

Merger Is a Must
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Ever since its victorious, twelve-year guerrilla war against Communist rebels, rubber-rich Malaya has been an eye of calm amidst the storm of Southeast Asia. From its plantations comes 40% of the world's rubber, and scores of new schools and factories give evidence of its quietly booming economy. But for some time Malaya has cast a wary eye at the spread of Communist influence directly to the south. On the island state of Singapore, Red-lining extremists threaten to topple the local government, and the British-run territories of Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (see map) are prey to the expansionist aims of Indonesia's left-leaning President Sukarno.

To prevent Singapore from becoming an Asian Cuba off Malaya's coast and to stimulate the development of the backward Borneo territories, Malayan Prime Minister Tengku (Prince) Abdul Rahman last year proposed a sensible solution: the formation of a Malaysian Federation.

No Altruism. The Tengku's proposal would create a new independent nation of 10 million people with an area a little smaller than Japan. The federation would provide new political stability and end the "colonialism" propaganda issue, which has been a feeding ground for Communist growth. Malaya could use Singapore as a port instead of competing with it and could channel economic and technical aid into the Borneo territories with their rich oil and rubber resources. "There's not a single railroad track in all of Sarawak," says Abdul Rahman, "and not one road connecting any of the territories with each other." But the Tengku was not being just altruistic about the Borneo lands; he wants their inclusion in the federation because, being non-Chinese, they would preserve the existing cultural balance and keep the Malay-Moslem population from being swamped by the influx of Singapore's 1,250,000 Chinese.

Last week the Tengku was in London hopeful of hammering out the final details that would make his plan a reality. Britain has already tentatively okayed the federation, exacting only the promise that it could have continued use of its military base in Singapore. Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo have all indicated a willingness to join, mainly because it would give them their independence far sooner than they might otherwise have expected.

Only Singapore remains a stumbling block.

Chaotic Alternative. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is fighting to prevent Red rabble-rousers from ousting his government before the federation can be established. The once solid majority of Lee's Political Action Party in the Singapore Legislative Assembly has been dissipated through defections to a Communist-front known as the Barisan Socialists, who have been able to marshal tremendous support among the island's underfed, underemployed, predominantly Chinese masses. Lee's all too nimble shifting of position from right to left in the past has also cost him conservative supporters, who now maintain the P.A.P. in power only because they regard it as a far lesser evil than Communism.

Lee's only chance of saving himself from political extinction in his fight with the Barisan Socialists is to maneuver Singapore into the federation as soon as possible. Under the terms he proposes, the island would maintain a certain measure of autonomy by controlling its own labor and education policies, would let Malaya provide for internal and external security. Communist subversion would therefore be the responsibility of Malaya's powerful

and expert police system. Naturally the Barisan Socialists rant that Malaya's government is "reactionary, repressive and misguided." scream that the Malaysia Federation plan is a "sellout" that would make Singapore's Chinese "second-class citizens."

Lee is committed to a referendum on the federation question and is campaigning hard to rally his dwindling support behind his program for partial merger. Aware that time is running out, he bluntly lays on the line the alternative to Singapore's joining Malaysia. "I'm not threatening chaos," he says. "I'm predicting it."

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