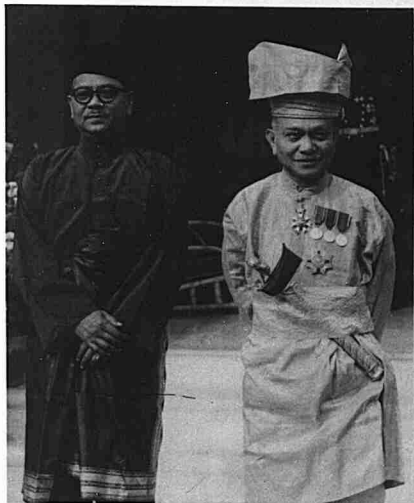


TUNKU

A Pictorial Biography



TUNKU

A Pictorial Biography

1903~1957

Tan Sri Dato Mubin Sheppard

Sponsored by
Mohamed Khir Johari and Datuk Lim Sun Hoe



Pelanduk Publications
Malaysia

Frontispiece: The Paramount Ruler elect, Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni Tuanku Muhammad, with the Chief Minister of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra

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Foreword



PERDANA MENTERI
MALAYSIA

This pictorial biography of Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj provides Malaysians with yet another record of Malaysia's elder statesman. The author's close association with the Tunku has enabled him to have clear insights of the Tunku's background, his student days, his struggle for independence and his contribution to the nation. Tracing the Tunku from his early years until the attainment of independence, this biography would be of special interest to our younger generation who grew up in the post indepen-

dence era.

Our independence was gained not without sacrifices. Malaysians were united and they persevered over the years to obtain this much cherished freedom. The younger generation, therefore, should be made aware that independence was not given to us on a silver platter. An awareness of the struggle for independence would make Malaysians, especially the young, appreciate these efforts as well as be more committed in preserving the independence and sovereignty of our nation.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which is the signature of Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad.

Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad

Acknowledgements

Many biographers of famous men have been obliged to depend on diaries, letters, official documents and the memories of relatives and friends of the deceased.

In this case the author's task has been made infinitely easier and more pleasant by having direct access to the Tunku in person.

The thanks which are usually distributed by the author to the many individuals who have contributed to his fund of knowledge are on this occasion offered, with affectionate gratitude to Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra himself.

Much of the information in this biography was assembled by a simple system which was followed at fairly frequent intervals for over a year. The author prepared a list of questions, related to the particular chapter or incident which he was researching. These questions were read to Tunku, one by one, and his replies were recorded on tape. The taped replies were then transferred to typed pages and filed by the author as part of the source material. These unique tapes will eventually be deposited in the National Archives.

The background from which many of these questions were framed consisted of Tunku's own articles in the 'Star' newspaper, many of which have been reprinted in book form. The historical background for Chapters One and Two was drawn from Al-Tarikh Salasilah Negeri Kedah by Muhammad Hassan and Sejarah Kedah by Haji Buyong Adiland, from writings by Professor Sharom Ahmat of the Universiti Sains Penang and from articles by J.M.

Gullick. Tunku's entry and meteoric rise to the stratosphere of Malayan politics, and his dedicated struggle to achieve independence by peaceful means were partly described by Tunku and were partly derived from Press coverage, and partly from the recollections of those of his political colleagues who are still alive, notably Mohamed Khir Johari and Tun H.S. Lee.

The final draft of these pages was read to Tunku by his Personal Secretary, in Kuala Lumpur, and was approved by him after minor amendments.

Tunku is now eighty two, and we pray that he will be spared for many years to come. A biography of an eighty two, year old statesman which stops when the subject is still making a sage contribution to public opinion and is still actively promoting Muslim missionary work, is likely to be judged to be incomplete. I therefore decided, with the approval of Tunku and the agreement of the publisher, to divide the work into two parts. The choice of a boundary was easily made, and part one ends with the joyous achievement of Independence on 31st August 1957.

This is a Pictorial Biography and the assembling of illustrations occupied nearly as much time, and consumed even more effort than the collection of the facts. The principal sources have been Tunku's own photograph albums and his miscellaneous collection of other photographs which have still to be filed, in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Alor Star. The National Archives and the Photo Division of the Depart-

ment of Information have made valuable contributions and friends of Tunku have filled gaps which at one time seemed fated to be left vacant, notably Mohamed Khir Johari and Dato Justice Eusoffe Abdoolcader. But the most spectacular cache was discovered in the library of the 'Illustrated London News', the century old periodical, which published four full pages of photographs in September 1904, covering the 'Million Dollar Wedding' in Alor Star. The source was discovered through the Registrar of the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, to whom the author had written.

Old photographs of the timber palace with its walled enclosure, in Alor Star, where Tunku spent part of his childhood have been made available by the Curator of the Kedah Museum, Puan Nabihah.

The photograph of the ship 'Rhesus' in which Tunku travelled to England in 1920 was recovered from the Archives of the Blue Funnel Line, with the help of W.J.V. Cook.

Few pictures of Tunku's undergraduate days at Cambridge have survived the Japanese occupation, but Professor E.J.H. Corner, at one time Director of Gardens Straits Settlements, and later Professor of Tropical Botany at Cambridge University, kindly arranged for photographs to be taken at Little Stukley, near Huntingdon, where Tunku was sent to a Tutor on his arrival in England, the Professor also sent a photograph of St. Catherine's College and obtained a copy of Tunku's academic record at the end of his three halcyon years

at that University. Derek Headly, M.C.S. who parachuted into Pahang in 1945, as a member of Force 136., searched for and discovered a photograph of a Kedah Malay Resistance group, which included Tunku's own nephew, and another of Major Hasler, who was for a brief period the first acting Senior Civil Affairs Officer in Kedah after the Japanese surrender.

Many more photographs of Tunku's early service in Kedah, after his return from Cambridge and London might have been available, had it not been for his transfer, from Kulim to Alor Star, on the order of the Japanese Governor, at 24 hours notice, in 1943. The losses included the only photograph of Tunku's first wife, and photographs of his mother. I have tried to remedy the total absence of pictorial record of Tunku's compassionate welfare work for the starving and disease-ridden refugees from the "Death Railway" in 1944 by including a few line drawings, by Othman bin Haji Zainuddin, which were originally made to illustrate a small book entitled 'Korban Keretapi Mau' by En. Hashim Yop. These are now published with the permission of the Director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. Mr. John Cloake, the biographer of the late Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, has made available a photograph of Tunku with the Field Marshal in London July 1957, with the assistance of the National Army Museum and the Central Office of Information.

Cheah Phee Cheok, Tunku's personal secretary in Kuala Lumpur has given un-

failing cooperation, arranging appointments, relaying messages and locating photographs and documents with unruffled composure.

'Last but not Least' is a phrase which often occurs at the end of an author's other acknowledgements. In this case I have left until last the name of Ng Tieh Chuan, the Managing Director of Pelanduk Publications, who is publishing this biography. He has worked closely with me since the inception of the project: he was responsible for all the tape recordings and has tolerated numerous revisions of the text which became necessary from time to time, as fresh information came to light. In our frequent discussions we have never had any serious disagreement. His enthusiasm for this

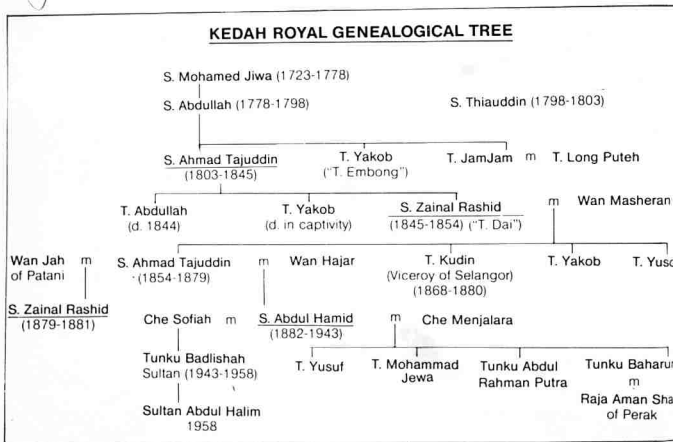
project has been stimulating and after two years of close association I still look forward to his next visit.

Perhaps something of the charm, the gracious flexibility and the quiet strength of purpose, which distinguish Tunku from most other men entered his mind, as he sat so many times in Tunku's office. The debt which I owe Ng Tieh Chuan I can never repay: I can only repeat the words of a famous Malay Pantun 'hutang budi dibawa mati'.

Tan Sri Dato Mubin Sheppard

*Kuala Lumpur,
21st June, 1984*

The Kedah Background: Farewell to Feudalism 1882 - 1910



Kedah Royal Genealogical Tree 1723-1958.

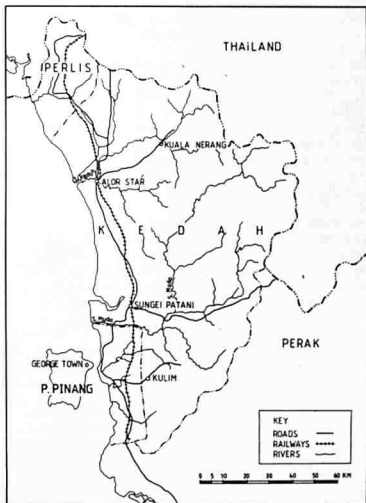
Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was the twentieth child of Sultan Abdul Hamid Halimshah, the twenty-fourth ruler of Kedah.

For many centuries the Rulers of Kedah derived much of their wealth and authority from trade, and they lived on the bank of the Kedah river, either in a fortress at the river mouth or thirty miles up stream at Alor Star. The town was named after a Malay fruit tree '*pokok Setar*' which grew in profusion on the borders of a great rice plain and along the banks of numerous canals-'*alor*'-which flowed into the Kedah river. The ruler's principal residence was built and rebuilt there, on the bank of the '*sungei Raja*', a minor tributary of the Kedah.

Successive Kedah rulers had tried to shield their subjects from external aggression by diplomatic means, without achieving any long term advantage. At different times they had turned for protection to the Siamese in Bangkok, the Dutch in Malacca and the British in Calcutta, but when the most destructive attack took place in 1821 no one came to their aid. In November 1821 a large Siamese naval and military force appeared, without warning, off the mouth of the Kedah river, seized the fort and over ran the whole country, which they then occupied for twenty one years. Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin II was fortunate to escape but many of his relatives were captured and massacred. The Sultan lived in exile in Penang and Malacca and only returned to Kedah in 1842.

Sultan Abdul Hamid's father, another Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah, reigned from 1854 to 1879. He married two influential wives, Wan Hajar and Wan Jah, whose offsprings were to become rivals. Wan Hajar was the mother of Sultan Abdul Hamid and the grandmother of Tunku Abdul Rahman. She was the daughter of Wan Ismail, whose father, the old Dato

Laksamana of Kedah, received the leaders of the Siamese Army and Navy at Kuala Kedah in November 1821, and was treacherously murdered by their orders the next day. Wan Ismail would probably have succeeded his father as Dato Laksamana, had not the exiled Sultan and his successor deliberately left this and other major non-royal Offices of State vacant. Even though he held no title, Wan Ismail inherited the status and influence of his murdered father. When Sultan Zainal Rashid died in 1854 and the Raja Muda, Tunku Muhammad Said, tried to claim the throne, Wan Ismail led the opposition and secured the succession for the late



Map of Kedah, showing Alor Star, Kuala Nerang, Sungai Patani, Kulim and Butterworth, including roads and railways.

Sultan's young son, Tunku Ahmad Tajuddin. Wan Ismail then married his daughter, Wan Hajar, to the newly proclaimed Sultan, and negotiated the appointment of his very able son, Wan Muhammad Saman, as Chief Minister.

Soon after his proclamation as Sultan, and his marriage to Wan Hajar, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah travelled to Bangkok to pay his respects to the King of Siam and was given a second wife, Wan Jah, by the Siamese ruler. Wan Jah was related to the Malay royal family of Patani but had been adopted at an early age by King Rama IV.

Wan Jah was the first of the two wives to give birth to a son - Tunku Zainal Rashid - in 1857. Wan Hajar bore two daughters in 1859 and 1862 and only gave birth to her first son in 1864: he was named Tunku Abdul Hamid. Her other sons were Tunku Abdul Aziz born in 1870 and Tunku Mahmud, born in 1876: both played prominent roles in Kedah history.

When Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin died in 1879, the first phase of a power struggle began. A large delegation journeyed to Bangkok, taking with them the two candidates, Tunku Zainal Rashid, Wan Jah's son, and Tunku Abdul Hamid, the son of Wan Hajar. Tunku Yaacob, the Raja Muda and Tunku Ziauddin, both younger brothers of the late Sultan, headed the delegation. The Siamese chose Tunku Zainal Rashid, then 22, to be Sultan and Tunku Abdul Hamid, who was only 16, was appointed Raja Muda, in place of his uncle Tunku Yaacob. Although Sultan Zainal Rashid was 22 he is reported to have been incapable of carrying out his royal duties, and to have been addicted to opium smoking. Owing to his incapacity his uncles, Tunku Yaacob and Tunku Ziauddin were appointed joint Regents. They were rivals in the power struggle and when Sultan Zainal Rashid died in 1881, Tunku Ziauddin headed another delegation to Bangkok and tried to persuade the Siamese to appoint him Sultan.

Tunku Yaacob, younger brother of Tunku Kudin, appointed Raja Muda by Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin in place of Tunku Kudin. He supported his nephew Tunku Abdul Hamid in 1881 in opposition to Tunku Kudin. Photo Muzium Negara





The Fort at Kuala Kedah. Photo Muzium
Negeri



Sultan Abdul Hamid in about 1894

Tunku Yaacob, Wan Muhammad Saman and Wan Hajar strongly opposed this and supported Tunku Abdul Hamid. Wan Hajar is reliably reported to have pawned most of her jewellery in Penang in order to help to meet the expense of opposing and out manoeuvring Tunku Ziauddin. The Siamese were aware of the prominent part which Tunku Ziauddin had taken in the Selangor Civil War in the 1870's and of his intimate association with the British, while he was Viceroy of Selangor, and it was soon clear that he was not an acceptable candidate. Tunku Ziauddin then proposed Tunku Kassim, another son of Wan Jah, as Sultan. Discussions continued for five months, but eventually the Siamese directed that Tunku Abdul Hamid be installed as Sultan. Tunku Ziauddin vacated his position as joint Regent and retired to Penang. Tunku Yaacob retained his position as Regent and the post of Raja Muda was left vacant until Tunku Abdul Aziz, the new Sultan's younger brother, was old enough to hold it.

Sultan Abdul Hamid was 18 when he was installed. He was lightly built, slim and appeared frail, in contrast to his robust maternal grandfather and mother. However, he inherited from his father a keen interest in the administration of the state. Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah had travelled widely; he had imported tall Venetian glass mirrors and Italian crystal candleabra for his palace and a set of musical instruments to equip a full brass band. He almost invariably wore Western-style suits in preference to Malay dress. Soon after his accession Sultan Abdul Hamid handed the control of the administration to his dedicated Chief Minister, Dato Wan Muhammad Saman, who was also his uncle, and began to visit other states. In 1893 he sailed to Singapore and on to Trengganu and Kelantan. In 1895 he visited India, and paid a number of informal visits to Bangkok, where he established a personal rapport with King Chulalongkorn.

He studied some of the King's progressive projects, but the progress which he saw and admired in other countries was made possible by more modern administrative practices which were absent in Kedah.

The Kedah system of government in general, and the control of state revenue and expenditure in particular, were feudal and autocratic, and had not been changed for several centuries. Taxes imposed on imports and exports had been the principal source of state revenue in Kedah since medieval times. All income was paid into the Sultan's office, and only the Sultan could authorise expenditure. But when the British established a duty-free trading station on Penang island in 1786, after obtaining a lease from an earlier Sultan of Kedah, much of Kedah's trade was diverted to Penang. Sultan Abdul Hamid's grandfather and father were therefore obliged to seek new sources of income. These took the form of Revenue Farms - selling the right to collect taxes on rice, opium, spirits, tapioca and other lesser commodities. These 'Farms' were usually let annually. All payments were made into the Sultan's office and were recorded as payments into the "Sultan's Income Account."



Wan Hajar (Ma 'Wan Besar') mother of Sultan Abdul Hamid.



Dato Wan Mohamed Saman. Brother of Wan Hajar. Chief Minister Kedah (1882-1898). Photo Muzium Negara

At the beginning of his reign Sultan Abdul Hamid appointed a well-known and much respected Chinese businessman, named Lee Yoke Siew, to be his State Treasurer, and the Sultan often visited his royal office, which was sited in an extension to the palace. He gave instructions that estimates of annual income and expenditure should be prepared, approved by him and adhered to.

The prospect of enlightened improvements in administration were tragically shattered when the young Sultan was paralysed by a stroke in 1895. The cause is not known. Less than a year later, before he had fully recovered, he set off with a numerous retinue to visit the Raja of Patani. Patani shared with Kedah an ancient history and culture, and it was

The Old Balai Besar, before demolition and reconstruction in 1904.



A group of Siamese officials with Sultan Abdul Hamid, outside the Old Balai Besar in about 1895

the birthplace of his father's second wife. The journey, much of it through virgin forest, was made on elephants, and the baggage included crates of whiskey. Members of the royal family of both Kedah and Siam were in the habit of consuming alcohol, whiskey in particular, and in quantities which to others appeared to be excessive. Sultan Abdul Hamid followed this habit. It was during the return journey from Patani that the Sultan suffered an attack of Delirium Tremens, which was followed by a second and more serious stroke. When he recovered he never drank alcohol again.

His recuperation was slow, but by the end of 1898 the Sultan's physical recovery appeared to be complete both to the members of his court and to his wives. It was however observed that he seldom

Sultan Abdul Hamid, in ceremonial dress, 1904. Photo Illustrated London News, 1904



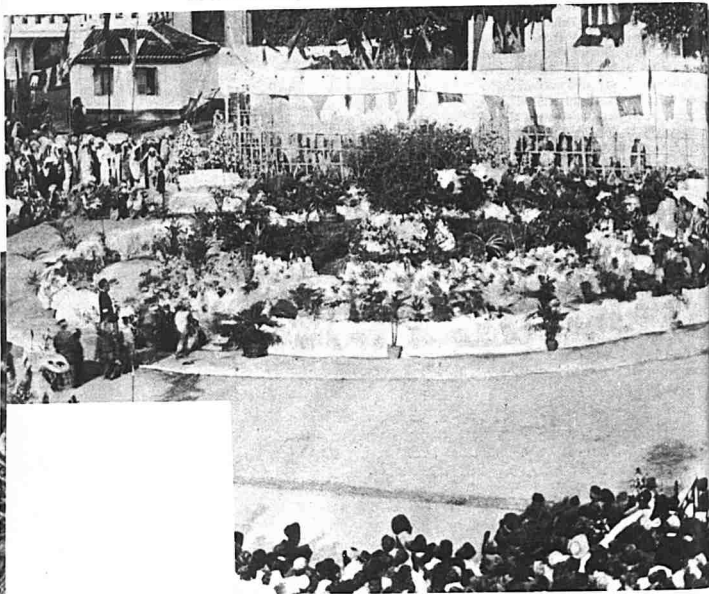
visited his royal office and that he began to develop new and costly tastes, which included horse racing in Penang, gambling in Alor Star and billiards. His appetite for gambling resulted in progressively heavy losses, mainly to Chinese revenue farmers. He purchased a number of billiard tables and invited a champion billiard player from England to visit Alor Star. He also greatly expanded payments under the title "*Royal Gifts*" (*Ampun Kurnia*). This form of benefaction was traditional and expenditure under this heading was made regularly by the Sultan's grandfather and father to reward those who were chosen to form a small circle of unofficial advisers who replaced the large number of title holders whose offices had been left vacant. But Sultan Abdul Hamid also used this form of royal bounty to buy jewellery for his wives and to gratify an increasing number of petitioners. When "Revenue Farms" were first introduced, and for many subsequent decades, they provided a surplus of income in the royal treasury. But the effect of this lavish increase in expenditure was cumulative and was scarcely perceptible to members of the royal family, or to court officials, except the State Treasurer and the Raja Muda, whose advice the Sultan was unwilling to accept. When Dato Wan Muhammad Saman, the Chief Minister, died in 1898, some of his responsibilities were taken over by Tunku Abdul Aziz, the Sultan's younger brother. He had been appointed

'*Pemangku Raja*' during the period of the Sultan's recuperation after his first and second strokes, and Raja Muda in about 1889, but he had no authority over public finance, even after the death of the Chief Minister, and he could not control the Sultan's profligacy.

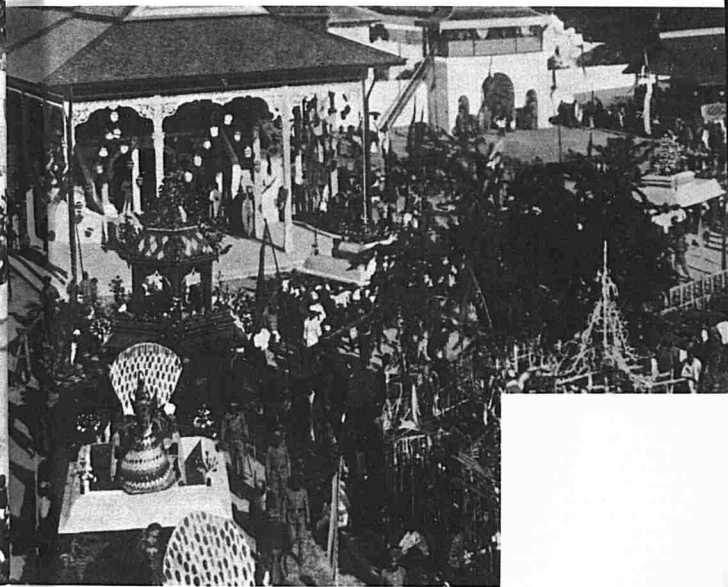
This extravagance reached a climax in June 1904 when the Sultan's five eldest children, two sons and three daughters, by different wives, reached marriageable age. Sultan Abdul Hamid commanded that their wedding ceremonies and celebrations should be on a prodigious scale. He possessed a talent for planning magnificent pageantry, a gift which was inherited by his son, Tunku Abdul Rahman, and memories of these months of spectacle and prodigal hospitality survive in the London-based magazine, *The Sphere* and in Alor Star to this day.

Preparations for the weddings began in 1903 with the demolition of the old *Balai Besar* - the Royal Audience Hall - and the erection of a larger and more decorative structure on the same site. An annexe to the old walled palace was built at the same time to provide a hall for the 'Sitting-in-State' of the bridegrooms and brides: it was named *Rumah Pelamin* - the house for the bridal dais. Wedding guests included a Siamese prince, representatives of Malay Rulers and of the European community in

Special guests picking Henna leaves from the Henna garden outside the Balai Besar, before the ceremonies began. *Photo Illustrated London News, 1904*



the Bridal Procession, touring the town of Alor Star. Photo *Illustrated London News*, 1904



Penang. Festivities were organised and hospitality was provided by the government in every district, and they continued in Alor Star for more than a month. By the time the celebrations ended, debts amounting to over a million Malayan dollars had been incurred. Businessmen and firms in Penang formed the majority of the creditors.

Tunku Abdul Aziz, the Raja Muda, was now confronted with a crisis never before experienced in Kedah history. Without consulting the Sultan, he travelled to Bangkok, conferred with Prince Damrong, the enlightened Minister of the Interior, and asked for a loan sufficient to pay all Kedah's debts. Officials in Bangkok were already aware of the situation, and had probably decided to give assistance, but they thought it prudent to enquire what the reaction of the British in Singapore would be before giving Tunku Aziz a favourable reply. The terms for the loan were then explained and were provisionally accepted by the Raja Muda. He then returned to Alor Star and caused a letter to be prepared in the Sultan's office, in the name of the Sultan, asking the Siamese government to grant Kedah a loan of two million six hundred thousand dollars. In return, Kedah would accept a Financial Adviser, appointed by the Siamese, who would have complete control over the financial administration of the State until the loan had been fully repaid. Kedah would also agree to the creation of a five-man Council of State on which the





A shooting party, arranged by the Sultan's brother for guests during their stay. *Photo Illustrated London News*

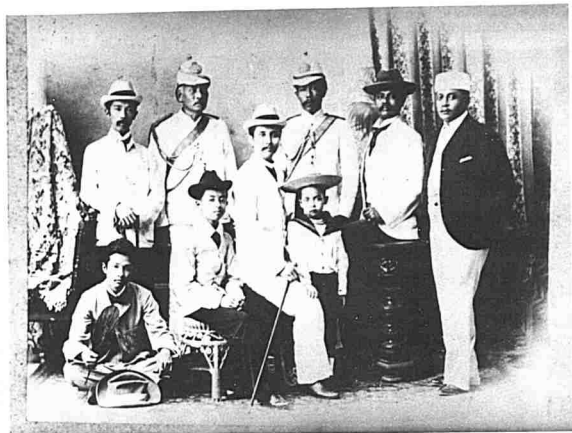


Each District erected a Pavilion to mark the wedding celebrations: the Kulim pavilion was photographed for the *Illustrated London News* correspondent.



Group photograph taken soon after the wedding, showing the Sultan, a Siamese prince, and leading Kedah officials in front of the Balai Besar including:
Front row, standing on the right of the Sultan: Tunku Bahadur (A.D.C. to the Sultan), Tunku Mahmud; to left of Siamese Prince, Tunku Abdul Aziz, Raja Muda;
Second row, from left: Wan Ahmad Kulim, Syed Abdullah Ahmad, Haji Wan Ishak, Cik Wan Tajar, Haji Wan Yahaya, Second Secretary to the govt, Dr. Gomex, Mr. Mitchell, Syed Mohamed Sahabudin, Wan Abdullah Kuala (Shahbandar)





Informal group of Siamese princes, with Tunku Abdul Aziz, in Singapore. King Chulalongkorn seated centre. Tunku A. Aziz extreme right.



Tunku Abdul Aziz – Raja Muda.

Financial Adviser would serve. It would be responsible for general administration. The autocratic powers of the Sultan would thus be extinguished. In addition to this document Tunku Abdul Aziz prepared and signed a letter, in his capacity as Raja Muda, stating that the Sultan was no longer responsible for his actions. This letter was countersigned by Wan Hajar, the Sultan's mother.

Tunku Abdul Aziz carried these letters to Bangkok and handed them to Prince Damrong. The principal letter did not bear the Sultan's signature or seal but it was accepted in Siam as an official request from the Kedah government, and on 16th June, 1905 the Kedah Loan Agreement was signed in Bangkok. Tunku Abdul Aziz was appointed Chairman of the Council of State.

Sultan Abdul Hamid bowed to the inevitable and turned his attention to religious studies and welfare work. The Sultan's grandfather had built a small timber mosque not far from the palace, but it had become much too small to



Istana Pongong. Built and occupied by Tunku Abdul Aziz when Raja Muda.



Opening of the State Mosque in Alor Star by Sultan Abdul Hamid, 1908. On the Sultan's right, beside the door, is Tunku Mahmud, the Sultan's brother. Tunku Bahadur, the Sultan's ADC is behind him, wearing a songkok. Photo Muzium Negara

accommodate the Muslim population of the state capital sixty years after its completion. Sultan Abdul Hamid directed that a new and much larger Mosque be built opposite the *Balai Besar*, and *Masjid Zahir* was completed and officially opened by the Sultan in 1908. Sultan Abdul Hamid preached the first sermon. Late in 1905, the Sultan asked the Penang government to help Kedah to set up a health service, and three years later a hospital was built in Alor Star.

The transformation of the system of administration was only known to the inner circle of Kedah royalty and the most senior officials. In the eyes of the public, authority and patronage still lay within the walls of the old palace and in the *Balai Besar*. Tunku Abdul Rahman and his many brothers and sisters, as they grew from infancy to childhood, were given no hint of the changes.

In June 1909 the Sultan received an official letter from Sir John Anderson, the Governor in Singapore, informing him that an agreement had been signed between the British and the Siamese, in which Siam had transferred to Britain all its rights of suzerainty over Kedah, including the balance of the government loan. The letter was carried in procession in a golden tray, and was received by the Sultan in the *Balai Besar*, and then read aloud.

In 1911, the Sultan, accompanied by his younger brother, Tunku Mahmud, and a number of Kedah notables, sailed for England to attend the coronation of King George V. They embarked on a ship at the main wharf in Alor Star and sailed down the river to Penang, watched by a crowd which stretched far beyond the borders of the town, and appeared at intervals along the river bank all the way to the river mouth, thirty miles away. In the British capital, the Sultan stayed at the Hotel Cecil, where his personal cook was made welcome by the head Chef, anticipating by nearly a quarter of a century the introduction of Malay cooking to London

Sultan Abdul Hamid in London in 1912, during his official visit to attend the coronation of George V. Left: Tunku Bahadur, centre: Sultan, right: Wan Ahmad Kulim.





Sultan Abdul Hamid in Kedah dress,
(baju Muskat) in London.



Portrait of Che Menjalara

by Tunku Abdul Rahman. The Sultan had not worn formal Malay dress in Kedah for many years: on ceremonial occasions he wore Siamese-style uniform, at other times a coat and trousers, shirt and neck tie and a low cotton *kopiah*. In London in 1911, the Kedah delegation wore western-style suits, including morning coats, tailored in Penang. They were therefore embarrassed when, at short notice, a protocol officer from Buckingham Palace requested that the Sultan and his brother should wear full Malay dress at the coronation. Hand woven silk was not available, but a famous London store provided a suitable substitute, and a tailor accredited to the Crown, cut and sewed Kedah-style dress, with an outer coat, an inner tunic, sarong, trousers and folded head dress, in time for the ceremony.

Sultan Abdul Hamid returned to Alor Star by ship to receive a rapturous welcome. He appeared to be in excellent health, but in 1912 he suffered a third,



Tunku Mahmud riding in the coronation procession. *Photo Illustrated London News*

and still more serious stroke from which he never recovered. It affected him both mentally and physically. For the next thirty years, until his death in 1943, the Sultan was never able to take any part in the government of Kedah, and he fathered no more children. His last child a daughter, was born to his favourite wife, Che Menjalara, in November 1912. She bore him twelve children, eight of whom grew to adulthood. These were Tunku Yusuf (1890), Tunku Kalthum (1893), Tunku Mohamed Jiwa (1894), Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (1903), Tunku Baharom (1904), Tunku Aminah (1906) Tunku Zakiah (1911) and Tunku Hafisah (1912).

Che Menjalara nursed the Sultan during his long illness until she died in 1941. When Tunku Mahmud, the Sultan's brother, became Regent in 1912, he wished to send Sultan Abdul Hamid to a mental hospital outside the state, but Che Menjalara opposed the plan so vigorously that he abandoned it. After her death, the old Sultan, who had survived all his other wives, lived in lonely isolation in a newer palace, some distance from the town, called *Istana Anak Bukit*, attended only by a number of devoted servants. To them, and to many of his other subjects Sultan Abdul Hamid was *Keramat* - a saintly figure who might on occasion heal a sick person. He often drove through the town in a horse drawn carriage, stopping when he wished, and so long as he was able to stand, he attended Friday prayers in the Zahir Mosque, an object of veneration by all who saw him.



Istana Anak Bukit, Alor Star, after its reconstruction, for the Regent, Tunku Badlishah. Sultan Abdul Hamid lived there after the death of Che Menjalara, and remained there till his death in 1943.



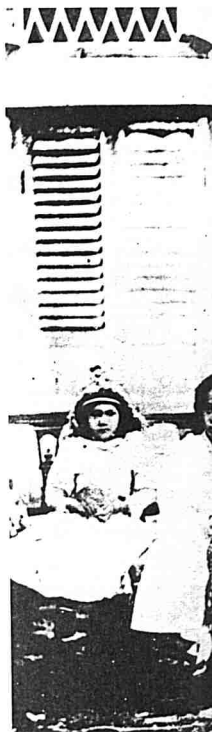
Oil painting of Sultan Abdul Hamid and Che Menjalara with two favourite grandchildren, the son and daughter of Tunku Abdul Rahman. (Tunku Khadijah and Tunku Ahmad Nerang).
Reproduced from an oil painting in the house of Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Schooldays in Alor Star, Bangkok and Penang and a Scholarship 1910 - 1920

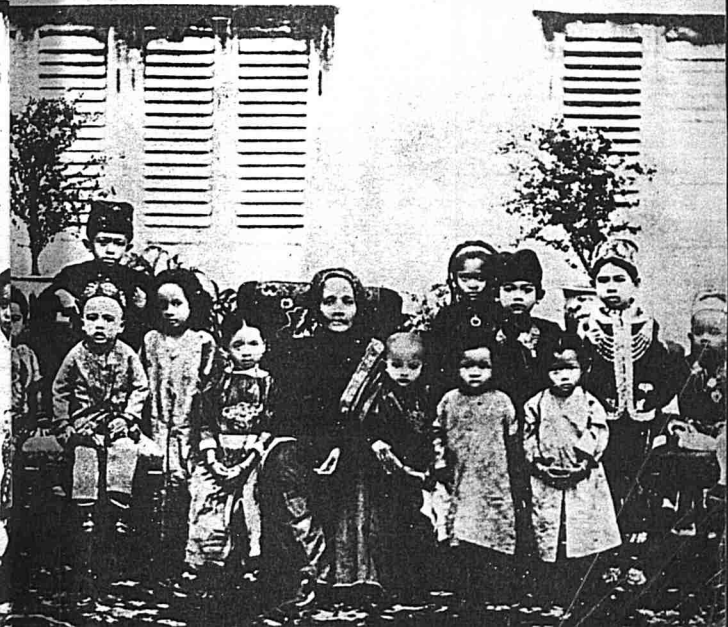
Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was born on 8th February, 1903 in Alor Star in a three storeyed building which resembled a Chinese Pagoda.

Some of his earliest memories are of glazed tiles, covered with green dragons, which formed a frieze decorating the upper walls of the interior; of a number of other buildings which, together with the pagoda formed a palace complex; of a high wall which surrounded these buildings and separated them from the outside world, and of a small, slow moving river, the *Sungei Raja*, where he swam by day and heard crocodiles fighting at night.

The whole palace complex was known as *Dalam Kota* - the inner residence, but Tunku's birthplace was often referred to as *Istana Tiga Tingkat* - the palace of three storeys. It had been constructed many years earlier by Chinese craftsmen living in Alor Star and was demolished in 1912 to make room for new government offices.

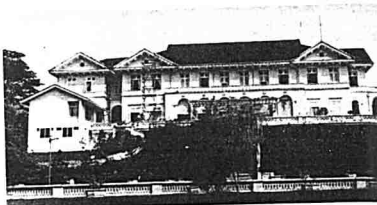


Tunku's Grandmother, Wan Hajar, with some of her grandchildren, in about 1904, outside the "Pagoda" – "Rumah Tiga Tingkat" – where Tunku was born. Tunku was too small to be included. The group includes Tunku Ahmad, in songkok, standing on Wan Hajar's right and Tunku Yusuf, in songkok, on her left.



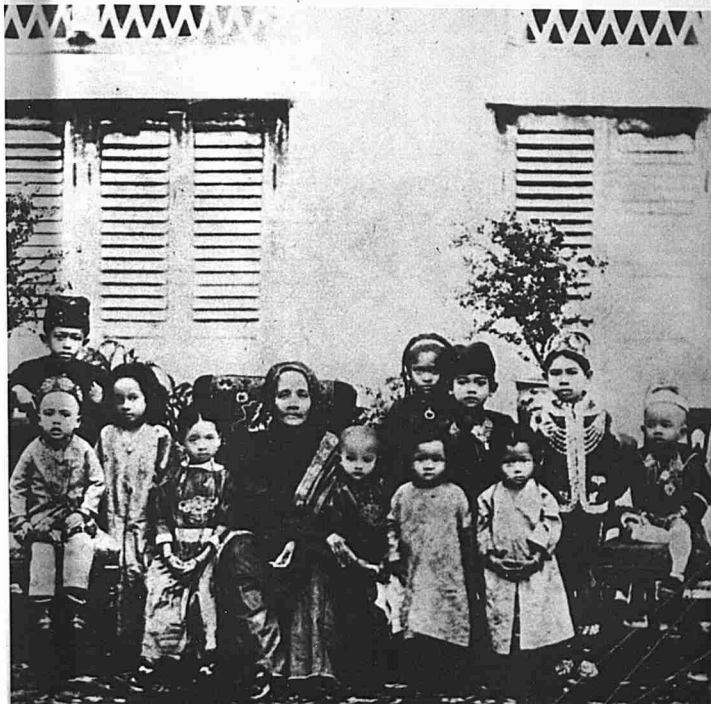
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Tunku's Grandmother, Wan Hajar, with some of her grandchildren, in about 1904, outside the "Pagoda" - "Rumah Tiga Tingkat" - where Tunku was born. Tunku was too small to be included. The group includes Tunku Ahmad, in songkok, standing on Wan Hajar's right and Tunku Yusul, in songkok, on her left.



A view of the old palace - "Dalam Kota". Sultan Abdul Hamid lived for more than thirty years in the main building, seen in this picture.



Another view of the old palace showing the wing which was occupied by ladies other than the Sultan's mother. (These photos were taken many years after the building had ceased to be occupied. It has since been extensively renovated). *Photo Muzium Kedah*

Tunku's father, Sultan Abdul Hamid, and his grandmother, Wan Hajar, who was usually referred to in the palace circles as 'Mak Wan Besar', lived in the principal building, sited centrally. Tunku, his mother and her other children lived in the pagoda. In about 1906 Wan Hajar had a stroke which paralysed her legs, and for the rest of her life she was carried in a sedan chair when she went out of doors, and was propelled in a wheel chair, imported from England, when she wished to move from room to room. Wan Hajar was very fond of her numerous grandchildren and arranged for the young ones to be with her and play in her room. When she died in February 1909 Tunku's mother moved to the Sultan's room in the central building, but Tunku and her other children remained in the pagoda with a Siamese nurse.

A number of door-ways with pointed arches in the outer wall of the palace compound gave access to the town of Alor Star. As soon as he was old enough, leaving his brothers and sisters, Tunku ran outside the walled enclosure to play with boys of his own age who lived in the town. His mother strongly disapproved, but she was occupied caring for the Sultan and Tunku's nurse was unable to control him.

Until he went to England in 1920, Tunku was known to most people, other than his close relatives, as Tunku Putra, and his father called him Putra as long as he lived. But his mother and many of his brothers and sisters called him 'Awang'. In Kedah 'Awang' was a nickname given to boys from the rice fields, whose skin was tanned by the sun. Tunku's skin was darker than that of his brothers, and so they called him 'kampong boy'.

Sultan Abdul Hamid had many wives and numerous children. He married Che Menjalara, Tunku's mother, in 1883 when he was 23 and she about 17. Tunku's mother was Siamese. She was the daughter of Luang Nara Borirak. Her father was descended from Chao Phya Maha Kota and Khun Yip Sup (Lady Sup). Chao Phya

Maha Kota was the head of state of Mataban, and when Burma attacked Siam in 1774 he and his family fled to Bangkok, the new capital, and settled there, acquiring considerable property. Part of this was eventually inherited by Tunku's mother.

Luang Nara Borirak had a little daughter named Nearing. The girl was also known as Menjalara, a Siamese name of endearment. Sultan Abdul Hamid's eldest sister, Tunku Aminah, who often visited Bangkok, saw and was attracted by the little girl and adopted her with Nara Borirak's permission. The child was later brought back to live at Kampong Kepala Bukit near Alor Star, and had since then, used the longer name, Menjalara, because it sounded more Malay. A mosque, Masjid Hamidi Menjalara, was built there many years later in her memory.

Tunku Aminah observed that the girl possessed exceptional intelligence and charm, and she took her to live with her mother, Wan Hajar, in the walled palace. Wan Hajar was equally attracted by the girl and in 1886 she gave Menjalara to Sultan Abdul Hamid to be his fourth wife. Between December 1890 and October 1894 she bore him five children, and then nursed him while he was paralysed. Her next child, Tunku Putra, was not born until February 1903.

The circumstances surrounding Tunku's birth could only have happened during a feudal regime. One of the Sultan's trusted officials was the "Keeper of the Ruler's Seal". The seal was affixed to every important document which was issued from the Sultan's office, and without it the document was not valid. Among those which required the Sultan's approval and seal were grants of land. Land was in great demand and the Keeper issued a number of land grants to which he affixed the ruler's seal without royal authority, receiving substantial sums of money in return. The Sultan had been seriously ill and the Keeper thought that it was unlikely that the felony would be discovered.

The penalties for the crime were well known to him – they had not been changed for centuries: execution of the Keeper and the amputation of the right thumb of the Keeper's wife and children. But only the Sultan could order the punishment. News of the crime reached the Sultan when he was recovering from his second stroke, and the Keeper was arrested and imprisoned. The Keeper's wife came to Menjalara's room in the Pagoda one night, and implored her to ask the Sultan for mercy. Menjalara replied that she could see no justification for clemency: the Keeper had taken advantage of the Sultan's illness to enrich himself. However she later relented and devised a story which might have brought disaster to her married life.

At the time, the Sultan's physical health had greatly improved, but she was not yet pregnant. However she told the Sultan that she was expecting a baby, and reminded him that, according to Malay superstition, if one of the parents caused the disfigurement of any person, the child which was in due time to be born would bear the same deformity. She therefore asked the Sultan to delay the imposition of any penalty until her child was born. Sultan Abdul Hamid agreed to do so. By good fortune Menjalara became pregnant soon afterwards and the child who was born from this confinement was named Tunku Putra. The Sultan then reduced the sentence on the Keeper to one of a long term of imprisonment and remitted the punishment of the wife and children. Menjalara firmly believed that the compassion and mercy which were associated with her son's birth distinguished him from all his brothers and sisters and had a lifelong influence on his character.

When the now legendary weddings of his five half brothers and sisters took place in June, July and August 1904, Tunku was not yet two years old, but was



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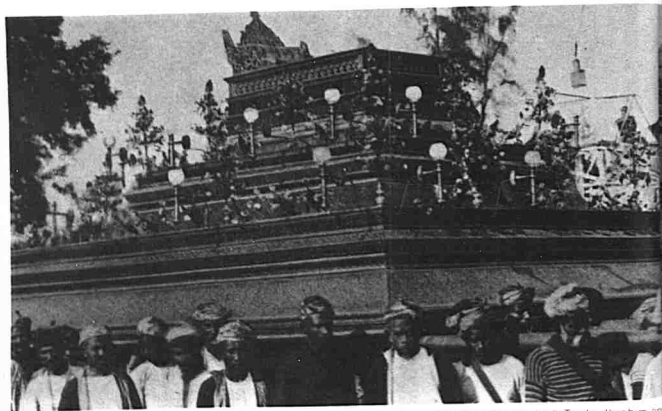
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Tunku Aminah, younger sister of Tunku:
born 12th May 1906

Group of some of Sultan Abdul Hamid's elder
children, taken in June 1904, in front of the
"Agoda" Centre. Tunku Ibrahim, with
walking stick, the eldest son and the first to
be married. Tunku Zainal Rashid, seated on
Tunku Ibrahim's right, was the second to be
married. Tunku Ibrahim was married to Tunku
Bahah, the daughter of Tunku Abdul Aziz.
Tunku Zainal Rashid was married to Tunku
Aminah, daughter of Tunku Bahadur.



carried in procession, with his elder brothers seated on a seven tier platform called *Perusungan*. Other childhood memories were less happy. When he was four, he was vaccinated; he tried to elude his mother's servants, but was captured and taken to the room of his paralysed grandmother, where the brief but painful inoculation took place under her supervision. Cholera and malaria were then common all over Kedah, and penetrated the walled palace. At least two of Tunku's brothers and an elder sister died of cholera, and Tunku suffered from intermittent attacks of malaria until he arrived in England in 1920. When he was about six he was toasting *keropok* (a fish fritter) in his mother's kitchen. A lighted fragment of firewood fell on his left ankle and burnt him. It was exceedingly painful. Tunku, wishing to conceal the accident from his mother, wrapped a cloth round

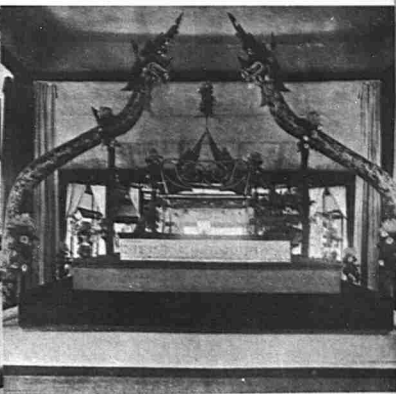


The Throne on which Tunku Ibrahim and wife were carried in procession through Alor Star. Tunku Abdul Rahman rode on Platform with many of his small brothers.
Photo Illustrated London News



One of the ornamental birds which were carried in the procession, seen outside the outer wall of the old palace.

Photo Illustrated London News



The dais on which the bridal couple were bathe, as part of the marriage ceremony, in a pavilion. The water was channelled through two decorative dragons' mouths.

Photo Illustrated London News

his ankle and hoped that it would heal. But the wound turned septic and it was three years before Tunku was able to resume his games of football outside the palace walls. When he was nine, Tunku was circumcised in company with seven other boys. None of them were his relatives: all of them were his playmates from the town. The event took place, at his request, in a room in the palace complex. The Royal Circumcisor (*Mudin DiRaja*) performed the minor operation, which occupied only a few seconds, but healing was slow. All the patients remained in the palace, with Tunku, for three weeks, while Malay and Javanese Shadow Plays were performed nightly for their entertainment.

Tunku's formal education started when he was about six years old at the only Malay elementary school in Alor Star. His mother had hoped that school would keep him out of mischief, but he often ran away from class. When a small English-medium school was opened by a teacher named Mohamed Iskandar, Tunku's mother sent him there instead. In the afternoon, Tunku was taught to read the Quran.

In 1913 Tunku's eldest brother, Tunku Yusuf, returned from England. He had been sent there as a King's Scholar by the Siamese government to study at the British Military Academy at Woolwich, where army engineers were trained. Tunku Yusuf was a most industrious individual and he passed all the difficult examinations. When he returned to Alor Star, he quickly realised that his younger brother was making no progress in his studies, and with the full agreement of their mother, the two brothers set off for Bangkok by sea from Singapore. Tunku Yusuf had married a European girl name Lily de Whittle, and she accompanied him to Kedah and thence to Bangkok,

where they rented a house. Tunku was admitted to the Debsurin School, where the lessons were taught in Siamese. Tunku always possessed an unrivalled capacity for making friends with people of all communities and in Bangkok he was never lonely. His best friend was Tavil Guptarak; they attended the same school and were inseparable.

Tunku Yusuf was given a Commission in the Siamese Army on his arrival in Bangkok, and he spent much of his time on military operations against bandits. In 1915 he contracted pneumonia while in the jungle and died on his return to the Siamese capital. He was buried there, but many years later Tunku arrange for his remains to be exhumed and reburied in the royal cemetery at Langgar, near Alor Star. Tunku returned to Kedah, accompanied by his brother's widow. They were met at Songkhla by Che Menjalara, in the Sultan's large Siddeley motor car. The Sultan and his close relatives had deplored the marriage of Tunku Yusuf to a European girl, and the widow was sent back to England.

Many Kedah boys of good family attended an English-medium school in Penang, and when Tunku returned his mother sent him to the Penang Free School. A number of talented teachers including H.R. Cheesemen were on the staff and perhaps for that reason Tunku developed a keen interest in his studies and twice obtained double promotion. The Kedah boys lived in a separate hostel in Penang; it was supervised by a Kedah born man named Awang Osman. His skin was unusually dark. The supervisor came to know many influential members of the Kedah government and one of his sons was later admitted, as a special privilege, to the exclusive Kedah Civil Service. That young man possessed keen intelligence, great industry and insatiable ambition,



Lt. Tunku Yusuf elder brother of Tunku Abdul Rahman, in Siamese military uniform soon after his return to Bangkok in 1913.



Widow of Tunku Yusuf (Tunku's elder brother)



Tunku Abdul Rahman with his close friend Avil Guptarak, while attending Debsurin school in Bangkok, 1914.

young man possessed keen intelligence, great industry and insatiable ambition, and he eventually rose to fill the highest post in the establishment, - Secretary to the Government. His name was Mohamed Shariff.

In 1912, when the Sultan's third stroke prevented him from carrying out his duties, his eldest son, Tunku Ibrahim, was appointed Regent. Although Tunku Ibrahim's own studies had ended when he left a Malay elementary school in Alor Star, he was a man of wide interests. These included the higher education of his younger brothers. He had heard of the rapid progress of Tunku Putra at the Penang Free School and he secured the approval of the Council of State to the creation of a new scholarship to send a student to Cambridge University. The Headmaster, R.H. Pinhorn, was consulted, and he, supported by the Head of the Lower School, H.R. Cheeseman, recommended that the scholarship be awarded to Tunku Putra, who was then sixteen. The Kedah government then followed the normal procedure and wrote to the Crown Agents for the Colonies in London, asking them to obtain a passage for Tunku on a ship sailing to England, and to select a tutor who could prepare him to sit for the University Entrance Examination. In neither case were their services satisfactory. The First World War had ended only a year previously and passenger ships were still scarce. Eventually a berth was reserved for Tunku on an old nine-thousand ton ship of the Blue Funnel Line, named *Rhesus*. It was a cargo vessel and carried only twelve passengers. It began its homeward voyage at Singapore, but had to take on cargo at Port Swettenham and Penang before sailing for Ceylon and England. Although it would have been logical for Tunku to board

the ship in Penang, he was told to embark in Singapore. The flat, swampy land near Port Swettenham was notorious as a breeding place for anopheles mosquitos, and while *Rhesus* loaded cargo in the Klang River. Tunku contracted a fresh infection of Malaria. He suffered acutely from high fever during the voyage and had barely recovered when the ship arrived at Tilbury on June 1st.

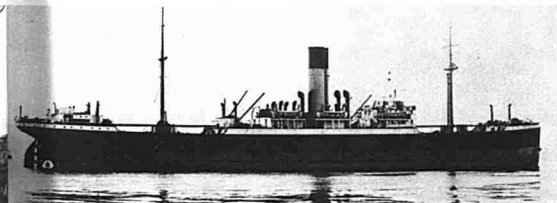
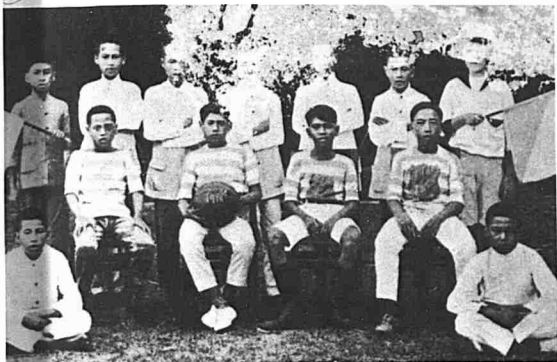
The Crown Agents had arranged for Tunku to lodge with a Church-of-England clergyman in a small village called Little Stukeley, near Huntingdon, and not far from Cambridge. Tunku had been told that a representative of the clergyman, by the name of Eccles, would meet him when he landed. But *Rhesus* had not yet been allotted a berth at a wharf, and when the passengers were taken ashore by launch Eccles could not be found. Fortunately a Kedah rubber planter named Atkins, who was a fellow passenger, had promised to look after Tunku if necessary and they waited in the summer sunshine, listening to forecasts of the winner of the 'Derby' horse race which was to be run that afternoon. This introduction to the 'sport of kings', at one time a hobby of his father, was to be one of Tunku's favourite past time for the rest of his life.

A later view of the ladies' wing of the old palace, showing the site of the Pagoda, after it had been demolished. Photo Muzium Kedah



Eventually Eccles appeared and they set off, first to Central London and then by train to Huntingdon, passing a panorama of urban and rural scenery. Tunku had promised to write to his mother and to tell her what England looked like. He did so as soon as he reached Little Stukeley. But he signed his letter 'Putra'. He had left 'Awang' behind in Alor Star.

The Penang Free School Third XI, with Tunku Abdul Rahman seated centre. Tunku played inside right and scored most of the goals, and the Third XI entered the semi final of the school league and almost met the First eleven in the final, 1915.



The Blue Funnel Cargo ship "Rhesus" in which Tunku sailed to England in 1919.
Photo Ocean Transport & Trading Plc, Liverpool

Paradise at Cambridge:
Competing priorities in London
1922 - 1931



Little Stukeley Church and Rectory. *Photo taken by Tunku in 1920.*

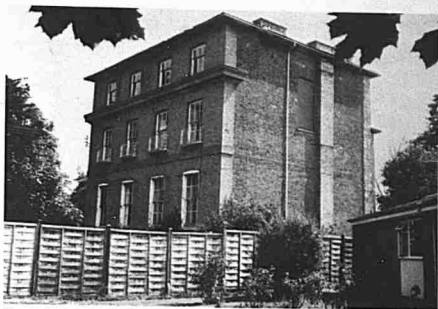
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Tunku was seventeen when, in June 1920 he arrived in Little Stukeley. It was a typical small village of that period. An old stone church with a low tower and a yellow brick Rectory, where the Church of England parson lived, were sited close together on the top of a low hill. A number of single storeyed thatched cottages, arranged in no sort of order, stood on the slopes of the hill and housed the villagers. There was one small provision shop which was also the Post Office, and one Public House, 'The Swan', where the villagers, who cultivated the flat Fen land for miles around, met to exchange gossip.

The Rev. Edgar Vigers, the elderly rector of the parish, lived in the brick Rectory which was three storeys high. He supplemented his small stipend by taking charge of boys who needed coaching before they sat for a variety of minor examinations. He had registered his name with the Crown Agents, and they sent him some of his students, including Tunku. His wife, who kept house for him was a chain smoker and Tunku acquired the habit of cigarette smoking while he was at Little Stukeley. Most of the boys were English and remained for only about six months, but when Tunku arrived there were also three Siamese.

Living in an English village was a totally new experience for Tunku. It took him a little time to establish rapport with any of the villagers, and at first he spent most of his time in the company of the Siamese. He bought a bicycle and found a football field and met some of the youths who played there in the evening. They were more heavily built and slower, but Tunku could kick a football accurately and could run faster than any of them, and they invited him to take part in a football game. Later he played regularly in the right wing for Little Stukeley. No one in the village had ever heard of Marathi or the Malays, and they called him 'Tubby'.

Mr. Vigers had no training as a teacher,



The old Rectory, Little Stukeley, Huntingdonshire. Tunku occupied the room on the top floor on the left, in 1919 (the house has been listed for preservation, but was unoccupied in 1984.)



The Swan, Little Stukeley, still in regular use by farmers. (Photo taken in 1930: the building has not changed since Tunku's time.)



Outside the Rectory, Little Stukeley

Seated: A Dutch lady, Mrs Vigers, Rev Vigers,
Miss Murdock

Standing: Tunku, Two Dutch students,
One Iceland Student

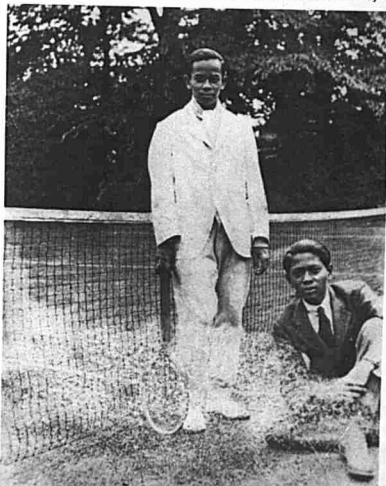
Seated on the ground: Siamese student
(Theb Apaiwongse), Miss Vigers,
Master Vigers.



Tunku and his friends at Little Stukeley

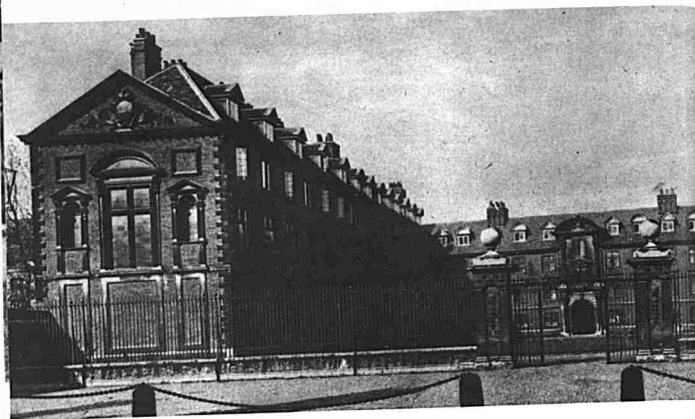
After about a year Tunku realised that he was making very little progress. He took a train from Huntingdon to London and went to see Mr. Ezekiel, in the office of the Crown Agents, who had been designated as his guardian. Ezekiel arranged for Tunku to move to Cambridge and to be taught by and live with a Mr. Basil Atkinson, a man of good family. Atkinson is an experienced tutor and he prepared Tunku to sit for the examination known as 'Cobbetlego', to enable him to enter the University. An Indian student taught him geometry.

The entrance examination took place in the late summer of the following year. Tunku had worked hard and was well prepared, and Atkinson was confident that he would pass. There was an English essay paper which included a choice of topics. One was a set book, entitled 'Cobbet's Rural Rides', the others were general subjects, one of which was 'An International language'. Tunku knew "Cobbet's



Tunku Badlishah (who was studying at Oxford) on a Tennis Court at Little Stukeley when visiting Tunku. Tunku seated on the grass.

6



General view of St. Catherine's college, Cambridge.



SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	RAKE OF COLL.	MATRICULATION	PREVIOUS	INT. COLL. EXAM.	SPECIAL P.S.	TRIPON	DEGREE
<i>T. Rahman (Tunku)</i>		<i>P</i>	<i>2nd Class 1913</i>	<i>I 1/2</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>1st 1/2 2/2</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>B.A. 2d Cl June 1914</i>
<i>K. Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah.</i>				<i>II 2/2</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>2nd II 1/2</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>M.A. 1st Class 1914</i>
				<i>III 1/2</i>		<i>3rd 1/2</i>		<i>L.L.B.</i>
						<i>II</i>		<i>L.L.M.</i>
				<i>1st M.B.</i>	<i>2nd M.B.</i>	<i>3rd M.B. Pt I</i>	<i>2nd M.B. Pt II</i>	<i>M.B.</i>
				<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>
<i>Place of Birth: Pn Taki 1903, Kedah.</i>								<i>B.C.</i>
<i>in School, Pinang.</i>			<i>1st FEB 1913</i>					<i>L.L.D. (Hon) 1960 (Cambridge)</i>
			<i>1960</i>				<i>Sec.</i>	<i>See records Pergast for info, page 12</i>
			<i>SEA</i>		<i>Hon L.L.D.</i>			

from the University Examination Register, June 1926 showing Tunku's examination results, he obtained an Ordinary BA. Degree".

Rural Rides" almost by heart, but he chose 'An International language' and wrote about the universal use of English. After the examination Atkinson asked him how he had fared and was horrified to hear that Tunku had not chosen Cobbet. "What do you know about 'Esperanto'?" he asked. Tunku admitted that he knew absolutely nothing. "That is the international language to which the examiners referred. You will certainly fail."

When the results were published Tunku obtained high marks for all his other papers and was allowed a Pass for the whole examination. Soon afterwards he was informed that he had been accepted as an undergraduate at St. Catherine's College, and had been allotted a sitting room and bedroom in one of the college's registered Lodging Houses at 11, Grange Road. He remained there for the next three years. The entry in the College Admission Register reads:

"September 1922. (Tunku) Abdul Rahman, son of (Sultan) of Kedah Abdul Hamid. Born in Alor Star, Kedah, Malay States, 8th February, 1903. Was admitted Pensioner."

St. Catherine's was one of seventeen colleges which, at that time, formed the University of Cambridge. All the undergraduates were male. None of the colleges were exactly alike, but they shared a basic form. Tall stone buildings surrounded one or more large open spaces, known as 'Courts'. These were sometimes paved and sometimes covered with well kept grass lawns. Admission was usually through double wooden doors in an arched gateway. These doors were open during the day, but were locked at night. College Door Keepers, known as 'Porters', occupied an office just inside the entrance and controlled all entries and departures. College buildings included a large dining hall, offices and living rooms for the Dean and Senior Tutor and a small college chapel, where Church-of-England services were conducted daily.

St. Catherine's - usually referred to as 'Cats' - was one of the smallest colleges in the University, and its principal stone buildings formed only three sides of a single rectangle. High decorative metal railings, painted black, stretched across the fourth side, close to a public street. The Porter's Lodge and access to the college was sited at one end of the railings. A stone path bordered the college buildings, enclosing a neat grass lawn, guarded from human encroachment by no fence but only by ancient tradition. The college stood in the centre of the town, within a short distance of two of the most famous colleges, - 'Kings' and 'Trinity'.



St. Catherine's College Football Team, 1924-25. They entered the final of the inter-college league. Tunku scored a goal in the final, but they were defeated. Tunku is seated on the extreme right.



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Tunku seated outside the house of his Tutor, D. Atkinson in Cambridge.

Each new undergraduate was required to call on the Dean of his college, to receive a brief summary of university regulations. Tunku was told that an undergraduate must attend dinner in the college dining hall every evening during term time. He must wear a short, knee-length 'Gown', open in front, over his other garments, when attending dinner and lectures, and whenever he moved outside his college or his lodgings after dark. He must return to his lodgings by 10 o'clock every night. If he wished to remain outside for a longer period he must obtain a pass beforehand. If he returned late, the front door would be locked and his landlady would record the time of his return, and fine him one penny for each hour after ten.

The Kedah Regent had instructed Tunku to study Law at Cambridge, so that he could make use of it in the Civil Service when he returned. But after reading

the syllabus for an Honours Degree in Law, Tunku decided to adopt a compromise, and he entered his name for a Pass Degree which included two years devoted to the study of Law and a final year studying History.

Cambridge University in the early nineteen twenties was a paradise for young men with private means and no particular ambition to excel in the academic field. Many aristocratic British families sent their sons to Cambridge to gain experience in social life. They attended a few lectures, read two or three text books, formed friendships which would continue into middle age, and if they failed to obtain a degree at the end of their third year they were not blamed.

Tunku Abdul Rahman entered this carefree world in October 1922. He quickly conformed to the social habits of other young men of good family, which included the use of ultra-baggy flannel trousers.



Interior of Tunku's lodging at Cambridge, 11 Grange Road.



Tunku's first motor car: a Riley Sports: 1923.

Tunku had always been a gregarious person, without any feeling of snobbery. There were no other Malay students at Cambridge in 1922, and he took as his friends, English and Siamese undergraduates, some of them with expensive inclinations. He also visited the head cook in his college kitchen and taught him how to prepare rice and curry in the Malay style. He met undergraduates from India, but they were absorbed with the politics of their home country: he listened to them discussing how India could achieve Independence, but found the subject tedious.

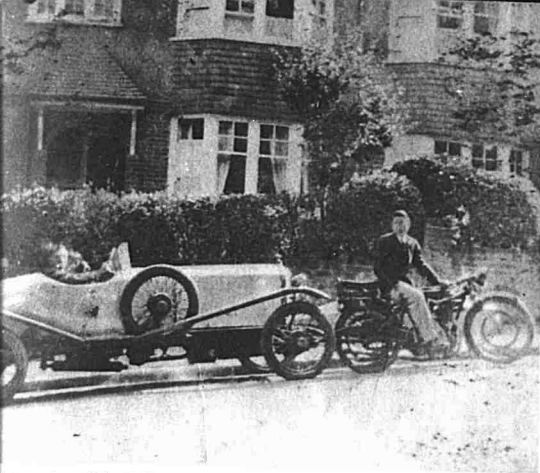
Football, hockey and cricket were played by undergraduates on the broad fields which bordered the town. Tunku's name was entered for the Freshmen's Soccer trial, but the organisers noted that he had not played football at any Public School and his name was dropped. Later he often played Right Wing for his college second eleven. In the summer he played tennis. Like every other undergraduate, Tunku moved about the town on a bicycle to which was fitted a small, open topped basket, attached to the handlebars, in which he carried his gown and note books.

The university authorities strongly disapproved of ballroom dancing. There was only one dance hall in Cambridge, called 'The Rendezvous'. It was often raided by Proctors - the University Security Guards - and any undergraduates found there were fined or punished in some other way.

Tunku was fond of dancing and he discovered that the nearest dance hall was at Bedford, but it was thirty miles away.

Some publicity was given in the press in May 1923 to the London Motor Show, to be held at Olympia in June. Tunku went there on the opening day and placed an order for the latest sports model of a Riley car: the price was £550/-. He cabled his mother and asked for the money and she sent it, also by cable, enabling him to complete the purchase before the end of the show. The car was delivered to his lodgings in Cambridge a few days later. It had an aluminium body and red wings. Tunku now had a means of transport to visit Bedford and he became popular with the dance hostesses there. He possessed a natural sense of rhythm and was exceptionally light on his feet. He perfected his performance of the Foxtrot and learnt to dance the Charleston. Few undergraduates owned cars in 1923 and Tunku became widely known both to University officials and to the local Police. The latter issued summonses to him from time to time, for exceeding the speed limit in the narrow streets of the university town.

The end of the academic year at Cambridge is in June. Tunku sat for examinations in Roman, Criminal and Constitutional Law, Contract and Tort at the end of his second year, in 1924, and obtained a Pass in all subjects. In May 1925 he sat for the History examinations.



Tunku's sports car, Riley 1923.



Tunku at the school...

The timetable extended over a week, and included certain subjects which Tunku was not taking. On the morning scheduled for his final paper he sat in his lodgings, concentrating on last minute revision, believing that this paper was to be taken on the following day. A friend, cycling by, saw both the familiar sports car and a bicycle outside, and hurried in to tell Tunku of his mistake. Tunku rode his bicycle at top speed to the examination hall but he was too late, and was refused admission. When the results were published Tunku had passed in the other subjects, but he was informed that he must take the whole History examination again in six months time.

London had always attracted Tunku, and while he was still at Cambridge he applied to the Inns of Court for admission to the Inner Temple and for permission to study law as an external student. He told the authorities at Cambridge that he had done so, and when he wished to attend a social engagement in London during term time, he applied for a Pass to be absent from Cambridge for the night, giving as his reason that he had to 'eat his dinners' at the Inner Temple, which was part of the process of qualifying to be a lawyer. But the dinners which he ate during these excursions were consumed elsewhere in the company of friends, not law students. The summer and autumn of 1925 graced by peerless sunshine, passed all too quickly; spent partly in London and partly at Brighton and other holiday

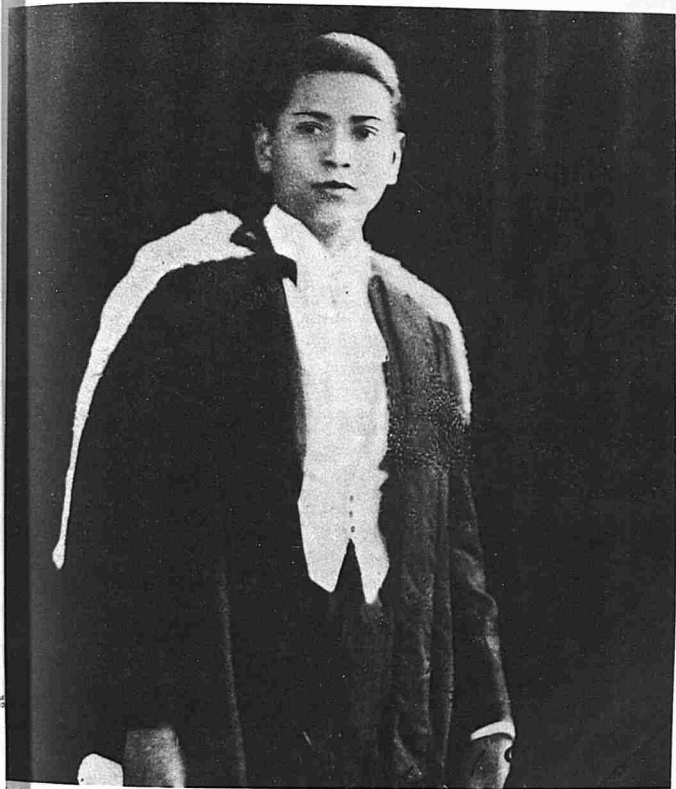


Tunku Ibrahim, Regent of Kedah in Alor Setar

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Ibrahim (Regent of Kedah) seated at
back of a car, while on a visit to
bridge to meet Tunku.
in front: Tunku Mansur, elder half
brother of Tunku.
standing: Tunku Mohammad Jawa, elder
brother of Tunku; born 1894



unku wearing full evening dress - white bowtie, white waistcoat and tail coat and the gown and hood of a Cambridge University BA.



Wedding celebration of Syed Omar to Tunku Aminah (Tunku's sister) outside the Rumah Pelamin in Alor Star in 1926.

resorts. In November he drove to Cambridge to confirm his entry and to obtain the History examination timetable. To his dismay he discovered that one paper in the History syllabus in the new academic year had been slightly altered. Candidates were required, as before, to describe the life of one of three world famous people, but the names of the individuals had been changed. The new names were Julius Caesar, Napoleon and the Prophet Muhammad. Tunku hurried to Heffer's bookshop, bought a volume on the life of the Prophet and studied it in his London flat. But when he presented himself at the examination hall, half an hour early, he was once again refused admission because he had not informed the examiners, in advance, which of the individuals he wished to write about. He pleaded with the invigilators and was finally admitted. After the examination he returned to his flat in Warwick Road near the Earls Court underground station. In due course he was informed that he had satisfied the examiners in the General Degree Examination in Law and History, and that he was entitled to place the letters B.A. after his name.

Five years had passed since he sailed from Singapore. The Crown Agents secured Tunku a berth in a P. & O. passenger ship which called at Penang. When he arrived back in Alor Star, he was 23 years of age, handsome, dignified, with

the polished assurance of a young man of the world. His eldest brother, Tunku Ibrahim who was still Regent, was favourably impressed, and listened without comment while Tunku explained why he had taken a Pass Degree in Law and History instead of an Honours Degree in Law. After a short silence, the Regent raised his eyes from the desk in front of him, where the parchment with the Cambridge University Coat of Arms lay, and said quietly, speaking in Malay, "You are still rather young to work as a junior administrative officer. You had better return to England and obtain a Law Degree at the Bar". Tunku would have preferred to remain in Kedah, but the Regent, in spite of his mild manner, was all powerful, and not even Tunku's mother, proud as she was of her favourite son, was willing to attempt to intervene.

Tunku returned to London and continued his study of Law at the Inner Temple as a regular student. It was now 1926 and many other Malays had been sent to England to study Law, including another Tunku Abdul Rahman, the son of the Yang Di Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, Nik Ahmed Kamil, the son of the Chief Minister of Kelantan, Raja Musa bin Raja Bot from Selangor and Abdul Wahab from Perak. State loyalties were still dominant in Malaya, and had it not been for Tunku, the Malay students in London would seldom have met socially. He cooked curries on Sundays in



Unku (seated left) in London, with members of the Malay Society of Great Britain. Tunku won the Tennis Challenge shield in 1928.
Photo taken in Tunku's lodgings.



Coulson with three Siamese students
race Meeting outside London.
taken by Tunku, about 1925



Siamese Prince (Lok Sna Kinn Mom Chow)
at the wheel of his car at Brighton. Tunku
seated on the back.



Che Menjalara, Tunku's Mother, in middle age, in Alor Star. She died in 1941.

his flat, to which all Malay students were invited, and on Tunku's initiative, a Malay Society of Great Britain was formed, with Tunku Abdul Rahman of Negeri Sembilan as President and Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra as Honorary Secretary and the driving force. Five years spent outside Kedah had broadened his horizon but Tunku observed that other Malay students felt no sense of racial unity or of a common nationality. In informal talks, he urged his fellow students to think of themselves first as Malays and only as a subject of a particular ruler second. In this his thinking was far ahead of his contemporaries.

Tunku studied Roman Law, Criminal and Constitutional Law, Legal History, English Real Property and Conveyancing. The first three subjects were familiar to him, the last two repelled him and he made little attempt to master them. He always found it difficult to read text books and case books, but he had an excellent memory, and if friends who were also studying Law came to his flat, read part of a textbook with him and discussed points which he did not understand, he made some progress. This would have been substantially greater had it not been for other friends whose interest were horse racing, poker playing and dancing.

It was in his second year as a Law student in London that Tunku met Violet Coulson, an attractive woman, five years his senior, who managed a restaurant where many Malayan students took their meals. When Tunku tired of his law studies they sometimes went dancing together.

At the end of Tunku's second year, his name-sake from Negeri Sembilan, passed his final law examination and the result was published in the Malay press. Some of Tunku's friends in Kedah wrote to congratulate him and to ask when he was returning home. This was embarrassing, but it did little to stimulate his



Sultan Abdul Hamid in ceremonial dress.

interest in law. He sat for Part One of the Bar examination in May 1930 and passed in Roman Law, Criminal and Constitutional Law and Legal History, but he scored hardly any marks in the Real Property and Conveyancing Paper. After the results were published, the Director of Legal Education sent for Tunku and asked him what he would do if he failed the examination. Tunku replied that a post in the Kedah Civil Service was waiting for him, whether he passed or not. The Director of Studies held up Tunku's answer paper on Real Property: "You are fortunate to have an alternative form of employment. Judging by what you wrote here you seem to know nothing whatever about the subject and you will be well advised to give up all ideas of becoming a lawyer." Failure in one paper was fatal. The examiners took no account of Tunku's success in three others, and he was recorded as having failed the whole of Part One. His three years at the Inner Temple and all the interest and pleasures which London had offered were at an end, Tunku sailed for Penang in January, 1931.

Tunku's reputation as a 'playboy' is largely derived from his three years at Cambridge and his early years at the Inns of Court in London. The expression is sometimes used in jest, but it is sometimes intended to be derogatory. But we should remember that the mid-nineteen twenties at Cambridge was the period of 'Playboy Undergraduates', and that Tunku was a typical example of, not an exception to the contemporary vogue. And we should not forget that this 'playboy' obtained, in the mid-twenties, a B.A. Degree in Law and History at Cambridge and passed four out of five papers in Part One of the Bar examination in London.





Members of the Malay Society of Great Britain, founded by Tunku in 1926.
Standing Left to Right: En. Hanafi Hassan (Kedah), C.M. Yusof (Perak), T. Izaham (Kedah),
T. Shuib (K), T. Abdul Aziz (K), T. Abdul Majid (K), T. Yahaya (K),
Nik Ahmed Kamil (Kelantan), Syed Sheh Barakbah (K), M. Mahmud Hashim (Penang),
En. Ramli (Perak).
Seated: Tunku Zainal Abidin (K), T. Yaacob (K), Tunku Abdul Rahman (Negeri
Sembilan), Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (Kedah), Hj. Abdul Wahab (Perak),
Raja Azman Shah (Perak), Tunku Ozair (Kedah).

Civil But Disobedient Servant:
Kuala Nerang, Langkawi,
Sungei Patani, Kulim: Fresh
Initiative at the Inner Temple:
Long Houses and Invasion
1932 - 1941



The District Office building, Kulim, where Tunku served first as Assistant District Officer, and later twice as District Officer. *Photo National Archives.*

Tunku had been sent to England on a State scholarship and was automatically a government servant when he returned. His eldest brother was still Regent, but when Tunku attempted to explain his failure to pass the Law examination in London the Regent made it clear in a brief interview that he was in disgrace. A few days later Tunku was informed by letter that he had been appointed a Cadet in the Kedah Civil Service, and was to report himself to the office of the Legal Adviser. His duties were uncongential, and he was relieved to find an outlet for his energies in the preparations for the celebrations of his father's Golden Jubilee, which included an elaborate procession of floats.

Tunku had been allotted government quarters, and prompted perhaps by memories of the decoration of the pagoda in which he was born, he arranged for a pair of green dragons from one of the floats to be fastened to the walls of his verandah after the celebrations had ended. But the colour soon faded and he asked a tin-smith named Chong, who had a flourishing business in the Chinese sector of the town, to come and remove them. Tunku had heard about Chong some weeks earlier from one of his sisters. Chong had joined with Tunku Ismail, his brother-in-law, in a mining enterprise in Perak. It had failed, and both men and his sister had lost the money which they had invested. Chong was a friendly individual, and after removing the dragons he paid several casual visits to Tunku's house. On one of these he told Tunku that he had a daughter aged sixteen and knowing that Tunku was still a bachelor, invited him to marry her. Tunku did not take the suggestion seriously and soon afterwards he was transferred to Kulim as Assistant District Officer.

This was infinitely more congenial than sitting in an office in Alor Star, and Tunku devoted much of his time to touring the district and getting to know the problems of the peasants who made up ninety per

cent of the population. The District Officer welcomed this enthusiasm, but advised Tunku to devote some of his time to prepare for the Cadet's Law exam, in order that he could qualify for promotion. The government law syllabus contained familiar subjects and the standard required was much lower than at the Inns of Court; he took the exam and passed it at his first attempt.

About a year later Tunku was transferred, on promotion, to be District Officer of Padang Terap. The district headquarters was at Kuala Nerang which lay in the north-east corner of the state. The district bordered Siam and included a community known as Sam-Sam, who were of Siamese descent. They spoke a mixture of Malay and Siamese, smuggled cattle across the border and led a life which was governed by superstition and was totally without hygiene. Tunku visited them on a number of occasions, and persuaded the leaders to give up cattle stealing, but failed to wean them from their antipathy to hygiene.

While Tunku was still at Kulim, Chong from Alor Star paid him another visit. This time he brought his daughter with him. Tunku observed that the girl was tall, strikingly good looking, and possessed a quiet self assurance, and so Miss Chong Ah Yong became 'Meriam', and they were married by the local Kathi in Tunku's government quarters. He did not inform the Regent, and only told his mother when Meriam became pregnant. Soon after Meriam's conversion to Islam she learnt to pray, and when the Fasting Month began, although she was pregnant she fasted and persuaded Tunku to do so too. During his years overseas Tunku had given up the practice of fasting during the month of *Ramadan*, indeed he seldom said his daily prayers. But his young wife set him an example which he was happy to follow for the rest of his life.

A year after their marriage Tunku's daughter was born; he called her Kha-



Sultan Abdul Hamid in his bedroom in the old palace, at the time of his Golden Jubilee

dijah. A year later a son was born. He was named Ahmad Nerang.

The post of District Officer Padang Terap was an unpopular one. Kuala Nerang was notoriously unhealthy owing to the prevalence of Malaria. As soon as he took over the district, Tunku gave orders for a survey to be made of the swamps which bordered the town, obtained an estimate for draining them and applied to the State Secretariat for the necessary funds: the cost would be \$10,000. The post of Secretary to the Government, — the head of the Secretariat, was held by an official named Mohamed Shariff: he had obtained rapid promotion as a result of his efficiency and industry. He was the son of the Hostel Supervisor in Penang. Mohamed Shariff had seen and formed an unfavourable opinion of Tunku, when he returned from England, and he was the exact opposite of Tunku in every respect: he loved office work and was rigid in his application of Government regulations. He now rejected Tunku's plea for funds.

A month after the birth of Meriam's second child she contracted a severe attack of malaria. She was weakened by her recent confinement, and although Tunku gave her the best remedies that he could obtain from Penang, she made little progress. An English lady doctor came from Alor Star to visit her bringing a phial of quinine and a hypodermic syringe. The doctor believed that the quinine had been heavily diluted and was ready for use. But it had not been prepared and she injected pure quinine into Meriam's vein. She died instantly.

It was a tragic misadventure but Tunku made no attempt to lodge an official report. Instead, he wrote again to the State Secretariat, asking that funds be made available to drain the swamp and to rid Kuala Nerang of the main breeding place of the carriers of malaria. This time the money was provided and the work was carried out under Tunku's supervision.



Snapshot of Tunku's two children by Meriam: Tunku Khadijah (L) and Tunku Ahmad Nerang (R)



Grave Stone of Meriam, first wife of Tunku, erected in the royal graveyard at Langgar, near Alor Star. Mother of Tunku Khadijah and Tunku Ahmad Nerang.



Group photo of Tennis Players in Kulim, during the annual match between Kulim District and a team headed by Raja Abdul Aziz, Raja Muda of Perak. The match was organised by Tunku. This group was taken in 1928, shortly before Perak Raja Abdul Aziz became Sultan of Perak.

Seated: L to R: En. Syed Sofi (K), Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (K), Raja Abdul Aziz, Raja Muda Perak, Raja Bendahara Perak, Syed Sheh Barakbah (Kedah).



Tunku Ibrahim, Regent, shortly before he died in 1934. Photo Muzium Negara



Tunku Mahmud, who succeeded Tunku Ibrahim as Regent. Photo Muzium Negara



Langkawi Islands. A view from Kuah, the district headquarters. Photo Information Services.



Tunku, after officially opening the "Fairwinds Hotel", in Langkawi in 1938. Tunku was then on holiday. Sharifah Roziah is standing behind him on his left.

Malay students in London continued to patronise Violet Coulson's restaurant. It was a centre for the exchange of home news, and Meriam's death was among the news items which reached Violet. Without telling Tunku, Violet handed over the management of her restaurant and sailed for Singapore, and only wrote to him after she had arrived. When he left England, Tunku had had no intention of marrying Violet; but Meriam's death had left a vacuum. Tunku took the train to Singapore and met Violet at her hotel. They talked of old times, of their long friendship. They danced together at Raffles Hotel and ignoring the disparity in their ages, Tunku took Violet to the Kathi in the principal Malay mosque in Arab Street and they were married according to Muslim rites.

Tunku arranged for Violet to live in Penang for there was a law in Kedah which forbade members of the royal family to marry non-Malays without the prior approval of the Ruler or Regent. Anyone who violated this law was liable to be disinherited. Tunku Ibrahim, the Regent was known to be strongly opposed to 'mixed marriages', but he died unexpectedly in 1934 and was succeeded as Regent by Tunku Mahmud, the Sultan's younger brother, who was more broad minded and gave consent to the marriage. Violet moved to Kuala Nerang, but the Secretary to Government showed his disapproval by transferring Tunku to the isolated post of District Officer Langkawi.

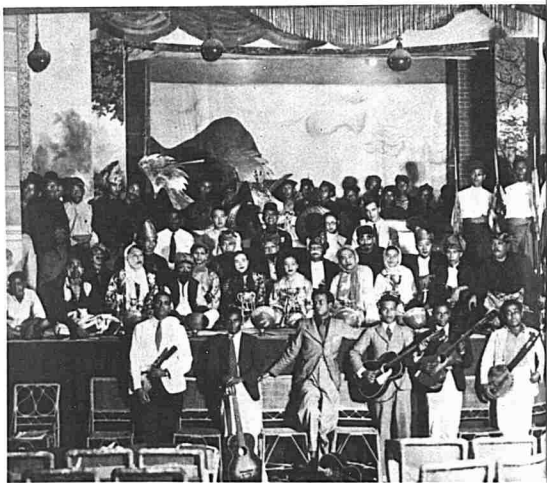
The district consisted of a group of picturesque islands, thinly populated, sparsely cultivated, without roads and the object of a legendary curse whose term of seven generations was thought not yet to have expired. Langkawi had at least one advantage: it was much healthier than Kuala Nerang, and Tunku took Violet with him to Kuah, the district headquarters. There was no jetty there, although small coastal motor boats from Penang and Kuala Kedah called daily. Government

funds had not been provided for this or other improvements and Mohamed Shariff made sure that no applications for a financial supplement to the District Officer's slender vote was entertained when Tunku wrote to ask for it. But Tunku's genius for winning cooperation from members of the public of all communities led to the construction of a new jetty and, later, to the opening of several earth roads using money and material which he had collected. Tunku also gathered together the old legends which still haunted Langkawi, and pieced together the tragic story of the beautiful Mahsuri, who had been unjustly sentenced to a cruel death, and who had cursed the islands as she died. He caused a search to be made for her grave, and when it was found, totally neglected, Tunku collected donations to meet the cost of providing a white marble covering and an inscribed headstone. New life returned to Langkawi, and Tunku declared that the period of Mahsuri's curse had expired. S.W. Jones M.C.S., who was acting British Adviser, Kedah, visited Langkawi and was so impressed by the initiative shown by Tunku that he persuaded the Council of State to agree to the transfer of Tunku, on promotion, to be District Officer Sungei Patani, the second most important district in the State.

Langkawi had been a kind of Shangrila for Violet. She had adapted herself to its isolation, and to an inexhaustible programme of picnics. But Sungei Patani was a busy, cosmopolitan town, the centre of a large district, in which Tunku's every moment was occupied. Violet was no longer happy and Tunku had little time to spare to search for a remedy. Early in 1937, she sailed for England and resumed the management of her restaurant in London. When Tunku went to London in 1939 he met Violet again and they decided on an amicable divorce. Violet later married an American who had gone to England with the United States armed forces and who held the post of Judge Advocate.



14





Group photo in front of Setia Kesukaan Club, Alor Star.

Tunku Kassim, President of the Club, is seated centre, with a Football Shield beside him. Tunku Yaacob is seated on Tunku Kassim's right. Violet Coulson, wife of Tunku Abdul Rahman, is seated on Tunku Yaacob's right. Tunku Abdul Rahman, in a white suit with neck tie, is seated to the right of his wife. Tunku Badlishah, wearing a songkok, is seated on Tunku Kassim's left.

The photo was taken late in 1934, when Tunku Abdul Rahman was District Officer Langkawi. He was still President of the Kedah Football Association. The Setia Kesukaan Club was the only Malay Club in Alor Star: it was located on the road leading to Penang, about a mile from the town centre.

Group photo in the Coronation Cinema, Kulim, when Tunku organised and staged a play about Mahsuri, after his return from Langkawi. Tunku wearing songkok, left of centre.

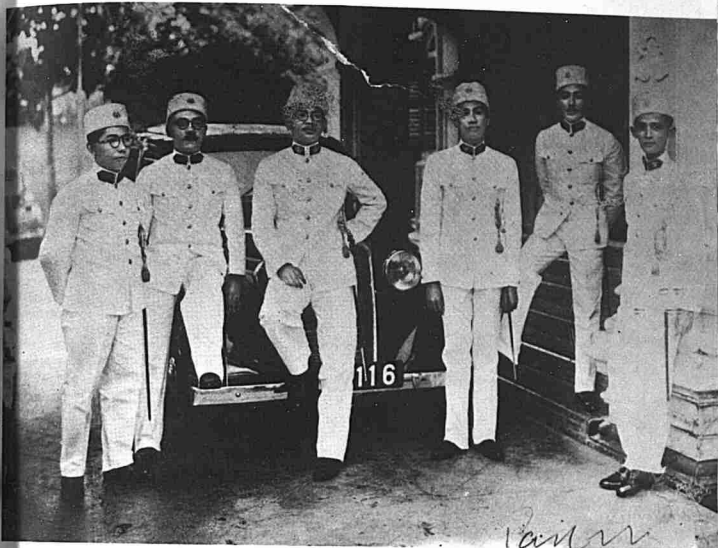
Tunku soon became the most popular District Officer Sungei Patani had ever known. His house was open to visitors with problems, day and night, at any hour, and he was constantly on the move. The town had only a small timber mosque. Tunku opened a fund to meet the cost of building a much larger brick structure, and stood in the river, with other volunteers, helping to cut Bakau wood for piling. Tunku had been transferred before the Mosque was completed, but it was named 'Al-Rahmaniah' after him. Tunku also associated himself closely with the sporting activities of the district, and he revived an inter-state tournament between Kedah and Perak, which he had initiated when he was in Kuala Nerang. Raja Muda Abdul Aziz captained the Perak team; Tunku led Kedah. The teams met in Sungei Patani over a long weekend. The tournament included tennis, football, badminton and golf. Tunku's team won by a narrow margin.

As District Officer Tunku received instruction from the State Secretariat to implement official decisions. Sometimes Tunku disagreed with the instructions and wrote to the Secretary to the Government expressing his views, although, as he anticipated, they were ignored. After some time he was summoned to Alor Star and after a stormy interview, which was attended by Mohamed Shariff and the substantive British Adviser, J.D. Hall, Tunku was threatened with disciplinary action if he continued to oppose decisions taken by the state government. The warning only served to stiffen Tunku's freedom of thought, and a crisis was reached when all district officers were ordered to enforce a new and arbitrary scheme, introduced by the Kedah Commissioner of Police, which required all taxi drivers to surrender their individual licences and to become members of a transport company. Tunku received complaints from taxi drivers in Sungei Patani, who protested that they would lose their regular source of livelihood if they fol-



Sultan Abdul Hamid with Tunku Abdul Rahman (Right) and Tunku Mohd. Jawa (left) in Civil Service uniform in Alor Star in 1931.

lowed the new instructions. Tunku addressed a gathering of taxi drivers in front of the Sungei Patani Rest House and advised them to continue to operate their taxis, and to reject the new scheme. When some of the taxi drivers were brought to the Magistrate's Court, where Tunku was on the bench, he cautioned and discharged them, in spite of a vigorous protest from the Officer-in-Charge of the Police District. The Commissioner



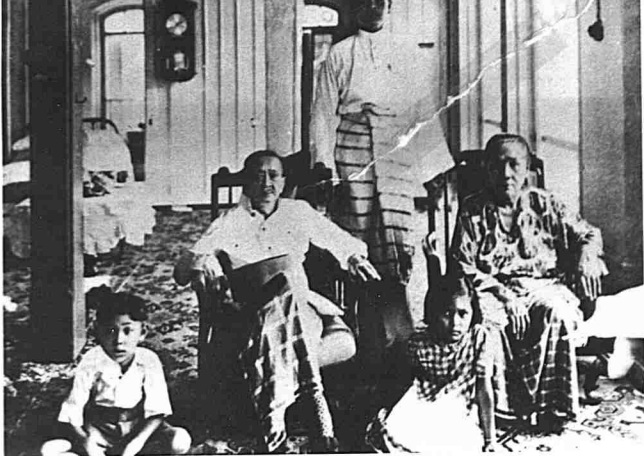
Tunku Abdul Rahman (while still a Cadet in the Kedah Civil Service) standing centre in the porch of his house in Alor Star in 1931.

Left to right: Syed Sheh Barakbah Mohd.

Akib, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Azmi, Syed Omar Shahabudin, Syed Hussein-
all in Kedah Civil Service uniform.



Sharifah Roziah, after her marriage to Tunku



Group photo taken in Alor Star showing Sultan Abdul Hamid, Cik Menjalara seated. Tunku standing. Tunku Ahmad Nering and Tunku Khadijah Tunku's children seated on the floor about 1939.

of Police Kedah then called on the Secretary to the Government and Tunku received an order to proceed on transfer to Kulim as District Officer, at twenty-four hours notice. The next morning a convoy of about forty taxis escorted Tunku to Kulim, a distance of about forty miles. In Kulim, Tunku's predecessor had already enforced the government order and there was nothing Tunku could do to help. The people of Sungei Patani never forgot Tunku and his memorable term as District Officer, and when the first Federal Elections were held in 1955, Tunku chose Kuala Muda as his constituency and the voters gave him a landslide victory.

Tunku had been happy in Sungei Patani, but now, although he had many friends in Kulim, he felt that he was in disgrace and that the hostility of the Secretary to the Government would prejudice any prospect of future advancement. He

decided to apply for long leave in order to return to London and to sit once more for the Bar Examination. He planned to leave the Civil Service and to enter private practice as soon as he had obtained a Law Degree. He now had a new incentive, and in the first year in London, in 1939, he succeeded in passing the Part One Examination. But in Europe, Hitler invaded Poland and Britain declared war on Germany. Tunku was recalled to Malaya and was ordered to resume duty as District Officer Kulim, where he remained for the next three years.

His mother renewed her appeals to him to marry, and with her blessing he chose a diminutive beauty, named Sharifa Roziah, the daughter of Syed Alwi Barakbar of Alor Star. Tunku was warmly welcomed on his return to Kulim. His friends included Malays, Chinese, European Rubber Planters and Air Force personnel who were stationed at Butterworth. The

war in Europe was remote, and few Malaysians believed that it would spread to the Far East. But Civil Defence schemes were prepared in Singapore and were sent to Kedah for implementation by district officers. They were given a very low order of priority locally. Tunku was appointed Deputy Director of Air Raid Precautions for South Kedah and was issued with a dark green uniform and a steel helmet. An air raid on Kulim seemed a fantasy to others, but Tunku, guided by his instinct, alone among the district officers in Kedah, recognised the need to prepare for the evacuation of civilians in the event of invasion, and in the middle of 1941 he gave orders for the construction of six "Long Houses", made of round timber and atap thatch, on a low hill about two miles from the town. Funds for this work had been refused by the State Secretariat, and Tunku therefore invited donations from local town dwellers, who would benefit if evacuation became necessary. Japanese intelligence agents, posing as photographers and hair dressers, had been a feature of every sizeable town in the peninsula for the past three years. In Kedah they moved about freely on second hand bicycles and sent their photos and sketch maps to the Japanese Consuls in Siam and Singapore, for onward transmission to Tokyo. Their accurate record of jungle tracks, roads and bridges were of considerable value to the invading forces.

By October 1941 British troops had prepared defensive positions in North Kedah, and air fields at Sungei Patani and Butterworth were alive with fighters and bombers. Kedah was evidently expected to be a front-line area. The war, it seemed, would be a duel between Titans, Britain and Japan, but the people of Kedah could not expect to escape unscathed. In kampongs and coffee shops a Malay proverb passed from mouth to mouth: *Gajah sama gajah berjuang, pelanduk mati ditengah-tengah* - when elephants battle, if a mousedeer strays in between, it will be killed.



Part of a group photo of the Civil Defence Force, South Kedah, in front of the District Office, Kulim, in 1940. Tunku is seated in the centre.

Abduction of the Sultan: Fruitless Search in Singapore: Revenge of a Japanese General: Education Department without Books: A Personal Welfare Service for Refugees from the Death Railway 1941 - 1945

At half past seven on the morning of 8th December, 1941 Tunku received a telephone call in his house in Kulim. It was from a friend in Sungei Patani.

"The Jap planes have just attacked Sungei Patani airfield. We can see a lot of black smoke, but no British planes have gone up to retaliate. They seem to have been taken by surprise."

The attack was the first incident in the Japanese invasion of Kedah, and was quickly followed by the advance of General Yamashita's army which had landed unopposed on beaches near Songkhla the previous night. A second assault force came ashore, unopposed, on the coast of Patani, and advanced towards Betong and Kroh. A third but smaller force landed close to Kota Bharu in Kelantan, in spite of vigorous opposition.

Though not yet aware of the extent of the Japanese attack, Tunku went to his office and ordered a general alert for his air wardens. A little later that morning he met the leading shop keepers and advised

them to prepare to evacuate their families to the 'Long Houses'. Apart from these precautions, life in Kulim followed its usual pattern.

But in Alor Star, only about ten miles south of the British Defence headquarters at Jitra, work came to a standstill. Shops and offices closed, and town dwellers hurried to nearby kampongs. The Regent, the British Adviser, a Senior Army Officer, the Commissioner of Police and a few very senior Malay officials met in the Balai Besar. Their discussions were top secret.

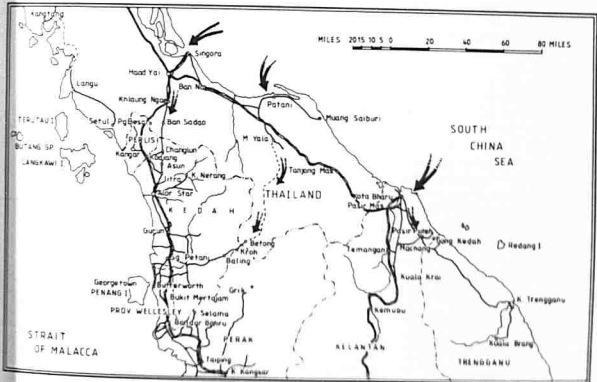
Tunku kept in touch with Alor Star by telephone. His chief contact was his brother-in-law, Syed Omar, who was the State Treasurer. Tunku's eldest surviving brother, Tunku Badlishahi, had succeeded Tunku Mahmud as Regent in 1937 when the latter died. He was now in control, since Sultan Abdul Hamid, although still alive, was a total invalid. Mohamed Shariff was his trusted adviser.

At about 9 o'clock on the night of the

invasion, Syed Omar telephoned Tunku and told him that the Regent, in consultation with the most senior Military, Police and Civil officials had decided to evacuate the seventy-seven year old Sultan to Penang, and thence to Singapore. Three nights earlier Tunku had been given what now seemed to be a sub-conscious warning. In a vivid dream Tunku saw his father sitting in his room in the palace at Anak Bukit: the Sultan called, "Putra, Putra, Help!" he then disappeared. It was only when Tunku received Syed Omar's telephone message that he understood the significance of his dream. Tunku disagreed profoundly with the decision to evacuate the Sultan, and he telephoned the Regent, who was nine years his senior, and urged him to cancel the order. Tunku argued that the Sultan should remain with his people, though not necessarily in Alor Star. His brother replied, curtly, that the decision had been taken and could not be altered.

Frustrated but defiant, Tunku sat down alone in his house in Kulim. How could he prevent his father's removal? A plan began to form in his mind, and half an hour later he telephoned Syed Omar and asked to be informed as soon as the time of the Sultan's departure from Alor Star was known. He then got into his car and drove rapidly to a little village called Sidim, twenty miles inland. On arrival, he told the Penghulu to prepare to receive the Sultan the very next day. On his return to Kulim, he contacted his friend Syed Abu Bakar Al Idrus, a District Health Inspector, and asked him to come to his house immediately. Tunku then explained what he intended to do and asked for his help.

Very early the next morning Syed Omar informed Tunku by telephone that the royal convoy would leave Alor Star at seven o'clock in the morning and that the Sultan's yellow Rolls Royce would be positioned some distance from the



Japan's opening moves in Malaya 1941

head of the column. The Regent's car would precede the Rolls Royce. The main road south from Alor Star runs through apparently limitless acres of padi land, before reaching Butterworth and the Penang Ferry. Fifty miles from the capital there is a junction, at a place called Kepala Batas, where a road leads East to Kulim, twelve miles away. Tunku drove to the road junction, soon after seven o'clock in the morning and parked his car fifty yards along the road to Kulim. Syed Abu Bakar was with him. There was an empty hut at the road junction. Tunku and Syed Abu Bakar stood just inside the hut, so that they could watch the main road without attracting the attention of any passing military or police. They wore Air Raid Precaution uniforms and steel helmets. Before long, two police jeeps drove past: they were the head of the convoy. What Tunku did not know was that the British Army Commander in Sungai Patani had stopped the convoy just long enough to direct that all vehicles should be spaced out at two minute intervals. This, he hoped, would avoid attracting the attention of Japanese war planes, armed with machine guns, which were already patrolling the sky over North Kedah. Without his providential intervention Tunku's plan might not have succeeded.

Tunku waited. There was an unexpected interval before the appearance of the next car, containing senior civil servants. The Regent followed two minutes later. His car had just disappeared down the road to Butterworth when the Rolls Royce came into view. Tunku walked quickly to the centre of the road, held up his right hand like a traffic constable, and stopped the yellow car. Opening the door nearest the Sultan, Tunku removed his helmet, made himself known to his father, and told him and Tunku Yahaya, a younger half-brother, who was acting as A.D.C. to the Sultan, that there had been a sudden change of plan and that the Sultan was to come to Kulim. The Sultan nodded approval. Tunku

told the driver to follow him, he then ran to his car and told Syed Abu Bakar to drive ahead to Kulim, while he accompanied his father in the Rolls Royce. Just as the yellow car turned left into the road leading to Kulim, the next vehicle in the extended column appeared in the distance, but drove straight on to Penang.

When the rest of the convoy, including the Regent and his family, reached Butterworth ferry, they discovered that the Sultan was not with them. Japanese planes were not far away and it was decided to proceed at once to Penang and then to try to discover the ruler's whereabouts.

Tunku took his father to his house and made him comfortable in a large arm chair. The Sultan had visited him in Kulim before, accompanied by Tunku's mother, and he felt quite at ease. Tunku then confessed that he had abducted his father so that he could remain with his people. Tunku said that he believed that this would be the Sultan's own wish. The Sultan nodded again. Sultan Abdul Hamid was dressed in a coat and trousers, a shirt and neck tie. Tunku then led the Sultan to a spare room, helped him to take off his coat and tie and asked him to lie down and rest.

Soon afterwards, the Regent telephoned from Penang to the Kulim Police Station and was told that the Sultan was in Tunku's house. The Regent then telephoned Tunku and ordered him to bring the Sultan to Penang immediately.





The house of the Penghulu of Sidim in which Sultan Abdul Hamid stayed.

Tunku replied quietly but firmly. "I will not do so. And if you try to remove His Highness it will only be done over my dead body." There was a short interval of silence, the Regent then continued. He was very angry and his voice rose much above the quiet tone in which he normally spoke. "Putra. You have committed the worst of all crimes. You are a traitor to our Ruler. As Regent I have no choice: I sentence you to death and I shall order that you be shot at four o'clock this afternoon. Wait in your office. Our order will be carried out then and there." The telephone line was then disconnected.

It was midday. Tunku said nothing of the conversation with the Regent to his father or his wife. His wife served lunch and immediately after the meal Tunku asked his father's permission to take him to Sidim. As before, the Sultan did not speak, but he nodded his head in agreement. The Sultan and Tunku Yahaya re-entered the Rolls Royce, Tunku and Syed Abu Bakar led the way in Tunku's car along the narrow road. Penghulu Manap of Sidim had assembled all the

young men of the neighbourhood and they were waiting outside his house when the two cars drove up. All the men carried spears, *keris* or long *parangs*, one or two had brought single barrelled shot-guns. Tunku left the driver's seat of his car and walked quickly across to where the elderly Penghulu was standing. With a quiet "Follow me", Tunku led the Penghulu to the door of the Sultan's car, opened it, raised his hands in a *sembah* and said, "Your Highness, this is Penghulu Manap of Sidim. I beg Your Highness graciously to enter his house and to remain here for a day or two, until the danger of an attack by the Japanese army has passed." Tunku then helped his father to step down from the car and to enter the house, where a bed, screened by a curtain had been prepared. The single-storeyed house was made of timber, and was raised three feet from the ground on wooden pillars. Tunku then told the villagers that the Japanese army had invaded Kedah and had occupied Alor Star. He thanked them for their willingness to help and asked them to protect the Sultan, if necessary, with their lives. Tunku then returned to Kulim. He took the Rolls Royce with him, but left Tunku Yahaya at Sidim to keep his father company.

Tunku returned to his house. As soon as he stepped down from his car, his friend, Syed Abu Bakar, met him, "The Police have been ordered by the Regent to shoot you at four o'clock in your office. The news has spread through the town and a crowd of your friends has surrounded the office and have made it known that they will allow you to go in, but no one else." Tunku shook his head slowly: "Does my wife know?" Syed Abu Bakar looked down and said quietly "I can not be sure." "Stay with her." Tunku then drove to his office.

Tunku was greeted by a crowd of Malays each of who pressed forward, took his hand and kissed it and withdrew. He stood on the steps leading to his office and spoke to the crowd briefly: "Thank



Portrait of Sultan Abdul Hamid.



Capt. Raja Aman Shah M.C.S., Tunku's brother-in-law.



Ramdan Din, who drove Tunku to Singapore and back in 1942.

you for coming here today. I am no traitor. I have helped our Sultan to remain here with his people. He is safer in Sidim than he would be in the British colony of Penang. Let us be patient: God's will be done."

Tunku went into his office and sat down, alone. It was then half past three. He lit a cigarette. At a quarter to four the telephone on his desk rang. The Regent spoke again. But this time his voice had changed. It was the voice of a very frightened man. "Putra. The Japanese are bombing Penang. As soon as the air raid has ceased I shall come to Kulim. I shall telephone, now, to the Police Officers and cancel my previous order. I and my family will require accommodation somewhere in Kulim tonight." Tunku replied, without any emotion, in the classical words of a courtier, "Your Highness order will be obeyed." He then replaced the telephone.

The Japanese had perpetrated indiscriminate bombing of civilians in Penang; it was repeated with greater destruction and loss of life the following day. Later that evening the Regent and his family arrived, visibly shaken, and were given accommodation in Tunku's house. The next morning - 10th December - Tunku took them all to Sidim, where they were given accommodation in other small houses.

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Group photo in Kulim with Japanese army Commander, Major Tomiaka, and Tunku, when he was still District Officer, Kulim 1942. Encik Mohd. Isa, A.D.O. Kulim is on the Officer's left.





They were all in Sidim when the second and more severe bombing of Penang town took place on 11th December. Hundreds of civilians were killed, proving how wise Tunku's kidnapping operation had been.

When Tunku returned to Kulim later that morning the situation had changed. The Police had taken off their uniforms and were no longer on duty. Tunku's first concern was to prevent looting, and he formed a Riot Squad with this as its priority task. The Kedah Volunteer Force had been disbanded but Tunku called all members in Kulim to come to his assistance. Their leader was a man named Ramdan Din, who in civil life was in the Telecommunications Department. These men formed a vigilante corps and Tunku arranged for them to patrol the town at night. This was necessary because although the Japanese army was still some distance away to the North, many of the town dwellers, Chinese in particular, had moved out to the evacuation camp which Tunku had prepared, leaving their shops locked but unprotected. When night fell Kulim was in total darkness. Before the British withdrew to Penang, they had destroyed the electric power station. In the course of his tour of the town, Tunku discovered that the stock of rice in the shops was very low. He had a small reserve of petrol in his store and, with characteristic foresight, decided to use part of it to send a lorry the next morning to the Government Rice Mill at Bagan Serai in Perak, to bring back a full load.

To add to Tunku's responsibilities officials in the State Secretariat, including the Secretary to the Government, had withdrawn from Alor Star just before the Japanese army entered the town, and they came to Kulim to seek temporary accommodation. Fierce fighting took place between the British and the Japanese, but by 16th December, the Japanese army had occupied the West coast of Kedah including all the main towns. The Japanese Military Governor of Kedah on assuming office

had been told that the Sultan was in Kulim, and he appointed another of Tunku's brothers, Tunku Mohamed Jawa, to be the temporary Regent until the Sultan returned to Alor Star.

The officer in charge of the Japanese intelligence Service (the *Fujiwara Kikan*) was the first Japanese officer to arrive in Kulim. His name was Lt. Nakamiai. On his arrival on about 14th December, he enquired from Tunku as to the Sultan's place of retreat and began to make arrangements for the Sultan's return to Alor Star. Tunku took Lt. Nakamiai to Sidim the next day and the situation was explained to the Sultan. Lt. Nakamiai remarked that the journey back to Alor Star would be very uncomfortable. Every bridge had been destroyed by the British, during their withdrawal, and only very temporary repairs had been possible.

Nevertheless, on 17th December, the Sultan, the Regent and his family and senior officers of the State Government set off for Alor Star with a military escort. The drive along roads which had been shelled and bombed, and over bridges which were still wrecked, continued for eleven hours, and the old Sultan was completely exhausted when he eventually arrived at his palace at Anak Bukit.

The Japanese captured Singapore on 15th February, 1942. Allied Prisoners of War were confined in Camps; locally enlisted members of the armed forces were segregated, but not released. On the mainland relatives waited anxiously for news of their survival. Among these unhappy wives was Tunku Baharom, Tunku's full sister, whose husband, Captain Raja Aman Shah, a cousin of the Sultan of Perak, had taken part in the defence of the island. He had held the post of District Officer Port Dickson, and Tunku Baharom and her children had remained in Negeri Sembilan when her husband was given permission very early in December, to be mobilised and to proceed on active service, as a Company Commander in the Negeri Sembilan Battalion

of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. Tunku Baharom and her three children moved inland to Jelebu when the Japanese entered Seremban, the State capital, and as soon as communications were possible she asked Raja Shahar Shah, Aman Shah's younger brother, to go to Tunku in Kedah and to ask Tunku to try to rescue her husband.

There were several good reasons why Tunku should have declined to become involved. He was District officer of a large district under a new and unpredictable master. He had no petrol, and there was no other way to travel except by private car. A journey of at least five hundred miles, through lawless country, controlled by irresponsible local military officers could only be undertaken at great personal risk, which Aman Shah's brother had shown no wish to share, and there were known to be at least 50,000 Prisoners of War on Singapore island. To locate one man from among so many would be extremely difficult. But, as his sister knew, Tunku never considered his personal safety or convenience if others needed his help. Two days later he drove to Alor Star, asked for and obtained permission from the Japanese Military Administration to proceed on short leave, and was given documents allowing him to travel to Singapore and back, and to carry a revolver. Tunku enlisted the help of Lt. Ramdan Din of the Kedah Volunteer Force, who agreed to be his co-driver and who knew a source of black-market petrol. They reached Singapore on the fourth evening, after many delays at check-points, and drove to the *Fujiwara Kikan* headquarters in Malcolm Road. While they waited to see a senior officer, Tunku met a Japanese named Ohta, who had been a barber in Alor Star, but who was now, openly, a member of the Japanese Security Service. He offered Tunku and Ramdan Din a room in his house. Tunku also met Ibrahim Yaacob, an ex-school teacher from Pahang, now in the close confidence of Col. Fujiwara. He



View of Sultan Abdul Hamid College, Alor Star, used by the Japanese as their military headquarters 1942-1945. Photo Dato Ahmad Nordin Zain

wore a Japanese military uniform with an arm band bearing the capital letter F. Tunku asked if he had seen Raja Aman Shah or if he knew of his whereabouts, to which Ibrahim retorted, "Why did your brother-in-law fight for the British? I know nothing about him." The next day Tunku drove to Changi prison and to a large allied prisoner-of-war camp not far away - but there was no such name as Raja Aman Shah on the records in either place. They appeared to have exhausted all sources of information; they had also exhausted their supply of petrol. Even his Japanese barber friend, Ohta, could not help. But once again Tunku's wide range of friends came to his rescue. Lt. Col. G. Q. Jilani, whom he had known in Sungai Patani, as commander of an Indian regiment before the Japanese invasion, was now Officer-in-Charge of the embryo Indian National Army in Singapore. Tunku went to see him, and although the Colonel had no reserve supply, he emptied the

tanks of some of his military vehicles and provided Tunku with enough petrol to take him back to Kedah. Tunku Baharom was still in Jelebu, and Tunku drove there, told her of his fruitless quest, packed her and her children into the back of the Chevrolet, and set off for Kulim.

The search had been a failure, but Tunku was never willing to admit defeat. His younger sister's distress and his own deep sympathy drove him to make a second attempt. He asked his two brothers-in-law, Syed Omar and Syed Sheh Shahabudin, to go with him. Ramdan Din again volunteered his service as co-driver, and Tunku was provided with fresh documents. Another source of hidden petrol was tapped and they set off early in March. On this visit Tunku decided to concentrate on the centres of Malay population on Singapore Island. There he met Malay members of the rank and file of the Straits Settlement Volunteer Force, who had served side by side with Volunteers from

the F.M.S. during the Japanese invasion of the island. He learnt that all the locally enlisted Prisoners of War had been segregated at Farrer Park and that Malay officers in the Malay Regiment and the Volunteer Forces had been confined in the Club House. Privates and N.C.Os had been released on the morning of 28th February, but no one knew what had become of the officers. Tunku drove to Farrer Park, but the whole area was deserted. He made a final visit to Fujiwara's office, where he was told that there was no trace in their records of the name of Raja Aman Shah - a blatant lie, which was only refuted four years later, after the Japanese surrender.

Dejected and defeated they drove back across the Johore Causeway and were stopped at the military checkpoint. All the occupants of the car got out: Tunku had been sitting in front, beside the driver, his brothers-in-law behind. A young Japanese officer walked over to the car



Japanese assembling Malays from the Kampongs to go to work in Siam.
Drawing by Othman Hj. Zainuddin

and put his hand through the open front window and into the inside pocket of the front passenger seat. Tunku had placed his revolver there, so that it was available in case of emergency. The officer quickly withdrew the pistol and aimed it at Tunku's head, at point blank range. Syed Omar, who was standing just behind Tunku, leapt forward and thrust himself between Tunku and the Japanese. Tunku, apparently unperturbed, produced a Japanese document from his pocket authorising him to carry the pistol and the crisis passed. But Tunku and his companions were taken into a military enquiry centre and it was long after dark before they were allowed to proceed. The Japanese confiscated Tunku's pistol.

After the war, further enquiries proved that all the Malay Officers, who had been at Farrer Park including Raja Aman Shah, had been shot in cold blood by the Japanese at Bedok, on the night of 28th February, 1942, shortly before Tunku's second visit.

Tunku remained in Kulim as District Officer for another year, a reluctant servant of the Japanese Military Administration. In Alor Star Mohammed Shariff demonstrated once again his talent for survival and was recalled to his former post. The old Sultan lived in the Istana Anak Bukit with the Regent. Much of his time was spent in the company of his religious teachers.

(Friction between Tunku and the Japanese officials was inevitable and frequent. When Tunku heard that the bungalows of several European Rubber Planters had been looted, he ordered his volunteers to collect all the looted articles and bring them to his house. There they were carefully listed and then sent in a light lorry to the appropriate Japanese official in Alor Star. The next day Tunku was told to come to Alor Star, but instead of receiving congratulations on his devotion to duty, the Japanese Custodian of Enemy Property accused Tunku of stealing nine knives which appeared in the list but which could not be found when the lorry arrived in Alor Star. Tunku had never before been called a thief, and it required exceptional self-control to resist the temptation to tell the Japanese that only a fool would make such an accusation. Later in 1942, the first Japanese Governor of Kedah was replaced by a more autocratic individual named General Okagawa. Tunku had received him on his first visit, but during a later tour of South Kedah he still expected the District officer to await his arrival. Tunku thought differently and went to play golf.

Early in 1943 a senior Japanese official in Alor Star sent orders to Tunku to have all the trees on a rubber estate felled and to have the land planted with cotton, using forced labour. Tunku informed the official that cotton would not grow on the soil, and furthermore he refused to force people in his district to work without pay on a project which could not possibly succeed. Tunku's blunt refusal brought speedy and vicious retribution. He was ordered to vacate his post as District Officer at twenty four hours notice and to proceed to Alor Star. This had happened once before in Tunku's civil service career, but this time there was no escort of grateful taxi-drivers. Although there was plenty of public sympathy it could not be demonstrated. The order to proceed to Alor Star was signed by the Governor. The penalties for opposition to the Japanese

were multiple. The Transfer Order instructed Tunku to report for duty at the State Audit office, but gave him no appointment. He was not allotted any government quarters, although his own house in Alor Star had been requisitioned by the military, and at such short notice he could only find temporary accommodation for himself and his wife in a very small house occupied by a friend. It was at this time that Tunku lost many of his treasured records, including his only photograph of Meriam Chong, which he was never able to replace.

For more than a month Tunku endured this acute discomfort and humiliation. Then a high-level administrative decision, which had been taken some time previously, was implemented and the Japanese transferred responsibility for the Civil administration of Kedah to the Siamese. Tunku was still well known and well liked in Bangkok and care was taken to include among the Siamese officials who were sent to Kedah those who were either Tunku's friends or acquaintances. Among these was his boyhood companion Tavil, who had now risen to the rank of *Luang*, and was a graduate of Harvard University. Soon after the take-over by the Siamese, Tunku was appointed Superintendent of Education. The appointment was a sinecure, but his status was restored together with his house. The Japanese had closed all the English-medium schools, including the Sultan Abdul Hamid College which they converted into their Military headquarters. In Malay medium schools there were no text books and no paper. Tunku decided to fill part of this vacuum by preparing a manual on good manners, which were so conspicuously absent from the conduct of their conquerors. The manual was dictated by Tunku, recorded by Senu Abdul Rahman, cyclostyled and distributed to schools in the State.

In May 1943, while Tunku was still in Kulim, Sultan Abdul Hamid died. A few days before his death the old Sultan spoke

to Tunku in a dream. He said, "Putra, I am ill." Tunku collected all the petrol which he could buy in the black market and drove to Alor Star the next day. The Sultan was able to recognise him, but died a few days later. He was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Tunku's half-brother, Tunku Badlishah.

It was during this period that a new challenge emerged, at first scarcely recognised, which engaged Tunku's compassion, his philanthropy and his organising ability. In 1942 the Japanese transported thousands of young male Malaysians, the majority of them kampong Malays, to work on the construction of a railway from North Siam to Burma. The railway was intended to provide the Japanese with land access to South Burma, where they were fighting a prolonged campaign against the British. The mortality among these Malayan labourers, due to disease and malnutrition was appallingly high. Cholera was common and lethal. At the end of the war, in 1945, it was estimated that at least one hundred thousand Malayan men died during this railway construction project: eighty thousand survivors were repatriated by the British.

Early in 1943, after months of increasing mortality and brutality, the first few Malay labourers, more intrepid and physically strong than others, escaped from construction camps in North Siam and began to make their way, painfully and slowly, southwards. They moved through the Siamese countryside, sometimes finding temporary shelter and employment, but always emaciated and usually diseased. If they were recaptured by the Japanese they were executed. Japanese goods trains moved slowly south, carrying supplies of rice, and some of these refugees climbed into the wagons if they stopped at night, and hid there until they crossed the southern Siamese border. Late in 1943 the first few living skeletons arrived in Alor Star. Their bodies, and in particular their legs, were covered with ulcers which gave



out a repulsive stench. They were clothed in ragged sarongs, often made of sacking, and some wore nothing but a loin cloth. In Alor Star there was an open sided market building where villagers came to sell their fruit and vegetables. It was sometimes known as *Pasar Yaacob* because Tunku Yaacob, elder half brother of Tunku, had founded it before the war on his return from England where he had studied Agriculture. Other people called it *Pasar Babu*. It was a meeting place, and the first refugees found it and begged for food and shelter. Few people could spare food, but the market, though it had no walls, provided better shelter than the slave labourers had been given in their construction camps, and they were reluctant to leave. But men covered with skin disease were unwelcome even for a single night. Market officials applied for help to the State Secretariat, the District Officer and the Medical Department, but no one was willing to take any official notice of the problem.

It was inevitable that those who watched this new phenomenon grow should speak of it to Tunku; he was famous for his sympathy for the distressed.

Tunku visited the market, talked to some of the refugees and called a meeting in his house. Some of his "Young Men", including Mohamed Khir Johari, Senu Abdul Rahman, Syed Agil, Aziz Zain, Mohamed bin Jamil and Wan Ahmad bin Wan Omar, came, and agreed to help. The first priority was a shelter where the refugees could be housed in comparative isolation from the public. Tunku located a vacant space near a house belonging to the Religious Affairs department and commissioned a carpenter to erect a shed

Malay forced labourers in a tent in Siam.
Drawing by Othman Hj. Zainuddin



with long sleeping platforms which would provide shelter for one hundred. Tunku paid for the building and called it "*Rumah Miskin* - Poor Men's House. A regular supply of food was the next priority. Rice was always plentiful in Kedah; vegetables and coconut oil could be purchased cheaply in the market; fish, fresh or dry, was always available but funds were nevertheless needed. Tunku and his Young Men canvassed potential supporters and some money and gifts became available, but from the beginning the major cost of the undertaking was borne by Tunku.

The food was cooked in Tunku's house, under the supervision of Tunku's wife, and conveyed to the refugees by rickshaw. Tunku often visited the centre and in course of time he, his wife and other helpers all contracted the highly contagious skin disease on their hands. Tunku's "*Rumah Miskin*" provided an invaluable 'staging post' where these men could recuperate and then continue their journey homewards, while others took their place. After a week or more in Alor Star men who appeared, on arrival, to be middle-aged, regained some semblance of their lost youth. Most of them had been enslaved when they were only eighteen years old: few of them when they returned looked to be under forty.

Malay labourers at work on the "Death Railway". Drawing by Othman Hj. Zainuddin



Refugees continued to arrive early in 1945, but it became increasingly difficult to obtain donations to support them. Senu Abdul Rahman wrote two plays: *Salah Pedoman*, about a young man who was sent to study overseas but wasted his opportunities, and *Aku Berdosa*, a domestic drama. It was agreed that they would stage these plays and raise funds by the sale of tickets. Tunku appointed himself Producer; his Young Men took all the principal parts and supplied the costumes while others provided musical accompaniment. The pre-war amusement park in Alor Star had been re-opened by the Japanese as a gambling centre and a company of professional actors and actresses performed *Bangsawan*-style entertainment several times a week. Tunku's two plays were staged on nights when there was no

Bangsawan performance. Although they were more serious than was expected they were well received. News of this enterprise reached Perlis, and the entire caste, headed by Tunku, set off by road in a lorry borrowed from the Kedah Public Works Department for a repeat performance. Vehicle maintenance had become almost impossible during the last year of the Japanese occupation, spare parts had ceased to exist, and early on their return journey they were obliged to abandon the lorry and to return to Alor Star by train. It is doubtful whether the "*Rumah Miskin*" benefited financially from this theatrical enterprise: the costs of production consumed nearly all the income, but



it encouraged other sympathisers to continue their support. Only the Secretary to the Government persisted in ignoring the disagreeable reality.

In September 1945 the Centre was still active under Tunku's supervision. One of the first British Civil Affairs Officers to arrive in Alor Star was a Social Welfare Officer named Miss Blake. She had many other problems and responsibilities, but she asked the Secretary to the Government if she could visit the Centre, of which she had heard good reports. The post of Secretary to the Government was still held by Mohamed Shariff, and he took Miss Blake on a surprise visit to the Poor Men's

Home without informing Tunku, and claimed all the credit for himself and his officers. Tunku was therefore never given any official recognition for his great personal initiative and individual generosity.

It may be a measure of the degradation to which these slave labourers were reduced by the brutality of their captors, and by their sufferings, that not one of all the hundreds of refugees who benefited from Tunku's "*Rumah Miskin*" ever wrote to say thank you.



Saberkas Group in Alor Star 1944.
Front row L to R: Haris Johari, Azahari Talb,
Senu Abdul Rahman, Abdul Aziz Zain
Khir Johari.
Back row: Ismail Yusof, Syed Zainal Abidin,
Dato Khalid Abdullah.

Interregnum and Administrative
Paralysis: Parachutes over
Kedah: Communist Occupation
of Alor Star Foiled:
1945



Malay Street in Alor Star

In mid-August 1945 Alor Star was inundated with rumours: many of them sensational, few of them reliable.

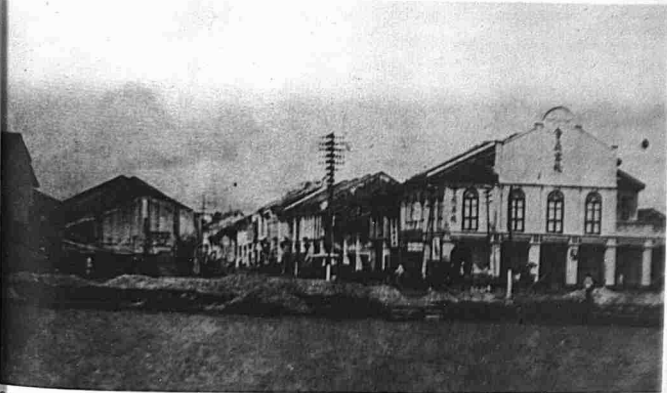
Atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August 1945 respectively. A week later, the Japanese Imperial government in Tokyo agreed to an unconditional surrender. However, Lt. General Itagaki, who commanded the Japanese troops in Malaya, with his headquarters in Singapore, declared that he would fight on, but was persuaded to change his mind.

None of these facts were known to Tunku or to senior Kedah officials, but rumours of the Japanese surrender grew stronger and generated fears that if there was an interregnum, the well armed Communist guerillas would emerge from the jungle and attempt to seize control of the State. If they were successful, they were likely to victimise those whom they accused

of collaborating with the Japanese, notably the police.

The Japanese army commander in Kedah who remained in his headquarters, told Malay leaders who went to consult him that he saw no reason to interfere in the internal affairs of the State. Siamese officials, who had taken over responsibility for the Civil administration of Kedah from the Japanese in 1943, were busy preparing to return to Bangkok, and were equally adamant that the activities of Chinese guerillas were no concern of theirs. A period of psychological paralysis then appeared to descend on the State Secretariat: several of the most senior officers were not to be seen and the Central Police Station was evacuated one night and was left empty.

The crisis was no direct concern of the Superintendent of Education, but to Tunku it was unthinkable that in the State capital,



General View of the old town.

of all places, authority should be rejected by those who shared its burden:- the Japanese, the Siamese and the Malay officials. He assembled some of his trusted friends and called for volunteers to form an unofficial Vigilante Corps to maintain law and order and to reoccupy the police stations. Tunku himself toured the town regularly on a bicycle to monitor the situation. Neither he nor any of his volunteers possessed a firearm.

About six weeks earlier Tunku had received a secret message telling him that two of his nephews, Tunku Yusuf and Tunku Osman had been dropped by parachute near the Siamese border at different dates (Tunku Yusuf on 25th June and Tunku Osman on 2nd July) and were members of a British Resistance organisation known as "Force 136", which had its headquarters in Ceylon. The news was followed by a request to Tunku to send Malay reinforcements. They were to go secretly to Kuala Nerang, where they would be met and taken into the jungle for training. The Malay name of their group was "*Anak Melayu Setia*".

Tunku knew of the activities of the Communist guerillas in the jungle, both in Kedah and elsewhere, but this message from Tunku Yusuf brought him the first definite information about a Malay Resistance force in Kedah. He gave it his immediate support. He sent small groups of young Malays totalling about fifty to Kuala Nerang, telling the authorities that they were going to plant hill rice and tapioca to help remedy the food shortage.

A Resistance Organisation, which would transmit information from enemy-occupied territory had been set up by the British in Europe at the beginning of the Second World War, but owing to the speed of the Japanese advance in December 1941 and January 1942 there was no time to set up "Stay Behind" parties in peninsular Malaya and it was not until May 1943 that the first British Liaison Officer - John Davis - was infiltrated into the country by submarine. Before the fall

of Singapore, leaders of the Communist Party of Malaya had offered to help the British fight the Japanese; their offer was accepted, and some arms were supplied. Soon after the surrender, some hard-core Communists in Singapore escaped across the Straits and set up small guerilla groups in South Johore, their activities later spread to Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Kedah. They called themselves the Malay Peoples Anti-Japanese Army: M.P.A.J.A. A Far Eastern branch of Force 136 was officially established in Ceylon early in 1944, its principal task was to supply these Chinese



Balai Besar, Alor Star. Front view.
Photo Information Services



Khair Johari in Alor Star in 1945.





Force 136. Major Hasler and his Malay Paratroopers in Alor Star October 1945. Standing L to R: Haji Abu Bakar Che' Chik, Haji Hamdi and Ahmad Othman. Seated: Lt. Abdul Hamid bin Abdullah, Rahma Bux, Major Hasler, Tunku Yusoff bin Tunku Kassim and Haji Razak.

guerillas with arms and equipment and to send them British Liaison Officers and Malayan technicians, with the long term purpose of preparing for the reoccupation of Malaya, with the cooperation of the guerillas.

Nothing was known in Ceylon of the existence of any Malay resistance, and it was not until the end of 1944 that a Malay speaking British Liaison Officer, Major Peter Dobree, was dropped by parachute into Upper Perak to explore the possibility of enlisting Malays into the Resistance movement. The response was so encouraging that more Malay speaking Liaison Officers were sent in. One of the first was Major G.A. Hasler, who was sent to Upper Perak to receive a briefing from Dobree, and was then instructed to move across country to Kedah. He was later joined by Major Maze, an officer from the French army, Lt. Tunku Yusuf and Lt. Tunku Osman, and finally by Capt. Burr, who only arrived in Kedah in mid-July.

Until the end of 1944 the only means of infiltration was by submarine. It was a difficult undertaking as the distance from Ceylon to the West Coast of Malaya was 1500 miles. But the arrival of giant American "Liberator" bombers in Ceylon in December 1944 made it possible to air-drop officers technicians and supplies into Malaya in much larger numbers and quantities, both to the Communists and to the Malays.

In July 1945, both Chinese and Malay guerillas were informed by wireless that the British intended to invade Malaya very soon, and they were urged to prepare to disrupt Japanese communications. When the Japanese surrender was announced over the wireless in mid-August plans were hurriedly prepared in Ceylon for the despatch of a British Military Administration. At the same time the top Communist leaders in Malaya, notably the inscrutable Annamese, who was often referred to as "the Plen", and a young Malayan Chinese named Chin Peng, decided to take the opportunity offered by an interregnum to

try to seize control of the civil administration in as many states as possible. They quickly spread propaganda from the jungle, opposing the return of the British and they moved their armed forces nearer to the centres of population.

In Alor Star, members of the Malay public became increasingly worried as news reached them of incidents in outlying villages involving Communist guerillas which included abduction of village headmen. One of these occurred at Alor Janggus, a little town about six miles from the capital. The residents of the town were mostly of Chinese origin, and a few of the younger generation instigated by messages from Communist guerillas on the fringe of the jungle, surrounded the police station after dark, and confined the police personnel and three prominent Malay civilians in the lock-up. As soon as Tunku received news of the incident - about three hours after it occurred - he asked his "Young Men" headed by Mohamed Khir Johari, to set off across country to Alor Janggus and to restore order. They arrived just before dawn and entered the police station. Khir Johari told the leader of the Chinese youths that he had been sent by Tunku Abdul Rahman, who ordered them to free the police and the local civilians, and leave the police station and not to interfere with the lawful government. The young Chinese leader was impressed by the name of Tunku, but he explained that he had received his orders from a guerilla leader at Changloon near the Siamese border, and he would have to consult him before he could withdraw. He would try to telephone to Changloon, but it might take a little time to contact the head of the guerillas. Tunku's emissaries agreed to return in an hour, and walked to the house of the Penghulu. Local morale was quickly restored and while his wife prepared a welcome meal, the Penghulu assembled a group of supporters and an hour later he led them to the police station, on the heels of Tunku's men, and watched while the local

police were freed and resumed control. The Penghulu then provided a boat which took Khir and his companions back to Alor Star, where they made their report to Tunku, weary but elated. They had proved that Tunku's name and influence were being accepted as a substitute for the official government.

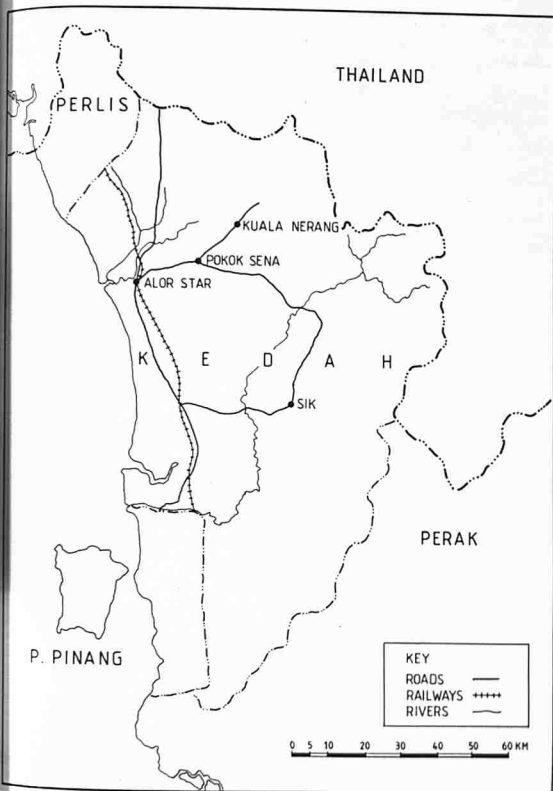
News of the Alor Janggus incident quickly spread through the State capital and that night, a crowd gathered on the open ground in front of the *Balai Besar*, calling for Tunku. When he appeared, the spokesman said that they believed that Communist guerillas were planning to enter Alor Star and to take control of the government. They offered Tunku their services in the defence of the State capital. Tunku told the crowd that he wanted to avoid bloodshed and violence. He asked them to be patient and not to take the law into their own hands. He added that his friend, Col Dara, who was serving with the Indian National Army at Jitra, had offered to bring Indian troops to protect the capital, but he had told the Colonel to remain at his headquarters, and only to come if he asked him to do so. Some of the young men in the crowd were not satisfied; they told Tunku that they wished to arm themselves and to be prepared. If Tunku was afraid to join them, they would act on their own. Tunku replied calmly, "Do not imagine that I am afraid to die, if my efforts to keep the peace fail, I will lead you against our common enemy".

That same night Tunku set off in his Austin Seven car with Khir Johari by his side, and drove to Kuala Nerang, 24 miles away. He had not yet finalised his plan, but he knew that the headquarters of Force 136, and *Anak Melayu Setia* were at Kuala Nerang and he intended to enlist their help. Twelve miles from Alor Star Tunku had to pass through the little town of Pokok Sena, where the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army had established their advance headquarters and a road block. It seemed likely that this would be their



Lt. Tunku Osman bin Tunku Md. Jawa, 2 I/C Force 136, Kedah, supervising the construction of a Bamboo Raft by his Malay guerillas, to transport a Jeep across the River Jeniang, when they were proceeding to Sik, October 1945.
Photo Gen. Tan Sri Tunku Osman

Map showing Alor Star, Kuala Nerang and Pokok Sena and Sik. Muzium Negara.





Japanese soldiers with road block, guarding the approach to Alor Star, August 1945
Drawing by Othman Haji Zainuddin

base if they tried to enter Alor Star. As expected, Tunku was stopped at the road block, but when he identified himself to the young Chinese on guard and said that he was on his way to visit relatives, they made no attempt to delay him further. He was known to some of the guerillas as the man who had helped to save the lives of a number of Chinese from the Japanese military earlier in the occupation.

In Kuala Nerang Tunku drove to the police station and asked to see the O.C.P.D., Abdul Rahman bin Hashim. He was then taken to the Rest House where Major Hasler had moved from the jungle after the news of the Japanese surrender had been transmitted from Ceylon. Hasler welcomed Tunku and introduced his second in command, the French officer, from the Royal Ulster Rifles named Capt. Derek Burr.

Tunku explained the explosive situation in Alor Star. He had discussed the situation with Khir Johari as he travelled the 24 miles from Alor Star and had formed a plan. He now asked Major Hasler if he or one of his assistants would return with him to Alor Star and go the next morning to meet the Japanese army commander. The plan was to try to convince the Japanese that it was still his responsibility to preserve public order until the British returned, and that if he failed to do so, and serious intercommunal strife occurred, the Japanese would be held responsible. Such neglect was likely to be classified as a "War Crime" and the senior officer responsible was liable to be severely punished. The Japanese commander should therefore be asked to send well armed troops to take up defensive positions outside Alor Star to prevent any armed Communist guerillas from approaching the town. Hasler agreed to cooperate, but he told Tunku that he, himself, was in constant communication by wireless with Colombo, and had been ordered to remain at his headquarters. Major Maze, the Frenchman, was ruled out as he might have difficulty in being understood by the Japanese and Hasler would therefore send

Capt. Burr. Tunku had hoped to meet his two nephews, but they were both in the training camp, some distance from the town.

Tunku told Capt. Burr that there was a guerilla road block, about half way to the capital and advised him to drive by another road, when he came down the next morning. Tunku and Khir Johari then returned to Alor Star.

The Japanese commander, with an interpreter, received Capt. Burr in his office. His face was expressionless, and he did not speak. Burr told him that he had received information from Colombo that British troops were on their way to Penang by sea and would be arriving very soon. He then described the situation in Alor Star, and the imminence of a Communist entry which would be fiercely resisted by Kedah Malays. If this occurred, and heavy casualties were inevitable, the Japanese army commander would be held responsible. Burr continued, almost word for word, as Tunku had briefed him. He then asked the Japanese officer to send armed men in uniform to block the main roads leading into the town, in particular the road from Pokok Sena, and prevent any armed Communist guerillas from advancing, and to continue to maintain road blocks until the arrival of the British.

The Colonel stood up and marched stiffly out of the room followed by the interpreter; neither had spoken a word to Burr.

Japanese soldiers, whether officers or other ranks, were not noted for their love of silence. A few minutes later orders shouted fortissimo, echoed through the college buildings. Half an hour later the interpreter came back into the room and asked Burr to go to the front porch. There he watched three military lorries drive off each with a section of armed soldiers and a wooden barrier fitted with barbed wire. Burr's car then reappeared and he drove to Tunku's house to describe the outcome of his visit.

Tunku's plan was completely successful.

When a reconnaissance party of Communist guerillas drove along the road from Pokok Sena at dusk, intending to find out how far they could proceed without opposition, they were dismayed to find that the approach to Alor Star was blocked by well armed Japanese soldiers. Reconnaissance along two other roads encountered similar obstacles. They withdrew and made no further attempt to enter the capital as an organised body.

In every other district in Kedah, Communist guerillas wearing Three Star badges in their caps and calling themselves "The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army", occupied district offices and police stations and organised public rallies at which they announced that Kedah had become a Communist republican state.

There was no armed resistance from the public.

The situation would have been very different in Alor Star. As soon as it was known that the Communists had been turned back and had not returned, Tunku was showered with expressions of admiration and gratitude from members of the public, which his modesty brushed aside. The episode and the way in which Alor Star was saved from blood shed, reflected so unfavourably on the State government at its highest level that no official recognition of Tunku's inspired initiative was ever proposed. But there can be no doubt that, without his fearless leadership, Alor Star would have seen one of the worst catastrophes in the whole of the Japanese occupation.



MPA.JA. troops marching before they
were disbanded in October 1945



The Sultan Surrenders to MacMichael: Return to the Inner Temple: Hart the "Slave Driver": Silver Jubilee Success 1946 - 1948

The surrender of the Japanese was broadcast over the British Radio from Delhi on about 17th August and two days later the news became common knowledge in Alor Star. In spite of this the town people lived in a state of uncertainty for another fortnight. It was true that the threat of a Communist take over of the town had been removed, thanks to the courageous initiative of Tunku, - that much was known and believed by everyone - but although government offices were open again few senior or junior staff were to be seen, and there was still no sign of the rank and file of the police in the Central Police Station. A few Chinese guerillas were visible, dressed in khaki uniform, but without arms, strolling in the Chinese portion of the town. Both Malays and Chinese avoided provocative talk or action.

Tunku continued to tour the town on his bicycle and to inspire respect and a measure of confidence in the hearts of the public. His 'volunteers' continued to provide a skeleton staff at the Central Police



Sir Harold MacMichael, December 1945.

Public demonstration against
Malayan Union, 1946.
Photo Muzium Negara

Station, and patrolled the town centre after dark. In this hazardous task they were led by Khir Johari, Senu Abdul Rahman, Syed Agil, Mohamed bin Jamil and several of Tunku's other 'young men'. Very few people outside Alor Star knew how the town had been saved from a blood bath, and Tunku was the last person to publicise his personal role in that operation.

Hari Raya Puasa fell on 9th September that year. An unofficial amnesty was observed and some of the tensions of the past two months were relaxed. The British forces had arrived in Singapore, but were not yet available to enter Kedah. Lt. Abdul Hamid and the majority of the rank and file of the Malay guerillas were granted leave and were reunited with their relatives. Tunku Osman had not seen his parents for ten years.

As soon as the short holiday ended, Major Hasler was instructed by wireless

to assume, temporarily, the post of acting Senior Civil Affairs Officer, Kedah, with the rank of Lt. Colonel, and to move into Alor Star. Hasler had never had any official administrative experience, and he received the news of his appointment with dismay. Nevertheless he sent a message to the Secretary to the Government, reporting the instructions which he had received and arranged to move to Alor Star with his officers and the majority of his men, numbering about one hundred. Hasler also sent word to Tunku and arranged to meet him on the outskirts of the town and to drive to the *Balai Besar* together.

When Hasler arrived, the Sultan was not present, but the Secretary to the Government and senior government officials waited upstairs. Tunku led Lt. Col. Hasler, Major Maze, Lt. Tunku Osman and Lt. Tunku Yusuf up the curved staircase and presented them to Haji Mohamed Shariff.



Some of Tunku's stalwarts, headed by Khir Johari, waited down below. After the formalities, the Secretary to the Government invited Lt. Col. Hasler, in his capacity as British Senior Civil Affairs Officer, to a private room, where they conferred for about five minutes. Hasler and his companions then left the *Balai Besar*.

Tunku had invited Hasler and Maze to lunch at the house of his brother-in-law, Syed Omar, but he noticed, as they drove along, that Hasler's manner had changed. He was silent and seemed almost hostile. When they had entered Syed Omar's house, and were having cold drinks before lunch, Hasler turned to Tunku and said, "What is this I hear about your Secret Police? Mohamed Shariff told me that you have taken control of the Central Police Station." Tunku laughed. "Did he tell you where the regular police have been for the past month? They have been in hiding. And so was Haji Shariff and many other officials." Hasler frowned and said, "After lunch I will go and see for myself." Tunku asked Syed Agil, who was also at Syed Omar's lunch party, to telephone to the Central Police Station and to tell his unarmed volunteers, who were still on duty, to disperse. When Hasler drove there after lunch, the building was empty.

Hasler, his officers and the majority of his men were allotted houses in a road then known as "Jalan Jail", later renamed "Jalan Day" and now called "Jalan Tunku Bahayah." Their principal task was the custody of "enemy property." Hasler remained in Alor Star as officer commanding the *Anak Melayu Setia* until the last week in October, but he handed over the post of Senior Civil Affairs Officer to Lt. Col. G.W. Somerville, a former Forest officer, at the end of September.

At about the same time that Hasler and his men moved into Alor Star, members of the Malayan People Anti Japanese Army were allotted accommodation in government buildings at Bukit Pinang, a little further from the centre of the town. Both the

Malays and the Chinese remained in their government accommodation until 4th December, 1945 when about 120 Malays and about 400 Chinese guerillas took part in a farewell parade on the open ground in front of the *Balai Besar*. Tunku was present: Lt. Tunku Osman was the senior officer commanding the *Anak Melayu Setia* and the salute was taken by Brigadier H. C. Willan, the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Malaya.

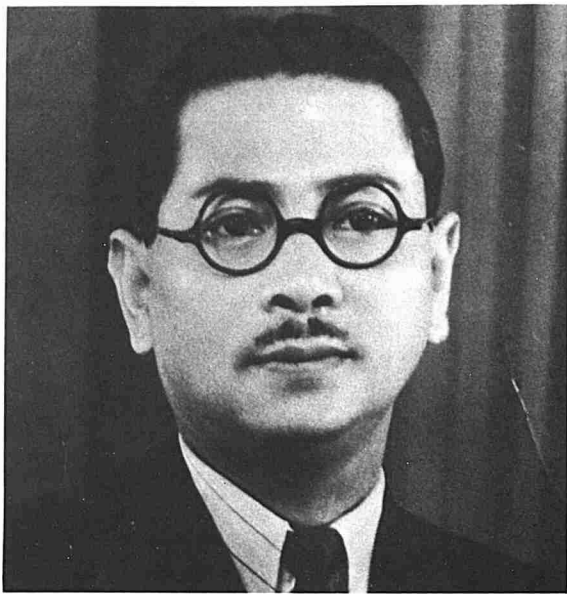
While this chapter in the chronicle of Malayan guerillas drew to its conclusion, other more momentous events were taking place in Alor Star and in every other royal capital in the peninsular.

The "Three Star" guerillas were not the only people in Malaya who planned to take control of the country when the Japanese surrendered. Groups of young Malays in Alor Star and in other towns and states, disillusioned by the dramatic defeat of the British, and encouraged by reports from Indonesia, talked of Independence and discussed how it might be attained. Malay societies were formed all over the peninsular with similar objectives, but with no coordination. In Kedah a body called "Saberkas" was the most active. The name was an acronym for '*Syarikat Bekerjasama Kebajikan Am Saiburi*', meaning the People's Cooperative Company of Kedah. *Saiburi* was the name given to Kedah by the Siamese. Tunku's principal allies were all members of the society and he attended some of their discussions. But Tunku was already forty years old, many of the members were only twenty or even younger and they grew impatient and hostile when Tunku cautioned them against trying to obtain Independence by force. After a time Tunku resigned from active membership and continued only as their patron.

On 10th October, 1945, when the British Military Administration had established only a tenuous control over the peninsular, and the commanders of the Communist guerilla forces had accepted temporary amalgamation with British



Malayan Union Rally in Alor Star, 1946.
Johari speaking; Tunku seated on his
Capt. Gammans M.P. seated on Tunku's
ht.



Tunku Abdul Rahman in London early in 1947 while preparing for his final Law examinations.

military units prior to disbandment, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. George Hall, issued his Policy Statement on a 'Malayan Union'. In Kedah both the principal Malay organisations held protest meetings and rallies. Tunku spoke forcefully at these, but he recommended opposition by peaceful means. He was nominated to be president of the '*Persatuan Melayu Kedah*', but, on the day of the election he was in Penang, addressing a different kind of rally, to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, and in his absence another candidate was chosen.

Sir Harold MacMichael, representing the British Labour Government, arrived in Kuala Lumpur on 11th October and came to Alor Star after visiting the Sultans of Johore, Selangor, Pahang and Perak and securing their signatures to a new treaty. The previous treaty between Kedah and the British, signed in 1926, prohibited any new transfer of sovereignty without the written consent of the Sultan in Council. When MacMichael came to Kedah he was told that the Ruler would consult his Council of State before holding discussions with him. While these consultations proceeded, rallies and processions in opposition to the treaty were held in every district and in the centre of Alor Star. Tunku was one of the most popular speakers in Alor Star, Sungei Patani and Kulim, but he was not invited to take part in any of the discussions convened by his half-brother, Sultan Badlishah. After three days of negotiations the Sultan followed the example of his brothers rulers, 'because there was no alternative.' Nevertheless, before he signed the treaty at 4.30 pm on 2nd December he declared that "it was the most distressing and painful moment in his life." The Sultan's surrender was vigorously criticised by the public and by Tunku, but MacMichael flew back to London, his mission completed, and the British Prime Minister announced that the Malayan Union would come into effect on 1st April, 1946.

Tunku was despondent. A British officer named W.H.W. Little, who had held the post before the War, was appointed Superintendent of Education, Kedah. The State Government did not give Tunku any new post, and he remained a passenger in the Education office. In spite of his immense popularity and his esteemed status as a Malay leader, he held no office in any Malay organisation at a time when far sighted planning and balanced opinions were of vital importance. Tunku applied for eighteen months study leave and arranged to return to England to resume his law studies at the Inns of Court. He told his wife and children that if he succeeded in the Bar Final he would enter private practice: if not, he would never return.

Tunku disembarked in Liverpool on 27th December, 1946 and travelled by train to London. He rented a small ground floor flat belonging to Burns Hotel, in Barkston Gardens, Earls Court, and remained there for the next eighteen months. His room had a bed in one corner, a dressing table, a dining table, four upright chairs and a long sofa. There was a gas fire to warm the room, and Tunku arranged to rent a cooking stove, so that he might cook Malayan food for himself and his friends. England was still suffering from severe postwar shortage of food, clothing and petrol. These could only be purchased if Coupons and cash were available. But Coupons were never sufficient and Tunku received food parcels regularly from his wife and friends in Malaya.

Tunku's London room quickly became a magnet for Malayan students. The Malay Society of Great Britain, which Tunku had founded before the War, had been revived. Mohamed Suffian bin Hashim, a young M.C.S. Officer, was Secretary and Tunku was promptly elected President, with Abdul Razak from Pahang as Vice President. Other students who came to London in 1947 were Tunku Abdul Aziz, later Sultan of Selangor, Tunku Munawir, later



Yang Di Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, and Taib Andak from Johore. Tunku also met and made friends with a Queens Scholar named Lim Hong Bee. He had a brilliant intellect, but was an ardent Communist. In their many discussions, Tunku advised Lim to go to China if he wished to experience Communism in practice, but not to try to introduce his political theories into Malaya.

As soon as Tunku had settled into his flat he made enquiries at the Inns of Court for a law coach. He was told that the best coach was a man called Colonel Gerald Hart, who had served in the war and had lost his left arm in action. People said he was a "martinet", others called him a "slave driver", but almost all his students had passed their exams. Hart was able to choose from among those who applied and it was reported that he had rejected many overseas students, but he accepted Tunku. Hart had his room near



Eusoffe Abdoolecader, in his London Lodgings 1947.



Malay Society of Great Britain. Dinner in London in August 1947.
 Standing L to R: Tunku Munawir (N.S); wife of Ungku Aziz: Sir Richard Winsted: Cik Saleha bt. Mohd. Ali: Lord Ogmoe, Tunku Abdul Rahman (President): Lady Winsted: Ungku A. Aziz (M.B. Johore): wife of Tengku Abu Bakar (Johore): Raja Abdul Aziz (Selangor): Za'aba: Capt. B. Preedy: Mr. Richter: Puan Bunny Suffian: Dr. Mohd Said (N.S): J.D. Dorrity.
 Seated in front of Capt. Preedy En. Mohd. Suffian (Honorary Secretary).

the Inns of Court, and his students were required to present themselves there, punctually at nine o'clock in the morning. Hart then allotted each individual specific sections or topics for study, and required them to produce written notes or answers the next day, Tunku knew from past experience that he needed others to read textbooks with him, and to discuss difficult passages. Several of Tunku's friends came to his flat in the evening to help. The most devoted of these was Eusoffe Abdoolcader from Penang, who later obtained first class honours at London University and eventually became a judge. Tunku worked virtuously with Hart five days a week, devoting his weekends to his favourite diversions. He never missed a Saturday afternoon football match at one of the London stadiums during the winter, and in the summer he sometimes attended race meetings. Soon after his return to London he renewed his friendship with David Rees-Williams, formerly of Penang, now Lord Ogmoe, who lived in Croydon. He was then a prominent Member of Parliament in the post-war Labour Government and their friendship proved to be most valuable a few years later.

After a year, Tunku asked Hart if he was ready to sit for the Bar Final, but he was advised to study for another six months. Tunku's weakest subject was Equity. Eusoffe bought the standard textbook by Snell, and read it to Tunku. They sat together on the sofa, opposite the gas fire, with textbooks and notes on their knees. At six o'clock Tunku closed his books, went to wash and then said his evening prayer. After his prayer, Tunku often cooked a simple meal which he shared with Eusoffe.

As the date of the Examination approached Tunku suffered the tensions of most students. However, he possessed a deep faith in God's power to help him, and obtained a measure of relief from his anxieties in his daily prayers. The ordeal of uncertainty continued for another month

after the exams, and then, one morning, Daisy, his housekeeper, came to his room to bring his morning cup of tea. He noticed that she had come earlier than usual, and enquired why. "Tunku", she said, "you have passed all your Law exams, and I wanted to be the first person to tell you". She explained that another law student living in the same building, had gone to the office of a well known newspaper late the previous night, and had seen the results before they were published. He returned with the news but Tunku was already asleep.

Tunku was not listening to her explanation. He was overcome with emotion, and tears trickled down his cheeks. He got out of bed, put on his dressing gown and went immediately to the telephone. He called Abdul Razak and Eusoffe, and by ten o'clock many of his close friends had arrived at his flat to congratulate him. That night, Tunku invited them all, and other Malayan students, to a dinner at Freddie Mills Chinese Restaurant in Tottenham Court Road.

Before he could return to Kedah, Tunku had first to be 'Called' to the English Bar. This ceremony required his presence at a formal dinner in the Great Hall of the Inner Temple, seated below full length portraits of distinguished judges.

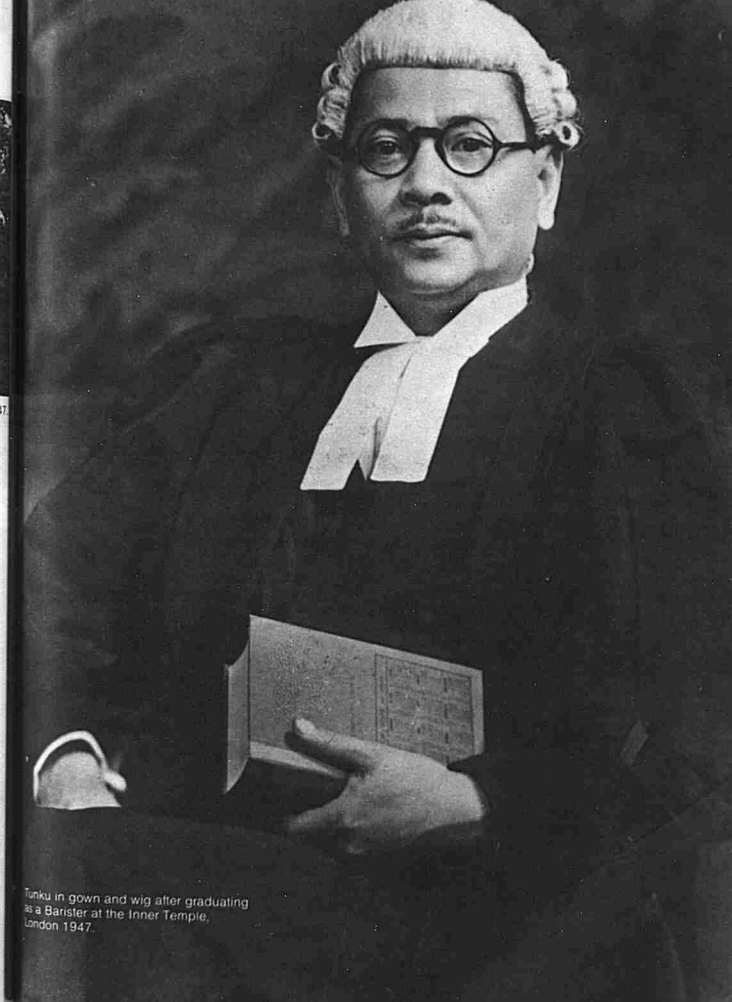
'Call night' was observed about two months after the examination results were published. The Treasurer of the Inner Temple presided; Benchers and members of the Inn and those barristers who belonged to the Inn and were able to attend, did so. They wore dinner jackets, black bow ties and long gowns. The dinner menu, of traditional British dishes, was consumed by candlelight.

On 'call night' a speech was made from the Bench, and the student who had obtained a gold medal replied. But in 1947, no gold medal had been awarded to a member of the Inner Temple and the privilege of replying was given to the oldest student. There was no doubt who



Tunku at the home of Lord Ogmore, in Croydon, London, July 1947
Seated L To R: Tunku Abdul Rahman, Master Rees-Williams, Lady Ogmore, Lord Ogmore
Standing: Eusoffe Abdoolkader, Eusoffe's brother-in-law.

qualified for this task, and Tunku was informed, a few days in advance, that he was invited to reply. Neil Lawson, a former gold medallist and a friend of Tunku helped him to prepare his speech and lent him the gown which he wore that night. Tunku had often made after-dinner speeches in England, though in less awe-inspiring surroundings, and he rose, genial and relaxed. He thanked his hosts for the privilege extended to an overseas student in this stronghold of British tradition. "It is possible", he remarked, "that some of you have overlooked the fact that I am not only the oldest of those who are to be called tonight, but the student who has devoted the longest period to the study of English law before achieving success. Tonight I am celebrating my Silver Jubilee as a law student." The next day, those who had been 'Called' were required to sign a declaration, undertaking to observe the honoured rules of legal conduct. Tunku was then free to leave for home.



Tunku in gown and wig after graduating
as a Barister at the Inner Temple,
London 1947.

No Post in Kedah: D.P.P. in Kuala Lumpur. A Diffident Entry into Politics: President of UMNO 1949 - 1951

Tunku sailed in the P. & O. Corfu in January 1949 and was met by his wife, children and friends in Penang. A few days later he called on the Secretary to the Government and informed him that he was now a qualified advocate and solicitor. Haji Mohamed Shariff, still entrenched as the head of the Kedah Civil Service, gave no indication that Tunku's success was welcome, but informed him briefly that he could only offer him a place in the Kedah Legal Service. Tunku was eligible for a much higher appointment in the State Civil Service, but the only appeal from Haji Mohd. Shariff's decision was to the Sultan and Tunku harboured no illusion as to his reply.

The State Legal Adviser was a European and Tunku was instructed to report to him for duty. Tunku's work was routine and he spent his days reading case files. As a minor compensation Tunku was invited to accept the chairmanship of the Kedah branch of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the premier Malay

political party, which had been formed by Dato Onn bin Jaafar and had expanded, almost beyond recognition, while Tunku was away in England. Tunku accepted the invitation gladly, but before long the Attorney General, Foster-Sutton, visited Kedah, called on the Secretary to the Government and then met Tunku in his dingy office. He asked Tunku if he would like to take up a new appointment in Kuala Lumpur. There was a vacancy for a Deputy Public Prosecutor at his headquarters, and he would like to fill it with a Malay. Tunku was more than willing to exchange an unidentified position in the Kedah Legal Service for a new type of work in Kuala Lumpur. The Secretary to the Government welcomed the departure of Tunku from the State, and the transfer was approved with immediate effect. Tunku's departure was an example of the skill with which the Secretary to the Government disposed of any possible rival. He had secured the key post in the Civil administration more than twenty years before, and had retained it in

spite of four major changes of external authority. He had filled many appointments in the State with his relatives, and so long as the ultimate source of patronage lay with the Ruler, Haji Mohamed Shariff had no misgivings. But the Sultan's surrender to MacMichael in December 1945 had generated a new source of power, insignificant at first, but a source which he feared that he would be unable to control or resist. From the ashes of the Malayan Union, a Constitutional Proposal Conference had led to a Federation Agreement,

and with it the creation of a new senior appointment of *Menteri Besar*, as the chief executive in each State. In Kedah, Malay organisations, headed by *Saberkas*, demanded that they should be consulted before this new appointment was filled, and the name of Tunku Abdul Rahman, while he was



Mohd Shariff, Chief Minister
of Kedah, 1948. Photo Muzium Negara



S. Foster-Sutton. Former Chief Justice of Malaya. Photo taken after his retirement.

away in London, and his elder half brother Tunku Yaacob, had been spoken of as desirable candidates. In December 1947 Haji Mohamed Shariff had advised the Sultan to refuse to consider any such proposal, and to retain the post of Secretary to the Government in Kedah, but he could not be sure how long he could continue to stifle these demands. Haji Mohamed Shariff was reputed to have an agent in every government department in Kedah, and he kept himself informed of the activities of Malay students in England. He knew of Tunku's success in the Bar examination long before Tunku returned, and he recognised the news as a danger signal and made preparations to meet the menace. Foster Sutton's visit to Alor Star was not fortuitous.

Tunku was allotted an office in the Federal Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur, together with other Deputy Public Prosecutors. He moved into one of a row of hurriedly constructed single storey timber government quarters in Kia Peng Road. His house stood at the end of the row, near the junction with Circular Road (Jalan Tun Razak). The work was totally unfamiliar to Tunku and he spent almost every night studying case files and preparing to appear in Court the next morning. His genius for making friends once again came to his rescue. When he was in London in 1927 he met another Malayan law student named Teh Hun Yum. They became firm friends. Teh passed his final law examination long before Tunku, and then obtained a degree in Medicine at Edinburgh University. But on his return to Malaya Teh decided to practice law. In his leisure time he came to Tunku's house at night and helped him to prepare the cases.

Tunku's work received a favourable report and he was transferred, on promotion, to the post of President of the Selangor Sessions Court.

Tunku had lost contact with most of his friends in *Saberkas*, but political groups had proliferated, each seeking popular support

for their demands for Independence. Forty Malay associations from all over Malaya had brought UMNO into existence on 1st March, 1946 at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in Kuala Lumpur. Their motto and slogan was "Hidup Melayu". But in June 1948 Communist terrorists launched an armed rebellion from jungle bases, and the need for racial harmony and for non-communal politics became evident. This led Dato Onn to propose to an UMNO General Assembly in May 1949 that UMNO should create Associate Membership and admit non-Malays of proven loyalty. His proposal was only reluctantly accepted, but when he asked another UMNO Assembly at a later date to agree on a form of Malayan Nationality, he only secured tentative acceptance by resigning from the Presidency of UMNO. The assembly, unprepared for these shock tactics voted Onn back into office and accepted, reluctantly, his innovation. In the months that followed, Onn prepared new proposals to offer full membership in UMNO to certain categories of non-Malays, and to change the name of the party to United Malayan National Organisation.

The next General Assembly was to be held in Kuala Lumpur in August 1951. Onn made it known that if his proposals were not accepted at this meeting he would resign, irrevocably, and would form a new political party. Early in August, Malay leaders discussed the crisis. They were adamant that they would not accept the new changes and they recognised that they must find a successor to Onn.

Onn had set a phenomenally high standard of leadership, ability and oratory. He had no heir apparent and no rival. Other members of the Central Executive Committee compared notes and admitted that some of them measured up to the national creed. His Deputy, Dato Abdul Razak, was too young; Dato Hamzah Abdullah of Selangor, the Treasurer, was too old; Capt. Hussein Onn the head of the youth section was certain to follow his father. It was at

this point that the name of Tunku Abdul Rahman of Kedah was put forward by Kedah Malays. At that time his qualities and ability as a leader were almost unknown outside Kedah, except to members of the Malay Society of Great Britain, few of whom were involved in politics.

Tunku had shown no ambition to be a full-time politician, and when his friends came to his house in Kia Peng Road and suggested to him, informally, that he should accept nomination, he was diffident. Abdul Razak, his close friend in London, and now State Secretary of Pahang, came to Kuala Lumpur and asked Tunku to agree, but Tunku replied that Razak himself was much better qualified to be nominated. Tunku knew that Razak had practiced making political speeches, standing in front of a long mirror, while he was still a law student in London. Tunku had never made a political speech in his life. But Razak was only 29 and he convinced Tunku that he was much too young to gain the support of the Malay masses in general, and of the existing UMNO members in particular. Razak's appeal was reinforced by that of Sheikh Ahmad, the UMNO leader from Perlis and by two brothers from Johore, Sulaiman, a lawyer and Dr. Ismail, sons of the former State Treasurer, Dato Abdul Rahman bin Mohd. Yassin and the leader of the "palace revolution".

Reluctantly and with considerable misgivings, Tunku accepted nomination and prepared his maiden speech in case he was elected. His message must, he knew, attract UMNO members all over the country if he was to retain their support after Onn's resignation. It was long before the age of television, before the worsening of the Emergency which led to the supply of Radio receivers to rural areas, and Tunku relied on the Malay Press. His friend Melan Abdullah, Editor of *Utusan Melayu*, promised him full coverage and helped in the preparation of his maiden speech.

The Assembly met on 26th August, 1951 on the roof garden of the Hotel Majestic



Sultan Badlishah. Tunku's elder half-brother:
born in 1894. Photo Muzium Negara

which was at that time the most modern hotel in Kuala Lumpur. It stood almost opposite the Railway Station an hotel where all the Malay Rulers had assembled on 1st April, 1946, ready to attend the installation of Sir Edward Gent as Governor of the Malayan Union. At the eleventh hour, Onn had persuaded them not to attend, and now he was ready to abandon UMNO and to form a new non-communal party. The atmosphere on the roof garden was tense. Malay dress was *de-rigueur*, but the style varied. Onn wore the collarless *baju* with a single stud at the neck, favoured in Johore. Tunku, a white silk *baju*, with a high collar and five gold studs down the front. Onn sat at a long table at one end of the hall, flanked by members of his executive committee. Delegates representing different State branches sat in groups: seventy five were eligible to vote.

Onn made his farewell speech inviting his audience to join him and his new party, which would be composed of all communities, and to build a United Malayan nation. He was eloquent, aggressive and confident: he spoke for forty-five minutes and reminded his hearers that his resigna-

tion from UMNO was irrevocable. Nominations were then called for. Three candidates had been nominated for the post of President. Tunku's name was the first to be proposed. His principal rival was C.M. Yusof from Perak. Voting was by show of hands. Tunku received fifty-seven votes, his nearest rival, eleven.

Tunku walked slowly to the main table. Onn vacated the President's chair and moved to another seat. Tunku, smiled at Onn, not in triumph but as a gesture of goodwill: Only a flicker of response crossed Onn's gaunt face. They did not shake hands. Tunku sat while the Master of Ceremonies invited the new President to address them. The speech which Tunku delivered was in sharp contrast to that of his predecessor. He spoke humbly, recognising the great services of Dato Onn

Dato Onn with Sultan Badiashah (on his right) and Tunku Yaacob, (on his left) in front of the Balai Besar, Alor Star, after an UMNO Meeting, 1948.



to the party and the country and his own inexperience. He asked God to guide and help him to undertake his new responsibilities. "The Malays", he said, "were never united under one leader until Dato Onn formed UMNO. Now the task of preserving this unity has been passed to me." Tunku, however, criticised Onn's call to form a pan-Malayan party. "Who are these Malaysians that Dato Onn speaks of?" Tunku asked. "This is a Malay country. The Malays will decide who should be included in the term Malayan. The Malays will welcome people of other races who give their undivided loyalty to our country." Tunku then demanded that Independence should be granted to Malaya as soon as possible. If Indonesia and the Philippines with their multiplicity of racial groups, can be granted Independence, why should Malaya remain under Colonial rule?

The speech made a most favourable impression on his audience, on all, that is, except Onn's inner circle. They remained nominal supporters of UMNO but only for the purpose of sabotaging Tunku's assumption of responsibility. Tunku's speech and news of his election was given prominence in the three Malay language newspaper, and Tunku continued to receive the fullest backing from the *Utusan Melayu*, which had the largest circulation. The paper laid emphasis on the fact that Tunku was the son and brother of a Sultan of Kedah.

There was no other business on the agenda and Dato Onn closed the Assembly with the enigmatic remark, "UMNO came from the palace and now it returns to the palace".

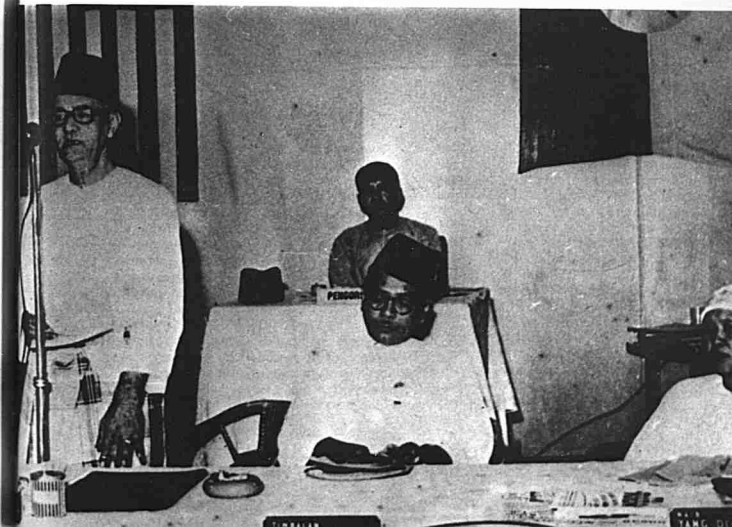
Tunku and his friends went to his house in Kia Peng Road. There was none of the

euphoria which followed his success in the final law exam: Dr. Ismail advised Tunku to study the art of public speaking; Sheikh Ahmad of Perlis urged him to read the world news and to become more familiar with current affairs both local and overseas. "And you had better stop drinking alcohol", he added. Tunku's eyes twinkled with amusement. "If you had told me that this morning, Pa' Sheikh, I would have declined nomination." Then in a more serious vein Tunku continued, "People must accept me as I am: my bad habits and my virtues. At the age of forty-eight I cannot change them".

Two views of No. 41 Kia Peng Road, Kuala Lumpur. Tunku's government quarters in Kuala Lumpur 1948-1951.



Tunku, seated centre, at the UMNO General Assembly, on the Roof Garden of the Hotel Majestic, Kuala Lumpur, on 25th August, 1951, after he had been elected President. Dato Onn is on Tunku's right, and is making the closing speech. Ibu Zain, head of the Women's division, is seated on Tunku's left. *Photo National Archives*



Revitalising UMNO: Birth of the Alliance: Merdeka Mission “On a Shoe-string”. Alliance Boycott: Midnight Compromise on “The Alert”: A Ninety-nine Percent Majority 1951 – 1955

Tunku's experience of the cost of leadership and of his own generous nature should have deterred him from making any hasty decisions, but during the three weeks which had passed since he had been elected President of UMNO he had taken three decisive steps.

He informed Sir Stafford Foster-Sutton, who was now the Chief Justice, that he wished to resign from the government service and to devote his full time to politics. He visited UMNO headquarters in Johore Bahru and quickly realised that the staff and most of the members of the Executive Committee were still loyal to Onn: he therefore closed it. He then set up a new skeleton headquarter in his own house in Telok Ayer Tawar, near Butterworth and appointed a clerk, whose salary he paid himself.

Tunku was still President of the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur, with daily duties to perform, drawing a government salary and living in government quarters. Tunku was still a Kedah Civil Servant,

seconded to the Judicial department, and as soon as he resigned from his judicial appointment in Kuala Lumpur he would lose both his salary and his quarters.

Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner, was informed of Tunku's decision. He realised how important it was for UMNO to continue to be in the hands of a responsible and enlightened leader, and that the Party needed the service of this leader as soon as possible. A few days later Tunku received an official letter from the High Commissioner offering him a seat on the Federal Legislative Council, which carried an allowance of five hundred dollars a month. Apart from a modest monthly Ruling House Allowance from Kedah, that was Tunku's only regular income for many months to come.

When Tunku closed UMNO headquarters in Johore Bahru, Party funds ceased to be available to the new President, and access to subscriptions also came to a halt. Tunku sold two of his houses in Penang and set off on a tour of

State Branches, driving himself in his own car. He soon discovered that UMNO members at Branch and District levels had not yet been influenced by Onn's final resignation or his call to them to join his new party. Tunku possessed certain assets which offset Onn's superior talents. In the eyes of the average UMNO member, Tunku was, first and foremost, the brother of the Sultan of Kedah and a member of a royal house. In 1951 this call carried a lot of weight. He possessed charisma which affected even those who were ready to be hostile: he had a great sense of humour and an infectious laugh and he had acquired a wealth of experience as a district officer in Kedah, before the war, which enabled him to understand and sympathise with the problems of the rural population, who made up a large proportion of the UMNO membership. Onn had spoken to his audiences in Malay with polished fluency, at great length and often in an aggressive manner. Tunku had none of Onn's fluency or oratorical talent; he had studied for so many years in England, and more recently had held appointments where English was spoken, that he was not even fluent in Malay. But in the eyes of many kampong Malays even this was not regarded as a serious disadvantage. Oratory had never been a gift possessed by or required of Malay royalty.

Tunku was almost unknown to the Malay public when he was elected President of UMNO, but within two months of his election, he became the champion of a number of Malays in Singapore, who were under sentence of death, and he quickly attracted the respect of Malay men and women all over the peninsula. The affair had its origin in a riot which took place in Singapore, in which 18 persons had died and 157 others were injured. The cause of the riot was a decision by a British judge to send to a Convent, a Dutch girl named 'Maria Hertog', who had been adopted and brought up in

Trengganu by a Malay woman, while a case for the custody of the girl was being heard. Six Malays and one Indian Muslim were sentenced to death. At the time of the sentence, representatives of the Malay community in Singapore had written to UMNO headquarters in Johore Bahru asking the party for assistance, and to support an appeal against the death sentence. But Onn, when he took the matter to his Executive Committee, opposed any intervention, and the matter was closed. At that time Tunku was still in government service in Kuala Lumpur, but he wrote to Onn and urged UMNO to help. His views were ignored. Now that he was President he went to Singapore, met Malay leaders, found out that the appeal was still pending, and arranged for David Marshall, one of the best criminal lawyers in Singapore, to defend the seven men. When the case was heard, not long afterwards, it attracted widespread interest, not only in Singapore but all over the peninsula. And when the Judge commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment, the name of Tunku Abdul Rahman, as the man who was mainly responsible for engaging the talented lawyer, became familiar to thousands who had never heard it before.

While Tunku was making his first tour of State UMNO branches, Gurney, the High Commissioner, was ambushed and murdered by Communist terrorists on his way to Frasers Hill, on 6th October, 1951. It was only about three months after the effective birth of Onn's Independence of Malaya Party. Gurney admired and supported Onn's political experiment, and had appointed him to the key post of Member for Home Affairs. At the time of his resignation from the presidency of UMNO, Onn had predicted that the party would disintegrate within three months. But even before the end of that period it had become clear that although influential Chinese and some prominent Indians and Ceylonese had become mem-



Col. H.S. Lee
Photo Muzium Negara



Dato Yahaya. *NST Photo*

bers of Onn's new party, very few Malays had done so. And even the support of leading Chinese was cautious. Dato Tan Cheng Lock of Malacca, President of the MCA, sat beside Onn on the day of the party's birth, but he adopted a neutral role and later withdrew. It has been suggested that if Gurney had survived he might have helped Onn to attract more influential Malays, and to encourage Chinese leaders to continue their support, but Malcolm MacDonald, the Commissioner General for South East Asia also supported Onn's initiative, without perceptible results.

Tunku held and expressed the view that Malayan communities could not be united within a single political party. He believed that each community needed its own political organisation and its own political leaders, and he was proved to be right. The first trial of strength between Onn's IMP and rival parties took place in January 1952. The government had agreed to hold elections at Municipal and Town Council level, as a first step towards democratic government, and Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the venue for the first experiment. All the existing political parties prepared to enter. UMNO had been formed in 1946, the MCA in 1949, other smaller parties emerged later. The concept of a party which would unite Malayan Chinese may have owed something to the example of UMNO, but the initiative which actually brought it into existence can be attributed to two far sighted men Col. H.S. Lee, the President of the Selangor Mining Association, who conceived the party, and Dato Tan Cheng Lock of Malacca, who had been recognised even before the War as a spokesman for Chinese of Malayan origin and who gave it his full support. Col. H.S. Lee was the chairman of the Selangor Branch of the MCA. He had never supported IMP, and he was now prepared to oppose it. It occurred to him that if the MCA and UMNO formed a political alliance at municipal level, and fielded candidates who had been



Dato Tan Cheng Lock, President of the Malayan Chinese Association.



Ong Yoke Lin one of the founders of the "Alliance" in January 1952.
Photo Dept. of Information.

selected jointly, their chances of success would be greater. He discussed the idea with his deputy, Ong Yoke Lin and together they met and sought the approval of Dato Yahaya, the chairman of UMNO in Kuala Lumpur. They quickly reached agreement. A combined committee consisting of three members each from the MCA and UMNO was formed, under the chairmanship of H.S. Lee and they selected twelve candidates, one for each ward, some Malays, some Chinese and one Indian, and then began a vigorous campaign to enlist support for 'The Alliance.' IMP also selected candidates from the three communities. At the counting of votes on 16th February, 1952, Mr. Malcolm MacDonald was present, and when the results were announced the 'Alliance' had won nine seats, IMP two and an Independent one.

This highly successful experiment was initiated without the knowledge of either Tunku or Tan Cheng Lock. A Press Conference was held in Kuala Lumpur on the night that the 'Alliance' was formed, at which it was made clear that this coalition was solely for the purpose of the municipal election. News of the venture appeared in all the leading newspapers. Tunku was in Province Wellesley, campaigning for stronger support for UMNO when he read the report, and he received a telephone call from an UMNO leader in Kuala Lumpur asking him to come back at once for a discussion. Tunku arrived in Kuala Lumpur with an open mind. On his way to meet UMNO leaders he saw a leading member of IMP and asked for his opinion of the 'Alliance'. 'It will never succeed in practice. It is certain to fail' was the man's reply. Tunku moved on to be confronted by protesting political colleagues, and told them that he supported the alliance and intended to help in the campaign in Kuala Lumpur. He urged them to do so too. Tan Cheng Lock was in a more delicate position. He was a founder member of IMP and also president of the MCA. Many members of the

central committee of the MCA were also members of IMP and they strongly criticised Col. Lee. But Tunku's prompt public support for the Alliance helped Tan Cheng Lock to resist pressure from other MCA leaders. He avoided making any public statement for as long as he could. Eventually he gave the Alliance his belated blessing.

The success which had been achieved in Kuala Lumpur was repeated in other municipal and town council elections, starting in Johore Bahru, where, to the chagrin of Dato Onn, the Alliance won all the seats.

The new British High Commissioner, General Sir Gerald Templer, arrived in Kuala Lumpur just before the first Municipal election. He brought with him a policy statement from London which gave further encouragement to the Alliance. Part of it read, 'It will be your duty to guide the people of Malaya towards the attainment of a United Malayan Nation'. It also called for 'the partnership of all communities'.

General Templer had served in Palestine in the Army in 1936, and brought with him to Malaya vivid memories of the horrors of inter-racial conflict. He was in sympathy with the demand by Malay leaders for independence, but he feared that Malaya might become another Palestine, and he preferred a programme for the introduction of democratic elections by gradual stages. He viewed Onn's efforts to form a non-communal political party with favour, and Tunku's vociferous efforts to revitalise a staunchly communal Malay party with concern. Templer did not yet appreciate Tunku's sterling qualities of sincerity and loyalty. He regarded Tunku's outspoken criticism of the British government for delaying self government as potentially dangerous. He conveyed these views to Oliver Lytleton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Mr. Lytleton had a distinguished career as a soldier in the First World War. In the interval between the two wars he had

been Chairman of the London Tin Corporation and of the Anglo Oriental Company, which owned and managed 44 tin dredges in Malaya – the biggest tin dredging enterprise in the world. He first visited Malaya in 1937 and maintained contact with the country and with his business interests until the fall of Singapore. He was a member of Churchill's War Cabinet from 1942 to 1945, but became a member of the Opposition during the rule of the Labour Party between 1945 and 1951. When the Conservative party regained control in the autumn of 1951 Lyttleton was appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies, and within weeks of his first appointment he flew to Malaya, at the end of November, to examine the Emergency situation at first hand. It was he who decided that the posts of High Commissioner and Director of Operations should be merged as a temporary measure, and should be filled by a General of exceptional qualities. Templer wrote regularly to Lyttleton and it can be assumed that his views and anxieties were carefully considered by the Secretary of State.

The formation of an UMNO-MCA Alliance at Municipal level, and its prompt support by Tunku, gave Templer his first favourable impression of Tunku. In other fields he found Onn more balanced and easier to understand. Tunku followed up the Municipal elections by holding on 3rd February, 1953 a 'Round Table Conference' attended by leaders of the MCA and UMNO, in the Selangor Miners Club, Kuala Lumpur. Those who came were Tan Cheng Lock, H.S. Lee, Leong Yew Koh, Ong Yoke Lin and S.M. Yong. Tunku brought Dr. Ismail, Sardon Jubir, Bahaman Shamsuddin and Syed Nasir, with J.H. Tan as Secretary. Everyone agreed to establish a permanent alliance of UMNO and MCA as a political body with Independence for Malaya as its principal objective. They also discussed the possibility of forming a united front with IMP. Tunku arranged a meeting with Dato Onn. Onn brought H.S. Lee and Dr. Ismail. Onn

brought three lawyers, Yong Shook Lin, Ramani and Thuraisingam, and two Malay civil servants, Raja Ayoub bin Raja Bot, and Zainal Abidin bin Haji Abas. After brief preliminaries, Dato Onn told Tunku that IMP could only work together with Alliance leaders if they disbanded the Alliance and joined IMP. Tunku tried to find some ground for compromise, but Onn was adamant and the meeting ended.

Tunku disagreed fundamentally with Onn's conception of a single political party in which members of all communities combined. He knew that Independence could only be obtained by constitutional means if the main communities proved that they were united, but he also knew by instinct that each community needed its own political party. The challenge which lay before him was how to unite the communal parties. He was convinced that the Alliance was the solution.

Since the Alliance initiative had been rejected by Onn, Tunku accepted the fact that the Alliance must pursue its own campaign for Independence without Onn. At a meeting of the Alliance leaders it was agreed that they should concentrate on demands for democratic elections to the Federal Legislative Council. They drew up proposals which included a request for an elected majority and a firm date not later than the end of 1954 for the first federal elections. Onn, who still held the portfolio of Member for Home Affairs, told the Legislative Council, of which Tunku was a member as the President of UMNO, that the holding of elections should be planned as a gradual process and he questioned whether Tunku's demands represented public opinion or merely the views of a small number of politicians. These remarks were relayed to the Secretary of State and damaged Tunku's image. Onn attacked Tunku and called his initiative 'irresponsible'. Tunku on his part criticised Onn's caution as 'pro-colonial'.

In August, Templer offered Tunku a portfolio in the Government, but Tunku

refused it on the grounds that, at least for the present, the leader of UMNO should not appear to be part of the Government, while working in opposition. Templer accepted Tunku's reason for refusing the offer, but asked him to persuade another UMNO leader to accept a portfolio and to ask Col. H.S. Lee who had previously refused a portfolio to accept it now. At Tunku's request, both Dr. Ismail and Col. H.S. Lee agreed to serve as Members, but they were severely criticised by other Alliance leaders for doing so. They replied that they had only accepted the posts for one year and they were ready to resign at any time if called upon by the Alliance to do so.

Although the subject had been discussed in February, it was not until July 1953 that the government set up a working committee to examine the possibility of holding State and Federal Elections and to make recommendations as to how they should be organised and how far they should move. The delay in setting up this committee was partly due to the extreme reluctance of the Malay Rulers to accept such proposals and their deep rooted fear of what might befall them if Independence was granted. Templer was obliged to obtain the concurrence of the Rulers, and to report their views to the Secretary of State, before he could proceed.

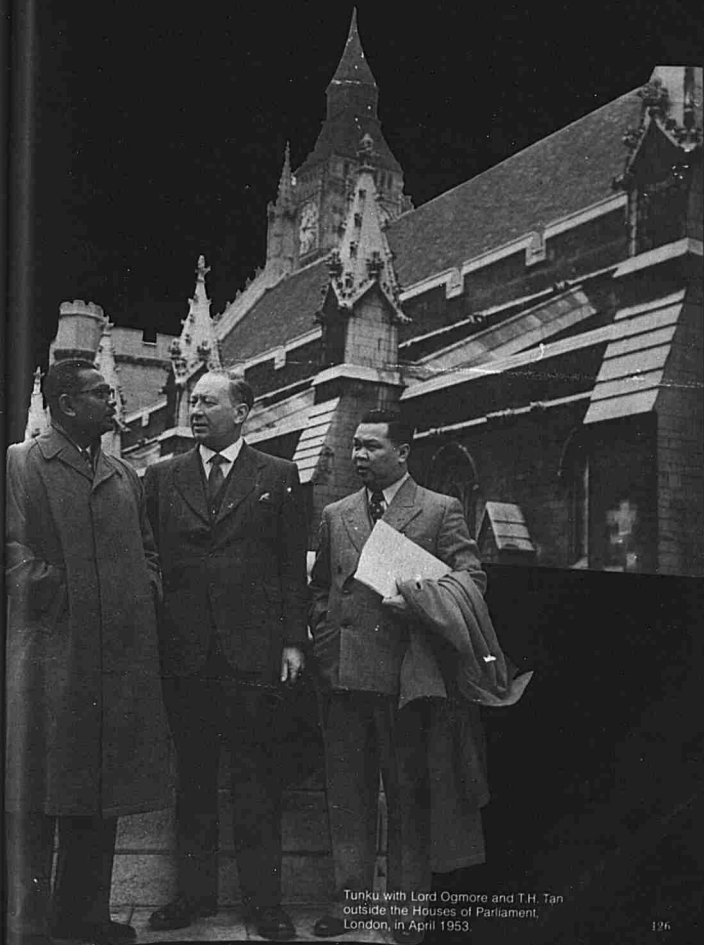
When the names of the members of the Election Committee were announced, Tunku observed that a majority were Onn's supporters, who included Chief Ministers in States and senior civil servants. In spite of the undeniable support for the Alliance in municipal and town elections, only a small number of Alliance sympathisers were included. During the discussions therefore, the members found themselves in two groups. The majority approved certain recommendations, the Alliance minority disagreed and made their own proposals. When the Committee's report was presented to the High Commissioner, it recommended that only

a minority of the seats should be elected – only forty-four out of ninety-two – and no definite proposal was made as to the date on which these federal elections should be held. Tunku's minority group asked that there should be an elected majority. The elected members should amount to three fifths of the total – and they asked for Federal Elections to be held no later than November 1954.

Alliance representatives all over the country attacked the Government's proposals and accompanied their protest with a new rallying cry – 'Merdeka'. By then, recommendations had been forwarded to London, and Tunku, in consultation with other Alliance leaders, decided that they must ask for an interview with the Secretary of State and seek to convince him that the minority recommendations should be given further consideration by him.

Tunku sent a long telegram to the Secretary of State asking him to meet a delegation from the Alliance and to delay approval of the Elections Committee's recommendations until he had heard what they had to say. Onn attacked the sending of the telegram and accused the Alliance of ignoring the Malay Rulers by sending a separate delegation. On 14th April, a reply was received from the Secretary of State. He rejected the request for an interview and stated that he had been fully informed of the views of the Alliance as well as those of the majority.

Emergency meetings of UMNO and MCA leaders were held, at which it was decided that a small delegation from the Alliance should be sent to London immediately and that they should try to meet the Secretary of State. This decision was severely criticised both inside and outside the Alliance and it required great courage and determination for Tunku to proceed. Finance was not the least of his problems. Tunku called another emergency meeting of UMNO in Malacca at which he asked for financial help. A quantity of money and even personal jewellery



Tunku with Lord Ogmore and T.H. Tan
outside the Houses of Parliament,
London, in April 1953.





Tunku campaigning during the First Federal Election, 1955. *Information Services*



was handed to him. It was agreed that Tunku would fly to London accompanied by T.H. Tan, the Secretary General of the Alliance. Dato Tan Cheng Lock could not travel by air and it was proposed that he should follow by sea. Abdul Razak was in America on a travel grant and he would go to London to join the delegation. Tunku and T.H. Tan left Singapore on 21st April.

Before he left, Tunku was aware that Onn had dissolved IMP and had formed a new political party which he called 'Party Negara' - 'National Party'. Onn now abandoned his vision of an all community party and directed his attention to the Malay community, attempting to weaken UMNO. Tunku flew to London conscious

of the doubts of his Alliance partners and of the strong criticism from Government officials, conscious of attempts to subvert some of his UMNO supporters, but conscious above all that he must go forward if the granting of Independence was not to be delayed indefinitely.

London in mid-April 1954 was cold, damp and cheerless. There was not even one press reporter to meet him, in contrast to the crowd which had wished him god-speed in Singapore. Knowing how meagre were their financial resources, Tunku took T.H. Tan with him to Gloucester Road Hotel, in South Kensington, and booked a double room. He then telephoned to his friend of long standing, the former David Rees-Williams. He was now a prominent member of the British Labour Party and had been given a Barony by the Party in 1950 with the title of Lord Ogmore. He had held the appointment of Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies under the Labour government from 1947 to 1950, and although Lytleton was then in the opposition party, Ogmore knew him and other Conservative Members of Parliament.

He was a valuable and influential ally. Tunku and Tan went to call on him the next morning in his chambers near the Inner Temple. Ogmore promised to do everything possible to persuade Oliver Lytleton to receive Tunku and his delegation and said that in the meantime he would arrange for them to meet other Members of Parliament, Labour, Conservative and Liberal. His persuasion proved to be potent. On 24th April, Lytleton replied that he was willing to meet Tunku and his companions. There was however one problem. He had arranged to leave for Uganda on an official visit on the following day and would not return until 10th May.

It was a long time to wait and it would stretch their financial resources to the limit, but Tunku decided to stay on. Meanwhile, with Ogmore's help, Tunku gave a Press Conference at which he ex-

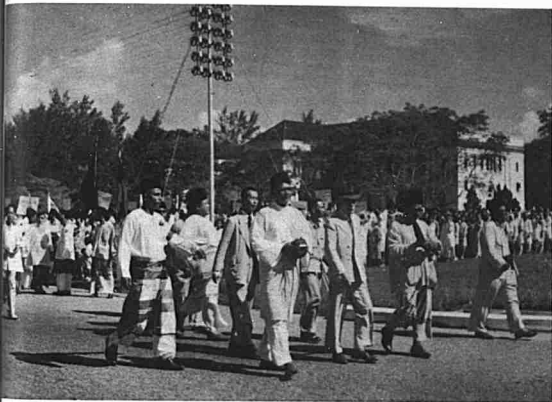


General Sir Gerald Templer, who succeeded Gurney in 1952 as High Commissioner.

plained to an otherwise ill informed British public the extent of the popular support for the Alliance. Meetings with Members of Parliament of all three parties were arranged. Tunku's relaxed manner, the fluency of his spoken English and his genial personality attracted his hearers and provided ample justification for his mission.

Three days after Lytleton left for Uganda the Colonial Office released the contents

16
Tunku and Alliance Leaders call on Sultan Ibrahim of Johore to seek his support 1st July, 1953.
Tunku leads the Alliance delegation on foot. Photo National Archives



of the despatches exchanged between the Secretary of State and the Malayan High Commissioner on the subject of the Election Committee report. Only then did Tunku discover that the Secretary of State had not accepted all the recommendations of the Elections Committee, but had apparently given some consideration to the views of the minority.

There was to be an elected majority, though only six. Fifty two elected members

forty six nominated. But Tunku was not satisfied. He had asked for at least sixty elected members. It was unlikely, he argued, that one party would win all the elected seats. The nominated members, who would all be selected by the High Commissioner, might not give the winning party their support on some controversial issue. A substantial majority of elected members was essential. While Lytton was overseas Tunku prepared his brief and on

14th May Tunku, Dato Abdul Razak and T.H. Tan were ushered into the Secretary of State's room in the Colonial Office. Tunku was the spokesman and explained in detail the Alliance views on the importance of a workable elected majority and on the need for early elections. Lytleton, the elder by ten years, listened and then in a friendly manner advised Tunku to return to Malaya and to give his election proposals a fair trial. Tunku, equally friendly, replied that his mandate from the Alliance was to ask for an elected majority of three fifths, nothing less, but he could extract no concession from the Secretary of State. He then told Lytleton that if the Alliance leaders were forced to resign by the Colonial Office attitude, they would leave the way open for extremists to replace them. It was a warning, not a threat, and Lytleton was obviously impressed. There was nothing more to say.

Tunku had to fly back to Kuala Lumpur on 20th May in order to attend the debate on the Elections Committee proposals in the Legislative Council, and Lytleton promised to send Tunku a written reply before he left London. The letter was delivered to Tunku's hotel on the 19th. It was beautifully phrased, but the contents could be summarised in two words – no change. T.H. Tan cabled the gist of the reply to the Alliance co-chairman, Tan Cheng Lock, and Tunku and he left London for Singapore the next day, leaving Abdul Razak to open an UMNO-MCA Merdeka Freedom Bureau, through which publicity material in support of early independence could be distributed in England.

In Kuala Lumpur, Tunku met members of the UMNO Executive Committee in the morning and the "Alliance Round Table" members the same night. The Alliance leaders accepted the view that



Part of the delegation in the Government Building before meeting the Sultan: Dato Tan Cheng Lock stands in the centre in white suit.

the Mission had achieved a measure of success. Members of the British Parliament and many members of the public in Britain were now aware, for the first time, that the Alliance represented the views of a majority of all communities in Malaya. This could have been achieved in no other way, and probably by no person other than Tunku.

At the Alliance Round Table meeting it was agreed that the request from the Secretary of State to give the election proposals a trial could not be accepted. They then prepared a resolution which was drafted by Col. H.S. Lee, rejecting the Colonial Office proposals and asking for the appointment of a special independent commission, composed of members drawn from outside Malaya, to recommend constitutional reforms which were necessary to prepare the country for Independence. The final paragraph read, "If the authorities insist on implementing the

White Paper on Elections, the Alliance, with great regret, will have no other choice but to withdraw all its members from participation in the government."

Tunku, Dr. Ismail and Leong Yew Koh, the Secretary General of the MCA took a copy of the Resolution to General Templer's office the next day. He may have been expecting something like this, he certainly showed no surprise. Templer read the document without comment and then looked across the desk at Tunku, with a twinkle in his eyes "So, Tunku, the pistol is out!" He made only one request—that the release of the resolution to the Press should be delayed until he had time to cable the contents to the Secretary of State and to pass a copy to the Rulers.

In the privacy of another meeting of the Alliance Round Table, the same night, Tunku brought up a delicate question. The boycott might lead to a wider reaction from the public, and the government



Sultan Ibrahim, in military uniform, stands on the front verandah of the government offices, with Tunku on his left and Tan Cheng Lock, in the rear, on his right, while the Mufti of Johore recites a prayer. The British Adviser, D.A. Somerville, M.C.S. stands on Tunku's right. 1st July, 1954.

might order the arrest of some of the Alliance leaders. With this prospect in view, were they ready to proceed? The answer was prompt and unanimous.

Templer's term of office in Malaya would end in seven days. Tunku knew that if the General had continued to control the affairs of the country there would be no question of any political arrests, but Templer's successor, Mr. Donald Mac Gillivray who was still at the moment his Deputy, was a different type. He had come to Malaya after a distinguished career in the Colonial service, his last appointment had been Colonial Secretary Jamaica. None of his previous posts had prepared him to negotiate with an aristocrat who had the common touch, or a Sultan's son with whom all men counted, but none too much. They were qualities which had eluded MacGillivray and this deficiency made it more difficult for him to understand or work in harmony with Tunku. This lack of compatibility persisted throughout MacGillivray's tenure of office.

Lytleton's reply to the Alliance request for an independent Constitutional Commission arrived ten days after Templer's departure. It was a qualified negative. Lytleton could not decide unilaterally: the proposal should first be discussed with the Malay Rulers. In the meantime preparations for elections, as agreed, would proceed. MacGillivray invited an Alliance delegation to King's House and asked Dr. Ismail and H.S. Lee to continue to fill their portfolios at least until after the Elections Bill was debated in the Legislative Council. He hoped that Alliance members in the Executive & Legislative Council would also continue to serve until the debate had been completed. Tunku agreed to take these requests to a meeting of the Alliance Round Table the same night and to inform him of their decision the next morning. The Alliance was as adamant as before and the boycott went into effect. About one thousand Alliance members at all levels took part. It was a subtle process with results which

were not immediately felt, but which were cumulative. It was widely criticised.

The Secretary of State had called for consultations with the Rulers by the High Commissioner. Tunku decided that the Alliance should take the initiative and present their views first.

On 1st July, Tunku, accompanied by Dato Tan Cheng Lock called on Sultan Ibrahim of Johore and explained to him the Alliance views on the holding of elections, the need for an elected majority and the importance of drafting a new Constitution for the country. The Sultan met them in the massive government office building in Johore Bahru, he also came out on to the terrace where two thousand UMNO members had assembled in support of the proposals. The Sultan had learned the need for caution in constitutional controversies, notably those which involved the Secretary of State, and he gave a genial but non-committal reply, and agreed to bring their views to a meeting of all the Rulers which would be held in two weeks' time.

Attempts to break the deadlock were made by Michael Hogan, the Attorney General and David Gray, the acting Chief Secretary. Both men were friends of Tunku and of many of the Alliance leaders. The Alliance would not accept a slender elected majority of six, but Hogan and Gray suggested that the five other members of the Legislative Council who would be selected by the High Commissioner and would be persons representing Special Interests, offered the basis for a compromise. MacGillivray agreed to this initiative and Hogan and Gray met H.S. Lee in Kuala Lumpur and he kept in touch with Tunku and Dr. Ismail who were in Johore Bahru. The crucial question was whether the High Commissioner would not only 'consult' the leader of the majority party about filling these five seats, but would accept the leader's views. Only the High Commissioner could give this assurance, and he was about to leave on board the British frigate 'Alert' at midnight

2nd July for an official visit to the rulers of Trengganu and Kelantan, in its capacity as the new British High Commissioner. The visit could not be postponed nor could a solution to the mounting inconvenience caused by Alliance non-cooperation be delayed.

Tunku agreed to meet MacGillivray that night on board the 'Alert'. Lee and Dr. Ismail were suspicious and questioned whether the venue had been chosen with some ulterior motive. After a long discussion in Johore Bahru, five men in two cars, Tunku, Lee and Ismail in one, with Hogan and Gray in the other, drove in the darkness across the Causeway to the Naval Base in Singapore, where the 'Alert' was at anchor, and went on board. It was seven p.m. MacGillivray was more relaxed than at their previous meeting in King's House, but he would only give a qualified agreement since he would have to seek the approval of the Secretary of State before he could confirm his undertaking. But he agreed to recommend the Alliance request to Lyttleton. He then sailed, two hours late, up the East Coast. On 6th July, MacGillivray flew from Kuala Trengganu to Kuala Lumpur to sign a letter in which he gave an assurance that he would consult with the leader of the majority party before making appointments to the five nominated seats. The Alliance then called off the boycott.

Elections to State Councils with Alliance participation could now proceed and Tunku and his colleagues travelled tirelessly to prepare for the coming trial of strength. Tunku took Dato Tan Cheng Lock and Col. H.S. Lee with him whenever possible and in particular when touring the northern Malay states, and emphasised the importance of unity among Malaysians of all communities. At each State capital, the Alliance leaders called on the Ruler and assured him of their loyalty and support. The links between UMNO and the MCA grew stronger and on Tunku's initiative, a National Council which became the supreme executive body of the

Alliance, was established. It took the place of the 'Round Table' which had had no executive power and Tunku was formally recognised as 'Leader of the Alliance'.

The first two elections to State Councils took place late in 1954 in Johore, Dato Onn's home state, and in Trengganu. In both states the Alliance won sweeping victories. Party Negara did not capture a single seat. Tunku was now a popular figure in every state and in almost every kampong. He travelled constantly. He had a phenomenal memory for the names of individuals, however humble, and his manner of winning and retaining support of UMNO was in marked contrast to that of his principal rival.

Towards the end of 1954, Tunku was invited by the Director of Operations, General Sir Geoffrey Bourne, to serve on the Federation War Executive Committee. Its membership had been confined to Military and Police officers and senior Civil Servants. Now Tunku, Col. H.S. Lee, Dato Onn, V.M.N. Menon and a European, H.R. Carey, who was Member for Works, were added. It was Tunku's first direct introduction to the conduct of the Emergency and to the tactics of the Communist Terrorists, and it was a valuable experience.

The government had promised to hold elections to the Federal Legislative Council in 1955, and in March of that year it was announced that Nomination Day would be in June, and that 27th July, would be Election Day. Many Malay government officers resigned in order to offer themselves as candidates, among them Dato Abdul Razak, who was then acting Menteri Besar Pahang. As nomination day approached, Tunku was plagued by demands that a high proportion of the candidates should be Malays - some UMNO members wanted the proportion to be as high as ninety per cent. Tunku brought the matter to the next UMNO Assembly and urged the members to adopt what he called "a policy of racial unselfishness". He reminded those present that it was only

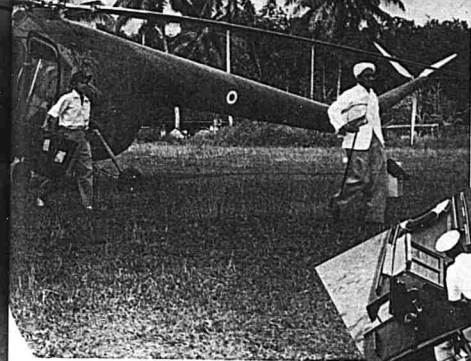
with the support of the MCA that UMNO had obtained Elections in 1955 and it was because of the whole-hearted cooperation of the MCA that the Boycott had succeeded. Now, when the time had come to give fair treatment to UMNO's allies, some members were unwilling to do so. "The validity of the Alliance is at stake", he continued. "If these first federal elections injure our racial harmony, our hope of early independence may be jeopardised." The arguments were compelling and Tunku won a unanimous vote of confidence. Almost at the eleventh hour Tunku's repeated emphasis on the importance of unity during the elections brought him a bonus. The Malayan Indian Congress, which had wavered in its support of Party Negara, now promised to back the Alliance.

Dato Onn, the seasoned politician, used every device to hamper and disrupt the Alliance. He tried to spread distrust of the MCA among UMNO members and among the Malays in general, hoping in the process to attract more Malays to Party Negara. Tunku frequently criticised Onn for these tactics.

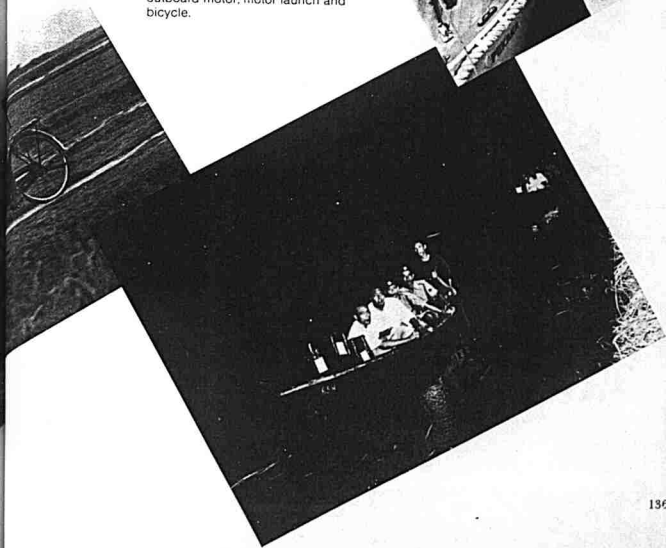
On Nomination Day, the Alliance entered a candidate in every one of the fifty two constituencies. thirty five were Malays, fifteen Chinese, and two Indians. Party Negara entered thirty candidates: twenty nine Malays and one Chinese. Four other political parties entered a total of twenty nine candidates: eighteen others stood as Independents. Two weeks before Nomination Day, Onn announced that he would stand in Johore Bahru, and challenged Tunku to stand against him. It was a tactical error. The Alliance let it be known that the Party would decide where Tunku would stand, and it gave their headquarters an opportunity to select a candidate who could be expected to defeat Onn. They chose Sulaiman bin Dato Abdul Rahman, a popular lawyer in Johore Bahru. Tunku chose Kuala Muda, in Kedah where he had been District Officer before the war. The choice left

him free to travel all over the country, by car, by lorry, by boat, by bicycle and on foot. He seldom slept in the same bed on two consecutive nights, but he was tireless, inspiring and confident. He paid particular attention to those constituencies where the Alliance had put up Chinese candidates in areas where the population was predominantly Malay. Dato Onn also campaigned with feverish energy. He had resigned from the post of Member for Home Affairs in order to



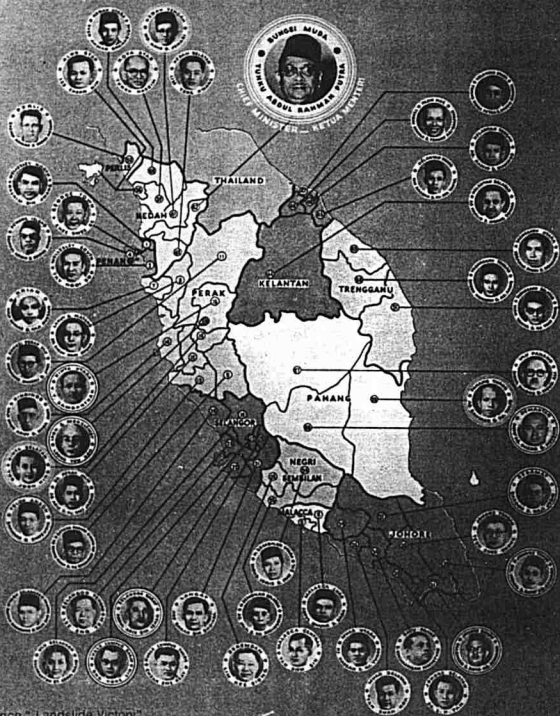


The First Federal Elections 1955:
collecting the voting papers by air,
outboard motor, motor launch and
bicycle.



CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE

THE 52 SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES IN THE 1955 FEDERAL ELECTIONS



The Alliance "Landslide Victory"

MADE IN MALAYA BY THE MALAYSIAN FEDERATION OF POSTERS, S.S. 10

concentrate on the election, but it was too late. Onn no longer hoped to win a majority, but he seemed confident that Party Negara would provide a substantial opposition. Tunku resisted invitations to forecast the election results, but he let it be known that he was confident of an Alliance victory.

It was only during the last week of the election campaign that Tunku toured his own constituency. Everywhere he went he was promised total support. He spent the day before the Election in UMNO House in Alor Star and telephoned to Alliance headquarters in every State to obtain last minute reports. On Polling Day, after casting his vote, he drove himself on a whirlwind tour of constituencies in Kedah and then set off for Kuala Lumpur, accompanied by T.H. Tan, the Executive Secretary of the Alliance. He stopped at every main Polling Station en-route, and only arrived in Kuala Lumpur at eleven pm. making it possible for him to enter the town unrecognised. Tunku always enjoyed the company of his friends: He had only to appear in the house of an acquaintance to be given the warmest welcome, but on the night of 27th July, he was exhausted and he wanted to be alone. Alliance headquarters was expecting him: many of his close friends were waiting anxiously for his return, but he asked T.H. Tan to drive him to the old Eastern Hotel, in Ampang Road, where Tan had a

single room. There Tunku spent the night, listening to Election results until the Kuala Lumpur Radio Station closed at 3 am. He learnt of his own victory, with a majority of over 20,000, and of Sulaiman's success in Johore Bahru, where he had polled 5,943 votes against Onn's 2,802. By 3 am. the Alliance had won 23 seats: the Opposition none. The remaining results would be known later that morning.

Tunku had shared a room with T.H. Tan before, during the visit of the first Merdeka Mission to London. It was not an experience which he had intended to repeat. Tan's snores had kept him awake. But he was too tired to move anywhere else, and he remained in Tan's room for what was left of the night. A Chief Minister elect, incognito.

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Chief Minister: Rapport with Lennox-Boyd: Second Merdeka Mission: Confrontation with Chin Peng: The Alliance under Stress: Preparations for Independence: Midnight, August 30th 1955 - 1957

Tunku calls on Sir Donald MacGillivray, the
High Commissioner on 31st July, 1955.

Tunku woke, after scarcely two hours of sleep, sustained by the ecstasy of success. He rose, took a bath and said his morning prayers, adding a special thanksgiving to Allah for the Alliance victory. It was almost unbelievable peaceful, after the perpetual motion and the multitude of friends and supporters who had deprived him of all privacy during the past month.

Tunku lay down again, focussing his mind on the immediate future. He must fly to Johore and see two of his staunchest friends, Sulaiman and Dr. Ismail. And before he left Kuala Lumpur he wanted to meet Col. H. S. Lee and other colleagues and workers at Alliance headquarters. He sat up: there was no time to relax.

While Tunku dressed, the first visitor arrived: his whereabouts had been discovered. Alliance headquarters sent him a summary of the Election results. It read:

Alliance	: 51 seats.
Pan Malayan Islamic Party	: 1
Other parties	: Nil.



Tunku at UMNO Headquarters with some of his principal supporters: L to R: Dato Hassan, U.B. Johore: Sardon Jubir, Head of the Youth wing of UMNO: Tunku, Dr. Ismail



Party Negara had been exterminated. Tunku put down the summary and continued to dress: he had forecast these figures a week ago. His next visitor was Col. H.S. Lee. He had been the architect of the Alliance campaign strategy and a champion of tolerance. He, now brought suggestions for the composition of the first Alliance Cabinet. While they talked, with the frankness of veteran politicians, another message was relayed, conveying the congratulations of the High Commissioner on their overwhelming victory.

Tunku was not overwhelmed: he was modest by nature, - never arrogant. To have achieved headline news overnight in the world Press made no difference to his character or his personality. No other politician in a colonial territory had won a ninety nine percent election victory: no other politician had accepted triumph with such gracious composure. After a brief and joyful encounter with his supporters at Alliance headquarters, Tunku flew to Singapore, where Dr. Ismail, Sulaiman and Sardon and anyone else to whom news of Tunku's unscheduled arrival could be passed, were waiting. UMNO headquarters in Johore Bahru and the road outside it was crowded: everyone wanted to congratulate their President. Tunku could only remain with his wife and friends for twenty four hours: MacGillivray had invited him to Kings House for a first formal discussion on Sunday 31st July.

Tunku handed the High Commissioner a list of eleven Cabinet Ministers: six Malays, three Chinese and two Indians. MacGillivray's approval was still necessary, but the nominations were so eminently sound that he had no comment. The list would still have to be passed to the Rulers for their formal concurrence: this would take a little time, but MacGillivray promised to arrange for all the Ministers to take their oaths of office on 9th August. Sir Donald asked Tunku if he had thought about the nominations to fill the five special reserved seats, a reminder of last year's melodrama



Tunku's residence in Johore Bahru, No. 1, Jalan Sekolah Arab.
Photo supplied by Tan Sri Ahmad Perang

Lennox Boyd, the new British Secretary of State for the Colonies, with Tunku in Kuala Lumpur, 1st September, 1955.



the "Alert". Tunku promised to bring proposals in a few days time.

If MacGillivray noticed Tunku's old Plymouth car standing in the porch, as they said good bye, he gave no sign. The latter of office and living accommodation and transport for the Chief Minister had not been mentioned, although a directive on the subject could only come from the High Commissioner. All Tunku knew was that an office had been made available for him in the Federal Secretariat, and that he could occupy it the next morning.

On 1st August, Tunku was received by a British Assistant Secretary to Government and climbed the wooden stairs at one end of the building, worn smooth by generations of civil servants. A phalanx of press photographers awaited him. As soon as they had departed, Tunku asked if he could be shown the house in which he was to live, since his only home for the past year had been in Johore Bahru. Whether by an inexcusable oversight or by deliberate neglect, no government quarters had been made ready for the Chief Minister or for any of the other Ministers. The Government Housing Officer, who was hurriedly summoned, regretted that he had nothing suitable to offer, but as a temporary solution he mentioned an old house in Hose Road, and suggested that Tunku might like to see it. They drove there, but the paintwork both inside and out was shabby, the furniture was worn and defective and there was an aroma of dampness and decay.

A man in Tunku's eminent position might have rejected the offer with acrimony, but he preferred to avoid a dispute on his first day in office, however well justified his complaint might be, and he agreed to occupy the house on the understanding that it would be repainted and if necessary repaired and that the work should be given top priority. Tunku moved into No. 1 Hose Road on 8th August and remained there for nine months. Back in his office Tunku asked when an official car for the

Chief Minister would be available. His enquiry had, it appeared, been anticipated: Ministers, he was told, who wished to purchase new cars could be granted Car Loans by the Government and repayment by monthly instalments could be deducted from their salaries.

Tunku did not allow these frustrations to influence his first Broadcast to the Nation which he made on 9th August from an old wooden structure in Young Road. He repeated his determination to strive for self government and Independence as soon as possible, by constitutional means. Others had been obliged to fight the colonial power before they achieved their freedom: this would not be necessary in Malaya. The Alliance had proved that they had the support of at least eighty per cent of the adult population and that the three principal communities had worked closely together at all levels to win the election. He would take the opportunity of the visit of the new Secretary of State for the Colonies to Kuala Lumpur to ask him to arrange for constitutional talks in London as soon as possible; the present Federal Constitution was now unworkable. The Emergency continued to obstruct progress and to swallow up funds which should be used for development: he would try to end the Emergency by a fresh initiative. Finally he assured government officers who belonged to other political parties that they had no reason to fear official disfavour.

There had been another General Election in Britain, won again by the Conservatives. Lytton had become Viscount Chandos and had moved to the House of Lords and Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, had arranged to visit Southeast Asia and to be present at the inaugural meeting of the new Legislative Council on 1st September. Before he arrived, Tunku paid two informal visits to Singapore and met the Chief Minister, David Marshall. They discussed the possibility of some form of



Members of the Second Merdeka Mission to
London: the Alliance representatives:
L to R: Dato A. Razak, H.S. Lee, T.H. Tan,
Tunku, Dr. Ismail.



The Rulers' representatives: L to R: Dato
Ahmed Kamil, Dato Haji Abdul
Wahab, Dato Abdul Aziz A. Majid,
Dato Mohd. Seth, En. Abdul Kadir
(Secretary).

Union between the two territories, but Marshall told Tunku that in his opinion Britain was unlikely to grant Singapore full Independence in the near future. Tunku feared that if the two Ministers proposed some form of Union this might delay the grant of independence to Malaya, and he abandoned the proposal.

Although Tunku had been well received by individual Conservative members of Parliament in London during his first Merdeka mission, he still suspected that the party was basically "imperialist". Tunku was therefore sceptical of Lennox-Boyd's motives. But at their first informal meeting at Kings House in Kuala Lumpur, Tunku found in the new Secretary of State an unexpected affinity. They were able to speak freely, they shared a sense of humour and when Lennox-Boyd commented that Tunku had been incorrect to speak of "my government" in the Legislative Council, Tunku replied, with a chuckle, "we have



The combined Mission.

L to R: Dato Nik Ahmed Kamil, Dr. Ismail, Dato Hj. Abdul Wahab, Tunku, Dato Mohd. Seth,
H.S. Lee, Dato Abdul Aziz, Dato Abdul Razak.

Standing in the rear: T.H. Tan, Secretary General of the Alliance and En. A. Kadir MCS. Secretary
of the Mission.

not been given any suitable houses to live in and we have no official motor cars: obviously I must make it 'my government' as soon as possible".

Lennox-Boyd agreed to hold Constitutional Talks in London in January 1956, provided that the Rulers were represented, and when the Rulers held one of their periodic Conferences in Kuala Lumpur, at the end of September, Tunku sought and was granted a special Audience. He assured the Rulers that the Alliance Government was pledged to uphold their position as Constitutional Rulers, and asked them to appoint representatives who could take part in preliminary discussions in Kuala Lumpur before the Constitutional Talks were held in London.

But such a quest for unity encountered unforeseen hazards. The eighty two year old Sultan Ibrahim of Johore celebrated his Diamond Jubilee on 17th September and invited Tunku and all other Alliance Ministers to attend. They were encouraged to do so by Dr. Ismail. But in his speech from the throne the Sultan went out of his way to caution those who, in his own words, were "clamouring for immediate independence". Tunku and his ministers sent letters, by hand, to the Menteri Besar, regretting their inability to attend the remaining functions, and returned to Kuala Lumpur.

This contretemps did not obstruct the plans for constitutional discussions, and the Rulers chose Dato Abdul Wahab, the Menteri Besar of Perak, Dato Seth, the Deputy Menteri Besar of Johore, Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Majid, the Menteri Besar of Selangor and Dato Nik Ahmed Kamil, who had been Menteri Besar of Kelantan, but, after his defeat as a Party Negara candidate in the elections, had moved to Kuala Lumpur and had entered a legal firm. The Rulers also engaged Dato Sir Roland Braddell as their legal adviser. The Alliance group consisted of Tunku, Col. H. S. Lee, Dr. Ismail, and Dato Abdul Razak, with T.H. Tan and a senior civil

servant, Abdul Kadir bin Samsuddin, as joint secretaries.

Tunku conceived the idea that the two Malayan delegations should travel together by sea as far as Karachi, and then fly to London. It was an inspired notion. 'Discussions in mid-ocean, divorced from local pressures and protected from interruptions, offered the best possible opportunity to seek agreement on controversial questions. The Rulers' anxiety about their consti-

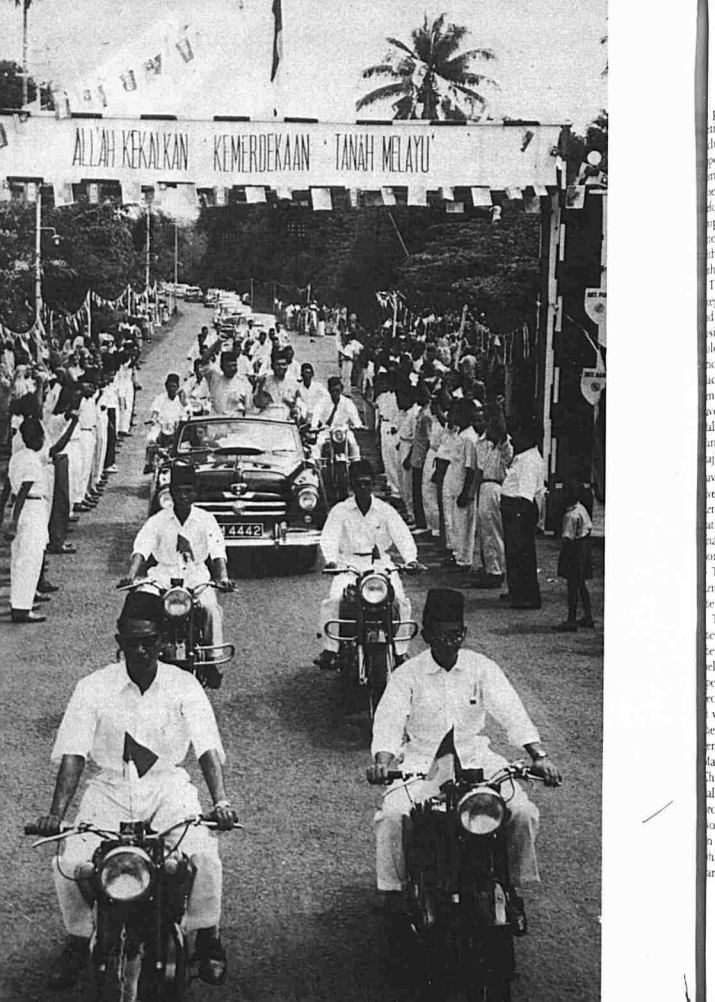


Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State, and Tunku, leader of the Malayan Mission, signing the Merdeka Agreement on 8th February, 1955 in Lancaster House, London.

tutional future extended to the subject of a single Ruler for the whole country after Independence: they wished to be assured that the choice would be made by them, without political interference. The two delegations sailed together from Singapore on New Year's Day in 1956 in the 'Asia', a large Italian passenger liner. They met every day either in a screened portion of the dining saloon or in one of their cabins. They concentrated on a single objective, -

...ku arriving at Malacca. 18th February, 1955.





present a series of proposals to the British which were unanimous. These included a resolution asking for the appointment of a special independent commission to make recommendations for a new constitution for independent Malaya. Before they arrived at Karachi their draft proposals had been finalised, and they entered Lancaster House in London on 17th January as "the Merdeka Mission", with a single leader - Tunku.

Tunku and Lennox-Boyd were men of integrity and sincerity, who spoke cordially and frankly. Progress was unhurried but decisive. But there was no precedent for a colonial territory to move, in one giant stride, from colonial status to independence. Had the Secretary of State been other than Lennox-Boyd the outcome might well have been different. Had the leader of the Malayan mission been a man other than Tunku, backed by a ninety nine per cent majority, Colonial Office caution might have over ridden the prevailing goodwill. Even the date of independence, for which Lennox-Boyd had warned of his almost pathological dislike, was written into the final paragraph, qualified only by the words "if possible", and on 8th February Tunku's fifty third birthday - he and Lennox-Boyd signed the Merdeka agreement.

Tunku occasionally took the other members of the group to dinner at one of the London restaurants which he knew so well, but their most memorable night was spent at a State Banquet, given by the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Head. It was held in the ancient banquet hall of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea, and the genius who conceived the idea was Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, who was then Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The hall was lit by silver candelabra: Templer brought his own regimental silver from Northern Ireland, and the food was served on silver plates lent by the Scots Guards, which had served in Malaya during an earlier period of the Emergency. Oil

paintings of Charles II and William III, royal patrons of the Chelsea Hospital two hundred and fifty years ago, hung on the walls. Never before had the Army Council honoured a delegation from overseas in this way. The army officers, headed by Templer, wore Mess Kit with Orders and Decorations. Tunku and his Malay companions, dreading the bitter cold of mid-winter in England, had left their colourful cloth-of-gold suits and sarongs behind and could only appear in black tail coats and trousers and white waist coats and bow ties. The Conference had approved an Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement, and comradeship-in-arms was the main theme in the two short after-dinner speeches. But when Tunku sat down, ignoring protocol and precedent, the Malaysians called for a speech by Templer. He spoke impromptu, but with deep feeling. His short service in Malaya had been one of the most rewarding periods in his whole career. He retained the warmest feelings for Tunku and the Malayan people and he wished them every success.

Tunku and his mission left London on 16th February and landed in Singapore four days later, after a short break in Cairo to meet Egypt's progressive Prime Minister, Col. Nasser. The next morning they took an internal flight to Malacca where Tunku had decided to make his first public announcement of their success. February in Malacca was harvest time: a season of dry weather. At least a quarter of the multitude which had assembled to welcome Tunku had spent the previous night in the open. Any discomfort which they suffered was offset by the prospect of an eye-witness encounter with their Chief Minister. Standing erect, with right arm raised, Tunku rode in the leading car in a motorcade, past the ruins of a Portuguese fortress to the open reclamation ground beside the sea. His speech was simple and brief, muffled by the constant chorus of "Merdeka". Malaya he said, would soon regain the independence which had been

usurped by a foreign power more than four hundred years ago. Euphoria swept the country. But Tunku and his colleagues recognised the obstacles which still stood in the way of real progress. One of these was the continuing Emergency.

Tunku had offered an amnesty to the Communist Terrorists soon after he became Chief Minister, and before he travelled to London. One hundred and eighty six "Safe Areas" were named in four million leaflets, which were dropped over the jungle from Air Force planes. Tunku had no delusions about the fanaticism of the hard-core communists, but he hoped that the mounting pressure of the British and Malayan Security Forces as well as the significance of the recent general election results might influence the younger communists to surrender if favourable opportunities were offered. The direct results had been disappointing, but an unsigned letter in Chinese, addressed to Tunku and Tan Cheng Lock, which was stated to have



... from Communist headquarters in
... Thailand, asked for a cease fire. It
... proposed that Tunku and Tan Cheng
... should meet Chin Peng, who had
... the Secretary General of the Malayan
... Communist Party since 1947. Tunku
... showed the letter to MacGillivray and
... General Bourne. MacGillivray delayed his
... agreement until he had consulted the
... Commissioner General and the Governor
... of Singapore. Then, with their agreement,
... Tunku issued a reply in the Press stating
... that he was willing to meet Chin Peng,
... but only for the purpose of clarifying his
... honesty offer. After a further exchange of
... letters, Tunku, Tan Cheng Lock and Chin
... Peng met at Baling, in Southeast Kedah,
... near the Siamese border in December 1955.
... Tunku had invited David Marshall, Chief
... Minister of Singapore, to be present. Some
... people, including certain senior Govern-
... ment officials, who did not know Tunku
... well, and were not aware of his previous
... encounters with Communists in Kedah in



Tunku visits Baling, in Kedah to meet Chin Peng. He arrives by car.
Photo Muzium Negara



Tunku with David Marshall, Chief Minister of Singapore and Tan Cheng Lock walk to the meeting place. *Photo Muzium Negara*

August 1945, feared that he might make some concessions or even come to some secret agreement with Chin Peng, which would benefit the Alliance government. Their fears were unfounded. As soon as Tunku had taken his seat at a long trestle table opposite Chin Peng, he stated that he had only two objects in mind in coming to the meeting: one was to clarify, if necessary, the amnesty terms, and the other to make it clear that he spoke for the people of Malaya and not as a representative of the British. He then invited Chin Peng to reply. The Communist leader stated that he could not accept the amnesty terms because they did not allow communists in the jungle to enjoy an equal status with other Malaysians. He demanded legal recognition for the Malayan Communist Party, and told Tunku that members of the party would never give up their ideology. Discussions continued after dark without either side making any concessions. David Marshall asked Chin Peng, "If Malaya is granted Independence, will your men lay down their arms?" Chin Peng replied that they would never agree to lay down their arms and repeated that he could not accept the Amnesty offer. The talks ended at 10 am the next morning, and Tunku left for London two days later. "This meeting taught me something" he remarked: "Malaya and Communism can never co-exist". When Tunku returned from London he announced that the period of the Amnesty would end on 8th February 1956 (his birthday), and fresh efforts would be made to end the Emergency, which would include Central Rice Kitchens on rubber estates and in New Villages.

A high-powered Constitutional Commission had been appointed by the Colonial Office, soon after Tunku's return. It was headed by Lord Reid, a Privy Councillor and Lord of Appeal in Ordinary. The Commission set up an office in Kuala Lumpur and then travelled to every State, hearing evidence and receiving



Chin Peng's group: L to R: Rashid Mahidin,
Chin Peng, Chen Tian.
Photo National Archives

memoranda. The two most controversial subjects were citizenship for non-Malays, and the Special position of the Malays. The Alliance National Council spent four months preparing a detailed memorandum for the Commission, most of which was accepted. But it made no mention of "*Jus Soli*" - citizenship by right of birth. During the drafting stage, there had been heated discussions among members of UMNO and the MCA. UMNO members hoped to secure more extensive privileges: the MCA argued that appeasement of UMNO had already gone too far, and questioned whether they should not withdraw from the Alliance. During this anxious period Tunku's reputation for sincerity and equity was of immeasurable value to both sides.

The Commission's report was published in Kuala Lumpur in February 1957. MacGillivray then set up a Working Committee to prepare final recommendations for the considerations of the British Government.



Tunku with his team: L to R: Too Joon Hing,
David Marshall, Tan Cheng Lock.

MacGillivray was chairman, Tunku, H.S. Lee, Dr. Ismail and Abdul Razak and the four representatives of the Rulers were members. Once again, Tunku, as the inspired diplomat, was obliged to exert his exceptional skill in order to avoid a deadlock over the vexed question of "Jus Soli". This subject had been included among the Commissioner's recommendations, although it had been omitted from the Alliance memorandum. Tunku finally persuaded the MCA leaders to agree to its omission from the official recommendations, which were to be sent to London for approval, on the understanding that the subject would be reconsidered by the Malayan government as soon as possible after Independence.

Only six months remained before the date which had been adopted for the proclamation of Independence. Other accessories of self-government, which were above politics and outside the range of Constitutional proposals, still awaited

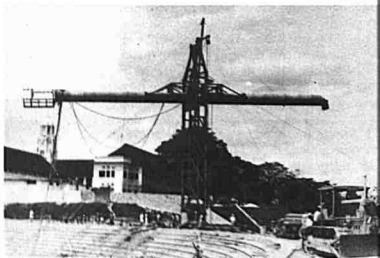
attention. Tunku possessed rare talents and interests which were of the greatest value to the country at this time. He had been surrounded by royal pageantry since his birth. He knew, by instinct, that Malaya must have a National Anthem, Orders and Decorations, Regalia for the elected Ruler, and a form of ceremony for that ruler's installation. There was no central arena where Independence could be proclaimed: it must be constructed. Tunku arranged for an announcement to be published, inviting musicians both at home and abroad to compose a National Anthem for Malaya. Tunku set up a committee to help him judge the entries, which numbered over seventy and included one by the world-famous British composer, Benjamin Britten. The choice, on musical merit, was scarcely open to debate, but after the first meeting of his committee, Tunku decided that the music of the National Anthem of Malaya must be Malay. When they next met to listen to a short list of Malay compositions Tunku recalled an old melody, once familiar all over the peninsula named "*Terang Bulan*" until and even after it had been adopted by Sultan Idris of Perak as his State Anthem, in 1888. It had long been forgotten, but Tunku asked the Inspector General of Police to arrange for the tune to be orchestrated and played by

the Police band, and the committee listened spell-bound, beside the parade ground at the Police Depot. The quest had ended: Tunku renamed the old tune '*Negara-ku*' - "My Country", and adopted it as the National Anthem of Malaya.

Johore and Kelantan were the only Malay States which had created their own Orders and Medals before Independence. British awards to people in other States and Settlements were conferred sparingly. Kedah had never introduced any decorations. Tunku found time to select from Malay literature titles which dated back to the old Malacca empire in the fifteenth century, and to an even earlier period in Kedah. One of these - 'Tun' - had been the prerogative of the hereditary Chief Ministers of Malacca, the other, - 'Tan' - was a modification of the title of a territorial chief. But 'Tan' could not now be used in isolation, for fear that it might be confused with a common Chinese Surname. A Malay honorific prefix, - 'Sri' - was therefore added to become 'Tan Sri'. Tunku decided that 'Tun' would be the

The "Merdeka Stadium" during the excavation of the site.

Photo National Archives

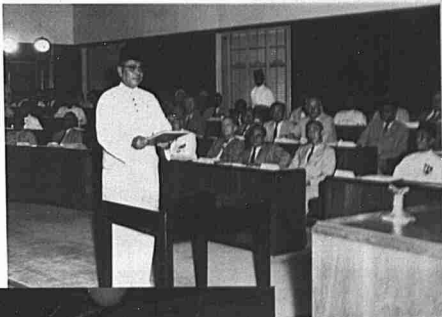


Tunku when Chief Minister with General Bourne visiting Negeri Sembilan in 1958.

... associated with the highest award to
... Malayan, other than a ruler: 'Tan Sri'
... could be the second highest award. The
... famous firm of Garrard in Regent Street,
... London, was asked to submit designs for
... these Orders, for Tunku's critical scrutiny
... and final approval.

Every Malay ruler possessed Regalia, -
... *Kebesaran* - treasured articles which
... they had inherited from their royal pre-
... decessors. They included weapons and
... sometimes a gold betel box or bowl, hun-
... dreds of years old. Tunku was determined
... that the new elected ruler should be equip-
... ped with a regalia of his own before he
... was installed. But heirlooms, such as the
... other rulers possessed were no longer
... obtainable. He therefore ordered long

Tunku, as Chief Minister, presents the Report
to the Legislative Assembly on the same day.



Tunku receives the Report of the
Constitutional Commission from Sir Donald
MacGillivray, 14th March, 1956.



Tunku Abdul Rahman with Field Marshal, Sir Gerald Templer in London at a reception given by Alan Lennox-Boyd in May 1957. Tunku was in London for Constitutional Talks. Photo Central Office of Information, London



The Government offices illuminated on 30th August, 1957.



Tunku with UMNO supporters on the Angkor Club padang, at midnight in August, 1957.



Tunku opens Merdeka Historical Exhibition Raja Uda, President, Malayan Historical Society, on his right.

keris, spears, war clubs and a pair of silver Mace to be made by the best craftsmen in Kelantan and Trengganu. A gold stand for an historic copy of the Quran was also commissioned from Kelantan. Tunku also decided that the elected ruler – some referred to him as 'the Paramount Ruler' – must be installed to the music of a 'Nobat', a form of royal Malay orchestra which, according to the *Malay Annals* was presented by the ruler of Pasai in Sumatra to the first ruler of Malacca in about 1415, and may have been in use by rulers of Kedah for an even longer period. No trace of the Malacca Nobat survived the capture of the town by the Portuguese in 1511, but the Kedah Nobat had been in continuous use in the palace for more than five hundred years, notably at the installation of each ruler, and had escaped capture by the Siamese in 1821 almost by a miracle. Tunku therefore asked for the loan of the Kedah Nobat.

As soon as a provisional date had been fixed for Independence Day, Tunku instructed the Director of Public Works to excavate a low hill near the centre of the town, bordering Birch road, and to pre-

pare a large open air stadium where the proclamation of Independence ceremony could be held and which could then become a centre for sporting activities, notably for football. Tunku also chose a site for another of his special projects – a National Mosque. The site was near the Railway Station, but it included a deep valley, and had at first appeared to be unsuitable on that account. But the earth which was excavated from the high ground to create the stadium was transported to fill the valley off Venning Road, – "killing two birds with one stone."

Tunku set up a committee, of which he was chairman, with Dato Abdul Razak as his deputy, to plan and organise the ceremony and he named the stadium "Stadium Merdeka." Through the months which followed Tunku maintained an unruffled calm and the final week of August arrived without any misadventure.

Kuala Lumpur had acquired a new airport, and for several days before the end of the month, official guests were received and escorted to the best accommodation available. The Duke of Gloucester, accompanied by his wife, arrived



The Union Jack is lowered at midnight.
Tunku centre: Sardon Jubir on his right:
Dato Sambantan on his left.

to represent Queen Elizabeth. They were met by Tunku, by MacGillivray, who would be their host, and by Cabinet Ministers. The Malay Rulers assembled in Kuala Lumpur to elect one of their number to be the 'Yang Di Pertuan Agong' - Paramount Ruler - for the next five years.

The great stadium was ready. Very early on the morning of 31st August, members of the public began to file through the entrance gates and to occupy the uncovered stands which surrounded an oval expanse of smooth green grass. A large rectangular carpeted dais stood near the centre, still

devoid of any furniture. Heavy rain started to fall before dawn and continued until nearly 8. a.m. Dato Abdul Razak visited the stadium looked anxiously at the pools of water which lay where the Guard of Honour of Malay soldiers must march, and at the sodden carpet on the uncovered dais. The arm chairs for the Yang Di Pertuan Agong and nine Rulers, for the Duke of Gloucester, for the High Commissioner and for Tunku, and the ornamental table on which the proclamation would be placed, were still safely stored in a waiting room. Dato Razak conferred by telephone with the Meteorological officials and with Tunku at his residence, and postponed the time of arrival of the Rulers, the Duke and the High Commissioner for one hour. The uncovered seats were shrouded by ten thousand umbrellas.

The rain stopped, as predicted, at a little before nine. The sun forced its way through low clouds and scattered flashes of gold across the waterlogged lawn. The arm chairs and the long strips of red carpet, which would cover the approach to the dais, were quickly carried out. Tunku, dressed in a Malay uniform of heavy black silk, bordered with gold thread inspired by a traditional Kedah style worn only by royalty, received the Duke, who wore the white tropical uniform of a British Field Marshall. The Rulers, sheltered by nine yellow silk umbrellas were already in position on the dais. The 'Paramount Ruler' sat in the centre with the Duke on his right and Tunku on his left. The Duke handed the 'Constitutional Instrument' to Tunku. It conveyed sovereignty over Penang and Malacca and withdrew protection from the Malay States. Tunku then spoke: "Independence is only the threshold to high endeavour. At this solemn moment I call on you all to dedicate yourselves to the service of the new Malaya." He then read the Proclamation of Independence. "...Now in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, I, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Prime Minister of the Persekutuan Tanah Melayu,

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PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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.

WHEREAS the time has now arrived when the people of the Persekutuan
Keseluruhan Melayu shall assume the status of a free independent and sovereign nation
among the nations of the World

AND WHEREAS by an agreement signed the Federation of Malaya
Agreement, 1957, between Her Majesty the Queen and Their Highnesses the Rulers
of the Malay States it was agreed that the Malay States of Johore, Pahang, Negri
Sembilan, Selangor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perak and the former
settlements of Malacca and Penang should as from the 31st day of August, 1957,
be formed into a new Federation of States by the name of Persekutuan Keseluruhan Melayu

AND WHEREAS it was further agreed between the parties to the said agreement that the
settlements of Malacca and Penang aforesaid should as from the said date cease to form part of
Her Majesty's dominions and that Her Majesty should cease to exercise any sovereignty over them

AND WHEREAS it was further agreed by the parties aforesaid that the Federation of Malaya
Agreement, 1957, and all other agreements subsisting between Her Majesty the Queen and Their
Highnesses the Rulers or any one of them immediately before the said date should be retained as from
that date and that all powers and jurisdiction of Her Majesty or of the Parliament of the United
Kingdom in or in respect of the settlements aforesaid or the Malay States or the Federation as a
whole should cease to an end

AND WHEREAS effect has been given to the Federation of Malaya Agreement, 1957,
by Her Majesty the Queen, Their Highnesses the Rulers, the Parliament of the United Kingdom and
the Legislatures of the Federation and of the Malay States

AND WHEREAS a constitution for the Government of the Persekutuan Keseluruhan Melayu has
been established as the supreme law thereof

AND WHEREAS by the Federal Constitution aforesaid provision is made to safeguard the
rights and prerogatives of Their Highnesses the Rulers and the fundamental rights and liberties of the
people and to provide for the peaceful and orderly advancement of the Persekutuan Keseluruhan Melayu as
a constitutional monarchy based on Parliamentary democracy

AND WHEREAS the Federal Constitution aforesaid having been approved by an Ordinance of
the Federal Legislatures, by the Governments of the Malay States and by resolutions of the Legislatures
of Malacca and Penang has come into force on the 31st day of August 1957, aforesaid

NOW in the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN
PUTRA HANI AL-MARHUM SULTAN ABDUL HAMID HALIMSHAH, PRIME
MINISTER OF THE PERSEKUTUAN TANAH MELAYU, with the concurrence and approval of
Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States he hereby proclaims and declares on behalf
of the people of the Persekutuan Keseluruhan Melayu that as from the thirty first day of August, nineteen
hundred and fifty seven, the Persekutuan Keseluruhan Melayu comprising the States of Johore, Pahang,
Negri Sembilan, Selangor, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Perak, Malacca and Penang 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.



Tunku at his residence on the morning of 31st August, 1957 as he leaves for the Merdeka Stadium.



Tunku arrives at the Merdeka Stadium, 31st August 1957.

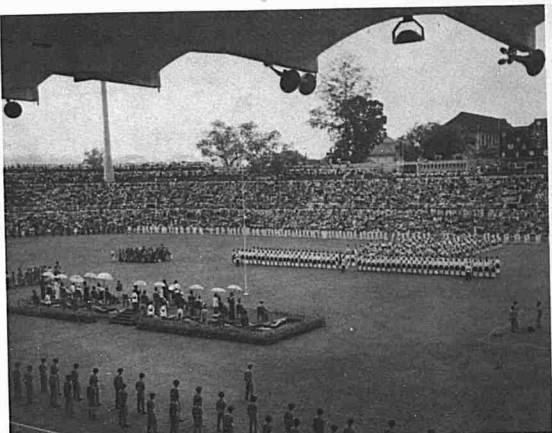
with the concurrence and approval of Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Malay States, hereby proclaim and declare that the *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* is, and with God's blessing shall be for ever, a sovereign democratic and independent State" A microphone carried his voice across the arena, but his words were drowned, time after time, by a massive chorus: '*Merdeka! Merdeka!*'

Photographs from scores of cameras recorded that historic event.

By comparison, the scene at midnight on 30th August was witnessed by relatively few and photographs of the first moments of *Merdeka* are rarely reproduced. The event took place on the playing field between the Moorish style government secretariat and the Tudor-style Selangor Club. That night, crowds covered every foot of the playing area and directed their eyes, not at any football or tennis player, but at two flag poles planted side by side,

and at a tall flood-lit clock tower above them. Tunku stood near the flag poles, with Abdul Razak, Dr. Ismail, Col. H.S. Lee, Sardon, Sulaiman and V.T. Sambanthan beside him. MacGillivray, Field Marshall Templer and a few other overseas guests sat on the low verandah of the Selangor Club. A moment after midnight Malaya would be independent. The clock in the tower began to strike: the Union Jack on one flag pole and the new Federation Flag on the other began to move slowly and simultaneously, — the Union Jack downwards, the Federation Flag upwards. As the last stroke of midnight echoed above the heads of the crowd, still silent, a band played 'God Save the Queen' followed by 'Negara-Ku' — not yet familiar to the public but arresting and captivating.

Tunku, who was the epitome of dignity and decorum later that morning, then raised both his arms above his head and



A Birds Eye view of the Merdeka stadium, showing the dais, the parade and the vast crowd.
31st August, 1957.

...dance a *pas seul* in uncontrolled rapture. The moment the band stopped playing the Malayan National Anthem, the silence was shattered by a roar, consisting of a single word, "MERDEKA", shouted repeatedly by at least ten thousand voices. Sardon Jubir, the Head of UMNO Youth, stood a little to the rear and when Tunku lowered his arms and stood temporarily motionless, Sardon held out a medallion with the words 'Bapa Merdeka' - "Father of Independence" on it, and slipped the ribbon from which it was suspended over Tunku's head. Tunku walked slowly across to speak to Templer and MacGillivray: he would have liked to linger with his friends, but a ceremony of unparalleled significance was only hours away. His official car standing in the club porch drove him

up the slope to his residence - the former British Residency.

The night sky was clear: 31st August, 1957 had arrived. Contrary to the forecast of some of his opponents, a new nation had been born in an atmosphere of racial harmony. The years of uncertainty, of resolute dedication, of political struggle against phenomenal obstacles were behind him. For a few short hours before the dawn prayer, Tunku could sleep soundly, - the sleep of a man who had dreamed of a near-miracle and had achieved it.





Yusuf Ismail proclaims Independence, in the presence of the Malay Rulers, the Duke of Gloucester, and Sir Donald MacGillivray, 31st August, 1957.

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