'

It is unlikely that Abdul Rahman would have achieved a judgeship had he remained in the Legal Department. He did not possess the talent or the capacity for it. Abdul Rahman's friends in the legal profession think to-day that he might have made a comfortable living as "counsel for the defence" if he had established a practice in North Malaya. As one put it, "An advocate does not need a profound knowledge of the law, merely an equable temperament, a pleasing manner in court, patience, no obvious guile, and a rather facile tongue. Abdul Rahman had all these requisites except a facile tongue when before a judge."

As Deputy Public Prosecutor, Abdul Rahman had "a good memory for facts," and a gift for discriminating fact from fiction — "you could not bluff him," one lawyer said — but he was not a subtle cross-examiner. Indeed, lawyers who were counsel for defence felt that most of the time the sympathies of the D.P.P. lay with their clients!

The Legal Department was so understaffed that prosecuting briefs came to Abdul Rahman frequently at short notice. One afternoon he received a heavy brief of about 120 pages dealing

with the appeal of a Malay electric-meter reader against a conviction and sentence of eighteen months' gaol for making false entries in his field-book. The appeal was to be heard the next morning.

The barrister who appeared opposite Abdul Rahman recalled, "It was tough going for him. He obviously had not had any time to absorb the relevant facts, and he kept being pulled up by the judge, but in his usual good-humoured way he made no excuses until I decided to point out to His Lordship that the learned Deputy had had only about twelve hours in which to look at his papers."

The judge, who had been quite curt with Abdul Rahman, declared, "Mr Deputy, why didn't you tell me this? I would have granted you a postponement." With a broad smile which robbed his reply of any suggestion of disrespect Abdul Rahman replied, "My Lord, you didn't give me half a chance."

After a year and a half Abdul Rahman was appointed President of the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur. It was with some trepidation that he took his seat on the Bench. The opinion of advocates who defended their clients before him was that he had made "a good but never outstanding" Sessions Judge. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that not one of his judgments was upset on appeal. He kept the dignity of the Bench, gave very patient hearings, and indulged in occasional light moments.

Abdul Rahman never got rid of his desire to leave Government and set up his own practice. An Indian barrister friend said to him once, "Look, why do you allow yourself to be a lackey in Government service? You are a Sultan's son; you can do much better in private practice." But Abdul Rahman did not seem to have sufficient confidence to break away from the security of a Government job.

It is intriguing to wonder what Abdul Rahman's future would have been if Onn bin Ja'afar had not decided to break away from the U.M.N.O.

Towards the end of 1950 Onn impulsively went ahead with his desire to widen the scope of the U.M.N.O. in spite of warnings from his close supporters, who said the time was not ripe. Among those who advised him not to be rash was young Abdul Razak, who had returned from England earlier that year.

Enthusiastic about politics — he had become a member of the

Fabian Society in London — ready for any movement that led to independence, Razak had been given an important mission in the U.M.N.O. He was president of the vital and growing Youth section, which also gave him a seat on the Executive Committee of the party. In Government he was Assistant State Secretary in Pahang, a junior officer.

After his return to Malaya, Abdul Razak had resumed his close friendship with Abdul Rahman. He felt that Abdul Rahman's political talents were being wasted, but could do nothing about it.

Onn tried to press the Malays to move faster politically than they cared to go. Many people believed that he was encouraged by Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commisioner, who foresaw that Malaya would not reach any heights until its races were well on the way to unity. Onn felt that the U.M.N.O., as the leading party, should take the first steps towards it by agreeing, for one thing, to review the question of citizenship. Some elements in the U.M.N.O. consequently branded him as a "traitor to the Malays and the country."

In a calculated move to force the issue Onn resigned as president of the U.M.N.O., and also announced the resignation of the entire Executive Committee.

For the first time Abdul Rahman's name was mentioned in newspapers as Onn's possible successor. Interviewed, Abdul Rahman told a reporter, "I know nothing of this suggestion, and I wouldn't even consider it, because I am in full agreement with Dato Onn on the question of citizenship."

Influential members of the U.M.N.O. appealed to Onn to withdraw his resignation. After a month of aloofness Onn finally told a meeting of 4000 people who had demonstrated in front of his home in Johore Bahru that he was prepared to return to the presidency if the Malays could guarantee to allow him "to play my part, and you play yours," in the implementation of the U.M.N.O. plans for the betterment of the Malays.

At the annual Assembly of the U.M.N.O. in August that year he was re-elected president by sixty-six votes to three. Abdul Rahman applauded with others when the Assembly passed the U.M.N.O. Executive Committee's proposals for giving non-Malays simpler facilities for obtaining either State nationality of Federal citizenship.

But he applauded more excitedly when it was announced that the U.M.N.O. slogan would be changed from "*Hidup Melayu!*" to

"*Merdeka!*" ("Freedom!") "in a struggle for national freedom." Abdul Rahman thought the time had come for a change, "not because we want freedom to-morrow, but to create a proper mental attitude in the struggle towards freedom." A pessimist was heard to murmur that the Indonesians had used the "*Merdeka!*" slogan for forty years before they gained independence.

It was not long before Onn was back on his hobby-horse, in spite of more warnings. He declared his belief that the U.M.N.O. had reached the stage when it should be put on a full national footing by offering equal membership rights and privileges to all races. He envisaged members of the U.M.N.O. voting for non-Malays at municipal and local elections.

His proposals were given a mixed reception by Malays. Critics said the plan was premature and would split the Malays. Supporters declared that it was necessary as a first step along the road to self-government. A Malay newspaper in Kuala Lumpur, the *Majlis*, warned Onn to go slow because "only a small minority" of Malays had recognized the imperative need for communal unity, and "even a smaller minority is willing to accept the change from a Malay to a Malayan nation."

It was on this note that the year 1950 ended. Onn's admirers realized that he was a visionary, but they wondered whether he had the vision to see how far along his path he could force his people.

Gurney was the real visionary. He had been urging Whitehall to convert the Executive Council into something approaching a Cabinet from responsibility for certain Government department. He felt this would help to build inter-racial unity and would also be a visual demonstration that the colonial system was gradually being transformed into a more acceptable democratic system of Government.

In March 1951 the first 'Ministers' were appointed. Onn received the most important portfolio of Member for Home Affairs. Two other Malays were included. One was Abdul Rahman's elder brother, Tunku Yaacob, who was eminently suited to be Member for Agriculture and Forestry. An English tin-miner, a Chinese, and a Sinhalese made up the remaining Members.

Before the first general elections four years later the number of Members was increased. Onn remained Member for Home Affairs right up to the end, but by then he had lost his position as the

leader of the Malays, and there were within the 'Cabinet' members of rival parties. They came from the alliance of the United Malays National Organisation and the Malayan Chinese Association, and from Onn's second new party, Negara.

Undoubtedly Onn was overconfident about his ability to carry most Malays with him on his theme of "a united Malaya." He had a natural supporter in Dato Tan Cheng Lock (he had been elevated in Johore), who in his presidential address at an annual meeting of the Malayan Chinese Association asserted that Sino-Malay unity was essential.

Significantly, he called for a "national and non-communal organization to pave the way for Malaya's racial unification and national freedom." This party, he advocated, could be superimposed on or added to, and co-exist with, communal bodies such as the United Malays National Organization, the Malayan Chinese Association, and the Malayan Indian Congress.

An impatient Onn finally produced the "weapon" with which he thought he would sway the Malays. he declared that if the U.M.N.O. refused at its annual Assembly in August that year to accept non-Malays he would form his own non-communal party, the "Independence of Malaya Party," and with it achieve independence by 1958.

Onn had miscalculated. In the few months left until the U.M.N.O. Assembly Malay opinion hardened against him; when he resigned again there were no demonstrations or appeals to him to withdraw his resignation and remain president.

The U.M.N.O. was split, and perhaps this helped to make Onn think that he still had a large following, and that Malays would flock across the road with him.

Abdul Rahman personally was disturbed by the U.M.N.O.'s apparent disintegration. So were Abdul Razak and others. They all believed then that without Onn Malays would no longer be united, and members of the U.M.N.O. would from fragment parties.

None of Onn's colleagues in the U.M.N.O. Executive Council was prepared to accept nomination as president. Each in turn refused to take over from him. Their reasons varied. Some were willing to move into his new party. Others were not prepared to captain what they thought was a sinking ship.

Into this vacuum stepped some men who said they knew a man

with the makings of leadership whom they were prepared to back — even if perchance it meant political suicide. They went to Abdul Rahman in his Kia Peng Road home to ask him if he would accept nomination as president of the U.M.N.O.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

President of a Party

Leadership was suddenly being thrust upon Abdul Rahman. Like many men who have had high honour offered to them, he said to his friends, "I do not think I am suitable." He was sincere in this belief.

The men who pleaded with him were led by Razak, who had refused the U.M.N.O. presidency when Onn asked him, 'Take it on, Razak." He had replied then, "I can't because I am too young, and I won't because the Malays will not support me because I am too young."

Razak had quickly added, "But I know some one who may take the job on."

"Who?" came the chorus.

"Tunku Abdul Rahman," he replied. At least nobody said, "No." Onn, after a silence, declared, "All right; you try Abdul Rahman."

So he was with others urging Abdul Rahman to accept nomination. The shuttlecock went to and fro across the room.

"Razak, you must take it on," cried Abdul Rahman. "I will give you my backing."

"No, Tunku; you're the man. I will get the Pahang U.M.N.O. behind you."

The struggle did not last too long. Abdul Rahman was politically ambitious. A strong impulse though was his faith in the United Malays National Organization as the only anchor for the Malay race in the future.

A couple of days before, when top U.M.N.O. men had been uncertain whether they should follow Onn into his Independence of Malaya Party or whether they should stay in the U.M.N.O., Abdul Rahman had pencilled a note to Abdul Razak, saying "Urge

you not to change your politics and jump about like monkey tied to a post." Abdul Razak recalled this note that night as he argued with Abdul Rahman and said sombrely, "Tunku, if you are prepared to take the lead I am prepared to stay."

Abdul Rahman looked at his friends, blinked his eyes, which felt unusually warm, and replied, "All right; if you want me I will stand for president."

For Abdul Razak it was a satisfying evening. He was confident now that the U.M.N.O. would be saved. There were others who became equally confident when word reached them that Abdul Rahman had accepted nomination. Among them were his old friends in Saberkas.

Khir Johari recalls, "We knew his qualities. We knew he could be a bit of a dictator, because he always wanted his own way. We had had our quarrels with him, but he knew there was nobody else who could come to the rescue of the U.M.N.O.

"The Malays required a sincere man. We knew from experience that Tunku possessed that quality. He was not smart, but we knew he would make a sincere and a real leader."

There were, of course, doubters in the U.M.N.O. They were sceptical of what they called the "experiment" of having a prince at the helm. Others were so prejudiced that they described Abdul Rahman's nomination as "ridiculous" and laughed it to scorn. Some of these men were to become his closest supporters.

Finally three candidates stood for election. On Sunday, August 26, 1951, the U.M.N.O. Assembly elected Abdul Rahman by fifty-seven votes to the eleven and seven of his rivals. When the result was announced Abdul Rahman walked to his place beside Onn. They did not shake hands, but they smiled at each other.

Here was a striking contrast in personalities: Onn, confident, challenging, sure of himself, and certain of the future of his new party, and Abdul Rahman, nervous, with little sense of the dramatic, and perhaps a little doubtful about the immediate future.

Onn made his farewell speech, in which he appealed to the audience to "join with me in working for an independent State of Malaya." He denied that he was deserting the U.M.N.O. or betraying the Malays. He went on to say: "Let us realize that there are non-Malays who are as loyal and patriotic as Malays themselves. Let no one fool himself into believing that independence can be

achieved by any one racial group or any section of the people." Then he took his last bow and severed his connexion with the party he had founded.

Abdul Rahman stood to make his presidential speech. He had dictated it to a friend, who had typed it for him. He raced through it. A Malay who was present recalls: "His audience clapped at the highlights, but that didn't stop him. He just rolled on. He felt so relieved when he ended that he went home and had a few drinks."

The same Malay said he gave Abdul Rahman some personal advice: "Start subscribing to newspapers, particularly the Malay ones. Learn what the people are thinking. In particular, learn how to make speeches."

Abdul Rahman's presidential speech was just what most of the depressed audience, who had said good-bye to their Onn, wanted to hear. He said that, like Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian leader, he would serve the Malays not as a master, but as a servant. "I am," he said, "just a creature of God, humble and insignificant. I am aware that I am taking over from a Malay leader who is known not only in Malaya, but also in other countries.

"The Malays were never united under one leader and one banner until Dato Onn started the U.M.N.O. Now his job has been thrust upon me. I pray to God for assistance."

He became fervently nationalistic: "This is a Malay country, and privileges should be given to the Malays. . . . . What will become of the Malays if we concede every time to the insatiable demands of the other races?. . . . .

"Siam, Ceylon, Indonesia, and the Philippines are independent nations. Why are we not getting our independence?. . . Some people say independence should be handed to 'Malayans.' Who are these 'Malayans'? The Malays will decide who the 'Malayans' should be. . . . .

"However, we shall not forget the contribution other races have made. The Chinese and the Indians, as far as I know, however, do not wish to become Malayans; they love their own languages and countries more. . . . The Malays will welcome other races who are loyal and faithful to this country. . . . .

"The independence of this country must be handed over to us with all possible speed. . . . .

"The Malay Rulers should consider what will happen if this

country is handed to 'Malayans'; it is certain that their palaces will be torn down. . . . . We shall destroy the Federation Agreement in the same way as we destroyed the Malayan Union five years ago, and establish instead freedom for our people."

It was the kind of speech that made Chinese and Indians think they should move towards Onn, instead of waiting for the U.M.N.O. to offer them equal membership rights. Which is what happened, because in the next few weeks the Independence of Malaya Party attracted Chinese and Indians, but Malays who had begun to step across the road halted, then turned back to follow the nationalist flag which Abdul Rahman was waving as hard as he could.

He repeated time and again, "Who are these Malayan?" until the day he realized — as Onn had already done — that the British Government would grant independence only to a country whose races were united.

Abdul Rahman was gripped by the challenge that Onn had flung out, and he was ready to throw himself into the political fight to capture Malay loyalties. He realized, however, that he would first have to devote considerable time to the task of welding together again the unhappy sections into which the U.M.N.O. had broken.

But he had a serious personal problem to decide first — whether he should give up his job in Government and devote his full time to his political job. He realized that the U.M.N.O. could not afford to pay him any salary, let alone finance the considerable amount of travelling that lay ahead of him.

He could not afford to resign immediately from the Government, because he still had two years to serve before being able to retire on a pension. He was not a rich man, even though he owned houses and land in Penang and Alor Star. It was a critical decision to take, and Abdul Rahman was very worried.

This was when Sir Henry Gurney stepped in to help him. Gurney was anxious that the U.M.N.O. should have sound leadership. Government sources say that Gurney was confident that Abdul Rahman could give this leadership. He was therefore prepared to do anything possible to ensure that Abdul Rahman should not lose financially if he retired immediately. Gurney realized that the U.M.N.O. required instant leadership to rebuild its morale.

The Government Establishment Office worked out a formula which enabled Abdul Rahman to go on leave prior to retirement

with a pension two years before Government rules ordained. Over the next two years Abdul Rahman was first 'given' a period of full-pay leave, then another on half-pay leave. Finally he was on no-pay leave. Abdul Rahman is still receiving his pension of $288 (about £35) a month.

Additional income soon came from another source. Gurney decided that the president of the U.M.N.O. should be a member of the Federal Legislative Council because he was leader of a major political party. As a Federal Councillor Abdul Rahman received $500 (about £60) a month.

However, in the next few years Abdul Rahman was forced to make personal sacrifices on behalf of the U.M.N.O. He sold some houses and land for money to back political expenses which the U.M.N.O. could not afford because it was struggling to straighten out its finances.

Onn had established the U.M.N.O. headquarters in his own home town of Johore Bahru. Abdul Rahman moved his home to the south, as he felt it would be unjustified expenditure to transfer the headquarters to Butterworth, nearer his own home. The U.M.N.O., however, paid the small rent of his house in Johore Bahru.

Abdul Rahman began to live a hard life. He had a motor-car which he drove and cleaned himself because he could not afford a driver. Whenever he stayed in the Rest House behind the Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur, Malayan Civil Service officers noticed this royal prince and political leader working beside their own chauffeurs.

After leaving Government service Abdul Rahman began the first of innumerable tours up and down and across the country. He introduced himself to Malays in Court and kampong, and pleaded with them to support the U.M.N.O. He had to work fast because of the I.M.P.'s drive for membership.

Abdul Rahman exploited the knowledge of British political tactics he had picked up in Cambridge and London. He told his Executive Committee that he expected each member to "talk politics" to the Malays. He said, "In England officials of political parties stand on soap-boxes at street corners and elsewhere and make speeches. We must forget pride and do the same. We must find audiences. For instance, let us talk to people after Friday

prayers.

"You must also give unstinted service to the U.M.N.O. by working your hardest and not merely talking. The U.M.N.O. has been talking too much and doing very little."

He declared that the U.M.N.O. would contest every town and village council election and try to win as many seats as possible, so that it would be "strong and progressive." If we are not strong and progressive politically, how can we achieve independence?" he asked.

He added quietly and firmly, "I am not looking for personal glory. My sole aim is to serve my people and my country."

In Kuala Lumpur on September 16, twenty-one days after he had left the U.M.N.O., Onn launched the Independence of Malaya Party. One thousand people cheered the resolution which pledged members to the task of uniting the pople in a common loyalty, irrespective of creed, class, or race, and "to work together towards the goal of an independent State of Malaya."

It is intriguing to note that the I.M.P.'s birth was announced by none other than Dato Tan Cheng Lock, the president of the Malayan Chinese Association, who promised the support of all Chinese associations throughout the country. Other enthusiastic speeches were delivered by Malays who are now prominent members of the U.M.N.O. Chinese who lead the Malayan Chinese Association to-day contributed large sums of money to the I.M.P.'s political fund.

It is interesting also that at this time Abdul Rahman was unknown to many of the men in the I.M.P. who later became his staunchest supporters and admirers. They say to-day that they either had not heard of him or, if they had, were not impressed by him. The I.M.P. could claim to have the strongest political group in the Federal Legislative Council because the majority of the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian councillors had either become members or indicated their support of the party.

The birth of the I.M.P. transformed the political scene in the country, but as the weeks passed it became apparent that Onn had not carried away with him anything like the influential Malay support he had envisaged. Reports are that he gave the U.M.N.O. three months after his departure for its disintegration to be complete. As it turned out, he committed a blunder of the first magni-

tude, because he had overestimated the receptiveness of the Malays to the creation of a united Malayan nation.

He had apparently overlooked the force of a statement he himself had once made: "The Malays are the key to the politics in this country." They remain the key even to-day.

In London that winter of 1951 Rees-Williams, as a guest of honour, made a speech at a dinner of the Malay Society of Great Britain. He said that he hoped next to visit Malaya when "my friend Tunku Abdul Rahman is Prime Minister."

Rees-Williams (Lord Ogmore to-day) asserts that he meant what he said. He really felt that Abdul Rahman would reach this pinnacle. As it turned out, his next visit to Malaya was for the independence ceremonies and celebrations, and Abdul Rahman was Prime Minister.

Abdul Rahman heard of Rees-Williams' remark and wrote him a letter which bore a trace of pessimism and a picture of his uphill struggle. He said, "You said you will visit Malaya when I become the P.M. Thanks, David, for your kind thought, but don't wait for that moment to come. If you were to wait until then it might never come – at least, not while the Conservatives are in power. Things are not very promising here – not making headway in the right direction."

Certain thoughts were obviously forming in Abdul Rahman's mind, because he added in his letter that he contemplated travelling to Britain soon. He asked Rees-Williams for "help in meeting those interested in Malayan independence."

Abdul Rahman was not worried about the I.M.P.'s possible attraction to Malays, but he took steps to clarify the U.M.N.O.'s attitude towards any member who joined it. He said that they would be expelled from the U.M.N.O. He advised those who "showed sympathy" for the I.M.P. to resign. He said, "We cannot afford to have a split in our ranks. The policies of the I.M.P. and the U.M.N.O. are opposed."

In October 1951 the country suffered a tragedy. Sir Henry Gurney was murdered by terrorists in an ambush on a road in North Selangor.

The country mourned the loss of a man of vision and integrity who in spite of the grim background of murder and terror by the Communists had launched constitutional advancement.

Thoughtful political observers in Kuala Lumpur like to speculate on the probable path of political events if Gurney had lived. One puts it this way: "Gurney's death was one large factor in the I.M.P.'s own death soon after birth. I think that Gurney could have influenced many U.M.N.O. leaders to give greater support to the I.M.P., and he would also have persuaded the M.C.A. to support it.

"With his own high standing among the people, Gurney could probably have afforded to lay before the people a new idea of unity and get them to accept it. As it happened, when Gurney died Onn and Tan Cheng Lock were not yet close enough to be able to come together permanently."

So it came to pass that Tan Cheng Lock, even though he had helped to launch the I.M.P. and had promised it full support from the Chinese, quietly withdrew and eventually clasped the hand of Abdul Rahman as his new political partner.

When Onn found he was not receiving Chinese support he became an angry man. He began to voice anti-Chinese sentiments which killed any likelihood of Chinese who were not members of the M.C.A. joining his I.M.P. Onn was submerged in the waters of bitterness; his feelings were perhaps understandable because he had given up an assured political career in the U.M.N.O. for the sake of non-Malay races, in particular the Chinese, and they had begun to desert him.

The verdict to-day is that Onn tried to do too much too quickly. He tried to sweep aside all the communal barriers too swiftly and with perhaps too little regard for personal feelings and anxieties.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

An Alliance Formed

January 1952 saw the dramatic birth of what is now known as the "Alliance Party." Never did the men who conceived a merger of local branches of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. envisage the giant strides it would take to national maturity, and that in five years the union would hold aloft the laurel of independence.

The original event was the more extraordinary because neither of the national leaders of the two parties, Abdul Rahman and the newly knighted Sir Cheng-lock Tan, was asked for his approval.

The news, when published, astounded them as much as it did the I.M.P., which then marshalled its forces — men of local eminence and its experienced lawyers and orators — not, it should be noted, to battle against this alliance on its own ground as a possible new political force, but to attempt to discredit it as "a marriage of convenience" and "dangerous form of political casuistry."

These tactics tended, on the one hand, to close the ranks of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A., and on the other to alienate voters from the I.M.P. As events turned out, the birth of the Alliance, which had also been contrary to all expectations, began the eclipse of the I.M.P., which had had the highest hopes of being in power when the country attained self-government.

Because Abdul Rahman assumed the reins of government as leader of the Alliance Party, it is essential to describe the origin of this political fusion in a little detail.

As 1952 opened attention in Malaya focused towards the first elections to the Kuala Lumpur Municipal Council, the premier body of its type in the country. The I.M.P. was confident of winning the majority, if not all, of the twelve seats to be contested. The chances of other parties were considered very small.

After the Kuala Lumpur branch of the U.M.N.O. announced that it was putting up six candidates the Selangor branch of the M.C.A. declared its intention to put not only Chinese but also non-Chinese candidates, who would pledge to support its proposed civic programme. The manifesto explained: "We feel that in running a municipality local interests should be paramount; local affairs should be neither influenced by politics nor conducted on a communal basis." This statement was signed by Colonel Hau-shik Lee, the president, a Hong Kong Chinese who had lived in Malaya for years, was a tin-miner by profession, and was also most active in public service. He was a power among the Chinese in Selangor.

Colonel Lee and Mr S.M. Yong; a Kuala Lumpur Chinese, a lawyer, who was also honorary legal adviser to the M.C.A., had drawn up the manifesto. Both say to-day that the decision to include non-Chinese candidates under the M.C.A. banner had been prompted by a conviction that racial unity in the country was essential, and that it could begin politically at the municipal level, although the fundamental requirement was to get Malays and Chinese in the rural areas together.

Strangely enough, the adjurations of civil servants, politicians, and newspaper editorials had never included the possibility of racial unity beginning by bringing communal organizations together. Every one thought this ideal could best be achieved through non-communal political parties.

The M.C.A. invitation to non-Chinese had a reaction on the chairman of a district committee in the Kuala Lumpur branch of the U.M.N.O., Dato Haji Yahaya bin Abdul Razak, a hereditary territorial chief of Selangor and a business-man. He was also chairman of a sub-committee responsible for organizing the U.M.N.O. campaign in the elections. It is pertinent to know that he was vested with full authority to do anything reasonable he considered necessary to assist the U.M.N.O. to win seats. He used that authority to its utmost in the next few days.

The M.C.A statement suggested, in his mind, the possibility of a local political alliance. He was nevertheless worried about its wisdom. Dato Haji Yahaya says to-day that he was uncertain then whether the Malays were ready to "walk hand in hand with the Chinese."

However, he decided to test a Chinese reaction to his idea. He

knew only one man personally in the M.C.A., Mr Ong Yoke Lin, a young business-man who was on the executive committee of the Selangor Branch, and who was a lieutenant of Colonel Lee.

The upshot of their "frank discussions" resulted in a meeting between Dato Haji Yahaya and his sub-committee, with Colonel Lee, Mr Yong, and Mr Ong and other members of the M.C.A. Dato Haji Yahaya had persuaded his colleagues that his plan did not require the prior approval of the chairman of the Selangor branch of the U.M.N.O., or of Abdul Rahman. Had not they had full authority to do anything within reason to win seats? A political merger, he contended, was "within reason" — and one way of giving the I.M.P. tougher opposition. His colleagues were cautious, but prepared to meet the Chinese.

The morning after the meeting a joint declaration announced the intention of the local branches of the two parties to fight the municipal elections as allies and to enter twelve Malay and Chinese candidates. The statement explained: "Inter-racial harmony is a pre-requisite to any successful administration. Close co-operation among all the elected councillors is necessary for an efficient Municipal Council. The purely local interests of the municipality do not call for activities of a political character."

Abdul Rahman says frankly to-day that when he read the news in the newspapers he was uncertain of the line he should take, but he finally supported the merger. In a speech at the first Sino-Malay rally a few days later he expressed the hope that "the unity" displayed in Kuala Lumpur might "prove to be the forerunner of co-operation on much more important issues."

Sir Cheng-lock Tan was in a bigger quandary over the alliance, because not only was he president of the M.C.A. but he was also a founder member and strong supporter of the I.M.P., which was contesting the elections as opponents of the U.M.N.O.

He decided to say nothing unless he received protests. These arrived from nearly all the top men of the M.C.A. — such as the secretary-general, the treasurer, and the publicity chief — who were also top members of the I.M.P. Angrily, they declared that Colonel Lee and his branch had "betrayed" the M.C.A.

The same situation built itself up in the Selangor headquarters of the U.M.N.O. Many executives were also members of the I.M.P.

It was inevitable, therefore, that what might have been a hum-

drum election campaign developed into a vigorous battle, with the I.M.P. violently attacking its new opponent as "an artificial alliance" and also accusing the U.M.N.O. of having "sold the Malays to the Chinese." It is piquant to recall that the foremost critics in the opposition were Malays and Chinese who later became either executive members of the Alliance or Ministers in Abdul Rahman's Cabinet.

On polling day, Saturday, February 16, the Alliance won nine of the twelve seats, polling a heavy majority in votes of 10,330 against the I.M.P.'s 6630. The I.M.P. gained only two seats. The twelfth seat went to an independent, a Sinhalese, who had contested in a strongly Indian ward.

Abdul Rahman says to-day that the Alliance had not been certain of the exact strength of the I.M.P., and was not optimistic of great success. The result confounded him as well as the country, which then began to wonder whether this "marriage" could be sustained, and not break up because, as one commentator put it, "of its own fundamental incompatibility."

All the same, the country recognized that as long as the Alliance spread and became stronger, a powerful political combination was in existence — and it could threaten the future of the I.M.P.

As the months passed it became evident that while the Alliance was running a strong course the I.M.P. was making little headway. Dato Onn finally admitted that lack of responsible leadership had made the party "almost moribund." The real reason, however, was that it had failed to attract the Malay support that was absolutely essential if it wished to become a vital force in Malayan politics.

The decline of the I.M.P. was hastened when Dato Onn in a speech attacked communalism, and in doing so hit out at the Chinese, describing them as a "community which desires to control the destiny of this country on the ground of its economic and financial influence." Chinese members of the I.M.P. objected strongly to his remarks, retorted that they felt Dato Onn was "hostile to the M.C.A.," and moved wholly back into the M.C.A., in which they became active in linking the amalgamation with the U.M.N.O. closer and in wrecking Dato Onn's political future.

In January 1952 General Sir Gerald Walter Robert Templer arrived as the new High Commissioner with a new emphasis on his job. He was charged with full and direct responsibility for the

Emergency, and he planned to make headway against the Communists by a combined military and political operation. His prime political problem was the Chinese.

General Templer had as his very able deputy Mr (now Sir) Donald MacGillivray, who had been Colonial Secretary in Jamaica.

Both men have left their impact and impress on modern Malaya. Templer dealt a shattering blow to the Malayan Communist Party, and MacGillivray, who succeeded him as High Commissioner, with tact and other great personal qualities, guided the country towards independence.

Templer lost no time in announcing the British Government's policy in the Federation. The directive given to him by the British Cabinet stated:

> The policy of the British Government is that Malaya should in due course become a fully self-governing nation. The Government confidently hopes that that nation will be within the British Commonwealth.
>
> In helping the peoples of Malaya to achieve this object — a fully self-governing nation — you (Sir Gerald) will at all times be guided by the declaration of policy expressed in the preamble to the Federation of Malaya Agreement.
>
> To achieve a united Malayan nation there must be a common form of citizenship for all who regard the Federation or any part of it as their real home and the object of their loyalty. It will be your duty to guide the peoples of Malaya towards the attainment of this objective and to promote such political progress in the country as will, without prejudices to the campaign against the terrorists, further our democratic aims for Malaya.
>
> The ideal of a united Malayan nation does not involve sacrifice by any community of its traditions and culture and customs, but before it can be fully realized the Malays must be encouraged and helped to play a full part in the economic life of the country, so that the present uneven economic balance may be redressed.....
>
> Communist terrorists are retarding the political advancement and economic development of the country

and the welfare of its peoples. Your primary task in Malaya must therefore be the restoration of law and order so that this barrier to progress may be removed....

The Government will not lay aside their responsibilities in Malaya until they are satisfied that Communist terrorism has been defeated and that partnership of all communities, which alone can lead to true and stable self-government has been firmly established.

Templer's blueprint for a united Malayan nation included the introduction of a common form of citizenship and elections among rural communities up to Municipal Council level as a first step leading eventually to elections to the State legislatures and finally to the Federal Legislative Council.

It was against his background that Abdul Rahman began his association with the devastatingly forthright Templer, who, however, always assisted him wherever and whenever possible. Abdul Rahman learned a lot, even though he found Templer somewhat intimidating. Each developed a considerable liking for the other.

A month after his arrival Templer merged the War Council, which had advised the High Commissioner on policy arising out of the Emergency, with the Federal Executive Council, because he wanted "one instrument of policy at Federal level." He brought five new members into the Executive Council, including Abdul Rahman in his capacity as president of the U.M.N.O.

So Abdul Rahman found himself in the rarefied atmosphere of policy-making. It was a new world in which he had to consider problems not from the purely communal viewpoint, but from a national focus.

He received top-secret papers which were intended to be studied. In this new world of his Abdul Rahman could not fall back on the old expedient of getting a friend to read aloud to him. He had to make an effort to study them himself. Often he did, but on many occassions he arrived at the weekly meetings of the Executive Council with his bundle of papers still unopened. On these occasions Abdul Rahman would smile disarmingly at a grim-looking Templer and say with a chuckle, "Sorry, I had to travel quite a lot this week." Which was quite true, but it did not absolve him from at least opening the envelope!

There was one epic occasion on which Abdul Rahman suddenly

began to participate in a discussion and to quote from a document before him, when he realized that everybody was looking at him in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" he asked with a smile all round.

Templer was quite blunt. "Tunku," he said, "we weren't discussing that subject at all. We completed it last week."

"Oh, did we?" grinned Abdul Rahman, looking down at his papers. "Aren't I silly? I've brought the wrong papers. Yes, I've brought last week's papers."

The meeting dissolved in laughter, but the incident did not help to destroy Abdul Rahman's reputation of being a playboy politician.

A member of that Executive Council says, "Abdul Rahman had a most difficult time, surrounded as he was with political opponents such as Onn bin Ja'afar.

"Although Abdul Rahman sometimes did not read his papers, he was always shrewd and in many ways practical in his comments. He had the feel of opinion and thought among the *rakyat*. He knew instinctively or through personal contact how they felt about measures that had been taken or how they were likely to feel about measures to be taken, but the task of expressing this instinctive knowledge or feeling in the form of clear-cut and detailed advice did not come easily to him."

The knowledge he gained of Government policies did not stop him making aggressive statements against the Government in his political speeches. On one occasion after he had been particularly vehement he was summoned before Templer, who told him that his speech had been "seditious."

Abdul Rahman replied, "All right, put me in."

Templer retorted, "The last thing I will do is to make a martyr of you."

Abdul Rahman kept on demanding "immediate elections"; he also declared that the Government was "using the Emergency as an excuse for delaying elections."

This was contrary to the facts. For one thing, elections could not be held without enlarging the franchise. Abdul Rahman knew that the Emergency was top priority in Templer's programme, and that until fear had been eradicated and the terrorists pushed farther into the dense jungle elections would be a farce.

The year closed with further proof of the unchallenged suprem-

acy of local Alliance 'mergers' in Town Council elections. They won twenty-six out of thirty-four seats contested — all nine in the important Johore Bahru Town Council elections; three out of four in Kuala Lumpur municipal elections; three out of four in Kuala Lumpur municipal elections; seven out of nine in Muar, in North Johore; five out of nine in Batu Pahat, also in North Johore; and two out of three in Malacca town.

These successes led the leaders of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. to believe that the growth of a common understanding between the Malays and Chinese could develop. Progress would be slow, but they felt that at the very least they had found a way of trying to reconcile each other's point of view and endeavours.

The Alliance link was undoubtedly tenuous and existed mainly or almost entirely at the top level. Abdul Rahman was, however, more than alive to the fact that real strength would grow most readily from the bottom up, but he was willing to agree that if there were too many obstacles against forging links at the bottom advantage might well lie in forging one among Malay and Chinese political leaders.

He realized the danger that the union might not hold, and that when it came under strain its component parts would fly apart and the resultant bitterness would be all the greater, but he was optimistic enough to feel that Malays and Chinese at the top could discuss national and racial problems without rancour, and would try to appreciate each other's problems and points of view.

Abdul Rahman enthusiastically declared, "The Alliance will develop no matter how hard people — the political saboteurs — may work against it."

At the year's end Abdul Rahman went on holiday to Japan to brace himself for hard work the following year.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

First Step to Freedom

The Alliance between the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. crystallized in the early months of 1953. The year also saw political progress taking solid steps forward.

The Alliance brought Abdul Rahman strength and made him work more than ever. He also became somewhat militant in public statements, and serious-minded people, concerned about the future well-being of the country, felt that he was swinging left. To many people his statements did not appear to bear relation to facts. He made remarks like "Independence within three years," "Federal elections in 1954," and "Now that the war against the Communist terrorists has almost ended, the Government's attention will be directed against our nationalist movement."

For instance, during the year he led a procession of more than five hundred members of the U.M.N.O. from the headquarters in Johore Bahru to a green in the town, where he publicly set fire to copies of two Malay newspapers which had criticized him and his party. The newspapers, the *Qalam* and the *Warta,* were borne in a Malay bier.

"These two papers," said Abdul Rahman as he set fire to the bier, "have attacked the U.M.N.O. continuously and mercilessly. If such papers are allowed to be published unchecked Malay society will be ruined and all our efforts to unite would end in failure. The action I take to-day is the first step to fight our enemy."

The public reaction to this thoughtless price of pique and resentment surprised Abdul Rahman. His critics could not reconcile his emphatic assertions that "a newspaper has its freedom" with his denial of this freedom by putting a torch to a coffin-load of newspapers which had criticized him.

If this public burning of newspapers which had attacked him was his "first step," what, they asked, would he do supposing he were the Minister for Home Affairs?

A political commentator wrote:

> One can understand a politician of little standing, upset by personal criticism, vanity wounded, perhaps, making a speech of this kind, but it is profoundly disturbing to find such sentiment coming from the president of Malaya's largest party, an organization which claims to represent 90 per cent of all Malays.

Although Abdul Rahman never repeated his error of making a bonfire of newspapers, he continued — even after he became Chief Minister — to make contradictory, conflicting, and jarring statements.

Early in 1953 the leaders of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. began discussing a date for Federal elections. Abdul Rahman believed that the Malays were "more than ready" for elections.

When a new session of the Legislative Council opened in March Abdul Rahman determined to talk about early elections.

Templer reviewed the Government's future policy. It was an indication of the change of emphasis in conditions that he said nothing much about the Emergency, but dealt lengthily with social and political progress.

He spoke frankly in the political phases of his address. He said, "I consider that we have now reached the time when we not only should, but can, put sectional interest aside and concentrate consciously on the interests of all.

"There has been a great deal of jockeying in the last four years, and it has been the task of Government to weigh up and admit, by practical measures the legitimate but often conflicting claims of the various communities. I consider that in a year or two's time this will have been done."

In the debate the U.M.N.O. speakers expressed regret that Templer had not referred to Federal elections, but only to local and town councils.

Abdul Rahman added his "further emphasis on the question of elections." He felt that the people wanted a thorough overhaul in

the system of representations to various councils, and in particular to the Legislative Council. The time had come to deal with politics on a much higher level than local councils.

He said, "I am inclined to believe that the higher authorities still regard the people as backward and semi-illiterate." He mentioned the Gold Coast, where Kwame Nkrumah was leading the House.

He commented, "It might be said that we probably have not got a Nkrumah to give the impetus to such a measure, but I do not feel we need such a man here, for we have been promised again and again that our protector would prepare us for self-government. Up to now, however, there is no indication of it."

Turning to Templer's pleas for unity among the communities, Abdul Rahman said, "Such unity must arise from a natural desire of the various people themselves. It must be remembered that in this country every community has been taught from the cradle to think of themselves as people of different communities. Do you think you can do something in one day which for generations we have been taught otherwise? I think you would be a magician if you could.

"If unity is to be achieved we feel it must come from the people themselves, and in order to get the people to unite we must work for it. We must identify ourselves with the people. We cannot achieve it if we sit on a high pedestal and look down upon our people below."

Abdul Rahman got very little satisfaction from the reply of his political opponent, Onn, the Member for Home Affairs. Onn declared it was never the Government's intention that elections should end at the local authorities. To attain a high standard of voting "it is better to educate the voters as we are trying to do."

There would be elections to the State and Settlement Councils next year, but it was "a moot point whether we should at this stage omit State and Settlement Council elections and go straight to Federal elections."

Onn concluded, "We have been told that there is a demand from the people, but again that is a very debatable point. It may not really come from the people; it may come from a few people."

Undeterred by the reception to the request for Federal elections, Abdul Rahman went on mentioning the subject in speeches in kampongs.

In April the annual Assembly of the U.M.N.O. discussed elections. In his speech Abdul Rahman opened the theme he was to emphasize in the next few years — unity among the races. He told the Malays that unity was a salient requirement by the British Government before granting independence. He warned them that if the Chinese and the other communities were to feel Malayan "they must be offered something more than the status of subject people." To limit their voting rights was to deny their support and co-operation for independence.

The Assembly passed a pointed resolution urging the Federation Government and the Colonial Office to introduce Federal elections "in 1954." It added the rider that if the Government rejected this proposal "all representatives" of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. should resign from the Legislative Council.

Thus the stage was set for a dramatic boycott which the Alliance carried out a year later.

At the next meeting of the Legislative Council the President, Sir Donald MacGillivray (he had been knighted in the New Year), announced that the High Commissioner and the Malay Rulers had decided that the time had come "for an examination of the practical issues involved" in introducing legislation for Federal elections. Alliance Councillors applauded and banged on the tables in delight over what they called their victory.

Sir Donald added that a committee would examine the question of elections. Its membership would be representative of all substantial interests "in the hope that recommendations can be agreed upon which would generally be acceptable to all those who regard the Federation or any part of it as their real home and the object of their loyalty."

Later that day Abdul Rahman commented, "I am sure the news will be received with great joy in the U.M.N.O. circles. It came at the right time." In Malacca Sir Cheng-lock Tan described the announcement as "a master-stroke of timing."

That meeting of the Council was outstanding for-another reason. Onn bin Ja'afar was attacked by members of the Alliance for a political speech in which he had criticized the political activities of the M.C.A. At a meeting of the Independence of Malaya Party Onn had declared angrily that "The Malayan Chinese Association and the Chinese Chambers of Commerce are carrying out a plan to

make this country the 20th Chinese province — to owe allegiance to Formosa, which is the 19th province."

The Council had before it a motion deploring Dato Onn's speech "as one calculated to stir up inter-racial discord." It was moved by Mr Tan Siew Sin, once a great supporter of Dato Onn and the I.M.P., who had become a leading member of the M.C.A. He was also the only son of Sir Cheng-lock Tan. The line of attack by Alliance speakers was that Dato Onn's speech had been aimed at "undermining the influence" of the U.M.N.O. and at breaking up the union with the M.C.A.

Abdul Rahman in his speech said he was concerned with the possible consequences of Dato Onn's remarks. The accusation that one community was trying to betray Malaya and turn it into a province of another country could have "a bad effect on the minds of the Malay people." He feared, he said, any resuscitation of the kind of racial conflict that had occurred immediately after the end of the Japanese occupation (when Malays and Chinese killed each other in some parts of the country).

He defended the Alliance as "not unhealthy" and an organization that "intended to do good." It still remained to be tested, and he felt confident it would stand the test. He added quietly, "I say, sir, that if the Alliance is broken the independence of Malaya to which we all look forward may not be achieved. I deplore any attempt by word of mouth or by an overt act to bring about inter-racial discord in this country."

As the debate progressed there was little doubt that the President, Sir Donald MacGillivray, was giving the House extreme latitude in arguing about a statement which had been made at a purely political meeting. Dato Onn naturally denied strongly that his statements, which were made in his private capacity and not as Member for Home Affairs, were calculated to create inter-racial discord. The Alliance motion was lost by an overwhelming majority of nine against forty. There were twenty abstentions.

The debate undoubtedly illustrated the bitter feelings of Alliance members against Dato Onn, as well as the strong position he held in the Government. It was from this meeting onward that debates in the legislature became tinged with political bias by all parties, and it was only standing rules and orders that prevented personalities being attacked in an unparliamentary manner.

In June politics were thrust right into the background for a short week as Malaya celebrated the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Town, kampong, and village rejoiced. There was colour and sparkle and glamour and glitter in the celebrations.

The Queen honoured Onn by appointing him an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. He was the first Malay commoner to be knighted.

Politically, the honour did not help Onn. Abdul Rahman, who privately acknowledged that Onn deserved the decoration, felt that he had been wrong in accepting it, because in the eyes of the Malays and the Chinese he became stamped as a "British stooge." Significantly, in a few months Onn dropped the use of the honorific "Sir."

When the Legislative Council met again in July Sir Donald MacGillivray announced the appointment of forty-six members of the House as a committee to examine the question of Federal elections and constitutional changes.

Onn and Abdul Rahman were members. In its political make-up, however, an overwhelming majority of the committee were either in the I.M.P. or supported its plan for a measured march to independence. The committee was to submit its report "at the earliest possible date consistent with the importance of the task."

Abdul Rahman became a member of the working committee, in which there was a balance between the two major political groups. With him were Abdul Razak, Lee, and Dr Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman, a young graduate from the University of Melbourne, who was a member of the U.M.N.O. Executive Committee (in 1959 he was Minister without Portfolio and Malayan Ambassador in Washington). The Chairman of the working committee was Mr M.J. Hogan, the Attorney-General, which was fortunate, because his tact and charm of manner kept the members in close accord despite great political differences of opinion.

In September the U.M.N.O. held its annual Assembly in Alor Star. It had two highlights. First was the re-election of Abdul Rahman as president. Second were the shouts of *"Merdeka!"* which filled the hall as Abdul Rahman and the five U.M.N.O. members in the Legislative Council pledged to resign from the Council if the Government did not accede to the Alliance demand for elections by 1954.

Simultaneously, the Alliance found itself supported in its demand for general elections by 1954 by other political groups such as the Malayan Indian Congress and the Pan-Malayan Labour Party. This alignment made one point clear to the Elections Committee: there apparently was a wider demand for national elections.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A Portfolio Declined

Abdul Rahman could have become a Minister in the Government in 1953. One day in August Templer called him to King's House on a matter of "the utmost importance."

Templer told him that he felt the time had come when members of the Alliance should help to run the country and so gain experience of Government and of the precepts of collective responsibility. He offered Abdul Rahman a portfolio.

Abdul Rahman declined. He said he felt that as leader of the U.M.N.O. he should hold no position in the Government. He could not "work aginst the Government" and at the same time accept a remunerative appointment in it. "I have my principles," he said. Anyway, his presence on the Government side might create serious misunderstanding among the members of the U.M.N.O.

Templer then said that he planned to re-offer a portfolio to Colonel Lee as a representative of the M.C.A. Lee had rejected previous Government advances for personal reasons. Templer added, "Tunku, I want some one from the U.M.N.O. If you won't accept appointment, will you suggest some one?"

Whatever Abdul Rahman may have felt about the inadvisability of accepting a Ministry himself, he realized that it would be a good thing for other members of the U.M.N.O. to have experience in the running of Government. As he said later, "I was confident even then that one day we would take over."

Abdul Rahman has an almost unerring ability to select the right man for a special job. In this instance he thought of Dr Ismail.

"I'll get Ismail to accept the portfolio," Abdul Rahman promised Templer.

A few days later Ismail, who also lived in Johore Bahru, was

boarding a train for Kuala Lumpur to attend a meeting of the Federal Finance Committee when Abdul Rahman arrived at the station, handed him an envelope, and said, "Here's something for you, but I don't want you to open it until you are on your way to King's House. I want you to promise me that."

Ismail accepted the envelope with curiosity. He was curious about what it contained and why he should go to King's House at all.

During the Finance Committee meeting he received a note telling him that Templer wished to see him and would send a car for him. The envelope burned in Ismail's pocket as he was driven to King's House, but it was not until he had passed through its gates that he opened it.

A note from Abdul Rahman said, "When you see Sir Gerald you will be offered a job as a Member in the Government. I would like you to accept it."

Ismail was a militant politician at that time, and his immediate reaction — as Abdul Rahman had foreseen — was to reject the suggestion that he should enter the Government. Had he opened the letter much earlier — as Abdul Rahman had foreseen too — he would have asked Abdul Rahman for time "to think," and then sought a pretext to enable him to decline the job with thanks.

But here was a few yards from King's House, and he could do nothing but walk in and meet Templer. The portfolio planned for Ismail was "Member for Lands, Mines, and Communications," a job with considerable political implications, particularly in the framing of land policies.

Ismail asked Templer what action was open to him should the Government take any step which was against the policy of the U.M.N.O. or the Alliance. "After all, I shall be the only Alliance man in the Cabinet," he added.

"You won't be the only man," said Templer mysteriously, adding that Ismail's only obvious course in the situation he had described would be to resign. Templer assured Ismail, "I would be a fool if I permitted such a situation to arise."

Ismail was still not very anxious to accept the appointment. He was worried about the repercussions in the U.M.N.O. He realized that Abdul Rahman had taken a great responsibility in agreeing to Templer's proposal that the U.M.N.O. should be represented in

the Government without consulting its Executive Committee.

"May I see the Tunku first before giving you my reply, sir?"

"No, I want your reply now, then you can see the Tunku, and if you change your mind you can telephone me."

With little enthusiasm Ismail accepted the portfolio.

Abdul Rahman knew that Templer was summoning Lee to King's House after Ismail to offer him the portfolio of "Member for Railways and Ports," two subjects on which he was an authority because he had been a member of the Railway Board since its establishment in 1946 and had also sat on a Ports Advisory Committee.

Lee declined to accept the job until he too had seen Abdul Rahman. It says much for Abdul Rahman's powers of persuasion that Lee also finally accepted the appointment.

Abdul Rahman arrived in Kuala Lumpur later that day. Ismail was in a confused state of mind, but finally agreed, saying, "I'll take the job, but only because you ask me to do so."

That night Abdul Rahman was the centre of an angry handful of members of the U.M.N.O. Executive Committee in a room in a cafe in Batu Road. Most of them criticized him severely for his failure to discuss Templer's proposition with them first.

"How could I? I promised Templer to keep his proposals to myself. He wanted me solely to make the decision," replied Abdul Rahman.

"But you were being undemocratic," retorted a Malay with the reputation of being both anti-British and anti-Government. "You've been outwitted by the British. You're supporting the Imperialists."

"Don't be silly," retorted Abdul Rahman. "I am supporting nobody but the U.M.N.O. Don't you realize it is essential that when we get independence we should have men experienced in Government procedure?"

The same angry criticisms were hurled at Abdul Rahman the next day at an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee of the U.M.N.O. but most of the members supported him, particularly those who were themselves working in the Government.

Abdul Rahman assured his critics that Ismail's appointment did not require him to abandon loyalty to the U.M.N.O. or to the Alliance, although it would bind him to the Government's administrative policies, and that in the Legislative Council both he and Lee would be expected to adhere to the precept of collective responsi-

bility and vote accordingly. Neither he nor Lee, however, would be prevented by this from continuing to work in the Alliance on a blueprint for constitutional progress.

Within the next few days both Ismail and Lee announced that they had agreed to serve in the Government on four conditions: their term of office should be for one year only, they would serve only as representatives of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A., they would resign if general elections were not held by 1954, and they would also quit if and when the Alliance called on them to do so.

In November Ismail and Lee took up their portfolios.

The year closed with a sensation for political Malaya. Abdul Rahman was cited in London as co-respondent in a divorce suit brought by Mr Patrick Joseph Johnson, a former Municipal Commissioner in Singapore, who was living in Britain. Mr Johnson alleged that Abdul Rahman had committed adultery with his wife, Barbara, in London when he was there in 1947. Neither Mrs Johnson nor Abdul Rahman contested the suit. He was ordered to pay £700 damages.

Had Abdul Rahman been a political leader in England the case would have ended his career. In Malaya, however, where Islam permits a man four wives, and where divorce is a feature in Malay life, the news was a minor wonder. His political standing was neither besmirched nor scathed.

What everybody was curious about was whether Abdul Rahman possessed £700. He paid this sum in London when he arrived there in 1954 on the first of a series of trips to the Colonial Office to fight for independence.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A Critical Year

For Abdul Rahman the year 1954 opened with hopes mixed perhaps with trepidation. He realized that it was going to be a critical year, during which the Alliance would rise or fall on its demand for Federal elections.

The year proved the most dramatic in the political history of the country in general. For Abdul Rahman himself it saw the complete sloughing of his reputation as a 'playboy.' Perhaps for the first time he fully appreciated the seriousness of the business of being a political leader.

The report of the Elections Committee sparked off the eventful year. Its salient recommendations were an enlarged Federal Legislative Council which would be partly nominated and partly elected, and that only Federal citizens should be entitled to vote or be elected.

The Committee recommended the retention of a substantial element of nominated members, because it felt that the transition to a wholly elected Council should be gradual; the nominated element should be retained at any rate for the next four years.

The Committee stated that it "clearly recognized" that the ultimate objective must be a fully elected Council, but it considered that development and experience in the country had not yet reached the stage when all aspects of the political and economic life of the community would be adequately represented through the electoral process.

It was apparent from the report that there had been sharp conflicts of opinion during the discussions between what was described as "a majority of the Committee," the political opponents of the U.M.N.O.-M.C.A. combine, and the "minority," the

Alliance itself.

The majority wanted forty-four elected seats in a ninety-two-member Council, which meant that if the Speaker and three *ex-officio* members were not taken into account the elected members would represent 50 per cent of the Chamber. They also recommended that of the forty-four nominated members the High Commissioner should personally choose eight, who would give a voice to any "important element" which had not found adequate representation through elections.

The "minority" rejected this suggestion, and recommended sixty elected members who would represent three-fifths of the Council.

The Alliance also urged elections not later than November 1954, but the "majority" considered that "it would be impracticable to specify the date in view of the difficulty in estimating at this juncture the period to complete the necessary legislative and administrative arrangements."

After the publication of the report the Alliance felt that they had to act swiftly if they wished to force through elections during the year. They brushed aside all references to the difficulties of arranging elections in a few months.

In their literature and in the speeches of their leaders the Alliance recalled that India had held the most widespread democratic elections in world history very soon after independence, and that the Gold Coast had also had elections — without, however, mentioning that both territories had had tested and adequate machinery for elections long before they achieved their new constitutions.

The Alliance had underestimated the practical difficulties. The passage of legislation and fixing the constituencies and the polling districts would take months, as also would the registration of voters.

Conservatives estimates reckoned on elections in late 1955 or early 1956 without putting a premium on speed, and also to permit State and Settlement elections to be held first. Abdul Rahman, however, declared, "We are bitterly disappointed with the election report." Sir Cheng-lock Tan thought the recommendations "very undemocratic" and also that they would help to "maintain the autocratic system of colonial government." He added irritatedly, "At this rate, we will never get self-government."

The political battle on the election date was joined. Onn bin Ja'afar made the dig that the Alliance had pressed for November 1954 as the date for elections because they did not want their leaders to quit their Government posts in that month. The earliest date possible for elections was some time in 1956, he said.

The retort was left to Dr Ismail, one of the men concerned. He had become "Member for Natural Resources" early in February in a reshuffle and renaming of portfolios and the appointment of an Indian, Mr V.M.N. Menon, an insurance agent, as "Member" to assuage Indian demands for representation. (Colonel Lee's portfolio of Railways and Ports was renamed "Transport.")

Ismail, who was also vice-president of the U.M.N.O., declared that as Member for Natural Resources his period of office had been extended until the end of February the following year. "This," he added, "should answer the allegations of Dato Sir Onn, the prima donna of Malayan politics."

The Alliance machine swept into action. Its branches all over the country began to hold public rallies which shouted *"Merdeka!"* and demanded national elections in November.

Behind the scenes senior Government officers concerned about the peace of the country tried to make Abdul Rahman and Sir Cheng-lock realize that they were overestimating the practicabilities of an election programme. They pointed out that there was nothing in the Alliance programme which was not in the ultimate programme of every Malayan political party, and which was not implicit in the British pledge of self-government for Malaya. It was the pace of political progress that was in question, and whether it was physically possible to hold Federal elections during the year.

The Alliance remained adamant.

About this time the Independence of Malaya Party changed its name as a psychological necessity. It had not received the Malay support that was essential for it to make an impression in the political world.

There was a cogent reason for changing the name, quite apart from the feeling that a new name which would 'catch' Malay attention might alter the fortunes of the party. Onn had originally been delighted in the circumstances that the first letters of the name of his party had spelt 'imp.' It suited his temperament at the time. Politically he felt impish, and so the party also could be

'mischievous' against its opponents. But the word boomeranged in a surprising and unexpected manner, and proved that in Malaya, as elsewhere, a name may mean the difference between success and failure.

To the Malays in the kampongs, the people the party was wooing, the word 'imp' had a frightening connotation. To them an imp was not a physical mischievous being; it was a little ghost, or, in Malay, *mak hantu*. The rural Malays were too superstitious to wish to have anything to do with an organization whose name literally meant "The Ghost Party."

Thus it became sheer necessity to erase this impression, so the Independence of Malaya Party became "Party Negara." In Malay *negara* means "country"; the name could mean "party of the country" or "country party." The choice was admittedly a better one, and it made some impact in the rural districts, but it was too late. Negara did not have the ground organization to compete against the U.M.N.O., or the financial security which the M.C.A. brought to the Alliance.

In March the Federation Government announced the membership of the last fully nominated Legislative Council. Templer had made a significant reshuffle. He gave the Council its widest representation in its six-year history, including in it representatives of all major political parties. They were not in the Council as party members, of course; they served 'interests.'

An examination of the political affiliations of the members showed that Negara had a majority even without the support of people like the nine Mentri-Mentri Besar. It could count on at least thirty-four votes out of the seventy-five official and unofficial members. The Alliance could only call on fourteen, although a Labour group of seven might align with it on an important issue. It was correctly assumed that the meetings of the Legislative Council would run more vigorously on party lines.

The Malay Rulers and Templer held their first critical talks on elections. Abdul Rahman appreciated that the position was "delicate." He knew from his contacts in royal circles that the Rulers not only were split among themselves about elections, but also disagreed with a secret Federation Government proposal that the Legislative Council should have an elected majority and that there should be a form of party government for the interim period before

self-government. Many Rulers were anxious to postpone their date with independence, and were in favour of continuing a nominated majority in the Legislative Council.

Nevertheless, despite their royal feelings, the Rulers agreed to the appointment of a commission to delineate constituencies.

Abdul Rahman and the Alliance decided that they had to work decisively if they wished to gain royal and public support for their demand for a three-fifths elected majority and elections that year, even though they themselves had begun quietly to agree about the practical difficulties involved.

Their thoughts turned to London, to the British public as represented by the members of the House of Commons, and in particular to the British Labour Party. Abdul Rahman felt that his friends there would help in the cause because their sympathies were always with "the underdog." The Alliance considered that they were up against a powerful group of Malayan "Conservatives."

The Alliance decided to send a delegation to London to lobby in the two Houses, and if possible to see the Secretary of State for the Colonies. They felt that in London they could engender Labour support, and maybe some Conservative backing.

It was pure coincidence that it should have been All Fool's Day when Abdul Rahman sent a telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking him to meet a delegation from the Alliance before he made his decision on Federal elections.

When news of this telegram broke in Kuala Lumpur a battle of words developed between Dato Onn bin Ja'afar and Abdul Rahman. Dato Onn declared angrily that the Alliance was trying to defy and to sidestep the Malay Rulers by wishing to send a delegation to London. He described its action as "almost tantamount to a form of intimidation which is not within the framework of the Federation Agreement."

Thirteen days later Mr Lyttelton rejected the request for an interview. He said that the Alliance had had the fullest opportunities for making recommendations on all questions relating to elections. He himself was "fully seized" of the views of all parties and sections of opinion including the Alliance's, and he could therefore see "no occassion for further intervention by any of them in the discussions and exchange of views between the High Commissioner, Their Highnesses the Rulers, and myself."

Mr Lyttelton added that if he were to receive the delegation from the Alliance "I should also have to give time and opportunity to others if they too wanted to send delegations."

The Alliance became all the more determined to fly to London and beard this British lion in his den. Abdul Rahman said that he and his delegation would see "influential pressure groups in London."

He called an emergency assembly of the U.M.N.O. at Malacca on Sunday, April 18. This meeting approved "positive steps to press the demand for a large elected majority." The M.C.A. passed a similar resolution.

What this meant was that during the next few weeks the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. would organize mass rallies which would demand an elected majority.

The Alliance decided that with Abdul Rahman should go Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan, president of the M.C.A., who would travel by ship, Dato Abdul Razak, deputy president of the U.M.N.O., who was to be summoned to London from the United States, which he was touring on a State Department grant, and Mr T.H. Tan, executive secretary of the M.C.A.

On Wednesday, April 21, seven days after the receipt of Mr Lyttelton's telegram, Abdul Rahman and T.H. Tan left Singapore by air. Abdul Rahman's words before boarding the plane were: "We will tell the British public, Members of Parliament, and political organizations about our opposition."

He left with the knowledge that the purpose of his trip was being severely criticized. The Alliance action was looked on as "bad and untenable" constitutionally speaking. The British Government could not ignore agreement with the Malay Rulers except by breach of faith.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A British Lion Bearded

Lord Ogmore had last seen Abdul Rahman in London when he passed his Bar finals. Abdul Rahman had often visited him at his home in Croydon, and had cooked rice and curry there on a Sunday.

Lord Ogmore had a great admiration for Abdul Rahman. It was then that he had first become "impressed by the tremendous qualities of leadership shown by Tunku. Among the Malay students he was wonderful and took a personal interest in them all. He had Indian and Chinese friends too. He impressed upon me frequently," says Lord Ogmore, "that it was the Malay in the kampong, the salt of the earth, about whom he was so concerned."

It was to Lord Ogmore that Abdul Rahman penned an appeal before he left Kuala Lumpur for London. His letter disturbed Lord Ogmore:

> The situation is tense here (in Malaya), and I fear the worst will happen should the Colonial Secretary refuse to meet the delegation. . . . I fear that this (the methods in Malaya) will be met by an even stronger protest than that which you witnessed when you were here (in 1946). I would like you to bring this point home to the Secretary of State. Would you also tell him that the least we expect of him as Colonial Secretary is to give us a hearing?

The day before Abdul Rahman left Singapore for London Lord Ogmore wrote to the Secretary of State urging him in the strongest terms to receive the deputation. Two days later Mr Lyttelton

replied that, while he could not receive a deputation, he would be very willing to meet Tunku Abdul Rahman and Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan so long as it was understood that it was informal and that he could not at that stage enter into discussions of the constitutional proposals.

This was better than nothing. At least the delegation would be able to beard the British Colonial lion in his den — even if it was an 'informal' den.

Abdul Rahman and Tan landed at Heathrow airport. In this first trip to London on Malayan constitutional affairs Abdul Rahman was met by only a handful of Malayan students and a newspaperman representing a Singapore newspaper. The British national dailies saw no interest in him; indeed, they were too preoccupied with conferences in Geneva and Colombo and with the fate of Dien Bien Phu, the French jungle fort in Indo-China which was doomed to fall to the Communist Vietminh.

The next day Abdul Rahman and Tan saw Lord Ogmore in his office in King's Bench Walk, near the Inner Temple. Abdul Rahman asked Lord Ogmore for advice on how they should achieve their object. He expressed the utmost concern over the events in Malaya, and spoke of the Alliance's resentment of the treatment by the Secretary of State.

With a smile Lord Ogmore halted Abdul Rahman, pulled open a drawer in his desk, and produced Mr Lyttelton's letter. Abdul Rahman was elated. Mr Lyttelton had told Lord Ogmore that as he was going to Uganda he could not meet the delegation until his return about May 10. This meant a wait for three weeks. Abdul Rahman considered that he had won "half a political victory," since Mr Lyttelton had refused originally to give him an interview.

The next steps obviously were to impress members of the House of Commons and the noble members of the House of Lords with the Alliance cause.

On Tuesday, April 27, Abdul Rahman received what he described as "our first rude shock in London." The Colonial Office released the exchange of dispatches about elections and constitutional changes between Mr Lyttelton and the High Commissioner of the Federation. These disclosed an agreement between the High Commissioner and the Rulers to an elected majority of six members in a Legislative Council which would have fifty-two elected

and forty-six nominated members. The High Commissioner would fill a reserve of seven seats with men of his own choice. The dispatches promised elections in a little over twelve months. It was also implicit that any alliance of political parties which won a substantial majority in the elections would have an effective voice in policy-making.

The White Paper accompanying the dispatches pointed out that it was unusual constitutional procedure for a territory to move at once from a wholly nominated council to one with a majority of elected members. Singapore — towards which the Alliance had been pointing fingers of comparison and jealousy — had followed the customary practice of having a Legislative Council with a minority of elected members for some years.

The Colonial Office appeared to have agreed to make the bold experiment and permit the Federation to take a bigger stride than that taken by other dependent territories advacing to self-government because its normal pace of political progress had been interrupted by the Emergency.

Abdul Rahman had had an inkling of these plans before he had left Malaya, but he had hoped to be able to see Mr Lyttelton before final approval was given by the Colonial Office.

Although the Legislative Council would have an elected majority, Abdul Rahman decided to "try to convince Lyttelton that a majority of six would not work out satisfactorily."

He called a Press conference in a committee-room of the House of Lords. He and Tan glumly noted that not many newspaperman turned up. *The Times* carried a six-inch report of the conference in its early edition on April 29, but left it out of its London edition. The *Manchester Guardian* gave six inches across two columns. The *New York Herald-Tribune* carried four paragraphs. The rest of the British and American Press printed nothing.

Members of Parliament with considerably more experience of the British national Press consoled Abdul Rahman by saying that the delegation had, in fact, done well to get any mention at all in view of the prevailing international situation.

Because of the long wait ahead Abdul Rahman advised Sir Cheng-lock Tan not to come to London. Dato Abdul Razak had already arrived by air from New York. Both of them and T.H. Tan would constitute the delegation. One day Abdul Rahman relaxed

pleasantly at the opening of the British Industries Fair as a member of the Malayan Committee who received the Queen Mother.

The delegation wooed the Labour, Conservative, and Liberal parties. Abdul Rahman found Labour Members of Parliament most anxious to help when he addressed a meeting of the South-east Asia Committee of the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Mr Stanley Awbery was chairman, and others present were Mr W.T. Proctor, Mr R.W. Sorensen, Mr Frenner Brockway, and Mr James Griffiths, who had been Secretary of State for the Colonies during the Malayan Union crisis.

The Labour members were frank. They told Abdul Rahman that it would be embarrasing for the Colonial Secretary to "climb down" to meet the Alliance demands, quite apart from the fact that they did not expect Mr Lyttelton to do so, as he could not commit a breach of faith with the Malay Rulers. They thought the solution lay either in doing away with the special reserve of seven seats which were to be filled by direct appointment by the High Commissioner, or in getting the High Commissioner to act on the advice of the party returned to power when he filled those seats. These alternatives would enable Mr Lyttelton — if he wished — to make changes within the framework of his Federal election proposals.

The Labour members generally favoured the latter alternative. It would be appropriate to say here that this ultimately was the solution accepted by all in Malaya — but only after the country had gone through a severe political crisis.

Abdul Rahman told the Labour M.P.'s that he had no authority to agree to either suggestion. If Mr Lyttelton should put either forward all he could do was to return to Kuala Lumpur and consult his colleagues in the Alliance. His mandate in London was a "fully elected" Legislative Council.

The delegation also met members of the Colonial Fabian Bureau and Conservative and Liberal Members of Parliament either individually or in groups. Some advice they did receive from certain quarters was the way in which they should tackle the "hard-headed" Lyttelton!

They were told that Mr Lyttelton made quick decisions and was reluctant to deviate from them. Abdul Rahman was advised to tell him that although he had come to London with a mandate for a

fully elected Legislative Council, the Alliance were prepared to be constitutional and would accept a three-fifths elected majority, which had been their recommendation in the Federal elections report.

The delegation was also given advice on the form of constitution they should propose if an independent commission were appointed in the future. Lord Ogmore, for instance, suggested a bi-cameral legislature. The Upper House should consist of "elder statesmen," special interests, Rulers' representatives, and others, and would hold no greater powers than those of delay and advice. The Lower House should consist only of elected members.

The most important point, said Lord Ogmore, was that the central authority must have powers over the State Governments. The constitution needed for Malaya, he added, was a cross between those of Ceylon and Canada.

This talk inspired the delegation to ask experts in London to begin drafting a proposed constitution based on a bi-cameral legislature. Abdul Rahman felt that even if the talks with Mr Lyttelton should end in failure the Alliance should lose no time in planning their election platform, which should be based on "the attainment of independence within the shortest possible time consistent with preparedness."

On May 9, five days before the meeting with Mr Lyttelton, Abdul Rahman received a telegram from Kuala Lumpur from Dr Ismail, one of the Alliance Ministers in the Government, saying:

> UMNO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MET THIS MORNING AND URGE YOU TO RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BEFORE MAY 23 GOVERNMENT VERY LIKELY TO DECIDE ELECTIONS BILL ON MAY 25.

The delegation read into this cable a determination by the Federation Government to "bulldoze" the elections Bill through the Executive and Legislative Councils. Abdul Rahman decided to return to Kuala Lumpur in time for the Executive Council meeting which would discuss the Bill.

The delegation booked air passages to leave London on May 20. This meant that Abdul Rahman had to cancel an appointment with Mr Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, who had agreed to receive

him on his way back to Malaya. Abdul Rahman wished to get Mr Nehru's advice.

On May 12 Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak, and Tan attended question-time in the House of Commons. Four Labour members, Mr Griffiths, Mr Proctor, Mr Awbery, and Mr W.N. Warbey, asked the Colonial Secretary questions about the delegation's visit to London. These were the first fruits of the delegation's efforts in London.

Mr Lyttelton, in his replies, indicated that he was seeing the deputation, but he understood that constitutional matters were not going to be raised.

Mr Griffiths asked, "Do I understand that if they desire to offer their comments to the Right Hon. Gentleman upon the porposals for constitutional advance he will be ready to listen to them?"

Mr Lyttelton: "I think we had better wait and see what happens."

Mr Proctor: "Is it a fact that the original demand of the parties was for 60 per cent elected representatives? Since the Right Hon. Gentleman's decision is fifty-two elected and forty-six selected, which means that there is only a narrow difference of seven, will he give some indication that on such a narrow point he will now allow the negotiations to break down?"

Mr Warbey: "Will the Right Hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that these two organizations representing the two main communities in Malaya are both moderate in their demands and are highly representative, and that if he loses the opportunity of coming to an agreement with them he may find it difficult to achieve any reasonable political settlement in Malaya at all?"

Mr Lyttelton: "I do not accept what the Hon. Gentleman says. I think we had better wait and see what happens."

The only consolation Abdul Rahman drew from the answers was the hint that there was still room for negotiation.

Lord Ogmore saw Mr Lyttelton the next day and put to him the alternatives suggested by the Labour Party. Mr Lyttelton agreed to consider them seriously. He authorized Lord Ogmore to tell Abdul Rahman that when he met the delegation he would be prepared to talk on constitutional matters. Mr Griffiths and Mr Proctor also spoke to Mr Lyttelton on the same subject.

So a lot of groundwork had already been laid when Abdul Rahman and his colleagues left their hotel on May 14 to meet Mr

Lyttelton.

The three men went by tube to St James's Park and walked to Church House, the home of the Colonial Office. They arrived ten minutes too early. At the appointed time they were ushered into the Secretary of State's office.

It was a large L-shaped room with a circular conference table. Mr Lyttelton had three advisers with him. He greeted the deputation pleasantly, then motioned them to the table. When they had all taken their seats he explained that the publication of the dispatches between him and the High Commissioner had given the delegation the opportunity of discussing with him Federal elections and constitutional changes. He would listen if they would talk.

The report of the discussions that follows comes from Mr Tan, who made notes at the time.

Abdul Rahman began by explaining why the Alliance considered that a three-fifths elected element in the Legislative Council was the absolute minimum to ensure satisfactory working of the party system. No single party could expect to win more than 80 per cent of the seats, and would therefore not have a working majority in a house of ninety-eight of whom fifty-two were elected. It consequently would not be able to run the Government, nor would the majority party in such circumstances have the confidence to run the Government.

Mr Lyttelton argued here that the party returned to power could count on some support from the five *ex-officio* members and from some nominated members. Abdul Rahman replied that much would depend on whether the Executive Council had decided which way official members should vote. The loyalty of nominated members belonged in the first instance to the interests that had nominated them; and if those interests were not affected voting would depend on the whims and fancies of the appointed members.

This would produce an element of uncertainty of support for the majority party which would make for unstable government, which was not the Alliance's idea of the first step towards responsible self-government.

Mr Lyttelton stated that he alone was in no position to change the proposals already announced. "I suggest the Alliance give them a go and put them to the test," he said. Abdul Rahman

replied, "No."

Mr Lyttelton suggested that the delegation should return to Malaya and ask the Alliance to accept delegation on the basis of his proposals. Abdul Rahman rejected this, saying that it was the duty of the delegation to express the wishes of the people rather than force on them something which they would not accept.

Tan says that Mr Lyttelton then suggested that if the Alliance supporters would not accept his proposals on the advice of the delegation the Alliance leaders could resign.

Abdul Rahman asked Mr Lyttelton if he would prefer extremists to take over from the present moderate Alliance leaders, which might well happen if they resigned or were forced to resign because they could not carry out their mandate. Tan says, "No direct reply came from the Minister, although he made it clear that he was fully conscious of this possibility and of its consequences."

Mr Lyttelton expressed anxiety over the whole subject. He was keen that the negotiations should not break down on the "small difference" between the number of fifty-two elected seats decided by him after consultation with the Malay Rulers and the sixty demanded by the Alliance.

Abdul Rahman remarked that if Mr Lyttelton considered the difference "small," then he should accede to the Alliance request, so that the Federation would be doubly sure in its first step towards self-government. He said that the Alliance could persuade their followers to accept a three-fifths majority of elected members in the Legislative Council, and they would be glad to leave the details to be worked out by the Colonial Office. This elected proportion was the absolute minimum, and the Alliance would not compromise further.

The interview was obviously ending. Mr Lyttelton said he still thought his election proposals could work, but he assured the delegation that he would seriously consider its objections.

"I will," he said, "give you a written reply before you leave London. However, in my view the proposals for national elections represent a bold step forward."

No other British Colony within his knowledge had gone in one bound from a fully appointed Legislative Council to one with an elected majority. Even in Singapore the Rendel Commission had recommended that 75 per cent of the future Legislative Council

should be elected only because Singapore had had several terms of partially elected Council.

The meeting ended just before lunch-time. The delegation had had an hour with Mr Lyttelton — an hour that Abdul Rahman later described as "a fateful hour in the history of Malaya."

As they left the Colonial Office Abdul Rahman hoped that Mr Lyttelton might produce a solution which would avert the threatened political crisis in the Federation, but it was not a sanguine expectation. Obviously Mr Lyttelton would have to be guided by his advisers in Britain and in Malaya, and reports indicated that those in Malaya were not in favour of the compromise suggested by the Labour Party. Abdul Rahman's information, rightly or wrongly, was that Sir Donald MacGillivray, who was succeeding General Templer as High Commissioner, maintained that it was his special prerogative to fill the special reserve of seven nominated seats in the new legislature, and he planned to retain it.

The group went to lunch at the Savoy Hotel. They were somewhat depressed. At the Savoy Tom Proctor, who was waiting for them, introduced them to Mr (now Sir William) Bustamante, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, a colourful figure. Bustamante had had, of course, his tussles with the British Colonial Office, and had had his successes. He said to Abdul Rahman, "I'm all in favour of self-government for Malaya," which brought some balm to Abdul Rahman.

Bustamante then advised him: "Fight hard, fight strongly, fight wisely, and when you are in power use that power with moderation."

Bustamante asked if Malaya intended to remain within the British Commonwealth after independence.

"Yes," Abdul Rahman replied.

Bustamante declared, "You are right. For all its faults, the Commonwealth is the best partnership of free nations."

It was, in a way, a thought-provoking meeting for Abdul Rahman. But he spent the next few days wondering what the nature of Mr Lyttelton's reply would be — and feeling more and more strongly that it would not be what the Alliance wanted to hear.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Political Crisis

On the morning of May 19, the day before Abdul Rahman was due to fly back to Malaya, a Colonial Office messenger delivered Mr Lyttelton's reply. Abdul Rahman had been waiting impatiently for it; he had also been busy answering telephone calls from newspapers and news agencies on whether it had come.

In a personal note to Abdul Rahman Mr Lyttelton said he hoped that his letter would show there was between them "no real difference of substance and very little even of degree." If they could agree "we shall be following the best course open to us in the interests of all the peoples of the Federation."

Mr Lyttelton's lengthy reply showed that he was prepared to meet the Alliance on some minor points, but he was adamant on the question of the elected majority. He agreed that because of the difficulties of finding for the elections sufficient candidates with the necessary calibre and experience in public affairs, junior Government servants would be permitted to stand for election and senior officers who had reached the age of forty-six could retire with pension or gratuity if they wished to stand for elections. He also agreed that nominated members of the Legislative Council should not be precluded from Ministerial office as holders of portfolios in the Executive Council.

On the subject of a three-fifths elected majority in the Legislative Council, Mr Lyttelton repudiated the Alliance apprehensions that unless such a majority existed the party in power could not function effectively in government, since it could not always be sure of substantial support from non-elected members.

Mr Lyttelton said it seemed clear that the party in power would be "regularly supported by a number of the nominated members,

since it is a reasonable expectation that these will include some councillors who are already members of the party." He also felt sure that

> whatever party may win the elections, it will set itself with a high sense of purpose to pursue sober and progressive policies; and if it does I have no doubt that it will enjoy the dependable support of a large number of the other nominated members.
>
> To think otherwise is to imply that the majority party might pursue such unreasonable experiments or so mishandle the conduct of public business that it was unable to carry with it any members of the Council outside its own ranks. I do not believe that your own or any other party would follow a course so prejudicial to the true interests of the Federation.

It was the British Government's firm intention, Mr Lyttelton went on, that the majority party in the Legislative Counci should be able to function effectively in government. He gave the assurance that if this turned out wrong in practice — that the majority party was "being frustrated by a deliberately obstructive minority" — he would take steps to remedy the situation.

Mr Lyttelton added: "I think that you will agree that this important fresh assurance finally removes any anxiety which you may hitherto have felt upon the whole question."

He concluded:

> Even in matters of degree that is always a breaking-point, and I am sure that you will agree that it would be a tragedy to stand uncompromisingly upon differences involving no question of principle, and in reality not even any significant question of degree. I believe that this would do grievious harm to the best interests of the Federation, and I am confident that you will agree with me — as I have no doubt will all reasonable opinion in the Federation — that our sense of responsibility requires us to avoid a damaging crisis of this kind. Let us not cast away the true substance of our common aims

and agreement for a shadow which has no body behind it.

Mr Tan cabled the gist of the letter to the Alliance headquarters in Malaya . . . . . Three days later the delegation arrived back in Singapore. Abdul Rahman left Tan to deal with the Press. (Quote: "Mr Lyttelton assured us that he had given in to us on many points, but we told him that those points were subsidiary to our main demand for a substantial majority of elected members in the Legislative Council.") Abdul Rahman went to the U.M.N.O. headquarters in Johore Bahru for a preliminary meeting with his Party leaders.

That night he took the train to Kuala Lumpur, attended a meeting of the U.M.N.O. Executive Committee the following morning, and in the evening went to the home of Colonel Lee for an emergency gathering of the "Alliance Roundtable." A momentous decision had to be taken, and from the determined looks on all faces it seemed certain that the Alliance were not prepared to accept Mr Lyttelton's appeal to give the constitutional proposals a trial.

Abdul Rahman was not, however, in favour of too precipitate action. After a long discussion Lee put forward a resolution which was adopted unanimously. After stating that the Alliance could not accept the election proposals it said:

"In order to get an unbiased assessment of the country's progress towards self-government, the Alliance requests that a special independent commission consisting entirely of members from outside Malaya be sent immediately to the Federation with the concurrence of Her Majesty and Their Highnesses to report on constitutional reforms in the Federation.

"Fully realizing its responsibilites towards the people and the country, the Alliance will continue to give its fullest co-operation to the Government in all respects, particularly with a view to bringing the Emergency to an early end if this request is acceded to."

Then came the ultimatum: "If the authorities insist on the implementation of the White Paper the Alliance with great regret will have no choice but to withdraw all its members from participation in the Government."

The gauntlet was on the floor.

Templer used another phrase when Abdul Rahman, accompanied by Dr Ismail, Colonel Lee, and Mr Leong Yew Koh, Secretary General of the M.C.A., called to hand him the resolution. After reading it he exclaimed, "Well, the pistol is out."

Abdul Rahman recalls, "We confirmed this in no uncertain terms." But he also told Templer that if an independent commission were appointed the Alliance would agree to withdraw its demand for elections that year.

It was an awkward time at which to face the Government with such an ultimatum. Templer had only seven days left in the country, as he was leaving on June 1 for London and a new assignment, and Sir Donald MacGillivray was succeeding him. The changeover had, however, been taken into account by the Alliance, who considered that MacGillivray had been long enough in the country and was already sufficiently steeped in its political atmosphere to be able to take over where Templer left off.

Templer had expected the Alliance's stand, but nevertheless he was perturbed. He made one request — that the text of the resolution should not be made public until he had telegraphed it to Mr Lyttelton and passed it to the Malay Rulers. Abdul Rahman agreed.

He returned home and penned a letter to Mr Lyttelton in which he begged to differ with the Minister's contention that the elected majority of six would give the victorious party at the election sufficient majority to run the Government. He added:

> With such a small majority of elected members, the party in power will be subject to the whims and fancies of the nominated members, because our experience has shown that there are elements who are opposed to real democratic progress.

He went on:

> While appreciating your assurance that in the event of the future government being frustrated because of deliberately obstructive minorities you would ask the High Commissioner to consider with the Conference of

Rulers what steps should be taken to remedy the situation, we beg to point out that this assurance is of no real value because such action will then have to be taken in any case. No responsible party will willingly form a Government in these circumstances.

At a subsequent meeting of the Alliance Roundtable, Abdul Rahman posed a question in quiet tones. He said, "Our withdrawal may mean trouble, maybe serious trouble, for some of us. I am quite prepared to go to gaol if necessary to achieve our aims. How many of you are prepared to do the same? I will have no hard feelings against those who may say otherwise."

It was perhaps melodramatic, but at the back of Abdul Rahman's mind were the pictures of Asian and African fighters against the British Raj who had been clapped into gaol — Nehru in India, Nkrumah in the Gold Coast, Bustamante in Jamaica.

While his common sense assured him that the conditions in Malaya were different and that agitation for an alteration in a constitutional process could not be regarded as a serious political offence when weighed against the greater offences of the Malayan Communist Party, he wished to see how others in the Alliance felt — just in case.

There was a moment's silence, and then all hands went up. Each member declared a preparedness to go to gaol "if need be." The Malay and Chinese leaders became more closely knit.

Whatever the serious undercurrents, the Legislative Councillors gave Templer a farewell party the night before he left Kuala Lumpur for England. Abdul Rahman arranged *ronggeng* girls to dance and be danced with. The traditional *satay*, pieces of meat skewered on thin sticks and eaten with a hot sauce, was served.

Templer took the opportunity to have quiet words with Abdul Rahman, for whom he had developed a friendship, even though he had frequently growled at him in the confines of the Executive Council.

The next morning Kuala Lumpur gave Templer an official farewell. The country had much to thank him for — such as the metamorphosis from fear, greater security and confidence, a few important strides nearer self-government.

To Onn bin Ja'afar, Templer said, "I'll see you again one day."

To Abdul Rahman, whose hand he gripped equally hard, he said, "Thanks very very much for the party last night, Tunku."

He boarded the aircraft, the band played *Auld Lang Syne*, Sultans and Government officers waved their farewells, and a man who will always be great in Malaya's history left. One and a half years later Templer reappeared formally in Abdul Rahman's life in London. He was Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Abdul Rahman was Chief Minister.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A Boycott Launched

Ten days after Templer left and the shy, youthful-looking Sir Donald MacGillivray had taken over, Mr Lyttelton sent his reply to Abdul Rahman. It was "No" again. The proposal for a special independent commission, wrote Mr Lyttelton, raised wide issues, and was not one that he could properly consider or decide upon unilaterally. He had therefore asked the High Commissioner to discuss it with the Malay Rulers.

Mr Lyttelton added that he saw no reason for postponing the programme for the introduction of elections. Any attempt to go back on the proposals would lead to confusion "or worse," and would do grave harm to the best interests of the Federation as a whole. He saw no justification for delaying the introduction of Federal elections.

The gauntlet had been picked up. To take Templer's phrase further, Mr Lyttelton's answer was a challenge to the Alliance to level the pistol.

At 8.30 the next morning the Alliance Roundtable discussed the next step. They decided to enforce their resolution of May 24 and withdraw all their members from every Government council.

A message from the new High Commissioner interrupted the meeting. MacGillivray wished to see Abdul Rahman and an Alliance delegation. Abdul Rahman, Lee, and a few others went to King's House. The meeting was brief. It could not be anything else because it was a meeting between two determined groups. The Alliance men were conscious of their power to slow down the wheels of government. MacGillivray, opposite them, was a very serious man. He was holding his first governorship. Because he was new and had not been given a chance to settle down he perhaps

tended to hold the reins too strongly. He stood for constitutional advance only at the speed laid down by the Colonial Office.

Finally, he was wary of Abdul Rahman and the Alliance — and he was not going to be threatened by them.

The meeting was therefore doomed to failure even before it began. MacGillivray, newly installed in office, was reluctant to adopt a different attitude from that taken by the Secretary of State and by his predecessor, and consequently there was no room for manoeuvre. Also, the atmosphere was all wrong. MacGillivray was in those days not the good mixer he finally and most successfully became. To him a formal meeting in his office was not an occasion which called for drinks and a relaxed atmosphere, a tactic which Templer had exploited whenever necessary.

MacGillivray's first contact with the Alliance leaders as High Commissioner was therefore inevitably unsuccessful. Fortunately this was to set no pattern for the future.

MacGillivray asked that the two Ministers, Dr Ismail and Colonel Lee, and the Alliance members of the Executive and Legislative Councils should continue in office so that the Alliance could participate in the forthcoming debate on the Bills introducing Federal elections.

Lee replied that they saw no point in debating the Bills until MacGillivray had spoken to the Malay Rulers about the Alliance request for a special independent commission.

Abdul Rahman said, however, that he would call a meeting of the Alliance Roundtable that night and let the High Commissioner know their decision the next morning. Lee spoke again, mentioning the Alliance resolution on immediate action if its "final bid" at compromise failed.

Abdul Rahman and his colleagues left King's House and adjourned to a favourite haunt, the Selangor Rest House, behind the Selangor Club. Over drinks they decided that they had reached the point of no return.

The Alliance released to the Press the text of their resolution, and also an announcement that the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. would hold emergency meetings on Sunday, June 13, to decide on "common action."

Abdul Rahman's feelings over MacGillivray's stand were aggravated by bitter news from London. Letters indicated that the

Labour Members of Parliament had, upon receiving news of the Alliance's proposal to stop co-operating with the Government, changed their minds about bringing the election issue to the floor of both Houses of Parliament immediately. They felt that the Alliance should accept elections on the basis of Mr Lyttelton's proposals, after which they could take the constitutional steps to amend the Federal Agreement.

This meant that the Alliance's fight now rested squarely on their own shoulders; they could not look to the British Labour Party for support in London.

The prospect looked dark, and Abdul Rahman once again thought of gaol. He recalled the remarks of Mr Justice van Lare, of the Gold Coast, whom he had met at a party in London. Van Lare, who was later to help in drafting a new constitution for the Gold Coast, had said to Abdul Rahman, "The way to self-government is not through the Colonial Office; it is usually through the prison gate."

Abdul Rahman considered himself a sincere nationalist. In moments of depression he argued with himself that if the aspirations of nationalists could be fulfilled only by entering a prison gate in Malaya he was prepared to pass through that gate. Abdul Rahman always bore thoughts of martyrdom when he was depressed — which was often these days. . . . .

On the Sunday Abdul Rahman and Ismail both addressed the M.C.A. general committee, an historic occasion for the Alliance, as it was the first time Malay leaders had attended its meeting.

Abdul Rahman declared: "The future happiness and the prosperity of the people of this country must not be dependent on the protection exercised by any outside Power. Past experiences have shown that such protection can be suspended or removed at the will of the protecting Power, and when that happens disorder and strife can break out as a result of communal misunderstanding and prejudices.

"We must therefore work out for ourselves our own salvation. Goodwill and friendship can be achieved, and this will in course of time grow into a solid foundation on which future happiness and harmony in an independent Malaya will stand. In order to achieve this we must decide to do one thing — remove this protection which has given us false security and set up a Government under

which a real contribution can be made by all people to establish real security."

Chinese and Malays, he said, had to "work together, shoulder our responsibilities together, and above all things look to Malaya as the object of our loyalty." He admitted that "a small section of Malays" was still "distrustful of the Chinese," but "the majority of Malays" believed in the "honesty and sincerity of their leaders and approved our action to give rights to those born in the country."

He denied that Chinese had "no stake to play" in the country. Economically they had a bigger stake than the Malays. "They work and slave to obtain this stake," Abdul Rahman stressed. "So strong in fact is the economic position of the Chinese that it would be true to say that you cannot buy a grain of salt if the Chinese were to close their shops, nor could you travel a mile if transportation were at a standstill. In fact, if the Chinese were to wield this power inadvisedly the life of the country would be interrupted.

"But I will admit that politically Chinese have little, if any, stake at the moment."

Abdul Rahman appealed to the Chinese to work hard to "establish this political stake: you must decide to make a home of Malaya and give it your undivided loyalty."

The time had come, he declared, for them to make a decision, as "otherwise there must inevitably be suspicion in the minds of the Malays as to the real intention of the Chinese in regard to Malaya." He went on: "Communist China can no more give most Chinese here thoughts of returning there, and Nationalist Formosa can hold very little hope for them also. The only alternative is to make a home of Malaya with the Malays.

"In order to make it a home worthy of our pride, Malaya must be free from the stigma of a dependent country; she must be free politically and economically. The leaders have agreed that such independence must be won, and won in stages."

The first stage of election on a Parliamentary democratic system had arrived, but the British Government had denied "our reasonable and moderate demand" of a three-fifths elected majority in the Legislative Council.

"We have attempted compromises, and now we have come to the end of our patience," Abdul Rahman declared. "Either we have to give up our struggle or fight to maintain the first principle

of democracy. We have decided to fight rather than to accept something which is a mockery of democracy.

"The U.M.N.O. have decided upon a stand which remains to be backed by the M.C.A. I can assure you that so far as the U.M.N.O. is concerned there is no wavering from our objective. I know that you will show the same determination."

Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan, president of the M.C.A., urged Chinese support of the U.M.N.O. "to the hilt." He agreed that several issues of outstanding importance to the Chinese, such as citizenship, franchise, immigration, and national schools, still remained to be settled.

"We have, however, the assurance of the U.M.N.O. leaders," he added, "that once the Alliance is returned to power, these questions can be equitably and satisfactorily settled. Concerted action on both our parts will ensure that the first step to be taken by the Federation towards self-government will be steady, definite, and democratic."

The inevitable conclusion was reached by the U.M.N.O. and M.C.A. Executive Committees. They ordered all their members in legislatures, councils, and Government committees throughout the country to quit.

The Alliance estimated that at least 1000 Malay and Chinese men and women would be drawn out by the directive.

Dr Ismail and Colonel Lee were the first to send in their resignations as Members of the Government.

The Alliance order was not, however, accepted blindly by all Chinese. In Penang, for instance, a Federal Legislative Councillor declared that as he represented labour, and not the M.C.A., he would not resign. A woman said she represented women, and therefore did not feel bound to resign. Other 'rebels' found other reasons for not agreeing to boycott the Government.

The Alliance was severely criticized in many quarters. Their action was supported by most of the Malay and Chinese newspapers, but not by two English newspapers. The *Straits Times* attacked the Alliance in every editorial, beginning with a statement that resignation before the momentous debate on the elections Bill appeared "peculiarly cowardly." The *Malay Mail*, in Kuala Lumpur, expressed its belief that the Alliance "came to their decision sincerely but mistakenly." The *Straits Times* considered it

a pity that the Alliance had decided not to fight the battle against the elections Bill inside the Council as well as outside. "It will never have a better forum," it went on.

> Alliance leaders surely were not deterred by the weight of the argument against them? That nevertheless is the appearance given by the immediate resignation of Alliance members of the Council. . . . .
>
> The merit of the White Paper proposals and the Secretary of State's assurance is that they ensure stability for the first partly elected legislature and the certainty of an effective elected majority. Is not that the Alliance's aim? It would be a great stride forward that could be taken with every confidence.
>
> The test of these proposals lies after all in the working of them. It may be too late for the Alliance to withdraw completely from the action it has taken, for once resignations have been submitted they must be allowed to stand. The Alliance, however, can give fresh thought to the future and measure more dispassionately the gains that are offered by the White Paper proposals against the disturbing perils of "struggle" at a time when Malaya needs unity and compromise, and labour for the common good. All communities and all parties are travelling the same road, but we must journey in company and in safety's convoy.

In London *The Times* said that the political dangers in Malaya were serious, and there was a good case for a new independent inquiry into constitutional reform. But such an inquiry would take time, "and meanwhile the Alliance is doing no service to Malaya by impeding the working of the present constitution."

Other critics felt that, while the White Paper proposals had not been abandoned by the Government, the committee stage of the legislation for elections would not be reached for several months — in fact, until either August or September. The demand for an independent commission had not been rejected, but had been referred by the Secretary of State to the High Commissioner and the Malay Rulers for discussion at their next meeting in July, the following month.

The argument was therefore that the Alliance could have de-

bated the principles of the elections even under threat of resignation. They would not have compromised their own principles by doing so. The Alliance could also have waited until after the Conference of Rulers in July before taking any precipitate action.

As the days passed, the M.C.A. received the backing of the powerful Chinese Chambers of Commerce and of the extensive guilds and clan associations. This brought more resignations and more withdrawals from councils and committees.

The fact that the Alliance leaders had not given any details to the members of their parties before taking their crucial decision had been one of the serious criticisms levelled against them. The Alliance Roundtable therefore drew up plans for a "fact-telling" tour of the Federation. Alliance leaders would visit all States and Settlements "to acquaint supporters" with the facts leading to the decision to withdraw from the Government.

The Roundtable also decided to attemp "to acquaint the Rulers directly" with the "wishes of the people." They planned to stage processions of Malays and Chinese to the Istana of each Ruler. It was, indeed, all very reminiscent of the days when Onn bin Ja'afar rallied the Malays to demand the revocation of the Malayan Union.

In London Mr Lyttelton, during question-time in the House, rejected a suggestion by Mr Awbery that further talks should be held in Malaya on the composition of the Legislative Council. Mr Awbery argued that these talks were necessary "in view of the fact that the difference between Mr Lyttelton's proposals and those submitted by the Alliance is so small." He asked whether it was "worth while that we should have a civil disturbance in Malaya now, with people refusing to co-operate with the Government, in addition to the trouble in the jungle, for the sake of a few representatives on the Legislative Council."

Mr Awbery was supported by Mr Proctor, who wondered whether "this narrow difference" of 7 per cent in the number of elected members asked for by the Alliance was "impossible of negotiation at the present time, bearing in mind all the great issues at stake in South-east Asia?"

Mr Lyttelton remained adamant, saying that it was not a question of small outstanding differences. The Malay Rulers, he said, were prepared to accept only a 53 per cent, elected majority. He

added that the High Commissioner was meeting the Rulers in July to discuss the proposal to appoint a constitutional commission.

The day before the Malayan debate on elections the Labour Members in the House of Commons returned to the subject again, and once more Mr Lyttelton said that he could do nothing until after the Rulers had met. Then Mr Proctor produced for the first time in public the compromise which had been suggested in private and was also being quietly canvassed in Malaya — that the High Commissioner should consult with the leader of the party commanding a majority support in the new council before filling the seven nominated seats.

Mr Lyttelton replied: "No. Two of these seats are to be filled by the Secretary for Defence and Member for Economic Affairs. The High Commissioner has the duty to use the remainder for the purposes indicated in the elections report. He cannot therefore undertake to use them to increase the majority of the party commanding major support among the elected members. In filling these seats, however, the High Commissioner will inform the majority leader of his intentions and take into account his views."

In Kuala Lumpur, the next day, the Alliance came under heavy fire during a five-and-a-half-hour debate on the elections Bill.

The Attorney-General, Mr Hogan, in launching the debate, said it was unreasonable to fear that any elected majority in the Council would be frustrated. He referred to the Secretary of State's assurance that if an elected majority was not successful he would ask the High Commissioner and the Rulers to find an immediate solution.

In political matters, he went on, it was always the maxim to take half the bread even if you could not get the whole loaf. "I hope it is not too late to appeal to those who have at this juncture withdrawn from the Council to consider again the question of giving this constitution a fair trial," he said.

He referred to "a matter on which they may possibly be under some misapprehension." This was the Gold Coast constitution, to which the Alliance had been "particularly attracted." This constitution provided a Council consisting of three *ex-officio* members, six nominated members, and seventy-five elected members. However, said Mr Hogan, only thirty-eight of the elected members were elected directly or indirectly by the people; the remainder, in fact,

were chosen by certain nominated and hereditary bodies of chiefs.

Mr Hogan said that in the Gold Coast elections of 1951 the People's Convention Party won thirty-four out of the thirty-eight seats to be filled by the popular vote, and its leader, Mr Nkrumah, declared the next day that the Gold Coast would remain within the Commonwealth, and that he was "prepared to give the present constitution a trial, although he did not think it would work."

Mr Hogan went on: "We know how brilliantly successful that trial has been. Would it not be a pity if we were not to go forward with these proposals, and if, after perhaps a year or two, somebody were to contrast the rate of progress in the Gold Coast with the rate in Malay, and somebody were then in position to answer that at the critical moment in the Gold Coast the leader of the majority party decided to suppress his doubts and to give the constitution a fair trial, and that fair trial has led to a very rapid progress, but in Malaya at a similar juncture, the leaders of two very important parties were not prepared to give the constitution a fair trial, and in that way political progress was hampered?"

The speakers who followed castigated the Alliance boycott in various terms — "an unorthodox and undesirable withdrawal of co-operation," "a challenge to the Government perhaps just as insidious as the Communist threat," "party rivalry should not be allowed to eclipse the larger interests of the nation." Onn bin Ja'afar called the Alliance demand for an independent commission "a device, and nothing more than a device, which arose from the fact that their members have been put into an awkward position."

The second reading of the Bill was passed; there was little opposition to its principles because of the absence of Alliance councillors.

Back in London, Lord Ogmore raised a voice in the House of Lords on behalf of the Alliance. He aksed if the Government would request the High Commissioner to arrange a meeting soon with the Rulers and the leaders of the Alliance. Lord Munster, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, replied, "The answer is in the negative."

Lord Ogmore persisted in asking the Minister if he would accept as a basis of compromise the proposal that the High Commissioner should consult the leader or leaders of the majority parties before filling the seven specially reserved seats. Lord Munster replied that

he would require notice before attempting to give a definite reply.

On July 1 Abdul Rahman and Cheng-lock Tan led a deputation of fourteen Alliance leaders to an audience with the Sultan of Johore, the first Malay Ruler to agree to hear their petition on the elections and constitutional reform. He saw them in an office in the Johore Government Secretariat, and listened to Dr Ismail, whose father had been his State Treasurer for years, read a petition which assured him that the Alliance walk-out of all councils and committees in Johore did not mean disloyalty to him or opposition to the Rulers generally.

The Sultan, always a forthright man — he had once declared in exasperation that politics was rending the people of his State in two — told the deputation that he could not commit himself until he had met his brother Rulers in the middle of the month.

The Sultan walked out to the terrace, where 2000 Malays had gathered to back the deputation. They chanted slogans and waved banners which cried, "Release us from Imperialism," "Abolish Colonialism," and "Support Independence," all subjects which had little to do with the issues of the moment.

The Sultan became a kindly father. He said to the gathering, "You should work together. Forget your differences. Unity is strength. If you quarrel in the morning forget about it in the evening."

Abdul Rahman described the audience with the Sultan as "a success"; he probably meant the fact that the Sultan had seen them.

Then a few days later, Malaya learned that a compromise might end the political crisis. It knew little, however, of the dramatic circumstances which led to peace again.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Drama about a Warship

The Government had naturally been uneasy about the boycott, which tended to weaken the common effort against the Communists. It also held the danger of erupting into violence in some places in the country.

Hence a need for early agreement arose — a feeling that had gained strength on all sides. It seemed that what might not have been acceptable only a short time before could now expect to find a measure of support from many quarters. It appeared possible that the assurance desired by the Alliance that the will of the majority among the elected members in the Legislative Council should not be thwarted might be found by calling in aid those appointments of nominated members which were to be made at the High Commissioner's discretion.

The support from these five seats for the party in power could materially promote the strength of its majority in a closely divided chamber. Also the nominations opened the prospect of strengthening the prospective Cabinet with members who for one reason or another might not wish to seek election.

Certain Government officers became convinced that such a solution could be worked out not only with the Alliance, but also without incurring any undue opposition or criticism from the leaders and members of other political parties.

The first Government feeler was put out by Hogan, with the approval of MacGillivray. Hogan was perhaps the best choice for the role of mediator. His personal relations with the U.M.N.O. and M.C.A. leaders were the friendliest; Abdul Rahman and his colleagues respected his impartiality and tact.

Another man who became closely concerned in the preliminary

moves and conversations was Mr David Gray, then acting Chief Secretary, an expert on Chinese whose knowledge and experience were respected by all political leaders.

Hogan and Gray began informal talks in Kuala Lumpur with Lee, who kept in touch with Abdul Rahman in Johore Bahru by telephone. Abdul Rahman was prepared to seek a solution on these lines, but he was anxious about the manner in which any High Commissioner would carry out consultations with the majority party before making appointments. A High Commissioner, he thought, would undoubtedly "agree to consult," but did that mean he would follow the advice of the leaders of the majority party?

It looked as if a meeting between MacGillivray and the principal Alliance leaders would prove fruitful. Sir Donald, however, had a long time before planned to tour the east-coast States to complete his first formal visits to all the Malay Rulers. He was scheduled to travel on the Royal Navy frigate H.M.S. *Alert*, and to leave Singapore on the night of Friday, July 2. His programme could not be changed, and because strict security enveloped his movements his actual whereabouts were secret.

It was arranged, therefore, that Hogan should fly to Singapore on July 2, and then drive the sixteen miles back to Johore Bahru for preliminary discussions with Abdul Rahman and Ismail, who lived there, and Lee, who would also fly from Kuala Lumpur. If this meeting looked likely to produce an agreement, then all four would meet MacGillivray later in the evening.

Abdul Rahman and his colleagues met Hogan in the home of the British Adviser in Johore Bahru.

The talks began at 6 p.m., and showed there was a very good prospect of reaching an understanding which would be satisfactory to both sides. The dinner that followed blended relief with anxiety — relief that the door to a solution was now beginning to open, anxiety lest it would be banged shut again by the difficulty of reconciling the Alliance desire for an explicit assurance about the nominated members with the freedom of choice contemplated by the majority recommendation which had been adopted by the Government. The task of expressing that reconciliation in terms generally acceptable on all sides was yet to come, but Mr Hogan's optimism — and he was in the better position to assess the measure of common thinking on both sides — gradually communicated

itself to the others.

After coffee and liqueurs the party got into cars, which drove south over the causeway and then turned left into the massive darkness and silence of the giant Naval Base.

It was then that Abdul Rahman had his first really unkind thoughts.

Was this a British trick to get him aboard a ship which would take him to exile in the Seychelles Islands, in the Indian Ocean, to which the British Government had once been fond of sending Malays whom they considered "dangerous" to the "good order" of the country?

He told himself that he was a fool for thinking that way; he had done nothing serious enough to justify 'exile.' But the unhappy thoughts prevailed; in fact, they ceased only when he saw the smiles on British faces in the Admiral's quarters aboard the frigate and the range of refreshment that awaited the party. . . . .

It was a pitch-dark night. The Naval Base was deserted, of course, and the only activity was that around *Alert*. Her departure had been delayed, and naval officers who met the small group at the gangway must have felt some curiosity as they conducted Hogan and Abdul Rahman and the others across the long after-deck to the Admiral's quarters, where MacGillivray was installed.

"Drink, Tunku?" MacGillivray was at his friendliest.

So over the glasses the dramatically backgrounded talks began. They sat in easy-chairs and talked in intimate surroundings. Within a couple of hours there was an understanding.

There was little doubt that the Alliance leaders began the talks with some suspicion; they did not know how far MacGillivray was prepared to go, and the memory of their first meeting with him prevailed, even if it had stopped rankling. Slowly but perceptibly the atmosphere changed.

Both sides were conscious of the problems facing them. The Alliance members would have the difficult task of explaining to their followers any understanding they reached and the reasons why they had accepted a compromise. The Government would have similar explanations to make to the leaders of other parties who were Members in the Government. Since the subject affected the constitutional understandings on which the government of the country would in future be carried on, MacGillivray had to be

careful not to commit himself prematurely to a step which before it was adopted had first to be communicated to the British Government and to the Malay Rulers.

When MacGillivray and Abdul Rahman parted well after midnight the basic principles of a settlement had been established; Abdul Rahman was satisfied that MacGillivray intended not only to consult but also to act in agreement with the leader of the elected majority in filling the reserved nominated seats, and he was also satisfied that all Alliance Legislative Councillors who had resigned would be reappointed when the crisis ended.

He accepted the difficulties that faced the restoration to their seats of members of councils and boards and committees in the Malay States because this was the prerogative of the Malay Rulers. MacGillivray had, however, indicated his preparedness to urge the Rulers to agree to the reappointments.

Alert sailed two hours behind schedule; back in Johore Bahru, Abdul Rahman chucklingly said to Ismail, "And I thought we were going to the Seychelles."

Hogan left for Kuala Lumpur. His talks with other political figures that day indicated that the developments contemplated would not be opposed in non-Alliance circles.

Abdul Rahman and his colleagues had a more difficult time. They had first of all to persuade the other members of the Alliance Roundtable that they had done right in meeting MacGillivray and then in reaching an understanding. Certain members not unnaturally demanded clarification and precise definitions on points of detail. Abdul Rahman was asked some awkward questions, mainly about the form and content of the assurances to be given by MacGillivray. He appealed for patience because the precise terms of agreement were being worked out.

The points of detail assumed tremendous importance, particularly when drafting the precise terms of the letters to be exchanged between Sir Donald and Abdul Rahman which would contain the assurances intended to operate in future.

Hogan and Gray kept in touch with MacGillivray as he travelled up the east coast via the radio-telephone aboard *Alert*. They also reached him by land-line telephone when he called at small towns along the coast. Thus there was little delay in hammering out points of detail.

Abdul Rahman and Ismail came to Kuala Lumpur for the final discussions with Hogan and Gray. In the memories of those who participated in this drama the Monday after the meeting in Singapore was the most difficult day. A measure of conflict and disagreement seemed to develop, and at one time it looked as if the whole understanding might collapse.

Eventually both sides agreed on the form of assurances which should be embodied in a public exchange of letters. A telephone-call was made to MacGillivray. He agreed to the final drafts.

On July 6 when *Alert* anchored off Kuala Trengganu, Sir Donald boarded a special plane and flew to Kuala Lumpur. In King's House he first signed a letter, dated that day and addressed to Abdul Rahman, pre-dated the next day, in which he gave a final assurance to the Alliance and other political parties. After informing Executive Councillors of what he had done MacGillivray flew back to Kuala Trengganu to resume his trip.

Sir Donald wrote in his first letter:

> I am writing to clarify the course I intend to pursue when appointing the "nominated reserve" members. These members are not to be appointed by me until the election is completed, and the appointments are to be made in the light of the results of that election.
>
> Apart from the officials whom all are agreed should fill two of these seats, the primary purpose of these members is to give a voice in the Council to any important element which had not found adequate representation in the Council through the electoral process.
>
> In giving effect to this purpose, it would, I believe, be inappropriate for me to send these representatives into Council to oppose the policy of the majority amongst the elected members; indeed, this might well be regarded as thwarting or frustrating the wishes of the electorate as expressed at the polls, and as being inconsistent with the promotion of that harmony and close identity between the legislature as a whole and the executive which the Elections Committee unanimously indicated in their Report should be the constant aim of the High Commissioner.
>
> The purpose of these seats as well as the basic intention of the constitution will, I believe, be more readily

> and appropriately achieved by filling these seats with representatives chosen for the purposes indicated in the report, who are not likely to find themselves out of harmony with major political opinion in the Council as reflected amongst the elected members, and consequently less able to inform and guide that opinion effectively.
>
> It is, therefore, my intention to consult with the leader or leaders of the majority amongst the elected members before making appointments to these seats.
>
> I hope that with this statement of intention, you will find yourselves able to co-operate in the establishment of the new constitutional arrangements and to give your support to the legislative measures.

Abdul Rahman replied that the Alliance were satisfied that the proposed constitutional arrangements had a "reasonable prospect of working satisfactorily," and were therefore prepared to extend their support of them and to resume participation in Government at all levels.

The next day, July 7, the Alliance called off the three-weeks-old boycott and began "Operation Status Quo." The crisis ended, but the scheduled meetings between Alliance leaders and the Rulers were carried out.

Political observers in Kuala Lumpur who look back to the crisis like to pose two questions in weighing the events. Would the solution ultimately found after the boycott had begun have been acceptable to Abdul Rahman and the Alliance had it been offered to them at the outset? And would it have been acceptable to Onn bin Ja'afar and his Negara colleagues, who at the time were strongly represented in the Executive Council and could command a majority in the Legislative Council, if it had been offered at the outset?

Possibly the actual giving of the assurance did carry the matter further than had been contemplated by the Alliance's opponents who formed the majority side in the elections committee. Certain Government circles, however, did feel that in filling the nominated seats a wise High Commissioner would almost inevitably seek to place in them individuals likely to prove sympathetic to and able to work in harmony with the party in power.

The crucial period was, of course, the meeting in *Alert*. Because agreement was reached the seeds of much that followed — right up to the day three years later when Abdul Rahman proclaimed Malaya's independence — were planted then.

When it is remembered how and why the British first came to Malaya there was perhaps something symbolic in the scene being laid in one of Her Majesty's ships moored in the straits between Singapore and the Federation.

Abdul Rahman on his part sees this significance in his drive through the Naval Base: it started him and his colleagues on the road to independence.

In the end the boycott actually helped Government and politicians to understand each other better. The surmounting of an obstacle in friendly fashion became an aid to mutual respect.

From then on every step that led to the final act of independence was to be marked by friendly and cordial discussions and relations between the Government and the party in power, and particularly the two individuals in power, Abdul Rahman and MacGillivray, who became firm friends.

As for Abdul Rahman, many of his friends think that with the boycott and its solution his sense of confidence, and particularly his sense of responsibility, developed. The crisis had been a particularly important one for him personally.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The Road to Independence

The way became clear for the Alliance to begin planning their manifesto and their campaign for the elections. As a preliminary, Abdul Rahman and Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan carried out an exhaustive and exhausting five-day tour of towns and villages in North Malaya. This had a dual purpose. First, they wanted to impress upon the Malays that unity existed between the leaders of the two communal parties. Secondly, they spread the word about the elections — and independence.

Abdul Rahman in a score of speeches emphasized the importance of the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. staying together if independence was to be won. Sir Cheng-lock reiterated that theme, declaring, "Malaya's future and prosperity depend on the success of the Alliance, which is striving to get the country's two major communities united."

On August 15 Abdul Rahman attended the wedding of his daughter, Kathijah, to Tuan Syed Hussain Shabbudin, a son of an old friend, Syed Abu Bakar. Three days later he was present when the Legislative Council unanimously passed the Bill which amended the Federation Agreement to allow the introducing of Federal elections. Mr Hogan made a brilliant speech. Dwelling not only on the anxieties of self-government, but on its opportunities, he declared that Malaya's material resources and its racial tolerances could make people confidently expect the self-government would be a success.

He warned, however, that the opportunities would not be grasped or the aspirations of the people realized unless "those who get power do not mistake the temptations of power for the realities of service." Parliamentary democracy was probably the highest form

of government.

Hogan went on: "We have in recent years seen a large number of countries in Asia and elsewhere step out on this road of Parliamentary democracy. Some have taken the transition in their stride, others have staggered a little at the start when they have found the burdens heavier than they anticipated or else were less well-prepared for them. They will recover and will go on like the others, but in the meantime there will have been a heavy cost in the happiness of their people and in the diminution of their economic strength.

"It is better to avoid this cost at the start; it is better to avoid such losses if we can."

He gave the assurance that the policy of self-government was "entirely welcome to Great Britain" and "entirely in accord with Great Britain's hopes and her record throughout the world." The policy of self-government, he emphasized, was not being forced on Great Britain, but was being adopted freely and voluntarily by her and by the Malay Rulers. "They are," declared Hogan emphatically, "quite determined to do their utmost to make a success of this policy in this country."

He finally said it was unlikely that the Federal elections would be held before the middle of the next year. Abdul Rahman and his colleagues accepted this statement without demur.

But from then on the Alliance concentrated their efforts on preparing for all elections. They organized hundreds of volunteers from the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. to help in the registration of voters. They then took a decisive step: they set up a thirty-man "National Council" to be the supreme executive authority in the Alliance to deal with policy, and to replace the Roundtable, which had had no executive power. The Alliance had come to stay as a political party.

Abdul Rahman was proclaimed "Leader of the Alliance." The way was clear for him to be leader of the next Government.

Elections to two State legislatures were contested during the year. In Johore the Alliance won a 100 per cent victory. All its candidates were returned to the sixteen seats. The Alliance captured 64 per cent., or 94,500 votes. Party Negara polled 9.4 per cent., or 10,160 votes. Independents polled 3185 votes. A total of 85 per cent of the electorate voted. This success showed that

nothing except a completely revitalized Party Negara would have any hope of securing any representation on the Federal Legislative Council the next year.

Abdul Rahman himself declared that the Alliance success was a revelation. He added, "I am overwhelmed. Our success has proved that people are thinking along party lines, and not along communal lines." He was referring to the fact that Malays had voted for Chinese candidates and for a Sinhalese.

Nineteen days later the election scene shifted to the east-coast State of Trengganu, where one unusual feature was that the candidates paid no deposit because many of them were too poor. Thirty-three candidates — fishermen, clerks, village leaders, and retired Government officers — contested twelve seats. Once again the Alliance made a clean sweep, polling 56,554 votes against Negara's 7169 and the 4702 by independents.

After the Johore and Trengganu successes Abdul Rahman began to believe that the Federal elections would be a walk-over for the Alliance. He was not far wrong.

Before the end of the year Abdul Rahman found himself a member of the Federation War Executive Committee which was responsible for conducting the campaign against the terrorists. Lieutenant-General (now General) Sir Geoffrey Bourne, the Director of Operations, had asked the High Commissioner to agree to the revolutionary move of bringing public representation into his war committee, which up to that time consisted only of Service and Government members. He wanted to associate "all sections of the Malayan community with what is undoubtedly a Malayan Emergency."

With Abdul Rahman were Onn bin Ja'afar, the Member for Home Affairs, who also represented the Party Negara; Colonel Lee, the Member for Transport and vice-president of the Malayan Chinese Association; the Member for Posts and Tele-communications, Mr V.M.N. Menon, an Indian, who was a member of Party Negara; and a European, the Member for Works, Mr R.B. Carey.

It was significant that in this committee the politicians were able to sink party differences in the common aim of ending the Emergency.

Abdul Rahman pledged the U.M.N.O.'s "all-out support" to help end the Emergency when he opened another general assembly of

the party in October. He told the members, "We will win independence only when the Emergency is over, and we must therefore do our part to help speed this up."

Very soon afterwards Abdul Rahman came out with a suggestion for "shortening the Emergency." He urged that a general amnesty should be offered to the Communists. He did not press the Federation Government to take this course; he proposed that the Alliance should offer the amnesty "should it emerge from the Federation elections with a majority." The Government had indeed from time to time considered an amnesty, but had not felt strongly that it would be effective. Abdul Rahman had much to learn yet about Communists. It was only at the end of 1955 that he realized from first-hand experience how tough and unyielding they were, and also how determined to be content not with an amnesty alone, but with nothing less than political recognition.

Early in March 1955 the Government announced that July 27 would be Election Day. Nomination Day would be June 15. The Legislative Council would be dissolved on June 2.

Onn bin Ja'afar resigned as Member for Home Affairs to devote himself exclusively to the rejuvenation of Party Negara for the great political battle. He worked so indefatigably that as the election day crept nearer political observers believed that Negara would dent the tremendous armour of the Alliance.

As one put it, "Onn converted the Negara from a flabby and lethargic organization into a militant political machine." However, as events proved, aggressiveness and enthusiasm were not sufficient against the ground organization of the Alliance.

As the weeks went by senior Malay officers in the Government service resigned to contest the elections, supremely confident about being returned. Very early on Dato Abdul Razak cleared the way for the U.M.N.O. members to resign. He gave up his job as Mentri Besar of Pahang, to which he had some time before been elevated.

The political air became marked with speeches in which Negara speakers, with Onn prominent, strove to break the U.M.N.O.-M.C.A. combination. The speeches were communalistic in vein. Onn undoubtedly did himself and his party a disservice. His remarks alienated a large number of Chinese who had been thinking of supporting Negara because they were unhappy about the

M.C.A. alliance with the Malays.

In the Legislative Council vote-catching manoeuvres dominated the remaining sessions. The debates were more vigorous than they had ever been, but their purpose was to win political advantage. The experienced hand and superior political intelligence of Onn were behind most of the manoeuvres.

For instance, the U.M.N.O. were mortified when Negara introduced a resolution that the national language of the Federation "shall be Malay whatever other official languages may have to be used from time to time in the country." The debate in the Council turned into a violent political wrangle.

Alliance speakers protested against the "vicious" Negara attacks on the Chinese and against "attempts to create disunity" between the Malays and Chinese. They vehemently described the resolution as vote-catching. Abdul Rahman realized that the whole Council had to show accord with the sentiment behind the resolution, so pacifyingly he said, "Malay is and will be the national language when the time comes. It is the aim of all the people in the country to found one single language which will have the profound effect of unifying them."

The resolution achieved its expected result — a unanimous vote.

Into the political arena at this time stepped the Malayan Indian Congress, which was anxious to participate in the Federal elections. The Congress, the only Indian political party in Malaya, wanted to hitch its wagon to a star. It was divided within itself on whether the star should be the Negara or the Alliance. It decided to approach both and weigh the results.

Negara were not prepared to receive a communal organization unless its members merged themselves into the party. The Alliance ultimately agreed to accept the M.I.C. as the third racial link in the chain. So it became the U.M.N.O.-M.C.A.-M.I.C. Alliance.

On April 10 the Alliance National Council met in Kuala Lumpur for the first time. Abdul Rahman, presiding, declared to the members that their "whole thought and planning" for the future "must be for Malaya as a whole, and not for personal or communal advantage, as otherwise the whole object and purpose of this Council would be lost — and Malaya could stand to lose."

A sincere man himself, Abdul Rahman placed sincerity on a high plane. He stressed the fact that in "our constitutional struggle

for independence we will meet with obstacles which will be many and varied. My advice to you is to be brave and go forward without any fear or misgivings, and, above all, be honest and sincere whatever may be the consequences."

He emphasized the need for a spirit of co-operation, goodwill, and friendship among the races. It was only in that spirit "that much can be done for this country or ours and the people, and it is only in that spirit that we can make sure that the independence of this country will be won."

He went on: "The object of our Council is to narrow the gulf of misunderstanding and suspicion which exists in this country among the various races. Once that misunderstanding and suspicion is removed we will know one another better. We will know also that the races which have lived in this country for so long cannot do without one another, and that they have to live on the best terms with one another in order to make Malaya a peaceful and a prosperous country and her people happy."

In the days that followed, however, the wrangles that occured within the three-party organization over the distribution of seats in the elections often made Abdul Rahman despair. Most of the trouble came from the more nationalistic sections of the U.M.N.O., who wanted Malays to have nothing less than 90 per cent of the seats. They wished to operate on the basis of the numerical strength of the various races in the electorate.

The analysis of the voting strengths of the races were revealing. Of the 1,280,865 voters, 1,077,562, or 84.2 per cent, were Malays and only 142,947, or 11.2 per cent, were Chinese. Most of the remaining 4.6 per cent were Indians. Chinese outnumbered Malay electors in only two constituencies — Georgetown, the capital of Penang, and Ipoh, the tin-mining capital of Perak. In thirty-seven of the remaining fifty constituencies Malays formed more than 75 per cent of the electorate. The experts estimated that about 300,000 people who were eligible to vote had failed to register. Most of them were Chinese. It was therefore with knowledge of the power of their own electorate that the U.M.N.O. sections aggressively demanded "90 per cent or nothing."

The Chinese kept mute in public on this point, but blamed their officials for not having worked hard enough to inspire Chinese to register as voters or to encourage them to become citizens.

There was, of course, a much more cogent reason for the tremendous dearth of Chinese voters. Many Chinese were indifferent towards politics, feeling that in an independent country the Malays would dominate in the Government and would tolerate other races only in the economic world. Abdul Rahman declared at a meeting of the Youth sections of the three parties that there was political apathy among the Chinese, who needed "persuasion."

He stressed the need for the Alliance to win the elections by a great majority. He said he feared the consequences of a Coalition Government. He feared that independence would be delayed if a coalition existed in the Federation. The Alliance, he revealed, for the first time, aimed to get independence four years after the elections, and, he added, "If the other parties don't want it by then, how can we have a successful coalition?"

Abdul Rahman was guilty in these days of making tactless remarks because he had not yet schooled himself to be cautious. On one occasion he declared, "Only independence can save the Malay people. . . . .who have to overcome their inferiority complex which they acquired under foreign rule." On another he said, "To me bad government is better than foreign government; I cannot put it more strongly than that." Yet not long before making his statement he had envisaged an independent Malaya which would be "an example" to the world in its "good administration, close relationship among various communities, healthy living conditions for the people, and a stable economy." No wonder that his critics said he was urging the people to accept chaos if that was to be the price of self-rule.

There seemed also some "unreal thinking," as one observer put it, over the target date for independence. Three months before Abdul Rahman had expressed uncertainty about when the Federation might be independent. His political partner, Dato Sir Chenglock Tan, spoke of a process stretching over ten years. Now Abdul Rahman spoke in terms of "four years." He was consequently described as a "reckless and impatient man."

The final Alliance political sensation came in May after a Legislative Council meeting in which they had suffered defeat on a Negara resolution calling for restrictions on the use of private motor vehicles on polling day. Seven Government officials had abstained from voting. Abdul Rahman accused the Government of

dishonouring a pledge not to limit the use of cars on polling day, and complained that the abstentions had cost the Alliance a narrow victory by one vote. He described the resolution as "a calculated conspiracy to cripple the Alliance in its election campaign." The Government by abstaining from voting was "weak and reactionary" and "afraid of honouring its own decision."

Abdul Rahman, Ismail, and Lee resigned from the Executive Council in protest. Their official reason for resigning was that "in the present circumstances, when elections are approaching and matters involving controversial issues are being raised and have to be decided by the Government, it is not possible to maintain a sufficient measure of cohesion within the Government as was demonstrated by the proceedings in the Legislative Council."

MacGillivray issued a statement which Abdul Rahman had agreed to: "While His Excellency feels regret that they have thought it necessary to resign over this issue, he recognizes that with the approach of elections representatives of different parties are finding increasing difficulty in working together in the Government, and he would not wish to ask them to remain against their will."

Abdul Rahman, Ismail, and Lee did not, however, resign their seats in the Legislative Council, because they felt it imperative to add their weight to any controversial resolutions which might be raised before the dissolution of the Council on June 2.

The resignations were neither ominous nor important. One Alliance leader admitted some time later that they had resigned "as a political stunt." There was little of importance to be decided in the Executive Council, which had nearly reached the stage of being a 'Caretaker' Government, but there was much the three men could do in the political field in the two months left before elections.

Truth to tell, the Alliance were not perturbed over the restrictions on the use of motor-cars on polling day, but it seemed a good principle on which to protest. But their attack on the Government officers who had abstained from voting was unfair. On obvious political issues Government votes one way or the other would have invited charges of partisanship. In this instance abstention equally laid them open to criticism.

It was perhaps wrong that there should be restriction on trans-

port on election day, because many constituencies were large and the public transport system was inadequate.

This though was a slight problem compared to that which Abdul Rahman had to face in the embarrassing and continued U.M.N.O. demands for Malays to form 90 per cent of the Alliance candidates in the elections. He finally had to issue a threat to resign from the U.M.N.O. if the demand persisted.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Elections Won

Abdul Rahman was testing his strength in the U.M.N.O. when he stood up at the half-yearly General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur and threatened to resign if it agreed to the demand that 90 per cent of the election candidates should be Malays.

"A prerequisite to independence," he declared, "is willingness to make sacrifices. We in Malaya do not need to sacrifice our lives for our objective. Ours is a constitutional struggle, and it only needs sacrifice of racial selfishness.

"In the past few months a section of our members have fallen victims to the influence of our enemies. I would like to remind this section that it was in combination with the M.C.A. that we demanded that Federal elections should be held. It was with the M.C.A. that we boycotted the Councils; now, however, when the Federal elections have come, these members do not want to give fair consideration to our friends."

He appealed to the assembly to be "careful lest independence which is within sight and grasp will disappear, and God only will know when we shall have the same opportunity that is before us now."

He went on to say that if the Assembly refused to be more liberal towards their friends it meant that they had no more confidence in the U.M.N.O. Central Executive Committee. He and his committee were therefore prepared to resign.

Abdul Rahman received a unanimous vote of confidence. From then on no more was heard about "90 per cent seats for the Malays." Nevertheless up to Election Day Abdul Rahman, Abdul Razak, and Ismail, and his brother Sulaiman, went around the country urging Malays to forget racial interests and to support

Chinese or Indian candidates put up for election by the Alliance.

They tried to thump home the need for Malays to show their understanding of the real meaning of the word 'alliance.' They pointed to the fact that in municipal and Town Council elections the M.C.A. had voluntarily given seats to Malays in areas where Chinese voters predominated.

These appeals swung Malay opinion. Inside the Alliance National Council the M.C.A. agreed to give up several strong Chinese Federal constituencies to Malays. They also agreed that they would not insist on Chinese candidates in the peculiarly Malay east-coast states of Pahang, Trengganu, and Kelantan.

In the middle of May the Alliance issued its election manifesto, entitled *The Road to Independence*. It was a book of forty pages, a most comprehensive document, which the *Straits Times* editorially said was "a painstaking attempt to get to grips with the Federation's problems." Its pages embraced administration, the Emergency, the social services, labour, economic and financial policy, local government, political reform, and town and country planning.

This mighty platform had been built up by the Alliance's political committee, of which Abdul Rahman was chairman, over the course of nearly a year. In a way it was a study of the political and economic problems of the Federation, and, what was most important, it was the result of an earnest attempt to reconcile many of the interests of Malaya's two largest communities.

However, on one pressing issue — creating unity and a common loyalty by widening the doors to citizenship — the manifesto made no definite stand. It was obvious that the M.C.A. had stepped off the platform from which it had once stridently demanded the acceptance of the principle of *jus soli* by which every one born in the country acquired nationality as a birthright. This principle had, however, been opposed by a sunstantial majority of Malays, and in addition the fact that only 11.2 per cent of the Federal electorate were Chinese forced the M.C.A. to decide to silence its demand. The Alliance, therefore, had taken the middle course of suggesting that the problem of citizenship should be solved by an independent commission which would review constitutional reform.

The manifesto called for independence in four years, asserting that "the peoples of Malaya have reached the stage where they can manage their own affairs." It also declared that the Emergency

could be ended by offering first a general amnesty, and if this failed "by mobilizing all our resources and seeking all foreign aid to increase the vigour and intensity of the fight against the terrorists."

The future legislature would be on the British model, a bicameral legislature with a fully elected House of Assembly and an Upper House. The Alliance also pledged that the special position of the Malay Rulers as constitutional heads of their respective States would be recognized.

Party Negara had issued their manifesto some weeks before. They pledged independence by 1960, and in a form which would be decided by a constituent assembly. The Malay Rulers would retain the functions and privileges of constitutional monarchs. There would be a single nationality law, so that "Malaya can sail forward as a compact unit, and not like a convoy at sea."

Negara took cautious lines in their approaches to economic, financial, and social problems.

Since his resignation from the Government Onn bin Ja'afar had been electioneering extensively for his party. He had travelled with extraordinary energy to towns by road, rail, and air, and to kampongs by boat and bicycle and on foot. By Nomination Day he became confident that his party would win many seats.

Indeed, a few weeks before Nomination Day he had been confident enough to announce that he had chosen Johore Bahru as his battle-ground. He challenged Abdul Rahman to meet him there, to which Abdul Rahman replied, "I have not made up my mind where I shall stand. It is for the Party to decide."

Nomination Day, Wednesday, June 15, was an exciting day for Malaya. The Alliance proved the only party to put up candidates in every one of the fifty-two constituencies. Thirty-five were Malays, fifteen were Chinese, and two were Indians.

Party Negara had thirty candidates, twenty-nine of them Malays and one Chinese. Twenty-nine candidates came from four other minor political parties, and eighteen were independents. There were to be six four-cornered and fourteen three-cornered contests and thirty-one straight fights.

Abdul Rahman was standing in the Sungei Muda constituency in South Kedah, his old District Officer's stamping-ground of Sungei Patani, where he had a tremendous following. His opponent was an old schoolmaster of his, standing as an independent.

Onn bin Ja'afar was opposed by Sulaiman bin Dato Abdul Rahman, a lawyer in Johore, who had won election to the Johore State Council.

Onn's brashness in declaring his battleground weeks before had given the Alliance plenty of time to choose their candidate, but this had been no easy task. It was a measure of Onn's prestige that several of the U.M.N.O. men from Johore declined the doubtful privilege of jousting with him in the political arena. They were not prepared "to be sacrificed."

Abdul Rahman finally asked one of his staunchest lieutenants, Sulaiman bin Dato Abdul Rahman, brother of Dr Ismail, to pit himself against Onn. It was a shrewd choice. Sulaiman, like Onn, came from a family which was well-known in Johore Bahru.

Abdul Rahman was certain that Sulaiman would defeat Onn. He felt that Onn had still not retrieved much of the affection and support from Malays in South Johore which he had lost after throwing the U.M.N.O. overboard.

Political pollsters who analysed the line-up in the fifty-two constituencies felt that the Alliance were taking a tremendous risk in putting up seventeen non-Malay candidates, and many of them in constituencies in which Malay votes predominated. The Alliance had to win practically all the fifty-two seats if they were to command an effective majority in the new legislature. Were they not therefore placing too great a faith in the readiness of voters to disregard communal feelings?

Abdul Rahman was superbly confident that there would be no communal voting. "I would not be at all surprised if we win all fifty-two seats," he said, and remarked on the superior machinery of the Alliance. "It will," he said, "steamroll through every kampong, village, and town."

A British officer in the Government who met Abdul Rahman a few days before polling recalls, "Abdul Rahman prophesied that the Alliance would win fifty-one seats." He was bothered about only one constituency, and felt that that was where the Alliance would lose.

"He prophesied correctly," said the officer. "The seat the Alliance lost was exactly where he said they would lose."

Abdul Rahman came into his element during the month's electioneering before polling day. One M.C.A. leader said, "He cam-

paigned for everybody else except himself. He went to his constituency only a few days before polling; he was so well-known there that it really did not matter."

Abdul Rahman tirelessly concentrated on assisting the campaigns for non-Malay candidates. He ordered all the U.M.N.O. leaders to follow in his wake in constituencies where Chinese were candidates and where the Malay vote was absolutely vital. One candidate, after a rally at which Abdul Rahman spoke, said, "He is worth a thousand votes to me."

He travelled by motor-boat, lorry, jeep, motor-cycle, and trishaw in intensive tours in which he made an average of four speeches a day. In a Taoist cave temple outside Ipoh, in Perak, he said, "We are not cocky; we will leave it to God. It is against any religion to be cocky and overconfident. We have worked very hard, and if we lose it will not be for not trying."

At a rally in a Malay village outside Kuala Lumpur, where he introduced a Chinese candidate, Abdul Rahman said, "Stooges have gone about the country saying that I have sold the U.M.N.O. to the M.C.A. and the Malays to the Chinese. I want to tell you all that no amount of money can buy the Malay race. The Malays can be bought only with my life."

There were, or course, the usual electioneering charges and counter-charges of "dirty tricks" and "unfair tactics" made by Negara and by the Alliance.

Onn bin Ja'afar, in Johore Bahru, attacked the Alliance for an alleged smear campaign conducted by its agents himself, his wife, and members of his family. He alleged that friends had received anonymous letters which made "the most scurrilous and wild insinuations against the personal character of my wife and members of my family."

These were serious charges, and Abdul Rahman, who wanted a fair campaign above all, gave immediate orders that campaigners were not to hurl personal abuse or make personal allegations.

In his own speeches Abdul Rahman attacked the tactics of a group of electioneers who, he said, "professed to belong to a non-communal party." Their speeches, he said, were aimed at fostering inter-racial suspicion and hatred. "These," he said, "are no doubt meant to win votes, but at the same time they incite the Malays to quarrel with non-Malays. I strongly resent and deplore most bitter-

ly any utterance which can produce only one effect, and that is a breach of peace.

"Whatever our political creed, we must make it our duty first and foremost to work for the unity of all people, for it is only with this unity that independence can be won and is well worth winning."

Abdul Rahman was hot on the trail of any campaigner who advocated communalism. He went to North Kedah, where an independent opponent, a religious teacher, had distributed a circular which asked constituents not to vote for "infidels" and urged Muslims to back "only Muslims." Abdul Rahman declaimed, "Such intolerance is highly dangerous. It is so vicious and potentially explosive that it must be stopped; I intend to stop it. We don't want religious warfare. I consider it the wickedest thing to cause blood to flow."

He asked his audience, "Do you want to see your women and children die or cause other women and children to die? It is the duty of politicians to keep and maintain peace, and not to create strife and trouble."

It was not until the last week that Abdul Rahman began his personal campaign in Kedah. "I have forgotten how to rest," he told a newspaperman who accompanied him for several days. "I live from hour to hour."

An observer who watched him during the campaign said at the time, "His oratory is by no means of the highest order, but he speaks with a simplicity and directness that strikes a responsive chord in his audience. Wherever he goes, however unpunctual his schedule, whole villages turn up to meet him with the raised clenched fist and the resounding cry of *'Merdeka!'*

"When he rises to leave he is immediately surrounded by villagers who want to shake his hand or ask for his autograph. He is in some respects a political showman, but there is nothing showy in his atitude towards the masses. He genuinely enjoys meeting the people."

Abdul Rahman motored daily from early morning to midnight. He usually stopped for a meal at midday. He chewed groundnuts the rest of the time. Whenever he was overcome with tiredness he took a cat-nap. Then, after a quick shower and a change of clothes, he emerged, fresh and cheerful, prepared to make another speech.

One night his motor-car broke down after crawling along miles of winding, isolated roads in a district which once had been a black terrorist area. There was nothing for it but to manhandle the car to the nearest village. Abdul Rahman was given the privilege of sitting at the wheel while his friends pushed. After some miles they saw the friendly lights of a village, but its gate was closed. Home Guards on duty at the gate shouted, "Who's there?" The magic word "*Merdeka!*" in Abdul Rahman's well-known voice replied, and the gates swung open.

Abdul Rahman travelled light. In a small cheap plastic net bag he carried a spare shirt, a tin of cigarettes, and a box of matches. Sometimes before arriving at a village where he was to make a speech he would do a quick change in his car. His speeches were extemporaneous, suited to his audience.

Down in South Malaya, Onn bin Ja'afar was showing unbounded confidence. He remarked, "I have between sixty and seventy per cent of the voters in Johore Bahru town on my side. In the rural areas I can count on about 55 per cent."

He had a ready answer for every heckler. He interjected notes of scorn into his attacks on the Alliance. He had his own tactics. This is how he described them: "It is no use rushing into a kampong and fixing a loudspeaker to a tree and expecting a crowd to be waiting. You have to be prepared to talk with a few of the local people, to listen to their complaints, and to answer their questions. After twenty minutes or so the crowd will be there, then you can start to talk."

The eve of polling day Abdul Rahman spent in the U.M.N.O. house in Alor Star. He telephoned every Alliance State headquarters along the west coast to find out if everything was all right and ready for the morrow. After that he chatted with friends and relaxed — a welcome break after twenty-eight days' roaming.

The morrow would show whether Negara's deliberate house-to-house canvassing and quiet talks as opposed to the Alliance's gigantic rallies would succeed. The question that evening was not whether the Alliance would be the majority party in power, but what majority they would possess.

Conservative "on-the-eve" forecasting gave the Alliance between thirty and thirty-five seats and Negara between eight and twelve, which would have satisfied Negara, because they had

always proclaimed that their aim in the elections was to provide "a strong opposition" to the Alliance in the Legislative Council. Negara hoped, however, that their own victories and those of other "anti-Alliance" parties and of independents would bring the necessary minimum of twenty-seven seats for government by a coalition.

The Alliance on their part depended a great deal on a full-turn out of Chinese voters, and towards this end had taken considerable pains to educate this section of the electorate. The Federal Supervisor of Elections himself had said once that at least half the electorate was illiterate, and therefore a large number of people would go to the polls with little idea of what they were doing, "although the amount of propaganda that has been thrown at them is nobody's business."

A few minutes before eight o'clock the next morning Abdul Rahman left his home and drove to a polling station in a Malay school. He called out *"Merdeka!"* to a waiting queue, and entered the station on the stroke of the hour to cast his vote.

He returned home, gathered his family and his household staff round him, drew the outline of a ballot-form on a sheet of paper, and showed them where to mark their crosses. After breakfast he left on whirlwind tour of polling stations in the State before turning his car south to Kuala Lumpur.

Malay women dressed in their best clothes led the march to the polls throughout Malaya. Husbands turned baby-sitters to give their wives time off to vote. In Kota Bahru, in Kelantan, a wife of the Sultan cast a vote. Curfews were lifted in many bad areas to enable people to vote after dark when they returned from the fields. Helicopters and motor-boats stood by to carry ballot-boxes back from isolated stations.

Abdul Rahman motored south slowly with Mr T.H. Tan, the executive secretary of the Alliance, stopping at polling stations en route. They arrived at Kuala Lumpur at 7 p.m., an hour before polling closed.

A sudden desire for solitude descended on Abdul Rahman. He decided that he did not want to sit in the hectic atmosphere of Alliance headquarters. Tan recalls, "We thought that he should not go to his usual haunts, otherwise he would be spotted. So I took him to my room in my hotel, and there we sat listening to the radio announcing the results." Nobody knew that Abdul Rahman

was in Kuala Lumpur that historic night.

Abdul Rahman heard of his own sweeping victory by 22,226 votes against his opponents' 1239. Just after midnight came the announcement of Onn bin Ja'afar defeat in Johore Bahru by nearly 4000 votes.

At 3 a.m., when the last result for the night arrived, the Alliance had already won twenty-three seats, with none of their rivals scoring a single success.

In the padang outside the Selangor Club a vast crowd of Malays and Indians watched the results being clocked on a giant board. They greeted each Alliance victory with a roar of *"Merdeka!"*

Just after 2 a.m. a figure moved quietly along the edge of this crowd, listening to the remarks and to the shrieks. Nobody recognized Abdul Rahman; yet everybody at Alliance headquarters was looking for him. At that hour nothing seemed to stand against a clear-cut success for the Alliance.

The next day Abdul Rahman, one-time playboy, had become Chief Minister-elect of the Federation of Malaya at the age of fifty-two.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Chief Minister

A tousled head looked out from behind the open door of the hotel bedroom. It was Abdul Rahman, awake after two hours' sleep into which he had sunk after walking back to the hotel from the Selangor Club padang.

"Come in," he said.

He was his usual self. He displayed no bombast, for a man who had stepped into the spotlight of the world.

"Pardon my attire. I've been lying in bed and trying to think," he said as I walked in to interview him.

His first act on awaking had been to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the Alliance victory. The Malays call it *sembayang sampai hajat,* a prayer for a wish fulfilled. Then he had prayed for personal guidance.

"What have you to say, Tunku?"

He replied without boast, "I had complete faith in victories for our Chinese and Indian candidates, who were in the strongest U.M.N.O. areas. Frankly, we dared not put them anywhere else; we had to try to win the confidence of the people first."

He went on, "The results are the first step towards racial harmony in this plural-society country. It is one thing I am damned proud of." He put his finger on the one reason for victory — "the people's enthusiasm for independence." He added quickly, "The first real approach towards independence must be made quickly.

"I do not think anybody gave a thought to policies at all. Certainly in all my speeches nobody asked me questions on Alliance policies."

He paused and added firmly, "The British Government cannot ignore the fact that our success resulted from this issue of indepen-

dence and nothing else — absolutely nothing else. The Alliance could not have functioned on any other issue. The public would not have accepted it."

"Will you raise the point when Mr Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, comes here next month?"

"I certainly will," replied Abdul Rahman. "I shall open talks on independence and a fully elected legislature. If these matters can be settled amicably the Federation will be a satisfied country."

"What are going to be your next priorities?"

"First, the Emergency must be ended swiftly. The Alliance will offer the Malayan Communist Party an amnesty. When? At the right time and with the advice of the experts, the Director of Operations, and his committee and his staff. Our duty is to bring peace to this country and harmony to all races, and here my sincere desire is that all our opponents will forget what has happened and co-operate with us towards this end."

There was a knock on the door. In walked Colonel Lee. He carried a blue folder. It held the Alliance's plans for Ministries and the names of proposed Ministers.

Abdul Rahman said a few last words. He fingered the Alliance badge of a boat in sail against a blue sky, and said quietly, "We in the Alliance will have to walk slowly before we can run. The people must learn to understand one another. For the Malays, I think I can say that now after this election they are beginning to look on things with non-communal eyes."

That was Abdul Rahman's first public statement after the final result of the elections had been blazoned throughout the democratic world. The Alliance had won fifty-one out of fifty-two seats, a 99 per cent success, never achieved by any political party in elections in any non-Communist countries.

In Johore Bahru the vanquished Onn bin Ja'afar, unmoved, declared that the defeat was not the end of Party Negara; it was the beginning. "We shall rebuild our party machinery until it is bigger, stronger, and more efficient," he said. He made no excuses for Negara's defeat.

On Sunday, July 31, Abdul Rahman drove to King's House to meet Sir Donald MacGillivray. In the months that had passed each had grown to understand the other better. Neither was any longer alert and suspicious. MacGillivray had accepted his own position

immediately; in the months to come he emerged as adviser and friend of Abdul Rahman, guiding him, but never leading him.

Mutual confidence and trust were established between the two men almost from that very first meeting when they discussed the appointment of Ministers and Abdul Rahman presented his proposed names. They spoke about the constitution in general terms, and Abdul Rahman gave MacGillivray the assurance that he would not interfere with the Federation of Malaya Agreement, as he appreciated that any amendments were strictly a matter between the British Government and the Malay Rulers.

MacGillivray himself prompted Abdul Rahman on the subject of filling the five nominated seats in the Legislative Council — the controversial point which had strained Government and Alliance relations a few months before. Abdul Rahman promised to produce his proposals for filling them the next day, when he would also present his final list of Ministers and portfolios.

The next day Abdul Rahman presented the names of six Malays, three Chinese, and an Indian as Ministers in the new Government. He himself would be Minister for Home Affairs. (Later he took on another portfolio of Minister for Internal Security and Defence.) MacGillivray arranged to swear in the Ministers on August 9, after he had informed the Malay Rulers of the appointments, as required under the Federation Agreement.

There was a great deal to commend in the selection of Ministers, even if there were some doubts about possible exuberance and over-enthusiasm by some "wild boys." It was a sound, balanced Cabinet, non-communal in character, with a strong element of experience among it. For instance, Colonel Lee was back as Minister for Transport (in a shuffle some months later he became Minister of Finance), and Dr Ismail returned to his old portfolio of Minister for Lands and Mines. Dato Abdul Razak was Minister for Education, and at thirty-three was the youngest member of the Cabinet.

It was in the selection of men for the five reserved nominated seats that Abdul Rahman and the Alliance also showed sound judgment. The U.M.N.O. willingly agreed not to put forward any Malays, but to bring about more balanced racial representation in the Council by accepting three Chinese and two Indians. This was in accordance with the principle enunciated in the Elections

Committee report that these seats were "intended to give a voice in the Council to any major element which does not secure adequate representation through either the electoral or nominating processes."

On the evening of August 9 Abdul Rahman made his first broadcast to the nation as Chief Minister. Without flamboyance, he reaffirmed his intention to work towards self-government and independence in a constitutional and orderly manner. He also emphasized the fact that the Ministers would follow the democratic principle of collective responsibility.

He assured Government officers who were members of opposing political parties that there would be no victimization. "To them I say, 'Cast away such fears,' " he declared. "The Alliance have gained strength through fairness and fair play, and in no circumstances will we depart from this pinciple."

As Chief Minister, Abdul Rahman received a salary of $3000 (£350) a month, an allowance of $1000 (£117) a month for his responsibilities as Chief Minister and Leader of the Government, an entertainment allowance of $500 (£58), and a transport allowance.

Abdul Rahman took his seat in the air-conditioned Chief Minister's office that had been prepared in the Federal Secretariat. Photographers and reporters recorded the history-making moment, but this was nothing compared to the incessant stream of visitors who called on him in office and home that day and for many, many other days.

The visitor were not only friends come to congratulate him. They were strangers, and principally Malays who felt that "Tunku" was the man to whom they could bring their personal troubles. They came from the farthest States to take advantage of this freedom which they thought had been created by the elections. Anyone who had the slightest grumble or complaint thought his solution was either to see Abdul Rahman personally or to write to him.

Abdul Rahman turned none away, although he fully realized that the complaints should have been made to local District Officers, and that he was acting against normal Government procedure by listening to his visitors. He was far too accessible. When urged to call a halt he exclaimed, "How can I send them away?

They come miles to see me."

Abdul Rahman learned the hard way over the weeks, but finally he began to settle down to the serious business of running a Government. He agreed that instead of his reading every letter addressed to him, his staff should use their own judgement about them and forward petitions and complaints to the right authorities, giving him only those which demanded his personal attention.

Perhaps the most surprised men in the Federal Secretariat were the British officers who either worked under Abdul Rahman or came into very close contact with him. Having been brought up in the Colonial Office tradition, they were apprehensive about government by politicians. They were also uneasy over the possibility of racial feeling against them.

Abdul Rahman's attractive personality and his expressions of confidence in them won them over, and it was not long before they leaned over backwards to help him in the complex task of preparing for independence. He and several Ministers took pains to dispel the British uneasiness about racial feelings; one or two Ministers, however, went out of their way to make life unpleasant for the British officers who served under them.

A British officer who worked closely with Abdul Rahman said, "He was always appreciative of what one did, and therefore one felt one had to bust oneself to assist him. I have rarely met anyone with such complete serenity and extreme cheerfulness. He is completely unruffled, whatever the weight of work."

Abdul Rahman took the earliest opportunity to discuss self-government and independence with Mr Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, when he arrived in Kuala Lumpur before the end of August during a tour through South-east Asia.

Lennox-Boyd was a Conservative, and Abdul Rahman was still suspicious of what he called the "Imperialistic" motives of the British Conservative Party. He found Mr Lennox-Boyd of somewhat different calibre from Oliver Lyttelton. Where the latter showed the instincts of an honest successful business-man, the former displayed adroit and brilliant diplomacy through which shone sincerity. Abdul Rahman said later, "When I met Lennox-Boyd in King's House I felt immediately that he was a sincere and straight man. I felt I could do a lot with him. He was my counterpart."

Abdul Rahman, however, illustrated how "straight" Mr Lennox-Boyd showed he could be: Mr Lennox-Boyd chided him for using the term "my government" in a speech he had made. Abdul Rahman recalls, "Lennox-Boyd said to me, 'You know, Tunku, you cannot yet call the Federation Government your Government. It isn't yours; it is a Government formed by agreement between the Queen and the Malay Rulers.' I said, 'Is that so? I'm glad to know that.' "

Abdul Rahman then quipped, "I must make it 'my government' as soon as possible then." Lennox-Boyd laughed.

Abdul Rahman followed up his sentiments in a speech at the inauguration of the Legislative Council. The distinguished audience, including Mr Lennox-Boyd, heard Abdul Rahman aver that the British Government and the Malay Rulers had no choice but to foster the growth of genuine nationalism and give independence to the Federation or "hand over this country to the Malayan Communist Party."

He went on, "If independence is delayed beyond the four years stipulated by the Alliance Government you will help spread Communism, since Communism thrives and flourishes on Colonialism." He said pointedly that he would go to London "early" for constitutional talks.

He publicly paid a tribute to the "cordial manner" in which Mr Lennox-Boyd had already discussed "important matters" with him. "I was particularly pleased and honoured," explained Abdul Rahman, "in that he treated me on terms of absolute equality, without making me feel that I represented a dependent territory or that I was leader of a party that had been newly elected to this council. If this is the manner in which he conducts his business I am sure they will be paved for better relationships and understanding between Her Majesty's Government and ourselves in the future."

Mr Lennox-Boyd told Abdul Rahman that he was prepared to hold constitutional discussions in London in January, but the Rulers would also have to be represented, as they were affected by any material change in the constitution. He also told Abdul Rahman that he had "perhaps almost a pathological dislike for time-tables," a hint that independence "in four years" was not much to his liking. But Abdul Rahman did not let this bother him.

He lost no time in wooing the Rulers. He had a special audience with them at their conference at the end of September, and suggested, with respect, that if they stood against independence they would be going against the wishes of their subjects who had put his party into power purely on the platform of independence. He took pains to assure the Rulers that their position as constitutional monarchs would be upheld after independence.

He asked them to appoint representatives for preliminary discussions with the Alliance, so that maximum agreement could be obtained before the London talks.

Just as he had lost no time in cornering Mr Lennox-Boyd, so Abdul Rahman pressed home with the experts his desire to offer the Malayan Communist Party an amnesty. He wanted to make this challenge to Communism, even though he was aware that the Communists might accept an amnesty only for the purpose of changing their strategy. He personally was convinced that an amnesty would not succeed in its entirety, and that only a handful of terrorists would escape from the intense discipline within the jungle and give themselves up.

The termination of the Emergency was first priority on the Alliance's platform, and it wished to try every means possible of achieving it.

On September 9, after seven years and eight-five days of fighting, an amnesty was announced. Royal Air Force planes saturated the jungle lairs of terrorists with 40,000,000 leaflets giving the Government's terms. These said, "Those of you who come in and surrender will not be prosecuted for any offence connected with the Emergency," which meant that murderers and disembowellers would escape death by hanging. MacGillivray, in a broadcast, described this guarantee of non-prosecution as "an unusual act of clemency."

This was the only new measure in the terms of what might be described as the continuing amnesty which had been offered the terrorists over the past few years. Although the threat of prosecution had hung over their heads, terrorists who surrendered and who could have been brought before a court with enough evidence either to hang them or to send them to gaol for many years had never been prosecuted.

Terrorists who surrendered but refused to give up Communism

would be detained, although request to be sent to China would be given due consideration.

There would be no general cease-fire, but terrorists could move into any one of 186 "safe areas" throughout the country if they wished to surrender. They would be unharmed, for no troops would be in them. Those who surrendered would be "thoroughly investigated," and if they satisfied the authorities that they genuinely intended to give up their Communist activities and be loyal to the Government they would be assisted to "regain their normal position in society and be reunited with their families."

Abdul Rahman issued a message to the people of Malaya. He said the amnesty was offered with "sincerity and magnanimity." He appealed to the people "to spread the news far and wide and to do your best to help in implementing it so that it may produce fruitful results."

Abdul Rahman would not hazard a guess on how the amnesty would go or make predictions about the rate of surrender. He was backed up by the Director of Operations, Lieutenant-General Sir Geoffrey Bourne, that tough, aggressive-minded battler, who said, "We cannot judge the rate of surrenders. Things happen slowly in the jungle."

But a reaction came towards the end of the month, when Abdul Rahman and Sir Cheng-lock Tan and other Alliance leaders received unsigned letters ostensibly emanating from the Malayan Communist Party headquarters somewhere in South Siam, calling for an immediate cease-fire which would enable "the various political problems to be settled in a peaceful atmosphere." Then "in the near future" an M.C.P. a representative would be sent to Alliance headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to arrange a meeting between Abdul Rahman and Sir Cheng-lock Tan and "Comrade Chin Peng."

Abdul Rahman sent his letter to the Special Branch to check its authenticity. Then, after a conference with the Director of Operations and his advisers and with Sir Donald MacGillivray, Abdul Rahman declared his readiness to meet Chin Peng in North Malaya, but only to clarify the amnesty declaration. If Chin Peng wanted to have this talk he should "address a private letter to the Chief Minister, naming the rendezvous, the time, and the date where a conducting officer will meet him and bring him to the

meeting-place.

Thirteen days later a Communist walked boldly out of the jungle in North Malaya and entered the village of Klian Intan, in Upper Perak, a few miles from the Siamese border. He met two Government envoys, Mr Too Joon Hing, the assistant Minister for Education, and Mr Ian C. Wylie, the Deputy Commissioner of Police. Wylie personally knew the Communist representative, Chen Tien, a member of the Central Propaganda Bureau and a close associate of Chin Peng. Chen Tien and Chin Peng had both gone to London after the Japanese War to participate in the Victory Parade.

After an hour and a quarter Chen Tien walked back into the jungle, after promising to return with Chin Peng's reply about meeting Abdul Rahman.

Towards the middle of November Abdul Rahman made his first journey overseas as Chief Minister. He flew to Indonesia at the invitation of President Soekarno, who paid him honour by asking him to ride with him in his car during a tour he was making. Abdul Rahman was impressed with the adultation the people poured on Soekarno, but he was equally impressed with the strength and potential of the Communist Party in Indonesian politics.

Three days after he returned to Kuala Lumpur, Chen Tien walked out of the jungle again with Chin Peng's proposals for a meeting.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Date with a Communist

Chin Peng sat smiling and apparently completely relaxed in the straight-backed chair at the centre of a long white-clothed trestle-table. Abdul Rahman, from a table opposite, looked steadily at Chin Peng. He noticed the well-brushed black hair, the high forehead, and the determined jaw. He disliked the smile — "the smile on the face of a tiger," he thought.

Chin Peng was stout, and his face was pasty, the blue-white pastiness usually found on terrorists who surrender after living for years in the steaming half-light of the Malayan jungle.

British officers had brought Chin Peng under escort from a rendezvous a few miles from the Siamese-Malayan frontier. They told Abdul Rahman that Chin Peng was fatter than when they had last seen him in Perak in 1948, just before he had gone into the jungle to lead his "Malayan Peoples' Anti-British Army" against the Government.

Chin Peng had obviously been leading a good life in his secret headquarters in South Siam ever since he had crossed over the border in 1954 — a 'good' life in the sense that he had not had to suffer the rigours of jungle warfare, of living on rice and vegetables all the time, and of continually moving camp to avoid enemy patrols.

Chin Peng, Secretary-General of the Malayan Communist Party, militant and fanatical, clever and shrewd, was a magnificent organizer and commander. When he became Secretary-General in 1947 he was only twenty-six years of age. He came under the influence of the Malayan Communist Party when he was a schoolboy of fourteen; in 1940 he was accepted as a member. He started his new life in a lowly job: he cut stencils for the propagandists.

During the Japanese occupation British officers in Force 136 had trusted him utterly, but he had made it plain to them that after the Japanese War the Malayan Communists would revolt against the "British Imperialists" and "liberate" Malaya. When the revolt occured the Government offered the incredible reward of £30,000 for his capture alive.

Here he was then, waiting opposite Abdul Rahman to pit his brain and Communist shrewdness in a bid to terminate the war with honour to himself and his party.

A few hours before he had emerged from the jungle four miles from Klian Intan. Behind him he had left his well-armed escort of forty bodyguards. They had accompanied him to the rendezvous without fear because a cease-fire had been declared and in addition troops had been withdrawn.

The British officer who met Chin Peng was Mr John L.H. Davis, noted leader of Force 136 in Malaya during the last years of the Japanese occupation. Davis and Ching Peng had operated together and knew each other well. They had last met in 1947.

Davis walked forward and said in Cantonese, "Long time no see." Chin Peng smiled. He was neither frightened nor brash. They conversed in Cantonese. Chin Peng asked about some "friends," and then expressed his readiness to move on for his meeting with the Chief Minister.

He received no V.I.P. treatment. He was shown into a police truck which had wooden benches for seats. He sat in a corner opposite Davis. In a second truck came Chen Tien; a Malay Communist, Abdul Rashid bin Mydin, who had escaped from a detention camp in 1951 and was now a member of the Politbureau; and a cook.

They were driven rapidly along a winding road to the pleasant Malay town of Baling. The trucks turned into the grounds of a newly built school which was to be the scene of the peace talks. Chin Peng and his party were shown into a house which was to be their home while the talks lasted.

They had an immediate request. "May we have singlets and underpants?" A police officer went shopping for them in Baling. A short while later the Communist cook got a fire going in the kitchen and prepared a meal.

High barbed-wire fencing encircled the school. There were strict

security measures. Armed policemen patrolled the perimeter because the Communists were to be completely isolated. They had asked if they could have freedom or movement in Baling, but Abdul Rahman had forbidden this, not only because he could not guarantee Chin Peng safety from attack by people bitter against him, but also to prevent contact with the villagers and — more important — to keep him away from the world Press men gathered outside the gates of the school to record the events at this "little Panmunjom," as a few of them called Baling.

There was, however, one essential difference between Panmunjom, in Korea, and Baling. Abdul Rahman was not prepared to give Chin Peng any opportunity to prolong the talks. He had allotted two days to Chin Peng. At the end of the week he had a date in London with Mr Lennox-Boyd to talk about independence.

Abdul Rahman desperately wanted an end to the Emergency. Primarily, it would mean an end to murder and terror and be a tremendous relief to the country. The politician in him also realized what a triumph it would be for him in the international sphere if he succeeded in persuading Chin Peng to surrender. And, of course, Chin Peng's agreement to surrender would be an extremely powerful weapon to wave in front of Mr Lennox-Boyd. . . .

But he had a feeling that Chin Peng would not surrender. Communist leaders did not surrender in war. They sought peace with honour.

Chin Peng had built up prestige, and it was a commodity he had to retain as a Communist leader. The lowest price he could pay and yet tell his men in the jungle and his supporters outside of it that they had not lost the war was to gain recognition of his party as a political organization. Which is precisely what he asked for. It was the point on which his talks with Abdul Rahman broke down.

Abdul Rahman had had great hopes at the Baling talks, but he watched them go down the drain without a flicker of indecision, without any desire — as many cynics in the country thought he might nourish — to come to any secret understanding with Chin Peng so that he personally would benefit politically. He did not deviate one iota from the only condition he had offered the Communist, which was "unconditonal surrender."

Abdul Rahman was a comparative fledgling as a Government leader when he entered that schoolroom to put his ultimatum to

Chin Peng. He grew up a lot during the next forty-eight hours, and he emerged with the respect of Malaya and the rest of the democratic world for his courageous grasping of a nettle and for his indomitable stand.

It was 2.30 on the afternoon of December 28 when Abdul Rahman walked into the schoolroom with Mr David Marshall, the Chief Minister of Singapore, and Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan, president of the Malayan Chinese Association.

Abdul Rahman opened the talks with a flattering statement of thanks to the Communists for the confidence they had shown in him in emerging from the safety of their jungle to meet him. (Chen Tien in his early discussions had exhibited apprehensions for the safety of Chin Peng and his party and escort, and was finally persuaded that the Government really intended to observe the rules of safe-conduct, and would also give the Communists a reasonable "get-away period" at the end of the talks.)

Abdul Rahman went on to say that he was not standing in judgement over the Communists, but had come to explain the amnesty terms and also to remind them of the political changes that had taken place in the country. His election victory had been based on the vital promise "that Colonialism must end, and that this country must be given freedom."

He then produced the trump card that had been given him a few weeks before when Sir Donald MacGillivray had announced in the Legislative Council that the British Government no longer considered "the continuation of the Emergency" as "an obstacle to the Federation's advance to self-government."

The British Government intended to enter the London talks in January "on that understanding."

This announcement had quite naturally swept away all fears of Alliance leaders that Whitehall would use the Communist war as "a pretext" for blocking further political advance. It was a genuine fear, because the British Government had not indicated that it planned to alter the directive it had given Templer in 1952 that "Her Majesty's Government will not lay aside their responsibilities in Malaya until they are satisfied that Communist terrorism had been defeated."

The announcement, however, also had its psychological effect on the Alliance. Very soon after it had been made the U.M.N.O.,

at its General Assembly, passed a resolution that independence "must be given by August 31, 1957."

Abdul Rahman exuded quiet confidence as he said to Chin Peng, "I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever that we shall, if possible, achieve this aim of independence by August next year, and that there will be no conditions attached to independence."

He went on, "Before my party came into power I said that I wanted to bring peace to this country, and I really meant it." He had offered what he considered were suitable terms for the surrender of the Communist Party.

He emphasized that he had not come to Baling "as the spokesman for the British Government."

"Neither am I the stooge or running dog of Colonialism," he went on. "I am the servant of the people, and I represent the people who have elected me to power. Now, you are at perfect liberty to say what you like, and none of us will object to what you say. I would, however, like to know why you reject the amnesty terms."

Chin Peng replied in Mandarin, and Chen Tien interpreted. Chin Peng knew English, but he had not spoken it for eight years.

He acknowledged Abdul Rahman's position in the Government. "It is, " he said, "precisely because we realize that you are not the spokesman of the British Government and are not the running dog of the British Government or their stooge that we have come out to meet you at the risk of our lives.

"I have not come here to argue questions of ideology. Peace is the common demand of all people. We also hope that peace will be realized early so that the misery of the people can be reduced."

Chin Peng almost immediately began to show signs of intransigence. The amnesty terms were unacceptable, he said, because they did not permit Communists to "enjoy equal status so that they genuinely intended to be loyal to the Government would be "helped to regain their normal position in society."

"Naturally," Abdul Rahman added mildly, "you first have to convince us that you will be loyal to Malaya. In my view being anti-British does not indicate loyalty to Malaya. You have to prove that this is the country to which you really owe your allegiance. The people here all regard the Communist Party as belonging to a Power outside this country, and consider it members give alle-

giance to that foreign country and not to Malaya. That is why it is necessary for you to prove your loyalty here."

In the two hours that followed Chin Peng fought a losing battle. He put forward a demand for legal recognition of the Malayan Communist Party. Abdul Rahman replied firmly that "giving up Communist activities means the dissolution of the Communist Party."

Chin Peng wanted a revision of the amnesty terms. His main concern in his arguments was always with the future of his party.

"The point is this," he said frankly. "As members of the M.C.P. we still believe in our ideology. We will never allow ourselves to be forced by others to give up this ideology. Now the Government requests us to give up this ideology. As citizens, of course, we have obligations, but at the same time we must have freedom of thought, the right of freedom of thought, but the Government's point is that they don't want this. We wish to put our ideology to the people to decide, if that is possible."

Abdul Rahman pointed out that the Alliance upheld all the five freedoms. He went on, "Now you say you want the people to decide whether or not to accept your ideology or ours. Speaking for myself, I have no doubt whatsoever that in free elections the people would choose our system."

Chin Peng remarked, "Yes, I know that too. I agree."

He tried again. "I have made it quite clear that we cannot accept the amnesty conditions because they require us to dissolve the Communist Party. On this issue I want to request the Ministers of both countries to tell us whether or not there are any further grounds for discussion."

Abdul Rahman put his stand beyond doubt by saying, "No. If you are returning to the question of whether we are prepared to recognize the Communist Party — no."

He stressed this time and again, once saying to Chin Peng, "When you come out and surrender your ideology and your beliefs are your own business, but your activities, especially your activities to enforce the acceptance of your ideology, are different."

Chin Peng did not give up. He did not see why since they were Communists they could not "declare to the people that we are Communists. We do not wish to join other political parties and then do our scheming or intrigues. That is why we want this

question of recognition of the M.C.P. to be solved."

Abdul Rahman reiterated that the country could not recognize the Communist Party because Communist activities had been associated with murder, with atrocities, with acts of violence of every kind.

Chin Peng put one more question before another adjournment. Was it necessary for any decisions made at the meeting to be approved by the British Government? Abdul Rahman was quick on the uptake: "If I decide and Mr Marshall agrees with me that will be all."

The next session started at 6.30 p.m. and lasted until 8.05 p.m. Chin Peng returned with fresh vigour to the question of recognition of his party. One of several gambits turned on the question of whether his party would be accepted if its membership were confined to Federal citizens. "No," answered Abdul Rahman.

The talk turned to other aspects, such as the detention of surrendered terrorists for purposes of interrogation and investigation. Abdul Rahman explained that investigations would be carried out speedily, and those who were released on a promise of loyalty would be assisted to settle in society.

There would be restriction on movement for a certain period, "but not after you have shown yourselves to be like other people. We have to take precautions just to be sure."

Chin Peng refused to accept this, declaring that for the "dignity of man" if this principle was insisted upon, then they would have to carry on with the struggle.

This brought a question from Mr Marshall. "Forgive my asking, but what are you struggling for?"

Chin Peng solemnly replied, "It is very simple — just for the dignity of man."

Mr Marshall exclaimed that using deeds of violence to enforce their views on a population that did not want them was hardly compatible with the dignity of man. Their struggle only resulted in misery, both for them in the jungle and for the rest of the population. The dignity of man required sacrifice for the welfare of Malaya as a whole.

Chin Peng admitted that their outlook on this question was "quite different," and added that he was not prepared to argue about it.

It was at this stage that the talks really broke down, because Chin Peng came back again and again to the points on which he insisted acceptance: recognition of the M.C.P., no detention of men who surrendered, and no restriction on their movements after surrender.

Abdul Rahman yielded on one score. He told Chin Peng that after investigations and the removal of restriction on freedom those Communists who remained in Malaya could join recognized political parties and take part in politics, but they would not be allowed to form a Communist Party under another name.

Abdul Rahman rose, saying, "We are prepared to meet you again to-morrow if you wish. We must finish by noon, as I have appointments." He left Chin Peng.

From where they stood the newspapermen watched Chin Peng walking back to his quarters with hunched shoulders and head down, a thoroughly dejected man. He and his colleagues entered their house, closed all the windows, and spent most of the night talking.

There had apparently been one or two lighter moments during the day's talks. For instance, both Marshall and Rashid smoked pipes. During a lull Marshall asked Rashid what tobacco he used. Rashid replied, "Old English."

Abdul Rahman and Chin Peng met again at 10.50 the next morning. Abdul Rahman realized that it would be a useless session, but he was determined to listen to everything that Chin Peng wished to say. He remarked to a close friend before he went in, "I am in a position to dictate, but I do not want to be harsh. If Chin Peng is reasonable and asks for reasonable terms I might consider them."

Chin Peng wasted little time in disclosing the way he was thinking. "If the conditions as laid down cannot be changed," he said, "then I am not empowered to accept them."

What he said next though was unexpected. If the popularly elected Governments of Singapore and the Federation "have self-determination in matters concerning internal security and national defence, then all problems can be solved easily. As soon as these two Governments have self-determination in internal security and national defence we can stop the war immediately."

He looked at Abdul Rahman, who took him up quickly. "Is that

a promise? One of the purposes for which I am going to England is to get control of internal security. Are you saying that when I do get it you are prepared to accept our terms and lay down your arms if the terms come from me?"

Chin Peng replied flat-facedly, "If Tunku obtains control in internal security and national defence, then we will stop our hostilities at once" — but he made it quite clear in the next breath that laying down weapons did not mean handing them over to the Government. This could only be done "if the M.C.P. is recognized and we are not subject to restriction of our liberty."

Abdul Rahman made it equally clear that his terms were that the arms should be handed over to the Government, "as otherwise it would mean that they can be taken up again at any time."

Mr Marshall was busy writing. When he finished he looked up at Chin Peng and asked him if he would initial his note, which read: "As soon as the Federation obtains control of internal security and local armed forces we will end hostilities, lay down our arms, and disband our forces."

Chin Peng said he was prepared to accept this with an addition, "It does not amount to accepting the present amnesty terms."

There seemed little use in continuing the talks, so they ended.

Chin Peng's final words were: "The amnesty means surrender. Surrender means humiliation. We will not accept surrender at any time. If you demand our surrender we would prefer to fight to the last man."

Abdul Rahman said his final words: "If you do not come out to surrender we would rather not accept you in our society. If you want to have peace in this country one side must give in — either we give in to you or you give in to us. I am not prepared to allow a situation where Malaya might be divided, as has happened in Korea and Vietnam. Therefore, to be quite frank with you, it's you who must surrender. I will never give in."

Within an hour Chin Peng and his colleagues had been whirled back to Klian Intan by Davis. As his truck whipped past waiting Press photographers Chin Peng leaned forward and lifted his hand in a clenched-fist salute. The next day he rejoined his bodyguard and disappeared in the direction of South Siam.

Abdul Rahman firmly said after the meeting, "So we go on fighting. I have seen what is in the Communist mind. They will

never change."

Abdul Rahman's reflections on Chin Peng are noteworthy. He was, he said, struck by Chin Peng's "own brand of honesty and by his frankness." He was "an out-and-out Communist, and he made it quite clear that he could be nothing else."

Abdul Rahman had learned one lesson. "Chin Peng," he said, "really taught me what Communism was. I had never really understood and appreciated its full meaning. When I was briefed on Communism by the British experts I always felt that they were interested in making a bad case against the Communists. But there in that room in Baling Chin Peng taught me something I shall not forget. He taught me that Malaya and Communism can never coexist."

Few had believed the talks would be fruitful, but every one in the country had agreed that they were necessary, if only to present the dangers that confronted Malaya from such determined and fanatical people. Abdul Rahman's plain speaking and thinking – a man who was present at Baling said that on this occasion Abdul Rahman seemed to be thinking as fast as Chin Peng — thoroughly exposed Communist strategy and intentions.

The Baling talks enhanced Abdul Rahman's position in the country. He had gone to Baling because he had been impelled by his own sincerity of purpose and the fact that he felt that if he did not see Chin Peng it would be against his own interpretation of the way a democratic Government and Chief Minister should work.

The day after his return to Kuala Lumpur Abdul Rahman announced his decision to withdraw the amnesty on February 8 of the next year, five months after it had been offered. "I have," he said categorically, "no intention of meeting Chin Peng again unless he indicates his desire to see me in order to make a full and complete surrender. The war must be intensified."

A couple of days later, on January 2, he sailed for England "to work out details for self-government and independence." He simply radiated confidence.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

'Everything on a Golden Plate'

A Malay close to royal circles spoke of the Rulers thus: "You know, they are normal beings. They are firstly Malays and secondly Sultans. They believe implicitly and fully in their race, but as Rulers they have seen the writing on the wall. They have watched the birth and progress of independent movements all over the world. The kinsmen of some of them were killed or were humiliated in Indonesia." Against the background of this knowledge it was easy to understand the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty with which the Malay Rulers observed the inexorable approach of independence to Malaya.

Very few people in Malaya knew of the secret meeting the Rulers had had in Johore Bahru in September 1955 to talk about their position after independence. They were worried about independence, and they were worried about their security. So they decided that their future should be the responsibility of the British Government. If they were driven from their thrones after independence the British Government should be responsible for giving them sanctuary and for maintaining them afterwards.

As a member of royalty, Abdul Rahman was conscious of these royal fears. He made it his duty, therefore, to assure the Rulers publicly and as often as possible that they should banish feelings of insecurity because their positions as constitutional Rulers of their respective States would be maintained after independence.

Sincerely he assured them that this promise was neither idle nor empty. "It is not made with the object of winning the Rulers to our side," he said once. "This is the first time in the history of Malaya that Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others have joined together in commonly loyalty to Malaya and to Their Highnesses the Rulers.

"There is no doubt," he went on, "that if the Rulers agree to our plan to achieve independence the path towards it will be smooth and the going will be easy. If however, for some unknown reasons, the Rulers cannot bring themselves to agree with us the path admittedly will be rugged and the going difficult."

He added quietly, "Nevertheless, I am confident that the Alliance will in the end achieve our objectives despite it, for history tells us that the will of the people must prevail."

Abdul Rahman, as a prince, was not anxious to bring "the will of the people" to bear on royalty, although he realized that the British Government would accede to independence only if the Malay Rulers were willing to accept it and were prepared to revoke the treaties they had signed with Britain. It was absolutely essential, therefore, to persuade them that they had nothing to lose because of the constitutional change-over.

So it was that as he prepared for the London conference — a conference to which he was going in far happier circumstances than he himself would have dared to anticipate a few months before — Abdul Rahman still had one important thing to do, and this was to win the Rulers over completely. They remained to be persuaded over certain issues.

It had been arranged that the Alliance should send four representatives to the London talks. The Rulers would also have four representatives. Instinctively Abdul Rahman felt that if the eight could sit around a table away from the atmosphere of Malaya he would gain considerable ground. He suggested, therefore, that the two delegations should travel part of the journey by ship and the rest by air.

This happy inspiration found acceptance by the Rulers, and so the "Merdeka Mission," as it came to be called, left Malaya on the Italian ship *Asia* to travel as far as Karachi, from where it would fly to London.

With Abdul Rahman were the Minister for Education, Dato Abdul Razak; the Minister for Natural Resources, Dr Ismail; the Minister for Transport, Colonel H.S. Lee; and the Alliance Party secretary, Mr T.H. Tan. The Rulers' representatives were the Mentri Besar of Perak, Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang; the Mentri Besar of Selangor, Inche Abdul Aziz bin Haji Abdul Majid; the Deputy Mentri Besar of Johore, Dato Wan Idris; and Dato Nik

Ahmad Kamil, the former Mentri Besar of Kelantan, who after his defeat in the Federal elections as a Party Negara candidate had practised law. He was engaged by the Rulers to act as an adviser at the "Merdeka" talks. After independence he became the first High Commissioner for Malaya in London.

"We got on extremely well at our first meeting a few hours after we left Singapore," recalls a member of the royal delegation. "Abdul Rahman was prepared to exercise a spirit to give and take. So were we."

Every day the eight men met either in a screened-off corner in the dining-room or in a cabin.

"By the time we reached Karachi," adds the delegate, "there was hardly any point on which we did not agree."

The principal subjects which the Rulers were concerned about were their position and prestige as constitutional sovereigns of their respective States after independence and their rights to have full autonomy and to raise revenue from taxation.

They also felt that in keeping with the dignity and prestige of a sovereign and fully independent State, Malaya should not be a republic, but have "a constitutional Ruler for the whole Federation," to be chosen by the Rulers from among themselves. He would be a symbol of the unity of the country, and Federal citizens would bear allegiance to him.

The Rulers were also concerned about proposals for extending citizenship to non-Malays. They were anxious for "a common nationality" to be created.

The Alliance delegation and the Rulers' representatives found concord on all these points. They agreed to declare in a resolution to the British Government that they were "of the opinion that the present form of constitution in the Federation is incompatible with the independence of the Federation and does not meet with the aspirations of the people."

Their resolution added: "The position of the Rulers and the relationship of the States with the Federation, together with the special position of Penang and Malacca, make it highly desirable for a special independent commission to be set up to make recommendations on the future constitution."

They wanted men "of great experience in constitutional matters, headed by a chairman of outstanding position," and coming from

countries in the Commonwealth, to be members of the commission, which would recommend a Federal form of constitution for an independent country, based on Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature.

This commission would have special regard to the whole position of the Rulers and their States, and also — a controversial point put forward by the U.M.N.O. — "the safeguarding of the special position of the Malays and of the legitimate interests of other communities."

These terms of reference for the commission assured the Rulers that Abdul Rahman intended to keep the promise he made to them when he first raised the subject of independence with them individually, that they had nothing to fear, and that *merdeka* would not mean the unleashing of irresponsible government, as had occurred in certain neighbouring countries.

Thus the Colonial Office welcomed in London not two delegations, but a united group. This fact, plus the political power that Abdul Rahman commanded in Malaya, made the delegation feel that Whitehall could not expect to hold out against anything, except perhaps the actual date for independence.

A very senior Colonial Office official told a senior member of the delegation at London Airport, "We shall give you all you are seeking on a gold plate."

This statement put the delegation into an extremely optimistic and contented frame of mind, but Abdul Rahman admits now that there were moments during the "tough talks" of the next fortnight when he could not help wondering where the gold plate had been hidden and when it would be produced.

The "Merdeka" talks formally opened in the music-room of the historic Lancaster House on January 18, 1956. Abdul Rahman walked in with Mr Lennox-Boyd. In his speech he said it was his only desire that the talks would "be recorded in letters of gold, and not of mud." He earnestly asked Her Majesty's Government "to make a declaration of independence for Malaya within the Commonwealth. You may rest assured," he added, "that we have come here with a feeling of goodwill and friendship towards the British people. There is no intention on our part to sever ourselves from the Commonwealth. We want to be an equal partner of the Commonwealth."

The talks went fairly well because Mr Lennox-Boyd, considered by many to be one of the greatest Secretaries of State for the Colonies, was statesmanlike, far-seeing, absolutely frank, and patently sincere. It was also clear that on the Malayan side Abdul Rahman was equally sincere and straightforward. He did not have Mr Lennox-Boyd's negotiating experience or wealth of background, but his objectives were simple and comprehensive. Abdul Rahman negotiated with the British on a transparently honest policy which he believed in himself.

The first phase of the talks ended with Abdul Rahman receiving the fullest measure of home rule possible for the transition period before independence. His office of "Chief Minister" was to be written into the Federation Agreement, the High Commissioner would have to act in accordance with the advice of the Executive Council except in matters of external affairs and external defence, a Malayan Minister would take over internal security and defence, another would be Minister of Finance, and a third would become Minister of Commerce and Industry. They would all replace British officers.

Abdul Rahman and his colleagues were thus given the chance to prove their ability to manage the affairs of the country. Mr Lennox-Boyd had created his first precedent — that of giving home rule to a country with a partially elected Government.

The British Government was naturally concerned about the future safety of the extensive British investments in Malaya, and also the future well-being of the British officers in the Civil Service. Their fears eased when Abdul Rahman announced his willingness to sign a treaty for mutual defence after independence.

The most protracted discussions in committee occurred over the future of the Civil Service. Although the Service was to be "Malayanized," the future Federation Government wished to retain the services of many British officers, and were prepared to give "reasonable guarantees" about employment as well as compensation for loss of career.

It accepted the precept that it was of the utmost importance to the future of a self-governing Malaya that there should be a stable and efficient Civil Service. (In the ultimate event, the Federation Government offered such generous compensation to officers for loss of career that it suffered a far greater and earlier exodus than

it had envisaged.)

On finance, the British Government, pushed by the Malayan delegation, indicated their readiness to contribute towards meeting the cost of the Emergency, as it was in the common interest that the war should be brought to an end as soon as possible.

With settlement achieved on these important subjects, the talk in committee turned to independence. It seemed to the Malayan delegation that Mr Lennox-Boyd did not want to rush independence, "in the interests of the Malays," but Abdul Rahman asserted unequivocally that he was in fact speaking not only for the Malays, but also for the Chinese and Indians. An observer remarked later, "One has to give a great deal of credit to Abdul Rahman for his insistence upon the multi-racial character of his mandate. He came out as a pretty strong and tough chap in those negotiations."

The Colonial Office was not particularly happy about creating another precedent. Here was the first elected Government of a country wanting to step straight into independence by a target date, instead of proceeding steadily through customary processes in which each constitutional change transferred a little more responsibility. It was a big decision for the Colonial Office, and so it had to pause for reflection.

Did Malaya have the means to maintain its independence and not permit itself to fall victim to the domination of another Power? How would history hold Britain responsible if such a situation developed soon after independence? These questions of historical responsibilities weighed heavily on the Colonial Office, but it could not avoid noticing several unusual features which distinguished the Federation from other colonies or dependencies which had perforce to follow the usual constitutional processes towards self-government and then independence.

First, the Alliance held fifty-one out of fifty-two elected seats in the legislature, and so had the kind of mandate never before encountered in any overseas territory. Second was the fact that the two predominant races, the Malays and the Chinese, were united politically. Third, the Rulers had agreed to independence and to the constitution proposed by the Alliance. If the Rulers had no objections there was little that their partner, the Queen, could do but accede.

The Colonial Office recognized, therefore, that the experiment had to be made. Malaya should have the chance to manage her own affairs.

When it came to the point of setting a date for independence Abdul Rahman had another hard struggle, facing this time what Mr Lennox-Boyd had once described as the "almost pathological dislike" of the Colonial Office of fixing a target date. Abdul Rahman confesses to-day that he was not certain how successful he would be at persuading Mr Lennox-Boyd to agree to a date for independence because of the possibility of events or delays occurring to prevent the accomplishment of the objective.

Abdul Rahman was, however, a determined man. He is reported to have told Mr Lennox-Boyd privately, "I'm not returning to Malaya without a date, so you might just as well make up your mind." When Mr Lennox-Boyd finally acquiesced Abdul Rahman sat back in victory.

It is an indication of the cordiality of the talks and the understanding and amity between Abdul Rahman and Mr Lennox-Boyd that the date for independence was approved when the two parties were hardly half-way through their discussions.

Thus the final paragraph of the official report of the conference bore the all-important statement:

> We have further agreed that, in view of the Malayan delegation's desire that full self-government and independence within the Commonwealth should be proclaimed by August 31, 1957, if possible, a constitution so providing shall be introduced at the earliest possible date. . . and that every effort will be made by Her Majesty's Government and the Federation Government to achieve this by the time proposed.

There had been difficult moments in committee. On the British side some of the more difficult requests were answered with, "Tunku, that is difficult for us, but we will try to find some way out." Colonial Office ingenuity found a way out.

On his side Abdul Rahman once sought relief from the tensions of arguments by saying, "Mr Secretary of State, can you get me two tickets for the Arsenal soccer match this afternoon? I don't

intend coming to any meeting." After a moment of surprise the meeting broke into laughter.

Abdul Rahman the psychologist recalled later, "You've got to remember that the British are sportsmen and also have a sense of humour. When things got rough and I began to talk about football and the prospects for the Cup Final they gave up. Oh, yes, the Colonial Office found me two tickets for the match that afternoon."

Abdul Rahman the tactician added, "With the British, it is no use going to them and saying, 'I demand, I demand, I demand.' You say that, and you won't 'get' it — in other words, if you point a pistol at their heads you will get shot instead."

The talks ended after three weeks, with gold-plated success for Abdul Rahman. On February 8, 1956, he signed the "Merdeka" agreement with Mr Lennox-Boyd in a ceremony in Lancaster House. Abdul Rahman signed joyfully. It was his fifty-third birthday.

The only patch of tarnish in his gold plate of satisfaction was that back in Malaya that day the amnesty to the terrorists had ended in failure. Only seventy-two men and women had given up during the previous five months.

The "Merdeka" agreement was a tremendous achievement; barely six months had passed since Abdul Rahman and the Alliance had come into power, yet here they were with independence due in nineteen months.

A bare two months before, the Alliance had not calculated on slashing by half its original target date of independence in four years. No dependent territory had marched on the threshold of independence so swiftly and with so little confusion as had the Federation.

On February 16 Abdul Rahman left London by air for Malaya. In Cairo he met Colonel Gamal Nasser, the Egyptian Prime Minister.

He landed in Singapore four days later, and was immediately taken to Malacca, capital of the first Malay empire of Malacca, to make his announcement to Malaya.

Here, in the midst of a rapturous crowd of about 100,000, he formally proclaimed the day of independence. He did not, however, use the words "if possible" after the date. Instead he said, "If God permits."

He returned to Kuala Lumpur a hero, but a humble one. He knew that enormous tasks faced him.

Perhaps the highlights of Abdul Rahman's stay in London, outside his conference achievements, were his audience with the Queen and the State banquet that the Secretary of State for War, Mr Antony Head, the Army Council gave him and his delegation.

The banquet originated from Abdul Rahman's friend Field-Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. It was a gracious and unique honour. For the first time in its history the Army Council was honouring a delegation from the Colonies and Dependencies. It augured well for the relations between Britain and the future independent Malaya, whose leaders had already agreed to an Anglo-Malayan Defence and Mutual Assistance Pact.

The setting for the dinner was the banqueting-hall of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea. It was a magnificent and inspiring scene which impressed Abdul Rahman and his colleagues. The Malays keenly regretted that they had not brought their gorgeous ceremonial costumes to England. They had not done so principally because of Britain's cold.

Abdul Rahman and his delegation were sombre, therefore, in white tie and tails, while the Army officers wore mess kit and full orders and decorations.

They dined on the original oak table made in 1680, and under paintings of Charles II and William III. The room was lit by silver candelabras. Templer had brought his own regimental plate from Northern Ireland, and it made a gorgeous display on the table. The principle dishes were served on silver plates provided by the Scots Guards, who had once served in the anti-Communist war in Malaya. The menu, said a member of the delegation, was "quite exceptional."

The speeches were short. The basic theme of Mr Head's speech was the comradeship of the British and Malayan armies, a comradeship which, he said, would be retained after independence.

Contrary to all protocol, the Malayan delegation banged on the table in insistence that Templer should make a speech. He did, and it was mainly to say how dear to him had been his stay in Malaya and his real and abiding interest in the future of the country. He wished it well.

After it was over there was little doubt that Abdul Rahman had been touched by the exceptional honour which had been done to him.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Independence

Enormous tasks faced Abdul Rahman in Malaya. None was more urgent or of greater importance than the war on the terrorists, and he made it his first act after returning to Kuala Lumpur to broadcast a direct message to Chin Peng. He had, he told Chin Peng, returned with control of internal defence and security. "Therefore," added Abdul Rahman, "I call upon you to honour your pledge at Baling and surrender with all your weapons. If you should decide to meet me it will merely to discuss the time, place, and manner for the laying down of your arms."

Abdul Rahman knew that this would be a fruitless appeal, but he made it "to give Chin Peng a chance." By Independence Day, however, nothing emanated from the headquarters of the Malayan Communist Party except manifestoes which indicated that the language used at Baling had not changed, and neither had the Communist objectives.

Within a fortnight of returning from London Abdul Rahman took over the portfolio of internal defence and security. He became chairman to the top policy-making "Emergency Operations Council," which gave him responsibility for the course of the campaign. The operational direction remained, of course, in the professional hands of the Director of Operations.

The control of finance, with all the heavy responsibility it implied, went to Colonel Lee, who was moved from the Transport Ministry. Abdul Rahman took Dr Ismail away from Natural Resources to become the first Minister for Commerce and Industry, a portfolio that soon called for tact and diplomacy because of the necessity to create openings in business and industry for Malays.

Abdul Rahman also had urgent political problems. Of para-

mount importance was the creation of a formula for a common nationality which would be acceptable to both the Malays and Chinese. He swayed the Malays to the idea of a common nationality, and their acceptance of this principle he described as "a very big sacrifice which no indigenous people in any part of the world have made."

It was to be expected that with political power about to be transferred from Britain to the people of the Federation groups and communities should become vociferous in demanding "rights" and "privileges" for themselves.

Thus the old question of *jus soli*, citizenship by right of birth, was projected to the forefront by non-Malays, especially the Chinese. They felt that without this principle which guaranteed them rights as free and equal citizens independence would be meaningless, as they would retain an inferior status.

The Chinese saw in the forthcoming constitutional commission an opportunity for restoring the rights of citizenship taken from them when the Federation supplanted the Malayan Union. The Alliance thus faced their biggest test of accord within themselves.

As the situation stood, only 10 per cent of the Chinese were on the electoral roll, but this could not be attributed to the cumbersome procedure for registration demanded by the citizenship laws. The Government estimated that over 80 per cent of the Chinese could become citizens if they took the trouble to do so. The difficulties were not insurmountable. The root of it was political apathy.

The Malayan Chinese Association thus began to give attention to the task of persuading more Chinese to get on to the register, even though there was what one source described as "too much rigmarole" surrounding applications for registration and naturalization. Many sections in the M.C.A. felt keenly that political power should not be the monopoly of one community.

Another source of irritation to the Chinese was the fact that the terms of reference for the commission included the dictum that "the special position of the Malays" was to be recognized in the constitution.

They planned mass meetings throughout the country to coincide with the arrival of the independent commission which had been appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Reid, a Privy Coun-

cillor and a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary. The other eminent members were Sir Ivor Jennings, Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge; Sir William McKell, a former Governor-General of Australia; Mr Justice Abdul Hamid of Pakistan; and Mr B. Malik, a Chief Justice in India.

Abdul Rahman was a worried man. The situation threatened to get out of hand. He and Dato Sir Cheng-lock Tan and other leaders of the Alliance appealed continuously to Malays and Chinese to keep calm over the citizenship controversy.

Sir Cheng-lock Tan warned, "Irresponsibility almost invariably exacts a terrible price, and I appeal to all in this country not to succumb to irresponsibility. We are promised national independence, so let us prove ourselves worthy of it by showing the world that we are responsible people. It will be a thousand pities if our objectives are marred by thoughtlessness."

Abdul Rahman, observing his principle of impartiality, declared, "The constitutional commission has full liberty to recommend *jus soli* if it thinks it necessary." He ordered a directive to be issued by the headquarters of U.M.N.O. warning members against being swayed by sentiment. The directive said:

> All members should keep calm and be patient, because we still have much hope that this matter can be peacefully and amicably settled. In this critical period we must not follow our sentiment and take hasty decisions, because it may result in inter-racial strife which will only bring benefit to the colonial power.

The Malayan Chinese Association showed signs of splitting violently on the issue. On the one hand were the temperates who were willing to soft-pedal on *jus soli* and meet the wishes of the Malay leaders, who were uncomfortable over the fact that their community was not ready to go hand-in-hand with the Chinese on this question. On the other hand there were powerful sections in the M.C.A., composed principally of the Chambers of Commerce, the Chinese guilds and associations, and school-teachers, who adamantly insisted that the principle should be part of the new constitution.

The temperates were able to understand the doubts and fears of

the Malays, and they were far-sighted enough to appreciate communal feelings. It was not surprising that the demands were resisted by the Malays.

Abdul Rahman finally forced himself to speak forthrightly. In a broadcast he asserted that under the changes envisaged by the new constitution "the Malays are prepared within reason to share their rights with others who owe loyalty to this country. I must, however, ask non-Malays to be fair and considerate, and not to make unreasonable demands. It is well to remember that no natives of any country in the world have given away so much as the Malays have done; no natives have been as friendly to immigrant people as the Malays have been."

He said that the only chance the Malays had of keeping their identity alive was to insist on the retention of inherent rights guaranteed by the Federation Agreement and by treaties made between the British Government and the Rulers. Suspicions about Malay insincerity were unjustified.

"There is," he said, "ample evidence of goodwill and friendship for all. It would be a thousand pities if anything were to disturb the happy relationship that now exists. Malays do not covet the riches or wealth in other people's hands. All that we have asked for is to be given the respect due to us as the sons of the soil.

"I would ask those who hope to obstruct the progress towards independence by creating dissension among the people to think again. To them I say, 'Know your friends from your enemies, and remember that the real bulwark against Communism is the Malays.' "

To Malays Abdul Rahman made an appeal: "No country in the world has won independence without sacrifices by the people. I have no doubt that you are prepared to make sacrifices and to live up to your reputation of tolerance, hospitality, and courtesy."

It was perhaps significant that after this appeal the tension in Malaya eased and the subject of *jus soli* disappeared from the pages of newspapers for many weeks.

Nevertheless, behind the scenes, Malay and Chinese leaders, including Abdul Rahman, worked quietly to find a solution which they could present to the Reid Commission.

The Alliance National Council took four months to complete a memorandum — described as "our political testament" — for the

commission. The soothing tongue and impartiality of Abdul Rahman prevented a complete breakdown in the private discussions over the question of citizenship.

The final memorandum made no mention of *jus soli,* but the U.M.N.O. agreed to permit those born of alien parents after independence to be free to choose their nationality after attaining the age of twenty-one years.

This raised bitter feelings among the Chinese and Indians in the National Council. Abdul Rahman saved the situation again: he persuaded the U.M.N.O. to permit the opposition of the M.C.A. and the M.I.C. to this provision to be expressed in the memorandum.

Lord Reid and his commission travelled through the country for six months, receiving memoranda and hearing evidence in camera. They then went to Rome to prepare their report and recommendations. In February 1957 they published their report. Immediately and inevitably it produced controversies.

The keynote of the recommendations was compromise. They provided for a constitutional Paramount Ruler to be known as the "Yang di-Pertuan Agong" to be elected every five years from among the Rulers, which made the "monarchy" unique in the world. He would choose the Prime Minister, whose advice he would accept on all matters.

Parliament would consist of a wholly elected House of Representatives of one hundred members and a Senate of thirty-three, two-thirds of whom would be elected by the States and the remaining eleven nominated by the Paramount Ruler. This Upper House would have power to delay legislation.

These were not contentious points and were accepted. The lively issues were the recommendations on citizenship, special Malay rights, and the question of the State religion.

On citizenship the Commission had accepted the Alliance proposals almost in their entirety, but had gone further by advocating the acceptance of *jus soli.* It called for all Abdul Rahman's tact and powers of persuasion to cajole the M.C.A. and the M.I.C. to adhere to the terms of the Alliance memorandum, and not to demand acceptance of an issue which the U.M.N.O. had not agreed to.

On the understanding that *jus soli* would be considered by the

Government as soon as possible after independence, the Chinese and Indian partners in the Alliance acceded to Abdul Rahman's request not to force the point.

The other two problems were solved amicably. Islam was accepted as the State religion, but there were freedom of religion for non-Muslims. The non-Malays accepted the need to continue, for a few years longer, the system of giving Malays special privileges with regard to land reservations, and quotas for admission to the public services, for receiving permits and licences, and for scholarships, bursaries, and other educational aids.

Only six months remained for all the constitutional changes and processes to be carried out if independence was to be announced on August 31. With an effort they were completed in time.

The world's Press descended on Kuala Lumpur. Dignitaries of the free world arrived. The main concern of Press men and V.I.P.'s seemed to be whether racial clashes would develop between the Malays, whom they expected to be arrogant and possessive, and the Chinese. They were doomed to disappointment.

Abdul Rahman gave the Press an "eve of *merdeka*" conference. He answered questions about Communists by saying, "They cannot co-exist with any Government. They drove the Nationalist Government out of China. They tried the same thing with the Nationalist Korean Government and with that of Vietnam. I would be deceiving myself is I were to think they would tolerate the Government of Malaya and treat us differently.

"As sure as my name is Abdul Rahman they would try to kick me out."

He answered questions about external defence. Britain, he said, would help Malaya if she were attacked or threatened. The Defence and Mutual Assistance Pact between the two countries would be signed within the next two months. No, nothing in it made provision for a nuclear-weapon base in Malaya.

As for joining the South-east Asia Treaty Organization, that was a question yet to be decided. No, he was not neutral; he was against Communism.

His policy after independence? Abdul Rahman replied, "My first duty will be to concentrate on home affairs, to satisfy the needs of the people and the country. The multi-racial population must be taught to consider Malaya their home; much work must be done to

impress upon them the true significance of loyalty to Malaya.

"We will see that the efficiency of the excellent Government machinery we have inherited from the British will not suffer."

Individual freedoms? "I believe," he said, "in allowing the people to live as they wish as long as they abide by the law. I believe in allowing them to run their own life and to enjoy the fruits of their own labours."

His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester arrived to be the Queen's representative and to present Abdul Rahman with the constitutional instruments that made the Federation a free country.

The night of August 30 was clear and bright. Members of the U.M.N.O. gathered on the great green sward between the Moorish outlines of the Federal Secretariat and the pseudo-Tudor of the Selangor Club for a symbolic midnight ceremony.

Just before midnight Abdul Rahman arrived. As the clock in the tower of the Secretariat began to boom the first strokes of the new day the Union Jack was hauled down slowly from a mast.

As it was gathered gently by Malay hands and placed on a tray the Federation Flag was slowly hoisted to the top of a second mast. The thousands screamed *"Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka!"* Britons watching from the Selangor Club led the applause, taken up by Malays standing outside.

A British pledge was honoured and a nation was born. Unashamedly Abdul Rahman was gripped with the ecstasy and emotion of the moment. As the shout of *"Merdeka!"* died another rent the air — that of *"Bapa Merdeka!"* ("Father of Independence!") as the president of the powerful Youth section of the U.M.N.O., Inche Sardon bin Haji Jubir, placed a gold medallion on Abdul Rahman's neck. On it was inscribed *"Bapa Merdeka."*

Over 170 years had passed since the trading port of Penang had been ceded to Britain by Abdul Rahman's great-great-great-grandfather.

"It was perhaps destiny that I should bring Penang back into the Malay fold and negotiate an agreement with Great Britain to withdraw her protection over the country," he said to a friend.

A few hours later Abdul Rahman stood in front of the Duke of Gloucester before a crowd of thousands in the "Merdeka" stadium which he had inspired as a centre for sport in Kuala Lumur. Abdul Rahman was wearing the picturesque black-and-white ceremonial

costume that he personally had designed from the Muscat dress of old, for himself and his Cabinet.

Behind him on the red-carpeted dais that stood in the centre of the field were the eight Malay Rulers and their newly elected Paramount Ruler, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, the same Tunku Abdul Rahman who had been in London in the twenties with playboy Abdul Rahman.

The Duke of Gloucester, in the white tropical uniform of a Field-Marshal, spoke. From his niece, the Queen, the head of this new member of the Commonwealth, he brought a message:

> My thoughts and my good wishes are with you as you take up the great and stimulating responsibilities of independence. I am confident that Malaya will respond worthily to the challenging tasks of independence, and that she will continue to show to the world that example of moderation and goodwill between all races that has been so marked a feature of her history. May God bless and guide your country in the years that lie ahead.

The aide-de-camp stepped forward, and the Duke took from him and presented to Abdul Rahman the constitutional instruments providing for the withdrawal of British protection over the Malay States and of the Crown's sovereignty over the settlement of Penang and Malacca.

Abdul Rahman faced the masses and spoke.

"To-day," he said, "a new page is turned, and Malaya steps forward to take her rightful place as a free and independent partner in the great community of nations. Though we fully realize that difficulties and problems lie ahead, we are confident that with the blessing of God these difficulties will be overcome, and that to-day's event will be our inspiration and our guide. . . . .

"For many years past," he went on, "our fortunes have been linked with those of Great Britain, and we recall in particular the comradeship of two world wars. We remember, too, the products of our association: justice before the law, the legacy of an efficient public service, and the highest standard of living in Asia.

"We shall therefore always remember with gratitude the assist-

ance which we have received from Great Britain down our long path to nationhood, an assistance which culminated to-day with the proclamation of Malaya's independence. But the long-standing friendship between our countries does not cease with independence.

"Britain will ever find in us her best friend, and it is a source of much gratification to my Government that British civil servants will continue to serve in this country to assist us in the solution of the many problems which independence will present.

"Independence is only the threshold to high endeavour. At this solemn moment I call upon you all to dedicate yourselves to the service of the new Malaya, to work and strive with hand and brain to create a new nation, inspired by the ideals of justice and liberty — a beacon of light in a disturbed and distracted world.

"Let us unitedly face the challenge of the years. With remembrance of the past and with confidence in the future, under the providence of God, we shall succeed."

He drew from a large leather case the Proclamation of Independence. He held it up for all to see, and began to read in Malay:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, the Lord of the Universe, and may the blessings and peace of God be upon his messengers.

This was the ancient Malay preamble to all royal announcements or messages. Abdul Rahman read on:

> "Whereas the time has now arrived when the people of the Persekutuan Tanah Melayu will assume the status of a free, independent, and sovereign nation among the nations of the world.
>
> "And whereas by an agreement styled the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1957 . . .And whereas. . .And whereas. . .And whereas. . .
>
> "Now in the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, I, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Prime Minister of the Persekutuan Tanah Melayu, with the concurrence and approval of Their Highnesses the Rulers

> of the Malay States, do hereby proclaim and declare that the Persekutuan Tanah Melayu is, and with God's blessing shall be for ever, a sovereign democratic and independent State founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of its people and the maintenance of a just peace among all nations."

Exultant cries of "*Merdeka!*" rose into the air. Then, as the guns boomed and the new national anthem was played, the flag of Independent Malaya was slowly raised to the mast.

For Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister, standing on the dais with his hand at the salute, his brimming eyes following the slow, fascinating rise of the flag, the quest that had begun in his heart many, many years before had ended.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Whither Man and Country

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch.

This couplet from Rudyard Kipling's famous poem reflects Abdul Rahman's most prominent characteristic. Born a prince, he has the "common touch." He can unbend without effort, in the natural course of things, to meet on equal terms the peasant in his rice-field.

He has the courteous dignity of Malay royalty and is a convivial companion of commoners. He is at ease with British royalty — the Duke of Edinburgh and he took to each other like brothers — and was an equally gracious host to Miss "Bunny" Simmons, the Colonial Office chauffeuse who drove him around London during his official visits, and whom he invited to Malaya as a guest of the Government at the independence celebrations.

He learned the common touch in England, and he has never forgotten it, especially in his own country, which abounds in Malay royalty, from Army privates to civil servants and Sultans.

Abdul Rahman is a joint product of East and West. In this he resembles his favourite politician, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister. Like Mr Nehru, he has the advantage of an Asian and English background, which was a particularly great asset when he was negotiating his country's course to independence. With Mr Nehru he shares an abhorrence of violence. It is typical of Abdul Rahman that he wants everybody to be happy.

Unlike Mr Nehru, however, he was in the Civil Service and took to politics and a national movement only late in life.

Tall for a Malay — he is just under five feet ten inches in height

— Abdul Rahman sports a sparse black moustache which has become much admired by young Malays, who cultivate one — if they can, for they are not a hirsute race.

His dark eyes twinkle whenever his sense of humour — unusually free for a Malay — bubbles to the surface. His humour is often personal, but never malicious, a failing of some Malay politicians.

He speaks quietly. He rarely raises his voice and rarely displays emotion in Parliamentary debate or at political meetings. He is not a dynamic or powerful speaker, but he holds a Malayan audience without difficulty because he is a man speaking his mind sincerely.

He has a normal Malay love of ostentation. For instance, he ordered for himself a magnificent American car, all glistening black and chrome, which he used with pennants flying and its air-conditioning switched on; vastly different, perhaps, from Mr Nehru, who had to be dissuaded from riding a bicycle to work, and withal not as ostentatious as President Soekarno of Indonesia, who is always preceded by a galaxy of outriders.

After he became Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs Abdul Rahman gathered criticism for fitting his Cabinet colleagues into helmets plumed with red, white, and blue feathers* — so reminiscent of British Colonial governors — and in sets of uniforms for ceremonial and formal occasions. His reaction to these criticisms was unconcealed displeasure, although on reflection he agreed that some had been fair.

Thus for all his camaraderie Abdul Rahman is extremely sensitive to personal criticism, and for all his ability to mix with the common people he has not learned to take the rough with the smooth in politics. The best illustration of this was his mortification and anger when supporters of a rival politician booed him, the Prime Minister, at a political meeting.

Another characteristic is his superstition. He never cuts his nails or his hair on *Hari Jumaat*, Friday, the Muslim Sabbath, or walks under a ladder, yet he considers thirteen his lucky number. He says, "If racing falls on a 13th I never lose, and Friday the 13th is always a lucky day for me." Yet he will not sit thirteen at a table.

*The plumed helmets were replaced by gold-braided Malay *songkoks* (caps) in time for the first anniversary of independence celebrations.

As Prime Minister he had no patience with long-winded reports or long-winded officials, but he has a common sense which gets him to the heart of any matter. He relied rather heavily on the permanent officials, which is all very well as long as the Civil Service remains as efficient and disciplined as when he became Chief Minister.

He is aware, however, that the machinery of government is bound to be subject to strains inherent in its composition. The top officials are either Malay or British.

The better Malay officials, who are gradually taking the senior jobs, may be inclined to go for political rewards instead in future, and in any case cannot be expected to be completely neutral, racially and politically, in a country which held its first political elections but a few years ago.

The old Malayan Civil Service was impartial because it had nothing to be partial about; it was the Government, a benevolent bureaucracy answerable really to no one except the head bureaucrat, the High Commissioner.

The trouble will begin when the politicians realize that power belongs to the Government and the legislature, and no longer to the Civil Service, and that it can change hands and become theirs if the crosses are put in the proper places on the ballot-papers.

In Malaya under Abdul Rahman, therefore, it was in the main government by personality and by emotion. The whole conception of democratic government was new.

Abdul Rahman is not a man of startling intellect. He is an extraordinarily shrewd politician who prefers discussion and compromise. Yet he has already shown a capacity to be statesmanlike on the internal issues that matter and to give ground politically where they are not so important. He was, for instance, as firm as a rock against Malay condemnation of his intention to sign a defence pact with Great Britain.

As Prime Minister, Abdul Rahman did not pay a great deal of attention to detail. On the country's economic problems, for example, he has shown alarming blind spots.

He was fortunate to have the absolute loyalty of his Cabinet of seven Malays, three Chinese, and one Indian. His right-hand men were his old friends Dato Abdul Razak, his Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and Colonel Sir Henry Hau-shik Lee, his

Minister of Finance.

He placed considerable confidence in Sir Henry Lee, who is the most practicable and knowledgeable man for financial matters, which generally are a mystery to the rest of the Cabinet.

Abdul Rahman's trust in Sir Henry is another illustration of his honesty and fidelity to his principles.

Sir Henry lost his powerful political position in the Selangor M.C.A. soon after the Federal elections (his successor as president was Mr Ong Yoke Lin).* Abdul Rahman did not, however, put political expediency before efficiency in government. He publicly stated that Sir Henry's loss of political standing in the M.C.A. would make no difference. Sir Henry remained in the Cabinet, not as an elected member, but as an appointed member.

To some people Abdul Rahman's determination to retain Sir Henry in his Cabinet demonstrated a political weakness in his ignoring of expediency, but his decision was accepted by the Alliance partners, and it created no political crisis or unhappy public controversy.

In Abdul Rahman's running of the Government it is a fact that much of his advice came from British civil servants or other British officials, but the political situation does not enter into their counsels. He himself invariably applied the political yardstick to their recommendations, and sometimes went to the extent of reversing — not rejecting — their advice.

Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this was when ten of his top military and civil advisers and experts presented him with their agreed draft of a reply to a Malayan Communist Party manifesto which had been sent to Singapore newspapers. The Communists once again wanted peace talks. Abdul Rahman altered the draft in what seemed to the experts to be several vital respects. He considered these amendments desirable and necessary in the prevailing political circumstances.

The footnote to this story is that the ten good men and true were afterwards all satisfied that Abdul Rahman was right in his alterations.

The Tunku's greatest political asset, therefore, is his remarkable

*Three years later he regained influence as a member of the national policy-making central committee of the Association.

intuition. He grasps instantly the political implications of a situation while his advisers are groping with the mystique of decision. This is especially true, of course, where Malay matters are concerned, but he is rarely at fault in his judgment of Chinese or Indian feeling.

No Asian or African who became the first Prime Minister of an independent State has taken over a country like Malaya — financially stable, with great wealth from its main industries, with rich potentialities in its land, and with an efficient and honest Civil Service.

In addition, the party in power, the Alliance, had the respect of democratic countries for its conservative and thoughtful plans for the future, and the Prime Minister himself stood high in the esteem of Governments outside the Communist countries.

Nevertheless, Abdul Rahman faced very serious and complex internal problems — let alone those created by international politics.

Some of the problems spurt from independence being equated with prosperity and freedom with relief from taxation. For instance, many people in the rural areas took seriously a whisper that freedom meant that the British civil servants and civilians were going, and all that they left behind "will be ours" — and simple to run.

His first problem was to maintain sound administration and the efficient execution of policy in the face of a rapid — far more rapid than was expected — exodus of British civil servants because of "Malayanization." Within a few months of becoming Prime Minister Abdul Rahman viewed with considerable alarm the loss of 40 per cent of his experienced administrators and qualified technical and professional officers.

Standards of efficiency have begun to drop because of a shortage of staff, and a Government five-year plan threatens to become an eight-year plan because of the dearth of experienced and qualified men.

Abdul Rahman's second problem was the early termiantion of the Emergency. The only satisfactory solution is the complete elimination of the armed forces of the Malayan Communist Party, but this could be extremely lengthy and expensive.

Abdul Rahman showed undue optimism, however, that by the

end of 1958 the terrorist strength could be whittled down to a negligible force by surrenders and kills. Nevertheless, since independence and his offer of a "Merdeka" amnesty Communists surrendered at record rates.* He personally was too strongly anti-Communist to end the war by negotiation; he will not capitulate to co-existence. Four months after becoming Prime Minister he rejected Chin Peng's call for another meeting to discuss peace; since then he disregarded Chin Peng as the leader of the terrorists and concentrated his attention on persuading those remaining in the Malayan jungle to surrender.

Even if the Communist units in Malaya are reduced to a minimum which does not necessitate the use against them of tremendous military and police forces, the country still faces grave dangers from Communist subversion and infiltration into all spheres of life.

The Malayan Communist Party has already begun its efforts to subvert schoolchildren, trade unions, youth organizations, and political parties. This phase of their campaign to 'conquer' Malaya can be vanquished only by national endeavour in which the Chinese must play the most important role. To keep Communist subversion at bay, therefore, Chinese support had to be secured, but the Government is unlikely to receive this in good enough measure.

Abdul Rahman is certainly perturbed also about the creeping Communist threats in countries adjoining Malaya.

Singapore is an affliction to him because of its insecurity and its large Chinese population, who are intimidated by Communists and influenced by the tremendous waves of Communist propaganda directed to them from Red China. Abdul Rahman was determined that while he was Prime Minister he would not agree to political union between Singapore and the Federation so long as the Communist hazards existed and so long as large sections of the one million Chinese on the island looked towards Red China as a source of inspiration.

He also regards the growing Communist hold in Indonesia with trepidation. He travelled through Indonesia, and was impressed only by President Soekarno's personal hold on the people. He

*More than 500 terrorists surrendered during the period of the amnesty.

noticed the Chinese flag flying side by side with the Indonesian and drew his own conclusions.

Early in 1958 he chose the neighbouring country of South Vietnam, itself involved in keeping Communists at bay, in which to make a forthright speech during his first goodwill journey after independence. He said, "Some South-east Asian countries have not taken up a definite stand against Communism. I think they will have cause to regret it."

As the London *Times* said:

> The reason why Tunku Abdul Rahman has no time for Asian neutralism is that the Communists have for ten years been interfering in Malaya.
>
> If he becomes an active advocate of a stronger front against Communism throughout South-east Asia the long war in the Malayan jungle will have had results the Communists never dreamed of.

And Abdul Rahman minced no words when as Prime Minister of the world's newest nation he replied to the letter that the Russian Premier, Mr Bulganin, had sent to all United Nations countries calling for a 'summit' conference of heads of State to find ways of reducing war tension and also urging peaceful co-existence.

"Since the middle of 1948 this country," he wrote,

> has been subjected to the tribulations of an emergency situation created by a group of adventures whose loyalty lies outside this country, attempting to impose by force of arms a way of life that would be wholly unacceptable to, and abhorred by, the people of this country.

In such circumstances the Federation Government

> wholeheartedly welcomes the Soviet Government's declared views on non-interference and appreciation that any attempt to violate the status quo would have undesirable consequences. It is therefore hoped that these elements who are causing so much calamity and

> suffering to the ordinary people. . .will take heed of the Soviet Government's view.

Abdul Rahman had little faith that Russia would take the hint and instruct the Malayan Communist Party to halt its war.

Abdul Rahman has already planted the idea of unity among the races in spite of his opponents, who say that he really wanted to make Malaya a happy land for the Malays while they rode on the backs of the industry and money of the Chinese, who would be given all the freedom they need to grow still richer.

Abdul Rahman stands head and shoulders above other politicians in Malaya in the singlemindedness of his desire to achieve unity. He pins his faith on the charity of man and on the fact that for many, many years already the races have been able to live harmoniously. But there are quicksands under the bridges he has built.

Abdul Rahman has serious problems to contend with inside the Alliance Party. He will have to be able to hold the party together in the face of strains and dissensions over political, economic, social, educational, and cultural aspirations of the Malays in the U.M.N.O., the Chinese in the M.C.A., and the Indians in the M.I.C.

The Alliance is still not a cohesive, meaningful whole. The exacerbations and turbulences over peculiarly communal problems — such as simpler citizenship facilities for non-Malays, the retention of Chinese education, and special privileges for Malays — which were suppressed during the march to independence, reared themselves even before the country had settled down to its new-found freedom.

They demonstrated that the links between the three organizations were held together by and because of one man — Abdul Rahman.

He perhaps recognizes — as do many political observers in the country — that the Alliance is really made up of one principal party, the U.M.N.O., with the M.C.A. and the M.I.C. as branches clothed with the intelligentsia and capitalist classes of each community.

The M.C.A. is not representative of the two and a half million Chinese in the Federation, neither is the M.I.C. of the six hundred

thousand Indians. Neither of them has roots in the villages and small towns. And this is the weakness of these two partners in the Alliance.

Events in the Federation after independence produced allegations of lack of loyalties by Chinese and Indian members of the Alliance.

One showed that the M.C.A. had its opponents among a large and powerful section of the community. A by-elelction for a seat in the Legislative Council saw Chinese votes in a predominantly Chinese constituency going not to a Chinese candidate put up by the Alliance, but to an Indian who was a member not of a national party, but of an organization which was peculiarly local.

It was a serious setback, and inevitably it led Chinese opinion, some observers, and also opponents of the Alliance to feel that the 'marriage' between the U.M.N.O. and the M.C.A. was breaking up.

However, while Abdul Rahman is leader of the Alliance he will do everything in his power to ensure that there will be no divorce. He will by his own faith in the party and on the strength of his own emotional appeal to the Chinese and Indians, and by following his policy of trying to adjust differences, of patching up, of bridging over, and generally of compromising, endeavour to make the Alliance a real, living, vital, and permanent factor in Malaya's political life.

He has an unenviable task which would have been herculean but for the fact that he is trusted by the majority of Chinese and Indians in the Alliance. To many of them Abdul Rahman's word is his bond. No other Malay could have achieved with these two communities quite as much as he did in a few short years.

Thus the Alliance will continue, maybe in a different form, and maybe with members dropping away and joining other parties, but never again is it likely to win rural, Town Council, municipal, and Parliamentary elections with the complete confidence and overwhelming triumphs that characterized its first five years, when *merdeka* was the impulse and inspiration.

Abdul Rahman is not so optimistic as to think that a united Malaya can emerge in a handful of years. He realizes that too many suspicions and distrusts still exist between the communitites, but his personal message of friendship and goodwill among all is understood because it comes from an immensely sincere heart.

He is the country squire who wants to look after his people, who with considerable generosity, tact, and goodwill endeavours to help them to merge their individualities and become a single contented society.

He feels strongly that this and other problems of Malaya can be met without upheavals, and that because independence came without animosity and with a great deal of goodwill a policy of gradual progress will be effective and accepted.

The test, however, will come when a new emotional mood rises in Malaya — a mood parallel with the emotional spirit of the new Asia — and wants changes quickly instead of slowly.

Also with its lack of homogeneity and with the appeal of race, Malaya is still a new enough nation for its people to be guided by emotions rather than by thought, and any one of the problems could defeat a statesman and hand power to a demagogue.

Abdul Rahman resigned the Premiership early in February 1959.

A few days after the announcement of his resignation he made the following statement: "There has been a lot of speculation in this country as to whether I will come back or not. I think I have made it clear that I will be coming back — of course, provided we win." There is little likelihood of the Alliance Party not winning.

There is no sentiment in politics, however. Memories are short. Winston Churchill led Britain to grand victory in the European WAr, but that did not prevent his going out of power for six long years.

This may eventually be the fate of Abdul Rahman, if only because he wishes to administer according to the creed he learned in the Civil Service and according to his own conscience, and not to 'play politics' and submit to expediency. The question can only be answered by time — and the man himself.

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra is unique because he is not only the greatest Malay, but the greatest patriot of the country whose people he wishes to see united so that they may live in peace, contentment, and prosperity.

In the Preface to this book first published soon after Independence, HARRY MILLER states that in the writing of it, he offers no verdict on Tunku Abdul Rahman and his stewardship as Prime Minister. That, he emphasizes, must wait some years.

As such, this biography of the Malay prince pitchforked into politics, is objective, sensitive and frank. It brings together the impressions this sincere and simple man made on his country and the politics of his day.

The Tunku himself, in his Foreword, believes this to be as complete an account of his life as it is possible for another man to write.

This first local reissue, twenty-five years after Merdeka, does not only uphold the clear verdict on a great man but also seeks to preserve this well-researched record which tells the striking and often dramatic story of 'Bapa Malaysia'.

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