Fabian International and
Commonwealth Bureaux

THE MALAYAN EXPERIMENT

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RESEARCH SERIES 213

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1. Britain's Present Role

SINCE 1957, when the word 'Merdeka' (Malay for 'independence') became familiar to the British public, Malaya has taken its place in the cosy list of ex-colonial territories, which, having attained nationhood, could be conveniently labelled 'problem solved' and more or less forgotten. But the problem of Malaya is not solved. There is unfortunately a possibility that it will, within a few years, confront the Commonwealth with a dangerous crisis.

Britain, by the grant of independence in 1957, did not detach herself from Malaya and its problems any more than she disentangled herself from those of Jordan through the concession of independence in 1946. In Malaya the armed forces remain under the higher direction of British officers much as the Arab Legion did under Glubb Pasha. Malaya's own policies continue to be strongly influenced by British advisers. Commonwealth armed forces are at present participating as combatants in the conflict between the Malayan government and the remaining Communist insurgents. In effect Malaya remains in some respects a 'protectorate' of Britain.

The present relationship is, however, one which has been freely chosen by a government elected by the majority of voters. It is in no sense imposed. Although the three principal opposition parties made the withdrawal of British bases and forces part of their 1959 election platforms it is by no means certain that those parties, in office, would hasten to implement that part of their programme. Malaya has for eleven years been rocked by a minority-insurrection of the Communist Party. The presence of the British forces has a stabilising effect which is pretty obviously welcomed by most members of all the races. A precipitate withdrawal would involve the Malayan government in greatly increased expenditure on defence and police forces, thus hampering the economic and social development which is the most important thing of all, if the difficult inter-racial and popu[illegible] to be solved. This does not, however, alter the fact th[illegible]n, the Commonwealth bases must be seen as impermanent and [illegible]. Sooner or later, if Malaya settles down on a basis of ra[illegible] economic progress her government will request the winding up of the bases.

Inter-racial Friction

But what if Malaya does not settle down? With considerable British forces stationed there it is at least necessary to contemplate this possibility. Malaya is inherently unstable. Her population is tri-racial with no single race composing an absolute majority. The two preponderant races — the Malays (49 per cent.) and the Malayan Chinese (38 per cent.) — are incompatible in ways that seem to make inter-racial friction almost inevitable. The Malays are an unsophisticated, technically underdeveloped, rural people; the Malayan Chinese are technically resourceful and commercially energetic. The Chinese hold the purse-strings *vis-à-vis* the Malay peasant

cultivators and fishermen whose general relationship to the Chinese is that of suppliant debtors towards affluent money-lenders and merchants.

At present the economic subordination of the Malays is counterbalanced by their position of political privilege. The key ministries in the central government are in their hands, except finance. Nine of the States (though not Penang and Malacca) have constitutional monarchs (the Sultans) who are Malays. The Federation itself has a Malay constitutional ruler. The police force of Malaya is overwhelmingly manned by Malays. The only considerable indigenous military force is the Malay Regiment, now nearly a division strong. The Malays are guaranteed, under the 1957 Constitution, a certain percentage of posts in the civil service and their quota of business licences and of federal scholarships to the university is safeguarded. But the uneasy present balance in Malaya, based on Malay political power *versus* Chinese economic superiority, is being slowly eroded by a single factor: the franchise — hitherto overwhelmingly in Malay hands — is being extended through the working of the 1957 Constitution to more and more Malayan Chinese and Malayan Indians. This means that, *given a continuance of full parliamentary democracy*, the Malays face the probability that in about five years their political predominance will be ended by the advent into parliament of Malayan Chinese and Indians in full strength.

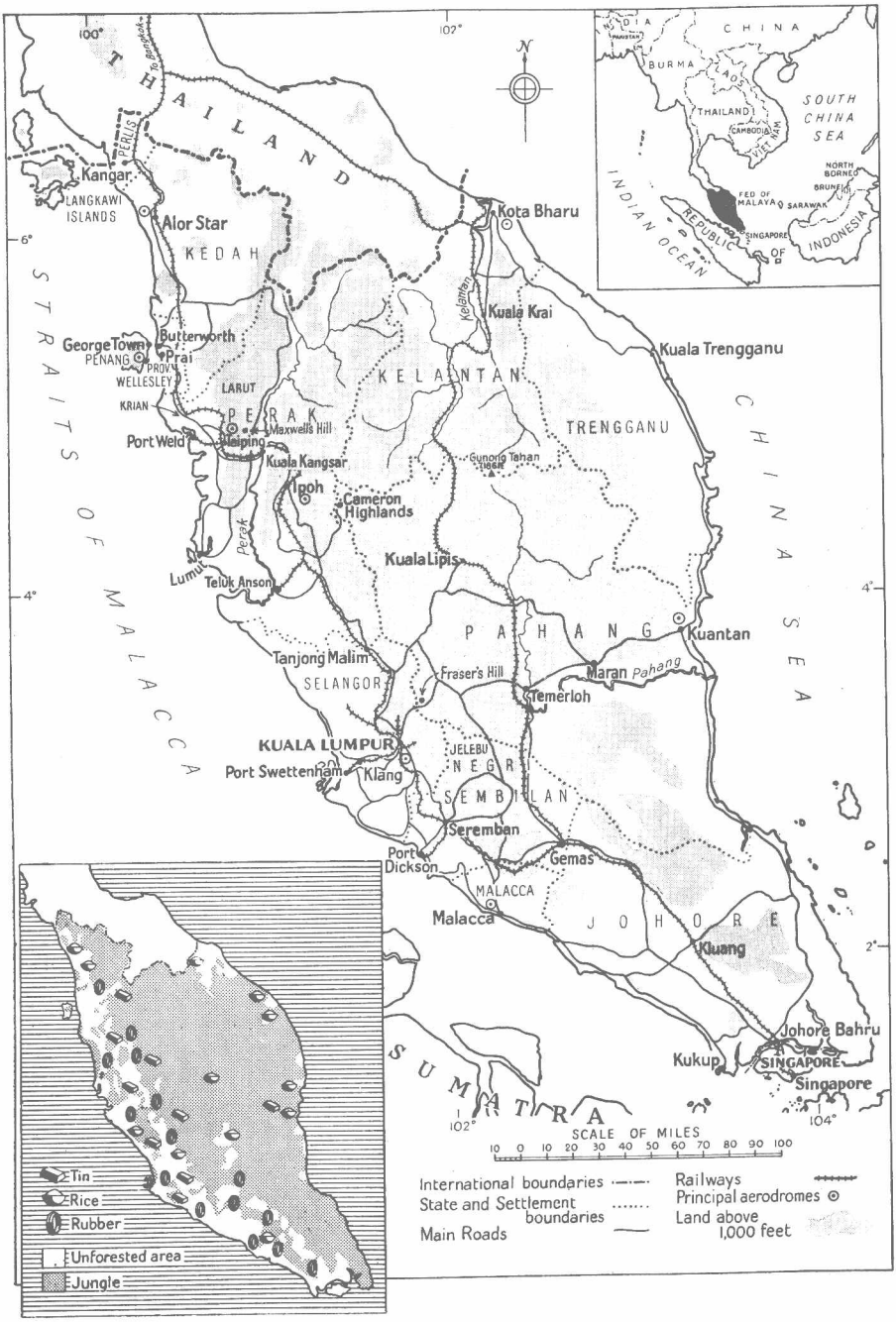
Dangers of Extremism

The attitude of the Malay leadership towards the rising tide of Malayan Chinese and Malayan Indian aspirations is obviously crucial. At present Tungku Abdul Rahman and other leaders of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), who are effectively in power, rest their policy on an inter-racial Alliance. Their junior partners are the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC). The declared aims of the Alliance are solutions by compromise and give-and-take between the races — solutions which to an appreciable extent have been implemented. But in the eyes of a large section of Malayan Chinese and Indians — notably those who are non-English speakers — the Alliance has not satisfied their aspirations and is regarded — not necessarily with justification — as a façade for the perpetuation of Malay privilege. On the other hand Malays, inside and outside the Alliance, are understandably anxious about Chinese and Indian aspirations because of the prospect they could open up of adding political subordination for the Malay race to its existing economic weakness. And extreme Malay groups are already making the Alliance policy of moderation difficult. The temptation that could assail Malay leaders, should inter-racial co-operation fail, is to end the parliamentary system and freeze the political *status quo* by setting up an 'emergency' government resting on the batons of the preponderantly Malay police and the well-trained Malay regiment.

That would mark the end of this experiment in multi-racial nationhood. It would also be the beginning of a period of acute unrest for Malaya.

The above is a pessimistic forecast which, as the following pages will show, may well be belied. But, with British forces stationed in Malaya, it is necessary to contemplate possible unfavourable internal developments. If

THE FEDERATION OF MALAYA



they should occur the British government and British forces would clearly have to keep right out of it. The time has long gone past when European countries, whether ex-colonial or not, should, or can effectively, intervene in purely internal conflicts in Asian countries. The Lebanon in 1958 was a bad precedent. What Britain can do, however, is to use her resources and considerable remaining influence to help Malaya constructively, so that no internal conflict shall happen.

With the communal situation in the Malayan Federation unfinalised, neighbouring Singapore is a kind of political outcast, feared by the predominantly Malay Alliance leadership in the Federation because Singapore's mainly Chinese population, if merged with the Chinese minority in Malaya, would outnumber the Malays. The conservative Malay leaders of the government of the Federation are also antagonised by the Left Wing Socialist character of the present Singapore government. The Singapore government, for its part, is eager for closer union with Malaya both for political reasons and because the two territories form a natural common market. Singapore does not wish to achieve independence until union can be accomplished.

2. The Colonial Background

BRITISH colonial territories East of India were, until World War Two, treated entirely paternalistically. Malaya was an outstanding example. Asian wielders of authority, the Sultan, the headman, the towkay, were 'managed' by British governors, residents and advisers while European capital had a free rein. The great rubber companies, tin concerns and managing agencies virtually ran the country. It was a paradise of economic *laissez-faire* — based on government inaction, and energetic, self-interested activity by private entrepreneurs. The rich — European and Asian alike — grew richer and, if the poor didn't all get poorer the gap between the two categories certainly widened. The system offered no training in political democracy. Racial antagonisms however remained dormant because of the presence of the colonial Power.

But Malaya lay squarely in the path of the Japanese thrust southwards in 1941. That thrust, by destroying the superstition of the invincibility of the white man, let loose a nationalism which made it impossible for European rule to be restored in Asia save in a few limited areas (and there only temporarily). Of all the countries thus affected Malaya was least set aflame — because of its multi-racial, largely 'new immigrant' population from India and China. Nevertheless the fever of nationalism had not passed Malaya by. A desire for an end to, or at least a great relaxation of, British control possessed all Malaya's races. The British Labour government, under which Malaya was re-occupied by Britain, grasped these central facts. Arrangements were put in hand for an entirely new political set-up which should provide for rapid advance to nationhood. High Commissioners were sent out with a clear directive to bring Malaya into the

stream of modern technical advance and to treat her economy as an organic whole, not as a mere theatre for specialised economic development ancillary to European needs.

Inappropriate Policies

The trouble was that the political concept applied to Malaya in 1945 ignored complex racial tensions and sprang too much from emotions that derived from the Anglo-American struggle with Japan. Superficially it seemed rational to set up a democratic Malayan Union in which all the races (Malays, Chinese and Indians alike) should have equal rights of citizenship. The old assumption that Chinese and Indian immigrants were 'birds of passage', mere money-makers on sufferance within Malay Sultanates, was to be felled at a blow. In a unified country the Malay petty kingdoms would be absorbed under a strong central government. This conception commended itself the more to Britain since it virtually rewarded the Chinese of Malaya who (including the Communists) had resisted the Japanese and shown sympathy to British prisoners in Japanese hands.

How unwise it was to oversimplify and base a policy for Malaya on emotions which were tied up with a British cause, and not with Malayan aspirations as a whole, was soon borne in on the British government. The Malays organised opposition to the Malayan Union, the idea had to be scrapped, and only after two years was it possible to get the agreement of the Malays to a compromise arrangement — a Federation in which the component States and their Malay Sultans retained considerable powers and in which the non-Malay races could only acquire Malayan citizenship slowly and under scrutiny. This second attempt at a constitution for Malaya aroused strong opposition among the Chinese. But it went into effect. The British government had learnt once again — India was the earlier experience — that it is not easy to launch a multi-racial State in Asia, particularly if, as in the case of Malaya, the two main races are almost numerically equal.

The 1948 compromise of the Malayan Federation set up a centralised superstructure around the nine Malay Sultanates (which had been British protectorates for many years) together with the two Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. Singapore remained a separate colony in deference to the fears of the Malay race that they would be dominated by the Malayan Chinese in the event of an accession to Malaya of Singapore's million Chinese. This 1948 constitution did not launch Malayan democracy. Not a single elected seat was provided for in the central Legislative Council. As for the Malay Sultanates, the component States, they retained important powers. And although the Sultans themselves became constitutional rulers their State legislatures were not democratised either. But, as an earnest of future intention to move towards universal suffrage, Malayan citizenship was made available to Chinese, Indians and other non-Malays, though under stiff qualifications, notably that both parents must have been born in Malaya, or applicants must prove eight years residence in the country and pass language, character and loyalty tests. This 'quarter-way house' constitution remained substantially the basis for the government of Malaya until 1955.

It is anybody's guess what the rate of advancement toward Malayan independence would have been after 1948 if an extra-constitutional happening had not caused everything to be hurled into the melting-pot. The development which hastened Malaya's advance to independence was the insurrection launched by the Malayan Communist Party, an overwhelmingly Chinese organisation, in 1948. As the intervening ten years have shown, this was from the Communist point of view a singularly ill-judged venture. It had the effect of isolating the Communists and enabling British forces — increasingly supported by local people — to deal with and defeat the Communists in their guerilla capacity. Although the Malayan communist rebels were able for some years to attract considerable support among Chinese peasants and workers, who had a grievance, and from Chinese students with radical urges, they immediately antagonised the Malays and then progressively lost support among Malayan Indians and Chinese alike as a result of terroristic methods. Nevertheless, what the Communist insurrection did was to make articulate the anti-colonial, anti-European feeling and to 'highlight' the humiliating situation of Malaya, the last country in Asia which remained tamely under colonial rule. This emotional appeal remained effective even when the Communists had become unpopular and hated. It caused the British government, by then a Conservative one, to 'see a red light' and to perform the neat political operation of pulling the supports from under the Communist platform by going all out to give Malaya complete sovereign independence at the earliest possible date.

Oddly enough when Oliver Lyttelton, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited Malaya in January 1952 he asserted that no further political advancement would be possible for Malaya until law and order had been restored, *i.e.* until the Communist guerillas had been eliminated. Yet little more than 18 months later, with the Communist insurgents still several thousand strong, preparations were begun for replacing the wholly nominated Federal Assembly by a largely elected one. A mixed committee of local men and British officials drafted an electoral plan in February 1954. After some exchanges between the leaders of the Malayan all-races Alliance (based on the United Malays National Organisation and the Malayan Chinese Association) and the British government, the electoral plan was substantially adopted and the first Malayan general election was held in 1955. The victors were the Alliance, which won 51 of the 52 elected seats in an assembly of 98.

Independence Granted

Significantly, the Alliance leadership was essentially a landed and middle-class one, made up of Malay aristocrats and English-speaking Chinese plantation owners and merchants. The 1955-6 arrangements transferred all internal affairs, including finance, to local ministers responsible to the Assembly. The Malay, Tungku Abdul Rahman, a Sultan's brother, became Chief Minister, with the Chinese tin-mine owner, H. S. Lee, as his Minister of Finance. The Communists had been 'dished'; the incoming group of Malay and Chinese politicians had successfully used the thesis that sated nationalism was the only effective weapon against Malayan Communism. Tungku Abdul Rahman and his colleagues then pushed the thesis to its

ultimate logic. They asked for, and obtained, a promise of complete national independence. One meeting with the British government in London (in January 1956) and several months work by a special Commonwealth constitutional commission (the Reid Commission) sufficed to attain the goal. Malaya became a sovereign, independent nation on 31st August, 1957.

But the successful, even brilliant, joint execution of this five year political operation in Malaya could not obscure two grave weaknesses which had not been overcome by Merdeka (Freedom) Day and which can still pull down the fabric of Malayan unity and progress if they are not eliminated during the next few years. First of all, the pace of establishing Western democratic political institutions had been a hurricane one. In 1951 not a single democratic election had ever been held in Malaya; nor had any real attempt to train local men for top-level administrative posts been made. The result is that today a two-chamber, largely-elected parliament, eleven elected State legislatures and dozens of elected local councils are at work although none of their members has had anything but the briefest experience of any political systems except the old autocratic ones — monarchy and colonial rule. At the same time the civil service is still largely dependent on British administrators and technicians; and, where these men have left in force, serious gaps have been opened up. Secondly, the inter-racial leadership and authority in the new nation, although it is temporarily reconciled around a constructive and admirable compromise, is greatly dependent on a few personalities. Moreover, the compromise is an uneasy one.

3. The Multi-Racial Alliance

THE inter-racial political Alliance won 74 seats out of the 104 Assembly seats in the Malayan general election of August 1959, thus achieving power a second time. But, compared with 1955, when it won every elected seat but one, the Alliance lost much ground to opposition elements with uncompromising racial platforms. The Pan Malayan Islamic Party which won 13 seats, accused the Malay leaders in the Alliance 'of betraying the Malay race' and used the ominous expression 'jihad' (holy war) in demanding a theocratic Islamic State. The People's Progressive Party of D. R. Seenivasagam, which won four seats, appealed to uncompromising Chinese sentiment, in offering to give the vote at once to all adults and to make Chinese an official language along with Malay. Both the PMIP and the PPP are playing on emotions which, if they capture the Malays and the Chinese throughout Malaya, will make inter-racial conflict almost certain. The Socialist Front, an opposition multi-racial alliance between the Labour Party of D. S. Ramanathan[1] (an Indian), and the Peasant Party of Ahmad Boestamam (a Malay) won eight seats on a Left Wing non-communal

[1] In 1959 Ishak bin Haji Mohammed, a former leader of the Malay Nationalist Party, was elected Labour Party Chairman.

platform. It was the only opposition group which did not play up to communal emotions.

Such was the situation in September 1959. It does not, necessarily, foreshadow the eventual collapse of moderate inter-racial politics. A majority of the several hundred thousand new Chinese electors seem in 1959 to have voted for candidates of the non-communal Socialist Front, of whom eight candidates were elected. The constituencies containing a majority of Chinese and Indian electors may, through the progressive enfranchisement of these races, increase from 15 to about 35 by 1963, the year of the next elections. This may mean, if the Socialist Front continues to attract, that it will win at least 20 seats in 1964. The other main question is whether the Alliance will continue to cohere and, if so, whether, in most constituencies containing a Malay majority, it will retain electoral support. The threat to it is obviously from the extreme Pan Malayan Islamic Party. But PMIP has so far failed to make much headway outside two Northern States. The Alliance may, then, in 1964 win about half the seats in the Assembly, the Socialist Front and the PMIP about a quarter each. In that event, parties standing for multi-racialism would still preponderate though such an Assembly would not be a very stable one on which to base a government. Will the Alliance hold its majority? Can the Socialist Front continue to make headway?

Rivalry for Power

To understand the character and chances of the two, one should look at their history. The Alliance was born in rivalry with another all-races political organisation, which, like the Alliance itself, originated from the coming together of conservative leaders of two bodies representing purely racial interests. One of these latter was the UMNO (United Malays National Organisation) created in 1946 out of the Malay rejection of the British attempt to impose a Malayan Union (see Part 2); the second was the MCA (Malayan Chinese Association), launched three years later to rally the Malayan Chinese in opposition to the Malayan Communists (overwhelmingly Chinese). UMNO was led originally by Dato Onn, a Malay from Johore sultanate circles; the MCA by Tan Cheng Lock, a Chinese businessman from a wealthy, old-established Malacca family. These two made a first attempt to found a genuine all-races party, the Independence for Malaya Party, in 1951. But they over-estimated the extent to which the common desire for independence could bring the Malays and Chinese to bury their differences within a single organisation. It was a curious mistake for Dato Onn, who had led the Malay interest in its opposition to the British-imposed Malayan Union, and knew the strength of Malay racial feeling.

The IMP was launched after Dato Onn had resigned from UMNO to form it. But within six months two second-line figures in UMNO and MCA — Tungku Abdul Rahman and H. S. Lee — had understood what corresponded more accurately to the reservations of the politically-conscious in both races; these two had seized the leadership and formed a *loose* alliance of UMNO and MCA, leaving detailed inter-racial compromises to be worked out later.

In February 1952 the UMNO-MCA Alliance heavily defeated the IMP in the important Kuala Lumpur municipal elections (winning nine seats against two). Since then the Alliance has never looked back. From the beginning it was conservative and non-socialist. Tungku Abdul Rahman is the uncle of the Sultan of the State of Kedah, a stronghold of Malay feudalism; H. S. Lee is a rich Chinese operator of tin mines. Nevertheless, their loose merger attracted support. And the two leaders worked out a set of ingenious and creditable inter-racial compromises. With the prestige of Malay traditional authority and the power of Chinese wealth behind them they won a number of local elections, and sailed into power in the first general election in 1955. Thus a grouping of the immemorial 'powers that be' in Malaya received independence on behalf of their country on 31st August 1957.

Weaknesses of the Alliance

The Alliance had weaknesses from the beginning. The first was its conservative character which remains a handicap in approaching economic problems that demand bold and efficient State planning. The second was the subordinate position, and unrepresentative character, of the Alliance's Chinese component, the Malayan Chinese Association, which, largely led by English-speaking Chinese, has been too out of touch with the mass of their Chinese-speaking co-racialists. MCA's secondary position has meant Malay predominance in the Alliance, which, together with Chinese apprehensions, and one specific Chinese grievance, caused the first crack in the Alliance in July 1959. Significantly the rift appeared just after the victories of the extremist anti-Chinese Malay PMIP in State Council elections in June 1959, which had immediate repercussions. A section of the MCA Chinese within the Alliance at once demanded the rectification of what they considered an injustice to Chinese schoolchildren in the education arrangements (see Section 5). Chinese leaders in the Alliance made another *démarche* which showed the extent of their misgivings over Malay intentions. They asked that one-third of the Alliance candidates for the 1959 election should be Chinese. One-third is the proportion of Assembly members needed to veto a revision of the 1957 Constitution which established the improved franchise for Chinese and other non-Malays. The demand therefore represented an endeavour of Chinese leaders to entrench Chinese rights more securely in anticipation of further 'encroachment' by their Malay allies. Tungku Abdul Rahman rejected the request of his Chinese partners. Many prominent Chinese leaders in the MCA resigned as a consequence. The Alliance had revealed serious stresses for the first time. Such was its condition at the end of 1959.

As for the Left Wing movements and parties of Malaya, these were virtually proscribed after the outbreak of the Communist rebellion in 1948. Chief among them were the all-races Malayan Democratic Union and the Malay Nationalist Party led by Burhanuddin al Helmy.[1] These two had formed the first of the 'alliances' in 1946. No doubt both had been associated with the Communists. But they were by no means communist in spirit and

[1] Now the leader of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party.

final aims. And their virtual proscription in 1948 had two significant consequences; it left political leadership in Malaya in the hands of traditionalists and conservatives of all races; and it created a precedent for treating left-wing movements as potentially communist, and therefore for taking 'emergency action' against them. That precedent is still a factor in the Alliance government's policies today.

The Non-Communist Left

After its bad mauling by the police in 1948 the non-communist Left in Malaya faded out until 1951 when Labour parties were formed in three States — Penang, Malacca, and Selangor. These new organisations suffered from the fact that they were largely led by English-speaking Chinese and Indians whose Fabianism — too little adapted — found small response in the minds of Chinese-speaking squatters, Malay peasants or Tamil labourers. A second liability was the personal ambition of some Labour leaders which easily generated rivalries and splits. In 1952 the State Labour parties of Malaya joined the Singapore Labour Party of Lim Yew Hock to form a Pan-Malayan Labour Party (PMLP). The PMLP had some small successes in the municipal elections in three of the largest towns (Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Malacca). And it continued to show signs of life during the three years preceding the first Malayan General Election in July 1955. Meetings were held and programmes were drafted — based on the demand for independence and on impeccable socialist aspirations. There was no lack of *articulacy*. But it was all remote from the peasants in the rice-fields and the workers in the tin mines, this English-expressed socialism of this English-educated white-collar Malayan youth. How remote it was became clear at the general election of 1955 when the PMLP only succeeded in putting up four candidates, all of whom were defeated. The 1955 eclipse of the Malayan Labour Party had been largely caused by the individualism, and incapacity to work together, of its leaders: for example, in 1954 both the UMNO-MCA Alliance and the PMLP, in protest against the British plan to include only 52 elected members out of 98 in the first partly-elected Assembly, decided to boycott the existing nominated Assembly. But the two PMLP members in the Assembly declined to observe the boycott and, instead, retained their Assembly seats and resigned from the PMLP.

By 1957 the Labour Party of Malaya was in little better condition than it had been when formed in 1952. The Asian Socialist Conference Secretariat put its membership in 1956 at 1,000. In that year the Malayan Labour Party was riven by an unedifying feud between the Selangor State Division of the party and the national executive which had passed into the hands of Penang socialists, notably D. S. Ramanathan, an Indian school teacher, who was chairman, and Tan Phock Kin, the general secretary. There were quarrels ending in the expulsion of Tan Tuan Boon, the Selangor State chairman, who then attempted, unsuccessfully, to form a new party. The next and important development, in 1957, was the formation of a Socialist Front by the alliance of the Labour Party with the Peasant Party which had been formed by the Malay, Ahmad Boestamam, in 1955 soon after his release from seven years in detention for encouraging violent action

against government. Boestamam, once a fiery pro-Malay nationalist, has become more moderate. His party stands for peasant awakening and improvement but not at the expense of other races and not by precipitately nationalising the European-owned plantations. Boestamam is a Malay intellectual who, as an earnest of his friendliness to other races, learned Chinese while in British detention. The Labour Party was strengthened through its partnership with his, largely Malay, Peasant Party in the Socialist Front which won eight seats in the 1959 elections.

Nevertheless in 1959 Labour still lacked sufficient roots among the non-English-speaking of the country. Moreover it suffered from the action of the Malayan police, and of the conservative Alliance government which continued to use emergency regulations against socialists as well as against communist infiltrators. The non-communist Left was still weak in 1959. Quite otherwise was the situation in neighbouring Singapore where the Socialists had been differently led. In Singapore a formidable and dedicated Socialist movement grew up, capable it would seem of forging a genuine all-races alliance of the Left.

4. The Constitutional Framework

THE 1957 (independence) constitution of Malaya is a skilful compromise which tries to reconcile Malay traditionalism with the need to provide a modern, democratic political framework in which all races can ultimately participate on an equal footing. It was based on the report of a Commonwealth Commission (the Reid Commission) whose members included Indian, Pakistani and Australian jurists besides two Englishmen. The 1957 constitution embodies a compromise over the relationship between the Central Government and the individual States. The States are still repositories of the political safeguards for the Malays.[1] The balance of powers allotted between Centre and States is therefore complex and this saddles the constitution with drawbacks as a mechanism for a dynamic social and economic policy. Its federal structure also, inevitably, carries the seeds of deadlock in case the present supremacy of the inter-racial alliance should be replaced by rivalry between parties having a racial complexion.

The Federation of Malaya consists of a Malay Supreme Ruler, having constitutional powers and a Central Federal government based on a parliament of two houses (an elected Assembly and a Senate with an indirectly elected majority). The components of the Federation are eleven states, nine of them ruled by constitutional monarchs (the Malay Sultans), and two — Penang and Malacca — having constitutional Heads or Governors appointed by the Centre. Each State also has its own elected legislature (State Council).

Clearly such a degree of federal fragmentation in a country whose popu-

[1] For example, only one-fifth of the entrants to the civil service may be non-Malays.

lation is less than that of Holland is excessive. The individual States of the Malayan Federation collect and spend a considerable proportion of the revenues, and control administration and policy in major fields of government. Among domestic fields which are under Central control are: police, trade, communications, education, medicine and health, social security, control of agricultural pests, and co-operative societies. The individual State governments handle all land questions, riverine fishing, agriculture and forestry. Subjects that are under 'concurrent' Central and State control include: animal husbandry, town and country planning, public sanitation and drainage and irrigation. Thus, in the important sphere of agricultural and rural development there is, in effect, divided control. The Minister of Agriculture for the Federation has to deal with eleven separate State authorities in putting into operation a national measure affecting, say, afforestation to combat soil erosion, or for the opening up of fresh land. And he must deal not as one having the last word but as an 'outsider' activating State governments in fields of administration and action that constitutionally belong to them, and in which they are often none too efficient. There is similar divided control in the field of public health and sanitation.

During the first two years of independence this fragmentation of power resulted in less frustration and lack of co-ordination than might have been expected, because of the ascendancy of the all-races Alliance in virtually every machine of government, including the central legislature and cabinet in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the State assemblies and executives in the various parts of the Federation. Even so, a good deal of the lack of momentum in the field of Malayan economic and social development could be ascribed to the overlapping and delay caused by the need to submit plans to many authorities before they could be completed or proceeded with.

The division of powers between Centre and States may set up more serious tensions if the Central government should get at loggerheads with a party or coalition strongly antagonistic to it and which held power in one or more of the States. Already in the two States where the Malays form the overwhelming majority of the population much headway has been made by the extremist Pan Malayan Islamic Party, whose purposes are hard to reconcile with the moderate multi-racial Alliance in power at the Centre. With a steadily increasing number of Chinese and Indians coming on to the electoral register, it is conceivable that in some years this situation will become accentuated, and that the Central government could well be in the hands of a modernising coalition with the Malayan Chinese powerfully placed in it. The probability then, of friction between the Centre and traditionalist Sultanates such as Kelantan or Trengganu would obviously be great. Conversely, a Malay-led government at the Centre could in some years' time get at variance with one of the South-Western States that, having a preponderance of non-Malay inhabitants, had by then returned a State Assembly and government with a non-Malay majority. There is, however, no solution, by constitutional revision, to the problem of Malayan inter-racial tensions. The solution lies only in the establishment of confidence between the races.

What is needed, however, in the interests of more efficient government, is greatly improved administrative machinery in the States. The trouble here is that old-fashioned court figures around the Malay Sultans still wield too much power, as do the Sultans themselves. Economic development, particularly when land is involved, is often seriously held up through traditional indolence. The best hope of improvement lies in reforming pressure from the new elected State councils. Failing this, ineptitude of the State governments may provoke a demand by Chinese, Indians, and progressive Malays for a sweeping away of Malay monarchical archaisms, and for a more centralised Malayan State. Such a demand could, however, stiffen the racial extremism of the conservative Malays.

It is then in everyone's interest that the new elected Councils in the eleven States should take their duties seriously and insist on a more modern spirit in the State administrations, with posts really open to merit, and increased efficiency.

The Electoral Structure

The 1957 constitution is rooted in a system of representation and constituencies which recognises no racial divisions. But, because of Malay apprehensions, the suffrage comes into full operation only gradually as far as the non-Malay races are concerned. The right to vote is based on citizenship which in effect is automatic for most Malays; but non-Malays—except those with a father born in Malaya or those born in the country after independence day (31st August 1957) — have to satisfy naturalisation qualifications. In 1955, 84 per cent of the electorate consisted of Malays, only 11 per cent of Chinese. By the 1959 general election more Chinese and Indians had through the processes of naturalisation become citizens and registered as voters; the electorate numbered 2,177,000 of which 57 per cent were Malays and 36 per cent Chinese. The possibility of the non-Malays (preponderantly Chinese) eventually becoming the majority of the voters is therefore inherent in the constitutional arrangements under which the attainment of citizenship by non-Malays has been made progressively easier.

This advance of the Chinese towards electoral equality can bring either support for new Chinese-led parties aiming at the assertion of Chinese 'rights' or it can mean continuing support by Chinese voters for all-race groupings, such as the Alliance which stands for inter-racial compromises embodying 'safeguards' for the Malays. Most Chinese electors are still voting for inter-racial compromise. But is the practical working out of the compromise, as it has progressed so far, satisfying the Chinese — or, for that matter, the Malays? That is the question.

5. The Clash of Cultures

CULTURE, education and language are the main overt fields of inter-racial tension in Malaya. The most widely felt racial grievance of the Malayan Chinese has concerned the content of education and the language of teaching in the schools. This is partly a legacy of the past. For

decades the British-controlled administration ignored the Chinese schools, leaving them without grants but also without criticism or interference. In the early 1950s, the British authorities began a belated attempt to create 'a Malayan spirit and culture' (based on the English language) as a prelude to nationhood. But Chinese educational leaders, while they accepted new grants-in-aid, were suspicious of government insistence that they should alter their curricula, teach Malayan instead of Chinese history, and give more instruction in the English language.

As independence approached another complicating factor emerged: the Malays insisted on the Malay language and culture being put far more securely 'on the map' in Malaya. The Malay language as a teaching medium and a subject, as well as Malay culture, had under the British been almost entirely confined to the village primary school. Practically all secondary education had been in the English language (in government and mission schools) or in Chinese (in the private Chinese secondary schools). The educational backwardness of the Malays was in great part due to Malay traditionalism based on village life which the British had done little to change. The Malayan Chinese, preponderantly urbanised, had not only built up their own secondary school system, they had been in a far better position than the Malays to take advantage of government and mission schools, most of which were in the towns. The reaction has come during the past few years. Under the 1957 Constitution Malay was made the national language, with English to remain in continued official use for 10 more years. The Chinese are now 'on the defensive', the Malays 'on the offensive' in the field of culture and education.

In the face of this situation the leaders of the Alliance in 1956 reached a sensible and liberal compromise embodied in the Education Act of 1957 under which (1) each race continues to conduct its own schools using its own language as the medium of teaching; (2) because Malay is the national language the Chinese and Indian schools must teach Malay as a subject; (3) the approach in history, geography and other textbooks must be a Malayan, not a Chinese or Indian one.

A Language Dispute

This practical compromise has worked well in primary education. But in the secondary school system severe tensions have developed. An Alliance compromise in 1956 provided for the use of different languages, including Chinese, as media of teaching in the secondary schools. But the question of the language media in which promotion examinations should be taken seems to have remained disputed. In 1959 the authorities began to insist that the Lower Certificate must henceforth be taken by everyone in Malay. There is some evidence that this move was the result of Malay conservative pressures. Malay leaders maintained that the admission of Chinese as the medium of examination at secondary level would be equivalent to giving it parity of status with the national language, Malay. But for Chinese and Indian children who had studied only in Chinese or Tamil at primary school the language condition seemed unreasonable at this stage, particularly since the Malay tongue needs to be further developed in order to be adequate for higher studies. The moderate Chinese leaders of the

MCA in the Alliance opposed the provision and a section of them broke with the Alliance over the issue in July 1959. It was a significant moment. The most racially and culturally conscious Malays — from motives which were understandable — were attempting, perhaps too precipitately, to make secondary education linguistically a purely Malay thing. It was symptomatic of the Malays' anxiety about their whole position in regard to secondary as well as higher education. In 1957 there were 55,000 Chinese in secondary schools compared with only 21,000 Malays; in the University of Malaya only 228 Malay students compared with 1,145 Chinese and 229 Indians.

Malay backwardness in secondary and higher education, like Malay inferiority in commerce, is one of the great problems of Malaya. And with a preponderantly Malay government an educational policy which is less than just to the Chinese may result, unless and until the Malays' own educational position can be improved. The Alliance government is making special efforts in this direction. Secondary classes in Malay are being held, for the first time, even in rural areas; but they still affect no more than a few thousand pupils. A Language and Literature Agency was established in 1956 to modernise the Malay language so that Malay can be used in secondary and higher teaching, but its work has so far yielded meagre results (the Agency became a publisher of Malay rare works and a promoter of literary competitions rather than a language pioneer). A greater influx of village Malays into secondary schools where English is the medium has been impeded by lack of accessibility.

Looked at in regard to its availability and expansion during recent years, Malayan education presents a praiseworthy picture. Directly after World War Two there were about 300,000 children in school; today the number is over four times that figure. Compared with 1953 the number of children of all races in school has almost doubled. British post-war administrators deserve much credit for this, together with private citizens who have founded schools. Especially impressive government work has been done in expanding teacher-training, the worst bottleneck of education. The number of teachers now in training is about 4,000 including, however, many trainees who can only study through correspondence courses or weekend classes. Many more Malay-language teachers are needed for Chinese and Indian primary schools which have not hitherto taught Malay; highly trained Malay teachers are needed in large numbers if Malay-language secondary schools are to be staffed. And so special emphasis is given to instruction in teaching the Malay language at a new Language Institute for training teachers of all races in Kuala Lumpur, as well as at the new Kota Bahru teachers' training college, and at some fifty Day Training Centres for teachers. In Britain at Kirkby College for training Malayan teachers many of the students have been trained to teach the Malay language.

Elementary education is now available for every Malayan child. But secondary education, unsatisfactory as a field of race-relations, is also quantitatively inadequate. Only one child in seven in Malaya can hope to go to a secondary school. The rest leave school at 13, long before they are fit to earn a living. Clearly there is a connection between the insuffi-