

BRITISH POLICY IN
THE MALAY PENINSULA
1880-1910

VOLUME I
THE SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL STATES

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EUNICE THIO



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PREFACE

This book was originally a thesis in two parts presented to the University of London in 1956 for the degree of Ph.D. At that time the British records were opened up to 1902. Since then, documents for the subsequent years were periodically released to researchers and I spent my study leave from April to September 1962 in London where I was able to examine relevant material for the period 1903-11. I have also looked at local collections of records in English which were not available prior to 1956. With the help of such documents, of theses related to a greater or lesser extent to my subject and secondary sources not previously consulted, part one of my thesis—revised and expanded—now appears as Volume I of a two-volume work.

I am very grateful to Dr. E. T. Stokes and Dr. C. N. Parkinson, formerly lecturer and Professor respectively in the Department of History at the University of Malaya, for arousing my interest in Malayan history and research in the B.A. Honours class of 1952; to Professor D. G. E. Hall, under whom I worked from 1953-6, without whose patient guidance and kindly encouragement the thesis would not have been completed; and to Professor H. R. Tinker and Professor C. D. Cowan for helpful comments on different portions of early drafts of the thesis. I am also much indebted to the latter for reading the revised manuscript of this volume, drawing attention to the Federal Records (as they have been called) in the Arkib Negara Malaysia (which collection he was the first to examine during a sabbatical leave spent in Malaysia early in 1966) and generously placing at my disposal his own notes on this collection covering the years 1896-1903. To Dr. D. K. Bassett, Dr. K. S. Sandhu, Mr. Lee Yong Leng, Dr. E. Sadka, Dr. D. P. Singhal, Professor K. G. Tregonning and Professor Wang Gungwu, I owe sincere thanks for advice and assistance rendered in one way or another. I must make special mention of my colleague, Dr. R. Suntharalingam, whose invaluable criticism of each chapter, when he himself was burdened with problems of re-

search, is here most gratefully acknowledged. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any errors and defects in the book.

Finally, I wish to record my appreciation for the facilities offered and courteous service rendered by the staffs of the Arkib Negara Malaysia (to which I am also indebted for the loan of the photographs appearing in this volume), Public Record Office, British Museum, Colonial Office Library, Foreign Office Library, Singapore National Library, and the University of Singapore Library.

E. Thio

University of Singapore
September 1966

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ABBREVIATIONS

AR	<i>Annual Reports</i>
BM	British Museum
CO	Colonial Office
CS	Colonial Secretary
DNB	Dictionary National Biography
Fed. Rec.	Federal Records
FMS	Federated Malay States
FO	Foreign Office
HC	High Commissioner
JMBRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch</i>
JSBRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Straits Branch</i>
KP	Kimberley Papers
Legco	Legislative Council
OAG	Officer Administering the Government
PFC	<i>Proceedings of the Federal Council</i>
PLCSS	<i>Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements</i>
PP	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
PRCI	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute</i>
PRO	Public Record Office (London)
RG	Resident-General
SS	Straits Settlements

INTRODUCTION

THIS is a study of the formulation of British policy in the Malay Peninsula between 1880 and 1910, and the circumstances under which it developed in a period of intensive and competitive European activity overseas, leading to the establishment of their control over Africa, the Pacific islands and large parts of Asia. Responsibility for policy towards those states in the Peninsula which remained independent of any foreign influence save that of Britain, rested solely with the Colonial Office whose decisions were based on the information provided by the Governor of the Straits Settlements. There were five such states (regarding the Negri Sembilan area as one) situated in the central and southern part of the Peninsula: Johore, Negri Sembilan, Pahang, Selangor and Perak. The rest of the Peninsula stretching northwards up to the Isthmus of Kra consisted of the predominantly Malay-inhabited states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and Patani; those with a larger proportion of Siamese inhabitants lying further north; and beyond these, the purely Siamese states. Here the situation was complicated by the existence of Siamese claims. According to the treaty of 1826¹ between Britain and Siam, Kedah was expressly recognized as a Siamese dependency while Trengganu and Kelantan were usually regarded by the British as within the Siamese sphere of influence although the terms of the treaty left their status somewhat vague. Owing to this complication, the Foreign and India Offices, in addition to the Colonial Office, participated in policy-making. Just as the Secretary of State for the Colonies received information about the local

¹ The text of this treaty is in W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, eds. *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 77-82. For a discussion of the background and the negotiations, see L.A. Mills, 'British Malaya 1824-67', revised ed., *JMBRAS*, vol. xxxiii, part 3, 1960, pp. 168-83; W.F. Vella, *Siam under Rama III 1824-1851*, New York, 1957, pp. 59-66; N. Tarling, 'British Policy in the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago 1824-71', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxx, part 3, 1957, pp. 29-35.

situation and recommendations on policy from the Governor of the Straits Settlements, so the Secretaries of State for India and Foreign Affairs had their own agents viz., the Governor-General of India and the British diplomatic representative at Bangkok. Reports, suggestions and rival theses from these three different sources were carefully weighed and competing interests balanced in Whitehall, where the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a post which for a large part of the period of this study was held concurrently by the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury,¹ would usually have the final say. Since different agencies were thus involved in the formulation of policy in the southern and northern portions of the Malay Peninsula, and also because the problems presented to the British in these two areas differed, it is proposed that they should be treated separately. The following chapters of this volume deal with the so-called independent Malay States. Volume II examines policy in relation to the rest of the Peninsula.

The Colonial Office, as already mentioned, was solely responsible for policy in Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Pahang and Johore. At the head of the department stood the Secretary of State for the Colonies. To assist him in explaining and defending policy, he had a Parliamentary Under-Secretary. These were political appointments dependent on the government in power. Below the two ministers was a hierarchy of permanent officials, ranging from a large number of clerks of various grades and several Assistant Under-Secretaries, each dealing with a different aspect of the departmental business, to the Permanent Under-Secretary, the highest post on the permanent establishment.

It is difficult to generalize about the extent to which the political heads and the permanent staff influenced policy. Although in theory the Secretary of State determined policy with his staff, venturing to give an opinion and adapting his ideas for practical execution, in practice it was less clear-cut. For one thing, ministerial appointments changed fairly frequently. And since a minister did not normally remain for long in the department, both he and his Parliamentary Assistant lacked that specialized and detailed knowledge of colonial

¹ A conservative Government under Salisbury was in power from 1885-6, 1886-92, and 1895-1902.

affairs possessed by the permanent members. For another, pressure of work frequently compelled the Secretary of State to delegate some responsibility to his subordinates. Matters regarded as less important might well be left to the Permanent Under-Secretary who would make policy decisions with only the nominal participation of the Secretary of State. Of course the extent to which officials were able to determine policy depended largely on the personality of the minister. When Lord Kimberley presided over colonial affairs from 1880-2, he was 'well up in his subject'. During his previous term of office as Colonial Secretary from 1870-3 in Gladstone's second ministry (1868-74), Kimberley had seen nearly all the important documents pertaining to Malaya, often drafting his own despatches and playing a major role in policy formation.¹ On returning to the Colonial Office with the Liberals in 1880, Kimberley showed the same keen interest in Malayan affairs. Indeed, he seemed to have been the only Secretary of State before Joseph Chamberlain to have definite views on Britain's long-term objectives in the Peninsula. Under other chiefs, the officials usually had the main say. Kimberley's successor, Lord Derby, was easy-going and had so little knowledge of and interest in the Malay States that he practically left their affairs to the permanent staff. Colonel F. A. Stanley, Lord Granville, and Earl Stanhope remained in the department for too brief a time—only a few months each—to exert a noticeable influence. As for Sir Henry T. Holland (later Lord Knutsford), who was Secretary of State from 1887 to 1892, he also tended to follow the recommendations of his staff. When Lord Ripon was in charge of colonial affairs (1892-5), the role he played is less easy to determine, for he seldom minuted on the despatches from Singapore and worked closely with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Sydney Buxton. Buxton was one of the few incumbents of this office who read and commented on most of the papers relating to the Malay States. But it is impossible to ascertain how much of what he wrote represented his own views and how much those

¹ W.D. McIntyre, 'British Policy in West Africa, the Malay Peninsula and the South Pacific during the Colonial Secretaryships of Lord Kimberley and Lord Carnarvon, 1870-76', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1959, pp. 23-25. See also C.D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, 1961, pp. 154-5.

of his chief with whom he had discussed the matter. However, when Joseph Chamberlain became head of the department, it was clear that he held the reins, although after 1897 the unanimity between the Secretary of State and the officials was quite remarkable. It may have been because Chamberlain's subordinates generally agreed with him on Malayan questions. By that time, moreover, and in the first decade of the twentieth century, British policy in the five Malay States for which the Colonial Office had sole responsibility had emerged from its more experimental and formative phase.

Among the many officials at the Colonial Office concerned with the peninsular states between 1880 and 1910, only a few stand out as having played a noteworthy role. Sir Robert Herbert, head of the permanent establishment from 1871 to 1892 and Sir Robert Meade, Assistant Under-Secretary from 1870 who succeeded Herbert in 1892, are said to have 'dominated Colonial Office thought for twenty five years'.¹ Both were Liberals and had been private secretaries to Gladstone and Granville respectively. They were not inflexible on questions of expansion but certainly cannot be described as expansionists. They always responded cautiously to requests for an extension of British frontiers.² In fact, neither of them shared that eagerness to push British influence and convert such influence into rule which characterized the outlook of almost all the officials in Malaya. Only when convinced that basic British interests in the area required to be safeguarded by action did they approve of a forward move. They were followed however by another Permanent Under-Secretary—Sir Montague Ommanney (1900–7)³—who had more enthusiasm for imperial expansion. But by then, of the five Malay States situated in the south of the Peninsula, only Johore remained outside the sphere of direct British control. Of the more junior men, C. P. Lucas (later Sir Charles Prestwood Lucas) exerted an influence on Malayan affairs which exceeded the importance of his position in the official hierarchy. With a deep interest in the Peninsula and a firm conviction about the desirability of expansion and development there, his attitude came closest to

¹ Cowan, *op. cit.* p. 155.

² See McIntyre, *op. cit.* pp. 31–32, on Herbert.

³ See *Colonial Office List* for 1901 and 1910 under M.F. Ommanney.

that of the men on the spot. From the 'eighties, when he was private secretary to Sir Robert Herbert, and particularly as first class clerk in charge of the eastern desk after 1 February 1892, Lucas drafted many of the despatches to the Straits. His influence increased on his promotion to an Assistant Under-Secretaryship in 1897 where he remained until 1907 when he became the first head of the new Dominions division.¹

In the formulation of Malayan policy, the Colonial Office depended chiefly on recommendations and information about local developments received from the Governor of the Straits Settlements who was also High Commissioner for the Malay States, in fact if not in name, until 1896. Occasionally, this was supplemented by official and private correspondence with other individuals on the spot such as the British Residents, and after 1895, the Resident-General of the four Federated Malay States of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang. The accuracy of official reports on these states usually went unquestioned at the Colonial Office unless they contradicted each other. It is essential to bear in mind that even if the official analysis of a situation differed from the Malayan reality, it was the former which moved British statesmen to act or not to act. Therefore, either by withholding facts, or presenting them in a manner favourable to the course of action urged, a Governor would often be able to force the hands of the authorities in London. And further, although the Colonial Office laid down the broad lines of policy, it was not in full control of the process of expansion or consolidation which depended partly on local developments and partly on the man on the spot. Consequently, the role of local officials in policy-making, especially the Governor, can scarcely be overrated.

Four Governors dominated the period 1880-1910: Sir Frederick Weld, Sir Cecil Clementi Smith, Sir Frank Swettenham and Sir John Anderson. Weld and Swettenham, like Sir Andrew Clarke² before them, were professed admirers of Sir Stamford Raffles who strove to realize the dream of a Malay empire for the glory of Britain, the envy of her rivals and the welfare of

¹ Ibid. for 1895, 1905 and 1910 under C.P. Lucas.

² Sir Andrew Clarke, 'Sir Stamford Raffles and the Malay States', a Paper read to the Royal Colonial Institute in May 1898; R.H. Vetch, *Life of Lieut. General the Hon. Sir Andrew Clarke*, London, 1905, *passim*.

the Malays. All four were expansionists. Indeed, in Malaya there existed no school of thought opposed to an active forward policy such as that found in other British outposts. In Malaya, even cautious men, like Sir Charles Bullen Mitchell, became advocates for the extension of British control. The sensible and quietly efficient Cecil Smith, no less than the militant 'pioneer of Empire',¹ Frederick Weld, and the intensely ambitious and somewhat flamboyant Swettenham, all tried their utmost to promote British interests and incidentally the welfare of the 'natives' by enlarging the area of British control as rapidly as local resources, and the Colonial Office, permitted. Sir John Anderson was similarly an imperialist 'to his finger tips'.²

These then were the agents involved in the formation of policy towards the Malay States outside the sphere of Siamese influence. Before pursuing the subject in the years 1880 to 1910, it is necessary to indicate briefly the nature of Britain's connexion with the Peninsula, her position in the Malay States and the principles underlying British policy which had already emerged in the preceding decades.

Long before 1880, Britain had become the paramount power in the Peninsula. The East India Company, during the first half of the nineteenth century, succeeded in establishing itself in this position as a result of two treaties with the Dutch³ and the Siamese in 1824 and 1826 respectively, which eliminated the influence of one, and restricted that of the other to the states north of Perak and Pahang. Subsequently, from its footholds in Penang, Malacca and Singapore, i.e. the Straits Settlements, the Company gradually extended its influence over the independent Malay States chiefly through trade and treaties. After 1826 these states tended to look on the Company as the arbiter of local politics to whom they reported the accession of new Rulers, and appealed for help to settle internal disputes as well as quarrels with their neighbours. The Company accordingly

¹ Lady Alice Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, A Pioneer of Empire*, London, 1924; also Weld's paper 'The Straits Settlements and British Malaya', *PRCI*, vol. xv, 1883-4.

² J.H.M. Robson, *Records and Recollections (1889-1934)*, Kuala Lumpur, 1934, p. 105.

³ The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 is discussed in Mills, op. cit. Chapter 4; G. Irwin, *Nineteenth Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*, The Hague, 1955, Chapter 3.

found itself guaranteeing some states from attack or pledging to uphold boundary settlements so that when responsibility for the Straits was transferred from the Government of India to the Colonial Office in 1867, the British were already bound by treaties with four of the five states south of Kedah, two of whom they were pledged to protect and 'three over whose external relations they had a right of control'.¹ But as yet Britain had no right of interference in the internal affairs of any state.

How this situation changed in 1874 and the British, through their Residents, came to control the Governments of Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong (one of the Negri Sembilan group of states), is now well known.² Initially, the Colonial Office had intended that this should be a system of British advice only. However due to a combination of events and personalities, the Residential system—as it came to be called—involved British control over all aspects of the administration. And yet these states were not annexed as a result of the Victorian preference for informal rather than formal rule.³ They remained theoretically sovereign entities with the Malay Rulers as the sovereign head of state although in practice the substance of power gradually passed into British hands. The main duties of the Residents, as laid down for them by the Governor with the approval of the Colonial Office, were: to maintain peace and law, initiate a sound system of taxation, supervise the collection of revenue and encourage economic development. The method thus adopted for the promotion of British interests in the Peninsula became the standard technique of expansion in the following decades.

Apart from this form of control which had been evolved in the 'seventies, some fundamental principles behind British

¹ Cowan, *op. cit.* p. 18.

² Two useful monographs on the subject are C.N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-77*, Singapore, 1960, and Cowan, *op. cit.* There are also two theses: Margaret Knowles, 'Expansion of British Influence in the Malay Peninsula 1867-85,' Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, 1936, and D. McIntyre, *op. cit.* See also, E. Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874-1895*, Kuala Lumpur, 1968.

³ On this point see R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, London, 1961, p. 8; also Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. VI, no. 1, 1953.

policy in the area had also emerged. In 1873, the Colonial Office asserted a condition of British paramountcy in the Peninsula which it maintained thereafter. Kimberley, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, stirred by a rumoured threat of German intervention in Selangor, remarked that 'it would be impossible [for Britain] to consent to any European Power assuming the Protectorate of any State in the Malayan Peninsula'.¹ In recommending intervention to the Prime Minister, Gladstone, Kimberley wrote: 'We are the paramount power on the Peninsula up to the limit of the states tributary to Siam, and looking to the vicinity of India and our whole position in the East I apprehend that it would be a serious matter if any other European Power were to obtain a footing in the Peninsula.'² The decision consequently taken led to Governor Andrew Clarke's intervention in the affairs of the western states which resulted in the extension of British control over Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong. Henceforth, the exclusion of other European powers from the Peninsula became a basic concern of British policy. It will be seen that a history of British policy in the Peninsula between 1880 and 1910 is partly a study of how Britain defended its paramountcy under different circumstances.

Britain's anxiety to keep out other foreign powers was due to the strategic importance of the Malay Peninsula, derived from its proximity to India and its position bordering the shortest sea-route between India and the Far East. Not only did British statesmen recognize the central importance of this route in imperial strategy but also appreciated its commercial value. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the bulk of the world's trade to eastern Asia poured through the Straits of Malacca. Even as early as the late eighteenth century, concern for the security of this highway through which passed the China trade, had loomed large in the minds of the metropolitan or London authorities.³ Such considerations led the Colonial and Foreign Offices, as well as the India Office, to uphold consistently the principle—endorsed also by the Straits Government for local reasons—that European intrusion should not be permitted in the Malay Peninsula.

¹ Kimberley's minute of 22 July 1873, quoted by Cowan, *op. cit.* p. 168.

² Kimberley to Gladstone 10 September 1873, *ibid.* p. 169.

³ Cowan, *op. cit.* pp. 2-4, 145 et seq.

If this was the first principle behind British calculations about the Malay States before the 'eighties, the (second was the promotion of local commerce.) From the distance of Downing Street, the China trade may have been considered more valuable than that of South-East Asia in general, or the Malay States in particular, but to the Straits Government and the local mercantile community, trade with the peninsular states was of primary rather than secondary importance. A Governor naturally saw the problems of his administration from the perspective of Singapore and not London. And the prosperity of the Colony appeared to depend increasingly on the development of its hinterland owing to the protective policies of other European powers controlling the surrounding areas. However the indigenous governments of the peninsular states could not provide the necessary conditions for economic growth, so the Straits authorities were eager to intervene to establish law and order as well as other facilities for commercial penetration. Where Singapore was concerned, this was a stronger motivation than the wider imperial interests which dominated Whitehall's thinking. In the 'seventies the latter would not be persuaded to accept new political responsibilities in the Peninsula solely for this purpose, yet by the 'eighties the Colonial Office had come to accept the idea that Britain should seek to open the Malay States to British enterprise, by political action if necessary, for the benefit of the Colony in particular, for British trade in general and (as the British often claimed) for the welfare of the 'natives' too. The condition for such political expansion, however, was that any cost thereby incurred should be borne either by the Colony or the Malay States themselves, and not by the imperial exchequer.

A third consideration, often linked with one or both of these principles, was the problem of the 'turbulent frontier'.¹ As in India and Africa, so in Malaya, disturbances in the zone adjacent to British territories caused Britain to attempt to restore order and, in the process, to become involved in new political responsibilities. The techniques adopted for stabilizing imperial frontiers, falling short of the full assumption of sovereignty, included the appointment of consuls with extra-territorial

¹ J.S. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 2, 1959-60, pp. 150-60.

jurisdiction; the device of chartered companies; attempts to exercise informal influence through some well-disposed local Ruler who was willing and able to be used for British ends; and the appointment of British Residents, with varying powers, to reside at the courts of local Rulers. For the Malay Peninsula, these different methods of dealing with the frontier problem were either considered or adopted at one time or another, but in respect of the five states south of Kedah, the Residential system, accepted as an experiment in some of them in the 'seventies, became the standard solution for the problem of a disturbed frontier subject to occasional though temporary modification.

These then were some of the more important principles underlying British policy in the Peninsula which appeared prior to 1880 and which continued to dictate Britain's attitude towards the Malay States in the period under consideration. The following chapters will try to disentangle, as far as possible, the continuity of purpose from the play of circumstances and personalities. Nevertheless, motives are hard to pin-point, usually mixed and often weighted differently at local and metropolitan levels. Furthermore, the nature of the materials in the English language available to us, mainly official records written by participants in the events, impose certain limitations on any attempt to present a balanced view of developments and individuals. Malay documents pertaining to these years are few. Some have been discovered since the research for this work was done, notably the Jawi records in the Johore archives, but these have not been used. It remains for others with the linguistic ability to fill in the gaps or provide a re-interpretation.

Before policy in the 'eighties is dealt with, it is first necessary to consider briefly those developments in the late 'seventies which will enable us to understand the significance of what followed.

It has been established that the consequences of British intervention in the affairs of the Malay States in 1874, such as the murder of the first British Resident sent to Perak, and the hostile risings in this as well as the neighbouring states of Selangor and Sungai Ujong where Residents had also been placed, compelled the Colonial Office to have second thoughts about policy. It seemed to them that the men on the spot had had too optimistic

and therefore an unrealistic appraisal of conditions in the three states. The Malay response showed that the experiment of appointing Residents whose advice 'must be asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom'¹ could by no means be described as a success. A withdrawal at that juncture was ruled out for prestige and other reasons, but the Secretary of State determined to allow no further experiments. He instructed the Governor that Residents were to interfere as little as possible in the administration of the three states. With regard to the other Malay States, Lord Carnarvon directed the Governor, Sir William Jervois, to 'adhere to a line of policy which will, as far as possible, avoid a further and especially an undefined and uncertain extension of our political responsibilities in the Malay Peninsula'.²

In other words, the Colonial Office now wished to revert to the policy of non-expansion insisted upon prior to 1874, but there remained, in 1876, the problem of the 'turbulent frontier' in the Negri Sembilan area. Negri Sembilan consisted of a group of small states or districts each ruled by its own territorial chief, the *penghulu* (or *undang*), whose lineage was based on matrilineal descent in contrast to the patrilineal system of the other Malay States. This feature of the Negri Sembilan was due to the fact that from about the sixteenth century there had been a substantial immigration of settlers from Minangkabau in Sumatra bringing with them their own social system and gradually assimilating the older ruling families. The predominance of Minangkabau influence here also led to the emergence of a clan/lineage organization unique among the Malay States where authority was usually exercised on territorial lines only and kinship ties had no significance outside the village. Although Negri Sembilan literally means 'Nine States' it did not consist of exactly nine districts or even of the same components at different periods of its history. Nor was there a focus of central government within the Negri Sembilan which recognized a common overlord, the Sultans of Malacca-Johore, until 1773. During the eighteenth century, however, developments such as the Bugis threat, the weakness of Johore and the continued

¹ Article 6, Engagement entered into by the Chiefs of Perak at Pangkor, 20 January 1874. See Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* p. 29.

² PP C.1709 (1877) CO to Jervois 19 August 1876.

immigration of Minangkabau settlers with the consequent rise of new settlements and chiefs created a demand for a more effective overall authority resident in the Negri Sembilan. In 1773 the four principal chiefs of Sungai Ujong, Rembau, Johol and Jelebu invited a prince from Minangkabau to be their Yang-di-pertuan (or Yam Tuan) Besar and gave him a residence at Sri Menanti in the district of Ulu Muar. The first three Yam Tuan Besar held office for life only. Then, at some time in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it became established that the royal office was to descend to a son or a brother of the previous Ruler acceptable to the four undang of Rembau, Sungai Ujong, Johol and Jelebu. Insistence that these four electors should be unanimous led to conflict in the Negri Sembilan. For instance, when Yam Tuan Besar Imam died in 1869, one of the three electors backed Tunku Ahmat Tunggal, a son of the deceased Yam Tuan, whereas the other three supported the claims of Tunku Antah, son of the previous Yam Tuan Radin and a cousin of Tunku Ahmat.¹ Their disagreement resulted in a civil war in the early 'seventies. British intervention in Sungai Ujong in 1874 merely introduced a new complication. The power struggle continued. And it necessitated the punitive expedition of December 1875-6,² which gave the British virtual control over Terachi, Sri Menanti and Ulu Muar lying east of Sungai Ujong. As a temporary measure the Governor, Jervois, established police stations there under the general supervision of the authorities in Sungai Ujong. Subsequently these posts were attacked, so British troops intervened again and remained there.³

To stabilize the situation in the Negri Sembilan, Jervois made a twofold proposal to the Colonial Office in April 1876. Firstly, he suggested that one of the two contenders for the title of Yam

¹ For more details on the Negri Sembilan see J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London, 1958; F.J. Wilkinson, 'Notes on the Negri Sembilan', *Papers on Malay Subjects*, part 5, Kuala Lumpur, 1911, pp. 14-21; R.O. Winstedt, 'Negri Sembilan: The History, Polity and Beliefs of the Nine States', *JMBRAS*, vol. xii, part 3, October 1934.

² On these disturbances see J.M. Gullick, 'The War with Yam Tuan Antah', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxvii, part 1, May 1954, pp. 1-23, and Parkinson, *op. cit.* Chapter xi.

³ *PP C.1512* (1876) Assistant Resident, Sungai Ujong to CS, Singapore, 5 April 1876.

Tuan of Negri Sembilan, the less popular but more friendly to the British candidate Tunku Ahmat Tunggal, might be recognized as a sort of 'Malay Captain' of Sri Menanti (the royal capital) and the adjoining districts of Terachi, Ulu Muar and Jempul. To assist him in maintaining order, he was to have a British officer. Secondly, Jervois recommended the conclusion of treaties of friendship with the chiefs of Jelebu, Rembau and Johol. Since the first two states or districts shared a common frontier with territories under British control, the Governor desired to prevent them from being used as a refuge for criminals and political malcontents. Jervois believed that such treaties, supported by the payment of subsidies, would suffice to secure their co-operation in keeping the peace. 'If Your Lordship will sanction the general scheme which I have submitted' Jervois wrote in May 1876, 'I anticipate that great advantages will arise therefrom, and that the Nine States will enjoy peace and order, the great natural resources which they contain (and which owing to the insecurity of life and property have been as yet scarcely at all worked) will be opened up, and the prosperity of the old settlement of Malacca will be greatly enhanced.'¹

The Colonial Office could not be persuaded to sanction the proposed arrangements. For one thing, they were uncertain whether Tunku Ahmat would be able to maintain order with only the moral support of a British officer. They suspected that the task would actually devolve on British forces. For another, the Secretary of State had lost confidence in Jervois' direction of affairs. In view of recent occurrences in those states where Residents had been placed, he preferred that the Governor should make such 'satisfactory arrangements [as would] enable the Government to disentangle itself from further complications with these States' beyond the existing commitments.²

With his hands thus tied, Jervois had to devise some other solution for the problem of the 'turbulent frontier' in the Negri Sembilan. Elsewhere, the British had occasionally attempted to promote political order by increasing the influence of those states where intelligent chiefs co-operated with the British. This

¹ Ibid. Jervois to CO 20 April 1876 and *PP C.* 1709 (1877) Jervois to CO 13 May 1876.

² Ibid. CO to Jervois 19 August 1876.

was an axiom of the Marquess of Hastings' policy towards the Indian states in the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹ In East Africa in the 'forties, the British had pursued a similar course through the Sultan of Zanzibar. There they helped to extend the Sultan's authority inland and prompted his policy behind the scenes instead of taking direct action and responsibility for pacifying and opening up the interior.² Jervois now fell back on a comparable expedient. He decided that the Straits Government should seek to influence the Negri Sembilan states informally and indirectly by means of the Maharaja Abu Bakar of Johore.

Of all the Malay Rulers of the peninsular states at the time, the British believed that none could compare with Abu Bakar for administrative and general ability. More important still, he was on excellent terms with the Straits authorities. He resided frequently in Singapore, moved in European circles, assisted Governors in their relations with the Malay States, and accepted their advice in his own affairs.³ On these grounds therefore the Maharaja seemed to be eminently suitable as an instrument of British policy. Besides, Abu Bakar himself was anxious to be connected with Negri Sembilan. Rulers of the old Johore Sultanate had inherited the suzerain rights over the confederation previously exercised by the Malacca Sultans. By the Treaty of 1855⁴ the descendant of the royal house of Johore—Sultan Ali—had ceded to Abu Bakar's father, in full sovereignty, the whole of the territory of Johore and its dependencies with the exception of Kesang or Muar, which district was created a separate state for Sultan Ali and his heirs. Under these circumstances, Abu Bakar was ambitious to revive the suzerain relationship with the Negri Sembilan which had lapsed since the early nineteenth century. Already the British had noticed that Abu Bakar seemed to possess 'much influence' with the chiefs of these states. For these various reasons, Jervois thought that the best hope of peace in the area lying behind Malacca, Sungai Ujong and Selangor, was to give the Maharaja a treaty

¹ Major Ross-of-Bladensburg, *The Marquess of Hastings* (Rulers of India Series), Oxford, 1893, p. 164.

² Robinson, Gallagher and Denny, *op. cit.* p. 43.

³ Parkinson, *op. cit. passim* and R.O. Winstedt, 'A History of Johore (1365-1895)', *JMBRAS*, vol. x, part 3, Dec. 1932, Chapter xii.

⁴ Cf. Mills, *op. cit.* pp. 211-17.

status there so that the Governor might advise him in regard to their troublesome affairs.

Always watchful for new opportunities for self-aggrandizement, Abu Bakar no doubt welcomed the idea of thus furthering his own as well as British interests. As a first step towards the arrangement envisaged for the Negri Sembilan, the Maharaja's agents brought to Singapore in November 1876, representatives and chiefs from the Sri Menanti states, from Johol and its dependency Inas. Tunku Antah, one of the two claimants for the Yam Tuan position in Sri Menanti, vacant since 1869, also came from Johore where he had been living in exile since his defeat by British forces during the disturbances of 1875-6. A 'proud, truculent looking character' with a reputation for hostility to the British, Tunku Antah retained his old popularity with the Sri Menanti chiefs, as Jervois discovered when he interviewed them all. Consequently, although he personally preferred to support the claims of Tunku Antah's rival, Tunku Ahmat Tunggal, yet, in the interests of peace, the Governor acquiesced in the desire of those present that Tunku Antah should be recognized as Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti with authority over Sri Menanti, Ulu Muar, Jempul, Terachi, Gunong Pasir, Inas and Johol.¹ These small states or districts would thus be reconstituted into a confederacy. The agreement² embodying this decision also stipulated that the several chiefs would not interfere with the other states which remained outside the confederacy and did not recognize the overlordship of Tunku Antah, viz, Rembau, Jelebu and Sungai Ujong. The signatories further promised not to molest those engaged in peaceful trade. Most important of all, they agreed to refer disputes among themselves to the Maharaja of Johore. Thus was Tunku Antah reinstated and permitted to return to Sri Menanti with the blessings of the Straits Government. An eye witness described his home-coming as follows: 'On arriving within a quarter of a mile of the Astana, Tunku Antah got off his pony and together with his wife, mother and children were carried on men's shoulders, accompanied by Tuanku Ahmad, to the graves of their ancestors, where they devoted half an hour to prayers.'³

¹ PP C.1709 (1877) Jervois to CO 13 December 1876.

² Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 60-61.

³ Gullick, 'The War with Yam Tuan Antah', *op. cit.* p. 19.

With the Sri Menanti states and Johol thus provided for, Jervois took another step in his policy of promoting the Maharaja's authority in March 1877 when Haji Sahil, the penghulu of Rembau, accepted an agreement similar to the one concluded in November 1876 by the Sri Menanti confederation. According to this Treaty,¹ Haji Sahil promised to keep the peace, to foster trade and to accept 'advice and instructions from His Highness the Maharaja of Johore' in case of disputes in his own or in the neighbouring states.

The conditions under which Abu Bakar was to give the advice stipulated in these treaties should be noted. Jervois made it clear that representations made to the Maharaja under the terms of such agreements were to be dealt with in concert with the Governor. Furthermore, Jervois reserved to the British Government the right of direct communication with any of these 'states' at any time.² Though he did not remain long enough in Malaya to complete his plans for making Abu Bakar overlord of the whole of the Negri Sembilan excluding Sungai Ujong, Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. H. Anson, who administered the government before the arrival of the new Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, brought the remaining state of Jelebu into similar treaty relations with the Maharaja. There, the Yam Tuan Muda³ formally accepted the Maharaja of Johore as his adviser in April 1877.⁴ Next, by allowing Abu Bakar to take possession of Muar, Anson settled the last of the small states behind Malacca and completed the Maharaja's control over all the territory which had belonged to Johore until 1855.

The circumstances in which Muar was brought under Abu Bakar's control require some explanation for the incident illustrates the extent to which the British were then prepared to be guided by political expediency.⁵ Sultan Ali had died at Umbai

¹ Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 48-9; CO273/90 Jervois to CO 17 March 1877.

² PP C.1709 (1877) Jervois to Maharaja 29 November 1876 and to CO 13 December 1876.

³ On this office see Chapter II below.

⁴ Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 52-53.

⁵ Official papers on this controversial question were laid before the SS Legco: *PLGSS* for 1878, Appendix 40, and the House of Lords: *Accounts and Papers*, vol. xii, 1878-9, *Copy of the Treaty of 1855 between the Sultan of Johore and his Temenggong and the Correspondence respecting Muar since the death of*

in Malacca on 20 June 1877 leaving as his chosen heir an eleven-year-old son by his third wife instead of his eldest well-born son Tunku Alam, a young man of thirty, who, according to Malay custom, ought to have been the successor. The validity of the late Sultan's will was questioned. Besides there was at first some doubt in British circles about the royalty of Tunku Alam's mother. Pending the settlement of the succession, Anson hastily invited Abu Bakar to undertake the guardianship of Muar. Of course the Maharaja agreed and expressed his appreciation of this 'further expression of the confidence of Her Majesty's Government'.¹

It seems clear that the purpose of this move was primarily to pave the way for the annexation of Muar to Johore. Of the two claimants for the title to Muar, one was a minor while the other, in Anson's opinion, was stupid, indolent and extravagant. The Maharaja Abu Bakar stood head and shoulders above them in energy, ability and administrative experience. Moreover, a clause in the treaty of 1855 said that if Sultan Ali or his heirs desired to relinquish their title to Muar, it was to be offered in the first instance to the British, and then to the Maharaja's family. Though the late Sultan's sons had expressed no such desire, Anson appeared to have made up his mind that their connexion with Muar should be terminated. In reply to Tunku Alam's request for recognition as successor to his late father, Anson told him not to expect this as the title had merely been 'continued by courtesy to Sultan Hussain Mohamed Shah after he had sold the sovereignty of Johore to the Temenggong, and which title has now, therefore, become extinct'.² Apart from erroneously ascribing to Sultan Hussain a deed concluded by Sultan Ali, Anson misinterpreted the treaty of 1855. That treaty had expressly laid down that Sultan Ali 'his heirs and successors, shall have and enjoy [the Muar territory] in full sovereignty and property forever'.³ But expediency and a strong

the late Sultan of Johore. The original manuscript correspondence is scattered in CO273/92-5. For different versions of the affair, see A.E.H. Anson, *About Others and Myself*, London, 1920; An Old Resident [W.H. Read], *Play and Politics*, London, 1901. Cf. also R. Winstedt, *op. cit.* pp. 113-16.

¹ PLCSS for 1878, Appendix 40, Maharajah to Anson 30 June 1877.

² Ibid. Anson to Tunku Alam 5 July 1877.

³ Article 3, treaty of 1855, see Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* p. 128.

personal preference for the Maharaja more than anything else guided the Acting Governor. He knew that Muar had been neglected and ill-governed by the late Sultan Ali. From its proximity to Malacca the British had a direct interest in its orderly administration and development. Reasoning that the Colonial Office would refuse to annex Muar, he decided to act in accordance with Jervois' policy by appointing the Maharaja guardian of Muar with a view to encouraging and assisting him ultimately to gain full possession of the territory.¹

Despite the fact that the Maharaja enjoyed the confidence of the Colonial Office, which remained wedded to a policy of non-expansion, the Secretary of State had some reservations about Anson's decision. Commenting on Abu Bakar's appointment as guardian of Muar, Lord Carnarvon wrote: 'It may be difficult to remove him and still more difficult to make the Chiefs believe that he is removable'.² Subsequently he informed the Governor that the British Government was unprepared to impose the Maharaja on the inhabitants of Muar against their wishes in order to reward the political services of Abu Bakar. He suggested that the Straits authorities should only recognize as Sultan a rightful claimant, according to Malay custom, who was acceptable to the people. The Secretary of State further advised that a final decision on the matter might be deferred until the arrival of the new Governor.³ The Assistant Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Meade, thought it necessary to address a strong private warning to Anson to be 'very careful' about the 'Muar business' and to allow the new Ruler to be freely chosen by the people. 'Who is to be the ruler of this little state we do not care two pins', he said, 'and though Her Majesty's Government would like to have a settled government on the borders of Malacca, they are not prepared to do wrong that right may come.'⁴

This warning arrived too late to prevent Anson from taking another step in his plan for placing Muar under the Maharaja's rule. The latter brought to Singapore in his own vessel the

¹ CO273/91 Anson to CO 6 July 1877.

² Ibid. Carnarvon's minute of 13 September 1877 on Anson's despatch of 4 August 1877.

³ Ibid. CO to Anson 3 September 1877.

⁴ Ibid. Meade to Anson 14 September 1877.

Temenggong and chiefs of Muar who, at a meeting in Government House, declared themselves in favour of Abu Bakar rather than Tunku Alam. When informed, the Secretary of State had doubts as to whether this was an honest expression of their views. He reiterated that the advantages of having a settled government in Muar must not be purchased at the expense of setting aside the rightful heirs. His suspicions were confirmed, for soon afterwards, these chiefs of Muar wrote to Anson to protest at the pressure put on them. The *Straits Times*, the leading local newspaper, also criticized the Straits Government's role. Consequently, at that juncture, the Secretary of State declined to sanction the permanent annexation of Muar to Johore.¹

Meanwhile Anson had further connived in the Maharaja's manoeuvres to obtain permanent control of Muar. It was agreed between them that the Muar chiefs should meet to elect their Ruler. On the date fixed for the election, however, Anson was no longer in Singapore, the new Governor, Sir William Robinson, having assumed his duties on 30 October 1877. Robinson sent a Straits official, A. M. Skinner, to see that the elections were carried out in as impartial a manner as possible. As expected, the Maharaja was elected by the 'unanimous vote' of those present, who, it later transpired, had no right at all to vote. But Skinner had insufficient knowledge of local customs, and since he reported his impression that, on the whole, the voting had been spontaneous, if somewhat hurried, Robinson felt disinclined to interfere. As for the permanent officials at the Colonial Office, they heard with relief that 'the fittest man both for the State and the Straits Government' had been chosen.² The then Secretary of State, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who had replaced Lord Carnarvon in a Cabinet reshuffle, found himself confronted with this *fait accompli*. In his opinion, he had no option but to acquiesce, albeit reluctantly, in what he trusted was 'the true choice of the people of Muar'.³ Subsequently as more facts about the Muar election came to light, a Parliamentary Under-Secretary grumbled that the affair had been 'grossly mismanaged' and that 'everyone all round' was more or less to

¹ Ibid. CO to Anson 25 September 1877.

² Ibid. See minutes on Robinson to CO 14 November 1877.

³ CO273/93 CO to Robinson 20 April 1878.

be blamed.¹ Nevertheless, instead of considering the possibility of reopening the question, he too accepted the suggestion of the permanent staff that the British should try to ease their conscience by seeing that Tunku Alam was 'squared' by the Maharaja.

It may be argued that Anson had forced the hand of the metropolitan authorities. Yet the fact remains that despite Tunku Alam's protests and the allegations of some influential Singapore residents that the so-called election was irregular, the Colonial Office accepted the incorporation of Muar into the state of Johore, whatever its misgivings about the treatment meted out to the descendants of the late Sultan Ali. This step seemed to reconcile the fundamental requirements of its Malayan policy, viz., that the Colony should promote peace and trade in frontier regions without assuming new responsibilities.² The Colonial Office also hoped that British support for Abu Bakar who had 'raised himself up to the position of an enlightened ruler of an unenlightened community' would encourage others to follow his example.³

Abu Bakar thus became *de facto* sovereign of the whole of Johore and adviser to the Negri Sembilan states with the exception of Sungai Ujong. Perhaps the last important act performed by Anson before he returned to Penang was to preside at a conference of the Negri Sembilan chiefs. Yam Tuan Tunku Antah together with the chiefs of the Sri Menanti confederation, and others from Johol, Rembau and Muar, all assembled at Segamat to confer with and obtain advice from the Maharaja regarding the government and opening up of their respective states. It was Anson's intention that Johore's hospitality and the good understanding between himself and the Maharaja should impress those present and give them increased confidence in the 'two Governments'. He was optimistic that the arrangements initiated by Jervois and which he had carried through, would usher in a new era of peace and prosperity for these

¹ CO273/92 Lowther's minute of 23 January 1878 on Robinson to CO 13 December 1877.

² Cf. Carnarvon's defence of British policy in the House of Lords, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol. ccxvi, 1341-50.

³ CO273/94 Cox's minute of 22 August 1878 on Robinson's despatch 5 July 1878.

states bordering on Malacca, Sungai Ujong and Selangor.¹ Whether or not these expectations were justified remained to be seen.

From 1878, however, the tide of official opinion in the Straits began to turn against the Maharaja and the policy of trying to attain British ends by using him as a means. In February, the Governor, Robinson, privately intimated to de Robeck of the Colonial Office that 'everybody' in the Settlements wished that Muar had been annexed to Malacca and that the rest of the Negri Sembilan might be brought under the Residential system.² Then, when Abu Bakar asked to be recognized as Sultan in August, the Governor categorically refused to support the request. He argued that Abu Bakar had no right to the royal title; that Malay royalty did not consider him their equal, the Sultan of Trengganu for instance, having refused to sit down to a dinner with him. Robinson added that the whole Peninsula would be incensed by such a recognition, for the Sultans of the other states would consider that Britain was exceeding her powers if she were to place in their ranks one who did not have a right to such a position. Finally, in view of the recent Muar succession question which still agitated the minds of not a few people, Robinson was afraid of an 'ebullition of adverse public opinion, European and Native' if the British Government were to acknowledge Abu Bakar as Sultan of Johore.³

Having been just ten months in the Straits, Robinson's knowledge of local affairs must necessarily have been limited and he appears to have been guided to a great extent in this matter by the Assistant Colonial Secretary, Frank Swettenham. Swettenham was one of the first cadets to pass the competitive examinations and joined the Straits service in 1871. After a period of apprenticeship in the Secretariat in Singapore during which he mastered spoken Malay, Swettenham was posted to Penang and Province Wellesley where he acted as interpreter to the Lieut.-Governor, had charge of the Lands Office in Province Wellesley and carried out the magisterial duties attached to the

¹ CO273/91 Anson to CO 25 August 1877.

² CO273/93 de Robeck's minute of 28 March 1878 on Robinson's despatch, 9 January 1878, in which he refers to a private letter from the Governor.

³ CO273/95 Robinson to CO 14 August 1878.

collectorate. In July 1872 he accompanied the Governor, Sir Harry Ord, on a political visit to Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan. Subsequently Swettenham participated in operations against the Larut 'pirates'. Under the Governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, he went on several missions to the west coast states in 1874 before becoming Assistant Resident in Selangor later in the year. Just as Clarke had found his knowledge of Malay useful, so did the next Governor, Sir William Jervois, who took him along when he visited the east coast. Then, during the pacification of Perak, Swettenham earned distinction for himself. By that time, he had acquired a reputation for his grasp of Malay affairs, his tact in dealing with Sultans¹ and chiefs, not to mention such qualities as courage, energy, zeal, a pleasing personality and a balanced judgement.² In 1877, when the Assistant Colonial Secretaryship was created, Jervois accordingly selected him for this appointment. From then on until his transfer to Selangor in 1882, Swettenham visited and reported on the Malay States besides dealing with the correspondence on their affairs at the Secretariat. His position was obviously influential, and the less a Governor knew about the peninsular states, the more he tended to rely on Swettenham. Therefore, when Swettenham prepared a long memorandum³ in which he cited official records and drew upon his knowledge of local history to refute Abu Bakar's claim to a royal title, and to explain why it would be impolitic for Britain to accede to the request, Robinson accepted his conclusions. It was evident to the Colonial Office that the Governor's despatch breathed 'the spirit of Mr. Swettenham's memorandum'. Sir Robert Meade hoped that he would not be so far influenced by Swettenham's views as to adopt a hostile attitude towards the Maharaja.⁴ On

¹ Parkinson, *op. cit.* p. 183 quotes a letter to the Governor from the Selangor Sultan in which he wrote of Swettenham as follows: 'He is very clever; he is also very clever in the customs of Malay Government, and he is very clever in gaining the hearts of Rajahs and sons of Rajahs with soft words, delicate and sweet, so that all men rejoice in him as in the perfume of an opened flower.'

² Cf. Sir Frank Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, London, 1942, *passim*; and *DNB* 1941-51, pp. 855-7.

³ Enclosed in CO273/94 Robinson to CO 5 July 1878.

⁴ CO273/95 Minutes on Robinson to CO 14 August 1878. Swettenham's reservations concerning the Maharaja may have been due, among other

the whole, the officials believed that the case against the Maharaja had been overstated. In yielding to the Governor's opinion, Sir Robert Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary, maintained that there was 'no little advantage in the abstract (when dealing with Orientals more especially) in selecting for special favour and support such princes as are loyal and intelligent and govern well'.¹ Herbert was to retain this attitude towards Abu Bakar for the rest of his official connexion with Malayan policy. His minute was incorporated into the despatch to the Governor. The despatch also said that the Secretary of State agreed with the Governor in thinking that the time was inopportune for extending to the Maharaja the recognition he desired. It omitted to mention, however, what was understood at the Colonial Office, that the British Government would not risk the possible consequences of obliging the Maharaja when no practical political advantage was involved.

At any rate, official opinion in the Straits was now less favourable to the Maharaja than before probably because the forward-looking school of thought in Singapore, to which Swettenham belonged, preferred the Government to take direct responsibility for the Malay States instead of building up the Maharaja's authority. Anson's handling of the Muar succession undoubtedly gave rise to a strong feeling in certain official and unofficial circles that the Government had gone too far in sacrificing its obligations for a doubtful advantage. Again, comparing the results of the Residential system with the alternative of utilizing indigenous agents advised by the British, they became further convinced that for the attainment of British objectives the former was superior to the latter. Presumably influenced by information provided by Swettenham, Robinson reported to the Secretary of State that the British Residents in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong had achieved far more by way of introducing an efficient administration and developing their states than the Maharaja had in Johore over a much longer period

things, to the fact that the latter had supported anti-British elements in Selangor in the 'seventies. See Cowan, *op. cit.* pp. 102-3, 162 and C.H.H. Wake, 'Nineteenth Century Johore—Ruler and Realm in Transition', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1966, pp. 305 ff.

¹ CO273/95 Herbert's minute 7 October 1878.

—over thirty or forty years—relying on British advice only.¹

But opinions alone could not move the Colonial Office to reconsider its previous decision not to extend the Residential system. The officials were determined that the arrangements made for Negri Sembilan and Muar ought to be given a fair trial, and that the British Government should wait and see how well the indigenous authorities conducted their affairs under the terms of the treaties concluded in 1876 and 1877 before rejecting this alternative. Even in regard to the three west-coast states to which Residents had been sent, the Colonial Office remained reluctant to indicate to the men on the spot whether the British Government intended to withdraw gradually from these commitments, or approved of a strengthening of control leading ultimately to annexation. No doubt the Secretary of State found it convenient to leave these questions open, but it meant that the Residents and the Governor had to shoulder the blame should anything untoward occur.² Addressing the Secretary of State on 29 April 1879, Robinson maintained the necessity as well as desirability of a system of British control in the Malay States. He went further and declared that annexation must take place sooner or later. To enable him to pursue a consistent course of action, he asked that the Colonial Office might give him a private intimation to this effect. If he were to receive such an indication of British intentions, he assured the Secretary of State that he would make no noticeable change in the conduct of public affairs. But just the knowledge that he was dealing with future British territory would enable him to do more for the Malay States than under the existing circumstances. He urged the Secretary of State to assure him at least that Britain had no intention of receding from the *status quo*.³

Even that assurance the Colonial Office was not yet prepared to give, in case the local officials should interpret it as a sign to go forward rather than stand still. While Robinson was considered a safe man the calibre of his successors could not be foreseen. The Colonial Office had had enough experience of

¹ CO273/101 Robinson to CO 29 April 1879.

² Cf. CO 273/94 Correspondence between the Governor and Hugh Low, Resident of Perak, enclosed in Robinson to CO 13 June 1878.

³ CO273/101 Robinson to CO 29 April 1879.

Straits Governors such as Ord, Clarke and Jervois, who lacked the 'eccentric quality'¹ of obeying orders, to take any future risk if they could help it. Perhaps events in other parts of the Empire at that time increased the Secretary of State's reluctance to give the Straits authorities any rope. Sir Bartle Frere in South Africa had just plunged the Government into a war against the Zulus in January 1879 at a time when British forces were already involved in hostilities with Afghanistan, and despite repeated warnings from the Colonial Office that Britain had more than enough to cope with.² It is thus understandable that the Colonial Office preferred to 'let well alone' in the Malay States. 'Some time must elapse' the Permanent Under-Secretary wrote, 'before the question of altering the existing status either in one direction or the other [could become] ripe for settlement.'³

Events however between then and May 1880 strengthened the case for a review of British policy. As previously mentioned, the Colonial Office had decided to await the practical results of the arrangements made for Muar and Negri Sembilan. So far, aside from protests by the disappointed son of the late Sultan Ali, and communications from the Temenggong and penghulus which varied according to the pressures put upon them either for or against Abu Bakar, nothing had actually occurred to indicate the success or otherwise of the settlement recently made. Then suddenly, in December 1879, disturbances broke out in Muar. The *Straits Times* published exaggerated accounts of the outbreak, while W. H. Read resumed his attacks in the legislative council on the Straits Government's role in procuring Abu Bakar's election as Ruler of Muar. And again, Lord Stanley of Alderley took the case up in the House of Lords.⁴ From the evidence produced at a subsequent inquiry, it

¹ Salisbury's remark on Colonial governors quoted by Lady Victoria Hicks Beach in *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach*, London, 1932, vol. 1, p. 72.

² At about this time too, the Government of India favoured an aggressive policy towards Upper Burma but was restrained by the Cabinet. See D.P. Singhal, *The Annexation of Upper Burma*, Singapore, 1960, p. 37, and J. Nisbet, *Burma Under British Rule and Before*, vol. I, London, 1901, p. 45.

³ CO273/101 Minutes by Hicks Beach and Herbert 12 and 13 June 1879.

⁴ CO273/104 See CO notes on Lord Stanley's questions; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. cclii, pp. 628-30. Lord Stanley, a diplomat

transpired that members of the Straits community had encouraged if not instigated the incidents in Muar in order to force the British Government to reopen the question.¹

Shortly after these disturbances, hostilities on a small scale took place on the Malacca frontier between Haji Sahil, the penghulu of Rembau, and Syed Hamid of Tampin. To understand their dispute, it is necessary to explain the latter's status. Tampin, a district bordering on Malacca, had formed part of Rembau until 1832 when Syed Shaban, the son-in-law of Raja Ali, then Yam Tuan Besar of the Negri Sembilan, was installed as Yam Tuan Muda or overlord of Rembau.² Tampin was assigned for his maintenance and separated from the rest of Rembau where power remained with the penghulu or territorial chief, and the *lembaga* or heads of clans. Moreover, for assisting the British at Malacca in the Naning war, Syed Shaban had obtained as his reward a plot of land in Malacca town so that he lived alternately at Malacca and Tampin.³ But Syed Shaban was unpopular with the Rembau chiefs apparently because he was not of royal blood. When he died in 1871, his son Syed Hamid could not establish his claims to the position of Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau. In the course of his efforts to obtain such recognition, he supported one of the two claimants for the penghuluship of Rembau: Haji Mustaffar. It so happened, however, that the other claimant, Haji Sahil, obtained an acknowledgement of his title from the Johore Government when he accepted the treaty of March 1877 already described. But that treaty was invalid because according to the constitution of Rembau all Acts of state required the assent of the eight lembaga and they had not formally accepted it.⁴ At any

and orientalist, had visited Malaya in the 'sixties. He was a Muslim and often spoke in the House of Lords on behalf of Asians. The affairs of the Malay States attracted his interest and he frequently asked questions about them. He was an outspoken critic of Anson's action and British policy in regard to the Muar succession.

¹ CO273/103 Anson to CO 29 April 1880 with enclosure.

² C.W.C. Parr and W.H. Mackray, 'Rembau; one of the Nine States: Its History, Constitution and Customs', *JSBRAS*, No. 56, December 1910, pp. 20-21. Also see Wilkinson, *op. cit.*

³ *Ibid.* Also cf. D.F.A. Hervey, 'Rembau', *JSBRAS*, No. 13, June 1884, p. 250.

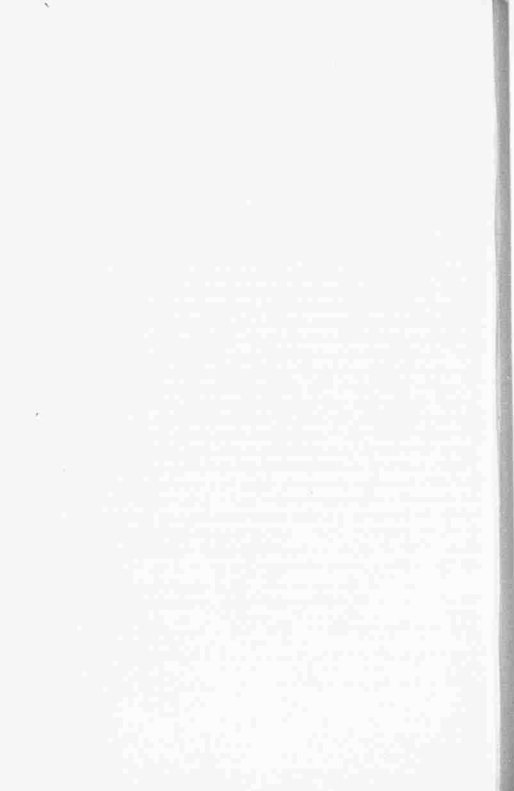
⁴ Parr and Mackray, *op. cit.* p. 22; Winstedt, 'Negri Sembilan', *op. cit.* p. 72.

rate, to settle old scores with Syed Hamid and with the hope of making himself more popular with the lembaga, Haji Sahil decided to lay claim to Tampin as part of Rembau. Robinson tried to smooth out their differences by summoning both of them to meet him at Malacca. But instead of proceeding thither, Haji Sahil appealed to the Maharaja—his adviser under the terms of the treaty of 1877. As Abu Bakar was then abroad on a trip to Europe, nothing was done to clarify the situation. The feud between Haji Sahil and Syed Hamid simmered until early 1880 when Anson was once more administering the Straits Government after Robinson's departure from the Colony and before the arrival of his successor. It seems that when Haji Sahil complained to Anson that Syed Hamid refused to comply with his demands, he was advised to 'take his own course' to enforce them.¹ From this Haji Sahil assumed, rightly or wrongly, that the British considered his claim justified and that both the Maharaja, who had since returned to Johore, and the Straits Government, would not prevent him from using force although Anson had not actually advised him to make war on Syed Hamid. At all events, Haji Sahil proceeded to raid, attack and finally overrun Tampin. Syed Hamid was then in Malacca and he began to recruit mercenaries and make other preparations for the recovery of Tampin. He had the sympathies of the Resident Councillor of Malacca, D. F. A. Hervey. Referring to these minor disturbances on the Malacca frontier, the *Singapore Daily Times*² asked why the British Government did not intervene to stop the 'little war' because in these 'turbulent states' a fire once started was likely to spread.

This then was the situation which confronted the new Governor, Sir Frederick Weld, when he assumed his duties early in May 1880. With his arrival, British policy towards the Malay States entered a new phase.

¹ Lovat, op. cit. p. 272; Weld to Anson, 26 May 1880, to be found in a collection of Governors' Miscellaneous Letters in the Singapore National Library.

² *Singapore Daily Times*, 20 April 1880.



PART ONE

THE EXTENSION OF BRITISH
POLITICAL CONTROL
1880-1889





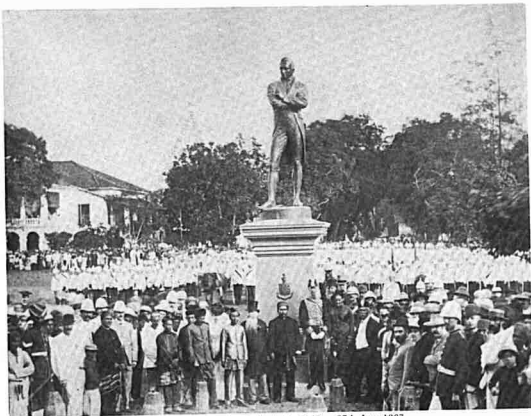


PLATE I *Unveiling of Raffles' Statue at Singapore by Sir Frederick Weld on 27th June 1887.*
Standing at the foot of the statue (l. to R): Yam Tuan Antah of Sri Menanti; Sir John Frederick Dickson, Colonial Secretary (white beard and black top hat); unknown Malay chief; Sir Frederick Weld; Lady Weld; H.H. Sultan Abu Bakar, Johore.

I

RESUMPTION OF THE
FORWARD POLICY

THE NEW GOVERNOR was in his late fifties, 'very tall, slim and erect, with great ease and grace of carriage'.¹ His fine figure, white hair and beard gave him an air of distinction and patriarchal dignity which might not have been an asset in governing Europeans but in the East, where respect for age was traditional, it was probably helpful. The fact that he had spent most of his life in outposts of the Empire meant that Weld was more sympathetic towards the aspirations and problems of European settlers than the feelings of those who sat behind their desks at the Colonial Office reading despatches and writing minutes. As a young man of twenty, Weld had gone out to settle in New Zealand. He remained there for twenty-four years during which time he became a member of the executive council, Minister for Native Affairs and finally Premier in 1864. Three years later, Weld was appointed Governor of Western Australia and, after five-and-a-half years, proceeded to a similar post in Tasmania.² His past experience had given him a firm belief in England's colonizing mission and capacity for improving the condition of 'natives'. It was also probably due to his long sojourn overseas that he took an intensely patriotic interest in the progress of British power everywhere. 'It was good news to hear of Gen. Roberts victory', he remarked in a letter to Anson.³ Then in October 1882 he was 'jubilant' over the result of the 'Egyptian affair'.⁴ These attitudes and convictions Weld brought with him to Malaya together with an outlook suffused with a sense of superiority and self-righteousness—qualities shared by many late Victorians.

¹ A. Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld: A Pioneer of Empire*, London, 1924, p. xv.

² *Ibid.* *passim*.

³ Weld to Anson 22 November 1880, among Governors' Miscellaneous Letters in the Singapore National Library.

⁴ KP Weld to Kimberley 4 October 1882.

Weld's ideas and inclinations predisposed him to the counsels of the officials in Singapore and in the Protected Malay States¹ who were eager to paint the remaining Malay States red on the map. Thomas Braddell, the Attorney-General with long local experience, considered that Britain should have exclusive influence from Johore in the south to Kedah and Patani in the north of the Peninsula. He had played a major role in Sir Andrew Clarke's intervention in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong; and notwithstanding the murder of the first British Resident of Perak, Braddell remained of the opinion that duty as well as self-interest demanded that Britain should introduce the 'first principles of progress and happiness' to all the Malay and Islamic states, leaving to Bangkok those peopled mainly by inhabitants of Siamese origin and the Buddhist religion.² This view was shared by the Assistant Colonial Secretary for Native Affairs, Frank Swettenham. Swettenham had welcomed Clarke's policy. He regarded the Residential system as the most effective method of 'opening up' the Malay States and the best solution to the problem of the disturbed frontier.³ After ten years' service in the Colony and the Malay States Swettenham was considered an expert on Malay affairs. His influence on Robinson, as we have seen, was noted at the Colonial Office. And Weld, like his predecessors Robinson, Jervois and Clarke, soon conceived a high opinion of Swettenham's ability and knowledge of the local scene.⁴ On one occasion the Governor even felt it necessary to explain to the Secretary of State his frequent favourable references to Swettenham.

Of Mr. Swettenham, you will perhaps think I have said too much, but if Your Lordship will look into his record in the C.O. List, it will fully bear me out. Excepting Mr. Cecil Clementi Smith (the Colonial Secretary)⁵ there is no officer here that is his equal. Taking

¹ For the purposes of this study, the term 'Protected Malay States' or 'Protected States' shall be used for those under the Residential system.

² CO273/134 Braddell to Swettenham 12 March 1882.

³ Cf. Frank Swettenham, 'Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula', *JSBRAS*, No. 6, December 1880, *passim*.

⁴ KP cf. Weld's letters to Kimberley, 9, 28 June 1881 and 4 October 1882.

⁵ Cecil Smith came to the Straits Settlements from Hong Kong in October 1878 with the reputation of being an authority on Chinese affairs, cf. G.B. Endacott, *A History of Hongkong*, London, 1958, *passim*; *Straits Times* 7, 16 August 1878.

him all round—with his sense of self-confidence (without which no man can do much) and somewhat unpleasant brusqueness of manner, he may formerly have made some enemies, but that is toning down, and he is too superior a man not to have seen his own youthful fault and corrected it.¹

Among others of the forward school of thought was Hugh Low, Resident of Perak,² whom Weld visited and stayed with in July 1880. The Governor thoroughly approved of Low and what he was doing in Perak. 'The Resident is a man after my own heart', he recorded in his diary on 31 July, 'a noble fellow with a true sense of duty—an Englishman of the best type.'³ Low's views on policy, too, the Governor found most agreeable.⁴

It was not only what the Governor heard, but what he saw for himself in the Peninsula during the early months of office, that moulded his ideas as to what British policy should be in Malaya. He spent the latter part of June, the whole of July and some of August 1880 touring Malacca, Sungai Ujong, Selangor, Perak, Penang and Kedah. He was impressed by the 'magnificent endowments and capabilities' of the Peninsula.⁵ Vast fertile areas on the west coast appeared suitable for the cultivation of coffee, sugar, tea, pepper and other products. Tin there was in abundance. Perak possessed 'immense mineral resources';⁶ much the same could be said about Selangor. And what was there to prevent the Governor from assuming that the other states were equally well-endowed? It excited him to think that these regions merely required security of life and property, and a larger population, to be profitably developed. Writing to the Secretary of State in August 1881, Weld said: 'We must look

¹ KP Weld to Kimberley 4 October 1882.

² Low had been secretary to Raja James Brooke of Sarawak in 1848. He remained twenty-nine years in Labuan in various posts, then went to Perak as Resident, after Birch's death, to organize the administration and reconcile the Malays. Under his guidance Perak made remarkable progress. He was there from 1877 to 1889; received a KCMG in 1883 and GCMG on his retirement. For further details about Low and his work in Perak, see E. Sadka, ed., 'Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxvii, part 4, November 1954.

³ Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 304.

⁴ CO273/104 Weld to CO 21 October 1880.

⁵ CO275/24 Governor's speech to the Legco 21 October 1880.

⁶ Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 304.

to the development of the great resources of the Malay Peninsula for the extension of our trade. It has not a million inhabitants . . . it ought to have twenty million.¹ On another occasion he expressed his keen desire to help British capital 'establish new industries in the Straits of Malacca and open out new fields for British commerce and for the consumption of British manufactures, now, it would appear, sorely needed by the producer'.²

Such comments by the Governor whether in despatches, private letters or official speeches, indicate that the prosperity of Britain and the Colony was for him a primary concern. From the 'seventies, it was the opinion of many in the Straits that the remedy for the ever-narrowing area open for free trade in South-East Asia was to find 'fresh fields for trade and investment' in their own hinterland where they would be safe from the tariff restrictions of other European colonies.³ At the time of Weld's arrival in Singapore, the finances of the Colony were satisfactory; revenue exceeded expenditure in all the settlements excepting Malacca. But looking ahead, and taking into consideration local complaints about increasing restrictions on Straits trade—for instance with Aceh⁴—Weld soon adopted the view that the continued prosperity of the Straits Settlements depended largely upon the development of the peninsular states. Not merely the colony but Britain herself then seemed in need of new markets and sources of raw material. An industrial depression which descended on England in the late 'seventies did not lift until the following decade. Weld and others began to think that Britain faced a precarious future. As a patriot, it gave him an added sense of urgency regarding new openings for British trade. To Kimberley he said, 'one thing is clear to me . . . if we ourselves do not labour to extend markets for our goods and to find consumers, nobody else is likely to help us to do so'.⁵

Just as the need to create colonial markets loomed large in the Governor's mind early in the 'eighties, so did the possibility

¹ KP Weld to Kimberley 10 August 1881.

² PP C.3095 (1881), Weld to CO 20 August 1880.

³ Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, 1961, p. 25.

⁴ CO273/108 and 109, Weld to CO 9 April, 27 August 1881.

⁵ KP Weld to Kimberley 17 January 1882.

of 'foreign intrusion' in the Peninsula. The frequent appearance of Russian vessels in Malayan waters in 1880-1 left him slightly uneasy.

Russian ships and soldiers pass here almost every other day. They learned a lesson in the Crimean war which they have profited by. They cannot be the first naval power in Europe, but they may be elsewhere. Their naval forces cannot effectively strike at the head but they may by striking at the extremities, paralyse the head. At present they appear to be the most striking naval power in the East and I see nothing to prevent them in the event of a sudden war from taking our coaling stations or destroying our commerce. It is fortunate that the atmosphere is not surcharged with thunder clouds at this moment.¹

Returning to the subject a few months later, he expressed his inability to understand why the Russians were keeping 'such an immense squadron at and about Singapore and making such a mystery of their movements'.² His uneasiness increased on hearing a rumour that Russia had her eye on some island or 'point of quasi-Siamese territory' lying between Province Wellesley and British Burma near the Isthmus of Kra where a canal had previously been proposed and was then being revived. 'The Russians' Weld added, 'had lately carefully' studied the ground when their fleets were in the vicinity.³ Despite Kimberley's assurance that Britain had no fears regarding Russian designs either in Siam or the Peninsula,⁴ Weld remained watchful.

His chief anxiety from 1881 was caused by the French who renewed their conquest of Tongking and Annam, resuscitated Cambodian claims to border provinces then held by Siam, and made persistent efforts to extract from the Bangkok authorities various concessions, including one for the construction of a canal across Kra.⁵ Owing to the colonial activity displayed by France in mainland South-East Asia on the one hand, and by Holland in the archipelago on the other, Weld considered it advisable for Britain to safeguard her paramountcy in the Peninsula and thus forestall any possible rival. Although the Dutch were

¹ Ibid. 22 August 1880.

² Ibid. 17 May 1881.

³ Ibid. 10 August 1881.

⁴ Ibid. Kimberley to Weld 22 September and 15 December 1881.

⁵ CO537/45 FO to CO 21 November 1881 with enclosures about various schemes for a canal across the Isthmus of Kra.

debarred from intervening in the Malay States as a result of the treaty of 1824 with the British, no such understanding about their respective spheres of influence in South-East Asia existed between Britain and France. Ruling out the Dutch, France was the only European power with substantial colonial possessions in the neighbourhood. The intensification of French pressure on Siam, and their ambitions openly proclaimed by French officials in Cochin-China as well as in journals published at Saigon, gave rise to some apprehension in the Straits lest the British Government should one day discover the French established within the Siamese sphere of influence in the Malay Peninsula. In the dark as to the metropolitan government's intentions towards Siam and France in the area, or of Siamese policy for that matter, the Governor's often exaggerated fear of 'foreign intrusion' is understandable. And this fear grew with the estrangement between France and Britain over Egypt in 1882, followed by the extension of Anglo-French rivalry to other parts of the world.

Turning from the external to the internal situation in the Peninsula, Weld found further cause for dissatisfaction with the policy pursued since 1876, according to which the three Residents were to interfere as little as possible in affairs outside their authority in their respective states while the Governor was to refrain from advancing British control. The former attitude in the recent election of a Dato Klana for Sungai Ujong had already led to results which the Colonial Office regretted. On that occasion because the Resident, Captain Murray, had been prevented from using his influence to obtain the election of a satisfactory candidate for the vacancy, it went to one who was 'weak alike in will and intellect'.¹ Although when Weld took over as Governor, he felt bound to recognize the new Dato Klana Lela Setia, he pointed out to the Colonial Office the mistake of refusing to exercise British influence.² He equally

¹ He also proved to be a spendthrift and an opium smoker who neglected his duties. His subjects later complained against him and asked that he should be deposed. In 1887, he was persuaded to spend the rest of his days in Singapore.

² CO273/104 Weld to CO 21 August 1880. The Secretary of State observed that it would 'probably be necessary to exercise a more decided influence in determining questions of succession in these Malay States in future'. See Kimberley's minute 13 October 1880.

disapproved of Anson's policy in the Muar question, as well as the final settlement of the succession. At the risk of a little more trouble, he considered that the British Government ought to have supported the legitimate candidate; if necessary, even advising him in the government of Muar.¹ Several times he made it clear to the Colonial Office that he regretted 'the ousting of the ancient Sultan's family from Muar, and giving that territory to the Maharaja, who was ineligible by all Malay custom, to the prejudice of our own reputation and to the bitter injury of a family to whom we owed much,'² to the abandonment of our very valuable reversionary rights and to the serious weakening of our legitimate influence and power over the little inland states, that form . . . the Malacca frontier'.³

In addition to thus criticizing accomplished facts, the Governor construed as further evidence against the policy of advice through the Maharaja, the recrudescence of minor disorders on the Malacca frontier and unrest in the Sri Menanti group of states. In the Introduction we referred to the Rembau-Tampin dispute in which the penghulu of Rembau, Haji Sahil, resorted to force to regain possession of Tampin. On Weld's arrival in Singapore, he ordered the belligerents to stop fighting and submit their differences to his arbitration. Pending a settlement, he directed Rembau men to withdraw from Tampin.⁴ He duly reported to Kimberley as follows:

It is unfortunate that the peace should have been broken and that the breaker of the peace, the Dato Perba of Rembau, should have had any grounds for thinking that he was acting in a manner not displeasing to the Government and pleasing to the Maharajah who is, by I think an unwise clause in a treaty, recognized as his adviser. The Maharajah, however, has behaved exceedingly well. When I said that all fighting must stop, he promised at once to support my

¹ CO273/104 Weld to CO 12 May 1880 and 11 August 1880.

² It was from Sultan Ali's father that Raffles had obtained Singapore. When Sultan Mahmud of Riau-Johore died, the throne was claimed by two of his sons: Tunku Hussain and Tunku Abdul Rahman. While the Dutch supported the latter who resided at Riau, Raffles upheld the claims of the elder son, Hussain, whom he acknowledged as Sultan, in order to establish the East India Company's right to Singapore. Subsequently when Hussain died, his son Ali succeeded to the title of Sultan though this was not recognized by the other branch of the royal family in Riau.

³ CO273/113 Weld to CO 23 January 1882.

⁴ Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 272.

view though it was a change of front for him—but I am sure your Lordship will agree with me that little fires are dangerous, and may spread, and had better be extinguished at once when small.¹

Shortly after he had thus conveyed his views to the Secretary of State, the Governor received complaints from some chiefs of the Sri Menanti confederation against their Yam Tuan, Tunku Antah, and the Maharaja.² The latter had sent his agent, Enche Andak, to Sri Menanti 'as a sort of Resident of those states'³ after the conclusion of the agreement of November 1876, whereby the chiefs of Ulu Muar, Jempul, Terachi, Gunong Pasir, Inas and Johol had jointly recognized Tunku Antah as Yam Tuan and promised to refer their disputes to the Maharaja. Thereafter, Tunku Antah seemed not to have consulted the lembaga (or clan headmen) on matters prescribed by custom, preferring instead to take advice from the Maharaja or his representative. Those by-passed were displeased and therefore complained to Weld when he visited Malacca.

This state of affairs, so it appeared to the Governor, boded ill for the future tranquillity of the area. Comparing these results of the experiment of exercising influence through the Maharaja with those achieved by British Residents in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong, he became convinced that the latter was by far the better method of promoting peace and commerce. Besides, he considered it essential for the Malay States to understand clearly that Britain was the paramount power, and the Governor the supreme authority in the Peninsula. To prevent any misconception among the Malay ruling class regarding the role of Johore, Weld thought it advisable to deal directly with them. This meant, however, that the Maharaja should cease to advise these states; and that in short, the existing treaties of 1876 and 1877 which established the Maharaja's connexion with the Negri Sembilan states had to be erased and replaced. However, the direct extension of British influence and control without the Maharaja as an intermediary—what Weld had in mind—required the sanction of the Colonial Office and also the exercise of such diplomatic finesse that

¹ KP Weld to Kimberley 30 May 1880.

² Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 284.

³ R.O. Winstedt, 'Negri Sembilan: the History, Polity and Beliefs of the Nine States,' *JMBRAS*, vol. xii, part 3, 1934, p. 73.

Weld once described it as trying to clear 'both Scylla and Charybdis'.¹ To what extent he succeeded in both respects remains to be seen.

So far, we have discussed the probable influence of individuals and events on the Governor's thinking about policy and noted his expansionist convictions. There was, moreover, an element of personal ambition in his motivation. Weld seemed more than usually anxious to be well thought-of, appreciated and proved right. For example, he made it a point to tell Anson that Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'had spoken in very complimentary terms' about him to a colleague shortly before his Straits appointment. He added that Hicks Beach had something in mind for him 'simply on account of the reputation' which Weld enjoyed at the Colonial Office.² In his private letters, Weld never tired of recounting the 'great success' he had scored in this or that state.³ Writing to his brother, he even described how 'an old fellow called Bongsu' from the Sri Menanti confederation loved him with enthusiasm and expressed it with effusion; how he brought the Governor some rice from his new crop and insisted that he could not swallow a grain of it until Weld had eaten some. This, Weld explained, was because of his gratitude⁴ to the Governor for having settled a dispute between him and Tunku Antah. Perhaps Weld's constant anxiety to be a 'great success', whether as Governor of Tasmania or the Straits Settlements, was due partly to the fact that he had entered the colonial service late in life and could not look forward to retiring on a substantial pension unless he was promoted or his emoluments increased in recognition of his good work. His family numbered a dozen, including his wife, and he tried to get a transfer from Singapore to Ceylon—then considered a prize appointment. As he explained to Kimberley, he 'must look' to his family 'if public service enables it'.⁵ But Weld was not counting on the Ceylon post. He had already determined to make the most of his stay in Malaya. In April 1882 he mentioned to Kimberley, half in jest but half seriously, that the Colonial Office might soon need

¹ KP Weld to Kimberley 10 April 1881.

² Governors' Miscellaneous Letters: Weld to Anson 4 June 1880.

³ Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 394. ⁴ *Ibid.* p. 355.

⁵ KP Weld to Kimberley 17 January 1882.

to appoint a 'High Commissioner or Governor General of British Malaya and Borneo', in which case, his services were available.¹

From the start Weld took a greater interest in the Malay States than the Colony for the simple reason that he saw more scope for empire-building and furthering his ambitions in the former whereas he would merely be involved in the 'gross details of administration'² in the latter. So he left the Colonial Secretary to deal with Straits affairs while devoting himself to the expansion and organization of British control in the peninsular states. Despite frequent bouts of gout, lumbago and other ailments, the aging Governor travelled untiringly from state to state, up and down the Peninsula, first in the decrepit *Pluto* purchased for the Colony in 1870, and subsequently in a new steamer which the Colonial Office allowed him to have as a result of his persistent requests.

To prepare the way for action, Weld elaborated his ideas on policy in a despatch to the Secretary of State dated 21 October 1880.³ He suggested that the future of a country, which was the key to the Far East, should not be left to chance. He urged that Britain should have a clearly-defined policy towards the independent Malay States on the one hand, and the three Protected States on the other. The Resident of Perak, Hugh Low, the Governor went on to say, concurred with him in thinking that the Protected States were making satisfactory progress; and with every year of peace and prosperity, it became less likely that the *status quo* would be disturbed. In the existing situation, Weld pointed out that there were three possible courses: first, to prepare to retire from the Protected States; second, to annex them; and third, to continue as long as possible the existing system of advice 'discreetly given but firmly administered' in the Protected States, while with regard to the rest of the Peninsula south of Siam, to increase British influence gradually as the occasion offered.

Of these possibilities, Weld rejected the first because he believed that it would have meant the return of anarchy; the

¹ Ibid. 24 March 1882. The British North Borneo Company had been granted a charter in 1881 and hence the significance of Weld's remarks.

² Lovat, *op. cit.* p. xii.

³ CO273/104 Weld to CO 21 October 1880.

Malays had not been taught to govern themselves. 'We are merely teaching them', he said, 'to co-operate with us and govern under our guidance.' With typical Victorian superiority, Weld considered that 'Asiatics' would never learn the art of government. 'Good native government', in his opinion was not 'a plant congenial to the soil, and every year native rulers are confronted with greater difficulties owing to the growth of a foreign, and especially a huge Chinese population.' Even if Johore were to be quoted against this view, the Governor argued that Johore was an exceptional case due chiefly to a combination of fortuitous circumstances; its proximity to Singapore; the absence of a large Malay population with quarrelsome chiefs; and above all the fact that Abu Bakar had 'spent all his life amongst Europeans' and received advice from his own European agents and lawyers as well as successive Governors of the Colony. But Weld pointed out the uncertainty of Abu Bakar's successor doing likewise. He was convinced that only the British Government could be relied upon to govern the Malay States properly. The Governor further claimed that Britain had an obligation towards foreign capital which had been invested in the Protected States in the confidence that the British would remain in control.

Therefore, according to the Governor, if a withdrawal was inexpedient, so was annexation. He thought that countries like the Malay States required a 'somewhat elastic form of government', with justice and firmness tempered by tact and discretion: in other words, a 'mild and equitable despotism', rather than 'a system which approaches more nearly the purely British one' prevailing in the crown colonies. The influx of European capital and economic development would continue, Weld assured the Secretary of State, so long as it was known that Britain had no intention of withdrawing from her participation in the internal affairs of the states concerned.

There remained the third alternative which Weld warmly recommended to the Secretary of State, viz., that the British Government should maintain the *status quo* in the Protected States and extend the Residential system to other states whenever possible. With regard to the latter, he believed it advisable to begin with informal advice and financial assistance which would slowly make the Malay chiefs dependent on the British

instead of subjecting them at once to an all-powerful Resident.

The immediate reason for Weld's despatch was the imminent visit to Singapore of Bendahara Wan Ahmad of Pahang,¹ a state situated on the east coast, but contiguous with Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Perak. In fact the Bendahara was already in Johore. Since his accession in 1863, he had never visited Singapore despite several invitations from Weld's predecessors. His change of mind, the Governor surmised, was due to the increased prosperity of the Protected States. Weld assumed that the Bendahara now desired British advice in order to lift Pahang from its 'stagnation'.² He informed the Secretary of State that alliance with a state so large, so rich in resources and important geographically would 'do much' to consolidate Britain's position and influence in the Peninsula.

At the time this despatch was written, the officials then in charge of Malayan affairs at the Colonial Office were Sir Robert Herbert, the permanent head of the department, and Sir Robert Meade, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State. Another Assistant, Sir John Bramston, occasionally minuted on the papers from Singapore, especially when legal questions were involved. Both Meade and Herbert, we have noted in the preceding chapter, were Liberals. Herbert had been private secretary to Gladstone and then to the first Governor of Queensland. Subsequently, he rose to the position of Premier of Queensland in 1860. He returned to England in 1868 where he first received appointment to the Board of Trade and then to the Colonial Office as Assistant Under-Secretary. In 1871, Herbert was appointed head of the permanent establishment—a position which he held for twenty-one years. He and John Bramston were life-long friends; their connexion having begun in their student days. They had later gone out to Queensland together and were

¹ Pahang had once formed part of the ancient empire of Malacca, being ruled by a minister of the Sultan known as the Bendahara. But as the Sultanate decayed and the royal court moved to Johore when Malacca was captured by the Portuguese, and subsequently to Riau, the Bendaharas of Pahang became practically independent. In 1853 the Bendahara finally severed his allegiance to his nominal suzerain. For the early history of Pahang, see W. Linehan, 'A History of Pahang', *JMBRAS*, vol. xiv, part 2, 2, May 1936.

² See Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 317.

now both at the Colonial Office.¹ As for Meade, after acting as Lord Granville's private secretary, he was given an Assistant-Under-Secretaryship in the Colonial Office in 1871. Like Herbert, he stayed there for over twenty years.²

All three of them recoiled from the idea of extending the Residential system. Bramston was afraid that once the Colonial Office relaxed its attitude towards the question of expansion in the Peninsula, some Governor might resort to annexation on the plea that events had forced his hand.³ Meade, who had watched over the introduction and development of the experiments in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong, distinguished between two 'widely different classes' of Malay States apart from those already under the Residential system. These were Kedah, Patani, Kelantan and Trengganu on the one hand; and the several states of Negri Sembilan, Pahang and Johore on the other. Whereas the former he described as tributary to Siam, the latter were independent of any foreign influence save that of Britain. Such influence was still confined to giving informal advice when requested, guaranteeing boundary and other arrangements and trade. Meade considered that the Governor should by all means cultivate good relations with the chiefs of these 'independent' states, advise them when approached but abstain from becoming involved in their administration.⁴ In other words, although more than four years had passed since his minute of 27 June 1876, which had formed the basis of the despatch⁵ informing Jervois that the British Government was 'unwilling' to extend the experiment with Residents, Meade's views remained unchanged.

Since 1876, however, the Colonial Office had received ample evidence from Malaya on the success of the experiment. Low in Perak had not only conciliated the Malays but also made good progress in the task of creating a modern administration. A similar state of affairs prevailed in Selangor. Everywhere the Governor went, he reported on the friendly attitude of the

¹ DNB Second Supplement 1901-11, vol. i, p. 253.

² Ibid. vol. xxii, London, 1909, pp. 1030-1.

³ CO273/104 Bramston's minute of 11 January 1881 on Weld to CO 21 October 1880.

⁴ Ibid. Minute by Meade.

⁵ CO273/84 Meade's minute of 27 June 1876 and CO to Jervois 19 August 1876.

Malays and Chinese. All three Protected States also showed increasing revenues. Perak had enough for ordinary expenditure and public works as well as for the liquidation of its debts to the Colony.¹ The tin industry was flourishing in both Perak and Selangor. Experimental gardens had been started in Perak while the cultivation of coffee, pepper and cocoa had begun in Sungai Ujong. Immigrants were pouring in. Further, Weld reported on the European interest shown in the mining and agricultural possibilities of these states. In contrast, signs had since appeared that despite the Maharaja of Johore's willingness to collaborate with the British he could neither maintain order nor speedily 'open up' the small states of Negri Sembilan. Despite such evidence brought to their notice by the Governor who sought to discredit the existing policy, Colonial Office officials still preferred to let well (or ill) alone rather than allow the Governor to resume the forward policy.

Only the Secretary of State thought differently. At that time Lord Kimberley held the portfolio for colonial affairs in Gladstone's second ministry, formed after the Liberals won the general elections in Britain early in 1880. During his previous term as Secretary of State for the Colonies (1870-3) in Gladstone's first ministry, Kimberley's decision to intervene in the Malay States, and consequent instructions to the Governor, Sir Andrew Clarke, had paved the way for the extension of British control in 1874-5.² Kimberley did not share Gladstone's aversion for imperial responsibilities. Indeed, his return to the Colonial Office in April 1880 was hailed with delight in Australia as a distinct guarantee that the policy of maintaining the integrity of the Empire would not be changed.³ For 'real sympathy with colonial aims and aspirations' Kimberley was known as one of the best Secretaries.⁴ And yet he was not rigidly expansionist. In August 1880 he opposed the suggested annexation of Samoa.⁵ Likewise, in January 1882, Kimberley declared

¹ CO273/90 Acting Governor to CO 6 March 1877; PP C. 2410 (1878-9) *Instructions to the British Residents and other Papers relating to the Protected Malay States*; see also Weld's despatches between June 1880 and May 1881 in PP C. 3095 (1881).

² Cowan, *op. cit.* p. 165 et seq.

³ *Singapore Daily Times* quoting the *Melbourne Argus*, 31 May 1880.

⁴ H.L. Hall, *The Colonial Office*, London, 1937, p. 60.

⁵ Granville Papers, PRO 30/29/135 Kimberley to Granville 24 August 1880.

that Britain had enough territory in West Africa and should not consider a protectorate over the Cameroons merely to keep out the French.¹ Nonetheless, whenever a forward step seemed advisable because Britain's basic interests were involved, Kimberley showed no hesitation. In the case of the Charter for the British North Borneo Company, for example, he believed that if the British Government remained indifferent, Spain, the Netherlands or Germany were likely to acquire North Borneo. Should this occur, British trade was bound to suffer from their restrictive policies. Furthermore, on strategic and political grounds, Kimberley thought that the presence of any of these powers in Borneo would be most undesirable: Germany, especially, would be too powerful a neighbour, and a danger to British interests in the Malay Peninsula and Australia. Consequently, when the question came before the British Cabinet in October 1880, he expressed himself firmly in favour of the Charter.² A few months later, on reading Weld's policy despatch together with the opinions of his staff, Kimberley agreed generally with the Governor's views. He endorsed Weld's suggestion that Britain should neither withdraw nor annex but retain the Protected States and also extend her influence. Kimberley, unlike the officials, would not restrict the appointment of Residents 'to the States which now have Residents'. He even foresaw the necessity of placing a Resident in Johore whenever a new man should succeed Abu Bakar; unless 'the Governor of Singapore should virtually exercise the powers of a Resident himself'.³

The actual despatch to the Governor was worded in more general and cautious terms:

Her Majesty's Government would view with satisfaction that the intercourse between the Straits Government and the Malay States should assume a character of more intimate friendship, but no measures involving a change in the relations of those States to the British Government, beyond what is already sanctioned, should be taken

¹ Ibid. Kimberley to Gladstone 2 and 14 January 1882.

² Ibid. PRO 30/29/143 Kimberley's memo. of 22 October 1880. For more information about Borneo in this period, see G. Irwin, *Nineteenth-Century Borneo: A Study in Diplomatic Rivalry*, The Hague, 1955.

³ CO273/104 Minute by Kimberley, 14 January 1881 on Weld's despatch.

without instructions from home; except for temporary purposes in case of urgent necessity.

The general policy which should be pursued is to avoid annexation, to encourage the Native Rulers to govern well and improve their territories, and only to interfere when mis-government reaches such a point as seriously to endanger the peace and prosperity of the Peninsula.¹

This despatch and Kimberley's minutes suggest that 'peace and progress' were the immediate considerations underlying his decision in favour of closer relations with the Malay States. These were the words he had used in commenting on the Governor's despatch though in the official reply, quoted above, 'prosperity' appeared for 'progress'. The British Government was always anxious to promote law and order in areas adjoining territories under its control on administrative and political grounds. We noted, for instance, that British intervention in the mid-'seventies had been due partly to the disturbances in the west-coast states which endangered the peace and security of the Straits Settlements.) Of equal if not greater importance perhaps was the fact that there could not be 'progress' (which many late Victorians tended to regard as synonymous with economic growth), without peace and 'orderly government'. Thus it may be argued that on this occasion, political and economic considerations—not the fear of foreign intervention—prompted Kimberley's thinking about the Malay States. Viewed from Whitehall in 1880-1, European rivalries in South-East Asia were really more dormant than active. The possibility of an external threat was neither mentioned in Weld's policy despatch nor in the Secretary of State's minutes. Instead, the emphasis was on the attainment of orderly government and the promotion of economic enterprise. That Kimberley had a 'great interest' in the development of the Malay States, he admitted after his transfer to the India Office in December 1882. Writing privately to Lord Ripon, the Governor-General of India, in February 1883, he asked the latter to 'expedite' the decision of the Indian Government on the question of immigration to Malaya. Straits policy then was to encourage Indian immigrants in order to meet the growing demand for labour in the Colony as well as the Protected States. Kimberley accordingly suggested that

¹ CO273/104 CO to Weld 11 February 1881.

Ripon should facilitate such a movement of labour from India to the Straits Settlements; adding, that he 'took a great interest in the progress of these States' which, under British guidance, 'bid fair to afford a valuable field for European enterprise'.¹

Whatever Kimberley's motivation, there is little doubt that his despatch of 11 February 1881 encouraged the Governor to attempt a more active policy towards those states outside the sphere of British control. While it is true that the extracts quoted above did not actually sanction an extension of the area under British protection, yet the opening statement and even the reservations allowed the Governor room to manoeuvre. To a great extent, the metropolitan authorities had to rely on the judgement of the man on the spot. If he were to recommend a certain course as an 'urgent necessity' and provide evidence to substantiate his view, then the Colonial Office would normally hesitate to contradict his assessment of the situation. And a forward step once taken, even for supposedly 'temporary purposes', was likely to lead to, or harden into, a permanent arrangement. In view also of the fact that unrest was endemic in the small states behind Malacca, it was not difficult for a forward-thinking Governor to justify intervention on the grounds that the misgovernment prevalent in this or that state was bound to lead to disturbances which would spread and thus threaten the 'peace and prosperity' of the Peninsula. These implications of the despatch the Governor must have perceived. But he chose to act cautiously instead of hastily.

His first move was in the Sri Menanti group of states owing to repeated complaints received by the Resident of Sungai Ujong against Yam Tuan Antah. The dissensions within this confederation, the Governor maintained, were likely to result in anarchy and bloodshed unless the differences between Tunku Antah and his territorial and tribal chiefs could be resolved. Weld therefore summoned the parties concerned to meet him at the police station at the top of Bukit Putus pass on the Malacca frontier.

On 29 March 1881 Weld, accompanied by Captain Murray, Resident of Sungai Ujong, and Frank Swettenham—but without the Maharaja who was supposed to be ill—proceeded to

¹ B.M.Add. MS. Ripon Papers 43523, vol. xxxiii, Kimberley to Ripon 23 February 1883.

Bukit Putus. There the Governor's party found Tunku Antah, Tunku Ahmat (one-time claimant for the position now held by Tunku Antah), the Dato's of Muar, Terachi, Jempul, Gunong Pasir and Johol including the clan chiefs and practically the whole population of the surrounding district. The crowd was so large that 'there was barely standing room on the narrow open ridge'. Though most of them were armed with the *kris*, they were orderly and quiet. There was even a guard of honour consisting of 120 men. Weld addressed those present concerning the intentions of the British Government and the Maharaja's status. He explained that since disputes within the Sri Menanti confederation had continued under the agreement of 1876, the time had come for 'the highest power and authority'—that of the Queen's Government—to intervene. Tunku Antah then requested that all communications between the British Government and the confederation should be made through the Maharaja of Johore who understood Malay customs better. In reply, the Governor dwelt on the advantages of direct relations to prevent misrepresentation and misunderstanding. He also pointed out that the agreement of 1876 did not make the Sri Menanti confederation dependent on Johore. They retained their autonomy in internal affairs; and even in the case of inter-state disputes where reference to the Maharaja was prescribed by treaty, Weld maintained that 'the final decision must rest with the British Government as the highest authority'.¹ Having thus justified his right to deal with them directly, the Governor next advised Tunku Antah to abide by local customs; to consult his territorial chiefs and clan headmen; and to reinstate a minor chief named 'Angki (or Orang Kaya) Bongsu'. He urged the others to show tolerance and to support their Yam Tuan. The Governor left with the impression that Tunku Antah, though intelligent, was too easily influenced by 'whomsoever may be at his side'. For the information of the Colonial Office, he repeated Murray's opinion that a 'more easily governed people' than those of Sri Menanti did not exist.² He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the outcome of the conference, yet one suspects that Tunku Antah's preference for the

¹ CO273/108 Weld to CO 9 April 1881 with enclosure.

² Ibid. See also Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 334.

Maharaja as the intermediary between himself and the British Government continued to rankle.

The Governor next began to doubt the nature of the Maharaja's influence on the Malay chiefs—whether he was furthering the purposes of the Straits Government or his own private ends—as a result of developments involving the Bendahara of Pahang. Prior to 1880, relations between the Rulers of Pahang and Johore had been anything but cordial. During the Pahang civil war of 1858–63, both the Maharaja Abu Bakar and his father had opposed Wan Ahmad who eventually obtained the throne. Thereafter, a border feud prevented a reconciliation. Ill-feeling between them continued into the 'seventies when they supported opposing factions in the Selangor wars.¹ Sir Andrew Clarke had tried to heal the rift and what his efforts failed to achieve the passage of time probably erased, for the Maharaja took the initiative and paid a visit to the Bendahara of Pahang in August 1880.² About two months later, the latter returned the courtesy. After all, the Maharaja's wife was his niece.³ The Bendahara remained for several weeks in Johore, crossing occasionally to Singapore where he stayed a few days at Government House. Weld noted the following in his diary:⁴

October 20th The Bendahara arrived this morning. . . . He settled to go first to Johore, as had been previously arranged. He came in the Maharajah's steam-yacht, accompanied by about three hundred followers in small crafts. . . .

October 27th Much preparation made for the Bendahara's visit. Sent four-in-hand to Reservoir to meet him. He arrived with the Maharajah and a large retinue. His kris-bearer and another official followed him everywhere; he also had a large train of attendants. He is a slight, elderly man with a pleasant expression of countenance and smile. . . . We had an official dinner. . . .

November 4th Drove the Bendahara in four-in-hand to the Reservoir. He told me he should like to visit Singapore every two or three years. Also that he thought he could by acting on my advice, do much to improve the state of his country—to which I replied that though I obtruded my advice on no one I was glad to give it when asked.

¹ On these events, refer to Linehan, *op. cit.* Chapter vii.

² *Singapore Daily Times*, 9 August 1880.

³ She was Che Engku Chik, a daughter of Wan Ahmad's brother—Wan Mutahir.

⁴ Lovat, *op. cit.* pp. 318–19.

The Bendahara's remark to the Governor during their drive to the Reservoir must have raised the latter's hopes of closer relations with Pahang. A few days before this, moreover, Weld seemed to have given the Maharaja some indication of his intentions towards Pahang and asked Abu Bakar to use his influence with the Bendahara. There is a reference in the Governor's diary on 26 October 1880 to a 'long and satisfactory conversation' with the Maharaja who said, 'If I saw a thing as clearly as the sun in the heavens, and you saw it differently, I would yield [my opinion] to you. You are my Father, and I wish always to take advice from you.' 'Very oriental' commented the Governor, 'but I think he meant it.'¹ Having thus paved the way for his policy, and believing that the Bendahara was inclined to seek British advice, the Governor must have attached significance to the Bendahara's observation of 4 November 1880. He expected the Bendahara to raise the subject again—and he had ample opportunity to do so during his prolonged stay in Johore and Singapore—but the Pahang Ruler remained silent. And Weld himself refrained from taking the initiative, partly because he wished to avoid the impression of pressing the Bendahara and partly because he awaited the reply from the Colonial Office to his despatch on policy. This reply arrived in March 1881 and the Bendahara returned to Singapore and Johore in December for the festivities in honour of the visit of Queen Victoria's two grandsons—Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales. But still the Governor waited in vain for the Bendahara to ask for British advice. Finally, unable to contain himself any longer, Weld broached the idea of a treaty of friendship between the Straits and Pahang Governments which would include a clause providing for a successor to the Bendahara's throne. At an interview, with Frank Swettenham interpreting, Wan Ahmad mentioned that he wished his eldest son, Tunku Mahmud, to succeed him. Nevertheless he declined to commit himself either on this or on the question of a treaty without first consulting his chiefs.²

This probably disappointed the Governor who had expected a more favourable response to his overtures. Had a counter-influence been at work? Could it be that the Maharaja had

¹ Ibid. p. 318.

² CO273/114 memorandum enclosed in Weld to CO 19 April 1882.

usurped the role *vis-à-vis* Pahang which Weld desired? He noticed the *entente* between the two Rulers. He heard too that 'Johore men' appeared to 'shepherd' the Bendahara closely on his visits to Singapore.¹ Then, apparently at the Maharaja's suggestion, Wan Ahmad assumed the title of Sultan and asked for British recognition.² Under these circumstances, Weld surmised that the Maharaja had not been acting for but against his Pahang policy.

It did not occur to Weld that he had mistaken the purpose of the Bendahara's visit to Singapore in the first instance, or that he had read too much into Wan Ahmad's statement of 4 November 1880. On that occasion, the Pahang Ruler was just trying to be polite and respectful to his host. At most, he could only have meant personal and informal consultations with the Governor on how best to develop Pahang and thus increase his personal wealth. There was no reason at all for him to ask for British control. Perhaps Weld never thought of such an explanation for the Bendahara's behaviour. Nor, it seems, did the Assistant Colonial Secretary for Native Affairs—Frank Swettenham—allay the Governor's suspicions about the Maharaja. On the contrary, he may have strengthened the Governor's misgivings. We do know that Swettenham disliked the policy of extending the Maharaja's authority and elevating his status. As Assistant Colonial Secretary for Native Affairs and the Governor's interpreter, Swettenham was in a position to influence Weld's thinking. He could easily have argued that Abu Bakar was ambitious to occupy *vis-à-vis* Pahang the status which he had gained, through British support, in Negri Sembilan as a result of the treaties of 1876 and 1877. Just as Negri Sembilan had once formed part of the Johore empire, so had Pahang. Swettenham's analysis of the situation could well have helped to mould the Governor's ideas about Abu Bakar's intentions.

At any rate, by January 1882, Weld was sure that the Maharaja aimed to be 'Sultan of Johore and gradually extend his influence over the other States'. 'It is a natural aspiration' he observed, 'and one especially in accordance with Malay nature, which cannot be happy without an undercurrent, I will not

¹ CO273/113 Weld to CO 23 January 1882.

² Ibid. enclosed in Sultan Ahmad to Governor 26 October 1881.

say of intrigue, but a secret object to pursue.¹ Having reached the conclusion that the Maharaja's purpose was now at variance with British policy, Weld felt the need for a further clarification from the Colonial Office of the position that the Maharaja was to occupy in British relations with the Malay States.

On 23 January 1882² the Governor addressed a despatch to the Colonial Office to warn the Secretary of State not to assume that the Johore Ruler would always heed the counsels of the British Government in important matters: '... it must be remembered that he is by nature vacillating, and after he has received advice, possibly from the Governor himself, he will run to that lawyer, or this merchant, possibly to some sporting friend, and consequently cannot be relied on to act according to his first intentions'. He went on to outline the first of two policies towards the Maharaja and its results.

The one is to let the British Government remain as much as possible in the background, to throw all possible influence into the Maharaja's hands and extend his actual territory as occasion may serve. This policy has been defended on the ground that the real guidance is retained, whilst the responsibility is conveniently evaded, and that 'it will come to the same thing as in the long run it must all fall one day into our own hands'. In accordance with this policy the Maharaja has received the GCMG and the KCSI—decorations which have a great effect upon Malays, which have not been conferred upon any Governor of the Straits Settlements, nor upon Malays of much higher rank than the Maharaja. So also with regard to salutes. What is even more important, in accordance with this policy, the Treaty of 1876 named the Maharaja as referee between the little 'Negri Sembilan' states on our frontier—a most mischievous provision which had led to that fighting on our borders which I stopped on my arrival. . . . No doubt the Maharaja in that case acted on what he had reason to suppose were the Administrator's wishes, but had the responsibility lain where it in my opinion ought to have rested, no fighting would have commenced. This Treaty has also conducted by an unwarrantable but natural stretch of interpretation to the present state of affairs in the 'Negri Sembilan' which is not altogether satisfactory. . . . The Maharaja keeps an agent in these states, and I have no doubt but that his agents, with or without his knowledge, there represent him to be Sultan of Johore, and as pos-

¹ CO273/113 Weld to CO 23 January 1882.

² *Ibid.*

sessing the rights . . . which were recognised at one time throughout the Peninsula, but which by no process of argument can be held to be vested in the Maharaja, although he has now possession of the last piece of territory that belonged to the ancient house. . . .

From the point of view of British interests, Weld considered this policy of encouraging the Maharaja short-sighted as well as dangerous. By placing too much power in the hands of one man, the Straits Government, he thought, was giving him the means to use it against itself. Annexation might be precipitated should this power fall into the hands of a Ruler who did not recognize, as did the Maharaja Abu Bakar, the extent to which he was dependent upon the British. Furthermore, Weld questioned the wisdom of extending the territory of a so-called 'enlightened Ruler' who tried to increase his revenues by encouraging enterprise, because this Ruler treated all revenue as private income and spent an 'infinitesimally small' sum of money on development projects for the benefit of his country. Instead of the policy described, Weld recommended an alternative course: ' . . . that the British Government should accustom the Malays and other races to look to it direct as the adviser, arbiter and general friend of the various Malay States that are now more or less under its influence; and by its acts strengthen their confidence that no intention is entertained of increasing the power of any one person or state at the expense of the independence of others.' He made it clear, however, that he was opposed to 'any sudden reversal of policy'. He assured the Secretary of State that he only wished to work 'gradually and quietly' for the extension of direct British control whilst remaining 'on the most intimate and friendly terms with the Maharaja, occasionally consulting with him, and giving him all possible assistance with his own State'.

Thus Weld plainly rejected the indirect method of promoting British influence adopted by Jervois and Anson in a period when the Colonial Office had refused to allow an extension of the Residential system. Now that Kimberley in his general policy despatch had indicated a readiness to 'view with satisfaction' the establishment of a 'more intimate friendship' between the Malay States and the British Government, the Governor ventured to suggest that the Maharaja should no longer be used as an instrument of 'peace and progress'. His despatch of

January 1882 sought a clearer mandate for the direct extension of British influence and control.

The officials at the Colonial Office were reluctant to give the Governor such encouragement. While admitting that there were 'fair grounds' for criticizing the details of Abu Bakar's administration, De Robeck felt that the Governor's pen, like that of Sir William Robinson's when he had written about Abu Bakar, was influenced by Swettenham.¹ Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary, alleged that Weld was 'unconsciously rather jealous of "our good friend" the Maharaja of Johore and his decorations',² and perhaps the Maharaja had become a little too independent and self-asserting. 'I would let the Governor see' he said, 'that we do not at all want him to make any change of policy. Let him leave well alone.'³ To this the Secretary of State would not agree. Kimberley remarked that 'as usual' there was another side of the picture, yet he thought the Governor right in his main view that Britain should not encourage the Maharaja's pretensions. At the same time he considered that the British Government ought not to recede from the concessions 'already (with doubtful policy perhaps) made'.⁴

After careful consideration, the final version of the despatch to the Governor stated that 'as regards the Native States generally', Her Majesty's Government had no wish to encourage any of the Maharaja's pretensions to supremacy over the smaller states. But they did not think it advisable 'to make any attempt to withdraw the concessions already made to him'. The Secretary of State reminded the Governor that the Maharaja's connexion with the Negri Sembilan states was not independent but exercised under certain conditions, with the sanction of, and subject to, the intervention of the British Government, should necessity arise; and with regard to Muar, the British Government had made their recognition conditional upon the Maharaja's continued good government. The despatch concluded as follows: 'Whilst however in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government it is undesirable to disturb the existing arrange-

¹ CO273/113 de Robeck's minute 6 March 1882 on Weld to CO 23 January 1882.

² Viz. the GCMG and KCSI.

³ Ibid. Herbert's minute 9 March 1882.

⁴ Ibid. Kimberley's minute 11 March 1882.

ments, the general line of policy pursued by the Colonial Government should be such as to inspire confidence that no intention is entertained of further increasing the power of any one native Ruler or State at the expense of the independence of others.¹

From the above statements, two things emerge. First, the Secretary of State now categorically rejected any extension of the experiment of relying on the Maharaja to further British interests in the Malay States. Second, though hesitant about disturbing the Maharaja's existing connexion with the Negri Sembilan states, he reminded the Governor of his right to intervene 'should necessity arise'. The former meant that Weld could press on with his policy of cultivating a 'more intimate friendship' with Pahang² whereas the discretionary authority contained in the latter enabled him to intervene in the Negri Sembilan area.³

¹ Ibid. CO to Weld 8 April 1882.

² See Chapter III below.

³ See Chapter II below.

II

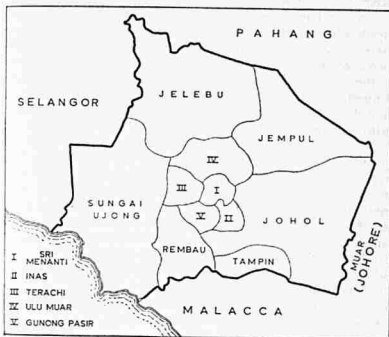
NEGRI SEMBILAN

THE NEGRI SEMBILAN area, where the Governor sought to 'advise' the chiefs without the interposition of the Maharaja, suffered from a greater degree of political instability than the other adjacent states. This was due to the weakness of the central authority; political fragmentation; the large number of lineage organizations; and constitutional procedures which were more commendable in theory than workable in practice. As Wilkinson states, 'many features' in the government of Negri Sembilan before the advent of British rule, seemed to have been 'invented for the express purpose of eliciting tumult and provoking civil war'.¹

In the Introduction above, it was mentioned how the several districts in the area had come to form an independent unit with its own paramount Ruler, the Yam Tuan Besar, and royal dynasty. The royal office descended within the royal patrilineage generally to a son or brother of the previous Ruler, but anyone of royal blood was eligible, the essential condition being that the candidate should secure the support and recognition of the four major territorial chiefs (*undang*) of Rembau, Sungai Ujong, Jelebu and Johol. The principle of unanimity prescribed by custom for this as well as other elective posts, was a major source of strife. Tradition moreover laid down a difficult constitutional role for the Yam Tuan Besar. He did not own the soil; nor could he levy taxes. Each household was obliged to contribute annually, for his maintenance, a small sum of money, a measure of rice and two coconuts. And on the occasion of a royal marriage, a circumcision, or burial, the Yam Tuan was entitled to a gift of buffaloes from the territorial chiefs. He also received presents from seekers after titles and distinctions. If his income was thus meagre, so were his powers. Occupying a position outside and above the lineage and territorial organiza-

¹ R. J. Wilkinson, 'Notes on the Negri Sembilan', *Papers on Malay Subjects: Malay History*, part 5, Kuala Lumpur, 1911, p. 42.

tion of the several districts, the Yam Tuan Besar was not supposed to interfere in the internal affairs of the component parts of the confederation unless referred to. In fact, his executive authority extended no further than the royal capital at Sri Menanti which was surrounded by an 'inner circle' of districts: Terachi, Ulu Muar, Inas, Gunong Pasir and Jempul, territories where he held more than a nominal sway; beyond lay the



Map 1 Late nineteenth-century Negri Sembilan showing the approximate location and boundaries of the component districts.

'outer districts' comprising Sungai Ujong, Rembau, Jelebu and Johol, governed independently by their own chiefs who acknowledged the Yam Tuan's nominal supremacy. Even in matters pertaining to the state as a whole, the Yam Tuan Besar was expected to assemble all the district chiefs and accept the majority decision. His already limited authority was further curtailed by the rise of minor dynasties and junior royal overlords in

Jelevu and Rembau some time during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.¹

As a result of disputes for the overlordship of the whole of Negri Sembilan in general, and that of Rembau and Jelevu in particular, the confederacy began to disintegrate. By 1880, Tunku Antah of the royal house of Sri Menanti was only acknowledged by the 'inner circle' of districts and Johol. Syed Hamid, as has been seen, claimed the Yam Tuan Mudaship of Rembau but he was not recognized by the undang, Haji Sahil, whereas in Jelevu the Yam Tuan Muda Abdulla was at loggerheads with his district chief. Although all three royal offices were primarily sought after for their prestige and ceremonial privileges, yet ambitious incumbents were bound to exceed their authority and thereby incur the hostility of the territorial chiefs. Indeed, as Gullick points out, the undang of the Negri Sembilan and their Yam Tuans lived in an 'intermittent state of warfare with each other'.²

What was more, the succession disputes and struggles for power at the highest levels of political authority were often repeated lower down between the undang of the several districts and the lembaga or clan chiefs residing within their respective jurisdictions. The undang was chosen from the *waris negri*³ (heirs of the country) according to local rules of rotation among the branches of this clan. Below the undang ranked the lembaga of the clans which numbered twelve altogether in the whole of the Negri Sembilan area but tended to appear in varying combinations of four in any one district. One was called *waris* and the rest *suku*, with names taken either from the place of their residence or of their origin in Sumatra. The former were believed to be the older inhabitants and titular owners of the soil in contrast to the latter who were considered the later immigrant clans. The waris consequently enjoyed a precedence over the others. With few exceptions, only members of the waris

¹ See P.E.de Josselin de Jong, *Minangkabau and Negri Sembilan: Socio-Political Structure in Indonesia*, Leiden, 1951, Chapter ix; A Caldecott, 'Jelevu, its History and Constitution', *Papers on Malay Subjects* (second series) no. 1, p.20; C.W.C. Parr and W.H. Mackray, 'Rembau, One of the Nine States: its History, Constitution and Customs', *JSBRAS*, no. 56, 1910, p. 19.

² J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London, 1958, p. 16.

³ For a discussion of *waris*, see Wilkinson, *op. cit.* pp. 46 ff.

clan could hold the post of undang. Here again there was room for dispute because their confirmation or rejection lay with the lembaga of the district. The details of the elective arrangements varied from place to place but the validity of the election depended on its unanimity. However the lembaga were also dependent on the undang. Though a lembaga was nominated by his clan, the choice had to be accepted by the undang who, moreover, could dismiss a clan chief if he could justify such a step to the others on the grounds that the individual concerned had committed crimes for which custom prescribed dismissal. Similarly, if all the lembaga reached agreement, they too could depose the undang.

Another source of trouble, apart from that of succeeding to an office or being removed therefrom, was the rule that an undang could make no decision involving his district without the consent of his council of clan chiefs, and occasionally other officials, such as the four *orang besar undang* of Rembau. In performing his duties as a court of appeal too, the undang dealt only with cases referred to him by the lembaga and even then consultation with his council of such chiefs was necessary. Nor could he take the initiative and interfere in clan affairs. As for his share of the revenue, this again depended on local custom. Such procedures and constitutional requirements were so difficult to implement in practice that in Rembau, for example, the relations between the undang and his clan chiefs were said to be 'normally strained'.¹

To make matters worse, 'each district was a separate political unit in which hostility to the neighbouring units was the normal state of affairs'.² The advent of the British in Sungai Ujong in 1874 and their subsequent policy of sponsoring the Maharaja of Johore as adviser to the other districts, aggravated the situation. It meant that disaffected elements and those who failed to get the better of their opponents could now seek external support either from the British or from Johore. In view of the centrifugal forces in Negri Sembilan and the numerous issues open to dispute, it was easy for the Governor to find an excuse to intervene and convince the distant Colonial Office authorities who relied upon him as their main, and often sole,

¹ Parr and Mackray, *op. cit.* p. 32.

² Gullick, *op. cit.* p. 74.

source of information, that a certain course of action was an 'urgent necessity'.¹

REMBAU

Weld turned his attention first to Rembau, the most populous of the Negri Sembilan districts at the time, situated between the British settlement of Malacca and the protected state of Sungai Ujong. Physically, it is an extension of the plain of Malacca, without any natural boundary, except at one or two points, to separate the two states. It suffered from dissensions then typical of Negri Sembilan politics. We referred elsewhere to the outstanding quarrel between Haji Sahil, the undang of Rembau, and Syed Hamid of Tampin who aspired to the position of Yam Tuan Muda. The latter was considered to be a 'restless and intriguing individual' but decidedly a 'supporter of and loyal to the British Government' whereas the former was the Maharaja's protégé whose attitude towards the Straits Government, in Weld's opinion, was never 'what it ought to have been'.² Though actual fighting between them had stopped, the Governor maintained that their feud continued to smoulder. On top of this, some of the people in Rembau became dissatisfied with Haji Sahil's conduct, accusing him of corrupt practices and of flouting customary law. They aligned themselves with Syed Hamid against the undang's supporters.

When the Governor visited Malacca towards the end of 1882, both factions tried to win his ear. So to prepare the way for action, Weld sent D. F. A. Hervey, Resident Councillor of Malacca, to Rembau to investigate the various complaints and report on the situation. In the meantime, the Governor wrote to the Colonial Office to suggest the following possible solutions of the Rembau problem.

We might quieten matters by confirming Syed Hamid's title to Tampin and Kru, by ourselves giving him compensation for losses incurred in consequence of the attack on him, made with the tacit sanction of the Acting Governor and for that reason cannot be claimed from the Dato Penghulu (Haji Sahil). . . . We might, if all consented, buy a piece of land cutting off Tampin from Rembau, between Malacca and Sungei Ujong . . . deferring the Yam Tuan

¹ See the policy despatch from the CO quoted on p. 18.

² CO275/50 PLCSS Weld's speech to the Legco, 6 July 1883.

Muda question and declaring our moral support for Haji Sahil, ask the people to give him a further trial which may probably be accompanied by our sending an officer from time to time to advise and see that justice be done, and so far as possible, that the revenue be more equitably used and distributed. Our interference would be as little as possible but it might mend matters . . . if the Dato Penghulu accepted this guidance.¹

Weld was pessimistic about the probability of Haji Sahil accepting British 'guidance' unless it was to avoid deposition. Even if Haji Sahil were to agree to the arrangement outlined above, the Governor thought that it was likely to lead, 'before long', to the Residential system. In asking for an indication of the course he should pursue, Weld reassured the Secretary of State that he would not move faster or do more than was necessary 'to avoid another little war' on the Malacca frontier. He mentioned that Thomas Braddell, the Attorney General who had just returned to the Straits from home leave, concurred with his views about Rembau. Braddell had been in the Straits since 1844 and was reputed to have a sound grasp of Malay affairs.

While these representations were being considered at the Colonial Office, a telegram arrived from the Governor informing the Secretary of State that 'most of the people of Rembau', according to the Resident Councillor of Malacca, were prepared to fight to get rid of Haji Sahil and that they wished to recognize Syed Hamid as their 'Chief Rajah'. Weld seemed to favour such a step; he indicated his readiness to 'recognize the right of Syed Hamid to live in Rembau' and compensate Haji Sahil from Straits funds. He urged a 'final decision' on the matter.²

Lord Derby had replaced Kimberley at the Colonial Office in a general reshuffle of Cabinet posts in December 1882 and he left much to the permanent officials who, in this instance, refused to be rushed into a decision. They referred the matter to Cecil Smith, Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements then spending his leave in Britain, and he maintained that there was 'no great need for haste' although the affairs of Rembau were indeed unsatisfactory. Cecil Smith thought it important to ascertain first the extent of support for Haji Sahil

¹ CO273/117 See the three despatches from Weld to CO 14 December 1882.

² CO273/119 Weld to CO 28 January 1883.

in Rembau and whether the allegations of misgovernment made against him were justified. 'I am quite clear', he remarked, 'that it is our duty to support Haji Sahil who is the acknowledged ruler of the State, as long as is necessarily possible. Then if he is to be turned out, that it should be done directly by the proper authorities in Rembau; our action being limited to easing his fall in order to avoid fighting.'¹ Meade, the Assistant Under-Secretary, agreed that the question was 'not yet ripe' for settlement. He preferred to await Hervey's report and the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Herbert, thought likewise. Herbert grumbled that he could not see why Weld should intervene in Rembau 'unless disorders within it should directly threaten the peace and safety of Malacca'.² Accepting the recommendations of his officials, Lord Derby instructed the Governor on 24 February 1883 to confine himself to advice only in adjusting the differences of the parties in Rembau.³

Subsequently, the Colonial Office received Hervey's voluminous report which shed no new light on Rembau affairs beyond confirming, so the Governor said, the case against Haji Sahil while strengthening that of Syed Hamid. Furthermore, the Laksamana Budin, a petty officer and adherent of the group which wanted to recognize Syed Hamid as Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau and also wished that Rembau should join the Sri Menanti confederation, was reported to have been murdered at the supposed instigation of Haji Sahil. Weld hastened to inform the Secretary of State that intervention was now essential to prevent the outbreak of a civil war which was likely to spread to the Sri Menanti states. In his opinion, nothing short of the Residential system or some modification of it would restore peace and order to Rembau and Tampin.

The metropolitan authorities had no means of verifying the Governor's appraisal of the situation in Rembau. Much as they disliked having their 'hands forced', they felt compelled to sanction intervention with one condition—that the Governor should avoid enforcing a settlement not unanimously acceptable to those concerned. The Colonial Office was anxious not to be involved in an entanglement of the 'Moar description'. Weld's

¹ Ibid. Cecil Smith to Meade 23 February 1883.

² CO273/119 Herbert's minute of 24 February 1883.

³ Ibid. CO to Weld 24 February 1883.

telegram in reply, however, said that insistence on unanimity would involve a war; he was sure that his decision would be quietly accepted if backed by a show of force. He explained that instead of using British troops, he intended to rely on police and Malays friendly to the Straits Government. Weld also reported that the Straits legislative council had already entrusted him with 'full powers' to handle the crisis and incur whatever expenditure he might find necessary. Hence, with considerable reluctance, the Colonial Office decided to allow the Governor a free hand. Its attitude was expressed by the Permanent Under-Secretary as follows: 'It is more than we can safely undertake with the little information we possess to refuse to consent to a course which will not be costly and will not commit us deeply but which we are assured is the only mode of averting a war which would seriously affect our settlements and the protected states.'¹

Having thus obtained permission from the Secretary of State to take appropriate action, Weld summoned all the chiefs of Rembau to meet him at Malacca on 27 March 1883; and he took the precaution of first informing the Maharaja of his intention to deal decisively with the Rembau problem. The Maharaja politely expressed a desire to assist in every way but asked to be excused from attending the conference.²

Shortly afterwards, Haji Sahil went to Singapore and through the Maharaja asked for British protection in return for an annual pension of \$800. He must have guessed that the Governor contemplated a move unfavourable to his position. Owing to his past behaviour and his connexion with the Maharaja, he was *persona non grata* in Singapore. Weld naturally rejected Haji Sahil's offer. All that he wanted, he told the Maharaja, was peace and quiet in Rembau and that he intended to have. To show the Maharaja and Haji Sahil his determination, the Governor mentioned that the Straits Government had forces ready to crush any opposition instantly although he had no intention of moving a man or firing a gun unless compelled to do so. Haji Sahil was advised to be at Malacca at the specified date

¹ Ibid. Herbert's minute 17 March 1883 on Weld's telegram 15 March 1883.

² CO273/120 Weld to CO 7 April 1883, and Weld's letter to the Maharaja 19 March 1883 in Governor's Confidential and Secret Letters.

to clear himself of the charges against him and come to terms for the future good government and peace of the country.

To the Secretary of State, Weld explained his reasons for refusing to extend the Residential system to Rembau on the terms suggested by Haji Sahil.¹ In the first place, he did not consider it a *bona fide* offer. In the second, he doubted whether Haji Sahil would prove amenable to British 'advice'. Nor did he think the majority of the chiefs and people of Rembau desired such a step. The risk of repeating the error which the British had made in Perak² in the mid-'seventies was too great for him to dare attempt a similar experiment. Yet another consideration was the poverty of the district. Swettenham had reported in 1875 that Rembau was one of the poorest states in the Peninsula with scanty mineral deposits located in areas remote from any navigable stream.³ As Weld had no reason to believe otherwise, he doubted whether sufficient revenues could be raised from Rembau to pay the salaries of British officers. He considered it altogether more expedient to move cautiously.

I am sure much trouble may be saved in dealing with Malays and particularly with Malays so little accustomed to Europeans by taking time and proceeding quietly, let them know us, and let us know them. Difficulties and fighting have come about in this Peninsula before because, as the Malays now say, they did not know us then. We pushed on too fast, they were startled like a young half-broken horse, when a rude groom shoves a saddle at him, instead of letting him see and smell it first, and the Malay soon learns that he is treated as a friend, that he gets care, justice and protection and is then quite willing to bear his share of the burden in return. Malays in Rembau like semi-civilized people elsewhere, want gentle handling; with force in the background, they soon learn that you mean no harm but much good, and I believe, that there are few happier Malays in the world than are the country Malays and villagers under our rule.⁴

¹ CO273/119 Weld to CO 23 March 1883.

² The first British Resident of Perak, J.W.W. Birch, was murdered partly because he drove the coach too fast and partly because many chiefs were opposed to British intrusion. The story has been told by M.A. Mallal in his unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Malaya, 1952, 'J.W.W. Birch: Causes of his Assassination'.

³ F.A. Swettenham 'Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula', *JSBRAS*, no. 6, December 1880, p. 196.

⁴ CO273/119 Weld to CO 23 March 1883.

Resolved that Rembau was not ready for the Residential system at that juncture, Weld left Singapore for Malacca on 26 March accompanied by Lord Clifford, his relative by marriage who was visiting him in Singapore. He was met at Malacca by W. F. B. Paul, Resident of Sungai Ujong; F. A. Swettenham, Resident of Selangor; D. F. A. Hervey, Resident Councillor of Malacca; and others such as Raja Dris, Chief Justice of Perak; Raja Kahar of Selangor; the Dato' Klana and Bandar of Sungai Ujong; the Dato' Muda of Linggi; and Yam Tuan Antah of Sri Menanti. From Rembau came Haji Sahil, Syed Hamid and twenty-three out of twenty-four of those believed to have a say in the election or deposition of the undang.¹

Swettenham, Hervey and Raja Dris were appointed to collect information and take the evidence of witnesses. When they completed their task on 30 March, the Governor decided that 'matters were ripe for action'. That evening, Haji Sahil, Syed Hamid and their respective followers gathered at the Stadt House where the Governor with his impressive *entourage* of British officials and Malay royalty entered the audience chamber at 8.30 p.m. With Swettenham as the chief interpreter, the conference lasted until after 4 a.m. the following morning.

From what transpired, the Governor was satisfied that Haji Sahil was guilty of misgovernment although he either 'flatly denied' the allegations or else 'pleaded forgetfulness'. His supporters repeated his earlier request for a Resident. As for the others, they refused to state whether or not Haji Sahil should be deposed. Did this indicate that the disaffection against him was not really as serious as the British had supposed? Or was their reluctance to voice an opinion due to their concern to avoid offending Haji Sahil? Whatever the reason, they chose to leave the decision to Weld. The Governor explained to his audience that the British Government could no longer recognize Haji Sahil as penghulu or undang of Rembau and proposed that a new undang should be elected who would be advised and assisted by the British. Immediately, the electors asked him to name a candidate. But the person proposed was found to be

¹ These were the four Orang Besar, the eight lembaga and twelve lesser chiefs of the suku. According to Parr and Mackray, op. cit. p. 49, it was essential for the eight lembaga to agree on the candidate; the dissent of the twelve lesser clan chiefs was immaterial.

ineligible according to Rembau custom where the undang had to be a member of the *baroh* (lowland) half of the waris and chosen alternately from one of its two branches: the *waris jakun* and the *waris jawa*.¹ Haji Sahil belonged to the former; so did the individual suggested by the Governor. The majority of those from Rembau however declared that it was the waris jawa's turn to provide the undang. When a nomination was made, it was again declined. Eventually, the Shahbandar Serun bin Sidin² was elected; and he, together with his lembaga, signed an agreement whereby they promised to refer to the Governor whenever there was 'trouble or dissension in the country of Rembau'. More important, they agreed to 'accept and obey' his decision.³ The intention of such a provision obviously was to prevent a resort to force in the event of disputes whether over an election or day-to-day problems and also to eliminate the Maharaja's influence.

This agreement superseded the one concluded by Haji Sahil with the Maharaja and Governor Jervois in 1877, the validity of which Weld questioned because the eight lembaga⁴ whose assent was required by custom had not participated in that contract. In contrast the 1883 agreement carried the names of not eight but nine Dato's representing the clans of the low country (*baroh*) and inland districts (*darat*). Since two names appear for the Seri Melenggang clan⁵ viz., the Dato' Mendelika Bakar and the Dato' Mendelika Sael, we may perhaps conclude that there were then two claimants for this post and both were asked to sign.

¹ According to D.F.A. Hervey, 'Rembau', *JSBRAS*, no. 13, June 1884, and Parr and Mackray, an undang from the *waris jakun* was addressed as Lela Maharaja whereas one from the *waris jawa* would be called Sedia Raja.

² The Shahbandar was one of the four *Orang Besar Undang* of Rembau who formed a sort of privy council to the district chief.

³ W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 50-51. A detailed account of the Malacca conference is given in CO273/120 Weld to CO 7 April 1883.

⁴ Both Wilkinson, *op. cit.* p. 42 and Parr and Mackray, *op. cit.* p. 20 refer to a constitutional change in Rembau from about 1832 whereby the four *darat lembaga* were admitted to the council hitherto comprising the four *baroh lembaga* only. Consequently any act of state from 1832 had to bear the signatures of all eight chiefs.

⁵ See Appendix III, 'The Constitution of Rembau', in Parr and Mackray, *op. cit.* p. 119.

Another feature of the 1883 engagement deserves notice. Malay chiefs from the other states present at the conference were also signatories and therefore obliged to assist the British to uphold its terms. Weld claimed that he had thus inaugurated 'a new phase of general policy', that is, that of co-operation amongst the Malay States and the development of British influence not under a direct protectorate.¹ The novelty of the method, as far as Rembau was concerned, remained on paper only as the need for its practical application did not arise.

Weld's Rembau policy was criticized in the Straits legislative council where two unofficials deplored the deposition of Haji Sahil and regretted that his request for a Resident had been rejected. In their opinion occasional visits, exhortations and warnings would not be effective unless a British officer actually resided in Rembau.² There was justification for their suggestion that Weld was prejudiced against Haji Sahil. The fact that he preferred to be advised by the Maharaja rather than the Governor, not to mention other considerations, must have ruined his chances of being retained as undang under Weld's scheme of direct influence and control. Nevertheless the Colonial Office, in contrast to unofficial opinion in the Council, felt relieved that the Governor had postponed introducing the Residential system. Indeed, his handling of the Rembau problem gave them added confidence in his discretion and judgement, and thereafter they allowed him a wide discretionary authority in the settlement of other disputes in the Negri Sembilan area and the extension of British control.

As far as the metropolitan authorities were concerned, Rembau represented a problem of the 'turbulent frontier' in the Peninsula. Their own strategic and economic interests were not directly involved. To the Straits Government, also, it seems that the desire for peaceful conditions was at least as strong, if not stronger, than commercial considerations. Swettenham had

¹ CO273/120 Weld to CO 7 April 1883. Several decades earlier, the Marquess of Hastings as Governor-General of India, had formulated a similar scheme for a league of states in subordinate co-operation with the East India Company as the paramount power, for the purpose of preserving peace on British frontiers. See M.S. Mehta, *Lord Hastings and the Indian States*, Bombay, 1930, pp. 18, 31.

² CO275/28 PLCSS for 1883, speeches by J. Graham, W.G. Gulland and Weld on 4 April 1883.

stated in his account of the 'independent' Malay States written in 1875 and published in 1880, previously referred to, that Rembau was not a 'rich country'; rice and fruit being at that time its only products. He mentioned too that the population contained 'many disorderly elements' and that 'escaped criminals from the Straits, aspiring but disappointed chiefs from the neighbouring states, malcontents and runaway slaves' had for years found a refuge in Rembau.¹ And Weld himself, in his despatches to the Secretary of State, never once argued that the pacification and development of Rembau would contribute substantially to the prosperity of the Colony. Its resources, agricultural rather than mineral, were modest. Though the Governor did refer to the promotion of 'peace and commerce', when he asked the legislative council in July 1883 to approve a sum of money for the construction of roads between Rembau, the other independent districts of Negri Sembilan and British controlled territories, it should be remembered that the unofficials represented mercantile interests and Weld knew that a reference to 'commerce' would carry weight. He could not ask them to invest public funds in Rembau merely for the sake of peace. Moreover, taking the Negri Sembilan area as a whole, was it not arguable that peace was an essential condition of 'progress'? Besides, the Governor's remarks included other districts of which Jelebu, for example, was believed to be rich in tin. It is therefore suggested that British intervention in Rembau in 1883 was an occasion when the problem of the 'turbulent frontier' seemed to have exerted a stronger pull than economic motives.

It was probably due to this also that the British were content to move slowly towards the establishment of their control. After 1883, the Governor and Resident Councillor of Malacca visited Rembau from time to time to advise the chiefs, settle their quarrels and supervise the building of roads financed by advances from the Colonial treasury. In the words of a member of the legislative council, 'the dollar is the best and cheapest weapon we can use in the Malay Peninsula'.² Various sums of money were accordingly handed to the chiefs of Rembau and Tampin ostensibly for road-building whereas such loans, it was

¹ Swettenham, *op. cit.* p. 197.

² CO275/30 PLCSS for 1885, p. 569.

alleged, found their way into private purses. Tampin had only four-and-a-half miles of very badly constructed roads to show for the \$8,397 advanced by the Colony over a period of two-and-a-half years. Similarly in Rembau, a total expenditure of \$19,387 on communications resulted in only five miles of tracks and bridle-paths. 'In the early stage of affairs' the Resident Councillor of Malacca noted in justification, 'money has been disbursed in a way which cannot be considered as likely to prove remunerative in a strictly business point of view, but the political effect is undoubted, as the Governor is now made the referee in even the smallest matters.'¹ And that, after all, was a chief object of Weld's policy. No longer did the chiefs of Rembau turn to the Maharaja of Johore. They found it more advantageous and in accordance with their treaty obligations to look to the Governor for counsel and material assistance. Nevertheless, continued criticism from the unofficials that money was being wasted and ill-spent eventually led to the appointment of A. B. Rathborne to supervise the laying out and building of roads on the understanding that as far as possible he was to work in harmony with the chiefs and employ local labour. What ensued is best told by Rathborne himself:

Prior to commencing work, I had to pay a formal visit to the Datoh. I was received with every courtesy, guns were fired in my honour but I recognized that, notwithstanding the apparent cordiality of my welcome. . . I was regarded with a good deal of suspicion. . . . But their mistrust was allayed when they learned that I was not going to dabble with internal politics. . . . The Datoh of Rembau was a man of strong character and great influence and thought more of the proposed road being a convenience to himself personally than to the public generally. Therefore our ideas of where it should pass were at variance; but on hearing I had also been employed by the Government of Malacca to lay out roads for them as well as to alter and deviate existing ones that joined his frontier with the town of Malacca, likewise also in other parts of the Malay States, he gave in, unconvinced and unsatisfied but not caring to argue the point any further with a person differing so much from his usual advisers who were only too ready to agree

¹ CO273/139 Weld to CO 9 March 1886 enclosing a 'Report by the Resident Councillor of Malacca upon the Expenditure of Advances made to the Native States adjoining Malacca'. Also refer to CO 273/136, Weld to CO 26 January 1886.

with all he said, and to acquiesce in every suggestion he made.¹

For several years the British confined themselves to such practical assistance and advice without directly interfering in the administration. The existing arrangement however had certain defects. For one thing, the British had no control over concessions and they discovered that Chinese tapioca planters from Malacca were taking up more and more land in the district. For another, as revenues from such concessions increased, disputes sharpened regarding its distribution among the penghulu and his chiefs. Lister explains that all waste lands were vested in the waris but the constitution merely provided for the purchase of lands for paddy fields and not for more intricate questions, such as lands for tapioca planting and mining.² The consequent 'jealousies and difficulties' obliged the Governor to intervene in January 1887 when he supported the penghulu against the few turbulent chiefs. To prevent further complications, so Weld said, he decided to obtain another agreement from Rembau in September of the same year which would give the British control over revenue and expenditure and enable them to assist in administrative matters. Presumably he was now more confident that Rembau itself, or else Rembau in conjunction with other districts, would be able to pay for its own regeneration. Initially, Weld found it difficult to persuade the penghulu and his chiefs to accept the suggestion. While they were ready to let the British collect the revenue, they demanded that such revenue should be handed over to them for spending. They remained stubborn until Weld threatened to withdraw completely from Rembau. The penghulu later remarked, 'Of course I should do anything the Governor tells me, but I thought that it would be pleasant to have all the revenue given into my hands.'³

On 17 September 1887 shortly before Weld's retirement, the 'Penghulu and Chiefs of Rembau' signed an agreement promising to leave all revenue questions to a British officer appointed by the Governor. Such an officer was not only empowered to dispose of state lands in consultation with the penghulu in

¹ A.B. Rathborne, *Camping and Tramping in Malaya*, London, 1898, p. 301.

² M. Lister, 'The Negri Sembilan: their Origin and Constitution', *JSBRAS*, no. 19, 1887, pp. 48-49.

³ CO273/146 Weld to CO 29 September 1887.

council but also to assist in the administration and exercise jurisdiction. In exchange for these powers, the Governor agreed to pay the above-mentioned chiefs one-third of the total annual revenue of Rembau.¹

In view of the Rembau tradition, observed by Weld in 1883, that the validity of a treaty depended on the acceptance of the penghulu and his council of lembaga, it is surprising to note that this document was signed and sealed only by the penghulu; one of the four *orang besar undang*, the Dato' Mentri Lela Perkasa; and a member of the lesser group of twelve lembaga, the Dato' Perba. The eight lembaga were not represented. Whether this was due to the difficulty of obtaining the signatures of the 'eight' or whether the British did not now consider it either necessary or convenient to do so, cannot be ascertained. The inclusion of the Dato' Perba and the Dato' Lela Perkasa is another departure from the 1883 treaty. In any case, Weld's successor in Singapore subsequently sent a Collector and Magistrate to Rembau and thus began a period of closer and more formal relations between this district and the Colony.

JELEBU

Returning to 1883, we find that Weld had no sooner settled affairs in Rembau than he contemplated intervention in Jelevu—a sparsely-populated district of about 500 square miles lying north-east of Sungai Ujong bordering on Selangor to the west and Pahang to the north. In contrast to Rembau, Jelevu was reported to be exceedingly rich in tin although work on these deposits by Chinese miners had been hampered by factors common to areas under indigenous rule, such as unsettled political conditions, arbitrary exactions by the chiefs and a lack of communications. Its proximity to Sungai Ujong—only five miles of roads were required to connect them—and mineral wealth, attracted the Governor's attention. He reasoned that the Resident of Sungai Ujong could easily extend his supervision to Jelevu. He was also anxious to develop Jelevu in order to improve the financial prospects of Sungai Ujong.² The latter

¹ See Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 51-52, and CO273/148 Weld to CO 11 October 1887.

² CO273/122 Weld to CO 3 and 9 September 1883. In the latter despatch, Weld mentioned that Sungai Ujong was not a 'quickly progressive' state

was the smallest¹ and least prosperous of the three Protected States with a population which was drifting away to Perak and Selangor where tin was more abundant. Between 1876 and 1881, the revenue of Perak increased from \$273,043 to \$693,861 while that of Selangor rose from \$193,476 to \$235,227 whereas in the same period, Sungai Ujong's revenue improved by a bare \$3,000 only (from \$94,478 to \$97,665).

As in Rembau so in Jelebu, internal disputes paved the way for Weld's intervention. For years the district had been the scene of strife between the royal overlord and the penghulu on the one hand, and the penghulu and his clan chiefs on the other. The Yam Tuan Muda, according to the Jelebu constitution, was merely a figurehead, a 'great snake' to be fed by the penghulu (undang). Like his counterpart the Yam Tuan Muda of Rembau, the Yam Tuan Abdulla of Jelebu could not levy taxes. He was expected to be content with the allowance allotted him by the penghulu. Even in exercising his major function as 'fountain of justice' he had to refer to the undang and lembaga. Moreover, the Yam Tuan could not by-pass the lembaga and make direct arrangements with members of any clan. Nor could he alter or initiate policy without obtaining the consent of the territorial and clan chiefs. But this constitutional theory, as Caldecott says, had always been more honoured in the breach than in the observance.²

Now Abdulla, who was recognized as Yam Tuan Muda after some fighting, tended to ignore the restrictions of his office. On 26 April 1877 he concluded an agreement with Col. A. E. H. Anson and the Maharaja of Johore on his own authority. In 1880 he put to death an officer of the penghulu's household without following the procedure prescribed by custom. The Penghulu Dato' Syed Ali therefore decided to 'root him up'. But not all the clan chiefs supported him and so the opposing parties fought it out. Those worsted in the struggle fled to Pahang from where they began to raid Jelebu. Two of them, the Dato' Mentri Ahmat and the Raja Balang Long, instigated the claim that Jelebu was part of Pahang. After some fighting,

and was 'unlikely to become so, unless Jellebu is opened out'.

¹ Sungai Ujong was 660 square miles.

² Caldecott, *op. cit.* *passim*.

Yam Tuan Muda Abdulla and Penghulu Syed Ali applied separately to the British to settle their differences, prevent Pahang encroachments on their territory and take over the government of the district.¹ Their requests became more insistent, according to Weld, after the Rembau settlement of March 1883. Hence he asked them to meet him at the Sungai Ujong Residency where they jointly signed a memorandum on 24 August 1883.²

The memorandum laid down the respective obligations of the Yam Tuan Muda Abdulla and Penghulu Syed Ali bin Zin al Jafra. Weld had refused to recognize the former's deposition on several grounds. Apart from the fact that Weld's predecessor had concluded an agreement with him in 1877, the Straits authorities had not been informed of the subsequent deposition. As the deposition had neither been valid nor effective the Governor continued to recognize Abdulla as Yam Tuan Muda of Jelebu but the latter promised not to interfere in the administration of the district or claim more revenue than was his due. The penghulu, on his part, agreed to 'render him proper homage', give him a reasonable share of the revenue and consult him on 'the larger matters of State, such as properly appertain to a Raja'. Provision was made for the Resident of Sungai Ujong to 'advise and assist' them in 'matters of administration and revenue as requested'; and that either he, or such officer as might be appointed, should supervise the collection of moderate frontier dues for the recovery of advances from the Colony for the purpose of maintaining order or improving communications to the mines. Furthermore, until proper provision could be made for the Yam Tuan's maintenance out of Jelebu's revenues, the Governor promised to pay him \$100 a month. Finally, he undertook to settle the boundary between Jelebu and Pahang.

Nine clan chiefs, in addition to the penghulu and the Yam Tuan Muda, signed this document. H. A. O'Brien,³ a Straits official who wrote an article on Jelebu after he had personally

¹ A. Lovat, *Life of Sir Frederick Weld: A Pioneer of Empire*, London, 1924, p. 364. On 12 April 1882, Weld noted in his diary that the penghulu and his waris had asked for his intervention. And in the Resident of Sungai Ujong's report for 1883, he recorded the penghulu's request for British protection.

² See Maxwell and Gibson, op. cit. pp. 53-55 and CO273/122 enclosure in Weld to CO 3 September 1883.

³ H.A. O'Brien, 'Jelebu', *JSBRAS*, no. 14, December 1884, p. 340.

visited the district in 1884, maintained that the penghulu was assisted by nine officers; five lembaga and four waris, whose consent was essential in every act of state. De Jong¹ adopts the same view. But the preamble to a subsequent agreement with Jelevu of September 1886 referred to the Dato' Penghulu 'in conjunction with the five *Waris* and three *Lembaga* constituting the Government of Jelevu'.²

Two questions which arise are: were there nine or eight clan chiefs in Jelevu and how many of these belonged to the waris? Regarding the first question, Caldecott explains that there were nine instead of eight such signatures in the 1883 memorandum because the two claimants for the office of Maharaja Inda had both participated in the contract. One of them had joined forces with Yam Tuan Abdulla against the penghulu and when he fled to Pahang, another man took his place as head of the *waris kemin*.³ Presumably the British in 1883 had not grasped the situation and hence the 'Datoh Mahrajinda Talib' as well as the 'Maharaja Inda Dolah' each placed their mark on the Memorandum. By 1886, however, the constitutional complexities of Jelevu must have been better known for the mistake was not repeated. Thus it appears that in Jelevu as in Rembau there were eight clan chiefs. This is supported by Winstedt's statement that 'multiples of four appealed to the framers of the Rembau constitution as to those of nearly all the States'.⁴

Turning our attention to the other question, it would seem that Caldecott is again more correct than O'Brien and de Jong. He says that there were five branches of the waris clan, two of which were considered more senior than the rest. They were the *waris mentri* and *waris ombi*, commonly known as the *waris yang dua*; and the *waris Ulu Jelevu*, *waris sarin* and *waris kemin*, referred to as the *waris yang tiga*. Winstedt also mentions five representatives of the waris clan out of the Council of Eight

¹ P.E. Josselin de Jong, *op. cit.* p. 141.

² Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* p. 55.

³ Caldecott, *op. cit.* p. 24.

⁴ R.O. Winstedt, 'Negri Sembilan: the History, Polity and Beliefs of the Nine States', *JMBRAS*, vol. xii, part 3, 1934, p. 81. See also M.G. Swift, *Malay Peasant Society in Jelevu* (London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, no. 29), London, 1965, pp. 14 ff. for an outline of the traditional political system of Jelevu.

which elected the undang.¹ The titles of each chief of these five sub-clans are also identifiable in the 1883 memorandum and 1886 agreement.

If therefore we accept the view that there were five waris as stated in the preamble to the 1886 agreement, then there should be only three lembaga of the other clans thus making a total of four clans or suku in Jelevu. This is substantiated by de Jong who maintains that although the Negri Sembilan area as a whole had twelve suku, four of them 'traditionally occur in varying combinations' in each district.² Yet Caldecott states that there were five clans in Jelevu or, to put it another way, four clans in addition to the waris. He names them as the Batu Balang, Tanah Datar, Mungkal and Tiga Batu. He explains, however, that the lembagaship of the Tiga Batu clan was abolished after the discontinuance of the office of Yam Tuan Muda. Since this office was formally dropped from the constitution of Jelevu in September 1886, the agreement of that date understandably did not carry the signature of the lembaga of the Tiga Batu clan with the title of Dato' Lela Angsa. Nevertheless the Yam Tuan Muda Abdulla had died in December 1884. According to Caldecott's dating of the exclusion of the Dato' Lela Angsa one would expect to find his signature in the memorandum of 1883 but that is not the case. In this respect, Caldecott's explanation is unsatisfactory and inconsistent with the more widely accepted description of the government of Jelevu as consisting of five waris and three lembaga only.³

The disagreement among contemporary and modern writers on the subject shows the difficulty of ascertaining the political and clan organization of Jelevu and the changes which occurred in its structure before the advent of British control. But from the point of view of policy, the British in 1883 were chiefly concerned with the validity of the memorandum and, above all, its efficacy as a means of improving conditions in Jelevu and developing its resources.⁴

For some time after August 1883, Weld's hopes for the district failed to materialize. The Yam Tuan and penghulu continued to be at loggerheads. The penghulu accused the Yam

¹ Winstedt, *op. cit.* p. 90.

² de Jong, *op. cit.* pp. 123, 150.

³ See Swift, *op. cit.* Chapter II.

⁴ CO273/122 Weld to CO 3 September 1883.

Tuan of exceeding his authority whereas the latter alleged that the penghulu did not fulfil his obligations. The British supported the penghulu and compelled Abdulla to sign a bond to abide by the terms of the memorandum in January 1884. When the Acting Resident of Sungai Ujong visited Jelebu in the middle of the year, he noted the effect of this and earlier disputes on the state of the district: 'The present condition of the country is truly deplorable. It bears marks of having been, at no very distant period, fairly prosperous and sufficiently peopled, but now, speaking generally, the whole land is waste. I passed the other day through mile after mile of deserted kampongs with fine padi land all round in abundance and with fruit trees still in bearing.'¹ Anyway, Abdulla died in December 1884. And there were three claimants for the office; his son-in-law and nephew; his eldest son; and his brother. Had it not been for the fact that the British were already the paramount power in the area, a war of succession would probably have followed. As it was, the penghulu asked that the post should be permanently abolished. The British agreed since it had ceased to serve any useful purpose, and especially in the interests of peace. To quote Caldecott: 'British policy was to give full support to Syed Ali . . . which, indeed, was the only means of reducing chaos to order. The eight chiefs soon fell into line with the penghulu, when they found that he was backed by the new Government'.² Their decision was ratified by the agreement of September 1886.

This new agreement was concluded when the 1883 memorandum was found to be inadequate for the protection and promotion of British interests. The latter, it will be remembered, merely provided for advice from the Resident of Sungai Ujong 'as requested'. The British could appoint an officer but his authority was confined to the collection of 'moderate frontier dues or otherwise as may be arranged' for the purpose of recovering loans from the Colony. The defects of such an arrangement impressed the British when concession hunters began to take an interest in the mineral and agricultural resources of the district. While some European and Chinese capitalists applied to the Resident of Sungai Ujong for mining rights, others went

¹ O'Brien, *op. cit.* p. 342.

² Caldecott, *op. cit.* p. 26.

direct to the penghulu from whom several British planters connected with a German merchant obtained three concessions for 3,000 acres. On discovering this, the Acting Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, advised the penghulu to cancel the grant on the ground that the form of the concessions contained irregularities.¹ The Straits Government consequently moved towards the view that to prevent future complications, it was advisable for them to have control over all concessions. Then in 1886, the penghulu and his chiefs decided to close certain lands to mining because the refuse carried down from the mines by floods would spoil their rice fields. The Governor failed to persuade them to change their minds. He had to resort to the threat which he had previously used with success in Rembau, viz., to withdraw from Jelebu and stop doling out allowances, before they would concede this point and entrust the administration of Jelebu to the British. Peace having been attained, Weld next determined that progress should be along lines favourable to British interests. By this time also, he must have felt confident that the Residential system would not encounter serious resistance since the Jelebu chiefs had already experienced the material benefits of closer relations with the Straits Government.

In fact if not in name, the 1886 treaty provided for the Residential system in Jelebu. Grants of land whether for mining, planting or building, were to be left to the British officer to be stationed in the district. Such an officer was also to have charge of the revenue as well as jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases not involving Muslim law. To prevent trouble with foreign powers, Article 3 stipulated that the British Government would conduct Jelebu's foreign relations and further, that 'no grant or concession shall be made to other than British subjects, or British companies or persons of the Malay, Chinese, Indian or other Oriental nations without the assent of the British Government or its representatives'. Other clauses dealt with arrangements for the distribution of revenue and payment of allowances to the penghulu, the waris and the lembaga.

Thereafter, the British Collector and Magistrate in Jelebu proceeded to organize the administration with a view to facilitating economic enterprise. As early as September 1885 the road connecting the mining area with Sungai Ujong had been

¹ CO273/130 OAG to CO 1 October 1884.

completed. And those who had formerly resided in Jelebu began to return. In 1887 more roads were built, bridges constructed and surveys made. Two years later, the success of mining enterprise was reflected in a dividend of 17 per cent. paid by one of the two companies in operation.

It is significant that after initially hesitating about Weld's intervention in Rembau, the Colonial Office subsequently remained content to note and approve the Governor's moves in Jelebu. Their passive role meant that British policy here and in the remaining districts of the Negri Sembilan was largely formulated by the Governor. He determined the pace of the British advance with the dual objective of 'peace and progress'.

As for the motivation behind Weld's policy towards Jelebu, it is difficult not to conclude that economic considerations were dominant whereas this element was less strong in the decision to intervene in Rembau and oust the Maharaja. Perhaps because Jelebu was rather remote from Johore, there was no evidence there of the latter's influence although Yam Tuan Abdulla had undertaken in 1877 to refer disputes to the Maharaja Abu Bakar.

From 1886 Jelebu was administered practically as a district of Sungai Ujong, yet typical of the British concern for substance rather than form, the *de jure* recognition of the situation did not take place until 1895.

SRI MENANTI

Let us now consider Weld's policy in the other districts of the Negri Sembilan area outside Sungai Ujong, Rembau and Jelebu. These districts, it was mentioned before, had recognized the overlordship of the Yam Tuan Tunku Antah and were sometimes known as the Sri Menanti confederation. Wilkinson explains that 'territorially the expression Sri Menanti may be either limited to the area round the Ruler's palace or extended in a loose way to all the territories over which Yam Tuan Antah held a nominal sway'.¹ To repeat, these territories were: Jempul, Terachi, Gunong Pasir, Inas, Ulu Muar and Johol.²

¹ R.J. Wilkinson, 'Sri Menanti', *Papers on Malay Subjects* (second series) no. 2, Kuala Lumpur, 1914, p. 1.

² See 'Agreement entered into by certain Chiefs of the Nine States on 23 November 1876', Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 60-66.

It might be recalled that Weld had attempted to settle outstanding differences between Tunku Antah and some of his chiefs at a meeting in Bukit Putus in March 1881 when he had also reminded the audience that the British Government was, and intended to remain, the paramount authority in the Malay States, thus correcting any mistaken notions among those present about the status of the Maharaja of Johore.¹ Subsequently Weld reported to the Colonial Office that all was quiet in these districts.

In June 1883, however, during one of the Governor's periodical visits to Malacca, he was told by Tunku Antah that there was neither order nor revenue in the Sri Menanti confederation. What he wanted was a substantial allowance for which he was prepared to accept a British Resident and hand over Inas, Johol and the adjacent district of Gemencheh. Tunku Antah had really no constitutional right to transfer any of these territories, or accept a British Resident, without the consent of the district and clan chiefs concerned, and he made the mistake of telling the Governor that these chiefs refused to be ruled by 'white men'. Needless to say, Weld turned down the suggestion, his policy, in his own words, being 'to aid the little states gradually to civilize themselves and to know us, and not too suddenly to force ourselves upon them'.² Besides, the opening of Jelebu may then have seemed to him to be the more urgent task and one more likely to prove of immediate advantage to British interests. Nevertheless, the Governor was willing to assist the indigenous authorities to attain 'order and revenue'. For this purpose, Tunku Antah and the chiefs concerned signed an agreement in the Governor's presence whereby they entrusted Syed Hamid of Tampin with executive authority over Inas, Johol and Gemencheh. In case of difficulties, the signatories agreed to consult the Resident Councillor of Malacca since that was the nearest British authority. Following the method of promoting British influence and interests adopted in Rembau, here also Weld promised financial assistance. Explaining his policy to the Straits legislative council soon afterwards, Weld said:

I shall ask you to vote a moderate sum of money to enable me to assist independent native states to make roads, to open mineral and

¹ See above p. 20.

² CO273/121 Weld to CO 8 July 1883 with enclosures.

agricultural country, and afford communication with our territories and between territories under our influence; for the promotion in short, of commerce and order. . . . Tunku Antah and Seyd Hamid are not only willing but anxious that a road should be made from our Malacca boundary through Tampin, Terachi and Sri Menanti to Bukit Putus pass. From that pass a road now leads to the Residency in Sungai Ujong. I need not dilate on the great advantage these roads would be to the Colony.¹

In 1884, \$5,832 were spent on Sri Menanti and the legislative council voted further sums of \$7,390 and \$30,000 for them in 1885 and 1886 respectively. It was said that some of these loans were frittered away on the purchase of slave girls for the royal harem² but some roads were built. Rathborne, engaged by the Straits Government to mark out a main road through this cluster of districts at about this time, recounts an interesting incident:

I spent a week in the hills between Tampin and these states before being satisfied that the best gap had been discovered over which the road should pass, and then set out exploring in order to obtain a general idea of the main features of the country. . . . One of the chiefs sent a message to inform me that he had decided no road should pass through his territory, and that rather than allow it he had made up his mind to kill the intruder. The only reply I could send back to him was that the taking of my life would not help him much, for someone else was sure to come in my place, and concluded with the Malay saying that 'plucking of the bud would not stop the growth of the tree' to show him that the policy the Government had initiated would continue whatever might happen to me.³

Of course nothing happened to him. The British went on directing the construction of roads and bridle-paths, paying allowances to the chiefs and settling their disputes. But there were still some people who continued to look to Johore rather than Singapore.

Syed Hamid of Tampin was warned not to go to Kuala Gemas, a station built by the Maharaja of Johore on what he claimed to be Muar territory although the Straits Government maintained that it was in Johol. At the time, the boundary

¹ Lovat, *op. cit.* p. 366.

² CO275/30 *PLCSS* for 1885, p. 469; J.M. Gullick, 'The War with Yam Tuan Antah', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxvii, part I, May 1954, p. 20.

³ Rathborne, *op. cit.* p. 305.

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between Muar, Johol and Malacca had not been demarcated and in fact the subject was intermittently discussed without any settlement being reached until 1896. When the British heard that men, arms and ammunition were being collected at Kuala Gemas, Weld despatched a police inspector, a corporal and a few others up the Muar river to investigate the truth of this report. On their arrival at Kuala Gemas, they were surrounded by an armed crowd which assumed a hostile attitude. The inspector subsequently heard that the people of Pahang residing in the neighbourhood had been invited to join in, therefore Weld hastily sent for the Maharaja Abu Bakar's brother in the absence of the Maharaja who happened to be holidaying in Japan. The Governor lectured him severely on fomenting intrigues in Tunku Antah's territory and told him in no uncertain terms that the British Government would not tolerate such interference. He demanded the withdrawal of all Johore agents from the Sri Menanti states.¹

Owing to the strategic position occupied by Johol in relation to the Sri Menanti confederation, Malacca, Pahang and Johore, Weld also considered it necessary to secure a treaty from the Dato' which would prevent his district from being ever again used as a centre of intrigue. On 21 March 1884 the Dato' signed a document² in which it was stated that he 'honestly and willingly' entrusted the government of his district to the Resident Councillor of Malacca. He undertook to 'agree and to obey exactly' that officer's advice. In practice, however, the agree-

¹ CO273/126 Weld to CO 10 January 1884.

² As this document is not included in Maxwell and Gibson's collection of treaties, it will be quoted below:

On the above dates (15th Johol 5th month and 21 March 1884) we Dato Johan Pahlawan Lela Perkasa Setiawan have made this agreement, honestly and willingly entrusting the government of our country of Johol and all its provinces (Gemencheh, Punggor, Ayer Kuning and Batang Malaka) to the Hon. Resident Councillor, Governor of the British Settlement of Malaka to carry out decisions of Government, with reference to arranging the affairs of our country in the best way according to his judgment, to bring about peace and prosperity in our country i.e. to make roads and police stations etc. as in English settlements and he also shall prepare and arrange means for exacting our revenue.

Now to any single matter which seems good to him we will give no opposition, but absolutely promise to agree and to obey exactly. . . .
See CO 273/127 Weld to CO 1 April 1884.

ment remained ineffective. The Dato' occasionally referred to the British but firmly refused to accept interference in his administration. And the Governor did not press the issue probably because he was confident that time was on his side.

From the middle of 1885 a British officer, initially described as Collector and Magistrate and subsequently as British Superintendent, was stationed at Kuala Pilah where Tunku Antah resided. Leopold Cazalas, a clerk of works, was temporarily appointed to the post until R. N. Bland, a young Straits cadet, took over in June of the following year. His presence in Sri Menanti had no treaty basis. Nonetheless, supported by a small police force and acting presumably on the Governor's orders, he began to collect the duties on tin and opium and to hold court for civil and criminal cases. He could not get on with Tunku Antah whose relations with his Dato's were no more satisfactory. The Resident Councillor of Malacca who exercised a general supervision over the Sri Menanti confederation just as the Resident of Sungai Ujong was responsible for Jelebu, ascribed their friction to the Yam Tuan's 'injudicious conduct',¹ but the Governor did not agree that the fault lay entirely with Tunku Antah. It is clear from his letter to the Acting Resident of Selangor, J. P. Rodger, that he thought a more experienced officer would be able to make more out of the situation.

I want you to let me have Lister. If I had a man in the Straits Service who would undertake this job I would not ask for him, but I find that it is too much to expect young officers of the Cadet class to manage affairs such as those of Sri Menanti and Johol. They have neither the experience nor do they carry weight enough, and no amount of cramming, or success at competitive exams, will teach a man how to manage natives and win their confidence. Matters in those States require firm and gentle handling. Action has been taken there without my sanction, in fact, in a manner opposed to my policy; some chiefs that I wished to conciliate have been alienated, and an impression has gone abroad that we are backing, right or wrong, the Yam Tuan. . . .

I think the Datoh Baginda Ton Mas, the Johol P.M., a capital man to work with, and he is by far the most influential man in the country. The Yam Tuan is full of good professions and possible intentions, but he is flighty and unreliable. He has no following to

¹ CO275/31 PLCSS for 1886, 'Report of the Resident Councillor of Malacca on the Native States bordering Malacca'.

speak of . . . Lister . . . would go to Sri Menanti . . . to advise and organize, as well as to act as Magistrate and Collector.¹

With better management from a man such as Martin Lister,² then Magistrate and Collector in Ulu Selangor, and given more money, Weld believed that Tunku Antah would mend his ways.³ Therefore Lister was transferred to Kuala Pilah with instructions to try to 'organize a little more'; and to remove one or two abuses and obstacles to the advancement of the country, such as transit dues and debt-slavery. The care which Weld took over the Sri Menanti confederation is illustrated by his request to Lister to send him full reports 'giving information on all points'. 'I read every journal of every Resident or District Officer in the Peninsula that reaches me' he said, 'so don't be afraid of boring me by long letters.'⁴

While *de facto* British control was thus gradually introduced into the Sri Menanti confederation, Weld thought it necessary to obtain a *de jure* right to conduct its foreign relations and handle requests for concessions from non-British subjects. In April 1886, the Yam Tuan and his chiefs signed an engagement of which Article 1 was taken *mutatis mutandis* from the December 1885 treaty between Johore and the British Government. However the Colonial Office objected to the statement that the 'two Governments' would co-operate 'in the joint defence of those territories from external hostile attacks' on the ground that such wording was suitable only in contracts with European Powers. It had been accorded to Johore as a special case and the Secretary of State maintained that small Malay States should not be treated on the same footing.⁵ The Governor felt that any alteration of the engagement at that stage would merely arouse

¹ Lovat, op. cit. pp. 390-1.

² Lister had gone to Selangor as a planter in the early 'eighties. He was a personal friend of Swettenham's and was persuaded to join the government service. After a short period at the Resident's office in Perak, he became District Officer in Ulu Selangor. His success in developing the district attracted Weld's notice.

³ CO273/141 Weld to CO 9 December 1886. Incidentally Antah died of smallpox in October 1887 and was succeeded by his son, the Tunku Besar Mohamed, aged 22—'a youth of pleasing manners and address, and of more than usual intelligence'.

⁴ Lovat, op. cit. p. 392.

⁵ CO273/139 Weld to CO 5 April 1886; CO273/140 CO to Weld 16 September 1886.

the suspicions of the Sri Menanti chiefs. Nevertheless, he promised to remedy this at the earliest possible opportunity. Eventually, on 4 June 1887, Tunku Antah was persuaded to sign another document in which the words objected to were replaced by a statement to the effect that there would be co-operation 'in the preservation of peace and settled Government' in their respective territories.

It is noteworthy that on this occasion the British did not bother to obtain the signatures of the territorial chiefs of the several districts acknowledging Tunku Antah's overlordship. The preamble merely stated that it was concluded between Sir Frederick Weld, 'Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of the Straits Settlements and its dependencies, on the one side, and His Highness Tenku Antah Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti with the consent of (or in conjunction with) the Datoh Penghulu of the States of Johol, Inas, Moar, Jempul, Terachi and Gunong Pasir on the other'.¹ Only Tunku Antah's name appeared on the treaty. We have already mentioned similar omissions in the treaty with Rembau concluded about this time.

The aims of Weld's policy in the Sri Menanti districts as in the rest of Negri Sembilan were, as he put it, 'to promote order and give security of life and property, to uphold British influence as the leading Malay power, and as a consequence, to develop the resources of the country and to foster trade and commerce'.² In practice this meant support for Tunku Antah in Sri Menanti and the undang's authority in Rembau and Jelebu; acceptance of the Governor's decision in disputes; financial aid from the Colony; followed by British control over the revenue and other aspects of the administration.

The originality of Weld's method lay in his introduction of a transitional stage of advice without control and his insistence on the avoidance of quick and drastic change. At the Colonial Office, approval for his policy was unanimous. As each year passed without mishap, and reports of steady albeit slow progress in these districts reached Whitehall, the Secretary of State

¹ Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 61-62.

² CO273/136 Weld to CO 26 January 1885. Weld mentioned that a deputation of Chinese merchants from Malacca had informed him of the improvement in their trade as a result of British intervention in Negri Sembilan.

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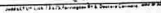
merely acknowledged despatches and expressed his appreciation for Weld's efforts at promoting 'peace and progress'. Lord Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1883-5, observed that Weld had acted 'with much good sense' in Jelebu.¹ Subsequently, when the Governor described his intervention in the Sri Menanti confederation, the Colonial Office thought that he had done well.² Indeed, the metropolitan government was so satisfied with Weld's 'excellent work in the Native States'³ that it extended his appointment by two years in 1885.

When Weld finally retired in October 1887, his successor, Sir Cecil Smith, pursued the policy of strengthening British control on the one hand, and welding the several districts into larger units on the other. By 1888 the situation in the Negri Sembilan area was as follows: Jelebu, for purposes of administration, had become part of Sungai Ujong under the Resident; Rembau and the Sri Menanti confederation each had a Collector and Magistrate with powers short of that enjoyed by a Resident, and both were supervised by the Resident Councillor of Malacca; Tampin alone had no formal relations with the British. For administrative convenience, not to mention the clarification and simplification of the legal basis for British control, Cecil Smith considered it advisable to get Rembau and Tampin to join the Sri Menanti confederation. At an interview with the chiefs concerned at Tampin on 11 March 1889, he found that, except for Syed Hamid of Tampin, the rest had no objection to the suggested change. Later on, however, Syed Hamid was persuaded to agree. So on 13 July 1889 the Yam Tuan Besar of Sri Menanti, Tunku Mohamed (son of Tunku Antah), 'together with the Rulers of the following States under his jurisdiction, namely, Johol (including Gemencheh), Inas, Ulu Muar, Jempul, Gunong Pasir and Terachi, the Ruler of Tampin and the Ruler of Rembau' formally placed themselves under British protection. They further agreed to constitute their countries into a confederation of states to be known as Negri Sembilan and asked for the 'assistance' of a British Resident. Article 3 said that no Ruler should exercise any power or

¹ CO273/122 Minute by Derby 23 October 1883 on Weld to CO 3 September 1883.

² CO273/126 See minutes on Weld's despatch of 10 January 1884.

³ CO273/138 Minute by Herbert 27 October 1885.



Map 2. Negri Sembilan in the late 1880's.

authority in any state but his own.¹ The unity of the confederation thus centred on the Resident.

From 1889, the Negri Sembilan area was divided into two administrative units, one presided over by W. F. B. Paul, Resident of Sungai Ujong, and the other by the Hon. Martin Lister. They were described as Sungai Ujong with Jelevu, and Negri Sembilan, respectively. Two years later the Colonial Office noted with satisfaction that British protection had 'apparently brought peace and contentment to the inhabitants of these small and once turbulent states'.

¹ Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp 64-65.

The next step in welding these states together was taken in 1895 when the Yam Tuan Besar of Sri Menanti and the Dato' of Johol, acting on behalf of the other districts which recognized the supremacy of the former, together with the Dato's of Sungai Ujong, Jelebu and Tampin, agreed to unite to form a single confederation to bear the historic title of Negri Sembilan. They jointly requested the assistance of a British Resident and undertook to 'follow his advice in all matters of administration other than those touching the Mohammedan religion'.¹

In 1898 the British completed their task of reconstructing the unity of Negri Sembilan. The Dato's of Sungai Ujong, Jelebu, Johol and Rembau, the original four electors of the Yam Tuan Besar, then consented to recognize the royal overlordship of Tunku Mohamed who became the paramount ruler of the whole of Negri Sembilan. But the actual powers and perquisites attached to the office were by no means those which the Yam Tuan Besar of the late eighteenth century had enjoyed. Among other things, the Yam Tuan Besar lost the right of interference in the appointment of the undang and of receiving homage from these chiefs. To quote Parr and Mackray, he was left with little more than 'ceremonial precedence as nominal head of the Federation'.² The British Resident was now supreme.

In retrospect, the gradual extension of British influence and control over the Negri Sembilan districts in the 'eighties forms a contrast to the immediate introduction of the Residential system to Sungai Ujong, Selangor and Perak in the 'seventies. There were several reasons for Weld's different approach. First, the widespread and serious nature of the disturbances in Sir Andrew Clarke's time obviously demanded more drastic action than the petty feuds in the Negri Sembilan area in the early years of Weld's Governorship. Second, the risings which followed Clarke's intervention impressed Weld with the need for a more cautious policy in the Negri Sembilan districts especially in view of their complicated political and clan organizations. Third, owing to the hesitant attitude towards expansion in the Malay States prevalent at the Colonial Office in 1882 and 1883,

¹ CO273/194 Smith to CO 9 April 1894 and Maxwell and Gibson, op. cit. p. 64.

² Parr and Mackray, op. cit. p. 63.

the Governor considered it better to move slowly towards the Residential system; proceeding from advice to active assistance and then control. Furthermore, the relative poverty of mineral deposits in these districts, coupled with the fact that they were sheltered by Malacca and Sungai Ujong from possible naval action by some other European Power meant that there was no urgency in this quarter for political action in support of British economic and strategic interests. Therefore, both the Singapore and the Colonial Office authorities were content to proceed step by step in the establishment of British control instead of attempting to force the pace as in the case of Pahang.

III

PAHANG

PAHANG was the largest of the Malay States occupying a commanding position on the eastern side of the Peninsula with an inland boundary which bordered Jelebu, Selangor and Perak. But it was isolated from the centres of British power in the late nineteenth century. The Main Range—the backbone of the Malay Peninsula—separated it from the west coast states. Access by sea too was closed from October to March because the east coast was exposed to the full blast of the north-east monsoon and even to-day, coastal navigation at this season is cut down considerably. For the rest of the year, the prevalence of high winds and rough seas made navigation hazardous.¹ Little was then known about this state in British circles in Malaya. Nevertheless, the popular Malay belief that Pahang had the greatest mineral wealth of any part of the country won general acceptance. Writing about the Malay States in 1875, Swettenham referred to the richness of its gold and tin deposits, its large population of about 60,000, its almost 'total freedom from taxation' and self-sufficiency in rice.² Likewise, Sir Andrew Clarke described Pahang as a 'large, most beautiful, rich and most valuable country'³ and Sir Frederick Weld never ceased to believe, during his Governorship, that Pahang was not only larger but richer than Perak, 'possessing great mineral and agricultural wealth, and offering a great field for commercial enterprise'.⁴

¹ See C.A. Fisher, 'The Problem of Malayan Unity in its Geographical Setting', *Geographical Essays on British Tropical Lands*, eds. R.W. Steel and C.A. Fisher, London, 1956.

² F.A. Swettenham, 'Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula', *JSBRAS*, no. 6, December 1890, p. 199.

³ PP C.1111 (1874) Andrew Clarke to the Legco 15 September 1874.

⁴ A. Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld: a Pioneer of Empire*, London, 1924, p. 393. Similarly, A.M. Skinner, writing on the Malay Peninsula in the *Eastern Geography*, Singapore, 1884, p. 51, observed: 'The chief importance of Pahang lies in its mineral wealth, its reputation for gold and tin

Although current opinions concerning the relative mineral wealth of the different Sultanates had determined to a large extent the direction of the British political advance inland in the 'seventies—to Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong—Pahang was not then brought into the British fold because there was no case for intervention. In 1874, Pahang was untroubled by problems of succession or disturbances such as those which prevailed in the west coast. Clarke did indeed visit Pahang to investigate a report of trouble with Johore about a boundary, but the matter did not turn out to be important enough to warrant intervention and the installation of a Resident. Furthermore, when Clarke offered the Bendahara Wan Ahmad advice and assistance in governing the country, it was politely declined.¹ His successor, Sir William Jervois, similarly tried to persuade the Bendahara to accept British advice but he too was unsuccessful.² The Straits authorities understandably left Pahang alone during the Colonial Office reaction against a forward policy after the murder of the first British Resident sent to Perak. Not until Weld arrived in the Straits did Pahang again become a target of British ambitions.

Early in the 'eighties Pahang, in contrast to the turbulent Negri Sembilan districts, lay quietly under the autocratic rule of the Bendahara Wan Ahmad.³ It resembled the west coast states to the extent that the territorial Ruler resided at a river-mouth village and exerted a measure of control over the scattered riparian and coastal settlements within the basin, while subsidiary chiefs established themselves at inland junctions of a tributary with the main stream from where they in turn ruled over the adjacent area.⁴ It differed from the other states, how-

combined being unrivalled, both for the widespread yield of these metals, and for their quantity and fineness. . . . Of the "mineral states" Pahang is placed first by the Malays.'

¹ PP C.1111 (1874) Clarke to CO 16 October 1874. For further information on this episode, refer to An Old Resident [W.H. Read], *Play and Politics*, London, 1901, p. 37; and Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, *Our Malay Conquests*, London, 1878, ch. ix on Pahang and Johore.

² PP C.1505 (1876) Jervois to CO 7 August 1875.

³ He assumed the title of Sultan in 1882, but this was not recognized by the British until 1887.

⁴ Rodger, the first British Resident in Pahang, reported that it was very sparsely populated. Nearly all the people settled along the banks of the

ever, because here the Ruler enjoyed more real power despite the greater size of the territory acknowledging his authority. There were several reasons for this phenomenon. Wan Ahmad was undoubtedly a forceful leader and a great warrior, superior in calibre to his royal contemporaries in the Negri Sembilan, Selangor and Perak. He had defeated formidable opponents in the Civil War of 1857-63.¹ When he ascended the throne, having eliminated or weakened his rivals, Wan Ahmad's position in Pahang was naturally stronger than that of the neighbouring Rulers *vis-à-vis* their own chiefs. The Bendahara further safeguarded his supremacy by elevating to aristocratic status men of humble origin who had served him well; he made the son of a Sumatran immigrant the district chief of Pulau Tawar in the interior of Pahang, thereafter known as To' (Dato') Gajah. Another individual who had begun as his 'dog-boy' was appointed Orang Kaya of Semantan. According to Gullick, in no other state at that time were there such chiefs of non-aristocratic lineage² and these chiefs remained loyal to their benefactor. After he had won the throne also, Wan Ahmad maintained his reputation for firmness amounting to ruthlessness. So much was he feared by the district chiefs that they kept away as far as possible from the capital at Pekan. And finally, Wan Ahmad succeeded in retaining his supremacy because the power relationship between the Ruler and district chiefs in Pahang was not upset by the development of tin-mining. Mining brought wealth to the chief in whose district the mineral was exploited: and wealth meant power. For this reason, in Perak, the Mentri of Larut had become influential enough to get his nominee elected as Sultan in the 'seventies. But in Pahang the paucity of alluvial deposits prevented the rise of local centres of power rivalling that of the Ruler. The greater part of the revenues were collected as import duties on goods entering by way of the royal capital at the mouth of the Pahang River. 'The total

rivers. The largest kampongs were at Pekan, Cheno and Temerloh on the Pahang River. He estimated that there were not more than 35,000 inhabitants including some 1,500 Chinese.

¹ See C.M. Turnbull, 'The Origins of British Control in the Malay States before Colonial Rule', *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, eds. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink, Oxford, 1964, pp. 175-80.

² J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London, 1958, pp. 79-80.

revenues of Pahang were less than those of the western states but the Sultan received a larger share of them'.¹ Personality, policy and circumstances thus made the Bendahara of Pahang a powerful Ruler much feared by his chiefs.

In theory however the Government of Pahang was similar to that of the western states since they were all modelled more or less on the Malacca Sultanate. Convention required the Ruler to consult male members of the royal family close in the line of succession; chiefs of the first grade, generally four in number; and sometimes those of the second grade numbering eight. Bendahara Wan Ahmad's immediate male relatives were his younger brother, the Engku Muda Wan Mansur; a cousin, 'Che Wan Ngah; and nephew, 'Che Wan Mahmud. But the Bendahara would not allow his relatives any authority or give them a sizable allowance. Of the Council of Four, only three posts were filled and as for the eight chiefs of the second rank,² the Bendahara ignored most of them. In fact, Wan Ahmad clearly preferred autocratic to constitutional rule. His only advisers were his favourites such as the To' Gajah, referred to already; the Orang Kaya Bakhti, a Tamil raised by the Bendahara to the important position of chief financial officer; Tuan Itam, a native of Riau, who acted as the Bendahara's secretary (and sometimes misinterpreted letters to suit his own ends); and one Haji Mohammed Nur, a native of Pahang described as his 'confidential clerk' and 'chief adviser'. Despite the influence which each of these might exercise from time to time, the Bendahara remained 'absolutely omnipotent'. As the first British officer sent to reside in the state was later to observe, the Government of Pahang was an 'absolute monarchy' where 'the smallest thing' could not be done without the order of the Bendahara and an order once given, further advice or discussion was 'impossible'. He mentioned that the Bendahara was 'unscrupulous and when angry pitiless', despite his exceedingly

¹ Ibid. p. 95.

² On the chiefs of Pahang see CO273/148 Clifford's Report on Pahang 1 October 1887 enclosed in Weld to CO 15 October 1887; CO273/155 Smith to CO 15 October 1888 enclosing Rodger's Report on Pahang and Clifford's remarks on the chiefs dated 1 October 1888; W. Linehan, 'A History of Pahang', *JMBRAS*, vol. xiv, part 2, June 1936, Appendix III. Of the 'Eight', only two were ever at Pekan: the Orang Kaya of Lipis and the Orang Kaya of Semantan.

mild appearance and 'quite refined' manners.¹ Such then was the Ruler who was to be persuaded to accept British advice amounting to control.

Notwithstanding the failure of his predecessors, Weld was at first optimistic about the chances of his success. In our introductory chapter, we referred to the Governor's expectation that during the Bendahara's first official visit to Singapore in 1880 he would seek advice to open up his country. He was disappointed on this occasion as well as on the next when the Bendahara paid a second official visit to the Straits in November 1881. Nonetheless he chose to inform the Secretary of State, Lord Kimberley, that he thought the Bendahara personally was not averse to closer relations with the British, and he sought approval for a draft convention to be concluded with Pahang at the earliest opportunity. It was to specify the Bendahara's heir, provide for most-favoured-nation treatment in matters of trade and for British control of Pahang's foreign relations. Kimberley not only gave his ready approval but expressed his hope that the proposed convention would pave the way to still closer relations with Pahang. With such encouragement from the Secretary of State, Weld prepared to proceed to Pekan. Unfortunately for his plans, the Bendahara sent word that the Reception Hall he was constructing for distinguished guests had not been completed and so requested the Governor to postpone the visit.² Weld sensed the Bendahara's withdrawal because he did not again ask to be received.

Instead, early in 1883, he contemplated intervention in Pahang on grounds of misgovernment. It was rumoured in the Straits that an Arab, suspected of involvement with a woman of the Bendahara's household, had been tortured in Pahang and subsequently poisoned in Johore. Believing the victim to have been born in Penang, Weld proposed sending a gunboat to Pahang to demand redress. But the Secretary of State, now Lord Derby, called for a full inquiry into the case as the evidence was inconclusive. He also informed the Governor that whatever the outcome of the inquiry, the British Government

¹ CO273/148 Clifford's Report on Pahang enclosed in Weld to CO 15 October 1887.

² CO273/116 Bendahara to Governor 24 September 1882 enclosed in Weld to CO 28 October 1882.

did not intend to take strong action. In the opinion of the Colonial Office the uncertainty and notoriety connected with an inquiry would suffice as punishment for the Bendahara and his suspected accomplice, the Maharaja of Johore.¹ Now that Kimberley was no longer at the Colonial Office, the ascendancy of the officials over his successor, Lord Derby, meant less support for Weld's forward policies. Under the circumstances, Weld decided to drop the case. 'We must be quite certain of our ground and quite determined as to our course' he observed, 'before we attempt to deal with such a matter as this, in a country like Pahang.'²

In the meantime promoters and speculators were busy in Pahang with the result that the state was drawn into the economic orbit of the Colony while still remaining beyond its political frontier. Apparently, the Bendahara's visits to Singapore and Johore early in the 'eighties coinciding with a period of high prices for tin, aroused the active interest of Europeans and others in the exploitation of minerals in Pahang. In 1882, Weld had questioned the Bendahara on a report that the Maharaja of Johore had asked for certain concessions in Pahang. He later heard that the Maharaja's solicitor's, Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson, were negotiating with the Bendahara for this purpose.³ In October of the same year, the *Singapore Daily Times* said that William E. Cameron, FGS, had spent six months exploring the upper reaches of the Pahang river and returned to Singapore with favourable reports.⁴ Then in November 1883, a Chinese, Lim Ah Sam, residing in the Dutch island of Billiton but with business connexions in Singapore, obtained a concession of about 2,000 square miles for mining and planting. The other partners in the venture were Goh Sui Swee of Singapore, a financier of mining operations in Perak; a certain Louis den Dekker, and another Chinese, Ho Ah Yun.⁵ This was followed

¹ CO273/120 Weld to CO 18 April, 31 May 1883; CO to Weld 19 July 1883.

² CO273/123 Weld to CO 22 December 1883.

³ CO273/114 Weld to CO 19 April 1882.

⁴ The *Singapore Daily Times* 16 October 1882.

⁵ CO273/157 Concession granted to Lim Assam, Ho Ayun, Goh Su (or Sui) Swee and Louis den Dekker dated November 1883, enclosed in Mr. N.S. Maskelyne's letter to the Colonial Office of 19 April 1888. See also PP C.5884 (1889) *Report on the State of Perak for 1888* and *The Singapore and Straits Directory for 1890*, Singapore, 1890, p. 259.

by a concession in the Raub district to W. Knaggs who had done some prospecting in Perak in the 'seventies.¹ Subsequently, George Scaife, a tailor by trade, acting through Malay middlemen, secured two concessions of approximately 900 square miles each for fifty and seventy-five years respectively, on extremely vague terms.² Others also managed to establish a claim to land in Pahang by paying the Bendahara and his favourites residing at Pekan. In fact, speculators and adventurers seemed to have been able to get hold of any land they wished irrespective of the rights of both the Malay district chiefs and the miners, whether Chinese or Malay, already working on the land. The Straits authorities not only apprehended trouble between the people of Pahang and the concessionaires, particularly those 'not of the best class', but also the retarded development of the state as a result of the irregular terms on which concessions had been given away.³

In addition to the internal developments, external events strengthened the case for the establishment of British control. A united and powerful Germany directed by Bismarck began to compete vigorously with other European Powers for a 'place in the sun' from 1883. In April 1884, Bismarck proclaimed a protectorate over South-West Africa where a German adventurer had previously acquired a concession from the native chiefs, despite the British Note of 22 November 1883 that any claim for sovereignty or jurisdiction by another Power between the southern point of Portuguese Angola and the frontier of the Cape Colony would be an infringement of Britain's legitimate rights. The manoeuvres of another German agent resulted in the annexation of Togoland and the coastline of the Cameroons in July of the same year. Germany also extended her control in East Africa where Karl Peters and his associates had secured treaties from the natives by devious means which placed some 60,000 square miles of territory under German protection. In the Pacific, the Germans were equally active. They ignored Australia's claim to New Guinea and hoisted their flag over the

¹ 'Sir Frank Swettenham's Perak Journals, 1874-1876', ed. C.D. Cowan, *JMBRAS*, vol. xxiv, part 4, December 1951, p. 74; *Straits Times* (weekly) 24 September 1884.

² CO273/130 Smith to CO 1 October and 15 November 1884.

³ *Ibid.* Smith to CO 1 October 1884.

north-eastern part of the island.¹ In short, Bismarck's colonial policy and the methods used by German agents to secure treaties from unsuspecting chiefs, led to a concern on the part of the metropolitan government for the security of its interests in states like Pahang where British paramountcy was as yet neither buttressed by treaties nor safeguarded by effective occupation.

There is no doubt that German activity affected the Colonial Office attitude towards the Malay States. The permanent officials realized that what had happened in Africa and the Pacific could well take place in the Malay Peninsula. Sir John Bramston, the Legal Assistant Under-Secretary who had been opposed to additional responsibilities in this quarter in 1879, raised the question of extending Britain's protection to all the Malay States—small as well as large—in November 1884.² The Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Herbert, similarly considered it advisable to protect British interests in the Peninsula. 'In these days when our rights and quasi-rights are strictly questioned and boldly encroached upon', he added, 'there must be danger in leaving this protectorate unconsolidated.'³ In February 1885, he was even prepared to consider the necessity of converting protection into outright annexation.⁴

The same period also saw a resurgence of French imperialism. Why French statesmen had no use for colonial expansion in the 'seventies is too well-known to need explanation, but Bismarck encouraged France to seek compensation overseas for her lost prestige and territories in Europe. In France too, there were those who urged the necessity of colonization if France wanted to maintain and strengthen her position. The first tentative steps towards imperial expansion in 1880-1 were followed by more assertive action from 1883-5 under the energetic direction of Jules Ferry.⁵ In mainland South-East Asia, France began the

¹ M.E. Townsend, *Origins of Modern German Colonialism 1871-1885*, New York, 1921, *passim*; P.T. Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*, New York, 1926, 13th ed., pp. 122-3.

² CO273/130 Bramston's minute 11 November 1884 on Smith to CO 1 October 1884.

³ *Ibid.* Herbert's minute.

⁴ *Ibid.* Herbert's minute on Smith to CO 8 November 1884.

⁵ See D. Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indo-China*, London, 1961; T.F. Power, *Jules Ferry and the Renaissance of French Imperialism*, New York, 1944; J.F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, New York,

military conquest of Tongking; attempted to establish a foothold in Burma and annex parts of Siam. Both here and elsewhere, British and French interests clashed.

As a result of the anxiety in Whitehall about German hostility on the one hand, and French rivalry on the other,¹ the Colonial Office swung round to the view of the Straits Government that it was imperative for Britain to acquire an irrefutable right to 'protect' Pahang owing to the 'possible interference in its affairs of another European Power'.² For this reason, three missions were sent to Pahang: the first entrusted to Swettenham in May 1885; the second undertaken by Weld himself in 1886 and the third by Hugh Clifford in 1887.

At one stage in 1884 the British toyed with the idea of using the Bendahara's younger brother, Engku Wan Mansur, as a means of establishing their influence in Pahang. Wan Mansur was estranged from the Bendahara for reasons concerning the succession and the inadequacy of his allowances. He wrote to W. H. Read,³ begging him to ask the Governor to mediate and appoint a British Resident to 'share in governing the country'. At an interview between Wan Mansur and the Acting Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, arranged by Read, the former claimed that the chiefs and people of Pahang wanted him to relieve them of their oppressive Ruler.⁴ It must have occurred to the Straits

1943; and B.L. Evans, 'The Attitudes and Policies of Great Britain and China Towards French Expansion in Cochin China, Cambodia, Annam and Tongking 1858-1883', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1961.

¹ There is ample evidence in the Granville Papers: PRO30/29/120, 139, 174, which shows that Granville himself; Kimberley, then Secretary of State for India; and Lord Lyons, British Ambassador in Paris; were all anxious about French and German policy. The same concern is evident in Derby's letters to Gladstone dated 26 and 27 December 1884 in the Gladstone Papers, BM Add. Mss. 44142, vol. lxii.

² CO273/138 Weld to CO 9 July 1885.

³ Read had 'very great influence' with the Malay chiefs who often came to him in their troubles. For the part he played in Clarke's intervention in Perak in 1874, see his autobiography, op. cit. pp. 24-27. Read had also accompanied Andrew Clarke to Pahang in 1874. For further details about Read, refer to C.B. Buckley, *An Anecdotal History of Old Times in Singapore*, London, 1903, vol. 1, pp. 297, 367-8; W. Makepeace, G.E. Brooke, R. Braddell, eds., *One Hundred Years of Singapore*, London, 1921, vol. 1, pp. 149, 297, 418-19.

⁴ CO273/128 Smith to CO 23 June 1884.

authorities who regarded the title of Engku Muda as equivalent to Raja Muda,¹ meaning heir-apparent in Perak, that Wan Mansur might well be the 'instrument' of British policy in Pahang just as Abdulla of Perak from whom Read had procured a similar application in 1874 had been Andrew Clarke's 'key to the door' of that state. But there was insufficient evidence to justify an attempt to depose the Bendahara at that juncture. Until it was clear that the majority of the chiefs and people of Pahang preferred Wan Mansur to be their Bendahara instead of Wan Ahmad, Cecil Smith considered it premature to act.² Meanwhile, Wan Mansur unsuccessfully attempted to use Ulu Selangor and then Perak as a base from which to raid Pahang. He was subsequently ordered to return to Singapore and his presence there created such uneasiness in the Bendahara's mind that he thought it better to ask for British arbitration. Three envoys from Pahang duly arrived in Singapore. The upshot of their visit was an undertaking that Wan Mansur would receive \$200 per month and that he would be reinstated as heir-apparent.³ Although Cecil Smith expected little from this settlement, he took the opportunity to send Swettenham to Pahang, ostensibly to witness the reconciliation between the two brothers but actually to observe the country, obtain such information as would be useful for Straits policy and, if possible, obtain a treaty.

According to Cecil Smith, Swettenham had 'personal influence with the Bendahara based on a friendship of many years' standing'.⁴ Since his first visit to Pahang with the Governor, Ord, in 1872, Swettenham had renewed his acquaintance with the Bendahara on two subsequent missions in 1875⁵ and had again met the Pahang Ruler in Singapore in 1880-1. In April 1885, Swettenham, then Resident of Perak, left Taiping for the Bernam River on an overland journey to Pekan where he was to meet Wan Mansur who travelled from Singapore by sea in the government steamer, the *Sea Belle*. As the first British official to pass through the interior of Pahang, Swettenham kept a

¹ Ibid. Weld's minute 8 August 1884.

² Ibid. Smith to CO 18 August 1884.

³ CO273/130 Smith to CO 17 November 1884; Linehan, op. cit. p. 106.

⁴ CO273/134 Smith to CO 23 May 1885.

⁵ See E. Chew, 'Sir Frank Swettenham's Malayan Career up to 1896', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Singapore, 1966, pp. 83-88.

full journal of his observations and experiences.¹ 'I heard from the Chinese that there is plenty of gold in the country' he wrote, 'but no one can live here owing to the injustice of "squeezing" and the want of government.' Again and again Swettenham referred to Pahang's 'great resources and unusual capabilities for supporting and enriching a large population', and he regretted the circumstances which kept Pahang closed to legitimate enterprise while its people 'were unable to take advantage of the gifts lying ready to their hands'.² His statements concerning the natural resources of Pahang, the absence of 'fixed laws' and a 'fair government' and the existence of an oppressive system of taxation, served to confirm the determination to open up the country of those in Singapore responsible for policy. The Acting Governor drew attention to this particular aspect of Swettenham's report in his covering despatch to the Secretary of State: 'Mr. Swettenham speaks in glowing terms of the magnificence of the scenery, and the great resources of this State, both for mineral and agricultural operations, but he adds that owing to misgovernment they are not being developed and oppressive taxation . . . prevents those in the country from exertion of any kind beyond what is necessary to meet their simple wants, and keeps out other races whose labour and capital would so much advantage the State. . . .'³

Swettenham also discovered that although there was a discontented faction in the upper country the chiefs were all too scared of the Bendahara Wan Ahmad to rise in revolt. When he sounded those he met about accepting the 'sort of administration . . . in force in Perak with a British Resident', some tended to agree that this would be a good thing while others refused to commit themselves. Such information must have ruled out the possibility of using Wan Mansur as the agent of

¹ CO273/134 enclosed in Smith to CO 23 May 1885. The greater part of this journal was immediately published in the *JSBRAS*, no. 15, June 1885, see 'Journal Kept During a Journey Across the Malay Peninsula'.

² Ibid. In his autobiography, *Footprints in Malaya*, London 1942, pp. 88-89, Swettenham reminisces about his journey to Pahang, an 'unregenerate place . . . sparsely inhabited . . . a mass of undeveloped jungle without a mile of road anywhere'. But 'from its size and geographical position' he said, 'it was important to get its Ruler into the fold, a position he was not at all eager to occupy; for he had never known control of any kind'.

³ CO273/134 Smith to CO 23 May 1885.

British policy. It left the local officials with no alternative except to persuade, if not compel, the Bendahara to come to terms.

The Bendahara suspected British intentions because he was ill with anxiety when Swettenham reached Pekan on 6 May 1885. On Wan Mansur's arrival by sea two days later, Swettenham met the Bendahara at the formal reconciliation between the two brothers. After that the Bendahara avoided Swettenham who sent him several strongly-worded letters before he finally agreed to see Swettenham at the home of the Chinese headman. At the confrontation, Swettenham told the Bendahara that the time had come for Pahang to have a treaty with the British Government; that the misgovernment prevalent in the country could no longer be tolerated. He urged the Bendahara to ask for a British officer to help him administer and develop his territory. He further reminded the Bendahara of his obligation to the British for having prevented his brother from invading Pahang in the previous year. All his arguments were in vain. The Bendahara gave the familiar excuse about requiring time to consult his up-country chiefs after which he would send a reply to Singapore. To mollify Swettenham, the Bendahara gave him a cordial send-off and even presented gifts to everyone in the party. Nevertheless, he complained privately to the Dato' Mentri, or Chief Minister of Johore, who was then at Pekan, about Swettenham's attempt to make him accept a British Resident. The Maharaja hastened to communicate this complaint to the Secretary of State on the mistaken assumption that the metropolitan and the local governments were still not agreed about expansion.

The Straits Government had its own theory about the failure of Swettenham's mission. Cecil Smith and Weld both thought that the Bendahara had been advised against a treaty by the Johore Government. They believed that the Bendahara's secretary, Tuan Itam, took his cue from the Maharaja. Further, that the Bendahara usually referred for advice to the Maharaja himself; the latter's brother, Abdul Majid; or the Dato' Mentri of Johore, Jaafar bin Haji Mohamed,¹ on questions concerning

¹ For some details on Abdul Majid and Jaafar bin Haji Mohamed, refer to C.H.H. Wake, 'Nineteenth Century Johore—Ruler and Realm in Transition', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1966, pp. 243, 244, 284.

the British. On this occasion they considered the Dato' Mentri's presence in Pahang significant.¹ The motives ascribed to the Johore Ruler will be discussed at a later stage. At this point, it need only be mentioned that a clause in Johore's treaty with Britain concluded in December 1885 was deliberately framed for the purpose of preventing the Maharaja, thereafter recognized as Sultan, from interfering with Straits policy towards Pahang.²

Before leaving Britain, Weld outlined for the Secretary of State's approval the policy which he intended to pursue on his return, viz., to 'lead and not press' the Bendahara; to secure the appointment of a British Agent who would be an adviser rather than an administrator like the Resident in the Protected States.³ Reasoning from the outcome of Swettenham's mission, and the Bendahara's cool response to his own earlier overtures, Weld now considered it unlikely that the Bendahara would agree to receive a full-fledged Resident. Indeed in the reply which he sent to the Governor as promised, the Bendahara said that while he and his children were 'still living', his chiefs had not 'the heart to have an officer of the government, that is, a British Resident in Pahang. . . .'⁴

Nonetheless, in April 1886 the Sultan of Johore, who was in London to discuss his own affairs with the Colonial Office and had accepted a treaty in December 1885, informed the Secretary of State of a telegram from his brother which stated that the Bendahara of Pahang was most anxious to conclude a treaty with the British Government like the one recently signed by Johore.⁵ Official response to Johore's proffered assistance, however, was on the whole negative. By article 6 of his agreement with the British Government, Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore

¹ CO273/134 Smith to CO 23 May 1885; Weld's private letter to Lucas 3 July 1885 and Herbert's minute 9 July 1885; CO273/140 Weld to CO 15 June 1886.

² See below, Chapter IV.

³ CO273/138 Weld's letter to Lucas 3 July 1885 and memo. of 9 July 1885.

⁴ CO273/135 Copy of the Bendahara's letter to Smith 10 July 1885. Linehan was mistaken when he said, *op. cit.* p. 108, that the letter the Bendahara had promised Swettenham he would write 'was not written'.

⁵ CO273/142 Abdul Rahman, private Secretary to Sultan Abu Bakar, to CO 29 April 1886.

had just promised not to interfere in the politics of any Malay State. To accept his good offices with regard to Pahang would have meant condoning his violation of this clause and encouraging his already too obvious tendency to communicate direct with the Colonial Office instead of dealing with the Straits Government. It was believed that Abu Bakar's move was prompted by his desire to obtain personal credit and thus further favours from the metropolitan authorities; or else, like the story of the fox without a tail, he did not like the idea of being less independent than the Bendahara. Whatever his reason, the fact remained that once again Johore had acted as spokesman for Pahang.

Annoyed by the continued interposition of Johore in British relations with Pahang, the Governor himself went to Pahang in quest of a treaty on 31 May 1886. He was accompanied by Hugh Low, Resident of Perak; John Rodger, Acting Resident of Selangor; Martin Lister of the Negri Sembilan; Raja Dris of Perak; Hugh Clifford, Weld's young nephew then serving in Perak, and others. Apparently it had been rumoured that French emissaries had visited Pekan and taken away letters from the Bendahara. This turned out to be unfounded yet the Governor pointed out to the Bendahara that in the absence of a treaty, Pahang would not be able to claim British protection should it become involved in difficulties with any other foreign government arising from the establishment of European companies in the state. To assist him in settling disputes between the local inhabitants and the European newcomers, Weld urged the Bendahara to accept a British Agent. Such an officer, he assured Wan Ahmad, would not assume the administration of the country.¹ But nothing could sway the Bendahara from his determination to refuse any degree or form of British advice.

There was much to be said for his stand. He had everything to lose and nothing to gain by admitting the British. His throne was never seriously threatened by his younger brother. And as explained already, he enjoyed more real power than the weak Rulers of the divided and disorderly states on the west coast who needed British support and assistance against recalcitrant chiefs or stronger rivals. At the risk of some repetition, the

¹ CO273/140 Weld to CO 16 June 1886 with enclosure.

following description of Wan Ahmad by Hugh Clifford who later came to know him well, seems worthy of quotation:

The Raja to whom I most frequently acted the part of guide, philosopher and friend was, in his day, to my thinking, one of the most picturesque figures in Asia. In his youth he was a mighty warrior; he to the end of his life was a keen sportsman; and for more than thirty years he had been a stern and ruthless ruler of men. After a decade of devastating warfare, two thirds of which period were packed with defeats, disasters and misfortunes that must have broken the spirit of a weaker man than he, the throne upon which he afterwards sat so squarely was wrested by him from his kinsman, the rightful owner of the kingship which he coveted. Thereafter, for more than a quarter of a century, he ruled a turbulent people in such wise that no man in all that lawless State dared think above a whisper without his leave. He so impressed his will upon his subjects that for them his lightest word, his merest whim, his hinted desire were law; and though . . . he governed selfishly using his 'high place as a perch for low ambition and a vantage-ground for pleasure', his was the personality, a force, that kindled the imagination and claimed the tribute of a reluctant admiration.¹

Where his own personal interests were concerned, therefore, the Bendahara had no reason to submit to British 'advice'. He neither understood nor did he care about the possible future implications of foreign concessions in Pahang. What evidently impressed him and his favourites were the immediate profits which could be made from giving away concessions. Consequently, it was futile for the Governor, or any other British official for that matter, to try to persuade him to make a great personal sacrifice, for that was what a treaty with the British Government would have involved.

Strangely enough, Weld and Cecil Smith ascribed the Bendahara's resistance almost entirely to the influence of Johore. It is impossible to pin-point Abu Bakar's motivation from the Colonial Office records. These records only tell us what the British surmised and suspected. Their evidence was the obvious *entente* between the two Rulers dating from their state visits in 1880. We mentioned elsewhere that Straits officials noticed men from Johore following the Bendahara closely whenever he came to Singapore. Moreover, in view of the British Government's

¹ Hugh Clifford, *Bushwhacking and Other Asiatic Tales and Memories*, London, 1929, p. 202.

earlier policy of assisting Abu Bakar to obtain a clear title to Johore and to play the role of adviser to the Negri Sembilan chiefs, it was logical for them to conclude that Abu Bakar hoped to assume the same status with regard to Pahang. Even after Weld had made it plain to Abu Bakar that British policy had changed, he saw another reason for Abu Bakar's continued close relations with the Bendahara. Either by obtaining concessions for himself which he intended to transfer to others at a profit, or else by helping his friends and business associates to acquire such concessions in Pahang for a price, the Johore Ruler found a convenient way of meeting his expensive and extravagant tastes. In this connexion, it was not without significance that the promoters of companies, brokers or agents for mining and other rights in Pahang included Johore's legal adviser, J. G. Davidson of Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson; his commercial agent in Singapore, Paterson, Simons and Company; Syed Mohamed Alsagoff, to whom Abu Bakar was believed to be heavily indebted; and William Hole, his private secretary. In fact, Hole became the local agent of the majority of mining companies formed to work concessions in Pahang.¹ Aside from such circumstantial evidence, there were the occasions when Abu Bakar acted as Wan Ahmad's mouth-piece *vis-à-vis* the British. To the above, we may add a further important reason for the Johore Ruler's disinclination to assist Weld's policy, viz., his seldom cordial and often strained relations with the Governor. We have seen how Weld edged him out of the Negri Sembilan districts. The next chapter will show that Weld would have curtailed his independence if Abu Bakar had been less vigilant or the Colonial Office more willing to ride roughshod over Abu Bakar's susceptibilities. And finally, the fact (discussed below), that Abu Bakar was able to get the Bendahara to accept British terms in 1887 and again in 1888, suggests that his influence was at least partially responsible for the latter's previous aloofness.

The manipulations of those interested in acquiring concessions on terms unlikely to be approved by British authorities was another factor which blocked Weld's policy. William

¹ See *Singapore and Straits Directory for 1890*, Singapore, 1890, under Pahang Mines Directory.

Fraser¹ and Alsagoff,² among others, advised the Bendahara to reject Straits proposals for they did not want an 'obnoxious Resident' in the state. A Resident would presumably have opposed the grant of concessions for fifty to ninety-nine years without adequate provision for the effective working of the land, and containing stipulations to the effect that the duty on each chest of opium imported for the consumption of Chinese coolies would be \$80 only whereas the same tax in the Protected States stood at \$280. The Bendahara listened to their counsel since he too wished to remain free from British surveillance and control. Until 1887, Weld seemed not to have known that these elements were working against him.³

In any case, by December 1886 Weld had reached the conclusion that nothing but 'harsh measures' would suffice to bring the Bendahara to terms. He proposed intervention on grounds of misgovernment in Pahang and resuscitated a case of the ill-treatment of the wife of Yeo Pan, a Chinese trader at Pekan. The woman was alleged to have been forcibly detained by the Bendahara since December 1884 but representations on her husband's behalf were made by the Governor only in July 1886. The evidence on the case submitted to the Colonial Office included accounts of the Bendahara's supposed barbarities such as his murder of the woman's infant with his own hands. The Governor was satisfied that he had 'proof positive' of the Bendahara's guilt and without making a definite proposal, gave the Secretary of State the impression that he wanted to force the Bendahara Wan Ahmad to accept a British officer, failing which he should be deposed in favour of Wan Mansur. Weld mentioned Wan Mansur's return to Singapore as the reconciliation between him and the Bendahara had been shortlived. The Governor further reported that Wan Mansur claimed widespread

¹ He was probably the brother of John Fraser, registered exchange and share broker, proprietor of several concerns and of Fraser and Co., also of the Johore Brick and Tile Company. When W. Fraser's activities took him back to England, John Fraser acted for him. See *Singapore and Straits Directory for 1889* in the section on Mining Companies and the List of Foreign Residents.

² Alsagoff became the Sultan of Pahang's Agent in Singapore and was involved in planting and other business in Johore.

³ CO273/148 William Fraser's memorandum of 4 May 1887 communicated to the CO by Mr. N.S. Maskelyne, MP.

support among the up-country Pahang chiefs and had frequently expressed his readiness to accept a British Resident should be succeed in wresting the throne from his brother.¹

The officials at the Colonial Office were dubious about interfering on behalf of 'general civilization and decency'. Sir Robert Meade, the Assistant Under-Secretary observed: 'Are there not many other equally cruel cases and if we enter on a general crusade where will it end? I think if we could curb the Bendahara of Pahang it would be a good thing but then there are many good things which we can't bring about and many outrages all over the world for us to redress. . . . We could not make such a case—however sad—a *casus belli* as it were.'² When asked for his opinion as he was then on leave, Swettenham declared that such occurrences as the one described by the Governor were commonplace in Pahang. He pointed out that the woman in question had been born in Pahang and her husband was a Chinese subject. Shorn of exaggeration and framing, he believed that the story amounted to very little. 'I trust' he concluded, 'our influence will shortly be established in Pahang but I hope it will be for some better reason than the excuse furnished by the story of the uxorious Chinaman.'³

Meanwhile, Weld had second thoughts about 'harsh measures' for in January 1887 he sent his nephew, Hugh Clifford, to Pekan with Wan Mansur who was said to have been 'most unexpectedly' invited by the Bendahara to return.⁴ Clifford had instructions to get a letter from the Bendahara asking for an 'agreement or convention of amity' on the lines of the Johore treaty of December 1885 in which the main stipulations were

¹ CO273/141 Weld to CO 6 December 1886 with enclosure.

² Ibid. Meade's minute 12 February 1887.

³ Ibid. Swettenham's note 12 February, and letter to Lucas 14 February 1887. The letter is amusing, sarcastic and characteristic of Swettenham's style. It turned out later that part of the evidence submitted by Yeo Pan had been forged. The woman concerned became a Muslim and was treated as a 'favourite Sultana'. See CO273/144 Weld to CO 16 April 1887.

⁴ The authenticity of the invitation is questionable. Writing to the Maharaja Perba, or To' Raja of Jelai, about Wan Mansur's intentions, the Bendahara made no mention of his supposed invitation and, on the contrary, said: 'We inform you that our brother Engku Muda has written to us announcing his intention of returning by the hinterland and of regulating affairs in the interior.' See Linehan, *op. cit.* p. 221.

control over Pahang's foreign relations and the appointment of a British Agent with consular powers.

Clifford and Wan Mansur's party travelled via Selangor through Ulu Pahang visiting some of the districts where European mining companies had started operations. Discontent was rife among the Malay chiefs and Chinese miners who had been displaced by Europeans holding authority from the Bendahara. One chief, the To' Raja of Jelei, claimed that his land had been given to William Cameron while the Orang Kaya of Lipis complained that a European company had taken away his mines. At Penjum, Clifford discovered that the dispossessed Chinese miners were preparing to attack the Penjum Company's establishment. In fact, from many quarters he received reports concerning the arbitrary action of European managers in their dealings with Malays and Chinese. Yet the Europeans also had their own grievances. They presented Clifford with a list of these which included broken contracts and the absence of any effective authority to whom they could appeal for redress. The conditions then prevalent in Pahang convinced Clifford that except for the Bendahara and his favourites at Pekan, all parties in the state would welcome the advent of a British Agent.¹

He reached Pekan on 18 March 1887 where he tried to impress on the Bendahara the seriousness of the situation in the interior and the probability of increased difficulties—even disturbances—as more Europeans arrived. Again he emphasized the danger of foreign intervention, but the Bendahara paid no heed to his arguments and urged him to leave Pahang. Although Clifford stayed on, he became daily more pessimistic about the outcome of his mission. 'As things stand at present' he recorded in his journal on 29 March, 'I have absolutely no chance of gaining the confidence of the Sultan. He shuts himself up as does also Tuan Itam and I am always put off by some excuse or other when I want to see either of them . . . the result of my mission is a foregone conclusion.'²

At the end of March, however, the arrival of the Dato'

¹ CO273/144 See Clifford's Journal which contains much useful information about conditions in Pahang, its government, system of taxation, the mining companies etc.

² Ibid. Entry of 29, 30 March 1887.

Mentri of Johore, Syed Mohammed Alsagoff and Mr. Glass of Guthrie and Company on business connected with concessions,¹ tipped the scales in Clifford's favour. On 10 April, the Bendahara handed him a letter for the Governor asking for a treaty which would put Pahang 'on the same footing' as Johore. Overjoyed, Clifford immediately rushed back to Singapore. Reminiscing about this incident many years later in his preface to the biography of Weld, Clifford wrote: 'I think I can see him [i.e. Weld] now, dressed in sleeping jacket and sarong, and with disordered hair, tramping about his bedroom in exclamatory delight, when having arrived in Singapore unexpectedly in the middle of the night, after an absence of three months, I woke him up to tell him the result of my mission just as dawn was breaking.'² Clifford attributed his success entirely to the Dato' Mentri and Alsagoff both of whom he thought had acted under orders from the Sultan of Johore.

Two reasons were given by the local and metropolitan authorities for the Sultan of Johore's co-operation in this instance. Weld surmised that since Abu Bakar had invested in Pahang and troubles appeared imminent between those working the concessions and the Malays and Chinese, he now deemed it expedient for the Straits Government to step in and impose the *pax Britannica*.³ But by that time Abu Bakar had transferred most if not all his concessions to other people. The Colonial Office had a more plausible explanation. They believed that Abu Bakar was anxious to be on good terms with the British Government at that particular juncture because of his financial difficulties. His debts in London amounted to some £140,000 and his lawyers were then trying to persuade the Secretary of State to instruct the Governor to collect Johore's opium revenues on the latter's terms so that with this as security, he would be able to raise a loan on the London money market.⁴ To this we may add that the Maharaja probably deemed it expedient

¹ The concession obtained by Alsagoff, Glass and Gan Eng Seng at this time, i.e. April 1887, was taken over later by the Malay Peninsula Prospecting Co. Refer CO273/228 Malay Peninsula Prospecting Co. to CO 14 March 1897.

² Lovat, *op. cit.* Preface.

³ CO273/144 Weld to CO 16 April 1887.

⁴ CO273/144 de Robeck's minute 8 June 1887 on Weld's despatch 28 April 1887.

to assist Straits policy in the hope that he himself would not be pressured into receiving a British Agent.¹ Moreover, those who had either invested in Pahang or else desired to gain from speculation in Pahang shares had had time to realize the practical difficulties of making headway in a state closed to British influence. They now saw the advantage of British protection and the presence of a British Agent with consular powers only. Without a right to control the administration such an Agent was not expected to interfere in matters pertaining to concessions in a manner detrimental to the interests of investors. Hence, as one of them admitted, whereas he and his friends had opposed British policy before they now took 'great pains' to overcome the Bendahara's reservations about a treaty² and presumably advised the Sultan of Johore to use his good offices accordingly.

It is interesting to speculate why the Bendahara gave heed to Abu Bakar's advice. His respect for the latter's experience in dealing with the British may be assumed. Of all the Malay Rulers, Abu Bakar seemed to have benefited most from his relations with the Straits Government. Despite the fact that Abu Bakar had signed a treaty in December 1885, he still remained independent in his internal affairs. The Bendahara therefore must have felt more reassured about the consequences of asking for a similar agreement. This, as we shall see, probably explains his subsequent change of mind when he found that despite his request to be treated in the same way as Johore, he could not rid himself of the presence of a British officer in Pahang.

Weld did not proceed at once to Pekan on receipt of the Bendahara's letter because the Foreign Office despatched him on a mission to Borneo to investigate some trouble there. Nevertheless, Clifford returned to Pahang where he discouraged the Bendahara from acceding to the requests of speculators rushing in to stake their claims as a result of rumours about the imminence of a treaty between Britain and Pahang. On one occasion, the Bendahara gave Tan Hay Seng, a Singapore

¹ See Chapter IV, p. 111.

² CO273/148 See Fraser's memo 4 May 1887. Clifford had also been told by the European managers of companies in Pahang that they could not carry on much longer under the conditions then existing. Similarly, the *Straits Times* of 4 April 1887 referred to the insecurity of life and property in Pahang and declared that it was 'high time' for the British Government to intervene.

Chinese, a concession to fell timber on the banks of the Pahang river and its tributaries and to mine in Brah, Cherang Yang and other districts¹ despite Clifford's remonstrances. In another instance, Clifford succeeded in persuading the Bendahara to reduce the size of a concession to Seah Song Seah, a Chinese merchant recommended by the Sultan of Johore. Annoyed by Clifford's interference, Tan, together with Seah's agent in Pahang, began to spread rumours to frighten the Bendahara about British intentions.² The *Singapore Free Press*³ also criticized Weld for his apparent hostility to investment interests in Pahang. Under these circumstances the Bendahara demanded from the Governor, when he reached Pekan in July 1887 on the completion of his Borneo mission, several new conditions in the proposed treaty. First, the right to appoint and to dismiss the British Agent; second, a stipulation to prevent such an Agent from listening to non-European complaints; and third, recognition of his son, instead of brother, as heir. Not only did the Governor turn down these demands but he put forward counter-proposals intended to enlarge the powers of the British Agent to be stationed in Pahang. A tense situation developed. Ultimately the Bendahara grudgingly agreed to abide by his earlier request for a Johore type of treaty. Even then Weld was prevented from signing a treaty now within his grasp owing to the Colonial Office ruling that the wording of Article 1 in the Johore treaty about 'joint defence' should not be repeated in treaties with other Malay States.⁴ Since the Bendahara would not consider an amendment, Weld had to rest content with his undertaking to sign a treaty exactly like Johore's.

¹ Tan Hay Seng's concessions dated 4 June and 21 July were later made over to a British company. See CO273/164 enclosure in Wilson, Bristow and Carmichael to CO 29 March 1889.

² CO273/146 Weld to CO 3 August 1887; CO273/148 Clifford's 'Report on the Present State of Pahang and its Inhabitants' 1 October 1887.

³ The proprietor of the *Singapore Free Press* was C.B. Buckley, partner of Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson's firm, the local agents of the Pahang Corporation Ltd. The Corporation believed that the Governor was hostile to their interests. A Director of the Corporation—a Member of Parliament—N.S. Maskelyne, interviewed Sir Robert Meade of the Colonial Office about Weld's supposed opposition. Maskelyne appeared 'very nervous' but was assured by the Colonial Office that Weld was not hostile to the Corporation. See CO273/151 minutes on Smith to CO 21 March 1888.

⁴ See above pp. 55-56.

At this stage, the Governor had misgivings about the adequacy of the terms of the Johore treaty for Pahang. He felt that a British Agent 'having functions similar to those of a Consular Officer' could not protect the interests of the British Government. Therefore, he told Clifford to press for control over concessions as well¹ when the Secretary of State telegraphed his consent to the retention of the above-mentioned article of the Johore treaty. This was more than what the Bendahara had previously agreed to and he refused to give way. Whether or not Clifford then withdrew his demand for controlling powers is uncertain. In any case, the Bendahara became so incensed that he refused to sign any treaty at all. Worse still, he assumed such a threatening attitude that Clifford was compelled to leave Pekan.

It looked as if Weld had missed a treaty in trying to force the pace. With his term of office fast drawing to a close, the Governor's frustration may be imagined. There are two versions of what happened next, viz., his own and Johore's. Reporting to the Colonial Office, Weld claimed that he bided his time because the Bendahara's 'breach of faith' and conduct towards Clifford justified intervention and the establishment of British control. 'Nothing could be easier' he said, 'than to put pressure to exact such terms as would deliver the country at once from misgovernment'. According to him, the Sultan of Johore who had hitherto held aloof, now approached him to intercede for the Bendahara.² On the other hand, a memorandum on Pahang affairs³ written by the Sultan of Johore's private secretary, the Dato' Sri Amar d'Raja, Abdul Rahman, gives the impression that the first move came from the Straits authorities. It states that Clifford called on the Sultan at his Tyersall residence in Singapore on 24 September. The next day, a meeting took place at Government House between Weld, Clifford, Sultan Abu Bakar and Abdul Rahman. There, it was agreed that to pave the way for a resumption of negotiations between the Straits Government and Pahang, the Sultan of Johore would first submit a written apology on the Bendahara's behalf and

¹ CO273/146 Weld's instructions to Clifford 7 August 1887.

² CO273/148 Weld to CO 11 October 1887.

³ Johore Secretariat, Official Letter Book A (1885-93), No. 80, pp. 57, 83.

subsequently obtain one from the latter. Both were drafted in the course of the meeting. Whoever took the initiative, there is no doubt that the Sultan of Johore played a vital role in ending the deadlock. As for subsequent events, the British and the Johore versions supplement rather than contradict each other.

In reply to the Sultan of Johore's apology mentioned above, the Governor stated the terms on which he would renew the offer of the Johore Treaty, at the same time indicating the 'ulterior action' he had decided to take on his return to England.

After the manner in which the Bendahara of Pahang has behaved in committing a direct breach of faith and by disrespectful and unfriendly conduct, and having in mind the anarchy and oppression that prevails in Pahang, the British Government would be perfectly justified in insisting upon much more than is provided by the Johore Treaty, and I consequently withdrew Mr. Clifford, my Agent, with the intention of bringing the matter under the consideration of the Home Government on my return to England, with a view to ulterior action, subject to the concurrence of my successor in my policy, and I had decided to take no steps in the interim, and not to renew the offer of the Johore Treaty, unless the Bendahara should, of his own accord, apologise and make reparation.¹

On receiving this communication, the Sultan of Johore sent the Bendahara's two envoys, Tuan Itam and Penghulu Balei, back to Pekan in his own steamer, to report on the Governor's terms and obviously, his own advice. The Penghulu Balei returned on 1 October together with Imam Prang and Haji Mohammed Nur, with the message that their royal master was 'perfectly willing to be guided' by the Sultan of Johore in the matter of renewing negotiations with the British. They presented the Governor with the Bendahara's abject letter of apology begging pardon for his 'mistake and folly'. Thus satisfied, Weld allowed Clifford to proceed to Pekan with the Dato Mentri of Johore. They were met at the jetty by the Bendahara's officers and received by a guard of honour. The British flag was hoisted, saluted with twenty-one guns—all according to Weld's demands—and a treaty² finally signed on 8 October 1887 just a

¹ CO273/148 enclosure in Weld to CO 11 October 1887.

² For the text of this agreement, see W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 66-68.

few days before Weld left for Britain, thus fulfilling an ambition conceived at the beginning of his Governorship.

The main purpose of Weld's Pahang policy throughout these years was to open the state to 'commerce and civilization'. To this was added the fear of foreign intervention as a result of the influx of concessionaires into the state and the onset of European rivalry for colonies. The Governor wavered between the desirability of acquiring a control amounting to the Residential system, or something less on the lines of the Johore treaty. He had no choice because the Bendahara would have nothing more than the latter unless forced to do so. And a gun-boat policy was unpopular at the Colonial Office. In fact, both the Straits and the metropolitan governments preferred to let Parliament and the public believe that the extension of British control was undertaken at the request of the Malays themselves, that was why Weld had directed Clifford to obtain such a letter from the Bendahara. It enabled him to tell the legislative council: 'the Rajah, with whom I have been long in communication, has at last applied to me for assistance, asking for a treaty like that with Johore, and a British Agent'.¹ Similarly, writing to a friend he said.

I have lately scored a great success as a result of my policy in this country; the rich and powerful State of Pahang on the east coast has asked for a treaty and a government agent. This is the seventh state that has voluntarily put itself under British protection, and asked me to undertake its affairs. . . . All the southern part of the Peninsula is now under British influence—and one may add—open to commerce, peace and civilization . . . the Raja of Pahang, a mild-mannered and amiable old gent, who having got into serious trouble with his own people, who are in a state of anarchy, and with Europeans to whom he foolishly gave concessions of tin and gold mines, is asking our help to get him out of his difficulties. His only idea of government is to order some one to be fined or assassinated. . . . The people are terribly oppressed, and look to us to save them. They are being plundered, and their wives and daughters are at the mercy of their chiefs. And yet the position of the chiefs is so precarious that even they welcome our coming. I cannot help regretting that I shall have left the country before my plans for its reorganization can be fully carried out.²

¹ Lovat, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

² *Ibid.* pp. 394-5.

Almost the last act Weld performed while in office was to appoint Clifford as British Agent in Pahang with parting instructions to cultivate good relations with the chiefs and extend British influence.¹ Of the British Agent's activities in Pahang, Linehan gives a fairly detailed account taken from the official records. It shows that under the terms of the 1887 treaty Clifford was powerless to suppress abuses² and to assist in the organization and development of Pahang. He had hardly any influence over the Sultan (the Bendahara having been recognized as Sultan in the 1887 treaty) and his chiefs.

The new Governor, Sir Cecil Smith, had previously tried to extend the Residential system to Pahang when he despatched the Swettenham mission to Pekan during Weld's absence on leave in 1885. If he then believed in the advisability of acquiring control without an intermediate stage of advice generally favoured by Weld in his dealings with the Negri Sembilan districts and Pahang, Clifford's ineffectiveness left no doubt in his mind now that only with an all-powerful Resident would mining, agricultural and commercial enterprise flourish in Pahang and its government cease to be a 'disgrace to the Peninsula'. In view also of the fact that company after company was being floated and share values were soaring with the optimism in British circles about the wealth of Pahang, the urgency of providing an administrative framework to facilitate economic development impressed the Governor.

The timing of his move to instal a Resident at Pekan was due to a matter involving the largest British company interested in Pahang, viz., the Pahang Corporation Ltd., a vendor company which had bought over the large concession acquired by Lim Ah Sam and others in 1883. Its directors included Sir Edmund Pontifex of the Cape Copper Company Ltd. as chairman; N. Storey Maskelyne, Professor of Minerology at Oxford and a Member of Parliament³ and a local representative, William

¹ CO273/148 Weld's instructions to Clifford 6 October 1887.

² See CO273/146 and 148 for Clifford's reports on Pahang dated 3 August and 1 October 1887 respectively. Recalling his experiences in Pahang many years later, Clifford said that he watched the Sultan's methods 'with a fascination of horror, and with the agony that comes to one who is the impotent witness of much evil'. See Clifford, *op. cit.* p. 203.

³ According to *Who was Who, 1897-1916*, London, 1920, Maskelyne was an MP from 1880-92 and occupied the chair at Oxford from 1856-95.

Fraser. In a dispute between the company's solicitors, Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson, and the Straits Government regarding the validity of part of the original grant to Lim Ah Sam, the Colonial Office had sided with the Company.¹ The Secretary of State maintained that the Straits Government had no right to interfere with concessions held by British subjects. Furthermore, he rejected the Governor's suggestion that a Straits Government Notification of February 1885 which reserved for the said Government the right of not recognizing concessions obtained by British subjects from independent Malay Rulers² should be published in London to deter company-mongers. The Secretary of State even instructed Cecil Smith on 21 March 1888 not to republish the Notification in Singapore.³ Then on 27 April, he telegraphed the Governor to ascertain the truth of a rumoured cancellation of the Pahang Corporation's concession at the supposed instigation of the Sultan of Johore.⁴ This telegram was the result of an appeal from Maskelyne to the Permanent Under-Secretary and Assistant Under-Secretary. Maskelyne urged the Colonial Office to support *bona fide* enterprise in Pahang. He suggested that the Straits Government should be requested to use its influence on the Corporation's behalf. Considering the company a good one deserving of support, the Secretary of State consequently forwarded his correspondence with the Corporation to Cecil Smith and left it to him to decide whether any friendly representation 'could not properly be made' to the Sultan of Pahang.⁵ As a result of these communications from the Secretary of State, Cecil Smith inferred that the metropolitan authorities wished him to assist not only this company but all such enterprise in Pahang. This

¹ For more information about this dispute, see E. Thio, 'The Extension of British Control to Pahang', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxx, part 1, 1956, p. 68.

² It should be explained that the Notification (see Straits Settlements Government Gazette, 1885, p. 18) was intended to discourage speculators who were then active in Pahang. In anticipation of the establishment of British control the Straits Government considered it advisable to reserve the right of rejecting concessions detrimental to its own and Pahang's interests.

³ CO273/151 CO to Smith 21 March 1888, and Smith to CO 3 February 1888.

⁴ CO273/153 CO to Smith 27 April 1888.

⁵ CO273/157 Maskelyne to CO 9 April and 3 May 1888; CO to Smith 11 May 1888.

meant that there had to be 'some substantial check' on the Sultan's powers. The remedy, obviously, was a Resident whose advice 'must be asked and accepted'.

Having made up his mind to act by approximately the middle of June 1888, Cecil Smith found an excuse ready to hand. In February of the same year, Clifford had reported the stabbing of a Chinese shopkeeper Chan You Wee, generally called Goh Hui in British records, close to the Sultan's palace at his supposed instigation. Rumour said that Sultan Wan Ahmad coveted Goh Hui's wife, and that he detained her after her husband's death. Clifford suggested that the Sultan should offer a reward for the capture of the aggressor as otherwise Chinese immigrants would be discouraged from entering Pahang. The Sultan attributed the deed to devils and only after pressure from the British Agent did he issue an unsigned and unsealed proclamation offering a reward of \$100 to any person who could reveal the identity of the perpetrator of the 'accident'—whether 'man, spirit or Satan'. It was also due to the Governor's representations that Goh Hui's wife was allowed to leave Pahang for Singapore. Investigations subsequently undertaken by W.A. Pickering, the Protector of Chinese in the Straits, apparently revealed that Goh Hui was a British subject.¹ Hence the Straits authorities seized on the incident to demand redress.

The Governor, Swettenham (then Resident of Selangor) and Pickering, arrived in Pekan on 23 June. Sultan Wan Ahmad denied any knowledge of the murderer. When the Governor demanded that he should raise the status of the British Agent with consular powers to that of a Resident enjoying full control as a guarantee against a repetition of such incidents in the future, the Sultan insisted on the *status quo*. However, he expressed regret for what had occurred and promised to introduce reforms. Cecil Smith refused to be satisfied with anything less than the acceptance of a Resident. According to Swettenham, an eye-witness at the interview, the Governor's vehement insistence was matched by the Sultan's obstinate resistance.

¹ Linehan says that according to a Malay source the *Hikayat Pahang*, Goh Hui was not a British subject and there was no indication that his death had been planned. But Linehan adds, 'He certainly met with foul play, and Clifford was not likely to have been deceived as to his nationality.' Linehan, *op. cit.* p. 124.

There were moments when the situation in the audience hall (filled with armed Malays) looked quite ugly.¹ Eventually, on 29 June, the Governor issued an ultimatum giving the Sultan ten days in which to give a satisfactory reply.

On 3 July 1888 the Governor wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies proposing a show of force should the Sultan remain intractable. To strengthen the case for intervention, he reported the death of another Chinese, also a British subject, who was supposed to have been poisoned at a meal in the Sultan's palace and had his property confiscated. 'Matters cannot be allowed to remain as they are', Cecil Smith said. He urged that as the Sultan was 'impervious to good influence, he should . . . be made to introduce reforms into his country, the government of which is a disgrace to the Malay Peninsula'. He was confident that a demand conveyed by a British officer supported by a detachment from the HMS *Orion* would bring the Ruler of Pahang to terms at once. From the people in the state, he anticipated no resistance at all.² Not only was he calculating on their inertia but Clifford had repeatedly maintained that the general feeling in Pahang was favourable to British rule. He had reported on 3 August 1887 that the common people were waiting for 'the English Government to assist them "as the parched earth awaits the rain" to use the expression of the Chief Chinaman of Pahang'.³

Lest it be assumed that humanitarian considerations dictated Cecil Smith's policy, we should note his private letter to the Secretary of State, Lord Knutsford, explaining the real reason for his pressure on the Sultan. 'It seems to me that directly it is recognized that Pahang is a sphere for British commercial enterprise, the Government is bound to take care that British lives and property are safe. Hence, I have not hesitated to push the case of the murdered Chinaman in order to get good government introduced into the State.'⁴

The Colonial Office accepted the idea of coercing the Sultan notwithstanding its innate dislike for a gunboat policy. As

¹ Swettenham, op. cit. p. 105.

² CO273/154 Smith to CO 3 July 1888 with several enclosures.

³ CO273/146 Clifford's Report enclosed in Weld to CO 3 August 1887.

⁴ CO273/154 Smith to Lord Knutsford 6 July 1888. A copy of this letter is available in the National Archives Singapore, in a volume of *Governor's Confidential and Secret Letters* (October 1881-May 1893) p. 128.

Meade remarked: 'I do not like this but our hands are forced and on the whole I think there is less danger in advancing than in disavowing the Governor's action.' Although the Secretary of State considered it 'very difficult' to advise on this case, yet he agreed with Meade. One member of the staff suggested that instead of landing a detachment, as Cecil Smith proposed, there might be less risk in shelling the Sultan's palace at Pekan if the HMS *Orion* could get within firing distance. Before authorizing action, Lord Knutsford telegraphed to the Governor to ascertain whether this could be done; and in the event of Pahang yielding, whether a British Resident would be safe in Pekan during the season of the north-east monsoon which was then approaching, when reinforcements by sea in an emergency were out of the question.¹

Meanwhile, the Sultan of Pahang summoned his chiefs to Pekan and held meetings daily. The people were panic-stricken and prepared for flight. It was said that the Sultan intended to ask for more time to consider the matter; that he hoped for support from the Sultan of Johore.² At all events, in his reply to the British ultimatum, Wan Ahmad offered compensation to Goh Hui's wife but remained silent about accepting a Resident.

Force, however, proved to be unnecessary despite the Sultan of Pahang's unsatisfactory reply. Cecil Smith's proposal to send a British warship was only to be the last resort. Before adopting such a course, he decided to try to work through Sultan Abu Bakar of Johore since direct negotiations with Sultan Wan Ahmad had been fruitless. Accordingly, the Governor confided to the Sultan of Johore his Government's desire to place a Resident in Pahang. As he had so often assisted British policy in the past during the Governorships of Ord, Clarke and Jervois (Weld being the exception), the Sultan of Johore now offered his services to Cecil Smith. Accordingly he went to Pekan with his chief minister and private secretary. Using a Malay source, Linchan describes what ensued:

Abu Bakar swore a solemn oath that his efforts were entirely directed towards the best interests of Pahang, and advised the Sultan to submit to the Governor's demands. Ahmad summoned his chiefs

¹ CO273/154 see minutes on Smith to CO 3 July 1888; CO537/46 CO to Smith 18 August 1888.

² Linchan, *op. cit.* pp. 124-5.

of Jelai, Chenor, Semantan, To Gajah and others to a council. A few were in favour of fighting, others recommended the payment of blood money and, if it were refused, passive resistance. . . . Other chiefs agreed to let the decision rest entirely with the Sultan. Ahmad at once vetoed the proposal to offer armed resistance. He did not disdain to seek the advice of Mr. Hole, a European merchant who resided at Pekan. . . . Finally the influence of the Johore ruler, Tengku Mahmud and the more moderate chiefs carried the day.¹

Persuaded to submit in order to avoid a worse fate, the Sultan of Pahang signed a letter on 24 August in which he acknowledged responsibility for the death of Goh Hui and asked for a British officer to 'assist us in matters relating to the government of our country, on a similar system as that existing in the Malay States under British protection'. At the same time he requested an assurance that he and his successors would be guaranteed all their 'proper privileges and powers' according to *their* system of government and that old customs which had 'good and proper reason' as well as all matters relating to religion, should not be interfered with.²

These two requests, the one for a British Resident and the other for a guarantee of the Sultan's 'proper privileges and powers', were incompatible. In the Governor's reply he made no reference to the assurance asked for by the Sultan. More than a decade later, when the Residential system had robbed him of all his power and perhaps during one of his rebellious moods, Sultan Wan Ahmad brought up the point that one condition in his letter, which was made the basis of British control, had been ignored.³

From the above account of the circumstances which led to British pressure on the Sultan of Pahang to receive a Resident, it is evident that Goh Hui's murder was not the cause of but excuse for the appointment of a Resident to replace the Agent. The version given by Sir Frank Swettenham, Sir Richard Winstedt and other officials-turned-historians is that a Resident was sent to Pahang as a result of the murder of a Chinese British subject. No mention is made of the Pahang Corporation

¹ Ibid. Mr. Hole was William Hole *quondam* private secretary to the Sultan of Johore.

² Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 68-69.

³ CO273/261 J.A. Swettenham to CO 17 May 1900; CO273/266 Smith to CO 31 July 1900.

or of the economic interests involved. But to quote Sir John Dickson, the Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements, who was on leave in London in 1888 and had been approached by the directors of the Corporation and consulted by the Colonial Office:

The financial interest which influential men in England had in that State was much greater than had existed in the case of any other state, and those interests were able to bring to bear upon the Government at home, and through them on the Government of the Colony, an amount of pressure which it was impossible to resist. . . . The Sultan of Pahang's conduct was so arbitrary that the largest and most important of the concessionaires were absolutely at his mercy, and received notice that their concessions were at an end, and they were practically ruined if the Sultan's order could not be cancelled, and it was at this juncture that the Government was able to make a Treaty with the Sultan and take the administration into its hands. That was not for the avenging of the life of a British subject, but really for the preservation of British capital.¹

Admittedly Dickson exaggerated the pressure of the Colonial Office on the local authorities to intervene on the Corporation's behalf because the occasion for his remarks was a legislative council debate on a loan for Pahang, and the unofficials had argued that Cecil Smith's move to take over the administration of Pahang had been premature. He probably wished to remind the leading critic of Straits policy, Thomas Shelford, of the particular interests which had largely prompted the Governor's action as Shelford's firm, Paterson, Simons and Company, was the local agent for the Pahang Corporation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that long before 'outrages . . . committed upon British subjects'² became known either in Singapore or Whitehall, the British wanted to have closer relations with Pahang; and Cecil Smith thrust a Resident upon the unwilling Sultan mainly in order to bring about political conditions favourable for economic advancement. If the object of

¹ *PLCSS* for 1891, refer to Dickson's speech at the meeting of 15 January 1891. Dickson was mistaken about the treaty. Actually no new treaty was signed in 1888; only an exchange of letters between the Sultan and the Governor took place.

² See the Colonial Office paper on 'The Appointment of a British Resident at Pahang' for Lord Salisbury's information. FO69/124 CO to FO 5 December 1888.

British policy had merely been to forestall foreign intervention, then the 1887 Treaty would have sufficed. The British wanted more than that. One Governor after another accepted the popular belief that Pahang was indubitably the richest and most favoured state of the Peninsula. As Cecil Smith himself told the Secretary of State, it merely 'required to be properly governed to ensure rapid development and future prosperity'.¹ To quote Edward Fairfield of the Colonial Office in his letter to the Governor written a few years later, 'with the strong current of testimony existing in 1888 as to the supposed riches of Pahang you had ground for believing that you were doing a good service to the Crown by your coup d'état'.²

If at the local level the principal motivation is thus apparent, that of the Colonial Office appears to have been less constant and more mixed. As we have seen, its response was determined at first by Kimberley's presence and from 1884 by the rush on the part of other great powers to stake claims in tropical areas. Nonetheless the evidence consulted suggests that the decision to introduce the Residential system in 1888 rested on much the same calculations as those which operated in Singapore. For instance, explaining to Lord Salisbury, head of the Foreign Office and Prime Minister, the circumstances under which a Resident had been appointed to Pahang, the Secretary of State for the Colonies expressed his anticipation that the step would be 'productive of good result both in developing the resources of the State and in preserving peace and good order, especially having regard to the mining concessions recently granted by the Sultan to European Companies'.³ In Pahang as in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong, flag followed trade.

It may be mentioned in passing that John Rodger,⁴ the first

¹ CO273/154 Smith to CO 3 July 1888.

² CO273/182 Fairfield to Smith (private) 27 July 1892.

³ CO273/155 CO to FO 5 December 1888.

⁴ J.P. Rodger was the owner of a castle and a man of considerable private means. He was educated at Eton and Oxford and had gone to Singapore as a traveller in pursuit of knowledge and new experiences. The Peninsula appealed to him so much that after a visit to Selangor he was persuaded to remain as magistrate. His enthusiasm and energy, according to Swettenham who knew him well, were only equalled by his wisdom and concern for the welfare of the Malays for whom he had a great affection. Certain influential members of the Singapore community later pressed for his dismissal be-

British Resident appointed to Pahang, encountered major difficulties in carrying out his duty. To begin with, the Sultan protested that the twenty-five Sikhs who formed the Resident's guard were turbulent and did not understand Malay custom. To show his confidence in the Sultan's good faith, Rodger had them withdrawn. Nevertheless, as a result of this and other evidence that the imposition of a Resident was galling to Sultan Wan Ahmad, Rodger and his assistants did not immediately attempt either to collect the revenue or to assume control over other aspects of government.¹ Not until July 1889 did the Residential system actually come into operation. By that time a police force of some fifty Sikhs and 150 Malays drawn chiefly from Trengganu and Kelantan had been organized. Besides, Sultan Ahmad had retired from 'the cares of Government' in view of his 'increasing age and infirmities'. He delegated authority to his eldest son, Tunku Mahmud, to enact laws and issue regulations with reference to all matters concerning the administration of Pahang 'in consultation with the British Resident'.² Although the British found the young Tunku Mahmud easier to deal with, the transition from the old Malay régime to the new one of British rule provoked the resistance of those chiefs whose position, power and perquisites suffered from the change. Beginning with the revolt of the Orang Kaya of Semantan in December 1891, intermittent disturbances occurred until 1895 when opposition was finally crushed.³ In that year, Pahang, Selangor, Perak and Negri Sembilan agreed to form a federation.

Before we examine the circumstances which led to this federation of the four states, we need to discuss British policy towards Johore, which not only stayed out of the federation but also succeeded in remaining virtually independent in the management of its internal affairs.

cause of his uncompromising attitude towards concessions that were not being effectively worked and because they considered that he had shown weakness and indecision in handling the situation on the outbreak of disturbances in December 1891-September 1892.

¹ CO273/155 See enclosures in Smith to CO 15 October 1888.

² Refer to *AR* Pahang 1888, 1889 and 1890 in *PP* C.5884 (1889), C.6222 (1890), C.6576 (1892) and Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* p. 70.

³ For an account of the Pahang rebellion, see Linehan, *op. cit.* Chapter XII. This episode remains to be more fully studied.

IV

INFORMAL ADVICE IN JOHORE

JOHORE was unique among the Malay States. It lay closest to the seat of British power in the Peninsula, being separated from Singapore by a narrow strait less than half-a-mile wide, and yet remained independent in its internal affairs long after the neighbouring states had succumbed to British control. Again, in contrast to the other states where the Ruler's authority was weakened by the influx of Chinese immigrants and curtailed as a result of relations with the British, the Temenggongs of Johore became more wealthy and powerful through the operation of these same factors. British support, for instance, enabled the Johore Temenggongs to elevate themselves from the status of local executive officers to the Sultans of Johore—comparable to the Bendahara in Pahang—to Maharaja in 1868, and then to Sultan of Johore in 1885; by which time they had become *de jure* as well as *de facto* sovereigns of Johore while their former royal overlords lapsed into an indigent obscurity. As far as the British were concerned, Abu Bakar (1862–95) clearly stood 'at the top of the tree'. When no other ruler had even a CMG he already possessed the GCMG and the KCSI.¹ Besides being the most independent, influential and richest potentate in the Peninsula, Abu Bakar was the only one well-known abroad. In 1866 he made the first of several trips to Europe where he dined with Queen Victoria and stayed at Windsor, was received at European Courts, had an audience with the Pope and mingled with high society. Among the decorations he received were the Royal Prussian Order of the Crown; Commander of the Cross of Italy and Commander of the Cross of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.² In the East, he visited India, Java, Hong Kong, Japan and China. The Emperor of China awarded him the First Class Order of the Double Dragon in 1892.³ Abu Bakar was

¹ CO273/138 Weld to Meade 9 August 1885.

² See *Singapore and Straits Directory for 1880*, Singapore, 1880, p. 99.

³ R.O. Winstedt, 'A History of Johore (1365–1895 A.D.)', *JMBRAS*, vol. x, part 3, December 1932, p. 117.

indeed the only nineteenth-century Malay Ruler to receive such honours from Asian as well as European monarchs. He, his father and his son, Ibrahim, were outstanding in yet another respect. They alone among the Malay Rulers of the nineteenth century resembled Kings Mongkut and Chulalongkorn of Thailand in their response to the West. They opened their country to foreign trade and sought to adopt Western ideas in their administration. In these several ways, therefore, Johore stood out from the other Malay States.

Its unique position was due partly to its proximity to Singapore but mainly to the ability, energy and political acumen of Temenggong Daing Ibrahim (1825-62)¹ and his successors. As Singapore prospered and grew from a little fishing village, Johore benefited from its development. To illustrate how its Rulers turned developments to their own advantage, let us take the case of the Chinese gambier and pepper planters. From the 1830's when the strong demand for pepper and gambier pushed up prices, some of the Chinese in Singapore crossed over to Johore to pioneer the cultivation of these products. Daing Ibrahim welcomed them into his domain. And to facilitate as well as control their operations, he issued to their headmen (*kangchu*) documents (*surat sungai*) which allowed them to form settlements, cultivate specified areas with their own capital and labour, and gave them the monopoly of gambling, pawnbroking, selling spirits, opium and pork. Such letters of authority also enabled the *kangchu* to take a certain commission on the export of pepper and gambier and the import of rice. In return, the *kangchu* paid rent, license fees and other duties.² Gradually, groups of plantations sprang up on the banks of the Johore, Batu Pahat, Muar, Sedili and other rivers. By 1883 there were well over ninety *kangchus*,³ and in 1889 the Chinese population was estimated at 150,000 out of a total population of 200,000.⁴ Daing Ibrahim and Abu Bakar not only encouraged the Chinese to settle in and open up Johore but also welcomed

¹ Ibid. Chapter XI.

² A.E. Coope, 'The Kangchu System in Johore', *JMBRAS*, vol. xiv, part 3, December 1936, pp. 247-61. See also C.M. Turnbull, 'The Johore Gambier and Pepper Trade in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the South Seas Society*, vol. xv, part 1, June 1959, pp. 43 ff.

³ *The Singapore and Straits Directory for 1883*, Singapore, 1883, pp. 126-7.

⁴ *The Singapore and Straits Directory for 1889*, Singapore, 1889, p. 291.

Japanese and Indian immigrants. At the same time, these Johore Rulers were known to favour European enterprise. Abu Bakar himself moreover sponsored experiments in growing cotton and tobacco and initiated many other projects. The small port and saw-milling centre which grew up at Tanjong Putri on the northern shore of the strait became such a promising place that it was renamed Johore Bahru in 1866 and made the capital of the state.¹ Describing it in 1894, Lake said:

It is now a flourishing little town of about 15,000 inhabitants, the seat of government and the residence of the Sultan. Viewed from the Singapore side of the straits, the town presents a very picturesque appearance, built as it is along the shore, with the surrounding small hills dotted over with houses mingling with the more substantial stone buildings of the Government. Facing the sea is the Istana Laut, the principal residence of the Sultan, a long two-storey building fitted up with every European comfort and luxury. . . . Well-laid out roads, an esplanade over a mile long, large airy hospitals, water-works, and wharfs all testify to the enlightened and energetic administration of the present ruler.²

Compared to the other Malay Rulers, Abu Bakar was undoubtedly 'enlightened and energetic' in his efforts to provide security of life and property and to model his administration on that of the Colony. Soon after his accession in 1863, he revised the Islamic code to make it 'more conformable to European ideas'.³ Besides, he established an English school, encouraged vaccination and employed Europeans as his legal and technical advisers. The day-to-day advice of British officials in their private capacity was also available to him. Furthermore Abu Bakar was fortunate in that the Malay population in Johore was small and completely under his control. T. H. Hill, who spent several months in Johore in 1878, saw 'none of the turbulence so commonly reported to exist amongst the Malays'. Everywhere he went he noted that the Maharaja's orders were received with respect.⁴ Among the Chinese the sources of friction

¹ C.D. Cowan, *Nineteenth Century Malaya: The Origins of British Political Control*, London, 1961, p. 37.

² H. Lake, 'Johore', *The Geographical Journal*, vol. iii, no. 4, April 1894, p. 295.

³ C.M. Turnbull, 'The Origins of British Control in the Malay States before Colonial Rule', *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, eds. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink, Oxford, 1964, p. 174.

⁴ T.H. Hill, *Report on Johore*, Singapore, 1878, p. 14.

present in the western states were lacking. Living in scattered settlements, the nature of their occupations in Johore did not give rise to arguments such as those over water courses and rich ore deposits prevalent among the miners in Perak and Selangor. In the interests of peace too Daing Ibrahim and Abu Bakar recognized only one secret society in the state, viz. the Ghee Hin.¹

Therefore in the 'sixties and early 'seventies, Johore, in contrast to the three west coast states, did not constitute a 'turbulent frontier' for the British in the Straits. Nor did formal control to promote trade appear necessary when informal influence sufficed. Furthermore, Daing Ibrahim and Abu Bakar made themselves useful to the British, whether as a source of information or as the intermediary between their own race and the Colonial Government. Above all, during these years, they refrained on the whole from pursuing 'their own inclination or immediate interest on any important subject once it was intimated to them that British policy favoured another course'.² Thus, so long as they maintained order, developed the state and governed in a manner consistent with British interests, they were advised, assisted, supported, praised and allowed to remain independent.

In fact, Abu Bakar won the unstinted praise of both the local and the metropolitan governments. Referring to Abu Bakar in 1868, Sir Harry Ord wrote to the Secretary of State as follows:

In his tastes and habits he is an English gentleman, as a ruler he is anxious to promote in every way the advancement and civilisation of his people, and he is the only Rajah in the whole Peninsula, or the adjoining States, who rules in accordance with the practice of civilized nations. He is deeply attached to the British Government and nation, and feeling with their support and encouragement he is most likely to benefit his country, he takes no steps of importance in administration without the advice of the local government, whilst he is ready at all times to place the whole resources of the country at our disposal.³

It may be thought that Ord's eulogy of Abu Bakar, one of his very few 'personal friends' in the Straits, was overgenerous. Other officials however were equally impressed by Abu Bakar's

¹ Lake, op. cit. p. 253.

² Cowan, op. cit. pp. 38, 158.

³ Ibid. p. 39; C.N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877*, 2nd ed., Kuala Lumpur, 1964, p. 41.

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intelligent response to the informal advice which he received from the British in Singapore. The Committee appointed by Col. A. E. H. Anson in 1871 to report on the Colony's relations with the Malay States recommended the extension of the same system of informal advice to other states by installing British Residents.¹ Swettenham similarly spoke well of the 'enlightened administration' of Johore in 1875. 'Though Johore has not yet been found to possess those rich mineral deposits which nature has conferred so lavishly on the other states,' he wrote, 'still, by the Maharajah's exertions, his just rule and his careful preservation of life and property, his country has attained a foremost position amongst the Native States of the Peninsula.'² The Governor, Sir William Jervois, thought no less highly of Abu Bakar³ whose authority he promoted, as we have seen, in the Negri Sembilan area after the Perak war on the grounds that this would be conducive to peace and commerce. Turning from Singapore to London we find that the Secretary of State had just as favourable an opinion of Abu Bakar. Addressing the House of Lords, Lord Carnarvon described the Johore Ruler as 'one of those rare and remarkable examples which we sometimes find in Oriental life, of a Native Prince accepting Western civilization, and throwing himself actively into the work of civilizing his country'.⁴ The general attitude of the Colonial Office towards Johore is contained in their statement of 31 October 1878: 'Her Majesty's Government cannot but be desirous on all occasions to encourage and support Native Rulers who are loyal, intelligent and govern well, especially in the case of those whose territories are in proximity to British Settlements.'⁵

Notwithstanding such pronouncements and the absence of any move in the early 'seventies to impose a more formal supervision over Johore's affairs, yet now and then towards the end of the decade, official statements critical of Abu Bakar's rule were made. In an earlier chapter we referred to Sir William

¹ Cowan, *op. cit.* pp. 82-83.

² F.A. Swettenham, 'Some Account of the Independent Native States of the Malay Peninsula', *JSBRAS*, no. 6, December 1880, pp. 198-9.

³ *PP C.1709* (1877) Jervois to CO 19 August 1876.

⁴ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debate*, 3rd series, vol. CCXLVI: Lord Carnarvon speaking in the House of Lords on 27 May 1879.

⁵ CO273/95 CO to Robinson 31 October 1878.

Robinson's observation in April 1879 that the states administered by British Residents were better governed and more speedily opened up than Johore.¹ It was symptomatic of a new critical attitude which slowly emerged in the Secretariat in Singapore.² Hitherto, Johore as the example of indigenous rule with British advice had clearly outshone indigenous rule without such advice as seen in Perak, Selangor and Negri Sembilan. But British intervention in 1874, followed by the pacification of the western states and their rapid development meant that the results achieved in Johore through advice alone no longer appeared remarkable. Perak consequently replaced Johore as the yardstick against which other states were measured. And the local officials became increasingly convinced that the Residential system involving British control was a speedier, more effective and more reliable method of promoting 'peace, commerce and civilization' in the Malay States. This then explains to some extent the gradual revision of opinion concerning the merits of Abu Bakar's rule.

What contributed to the growing disenchantment with the policy of informal advice pursued in Johore was the friction between Weld and Abu Bakar early in the 'eighties. The friction was due partly to a clash of personalities but mainly to Weld's determination to widen the area in the Peninsula under his direct control. We have already noted how Weld favoured such a course in the Negri Sembilan area and his efforts to circumvent the treaties of 1876 and 1877 which had given Abu Bakar a footing in the several districts. This, together with Weld's blunt statements to the chiefs of these districts and to Abu Bakar's brother that the Johore Ruler had better confine his energies and ambitions to his own realm, did not endear the Governor to Abu Bakar. Soon after his arrival, moreover, Weld began to harp on Abu Bakar's undue extravagance, cast doubts on his loyalty to British interests and even suggest that he deliberately set out to foment discord in the Malay States for his own purposes. The Governor evidently considered Abu Bakar a hindrance to his forward policy, a pretentious and rather unreliable potentate who had been thoroughly spoilt by the attention given him on his visits to Britain. Abu Bakar, on his part,

¹ CO273/101 Robinson to CO 29 April 1879.

² See e.g., CO273/105 Weld to CO 23 November 1880.

resented Weld's condescending and dictatorial attitude. He must have sensed the Governor's desire to put him in leading strings. Abu Bakar consequently turned more and more to his private advisers for counsel—particularly his lawyers, Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson—to Weld's great annoyance.

In 1884 the Governor set out to convince the Colonial Office of the need for a revision of British policy towards Johore on three grounds, viz., maladministration, the irresponsible advice given to the Maharaja by his European lawyers and the danger of foreign influence. In August he submitted a memorandum by Thomas Braddell on the unsatisfactory way in which justice was administered in Johore and the advisability of appointing a Resident 'as soon as possible'. Braddell argued:

The peace and prosperity of Johore depends absolutely on Singapore and close as it is to Singapore we know really nothing of what is going on there nor how the large revenue of the territory is disposed of. We hear of no expenditure or but little expenditure on the ordinary objects of state expenditure, matters intended for the safety, convenience and health of those who supply the revenue. Hitherto European planters have been quiet . . . but as soon as difficulties arise among the planters we may expect to find the Johore authorities unable to cope with the situation and the interference of the Straits Government will be necessary, a state of affairs which might I think be avoided by the appointment of a Resident in Johore.¹

Just about this time too, evidence of the 'pernicious influence' of Abu Bakar's private advisers came to the notice of the Secretary of State. It was discovered that despite Abu Bakar's promise in December 1882, after the British had rescued him from an ill-considered concession, not to tie his hands again in a similar manner without first consulting either the Governor or the Colonial Office, he gave to the Malay Peninsula Agency various rights over 100,000 acres of land on terms prejudicial to Johore itself and to the Colony as well. To mention one of the monopoly rights granted, the said concern was to have the sole right of issuing bank notes for use as legal tender in Johore. Should the Singapore authorities legislate against this, or if the existing laws in the Colony hampered the proposed banking operations, the Government of Johore was obliged to take

¹ CO273/132 Weld to Meade 29 August 1884 enclosing Braddell's memo. 27 August 1884.

retaliatory measures. Commenting on this scheme after discussions with Weld who was on home leave, de Robeck of the Colonial Office minuted:

I spoke to Sir Frederick Weld about this scheme . . . the main cause which leads him strongly to disapprove of the undertaking in its present shape is the fact that a Firm of Solicitors in Singapore have been and are the promoters of it.

Now Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson are the confidential advisers of the Maharaja, and occupy in the counsels of Johore, greatly to the detriment of the Ruler and people of that territory, Sir Frederick Weld considers, the position held by Her Majesty's Residents in more fortunate Native States. If this undertaking receives the support and favours asked for from Lord Derby in the Secretary, Mr. Walshe's letter, the Maharaja will fall more and more and to an undesirable degree under the influence and into the power of Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson.

The part this Firm plays in Johore affairs is already offensive to the Government of the Straits Settlements, and Sir Frederick opines that if success attends their present venture it will not be long before the relations between the Maharajah and the Representative of Her Majesty's Government in Singapore become strained beyond sufferance.¹

A few months later, Weld called attention to the possibility of another foreign influence in Johore. This was the period, it will be recalled, when the intensification of European colonial rivalry affected the thinking of the metropolitan government about British interests overseas. As a result of events in Africa and the Pacific, they realized that it was no longer safe to assume that informal influence would suffice because no other power was likely to challenge Britain's position. Taking advantage of the prevailing feeling of insecurity, Weld reported to the Colonial Office what he had heard concerning the possibility of French financiers undertaking the development of the Malay Peninsula Agency's Johore concession.²

In short, during his leave in 1884-5, Weld tried to persuade the Colonial Office that the policy of informal influence hitherto pursued towards Johore was most unsatisfactory and

¹ CO273/132 de Robeck's minute on the Malay Peninsula Agency Ltd. to CO 6 August 1884. See also CO273/130 Smith to CO 1 and 6 October 1884.

² CO273/138 Weld to Lucas 14 May 1885.

should be replaced by more formal control which would not only improve Johore's administration and hasten the development of its resources but also prevent the intrusion of some other power. Though admitting that Abu Bakar was not disposed to accept a British Resident, Weld maintained that 'such an appointment may at any time become a necessity'.¹

De Robeck of the Colonial Office saw the force of Weld's arguments. In his opinion, the Maharaja of Johore was 'the creature of England' and therefore had to do what he was told. He believed that both Pahang and Johore should be treated alike. Since the appointment of a Resident in Pahang was then in the offing, he suggested a similar step in Johore,² but the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Herbert, declined to be influenced by Weld's critical, and at times hostile, attitude towards Abu Bakar. We have already mentioned his suspicion that Weld was perhaps unconsciously jealous of the Maharaja and his GCMG and KCSI which the Governor himself did not then possess. Remembering the eulogies on Abu Bakar's administration by Ord, Clarke and other officials, Herbert probably found it difficult to believe the contrary about the Maharaja. He continued to take a sympathetic view of Abu Bakar's efforts to rule 'in accordance with the practice of civilized nations' despite occasional lapses, and although such rule might not have been as efficient as that in the Protected States. Far from regarding the Malay Peninsula Agency case as a reason for curtailing Abu Bakar's freedom, Herbert upheld Johore's independence. He agreed with the Assistant Under-Secretary, Meade, that the Colonial Office should do 'the utmost possible' to ensure that any banking scheme in Johore should work on the same lines as those in Singapore to prevent 'terrible confusion', but referring to the legal aspect, he added, 'we have little power to prevent the establishment in Johore of undertakings which we think undesirable in principle, or even directly injurious to the interests of the Colony and the Native States'.³ Instead of proposing that British paramountcy here should be more

¹ CO273/132 Weld to Meade 29 August 1884.

² CO273/138 G. de Robeck's minute 22 May 1885 on Weld to Lucas 14 May 1885.

³ CO273/132 Minute of 25 August 1884 on Malay Peninsula Agency Ltd. to CO 6 August 1884.

firmly secured, Herbert and the Secretary of State, Lord Derby, seemed to have thought the evidence presented not strong enough to warrant the appointment of a Resident.¹

Meanwhile, it was rumoured in Singapore that Weld would return from leave with authority to annex the Protected States and Johore. Abu Bakar became alarmed. He went to see the Acting Governor, Cecil Smith, to say that he hoped the British Government, for whom he had done 'so much', would not annex his state or force him to accept a Resident. If however the British were concerned about the danger of foreign intervention, Abu Bakar said, he was ready to sign a treaty entrusting his foreign relations to them. Though reassured by Cecil Smith that the Government did not contemplate annexation, Abu Bakar decided to proceed at once to London to see the Secretary of State.² And to counter any charges of maladministration, he invited Cecil Smith to make an inspection tour of Johore before his departure. This was a judicious move because the Acting Governor's favourable report weakened the case for interference in Johore's affairs. Writing to the Secretary of State on his observations, Smith mentioned evident signs of 'good organization' and the 'satisfactory progress' noticeable in many directions. He also stated that Abu Bakar had recently taken much personal interest in developing his state and especially in opening up the district of Muar. More important still, he informed the Secretary of State that he found Abu Bakar most willing to accept his advice.³

The effect of this communication on the Colonial Office may be imagined. On the one hand, it indicated that there had been no deterioration in the quality of Abu Bakar's rule; that in fact there was some improvement. On the other hand, it suggested that the cause of Weld's strictures on Abu Bakar lay in the clash of personalities and the Governor's ambition to govern Johore through a Resident. Cecil Smith's report confirmed Derby's and Herbert's decision not to press for control over Johore's administration.

¹ Ibid. See Derby's minute 5 September 1884 on Weld to CO 29 August 1884. See also Herbert's minute 8 July 1885 on the Malay Peninsula Agency Ltd. to CO 29 November 1884.

² CO273/133 Smith to CO 5 March 1885 with enclosures.

³ Ibid. Smith to CO 18, 21 March 1885.

Accordingly, when Abu Bakar arrived in London in May 1885, he received an assurance that neither annexation nor the establishment of the Residential system was contemplated. Nevertheless, to clarify certain matters, the opportunity was taken to negotiate a fresh treaty with him.¹ From the protracted negotiations stretching over a period of about six months, several points emerged: Abu Bakar, assisted by his astute secretary who wrote fluent English, the Dato' Sri Amar d'Raja Abdul Rahman, was determined to prevent any encroachment on his independence. He showed extreme sensitivity to anything which implied an inferiority of his status compared to other sovereigns. For example, he wished the treaty to be signed by the Secretary of State and not the Governor. He wanted the words 'the Governments of the High Contracting Parties' to appear in the document so that the contract would be between equals. And as befitting an independent state, he was willing only to receive a British Consul 'at the request of the Secretary of State'. Moreover, he refused to remain subservient to the Colony. The convention on opium farms which he tried to conclude with the Colonial Office at the same time illustrates this point. He disliked the existing arrangements for the leasing of the farms jointly with the Colony in order to prevent smuggling, on the grounds that the Colony obtained a better deal at Johore's expense. So he sought a more 'equitable' arrangement which, if put into effect, would have increased the price of the Johore farm while reducing that of Singapore's. Abu Bakar's resolve to protect and promote his own interests was matched by Weld's determination to push those of the Colony. The Governor therefore insisted on a stipulation to confine Abu Bakar's influence to his own state and prevent him from interfering with Straits policy towards Pahang. Not content with that, Weld pressed for the appointment of a British Agent to reside in Johore 'if the Governor should decide' that it was necessary.

Herbert, and Derby before he left the Colonial Office with the change of Government in September 1885, were disposed to comply with Abu Bakar's views. The actual negotiations however were left to Meade who was less partial to the Maharaja

¹ Documents on these negotiations are scattered in the following volumes: CO273/134, 135, 137 and 138.

than Herbert but also less biased against him than Weld. Consequently, the treaty¹ which was finally signed in December 1885 by the new Secretary of State, Colonel F. A. Stanley, represented a compromise. It provided for 'joint defence'² and, contrary to the usual practice, was signed by the Secretary of State instead of the Governor. The Colonial Office later declared that under the terms of this treaty, the relations between the Johore Ruler and the Queen were those of 'alliance and not of suzerainty and dependence'.³ It was also expressly stated that the Agent to be appointed should have 'functions similar to those of a Consular Officer'. Furthermore, Abu Bakar finally achieved his ambition of being recognized as Sultan.

Yet he did not have everything his own way. Meade considered it necessary to define Abu Bakar's title in such a manner as to prevent the Malays from thinking that it was a revival of the ancient title which carried rights of overlordship over the Riau-Lingga Archipelago, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, in addition to Johore proper. Henceforth Abu Bakar was to be known as 'Sultan of the State and Territory of Johore'. It was also plainly stated in the treaty that he could not 'interfere in the politics or administration of any native state' without the knowledge and consent of the British Government. To close possible loopholes for foreign intervention, Abu Bakar was

¹ The text appears in W. G. Maxwell and W. S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, p. 125.

² Under the treaties existing between Britain and Johore, the former was not pledged to defend the latter against foreign attacks. According to the 1824 treaty, the contracting parties were not bound in any way to 'support each other by force of arms against any third party'. Abu Bakar's grandfather had merely promised not to enter into an alliance or correspond with any foreign power so long as he continued to reside in Singapore and draw his pension. And in the Pahang-Johore Agreement of 1862, the contracting parties agreed and engaged 'each with the other and their successors that neither shall enter into any alliance or maintain any correspondence with any foreign power or potentates whatsoever without the knowledge and consent of the other and of the said British Government' (Maxwell and Gibson, op. cit. pp. 125, 210). The new treaty clearly provided for control over Johore's foreign relations as well as for mutual defence. It should be noted that such terms were later refused to Pahang and the Sri Menanti confederation. Johore was thus accorded a higher status and special treatment.

³ R. Emerson, *Malaysia*, New York, 1937, p. 202. In the well-known case of *Mighell v. Sultan of Johore*, British courts upheld the sovereign independence of the Sultan. See I.Q.B. 149 (1894).

compelled to accept restrictions on his authority to grant concessions. Article 6 said that he was not to 'make any grant or concession to other than British subjects or British companies or persons of Chinese, Malay or other Oriental race' without Britain's consent. In Meade's words: 'The . . . danger I see is that a Dutch—or worse still a German man of war (when Germany has absorbed Holland!) might attack Johore on the pretext of defending the rights of a Javanese leaseholder or the French might interfere on behalf of a Saigon Chinaman'.¹ Similarly, Weld wrote: 'The only danger that I wish, as you do, to provide against is the excuse for foreign intervention. I do think it sufficiently real to need providing against . . . with Zanzibar and other lessons before us, so special a point of vantage as Johore must be carefully secured.'² With the same consideration in mind, the clause providing for the recognition of Abu Bakar's heirs and successors stated that the British Government would recognize as Sultan, his heirs 'lawfully succeeding according to Malay custom'. Weld was afraid that Abu Bakar might be tempted by financial exigencies to sell the right to the throne and Meade did not rule out this possibility. Hence they made sure that foreign concessionaires would be excluded and the succession confined to Abu Bakar's family, or to 'Malay blood in the extremest case'.³

The other clauses in the treaty dealt with the co-operation of the two governments in the settlement of a peaceful population in their respective territories; the question of extradition; the facilitation of trade and transit communications from Singapore to Pahang; and the supply of coinage by the Colony to Johore on the same terms as those to the other Protected States. As for the convention regarding opium farms, it fell through because Cecil Smith objected to the settlement of a purely local question in London.⁴

¹ CO273/138 Meade to Weld 26 August 1885.

² Ibid. Weld to Meade 26 August 1885.

³ Ibid. Meade to Weld 26 August and Weld's reply 27 August 1885.

⁴ CO273/135 Smith to CO 1 August 1885. He wrote 'I regret that any discussion on such a purely local matter should have been permitted to be even initiated in London without the knowledge of the local government, for such action can only result in weakening the authority of the Government in its relations with the Maharajah who is already too much in the hands of irresponsible advisers.'

On paper it looked as if Abu Bakar had made 'valuable concessions' which were 'a decided gain' for the British,¹ and the Governor was not displeased. It is true that the Agent to be appointed merely had functions 'similar to those of a consular officer'. Nonetheless, Weld must have reasoned that if this post were well-managed, it could develop into something akin to that of a Resident.

Unfortunately for his expectations, the treaty did not either make Abu Bakar more amenable to the Governor's advice, or strengthen the latter's hold over Johore. On the contrary, after his recognition as Sultan, Abu Bakar tried even harder to make Johore 'the greatest Malay power, to keep her free and to make her rich'.² In this he was assisted and encouraged by his private secretary and confidential adviser, Abdul Rahman, 'a very clever Malay, educated in England'.³ In the pursuit of power, wealth and fame, Sultan Abu Bakar informed the British Government in March 1886 that he wished to claim the Natuna, Anambas and Tembelan group of islands lying off the Johore coast which Britain had already acknowledged as forming part of 'Netherlands India'.⁴ Then he created an Order of the Crown of Johore on the pattern of the 'best European Orders'. More important from the practical point of view was the formation of a Johore Advisory Board in London⁵ which enabled him to communicate directly with the Colonial Office. As Chairman of this Board, Abu Bakar appointed Lieutenant-General William Fielding, a cousin of Herbert's, who had the confidence of the Colonial Office. Fielding, as we shall see, was later succeeded by Herbert himself who was joined by Cecil Smith after they had both retired from official duties. The Board advised the Sultan on important matters and practically usurped the role played by the Governor *vis-à-vis* the other states.

¹ CO273/138 Weld to Meade 9 August, 22 August 1885.

² CO273/144 Dato Mentri of Johore's remark to Clifford, see Clifford's Journal enclosed in Smith to CO 28 April 1887.

³ CO273/326 Anderson to CO 18 January 1907. See also C.H.H. Wake, 'Nineteenth Century Johore—Ruler and Realm in Transition', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1966, p. 283.

⁴ CO273/142 CO to FO 25 March 1886; FO to CO 18 May 1886; CO273/150 CO to FO 18 July 1887.

⁵ I am indebted to my colleague R. Suntharalingam for pointing out that many Indian Princes established Advisory Boards in London in the 1880's.

By this move Abu Bakar improved the machinery for obtaining British advice without adopting a position subordinate to the Colony or submitting to formal control.

In 1886 and 1887 Sultan Abu Bakar frequently asserted his right to be treated as an independent sovereign with a status at least equal to if not above that of the Governor. He refused to allow the interests of Singapore to override his own. Nor would he accept the Governor's advice or shape his policies according to the latter's views. He even turned down loans from the Colony for fear of the strings attached. Typical of the conflict between Governor and Sultan in these years was the case of the disputed boundary between Johore on the one hand, and Malacca and Johol on the other. While Abu Bakar was still in Britain, Weld made a unilateral decision regarding the disputed boundary. The Sultan of Johore immediately protested to the Colonial Office. He complained of 'studied acts of discourtesy' towards his local representative and 'want of consideration' for the interests of a 'faithful ally of Her Majesty, the Empress Queen'. He asked that the question should be dealt with as between rulers of 'Independent States.' The Permanent Under-Secretary, Herbert, agreed that it was impossible to allow the Governor to settle the boundary of an 'independent State without giving its ruler a hearing.'¹ The Secretary of State accordingly instructed Weld to suspend all operations pending the Sultan's return to Johore. The furious Governor retorted that Abu Bakar's return was uncertain. He was likely to spend many months in Berlin, Vienna, Rome and other European capitals and the delay would be highly inconvenient, not to mention its effect on the 'native mind', which construed this as a trial of strength between Governor and Sultan. Moreover, in those states beyond the sphere of British control, Weld said, the incident was bound to be quoted to prove that the Sultan of Johore was 'the real man to look to' and not the Governor.² Herbert remained unconvinced by these representations. Thus the Secretary of State replied that the matter was 'unimportant' and suggested that a 'graceful concession' on Weld's part would improve his relations with the Sultan and secure that personal

¹ CO273/142 Sultan to CO 15 February 1886; CO273/139 see Herbert's minute 26 January on Weld's telegram 20 January 1886.

² CO273/139 Weld to CO 6 February 1886.

influence over the latter which it was most desirable for a Governor to possess.¹ The boundary dispute hung fire until well into the 'nineties.

On the question of the appointment of a British Agent to reside in Johore, the Sultan similarly got the better of the Governor. This right was conceded in the treaty of 1885. Yet when Weld sought to implement it, he was opposed by some of his officials and by all the unofficial members in the legislative council. The discussion took place in connexion with the Estimates for 1887 in which Weld had earmarked the sum of \$3,600 for an Agent. Such an appointment, he explained to the legislative council, would be useful in questions like extradition, immigration and to facilitate relations between the two governments. The unofficials opposed it on the grounds that it was unnecessary, unworkable and impolitic. Thomas Shelford, the senior member representing the Chamber of Commerce, whose firm, Paterson, Simons and Co., acted as the Sultan's agents in the Colony, led the opposition. In the course of the debate, it was said that when Abu Bakar accepted this clause, he 'never looked to its being acted on at once, and to his having a British Palatial Establishment rivalling his own, with officials watching his movements'.² Evidently the unofficials suspected Weld's motivation. They alleged that the Agent was intended to 'spy' on the Sultan. At the same time they themselves had vested interests in the *status quo*. As the Governor pointed out to the Secretary of State, they profited from loans to the Sultan. Apart from that, Europeans easily obtained concessions from him. On several occasions, the Colonial Office felt bound, as his 'friends and advisers', to pull him out of unwise commitments.³ Anyway, unofficial opposition, added to the division of opinion within the executive council, raised doubts in the Colonial Office about the advisability of proceeding with the proposed appointment.

¹ Ibid. CO to Weld 20 April 1886.

² *PLCSS* for 1886, see debate on the Supply Bill, 10 and 12 November 1886.

³ For example when Abu Bakar made a 'very bad bargain' with Sir Andrew Clarke for the construction of railways. See CO273/153 Smith to CO 21 June 1888 with enclosures; CO273/157 Fielding to CO 18 July 1888 and Herbert's minute 13 July 1888 on the memo. by R.S. Moss on proposed railways in the Peninsula; CO273/160 Herbert's minute 13 August 1889 on Smith to CO 18 May 1889.

Abu Bakar also let it be known through the Chairman of the Advisory Board that he objected to an Agent at that juncture. Despite Weld's contention that the Sultan's 'ruin' and 'deep injury' to the state of Johore loomed in the immediate future, as he was borrowing heavily at exorbitant rates of interest and giving as security either a share of the revenue or concessions of land, Meade, Herbert and the Secretary of State, Sir Henry T. Holland (later Lord Knutsford) decided not to press the Sultan. They turned down Weld's plea for 'firm and decided action' and instead chose to shelve the question until his retirement from the Governorship.¹

For his failure to bring Johore under the Residential system and win Abu Bakar's confidence, Weld himself was only partly to blame. Admittedly he failed to see that Abu Bakar could not be handled in the same way as the less intelligent and unsophisticated Malay chief. He made the mistake of thinking that firmness would be more effective than tactful diplomacy. Moreover, Weld was too easily provoked and lacked imagination. For instance, he asked the Sultan for a site within the Istana grounds for the residence of the British Agent!² No wonder he was outmanoeuvred by the wily Sultan. But even if Weld had made more carefully-calculated moves and maintained better personal relations with Abu Bakar, he would still not have succeeded in gaining the upper hand. This, as we shall see, was the experience of his successor, Sir Cecil Smith.

The key to Abu Bakar's relations with the Straits Government really lay in England: in the Colonial Office, in Windsor and Marlborough House. Not only Weld but later Cecil Smith also maintained that the reception which Abu Bakar received in Britain on his visits there, his friendship with British royalty especially, and the assistance invariably rendered him by the Colonial Office, led him to think that he had no need to court the Governor's favour or accept his guidance. He sensed that his friends in London would not deal harshly with him. In fact, the patient and indulgent attitude of the Colonial Office where Abu Bakar was concerned forms a sharp contrast to their treat-

¹ CO273/141 Weld to CO 26 November 1886, minutes on this despatch, and the Secretary of State's reply 23 April 1887.

² *Johore State Secretariat Official Letter Book A (1885-1893)* Sultan to Weld, 5 February 1887.

ment of the Rulers of the Protected States. It was generally said that Abu Bakar had a likeable personality. He was also more European in his ways than the other Rulers and hence had more in common with the British. His hobbies were cricket, billiards and horse-racing. Since the 'sixties, moreover, the Colonial Office had been given the impression that he alone of the Malay Rulers was 'anxious to promote in every way the advancement and civilization of his people' and to rule 'in accordance with the practice of civilized nations'.¹ Having once made up their minds about him, the older men at the Colonial Office—Herbert in particular—tended to overlook his shortcomings even when the younger officials such as de Robeck, Edward Fairfield and Lucas thought that Abu Bakar was getting 'above himself' and should be ordered to comply with the Governor's requests and with Straits policy.² Besides, as Abu Bakar himself said, he had done 'much' for the British. Finally, British statesmen still preferred informal influence wherever possible and formal control only when necessary. This factor cannot be overlooked in any explanation of their reluctance to force Johore into the mould of the other states under British Residents.

During Sir Cecil Smith's administration, the Sultan of Johore continued to be difficult with the Singapore authorities. But the Colonial Office remained as tolerant as before of his susceptibilities and demands although they had no reason at all to think that Cecil Smith was prejudiced against the Sultan. However, the Colonial Office did raise the question of the appointment of a Consular Agent in 1888 but only in connexion with the extradition of Indian labourers charged with breaches of contract and without any intention of using this as the thin end of the wedge. When Cecil Smith received instructions to ascertain whether the Sultan was agreeable now that Weld was no longer on the scene, he found Abu Bakar still opposed to the appointment. The Sultan declared it unnecessary and stated his personal preference for direct contact with the Governor.³

Why did Abu Bakar refuse to carry out his treaty obligations

¹ See above pp. 98-99.

² Refer e.g. to CO273/179 Fairfield's minute 11 March 1892 on Smith to CO 20 January 1892.

³ CO273/141 CO to Smith 18 April 1888 and CO273/154 Smith to CO CO 15 September 1888.

irrespective of his personal relations with the Governor? The terms of the appointment were not detrimental to Johore's status; and the presence of consular agents implied no diminution of sovereignty. Presumably, he was afraid that the Agent might report adversely on his administration and thus enable the British to make out a case for intervention and control. Anyway, Cecil Smith did not advocate pressure on the Sultan. At that time he probably felt confident of being able to influence Abu Bakar; or perhaps he had a sense of obligation towards Johore for having persuaded the Bendahara of Pahang to accept a Resident. As a permanent official at the Colonial Office remarked when reading Cecil Smith's report on the assistance given by the Sultan of Johore to his Pahang policy, 'Johore sees his way to make something out of this.'¹ It is also possible that the Governor remained patient because he had a genuine liking for the Sultan. One can only speculate on the reasons for Cecil Smith's recommendation that the idea of appointing a British Agent to reside in Johore should be dropped. He further assured the Secretary of State that from his recent visit to Johore, he was satisfied that greater care was being taken in the administration and that the extravagance so noticeable before was also being somewhat checked.² Under the circumstances the Colonial Office decided to leave Johore alone during Sultan Abu Bakar's lifetime. Once again, the Sultan had played his cards well. Thus by 1889, when the Malay Rulers of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang had lost control over affairs of state, Abu Bakar continued to enjoy a large measure of internal independence, guided only by British advice through personal and informal channels. The curtailment of his authority in the 1885 treaty remained on paper only.

That Abu Bakar exercised his powers to the satisfaction of the Straits mercantile community—both European and Asian—may be inferred from the absence of official complaints from them. As a matter of fact, the *Singapore and Straits Directory* had nothing but praise for the Johore Government. The 1885 and subsequent issues quoted extracts from an account of Johore by A. M. Skinner, a Straits official,³ which said:

¹ CO273/154 Graham's minute on Smith to CO 30 August 1888.

² CO273/154 Smith to CO 15 September 1888.

³ A.M. Skinner, ed., 'Malay Peninsula', *The Eastern Geography*, part 1, Singapore 1884, pp. 52-55.

Though Johore is not possessed of the rich mineral resources of most of the other States, yet by the security of its position in the close neighbourhood of Singapore, and through its present Chief's just rule, and his care for life and property, Johore has attained some prominence, and exceptional prosperity amongst the Native States of the Peninsula. . . . The form of Government is that of the usual Malay autocracy; but the freedom and *laissez-faire* of its administration are in marked contrast with the usual administrative system of the Malay States: rather resembling that of the neighbouring Colony.¹

Like the Colony, Johore from about 1886 had such establishments as the Secretariat, Treasury, Audit Offices, Supreme Court, Government Printing Office, and Departments for Public Works, Police, Survey, Land, Posts, Education, etc. Under this administration directed by the Sultan and Council of State, assisted by a few Europeans, British planters flocked into Johore in the early 'eighties to take up land for the cultivation of coffee, tea, cocoa, tobacco, sago and other products. Ten European planters were listed in the 1881 *Directory*. The list grew longer each year so that by 1889 there were thirty-four estates with one or more European lessees each. Apart from planting, the Europeans were involved in saw-milling and in the brick and tile manufacturing business in Johore Bahru. As for the Chinese who formed the bulk of the population, it has been mentioned that they were chiefly engaged in growing pepper and gambier. The extent of their trade may be gauged from the large number of Chinese firms in Singapore—135 in 1883—which handled this trade. The Muar district especially made rapid progress. Mindful of the conditions on which the British allowed him to retain possession of Muar, Sultan Abu Bakar took much personal interest in its development. In the mid-'eighties a small town named Banda Maharanee sprang up near the mouth of the Muar River to serve the adjacent area. It had a substantial trade in pepper, gambier, areca nuts, coco-nuts and other agricultural products. By 1890, there were some 5,000 inhabitants in the town, and amongst the public buildings were the Istana, residency, court, police station, barracks, gaol, hospital (with a resident apothecary) and market. Supplies of fresh water from a reservoir twelve-and-a-half miles away from

¹ See *Singapore and Straits Directory for 1885*, pp. 164, 167.

the town were available from March 1890. Good roads were constructed and a light railway, eight miles in length, connected Banda Maharanee with the neighbouring district of Padang which, by that time, had an estimated population of 10,000 Javanese engaged chiefly in growing betelnuts.¹

One of the many visitors to Johore in this period, Mrs. Florence Caddy, left a glowing account of the Sultan's rule. She saw flourishing villages around Johore Bahru and in Muar, sawmills, a hospital, an opera house, reasonably good roads, coffee, pepper, gambier and other plantations. Several times she mentioned that Abu Bakar was always 'on the look out for new ideas and improvement'. She praised his encouragement of all forms of economic enterprise 'with Chinese labour under European direction' and his appreciation of the role of railways in attracting population as well as opening up the country. What struck her also were the amenities of the Istana itself with its excellent food and wines, and its magnificent gold dinner service bought in London and originally intended for a Governor-General of India, Lord Ellenborough. Impressed by such visible signs of progress, she wrote: 'In Siam civilization is potential, in Johore it is at work.'²

All this spoke well for Abu Bakar's government in the 'eighties'³ although no statistics are available for the revenue collected annually, the total acreage under cultivation, the value of Johore's trade and the number of miles of road in the state. Yet, from available evidence, Johore compared very favourably with the east coast states which were similarly dependent on agriculture rather than mineral production, and even with the Negri Sembilan districts under direct British control.

¹ See under Johore and Estates directories in the *Singapore and Straits Directory* for 1891-4.

² F. Caddy, *To Siam and Malaya in the Duke of Sutherland's Yacht, 'Sans Peur'*, London, 1889, Chapters X and XI, esp. pp. 244, 247, 251, 254, 265-6.

³ There is a valuable chapter on the 'Foundations of Bureaucracy in Johore' in Wake, op. cit. pp. 239-90.



PART TWO

A POLICY OF CONSOLIDATION
1890-1910



THE NEED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION AND THE PAHANG PROBLEM

THE forward policy pursued by Weld and Cecil Smith went hand in hand with the development of the older group of Protected States, viz., Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong. Roads and railways were built to connect centres of the tin industry and administration with each other and with ports. An eight-mile railway line running between Taiping and Port Weld was opened for traffic in June 1885. In 1886 Kuala Lumpur was connected with Bukit Kuda and later with Klang, a distance of approximately twenty-two miles. In Sungai Ujong, Messrs. Hill and Rathborne were given a concession to construct a metre gauge railway between Seremban and Arang Arang (now Port Dickson) in 1887. Road building was pushed on even more vigorously in all the three states. Each state was soon covered by a network of bridle-paths and cart roads, while a main trunk road from Malacca town to Butterworth in Province Wellesley was ready by the early 'nineties. The establishment of telegraphic communication proceeded at the same time. Not only was every district in Perak and Selangor linked by telegraph with their respective capitals but by the end of 1892 there was direct telegraphic communication from Penang through Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong to Malacca (where a submarine cable to Singapore came in) and thence overland to Jelebu, and Raub in Pahang. With the development of communications, the expansion of agriculture, mining and trade, the population and revenue of these states increased correspondingly. The combined revenue of Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong, for instance, amounted to approximately \$4,600,000 in 1890 whereas it was only about \$400,000 in 1875.¹

¹ See CO275, *AR* Protected Malay States 1885-94, published in the *PP*.

Expansion in these states together with the extension of British control over others, meant more work for the Governor to whom all the Residents were responsible. Except for this link, the several state administrations were independent of each other. Initially, difficulties of communication and the special problems of each state made it inevitable that the Residents should have been vested with considerable authority to proceed with their pioneering efforts at introducing the rudiments of a modern administration. They were expected to maintain peace and order, collect revenue and develop the resources of the state without being specifically told how to go about it. Of course they frequently referred to the Governor. And from their reports, from what he could glean during his personal visits to the Protected States and, before 1882, through the Assistant Colonial Secretary for Native Affairs, the Governor tried to maintain control over such important questions as allowances to the Malay chiefs, concessions, appointments, estimates and enactments. As the older Protected States progressed, however, their affairs took up an increasing amount of the Governor's time. To take legislation as an example: from about 1890 there was a noticeable increase in the number of enactments either passed or dropped by the Selangor State Council at the Governor's suggestion.¹ Both Weld and Cecil Smith strove for some correlation in the laws of the several Protected States on the one hand, and between them and the Colony on the other, especially on similar subjects. It was largely due to their efforts that Perak and Selangor came to possess similar Penal Codes, Summary Jurisdiction Ordinances for the Preservation of Peace, laws on the Limitation of Suits, Indian Immigration, Prisons and other subjects.² Not only had the Governor to attend to an ever increasing volume of public business in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong but also to new responsibilities in the other states of the Negri Sembilan and Pahang which had accepted the Residential system by 1889.

It therefore became a question in the 'nineties whether

¹ Selangor State Council minutes, 1877-94, Selangor Secretariat, Kuala Lumpur.

² See e.g., Perak Order in Council 11 of 1890, Selangor Regulation XI of 1893, Negri Sembilan Order in Council of 25 May 1893. Refer also to A.B. Voules, *The Laws of Perak 1877-1896*, Taiping, 1899, and *The Laws of Selangor, 1877-1899*, Kuala Lumpur, 1901.

the Governor could continue to cope with the Protected States and still discharge adequately his duties in the Colony. In 1889 the states administered by Residents comprised some 27,000 square miles with a total revenue of \$4,613,998.¹ Governor Weld had devoted most of his time to the Malay States. In fact, he spent 136 days there, and in Penang and Malacca in 1886, not counting the days spent on the journeys to and fro.² In his opinion 'the most important and serious part of the Governor's duties' lay outside the Colony.³ Although his attitude caused some dissatisfaction in Singapore, its affairs had not suffered from Weld's absence because Cecil Smith was a capable and conscientious Colonial Secretary and a popular one too. Even then Weld often referred to the onerous nature of his duties. When Cecil Smith succeeded to the Governorship in 1887, despite his long experience, he confessed in 1893 that it was only by 'the most strenuous exertion' and working at weekends that he managed to keep abreast of all the work which required his attention.⁴ Moreover, Cecil Smith rarely left Singapore. If a man of his experience and industry found it such a strain to give to the affairs of the Protected States the attention they required, a Governor new to Malaya would certainly find it harder to maintain the same degree of control over these states.

Furthermore, these states appeared to require an even more effective control and guidance in the immediate future so as to secure greater uniformity, efficiency and economy. There were, it is true, factors such as the Governor's supervision, the interchange of officers among the Protected States and between them and the Colony, and the appointment of officials trained in the Colonial Service to the important posts of Secretary to the governments of the leading states, which tended towards some uniformity of administration. Nonetheless there remained important differences between them in such matters as taxation, pensions, justice and land settlement. In the absence of more adequate overall direction, such differences were likely to grow rather than diminish as the newer Protected States

¹ CO275/36 or PP C.6222 (1890) *AR* Protected Malay States 1889.

² I am indebted to Dr. E. Sadka for drawing my attention to this confidential despatch from Weld to the CO 17 February 1887.

³ CO273/138 Weld to Bramston, private, 8 March 1885.

⁴ CO273/188 Smith to CO 30 June 1893.

developed and the older ones tried to provide for practices and institutions which had grown up, like the English constitution, in an unwritten fashion.

Apart from uniformity, efficiency also demanded a more formal system for the Protected States where the existing arrangements still left too much to the individual. While this had been an advantage at first, now that the foundations of a modern administration were laid in Perak and Selangor, the advisability of a change occurred to the authorities in Singapore and in London. Disagreements between William Maxwell and Frank Swettenham on questions of policy revealed the extent to which personal factors could well impede efficiency. The friction between them was known to Cecil Smith, to Sir Charles Mitchell—the next man appointed to the Governorship in 1894—and to the Colonial Office. Maxwell and Swettenham were the two most senior and capable officers in the service. Both had a reputation for efficiency; both knew Malayan subjects. But hitherto Swettenham's career was associated almost entirely with the Malay States whereas Maxwell's was broken by Colony appointments. Consequently when Low retired from Perak in 1889 and both applied for the post, the Residency went to Swettenham while Maxwell was given the more junior and less well-paid Residency in Selangor. It embittered their already strained relationship so that henceforth what one said usually acted 'like a red rag on a bull'¹ on the other. This boded ill for the continued progress of Perak and Selangor on uniform and sound lines. It also placed a Governor new to Malaya, as Mitchell was, in a difficult position since he had to rely on them for advice especially after Maxwell was promoted to the Colonial Secretaryship in Singapore in 1892.

It may be argued that the disagreements between Maxwell and Swettenham were a factor which called attention to the desirability of having a system of administration in the Protected States which would depend less on the incumbents holding the post of Resident now that the period of experimentation was over.

In fact this, and the need for more uniformity, were but aspects of the larger problem of promoting efficiency. Gradually,

¹ CO273/197 Fairfield's minute 23 June 1895 on Mitchell to CO 4 August 1894.

the feeling grew among the Residents, in the Colony and at the Colonial Office, that co-operation between the several Protected States and a better co-ordination of their policies would lead to a more efficient and economical administration.¹ That some departments like the telegraph and railway would benefit by being worked as a whole rather than in parts had become obvious by the early 'nineties. Under the existing arrangements, each section of the line was controlled by a different state authority. Inefficiency in any section injured the interests of the others who were, however, unable to remedy it. Moreover, for railway extensions, the local officials required the services of an engineer of higher calibre than those being employed. Although any one state would find the cost of such an appointment excessive, this could easily be shared by several. In road construction and maintenance also, the establishment of an overall authority was seen as an advantage. On one occasion, the Selangor Government neglected to keep up its portion of the trunk road just to increase its railway receipts.² To prevent such policies, avoid an unnecessary duplication of personnel and increase efficiency, some senior local officials and others at the Colonial Office reached the conclusion that roads, railways, telegraphs, mines, Chinese affairs, education and other departments might be usefully centralized.

The administration of justice in the Protected States also stood in need of reform. These states had no separate judiciary. The Resident acted as principal judge though from about 1890, pressure of work in Selangor and Perak prevented their Residents from doing more than hearing capital cases and civil appeals. Then the Chief Magistrate in the former and his counterpart, the Senior Magistrate in the latter, became the highest European judge in their respective states. Below them the district officers acted as magistrates in addition to their multifarious duties and despite their lack of legal qualifications. They claimed to have acted according to principles of equity and good conscience, often guided by what they knew of English law and

¹ See CO275/41 or PP C.6576 (1892) *AR* Selangor 1891; F.A. Swettenham, *About Perak*, Singapore, 1893; CO273/183 memo. enclosed in CO to Smith 19 May 1893; CO273/188 Smith to CO 30 June 1893; CO273/211 Maxwell to CO 29 March 1895.

² CO273/166 Dickson to CO 22 April 1890; CO273/168 Dickson to CO 10 July and 31 October 1890.

the Indian Civil and Penal Codes effective in the Straits. In 1888, Selangor formally adopted the Indian Civil and Procedure Code but it was imperfectly understood. Perak, on the contrary, used the Code although it lacked the force of law until 1893.¹ Despite these and other short-comings, such as the want of efficient supervision, Swettenham in Perak maintained that 'substantial justice' was done in the lower courts at small cost to their suitors who probably preferred cheap and speedy justice to the delays and expense of more elaborately constituted courts.² But he, among others, favoured improvements in the higher courts and the establishment of an independent court of appeal. Maxwell in Selangor, writing in 1890, proposed certain measures to make the chief magistrates' courts more efficient. He suggested a guiding authority to prescribe procedure, inspect the working of the various parts of the judicial system and advise on the application of particular laws to the various states.³ Swettenham also observed that as European and 'native' trade increased, an independent court of appeal might be found necessary.⁴ Under the arrangements then existing, appeals could only be made to the Resident's court or to the Sultan-in-Council. But 'the Governor sometimes intervened by executive process, ordering a retrial and modification of sentence by instructions to the Resident. The Secretary of State in turn was able to influence judicial decisions by instructing the Governor'.⁵

In 1891 the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and the Singapore Branch of the Straits Settlements Association, representing the European mercantile community in the Colony, urged that British subjects in the Protected States should be allowed to appeal to the Supreme Court of the Colony.⁶ Local newspapers took up the cry for reforms and alleged that some banks and capitalists had declined to invest in these states for want of confidence in their legal institutions.⁷ Hence, in January 1892 the

¹ PP C.6222 (1890-1) AR Selangor 1889; PP C.7546 (1894) AR Perak 1893.

² PP C.6858 (1893-4) AR Perak 1892.

³ PP C.6222 (1890-1) AR Selangor 1889.

⁴ PP C.6576 (1892) AR Perak 1891.

⁵ E. Sadka, 'The Colonial Office and the Protected Malay States', *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, eds. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink, Oxford, 1964, p. 198.

⁶ CO273/176 Smith to CO 4 November 1891 and enclosures.

⁷ *Straits Times*, 1 and 4 July 1891; *Pinang Gazette*, 11 July 1891.

Secretary of State suggested that appeals should lie to a judge of the Colony Supreme Court, travelling on circuit and holding a commission from the Sultan-in-Council while in the state.¹

By February 1893 the Colonial Office became more convinced that better arrangements should be made for the trial of British subjects charged with serious offences. It came to their knowledge in 1892 that the Resident of Pahang had sentenced to death a man convicted of murder on the basis of uncorroborated evidence from an accomplice. This case underlined the defects of the *status quo* which appeared more serious in view of the influx of European planters, miners and others involved in the construction of public works and commerce. Until the 'eighties, the Residents had failed to persuade European enterprise to participate in the development of the states to any significant extent. But there was now an extension of European commercial agriculture. To provide for British subjects, both European and Asian, the Secretary of State directed the Governor to see that those accused of offences punishable by death or a long term of imprisonment, should be tried either by Colony judges in circuit or in Singapore. Subsequently, his doubts about the executive control of justice in the Protected States increased owing to the disclosure of serious irregularities in Perak and Selangor.² The discussion about civil appeals between the metropolitan and local governments developed into proposals for a general reform of the judicial system in the Protected States. The Governor urged the appointment of a Judicial Commissioner for all such states who would organize and control the courts, inspect them, hear appeals and perhaps also advise on legislation.³

The desirability of having a competent authority to draft legislation was then felt both in Malaya and at the Colonial Office. Laws in Selangor were drawn up by the Chief Magistrate. In Perak this was the responsibility of the Senior Magistrate assisted by a private firm of advocates and solicitors, Messrs. Logan and Ross of Penang. Prior to 1888 the Colonial Office was unaware of defects in the enactments passed by the several state councils for the simple reason that they were not

¹ CO273/176 CO to Smith 18 January 1892.

² Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874-1895*, op. cit.

³ CO273/197 Mitchell to CO 4 September 1894.

transmitted to London. The situation changed with the publication of a gazette for Perak from 1888 and for Selangor from 1890. In 1894 the legal assistant at the Colonial Office declared that the laws of the several states were in a 'chaotic condition' and required immediate attention.¹ The local officers themselves had misgivings and urged the appointment of a Legal Adviser 'to assist the various (state) governments in consolidating, revising and, above all, assimilating the heterogenous mass of orders, rules and regulations already in force and drafting new enactments'.²

Financial considerations provided yet another and stronger argument for the reorganization and closer association of the several states. The rich mineral bearing states of Perak and Selangor enjoyed large surplus revenues when Sungai Ujong, the other Negri Sembilan states and Pahang, could not balance their budgets. In 1889 Perak's assets amounted to \$1,818,991; Selangor's stood at \$768,929 while Sungai Ujong had a debt of \$185,405; Negri Sembilan, \$129,579; and Pahang \$153,157. Prior to his retirement as Resident of Perak in 1889, Hugh Low expressed the view that all these states should be confederated so that 'the policy in all should be uniform', and the surplus of one lent to assist in the development of the others.³ Similarly, speaking to the Royal Colonial Institute in November 1891 on 'The Malay Peninsula, its Resources and Prospects', W. E. Maxwell, then Resident of Selangor, maintained that the smaller states would benefit from incorporation with a larger and richer neighbour—a step which would also reduce establishment costs.⁴ Evidently such ideas were current among the Malayan officials for the Governor himself considered the possibility of attaching Sungai Ujong with Jelebu to Selangor in November 1892 and the Resident of Pahang urged that Selangor should take over the administration of Pahang.⁵ The

¹ Ibid. See minutes by Wingfield 6 October 1894. In November the Secretary of State laid down that henceforth all the legislative enactments of the Protected States should be formally forwarded to him by the Governor for his information.

² PP C.7877 (1895) AR Selangor 1894.

³ CO273/164 Low's memo. on British policy 6 July 1889.

⁴ CO273/178 Copy of Maxwell's speech; see also the *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, 1891-1892*.

⁵ CO273/183 Smith to CO 28 November 1892; CO273/180 Rodger to the Colonial Sec. SS 17 March 1892.

advantages of financial co-operation impressed not only the British in Malaya but others as well. The large surpluses of Perak, Selangor and the Straits Settlements in prosperous years even attracted the attention of the British North Borneo Company's employees. And what was more, the House of Lords heard the view that for the purpose of achieving financial equilibrium some comprehensive scheme might be evolved to include all British controlled territories in Malaysia, viz., British North Borneo, then suffering from deficits, Sarawak, the Protected Malay States and the Straits Settlements.¹

The situation outlined above meant that the task of reorganizing with a view to consolidation and relieving the Governor of some of his duties would have to be taken in hand sooner or later, but what really gave it urgency was the continued insolvency of Pahang which accepted the Residential system in 1889. Compared with its neighbours on the other side of the Peninsula, Pahang suffered from several disadvantages. It was inaccessible by sea for about six months in the year during the season of the north-east monsoons. Overland, a range of mountains hampered communications with the west coast. And unlike Perak and Selangor, Pahang had neither alluvial tin in sufficient quantities nor a sizable Chinese population to provide a revenue large enough to pay for the new administration. At the outset, the British found only about 1,500 Chinese there.² They discovered too that Pahang's mineral wealth had been much exaggerated by company-mongers and ambitious officials. Intermittent work for centuries by Siamese, Chinese and Malay miners had in fact practically exhausted its alluvial deposits of gold and tin. Perak and Selangor, in contrast, had about 30,000 to 40,000 Chinese in the one and 12,000 to 15,000 in the other, engaged in a flourishing industry which had been merely disrupted by Malay disputes and Chinese secret society wars when the British intervened.³ Therefore, once peace and security were established in these two states, duties on tin

¹ *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Fourth Series, vol. v. Lord Brassey's speech in the House of Lords on 23 June 1892.

² PP C.5884 (1889) *AR* Pahang 1888.

³ R.O. Winstedt and R.J. Wilkinson, 'A History of Perak', *JMBRAS*, vol. xii, part 1, 1934, p. 82; S.M. Middlebrook and J.M. Gullick, 'Yap Ah Loy', *JMBRAS*, vol. xxiv, part 2, July 1951, p. 8.

exports and taxes on opium, spirits and gambling, provided an expanding revenue for current services, public works and to pay off debts to the Colony. Only three years after the British assumed control in Perak, and despite the 'Perak War', its revenues had exceeded expenditure by \$20,160. Furthermore, this surplus rose steadily year by year whereas nothing like it happened in Pahang.¹

In yet another respect Pahang was less fortunate than the western states. Substantial areas of its mineral-bearing land were locked up in concessions granted by the Sultan prior to the advent of a Resident. Altogether there were thirty-nine concessions for mining, planting or cutting timber, varying from two to several thousand square miles, defined on the vaguest terms and without adequate provision for the land to be worked effectively. The concessionaires were, by and large, more concerned with speculative profits from the Stock Exchange than the actual exploitation of their acquired rights. *Bona fide* enterprise too soon suffered from the exhaustion of their working capital, from mismanagement or the inherent poverty of their properties. In short, these concessions further handicapped the state.

In addition to all this, the initial outlay on Pahang had necessarily to be larger than that incurred for the other states since Pahang was about twice the size of Perak, four-and-a-half times that of Selangor and almost five times the whole of Negeri Sembilan. Following the practice established on the west coast of giving loans at an interest of 5 per cent. to finance the transition from Malay rule to the Residential system, the Colony lent Pahang \$22,000 in 1888; \$55,000 in 1889, and \$385,555 in 1890. Another advance from the Straits in 1891 brought

¹ The following figures in Straits dollars show the rapid increase of Perak's revenues.

Year	Revenue	Expenditure	Surplus	Deficit
1875	226,330	256,831	—	30,598
1876	273,043	289,476	—	16,433
1877	312,872	292,712	20,160	—
1878	328,608	291,473	37,125	—
1880	582,496	521,995	60,500	—
1883	1,474,300	1,350,610	123,719	—
1888	2,016,240	1,709,260	306,980	—

Pahang's debt to a total of \$610,000¹ and still prospects of a reduction in the annual deficit remained dim. The annual revenue was disappointingly small: \$30,390 was collected in the latter half of 1889, \$62,077 in 1890 and \$77,586 in 1891.

Unless communications were opened with the west coast, the local authorities could foresee no improvement in the situation. During his home leave in 1890 Governor Cecil Smith persuaded the Colonial Office of the advisability of constructing a railway into Pahang from Negri Sembilan to be financed either by the Colony out of its surplus, or through a guaranteed loan.² His executive council and the officials in the legislative council, however, opposed the idea of involving colonial funds in such a doubtful venture. Eventually it was agreed that the proposed railway should be constructed by private enterprise on the land grant system, but by that time an artificial boom in Pahang shares³ had so damaged the reputation of the state that no private syndicate was likely to tender for the concession.

To make matters worse, a trade depression affected Straits revenues adversely,⁴ at a time when the Colony had to make a larger contribution to the Imperial Treasury for its defence. From 1867 to 1890 the Colony had paid a sum of about £50,000 annually. In 1890 the British Government raised the contribution to £100,000. This doubling of the Straits military contribution on the one hand, and the decline in colonial revenues on

¹ CO275/41 *PLCSS* for 1891, see debates on Pahang on 15, 29 January 1891; the *Straits Times* 21 January, 4 February 1891; CO275/44 *PLCSS* for 1892, debate on 24 March 1892.

² CO273/165 Smith to CO 31 January 1890; Dickson to CO 22 May 1890; CO273/172 CO to Smith 2 April 1891.

³ CO273/173 Smith to CO 16 June 1891. A table in the *Straits Times* of 7 January 1891 shows the disastrous fall in the price of Pahang shares between December 1889 and December 1890. Fairfield mentioned in a minute that the Chairman, Sir Edmund Pontifex, and the Vice-Chairman of the Pahang Corporation, N. Storey Maskelyne, had made huge sums by selling the majority of their shares before this happened.

⁴ The decline in colonial revenues may be seen from the following figures in Straits dollars:

Year	Revenue	Expenditure
1889	4,410,620	3,816,194
1890	4,269,125	3,757,691
1891	3,826,583	4,599,199
1892	3,652,877	4,265,783
1893	3,706,308	3,951,482

the other, meant that whereas this charge had absorbed only 6.85 per cent. of the revenue in 1890, it involved as much as 28.42 per cent. in 1891. A fall in the value of silver further increased the actual burden on the Colony. Repeated protests, appeals, public resolutions and even the resignation of the JP's and unofficial members of the council at one stage, all failed to move the Treasury.¹ The Governor reported in September 1891 that colonial savings were exhausted and that he had sold the last portion of investment in India Stock. Unable to foresee either an improvement in the revenue or a substantial reduction of expenditure in the next few years, Governor Cecil Smith informed the Colonial Office that the Straits Settlements could no longer assist Pahang financially. He suggested that Pahang should obtain loans from Perak and Selangor whose assets were \$2,104,988 and \$720,440 respectively. These states had once received advances from the Colony so the Governor could see no reason why they should not now help Pahang.² But at the Colonial Office, some of the officials considered this unfair to the rich states which required their balances for their own development schemes. Besides, as the Straits merchants had invested heavily in Pahang, it was thought that any ultimate loss should fall on the Colony instead of the Protected States. The Secretary of State finally proposed that 'to keep Pahang going a little longer', Selangor and Perak might take over from the Colony the debts due to the latter from Sungai Ujong and Negri Sembilan. This seemed to him a less objectionable expedient because these two states, unlike Pahang, were expected to begin repaying their debts quite soon.³

By thus transferring to Selangor the debt of \$199,000 due from Sungai Ujong, the Colony was able to lend Pahang \$175,000 in 1892, but Negri Sembilan's debt could not be assumed by Perak which had already pledged its balances for railway extensions. In any case, such arrangements did not solve the Pahang problem which had really become more serious owing to a rebellion against the British. Soon after British

¹ Correspondence on the question may be found in *PP* C.6240 (1890-1) and C.7784 (1895).

² CO273/176 Smith to CO 26 September 1891; CO273/179 Smith to CO 21 March 1892.

³ CO273/174 CO to Smith 13 November 1891; CO273/176 CO to Smith 11 February 1892.

Collectors and Magistrates began abolishing debt-slavery, forced labour and other customary Malay practices in Pahang, rumours of dissatisfaction circulated in the state. The civil list, drawn up on what the British considered to be a generous scale as it absorbed a large proportion of the revenue, failed to satisfy the recipients. One of them, the Orang Kaya of Semantan, a 'born fighter' rose in revolt in December 1891. Around him gathered other discontented elements in Pahang. Although the Sultan sympathized with the rebels, he dared not give them overt support. Nevertheless, to suppress these disturbances the British in Pahang obtained military assistance from Perak and Selangor which sent contingents consisting of Sikhs, Malays and a handful of European officers. The campaign continued throughout 1892 when the rebels were pursued into the neighbouring state of Kelantan. These disturbances, by dislocating existing enterprise and involving additional military expenditure, led to a still larger debt for Pahang with even less prospect of its repayment. Under these circumstances, the Colonial Office debated at length the question of British policy in Pahang. Should the Residential system be maintained? If so where were the funds to come from? By then it was generally believed that Pahang would remain insolvent indefinitely. Furthermore, the Resident, John Rodger, maintained that it was futile to incur an annual debt of about \$200,000 merely to pay for current services whilst nothing was done to open up the country by way of roads, railways and telegraphs.¹

Among the permanent officials, there were two schools of thought on Pahang: Fairfield represented one and Lucas the other. According to the former, the Straits Government had made a 'huge mistake' in appointing a Resident in Pahang—the poorest and least populated of the Malay States which could never repay what was spent on it. Fairfield had no responsibility for sanctioning this step in 1888; his connexion with Malayan affairs had begun at a later date. Pahang seemed to him like a state where 'the Gods of Olympus had perpetrated a practical joke at the expense of the British investor, peppering over the whole surface with indications of mineral wealth of every kind but withholding the lodes and reefs which ought to have been

¹ CO273/179 Rodger to Col. Sec. SS 17 March enclosed in Smith to CO 25 March 1892.

underneath'. Consequently, Fairfield believed that the British should withdraw from Pahang in two stages; by reverting to the system of advice under Weld's treaty of October 1887 in the first instance, thus leaving the general administration of the country to the Malay chiefs and keeping only an Agent with a small bodyguard at Pekan. Following this, he envisaged a complete withdrawal from Pahang except for Raub where European mining showed signs of success. Raub, he thought, might be annexed to Selangor.¹ By August 1892 the Permanent Under-Secretary had also reached the conclusion that Pahang was in an 'inextricable mess'; that the rich resources of the state were either non-existent or grossly exaggerated. He despaired of any source from which money could be constantly poured into Pahang.² In contrast, Lucas chose to share the unwavering faith of leading Straits officials in the potentialities of Pahang. On the basis of the British experience in Perak and Selangor, he reasoned that Pahang would ultimately pay its way.³

The Colonial Office came to no decision in 1892 for two reasons. First, it awaited news of the final suppression of the rebellion in Pahang; and second, as the British general elections of July 1892 proved unfavourable to the Conservatives, Lord Knutsford declined to commit the incoming Secretary of State to any particular line of action. Although Lord Ripon assumed responsibility for colonial affairs in August 1892 in Gladstone's fourth ministry with Sydney Buxton as Parliamentary Under-Secretary, they did not immediately consider the Pahang question as more urgent matters claimed their attention.

Convinced nevertheless that Ripon and Buxton would expect something more from the permanent officials than a recommendation to 'drift on in a Micawberlike hope' that things would mend and the drain on Straits finances cease, Fairfield had, in the meantime, privately written the Governor a frank letter expressing his views on Pahang with a request for sug-

¹ CO273/174 Fairfield's minute 10 October 1891 on Smith's despatch 21 August; CO273/179 another minute 20 April 1892 and CO 273/180 minute 9 May 1892 on Smith's telegram 7 May 1892.

² CO273/181 Meade's minute 8 August 1892 on Smith's despatch 26 April 1892.

³ Future events were to prove that Fairfield and Meade had a more realistic evaluation of the resources of Pahang than Lucas and Cecil Smith.

gestions to meet the difficulty.¹ In his reply,² Cecil Smith deprecated Fairfield's suggestion of a withdrawal. British prestige, the Governor argued, was worth paying for. To return to a system of advice would only be throwing away all that had already been done, he said, because sooner or later British control would have to be re-established. There was also the question of moral obligation to the 'natives' whose lot had been improved with the advent of British influence. Governor Cecil Smith challenged Fairfield's evaluation of Pahang as 'a jungle state of no particular resources', and urged that it should be retained and opened for the benefit of British trade. He further contended that it was a matter of taking every opportunity to extend British commerce in a part of the world where it was being more and more hampered by the protective policies of surrounding countries; the time had come for Britain to realize that expansion meant expense. Other European colonial powers, he believed, would certainly not hesitate about the cost of a new acquisition like Pahang whose prospects were infinitely better than Tongking, Atjeh, German New Guinea and East Africa. Even the East India Company, Governor Cecil Smith added, had maintained the Straits Settlements at a loss for many years. He asserted that the Colony would have been able to continue financing Pahang if not for the 'excessive' military contribution demanded from it by the British Government. Again he pressed for a reduction of this contribution or, as an alternative, imperial assistance for Pahang whose development would after all benefit British commerce and people under British protection. Otherwise, as Cecil Smith saw it, the only solution was for Pahang to borrow from Perak and Selangor for an indefinite period.³

British policy in Pahang remained a topic of controversy among the permanent officials at the Colonial Office. Two of the three courses proposed by the Governor had to be ruled out. The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to reconsider the question of reducing the Straits military contribution. Nor

¹ CO273/182 copy of Fairfield's letter to Smith written with Meade's concurrence 27 July 1892.

² CO273/183 Smith to Fairfield, private, 6 September 1892; Smith to CO 30 September 1892.

³ Ibid.

could the Colonial Office entertain the view that the Imperial Government should bear the cost of the extension of British power in Malaya. Hitherto the forward policy had been financed by the Colony and subsequently paid for, with interest, by the Protected States themselves. Any departure from this practice would have been difficult to justify, not to mention the fact that Pahang was a state of such dubious prospects.

To strengthen the case for retaining Pahang, Lucas sought further evidence from Swettenham, who was on leave in England from October 1891 to December 1892. Swettenham accordingly submitted a memorandum recording his own confidence in the state, at the same indicating the requisites for its success: viz., reducing European-owned concessions; encouraging Chinese immigration; and constructing communications between Pahang and the west coast.¹ Swettenham claimed, in a memorandum written in 1926² and his autobiography published in 1942,³ that he took this opportunity of personal contact with Lucas, 'a valued friend of long standing' to elaborate on the need for a general reorganization of the Protected States, and to put forward a scheme which he had 'very much at heart', i.e. 'some kind of combination . . . of the four states . . . a form of federation'. The suggestion, again according to Swettenham, impressed Lucas.

It may be argued that Swettenham's memory of the details of what happened in 1892 must have been somewhat blurred by 1926 and especially by 1942, yet it is likely that in the course of informal discussions followed by private correspondence between Lucas and Swettenham on Pahang in particular and Malay States' affairs in general, seeds of the idea of federation, in some form or other, took root in Lucas' mind. That Lucas thought highly of Swettenham whose name was about to be recommended by the Colonial Office for a KCMG in the 1893

¹ CO273/185 Lucas' minute of 24 November 1892 on Swettenham's memorandum.

² Swettenham's version of 'The Origin of Federation in the Malay States' which contains a summary of his controversy with Cecil Smith, is preserved in the Swettenham Collection. In the later editions of *British Malaya* he also refers, but less fully, to the topic. For Cecil Smith's view see his 'Notes on some of the Statements in Sir Frank Swettenham's Book "British Malaya"', London, 1909.

³ Sir Frank Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, London, 1942, pp. 104-5.

Honours List,¹ is quite clear. In his minutes he nearly always expressed agreement with Swettenham's views on Malayan questions. And later, in 1906, when a dispute arose between Swettenham and Cecil Smith as to the origin of the federation scheme—a controversy in which the Governors, John Anderson (1904–11) and Lawrence Guillemard (1920–7) gave Cecil Smith the credit—Lucas admitted that as far as he could remember, Swettenham had either spoken or written to him privately on the subject before he drafted the memorandum which, as we shall see in the next chapter, 'first officially set the ball rolling'² towards a federation. Moreover, the arguments in this memorandum for a policy of consolidation resembled those used by Swettenham in a series of articles 'About Perak' for the *Straits Times*,³ in conversation with Sir Henry Norman of the *Pall Mall Gazette*⁴ and repeated in several of his books.⁵ At the London end, there is little doubt that Swettenham's advocacy of a policy of bringing the Protected States together under a Resident-General came prior to Governor Cecil Smith's own recommendations which will be dealt with later.

However, we must point out that the idea of having a Resident-General was not new. As early as 1880 local journals had reported a rumour that the Colonial Office was planning to place all the Protected States under one head, to be called 'Resident-General', and Hugh Low had been selected for the post. The object of this reorganization, said the *Pinang Gazette*, was to secure uniformity and prepare for annexation.⁶ Although Colonial Office records now preserved at the Public Record Office do not confirm this, in 1885 when considering Low's pay

¹ His name was withdrawn because the Colonial Office believed that he was about to be involved in divorce proceedings.

² Swettenham Collection, Lucas to Swettenham 1 November 1906.

³ Swettenham, *About Perak*, op. cit.

⁴ Norman stayed with Swettenham when he visited Malaya in the course of his travels in the East. Writing on the Protected Malay States in his book, *The People and Politics of the Far East*, London, 1895, he put the case for consolidation in terms which seem to indicate that he derived his views largely from Swettenham. A Straits resident, John Dill Ross, suggested that he was 'got at' by 'that master of Malayan politics', viz. Swettenham. See J.D. Ross, *The Capital of a Little Empire*, Singapore, 1898, p. 34.

⁵ See *British Malaya*, first published in 1906; Chapter I, *The Real Malay*, London, 1899; and *Footprints in Malaya*, op. cit.

⁶ *Pinang Gazette* 23 January 1880; *Singapore Daily Times* 31 January 1880.

and position, Lucas himself had proposed that Low might be made a sort of Resident-General for the Malay States by way of promotion, since his services were so valuable to Perak that he could not be given a higher post elsewhere. Considering any such change unadvisable at that juncture, the Permanent Under-Secretary had merely remarked that the suggestion would be well worth considering should there be a Governor who was either ignorant of Malay affairs or too lazy to travel.¹

As for the general idea of welding the Protected States closer together, that also had been expressed by at least two of Swettenham's colleagues prior to 1892, and possibly thought of by others. Low, in his report on Perak in 1888, had observed that 'the Protected States of the Malay Peninsula may be looked upon no longer as isolated Governments but as parts of one great whole'.² Again, in his last memorandum on future policy submitted to the Secretary of State prior to his retirement, referred to earlier on, Low had urged confederation. We have also previously mentioned a similar suggestion by Maxwell in a talk at the Royal Colonial Institute, a copy of which reached the Colonial Office. Their opinions did not then arouse any official interest. But the local situation, as we have seen, changed in 1892. Pahang had become a serious financial problem which the Straits Government could not cope with. Hence, when Swettenham brought up the desirability of federation towards the end of 1892, the idea fell on fertile ground. The seeds sprouted when Low, to whom Lucas also referred the Pahang problem in 1892, likewise advised that Pahang should be attached to and financed by the western states. In his opinion, there was a sufficient community of feeling between them for the Malay Rulers to be willing to help each other's countries and accept a 'general federation'.³ Lucas therefore welcomed the idea not only as the best possible solution of the Pahang problem but a means of obtaining a more efficient and economical administration for the Protected States. Once convinced, he set out to promote the policy of a 'union or federation' of the Protected States among his colleagues.

¹ CO273/138 Lucas' minute 8 October 1885 and Herbert's comment on Low to CO 5 October 1885.

² PP C.5884 (1889) AR Perak 1888.

³ CO273/185 Lucas' minute 24 November 1892.

Both Sir Robert Meade, the Permanent Under-Secretary, and Edward Fairfield, an Assistant Under-Secretary, thought it premature to consider Lucas' minute on the subject when the question of remaining in or withdrawing from Pahang had yet to be settled.¹ On 10 January 1892, Meade pressed the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to come to a decision:

We must take a decision about Pahang, and it is a very important question what should be done. . . . I think that the mistake hitherto made, and I admit our share of the responsibility, is that we have considered that Pahang was just another Native State like Perak and others on the western coast. We thought that as the Residential system was a success in Perak it would prove the same in Pahang.

But Pahang is an enormous country with no means of access except on its fringe during a certain season of the year, and devoid of navigable rivers. . . . Perak was accessible and had easy water communications over a considerable part of it with resources which were at any rate known to exist—as regards Pahang we only have prophecy to go upon.

If we had contented ourselves with a less ambitious policy at first it is possible that by this time we might have made more real progress.²

Meade drew Buxton's attention to the similarity between Fairfield's recommendations regarding Pahang and those of Thomas Shelford, an unofficial member of the Straits Legislative Council, that the British should revert to the system of advice.

Objections to such a course, Meade admitted, were considerable. For one thing, he was unable to say whether the Europeans in the country would be safe if British control were to be relaxed. On the other hand, if the Colonial Office could secure a reduction of the Straits military contribution, Meade considered that it might be spent on developing Pahang. Personally Meade favoured a withdrawal but the Parliamentary Under-Secretary thought otherwise:

I do not think we ought hastily to assume this because Pahang costs money or will not ultimately repay the cost. Even Mr. Shelford . . . while arguing that we should in a measure 'retrace our steps'

¹ CO273/185 Fairfield's minute 25 November 1892 and Meade's minute 9 January 1893.

² CO273/183 Meade's minute 10 January 1893 on Smith's despatch 29 November 1892.

states that on the grounds of prestige our entire withdrawal would be most disastrous.

Further, while it is I think clear that the Governor in regard to Pahang, has 'tried to run before he could walk', it would be a serious matter to throw away all the good which has been done, and to withdraw our Resident. In all probability if we did so, we should before long, have again to interfere in Pahang, and have all the initial expense to incur over again.¹

Lucas and Swettenham may well have influenced Buxton's decision to retain the Residential system in Pahang.² In this connexion it is worthy of note that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary interviewed Swettenham towards the end of 1892 before the latter's departure for Perak where he was due to resume his duties as Resident on 16 January 1893. At all events, Buxton's decision, endorsed by the Secretary of State, Lord Ripon, was in line with the prevailing trend of British colonial policy. The British East African Company was chartered in 1888; the South African Company in 1889; Britain extended her control over Zululand in 1887, Mashonaland in 1890 and Nyasaland in 1891. In Borneo, a similar extension of British power occurred and, on Buxton's recommendation, Ripon had just sanctioned the annexation of the Solomon Islands. An important decision involving British commitments in the Malay States was thus once again made by a Liberal Ministry as in 1873 and also in 1881.

This left the Colonial Office in February 1893 with the question of finding some long-term solution to the problem of financing the administration and development of Pahang. Such a problem had never arisen before. All the other states taken under British control had either prospered after a short period, or at least shown promise of becoming self-supporting. Pahang alone had already absorbed huge loans, required more and, worse still, appeared unable to stand on its own feet for many years, if at all. Its needs could no longer be met by the Straits Settlements. Nor could the Governor dip into the overflowing treasuries of Perak and Selangor without arousing unfavourable comment since these states were entirely separate entities.

Against this background the Colonial Office moved towards

¹ CO273/183 Buxton's minute 30 January 1893.

² *Ibid.* See memorandum on Pahang by Lucas.

the view that the Pahang problem, together with the need for administrative reorganization—becoming clearer each year—could both be met by a closer association of the several Protected States with a strong central government, a common purse, and a uniform administration. How the policy of 'a union or federation' came to be accepted and the particular form it assumed, is the theme of the next chapter.

THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND PROPOSALS FOR A 'UNION OR FEDERATION' OF THE PROTECTED MALAY STATES

LORD RIPON and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Sydney Buxton, were early converts to the idea urged by Lucas that for administrative efficiency, uniformity of policy and harmony of purpose, the Protected Malay States should be welded gradually into a union or federation. Lucas had been private secretary to Sir Robert Herbert, the permanent head of the Colonial Office, from 1881 until the latter's retirement in February 1892, except for a few months in 1886 when he was Granville's private secretary. In February 1892, he was appointed chief clerk for that section of the Colonial Office which dealt with the eastern colonies. As the one chiefly responsible for drafting despatches to the Straits Settlements and minuting on the incoming communications, Lucas had a say in the formulation of policy. Though mild-mannered and kindly, Lucas did not hesitate to assert his opinion or to disagree with those above him. When differences arose, however, he would try to convince the others by marshalling facts to support his case. And on the whole, he had an impressive knowledge of the local situation derived from official records and from his private correspondence with the men on the spot. For this reason, the more senior members of the Colonial Office attached considerable weight to his recommendations. Besides, on issues which he considered vital to British interests in the Peninsula, Lucas would show such vigour and tenacity in insisting upon a particular point or line of approach that a Foreign Secretary once described him as a 'truculently-minded individual'.¹

Lucas was opposed by Edward Fairfield on the question of

¹ FO277 Sanderson Papers, Lansdowne to Sanderson 16 September 1902.

federation, as on many other matters pertaining to the administration of the Protected States. Senior in service to Lucas, Fairfield lacked his grasp of local affairs probably because he had not been as long in the eastern department of the Colonial Office. But the conflict between them, it has been said, 'was one of principle as well as personality'.¹ While Fairfield pressed for closer control over the Residents, Lucas upheld the need for flexibility in these states. There was a similar division of opinion in Malaya: Maxwell (Resident of Selangor from 1889-92 and Colonial Secretary from 1892-5) believed in adherence to rules and regulations whereas Swettenham (Resident of Selangor from 1882-9, and of Perak from 1889-95) was impatient of 'excessive organization in details'. Understandably, Fairfield thought highly of Maxwell but was critical of Swettenham. Lucas, in contrast, was Swettenham's champion within the Colonial Office. Where Lucas and Fairfield differed their opposing views were considered by the men above them in the official hierarchy. Whether the one or the other prevailed usually depended on the Permanent Under-Secretary and the Secretary of State.

In this instance, Sir Robert Meade, the senior Assistant Under-Secretary who became permanent head of the department on Herbert's retirement in February 1892, shared Fairfield's reservations about the federation proposal. Their reasons will be considered later. It is only necessary to note at this juncture that among his colleagues at the Colonial Office, Meade had been associated with the affairs of the Peninsula for the longest period—since his appointment as Assistant Under-Secretary in May 1871. His experience and position therefore entitled him to an important share in deliberations on Malayan policy. He was also level-headed and a man of sound commonsense. But Meade was cautious by nature—sometimes over-cautious to the extent of being unenterprising. He belonged more to the 'urbane nonchalance of Granville's days than to the energy of Chamberlain's rule'.² He appears not to have played

¹ See E. Sadka, 'The Residential System in the Protected Malay States 1874-1895', Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, 1960, p.228, and 'The Colonial Office and the Protected Malay States', *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, eds. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink, Oxford, 1964, p. 186.

² J.L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, 1895-1900*, vol. 3, London, 1934, p. 17.

a prominent role during the years that Lord Ripon was Secretary of State for the Colonies (1892-5). Temperament, age and failing health probably explain why Meade did not exert his influence more strongly when the idea of a federation of the Protected Malay States was debated by Lucas and Fairfield.

Instead, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Sydney Buxton, took a more significant part in determining policy. Unlike other Parliamentary Under-Secretaries, many of whom did not read the despatches to and from Singapore much less minute on the matters raised, Buxton was frequently referred to by the permanent staff and left with the task of writing minutes by his chief. In his personal recollections of Ripon published in Wolf's biography of Ripon, Buxton described the Parliamentary Under-Secretary's position as being somewhat difficult and anomalous: 'He feels not infrequently that he is neither fish nor flesh nor fowl nor good red herring. His use and wont, his authority and responsibilities, his enjoyment of and interest in his post, depend in a very large degree on his Chief.'¹ But he added: 'To his Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office no Chief could possibly have been kinder, more helpful, more sympathetic, more generous than Lord Ripon.' Ripon allowed Buxton a substantial share of authority, probably because the latter was 'one of the most intimate' of his friends. Then as Buxton himself remarked, Ripon possessed a selective power which enabled him as head of a huge department overburdened with perpetual accumulation of work to attend to essentials while leaving the rest to others.² Enjoying as he did so much influence at the Colonial Office, Buxton's interest in the idea of federation urged by Lucas weighted the scales against the opposition. Buxton favoured a closer association of the Protected States in accordance with his desire to re-shape and develop the Empire anew in order to make it more useful and efficient a unit. He belonged to that school of thought which believed that the larger the unit, the greater its strength and efficiency.³ Such views were then in vogue in Britain and found expression

¹ See L. Wolf, *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, vol. 2, London, 1921, p. 323.

² *Ibid.* pp. 320, 322.

³ A.F. Madden, 'Changing Attitudes and Responsibilities, 1895-1914', *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. III, Cambridge, 1959, p. 347.

in the movement for Imperial Federation¹ as well as those for a federation and union of the Australian and South African colonies respectively. Apart from such general considerations, Buxton no doubt saw in the federation proposal an attractive solution of the Pahang problem, particularly since the Ripon ministry had decided to maintain the Residential system in that state. Once converted to the idea, he left Lucas to put the scheme down on paper.

Accordingly, there appeared in the Secretary of State's papers in April 1893, three drafts intended for the Governor, Cecil Smith. The first was a public despatch setting forth alternative solutions of the Pahang problem;² the second was a confidential communication to Cecil Smith seeking his views on future policy and particularly requesting him to consider and report on a general scheme for a union or federation of these states sketched out in a third draft—a memorandum.³

The confidential communication to the Governor said that the difficulties in Pahang had led the Secretary of State to consider the position of the Protected States, their relations with the Colony and with each other. In view of Cecil Smith's impending retirement, the Secretary of State wished to have his opinion on the possibility of consolidating these states into a union or federation. If this could not be achieved immediately owing to the difficulties of communication, the Colonial Office enquired whether a first and preliminary step could not be taken by federating for administrative purposes Selangor, Sungai Ujong with Jelebu and Negri Sembilan, thus leaving out for the moment the states of Pahang and Perak.

The enclosed memorandum referred to the practical advantages of co-operation between the Malay States to which, it was stated, there were objections in theory so long as no constitutional bond existed between them. It gave as examples the difficulty of justifying the use of Selangor and Perak police to put down the Pahang disturbances and the application of surplus revenues from the richer states to Pahang.⁴ If the Malay

¹ J.E. Tyler, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity (1868-1895)*, London, 1938.

² For details regarding these solutions, see below p. 148.

³ These documents may be found in CO273/183.

⁴ A financial expedient adopted by the Governor had been severely criticized by the Singapore press. The Sultan of Pahang had been receiving

States were thus to assist each other in these and other respects in the future, the memorandum went on to suggest that they should be welded into a 'federated or single state, having as far as possible, one system of administration, and a common purse'.

Nevertheless, any such scheme, the memorandum said, should be governed by two principles: First, it must leave the Governor's authority unimpaired so that there would be no divergence of policy between the Colony and the Protectorate. To quote the words used: 'the prospect of an uniform British policy in the Malay Indies, including Borneo as well as the Malay Peninsula, will most be furthered in future years, as communication both by land and by sea become quicker and more constant, by entrusting the Governor at the central point of Singapore with powers of general supervision and control'. However, since the Governor's sphere of authority had widened so much of late, to make his control more effective, the memorandum proposed the appointment of a Resident-General¹ to be directly subordinate and responsible to the Governor and who, as his representative, would visit, inspect and supervise the administration of all the states. He would be the Chief British Officer of a united or federated protectorate and not merely a single Resident of one among several separate and independent states.

In addition to the first principle mentioned above, the memorandum went on to stipulate a second condition of any scheme

\$7,200 annually from Selangor for the cost of his expedition in support of Tunku Diauddin during the Selangor civil wars. In 1893 the Governor persuaded the Sultan to give up this allowance and allow the funds thus released to be used for the state which had become more deeply indebted than ever owing to a 'native rising'. And Selangor was now requested to hand over the rest of the payments due to Pahang in a lump sum i.e. \$57,600. Selangor moreover had to contribute \$79,000 towards the expenses incurred in suppressing the Pahang disturbances. The local press accused the Home Government of squeezing these states indirectly by imposing an excessively high military contribution on the Colony which in turn helped itself to Selangor balances to finance its policies in Pahang. See CO273/186 Smith to CO 9 March 1893 and the reply 19 May 1893.

¹ As we have seen in the previous chapter, in 1885 when Low's pay and position were being considered, Lucas had suggested that he should be made a sort of Resident-General since his services were so valuable to Perak that he could not be promoted elsewhere. See CO273/138 Lucas' minute 8 October 1885 and Herbert's comment on Low to CO 5 October 1885.

of co-operation between the Malay States, viz., that it must not be uncongenial to the Malay communities and their Rulers. This precluded the annexation of the Malay States to the Colony. Although something would be gained if British authority were nominally as it was practically supreme in these states, the memorandum stated that these advantages would not compensate for the suspicion of bad faith which annexation would arouse, nor for the risk of abolishing a system which had 'on the whole proved singularly successful'. Annexation was thus out of the question—'at all events at the present time'. But since the confederation of the Sri Menanti states with Rembau and Tampin in 1889 under a single Resident and with one State Council had been well received by the Malays, it was thought that confederation on a wider scale along similar lines might be attempted. The Rulers with their advisers, it said, might meet in a common council; the revenues might be wholly or to a large extent combined; large departments of the public service might be centralized and the administration as well as the policy be that of a 'single Malay State'; with full allowance being made for the peculiarities, special customs and local interests of the different districts. In conclusion, the memorandum listed the advantages of a policy of consolidation in the administration of justice, the construction of public works, defence and police, recruitment to the Civil Service, finance and especially as a solution to the Pahang problem: 'One strong reason for raising the general question of the status of these States at the present moment is that possibly, in their confederation, might be found the best solution of the Pahang difficulty.'

This memorandum drawn up by Lucas had Buxton's approval prior to its circulation to other members of the department. On 28 April 1893 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary invited Meade and Fairfield to comment on them. And Lucas himself wrote as follows on 15 May 1893:

In a draft written at Mr. Buxton's direction and now in circulation, I have sketched out what I believe to be the true policy for all the Native States of the Peninsula and what seems to me must sooner or later be inevitable i.e. federation. It may be, and probably it is, impossible to work it out except by gradual stages, but the sooner the work of bringing them together is begun the better, and the Pahang question gives a reason for taking it in hand. I should be

glad to have an opportunity of answering any objections which may be taken to the draft. . . .¹

The procedure thus adopted involved a departure from the usual practice in which members of the permanent staff ministered on the papers in order of seniority before they went up to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and thence to the Secretary of State. This principle was apparently not adhered to under the Ripon administration for we find that the by-passing of the Assistant Under-Secretary and the permanent head formed the subject of a private complaint by Meade to Ripon on 11 October 1892. Meade maintained that for the protection of the Secretary of State, 'junior clerks and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary [with] as yet no colonial experience' should not send drafts or minutes to the Secretary of State without their first passing through the hands of the Assistant Under-Secretary responsible for the division to which the matter belonged. 'I hope you will not think I am fussy or jealous' Meade said.² His protest was either not brought to the attention of those concerned or else ignored because the same thing happened to the papers containing the federation proposals.

Neither Meade nor Fairfield favoured the scheme outlined in the memorandum. They felt that it would be 'difficult to work, would do no particular good, might lead to political trouble, and would not be just to the more prosperous states'. In Fairfield's opinion, the immediate adoption of the proposals would simply lead to the creation of bigger posts for Swettenham and for one or two others. Fairfield even alleged that Swettenham, being financially embarrassed, was looking for a higher office 'as a means of getting himself more leash'. And further, that he was hoping to be appointed Resident-General in order to free himself from the criticisms of his 'enemy' the Colonial Secretary, W.E. Maxwell.³

¹ CO273/187 Lucas' minute 15 May 1893 on the Governor's despatch 15 April 1893.

² Ripon Papers, BM Add. Mss. 43,556, vol. LXVI, Meade to Ripon 11 October 1892.

³ CO273/183 Minutes of 29 April on the Federation Memorandum; CO273/189 Fairfield's minutes 3 August 1893; CO273/188 minutes 17 August and 3 November 1893. At that time the fall in the value of silver affected the salaries of British officers in Malaya adversely and Swettenham was one of those who pressed for more pay. Although this was subsequently

This reference to Swettenham requires some explanation. The papers on the proposed federation circulated within the Colonial Office contain no specific mention of Swettenham's connexion with it at all. Lucas, as we have seen, gave the impression that it was Low's suggestion in his minute of November 1892 in connexion with the Pahang problem. The omission of Swettenham's name may have been deliberate on Lucas' part for fear of prejudicing the case. He knew that Fairfield did not approve of Swettenham, and Swettenham was the most likely candidate for the office of Resident-General. He had been in Perak since 1889 whereas his rival Maxwell had been promoted from the Residency in Selangor to a better-paid and more influential post as Colonial Secretary of the Colony early in February 1892. The Secretary of State had appointed Maxwell on the grounds that his claim to a senior post in the Colony was stronger than Swettenham's because of his greater experience in the Straits Settlements.¹ For the Perak Residency, however, for which both men had applied in 1889 the Colonial Office had chosen Swettenham. It was then agreed that Swettenham's longer and more continuous association with the Protected States gave him the edge over Maxwell. Consequently, if the policy of consolidation were to be adopted, and the post of Resident-General formed an integral part of it, then Swettenham's qualifications and service would have entitled him to being seriously considered for the vacancy. It was known at the Colonial Office that he was anxious for a better paid and more independent job. Maxwell, as Colonial Secretary, was now in a position to criticize his policies and advise the Governor. Already on several occasions Swettenham had clashed with Colonial Secretaries and with Governors.² The prospect of

granted, Swettenham later requested a further reconsideration of his emoluments as Resident-General. It drew forth the following comments from Fairfield: 'No doubt he would not have given himself so much trouble about this federation project unless he thought he would get more out of it. . . . There can be but little doubt that the Federation principle has been pressed on us as hotly as it has because everybody concerned hoped to get something for himself out of it. . . .' Refer CO273/233 Fairfield's minute 13 January 1896 and 30 March 1896 on Mitchell to CO 11 January 1896.

¹ CO537/47 Smith to CO 9 February 1892.

² For example, when Dickson was Acting Governor, he had refused to allow Swettenham to remit home certain Indian investments in August

getting his own way in Perak appeared worse with Maxwell in Singapore. Fairfield and Meade were both aware of Swettenham's dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. Despite Lucas' careful omission of Swettenham's name in connexion with the federation scheme, they suspected—and justifiably too—that Swettenham had a hand in the contents of the memorandum drafted by Lucas for their consideration. In the preceding chapter, we have seen that this collaboration was later acknowledged by both of them. It is worthy of note that in a private letter to Swettenham in 1906, Lucas referred to the federation scheme as 'our plan'. He remembered also that Buxton was 'very favourable' to it.¹

Had it not been for Buxton's support and Ripon's approval, the proposal outlined in the memorandum would probably have remained within the Colonial Office owing to the opposition from Meade and Fairfield. Under the circumstances, it was sent to Singapore on 19 May 1893 for the Governor's comments.²

In the meantime, other possible solutions of the Pahang problem put forward by the Colonial Office were rejected as impracticable by the Straits Government. In June 1893 the Governor reported that the unofficial members of the legislative council had declined to consider the Secretary of State's proposal that the Colony should submit to additional taxation in order to finance Pahang. As for the alternative, that Raub should be annexed to Selangor, Sir Cecil Smith asserted that the Sultan of Pahang would oppose the partition of his state; he was exceedingly jealous of any encroachment on the boundaries of Pahang and appeared to have a special animosity towards Selangor. For the same reason, apart from difficulties of communication, Pahang could not be administered by the Resident of Selangor.³ There remained the possibility that the Colony

1890, thus causing a loss of some \$38,000 to Perak later. Swettenham grumbled about this in his Administration Report for 1893 and was reprimanded for airing his grievance. See CO273/196 CO to Mitchell 22 March 1895. See also CO273/168 Dickson to CO 31 October 1890.

¹ Swettenham Collection, Lucas to Swettenham 1 November 1906.

² CO273/183 CO to Smith 19 May 1893. The main correspondence on the Federation was later published in the *PLCSS* for 1895, see CO275/51.

³ CO273/188 Smith to CO 12 June 1893. On receipt of this despatch, Lucas reiterated his confidence in some form of confederation as the answer to the Pahang difficulty but Fairfield continued to think otherwise.

might continue to finance Pahang if its military contribution, imposed by the War Office, were to be reduced. But when the Colonial Office approached the Treasury they heard that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 'heart was good', though unfortunately his 'revenue was bad'.¹ Hence that too was finally and definitely ruled out.

While this correspondence went on, the deteriorating situation in Pahang caused the Governor to make monthly advances from the Colonial Treasury without the formal approval of the legislative council. After September 1893, he was forced to draw on the credit balances of Perak and Selangor for current expenditure on Pahang since colonial funds had by then been exhausted.

Anyway, replying to the Secretary of State's policy despatch on 30 June 1893, Cecil Smith endorsed the desirability and feasibility of federation. He explained that even before the Colonial Office memorandum on the subject reached him, he had already started to prepare a statement on future policy in anticipation of a request from the Secretary of State on his retirement. He agreed that the time had arrived for placing the administration of the Protected States on a sounder basis. He stressed the onerous nature of the Governor's duties and the urgency of relieving him by the appointment of a Resident-General. Such an officer would act as chief executive officer in charge of all the Protected States and be directly under the Governor. In his opinion, this appointment was an 'absolutely necessary' first step towards consolidation. It would be the duty of the Resident-General to explain the proposition to the Malay Rulers, and to give them adequate time to discuss the scheme before bringing it into effect. The Governor emphasized the advisability of proceeding cautiously and carefully in order to retain Malay confidence² as well as ensure that the chiefs

¹ Writing privately to Campbell Bannerman on 20 September 1893, Ripon said: 'I cannot say that the War Office is reasonable in its demands upon the Straits Settlements but it is useless to discuss the matter as it will settle itself very shortly next year by, I fear, the bankruptcy of the Colonial Government.' Ripon Papers, BM Add. Mss. 43,517, vol. XXVII.

² The Governor was only concerned about Malay opinion as he was confident that the Chinese would 'readily fall in with any system of Government' that was not 'oppressive' and gave 'reasonable consideration to their habits of life'.

grasped the advantages of the new policy. To avoid arousing their unfounded suspicion of British intentions, Cecil Smith rejected the Colonial Office suggestion of beginning with a partial federation of Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Sungai Ujong only. All the Protected States he maintained, should at once be included in any confederation. He also proposed that Kuala Lumpur should be the headquarters of the Resident-General as it was within easier reach of some of the states than Singapore.¹

Cecil Smith's general agreement with the main points contained in Lucas' memorandum was so remarkable that the latter felt compelled to deny any 'friendly collusion' between them. That this was no coincidence was suggested by Swettenham in his book *British Malaya* (first published in 1906), and repeated subsequently in his private as well as public statements. He claimed that after sowing the seeds of the idea of federation in London during his leave, he had returned to Perak and submitted a memorandum to the Governor either in January or February 1893. In that memorandum, he had suggested in considerable detail, and for specified reasons, a federation of the Protected States under a Resident-General. And it was this scheme which Cecil Smith outlined for the Secretary of State in his despatch of 30 June 1893.² Sir Cecil Smith however questioned the 'historical accuracy' of Swettenham's statement.³ He denied having received any such memorandum from the latter. On the contrary, he said that he had discussed the question of future policy with Swettenham during a visit to Perak prior to his receipt of the Colonial Office papers. He remembered their disagreement about the position of the Resident-General. While he preferred the Resident-General to be subor-

¹ CO273/188 Smith to CO 30 June 1893.

² Regarding the conflicting claims of Swettenham and Cecil Smith, it may be noted that Hugh Low attributed the Federation as 'almost entirely due to Mr. Swettenham' in the discussions which followed a paper read by Swettenham at the Royal Colonial Institute in 1896. Clifford similarly referred to the scheme as 'largely Swettenham's conception'. And Swettenham himself in a despatch to the Secretary of State in 1902 said: 'I suggested the scheme of federation which received your approval.' See *PRCI* vol. XXVII, 1896-7 and vol. XXXIV, 1902-3; CO273/284 Swettenham to Chamberlain 7 December 1902.

³ Swettenham Collection, Smith to Swettenham 29 October 1906.

dinate to the Governor, Swettenham had wanted the Resident-General to be independent of Singapore. Although the source of the scheme described in Cecil Smith's despatch was thus disputed it does not necessarily follow that the veracity of these two men, whose long and close friendship was ruined by this controversy in their retirement, need be questioned. They had discussed things together and in the course of their exchange of views, each must have been influenced by the other's opinion. Anyway, we have seen that the idea of a closer association of the several states for administrative convenience had been raised by others such as Low in 1889 and Maxwell in 1891. To quote Cecil Smith, 'one and all of us had considered what should be done in the way of improving the administration of the Malay States'.¹ Whatever the explanation of the similarities between the Colonial Office memorandum proposing a federation or union and Cecil Smith's reply on the subject, the practical importance of the latter lay in its support for the idea of federation and the broad lines of the scheme sketched out in the former.

Cecil Smith's favourable pronouncement meant that a policy of consolidation was now accepted in principle at the Colonial Office. Nonetheless, Meade and Fairfield continued to object to its implementation in the form suggested chiefly on the grounds that Swettenham—the obvious nominee—was unsuitable for such an independent post as that of Resident-General. A man as go-ahead and headstrong as Swettenham, they felt, would give the Colonial Office a lot of trouble if not restrained by skilled critics like Maxwell. The retention of Maxwell's supervision over the Protected States seemed all the more essential because Cecil Smith was leaving the Straits on retirement and his successor, Sir Charles Bullen Mitchell, had no Malayan experience. To keep Maxwell over Swettenham, Fairfield proposed that the latter should be left in Perak while the other states were brought together under the Resident of Selangor who should remain subordinate to the Colonial Secretary in Singapore. Their opposition led Ripon to decide against taking any further steps in the matter until after personal consultation with Cecil Smith on his return to London. It was hoped that

¹ Ibid. Smith to Swettenham 5 December 1906.

the difficulties arising from the respective claims of Swettenham and Maxwell would then be resolved.¹

Subsequently, in November 1893, Buxton conferred with Cecil Smith and Mitchell. It is significant that neither Meade nor Fairfield were present at this meeting held in the Colonial Office. Arising from these discussions, Buxton urged that the new Governor should have instructions to send Swettenham on a special tour of the Protected States to broach the subject of federation with the Sultans and then report fully to the Colonial Office. But again Meade and Fairfield demurred. They argued that Mitchell should be allowed to study the situation for himself instead of being thus committed to a definite course of action. Fairfield was then in correspondence with Maxwell, who, he said, had an alternative plan for federation which would not only keep the Protected States under the Colonial Secretary in Singapore but also avoid the creation of the post of Resident-General. Maxwell had indeed mentioned to Fairfield his idea of a federation of the Protected States with the Straits Settlements, instead of a federation of the former to be separated from the latter. He believed that the Protected States stood to benefit more from a closer association with the Colony. Even before he knew the details of the Maxwell scheme, Fairfield pronounced the idea 'rather taking' and preferable to the 'barbaric federation of Sultans' under Swettenham.²

In deference to the opinion of these two senior members of his permanent staff, Ripon thought it advisable to allow Mitchell to examine the merits of the respective proposals on the spot. Since Mitchell was completely new to Malaya, he could not be accused of any partiality for either Maxwell or Swettenham. This may have been in Fairfield's mind when he insisted that the new Governor should have a chance to see things for himself and form an independent opinion. To Fairfield, Cecil Smith's word was not good enough for Cecil Smith belonged to the Swettenham school of thought on administration whilst Maxwell and his predecessor in the Colonial

¹ CO273/188 See Fairfield's minutes 17 August, 3 November and 11 December 1893; and Meade's minute 9 December together with Buxton's minutes 23 August and 20 November 1893.

² Ibid. Maxwell to Fairfield 14 November 1893 and minutes by Meade and Fairfield.

Secretariat, Sir John Dickson, subscribed to the view which Fairfield approved. Moreover Mitchell's colonial experience was considerable. He had begun his career in the service in 1868 as Colonial Secretary of British Honduras. From 1877 he held the post of Receiver-General in British Guiana until his appointment as Colonial Secretary of Natal. After that he had served as High Commissioner of the Western Pacific and then as Governor of Natal and Zululand prior to his transfer to Singapore.

Ripon and Buxton, however, did not allow Mitchell to leave for Singapore without giving him a lead. In addition to copies of earlier correspondence on the subject, Mitchell was furnished with two memoranda. One stated that there should be a Resident-General stationed at Kuala Lumpur and that Swettenham was 'clearly the fittest man for the place'. It noted the suggestion that the Resident-General should combine the general supervision and control of the Protected States with the duties of Resident in Selangor. On the controversial question of the Resident-General's relations with the Colonial Secretary in Singapore, the memorandum urged that the status of these two officers should be equal as recommended by Cecil Smith. Both were to be directly under the Governor with one in charge of the Straits Settlements and the other the Protected States. The desirability of moving slowly and cautiously rather than attempting fundamental changes precipitately, was stressed. The second memorandum, together with a covering letter from Buxton, suggested that Ripon favoured the scheme for the federation of the Protected States contained in his correspondence with Cecil Smith although the Secretary of State was not yet irrevocably committed to it.¹ From this it may be inferred that the Secretary of State and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary had already made up their minds but hesitated to overrule the Permanent Under-Secretary and his senior Assistant.

The local rivalry between Maxwell and Swettenham and the division of opinion in the Colonial Office regarding their respective positions in the proposed federation thus caused a delay in the implementation of the policy of consolidation. What form

¹ CO273/188 Memorandum on the Proposed Federation of the Native States 30 October 1893; Memorandum for the private information of the Governor December 1893 and Buxton's covering letter 22 December 1893.

this was to assume, whether the Protected Malay States alone should be brought together under a Resident-General in Kuala Lumpur, or whether these states should be combined with the Colony and ruled from Singapore, depended to some extent on the new Governor's verdict.

Presumably, the Governor, Mitchell, learnt the Colonial Secretary's views on the subject soon after his arrival in Singapore in February 1894. Maxwell, as he later recorded in a memorandum for the Secretary of States' information,¹ agreed that the Malay States under British Residents required more effective central control to ensure greater uniformity of administration, to spend on undeveloped districts and to improve the public service. Only in respect of the means to achieve these ends did he differ from Cecil Smith, Swettenham and the Residents of Selangor and Pahang. He recommended annexation and the confederation of the Malay States with the Colony as the best method of improving the government of the former. Maxwell believed that the Malay Rulers could be persuaded to cede their states to the British Government if their ranks and titles remained unchanged and they were given suitable allowances by way of compensation. This represented a change of attitude on the part of the Colonial Secretary. Hitherto, like other British officials,² he had preferred the maintenance of Malay sovereignty. As late as 1891, while still Resident of Selangor, he had not favoured annexation.³ His experience in the Secretariat in Singapore probably gave him a new perspective. He must have been impressed too by the financial advantages of annexation from the Colony's viewpoint because the early 'nineties were lean years for the Straits but a prosperous period for Perak and Selangor. That annexation would not be popular in many quarters had occurred to Maxwell. He foresaw opposition from the Residents who might prejudice the Sultans against it. He was aware of the argument that annexation might deter other states from accepting the Residential system. Discounting this possibility, Maxwell felt that in the long run, the material results of British rule would induce the other Malay

¹ CO273/211 Maxwell to CO 20 March 1895.

² See E. Sadka, 'The Residential System in the Protected Malay States 1874-1895,' pp. 211, 215, 222.

³ W.E. Maxwell, 'The Malay Peninsula', *PRCI* vol. XXIII, 1891-2.

States to accept British 'protection'. As an alternative to annexation, he urged a confederation of the Protected States under the Governor who was to be assisted by four principal officers resident in Singapore: a Secretary for Native Affairs; a Judicial Commissioner; a Financial Controller and a Consulting Engineer. Each of them would be responsible to the Governor for uniformity and continuity of policy in his own department.

Meanwhile, Swettenham also made his views known. He contributed a series of articles to the *Straits Times* about Perak¹ deploring annexation and arguing instead for a larger and more rational administration under a Resident-General, either subordinate to or independent of the Governor. He aired his views to Henry Norman, MP, who was then travelling in the East as a correspondent for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In his book on *The Peoples and Politics of the Far East*, Norman had a section on the Malay States in which he put the case for a federation 'governed by a man whose position enables him to deal direct with the Secretary of State at home'.² Swettenham's fellow Residents in Selangor and Pahang also supported federation in their annual reports. Clifford, for example, wrote:

If all the Native States were welded into one, however, with a single head, a single purse, and a general policy for them all, Pahang would speedily receive the financial aid and close attention which she so sorely needs for the complete development of her resources. . . . Unless some such policy of amalgamation with the other Native States is adopted, the progress of Pahang will continue to be slow, and such results as the Government may be able to effect will . . . be wholly disproportionate to the large sums annually expended for the administration of the country.³

¹ These articles were published under the title *About Perak*, op. cit.

² H. Norman, *The Peoples and Politics of the Far East*, London 1907, pp. 64-68. John D. Ross in *The Capital of a Little Empire*, Singapore, 1898, p. 34, criticized Norman's suggestion of separating the Malay States from the Colony and placing it under a Resident-General directly under the Colonial Office. Ross stated that this would leave 'a certain official' (i.e. Swettenham), free to do exactly what he wanted for the Secretary of State would know nothing about these countries. 'It is easy to surmise' Ross continued, 'what may have been the matter with Mr. Norman when he wrote these particular pages of his book. He may, or may not have been lunching or dining with a gentleman of the name of Swettenham. He may, or may not have been "got at" by that master of Malayan politics.'

³ CO275/47 Clifford, *AR* Pahang 1893.

Events in 1894 and early 1895 also paved the way for the adoption of the federation proposals. Firstly, on 1 January 1895, the two separate administrative units of Sungai Ujong with Jelebu and Negri Sembilan, were combined into one to form the Negri Sembilan confederation of states under a single Resident. This facilitated its further amalgamation with the other states.¹ Secondly, events in Pahang during this period obliged the British authorities to fall back on federation as the only practical solution to the Pahang problem. At one stage, Mitchell, influenced by Maxwell, had actually proposed a withdrawal of British officers from certain districts.² But a few months later, renewed disturbances in Pahang caused the Governor to change his mind; any withdrawal would then have been interpreted by the Malays as a 'confession of weakness'.³ This meant that further loans had to be made by the rich states. Already towards the end of 1893, the Sultan of Perak's proffered financial assistance for Pahang had been accepted. And soon afterwards Selangor too became Pahang's creditor.

At the Colonial Office, Lucas took every opportunity to drive home the desirability of federation. On receiving the Governor's complaint of extravagance in Perak and Selangor, Lucas pointed out that it would be more economical to administer all the Protected States as one. Again, commenting on the anomalous position of British officers serving in the Protected States who were not servants of the Crown and yet expected pensions due to regular members of the Colonial Service, Lucas remarked that the sooner one service was established the sounder the position of such officers. He thoroughly approved of a proposal for the unification of the Sikh police under one Commandant as 'a step in the federation or union of the States which must come'. Repeatedly, Lucas stressed the inevitability of 'one British Protectorate of at least the southern part of the Malay Peninsula'.⁴

It was not long before the opponents of the federation scheme began to feel that they could not resist the pressure of circum-

¹ CO273/194 Mitchell to CO 9 April 1894.

² CO273/196 Mitchell to CO 12 June 1894.

³ CO273/198 Mitchell to CO 2 October 1894.

⁴ CO273/196 Minutes by Lucas on Mitchell to CO 12 June and 9 July 1894.

stances and official opinion. Fairfield sounded Maxwell on his preferences, if any, as regards promotion outside Malaya. The latter indicated his readiness to serve in Ceylon or even in Africa. 'There is such a thing' he told Fairfield, 'as knowing too much of things and people' and consequently, he was not 'very sorry' to leave the Straits.¹ Maxwell felt that Mitchell considered him prejudiced on Malay States' subjects. Indeed, the Governor once told Fairfield: 'Maxwell is a trump to work with and, when Swettenham is not the subject, he is a good counsellor, but where the other is concerned, neither of these men can give an unbiassed opinion . . . it is a great pity for they are two very able fellows.'² Malaya, it appeared, was big enough for only one of them. And so early in 1895 Maxwell accepted the Governorship of the Gold Coast.

Maxwell had spent almost thirty years of his life in various posts in the Malay States but mostly in the Colony. He had a reputation for 'devotion to work, fertility of resource and general sagacity'.³ Of his integrity there was never any doubt. His contributions to scholarship too were many. His publications included books, articles and notes on Malay history, literature, language and culture.⁴ Although his career resembled Swettenham's yet they differed significantly in temperament and character. One was a disciplinarian who set the highest standards for himself and took a poor view of human frailties in others. The other was less of an idealist; more willing to compromise; more tolerant of his fellow men. Whereas Maxwell was always outspoken and often caused offence, Swettenham seldom made an enemy. The latter seems to have been popular with the Malays as with British officials. Maxwell, however, in the opinion of Hugh Low, was 'a little rough and hasty in his ways with natives'.⁵ Nevertheless, both were dogmatic, liked to run a 'one man' concern and therefore could not work well with the other.

¹ CO537/48 Maxwell to Fairfield, private, 9 July 1894.

² CO273/189 Mitchell to Fairfield 18 June 1894.

³ CO273/198 Mitchell to CO 6 November 1894.

⁴ E.g., sections by W.E. Maxwell in the *JSBRAS*; *The Laws and Customs of the Malays with Reference to Land Tenure*, Singapore, 1885; *A Manual of Malay Language*, London, 1882.

⁵ E. Sadka, ed., 'The Journal of Sir Hugh Low, Perak, 1877', *JMBRAS* vol. xxvii, part 4, November 1954, p. 63.

In accepting promotion outside Malaya, Maxwell¹ left the field clear for a federation or union of the Malay States along the lines desired by Swettenham. Nevertheless, he was asked by the Colonial Office to submit his views on the 'Native States' Confederation' before proceeding to the Gold Coast. It was a polite gesture more than anything else. In any case, Maxwell presented his ideas on the subject in a memorandum. While admitting that this memorandum was 'interesting and valuable', Lucas and Buxton rejected the idea of annexation as dangerous and injudicious. Even if annexation were desirable, Lucas doubted whether it could be safely carried out except 'through some intermediate stage'.² Besides, he did not think that centralization at Singapore would improve the administration of the Protected States. Kuala Lumpur, for geographical and political reasons, was considered to be a more natural location for their central government and within easier reach of the Protected States, communications being what they were at that time.³ Neither Meade nor Fairfield thought it necessary to comment further on the memorandum. They probably realized that it was now pointless as well as too late to do anything more.

Soon after Maxwell left Malaya, Mitchell addressed the Secretary of State on the subject of federation.⁴ In the course of fifteen months, he had visited all the different states, conferred with the Residents and consulted others whom he felt could

¹ In the Gold Coast, Maxwell was no less conscientious in the performance of his duties. In 1896 he was awarded a KCMG but the next year he became ill. A rebellion delayed his departure and when he finally did get away, it was too late; he died on the voyage home on 14 December 1897 and was buried at sea. The post of Colonial Secretary of the Straits Settlements was filled by James Swettenham, Auditor-General of Ceylon and brother of Frank Swettenham. Mitchell had asked for him as he needed someone with long Eastern experience and knowledge of finance. The fact that he was the brother of the Resident-General designate did not prejudice his selection as he was known to be somewhat of a 'dragon in point of public virtue'. See CO273/198 Mitchell to CO 6 November 1894, minutes on this despatch and the CO reply 11 January 1895.

² CO273/211 Minutes on Maxwell to CO 29 March 1895.

³ CO273/203 Lucas' minute 30 May 1895 and Buxton's marginal comment on Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895.

In fact when the new arrangements came into force the High Commissioner complained that questions requiring his decision took much too long to reach him in Singapore. See CO273/229 Mitchell to CO 4 June 1897.

⁴ CO273/203 Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895.

help him arrive at a sound conclusion. He rejected as impractical the idea which had found some favour in Singapore viz., that the Protected States should be combined with the Colony. He considered the interests of the two territories divergent and, in some respects, even antagonistic. Presumably he had in mind the fact that the Protected States were primary producing countries whose interests were not identical with those of the trading community in the Straits. Furthermore, the Governor feared that any attempt at union based on equality of status would prove abortive because of the differences in the political and social condition of the colony and the protectorates. Instead, Mitchell advocated a 'Federal Union of the Protected States' as soon as possible on the lines set forth in the Colonial Office memorandum which had been substantially endorsed by his predecessor, Cecil Smith. Mitchell agreed that the existing system was cumbrous, unsatisfactory, and might soon become unworkable owing to the rapid expansion of business in Perak and Selangor. Like Cecil Smith, he felt that the Governor had too many responsibilities; even the routine work alone was more than one man could be expected to perform satisfactorily in a tropical climate. He was convinced that the Governor could not be expected to reorganize the Protected States. For this, there had to be some centralizing power 'on the spot'. Such a central authority would also be able to deal more promptly with emergencies like the Pahang rising. There was moreover the overriding problem of finance. Under existing conditions, he was compelled to levy a system of 'benevolence' on the rich states which they granted somewhat grudgingly. If they were obliged by a federal bond to assist one another in time of need, then 'the necessary aid would doubtless be provided under the Treaty and with the approval of the federal council, for the common good'. Mitchell pressed for permission to despatch a mission to the several states. He considered Swettenham the only man who could be entrusted with the task of securing the Sultans' adherence to an agreement for the establishment of a 'Federal Union'. And since Swettenham was then suffering from a bout of ill-health, he was eager to proceed on leave as soon as he could be released.

The proposed Federal Agreement¹ which the Governor

¹ The draft containing the Secretary of State's alterations (e.g. his change

submitted to London for approval was apparently drawn up by Swettenham.¹ It consisted of six short articles. The first confirmed previous engagements between the four Protected States (Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang) and the British Government; the Sultans and their chiefs formally admitting that they 'severally placed themselves and their States under the protection of the British Government'. According to the second article, the Malay Rulers agreed to constitute their countries into a confederation, to be known as the Protected Malay States. The third article came from the treaty of July 1889 whereby several of the Negri Sembilan districts, excluding Sungai Ujong and Jelebu, had coalesced to form the Negri Sembilan confederation. It said that no Ruler or chief was to exercise any power or authority over any other state other than his own. The fourth and most important article provided for a Resident-General, the 'agent and representative of the British Government under the Governor of the Straits Settlements', whose advice the Sultans promised to follow 'in all matters of administration other than those touching the Mohammedan religion' in addition to their similar obligations to the Residents. The next clause gave the necessary sanction for the application of funds as well as for military and other assistance from the richer to the poorer States as advised by the British Government. Moreover, it provided for military assistance from the Protected States to the Colony in the event of war. The Agreement concluded with an enigmatic statement that nothing was intended to curtail any of the powers and authority then held by any of the Rulers in their respective States, nor alter the relations between them and the British Empire.²

of 'confederation' to 'federation') is enclosed in CO273/201 Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895. The Malay version with the *chops* of the several Sultans and chiefs as well as Mitchell's signature and Swettenham's may be found in CO273/205.

¹ F.A. Swettenham, *Footprints in Malaya*, London, 1942, p. 107. When Roland Braddell criticized the Federal Agreement in his pamphlet *The Legal Status of the Malay States*, Singapore, 1931, Swettenham replied in an article in *British Malaya*, vol. 6, January 1932, in which he made this statement: 'May I, as the person whose business it was to draft the form of treaty, to take it to each of the signatories, to explain its meaning, and to get their signatures, say that the intention was not what Braddell supposes.'

² For the text, refer to W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924; R. Emerson,

Some stipulations in this agreement merely tidied up Britain's status *de jure*. Hitherto, the Residential system in Perak and the Negri Sembilan had rested on treaties but in Selangor and Pahang it was based on nothing more than letters of invitation and acceptance from the Malay Rulers. The opportunity was therefore taken to define more clearly the relations between them and the British Government in the first clause. Similarly, the provision for military assistance from the Protected States to the Colony in time of war, was a formal recognition of a decision made as early as 1889 that the Perak Sikhs were to form an integral part of the garrison at Singapore, thus enabling the peace garrison in the Colony to be maintained at a lower strength than would otherwise be necessary.¹ The legal sanction required for the intended administrative reorganization was furnished by the fourth article. This may be difficult to reconcile with the statement contained in the last clause unless the latter was intended to reassure the Sultans of the retention of their personal privileges only² and referred to the theory rather than the practice of British rule, for by 1895 power had largely passed into British hands.³ It could also be argued that since these states were not annexed, their status *vis-à-vis* the British Government remained unchanged.

Together with the draft of the Federal Agreement, Mitchell submitted for Ripon's consideration a memorandum embodying his proposals for the 'Administrative Federation' of the four states.⁴ Though Ripon authorized Swettenham's mission to

Malaysia, New York, 1937, p. 137 describes it as a masterpiece of loose and casual drafting, while a Permanent Under-Secretary of State noted that it was 'in some respects contradictory'. See *Report of Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, on his Visit to Malaya—1932*, Cmd 4276 (1932–3), p. 6.

¹ CO273/163 C.O. to War Office 3 August 1889.

² CO273/188 Memo. for Mitchell's private information dated December 1893 and CO273/203 Mitchell's instructions to Swettenham.

³ The Colonial Office recognized that although the Resident was nominally an Adviser, every part of the administration of the 'Native State' was actually controlled by British officers, by the Governor of the Straits Settlements and, so far as he thought fit, by the Secretary of State. See CO273/194 Fairfield's minute 17 May 1894 and Wingfield's of the same date on Mitchell's despatch 3 April 1894; also CO273/198 Lucas' minute 21 December on Mitchell to CO 19 May 1894.

⁴ CO273/203 A Proposal for the Administrative Federation of the Pro-

secure the Sultans' adherence to the Agreement in a telegram dated 6 June 1895, he left the administrative scheme to be considered later in view of the general elections then pending and Swettenham's return to Britain on leave later in the year. As it turned out, the Liberals lost the election, and the Conservatives formed the new Government with Joseph Chamberlain assigned to the Colonial Office. Credit for the adoption of a policy of consolidation, nonetheless, belonged to Ripon and Buxton even though the *Daily Chronicle* ascribed it to Chamberlain. In giving Chamberlain credit for carrying through this and other matters which the former administration 'had in train' or almost completed, the *Daily Chronicle's* report provoked Buxton into writing a private note to Ripon in which he stated that the Federation of the Protected States had been a question over which they had both taken 'a great deal of trouble, moving cautiously and securely in the matter, and thanks to Mitchell's tact and loyalty, successfully carrying it through (except in the actual mechanical part) before Joe was born or thought of as Colonial Minister.'¹

tected States enclosed in Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895.

¹ Ripon Papers, Buxton to Ripon 14 December 1895. Ripon and Buxton had not only worked for the federation of the Protected Malay States but also for some form of Federal Union for South Africa. See Wolf, *op. cit.* vol. 11, pp. 222-3.

VII

THE FEDERATION OF THE PROTECTED STATES UNDER SWETTENHAM

Who originally conceived the scheme of federation adopted in 1896 may be open to question, but Swettenham was undoubtedly responsible for putting it into effect and guiding its development during the first eight years of its existence.

From his accounts, the Sultans of Perak, Selangor and Pahang and the chiefs of Negri Sembilan accepted the Federation Agreement without hesitation. Swettenham, acting on instructions from Governor Mitchell,¹ had pointed out to the Malay Rulers that in accepting the Agreement they would not 'in the slightest degree be diminishing the powers and privileges which they now possess nor be curtailing the right of self government which they at present enjoy'. Each state, he further assured them, would continue to pass its own laws. While separate state treasuries would be retained, the expense of carrying the scheme into effect would be divided among the states in shares proportionate to their revenue. He stressed that the object of the British in proposing a change in the *status quo* was the common good of the states as a whole. Among other advantages, Swettenham explained that they would be stronger and receive more consideration as a federation. He used an additional argument which was not contained in his instructions, viz., that in the Resident-General they would have a representative with greater authority than that of a single Resident or of all the Residents acting independently—a friend who 'could and would support their interests and plead their cause' against the authorities at Singapore.² Sultan Idris of Perak, the first to be approached,

¹ CO273/203 see enclosure in Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895.

² CO273/360 Swettenham to Crewe 3 June 1910; Sir Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya*, rev. ed., London, 1948, pp. 273-4.

signed the Agreement immediately. He was a 'warm friend' of Swettenham's. Moreover, the latter, as Resident of Perak, had just procured for him an increase in the Civil List, a new istana and a houseful of furniture from Maples. The Sultan of Selangor likewise promptly accepted the Agreement. But in matters of administration, he was a *quantité négligeable* and he was then in his nineties.¹ As for the chiefs of the insolvent states, they had more reason to welcome a scheme which promised increased financial assistance for themselves and their states. The Dato' Bandar of Sungai Ujong with the Dato' of Jebebu signed and sealed the document after half-an-hour's discussion with Swettenham. The Yam Tuan of Sri Menanti, the Dato's of Johol, Rembau and Tampin, returned the Agreement duly sealed within three hours. Only the Sultan of Pahang took longer to decide and asked for a clarification of certain points. Even here Swettenham accomplished his mission within four hours.²

None of the Malay Rulers had consulted their state councils before making these important decisions whereas in Malay times, according to Winstedt, the most arbitrary Sultan 'had at least made a pretence of consulting his chiefs'. The procedure adopted on this occasion, he observed, was typical of the British Government whose tendency was to assume that when the attainment of a good end was in question, the end justified the means.³ The speed with which the Rulers' consent was thus formally obtained is not only remarkable but also typical. Just as speed had been an element in Sir Andrew Clarke's success at Pangkor in 1874, it was also a factor in 1895 and similarly, fifty years later, in 1945 when Sir Harold MacMichael inaugurated the Malayan Union by hastily inflicting upon the Sultans a series of treaties which deprived them of their sovereignty.

The Governor attributed the success of Swettenham's mission to his personal influence with the Malay Rulers. Swettenham thereby confirmed the reputation he enjoyed at the Colonial Office of being 'far ahead of any other officer in the Peninsula as

¹ Sultan Abdul Samad died in 1897 at the age of 93.

² CO273/204 Swettenham's report on his mission to Pahang, 21 June 1895; CO273/205 Report on his visits to Selangor and Negri Sembilan, 28 July 1895.

³ Sir Richard Winstedt, *Malaya and its History*, London, 1948, pp. 88-89.

to dealing with and administering Malays'.¹ But Sir Andrew Clarke, who had negotiated the Pangkor Treaty of 1874, 'rocked with laughter' when he heard of Swettenham's mission during a visit to the Colonial Office. The Sultans, in his opinion, invariably accepted whatever the British required of them.² Although there had been a time when such was indeed not the case, the Malay Rulers now undoubtedly recognized that their own comfort and incomes as well as those of their children and relatives, depended largely on the goodwill of the British. Unless a Ruler felt strongly on any issue or had reason to suspect that his Resident sympathized with his views—but this hardly ever occurred except in Perak—he probably considered it more politic to concur in the proposals pressed on him by the British Government. Subsequent events were to show that the Malay Rulers did not grasp the significance of the concept of a 'Federation'.³ Nobody explained to them the likely effect of centralization under the Resident-General and federal officers on the individuality of the several states and the authority of state officials. If anything, the assurances they received from Swettenham led them to believe that the anticipated advantages of the new scheme of things could be obtained without corresponding sacrifices. At any rate their formal assent, thus secured, enabled the British to proceed with the task of organizing, in gradual stages, a centralized government for the four states.

It is neither necessary to apply to the treaty the criterion of federation, viz., 'a division of powers between the general and regional authorities, each of which, in its own sphere is co-ordinate with the others and independent of them',⁴ nor to look for the three elements of organization common to all genuine federations: an assembly of representatives of constituent members; a common executive to carry out its decisions and an arbitral or

¹ CO273/203 Minute by Lucas 30 May 1895; C.N. Parkinson, *British Intervention in Malaya 1867-1877*, Singapore, 1960, p. 182.

² CO273/203 Fairfield's minute 16 November 1895.

³ In 1903 Sultan Idris of Perak declared at a Durbar that he could not understand the working of the Federation and protested against the encroachment of the Federal authorities. In 1906 he told his Resident that the practical effects of Federation had violated the verbal assurances given him by Swettenham in 1895. See CO273/320 Anderson to CO with enclosures and minutes 10 February 1906.

⁴ K.C. Wheare, *Federal Government*, London, 1953, pp. 13-14.

judicial body interpreting the charter in its bearings upon the relation between particular members of the federation and the federation itself.¹ British officials did not seem too particular in their choice of terms. 'Federation', 'confederation' and 'union' were often used interchangeably in the Colonial Office minutes and memoranda. The men on the spot too referred in their statements and despatches to 'confederation', 'federation', a 'Federal Union' and an 'Administrative Union'. It may be noted that in the original draft which Mitchell submitted to the Colonial Office, clause 2 stated that the Rulers and chiefs of the respective states agreed 'to constitute their countries a Confederation, to be known as the Protected Malay States . . .' while by clause 5, they further agreed to 'give those States in the federacy which require it such assistance in men, money, or other respects as the British Government . . . may advise . . .' The Secretary of State, then Lord Ripon, altered 'Federacy' into 'Federation'. 'There is no such word as Federacy', he wrote in a minute,² and so 'Federation' was substituted in both places. But neither Ripon nor any member of his staff noticed that this made another change necessary. 'Protected Malay States' in clause 2 should have read 'Federated Malay States'. In practice, Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan, came to be known as the latter or the FMS for short. One should also remember, perhaps, that the signatories of the so-called Treaty of Federation or Federal Agreement lacked the administrative experience and education necessary to criticize the wording of documents submitted for their acceptance, not to mention the problems of translation from English into Malay. Furthermore it would seem that the British accepted 'federation' simply as a convenient description of a transitional stage in the constitutional development of these states. The treaty was merely to give legality to innovations designed to secure greater 'uniformity, efficiency and economy'—oft repeated words in the official papers on the experiment launched in 1896. As such, the particular terms used to describe the status of the states and their form of government probably mattered less than the power it conferred on the British to reorganize the administration. And

¹ C. J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy*, rev. ed., Boston, 1950, Chapter IX, *passim*.

² CO273/203 Ripon's minute 4 June 1895 on Mitchell to CO 1 May 1895.

this was secured by clause 4 whereby the Rulers promised to follow the advice, in all matters of administration, of a Resident-General in addition to their similar obligations towards the Residents.¹

A Legal Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office was to observe later that the FMS formed an 'extraordinarily anomalous federation' which possessed no sovereignty either internal or external. Internal sovereignty continued to reside in the Sultan of each component state (subject to British 'advice' which he could not disregard) while external sovereignty similarly lay with the Malay Rulers (subject to the protection of Britain).² This so-called Federation together with the Residential system in which advice took the form of control, gave Malaya the reputation of being a 'country of anomalies'. But the British were not concerned with the theoretical objections which constitutional lawyers might raise so long as their modes of control succeeded in creating conditions favourable to economic development without arousing Malay hostility.

By the time news of Swettenham's successful mission reached London, Ripon and Buxton, as mentioned above, were out of office. In December 1895 the new Secretary of State, Joseph Chamberlain, approved what had been done and, subject to minor modifications, accepted Mitchell's 'Proposal for the Administrative Federation of the Protected Malay States' which had been submitted to but not considered by his predecessor.³ It explained the administrative aspect of the Federation just as the Agreement of 1895 provided the 'political instrument' for its attainment. It defined in general terms the structure of government, the powers of the High Commissioner (the new title given to the Governor *vis-à-vis* the Malay States), the Resident-General, Residents, Federal officers and their relations with each other.

A main feature of the scheme was the supremacy of the Resident-General in the FMS. He was expected to travel exten-

¹ At the second Conference of FMS chiefs in 1903, Swettenham (the High Commissioner) stated that the Federation Agreement 'went far ahead of all previous agreements by recognising the control of the British Government over the destinies of the four States'.

² CO273/349 J.S. Risley's minute on Anderson to CO 8 February 1909.

³ CO273/203 Chamberlain to Mitchell 27 December 1895.

sively, to keep in touch with the Malay Rulers, the Residents, and all matters of administration; to have foresight enough to initiate works and a policy which would serve the Federation as a whole. Instead of the Colonial Secretary in Singapore, he was to act as the channel of communication between the Residents and the Governor. Residents were to take their instructions from him but could appeal through him to the High Commissioner though pending the result of their appeal they were to act on his orders. The wide powers of direction conferred on the Resident-General, however, were to be exercised through the Residents whenever possible. Such Federal officers whose appointment was suggested by Mitchell, viz., the Judicial Commissioner, Attorney-General, Commandant of the Malay States Sikhs, the Commissioner of Lands and Mines, the Commissioner of Posts and Telegraphs, etc. were all to communicate direct with the Resident-General and be responsible to him for identity of practice in their own departments in all the states. But they were not to issue directives contrary to the ruling of the local Resident. The scheme also set out in some detail the Resident-General's and Residents' powers regarding subordinate appointments, dismissals, promotions, the granting of leave, transfers from one vote to another and expenditure not included in the estimates.¹

The Resident-General was thus to be the Chief Executive Officer in the FMS subject only to the High Commissioner whose sanction he had to obtain for drafts of proposed legislation, estimates, certain classes of appointments and expenditure exceeding \$5,000. The Resident-General and all the Residents had also to submit annual reports to the High Commissioner for transmission to the Colonial Office.

State councils, in Mitchell's scheme, were to continue for some time as legislative and advisory bodies without control over public expenditure. Moreover separate state treasuries, as

¹ On other subjects the Administrative Scheme did not spell out fully the respective powers of the Resident-General and High Commissioner. For example, on land policy, whether the former or the latter had the last word depended on the incumbents. When W.H. Treacher acted as Resident-General and subsequently as the substantive holder of this post, he often referred to the High Commissioner for instructions. Swettenham, in contrast, asserted his right to deal with such matters himself without obtaining the High Commissioner's sanction, as we shall see later on.

the Sultans had been told, were to be maintained. Each state was to collect and spend its own revenues after paying its share of the salaries of Federal officers and any charge that properly belonged to all the states. These charges were to be divided among them in proportion to their revenue. Advances made from one state to another were to be classified as loans to be repaid according to terms mutually agreed upon. The creation of a common purse, Governor Mitchell felt, should not be rushed. He further proposed an annual meeting of all the Rulers, Residents, the members of the state councils and the Resident-General under the Presidency of the High Commissioner. It was to be held each year in a different state if possible. Commenting on this in his covering despatch, Mitchell wrote:

My idea is that, at any rate in the first instance, the Federal Council should have somewhat the character of the *Bose-Vaka-Tukaga* of Fiji or of the *Pitso* of Basutoland, that is, that it should be a consultative and advisory body composed of all those who are at present summoned to each State Council. I think that it should be formally opened by the Governor, with a speech giving an account of the condition of the Federation and detailing the subjects on which he desired to seek the advice of the Federal Council. These subjects should be carefully considered and settled before hand, and the different State Councils should have an opportunity of proposing points for reference to the Federal Council.

It would, of course, be impossible for the Governor to remain during the whole session, and in his absence, the Resident-General should, I think, be his deputy.

The meeting of the Federal Council should be attended with as much pomp and circumstance as possible. It should draw up at the meeting its own rules for the conduct of business, and no effort should be spared to show the Malay Rulers that the Federal bond would not have the effect of lowering the dignity and prestige which now attaches to each Sultan and Chief.

In accepting these proposals, the Colonial Office observed that 'the growth of federation may well be gradual and any attempt to prematurely hurry a closer union would probably invite suspicion and mistrust'. Nevertheless, in the minutes, Lucas expressed the hope that the four Malay States would eventually coalesce to form separate districts of one British Protectorate, with a uniform system of administration, a common treasury and a single legislature. As he explained to Chamber-

lain, 'At present there will be a Resident-General and four Residents. I hope in a few years time we may come to a Resident in Chief and possibly not more than 3 Assistant Residents; for when new men hereafter come to these posts I would give them no higher titles than Assistant Resident or even Government Agents, bringing the present separate states as nearly as may be, without offending native prejudices, to the level of districts of the same State.'¹ Ceylon, about equal in size to the FMS, was the model he had in mind.² Lucas added that if the annual meeting of all the Sultans, their State Councils, the Resident-General and the High Commissioner were 'properly handled', it should gradually supersede the separate State Councils as a legislative body. Since no one in the Colonial Office, either under Ripon or Chamberlain, expressed their disagreement, we may conclude that their intention was to encourage the four states to develop along unitary lines. The Federation Agreement, the appointment of a Resident-General and other chief officers were regarded as the first experimental steps towards this ultimate objective with the proviso that such a trend of development would not offend the Malay Rulers.

Swettenham was appointed Resident-General and entrusted with the task of organizing the Federation. It was stated in his letter of appointment that he could communicate freely with the Governor as well as with the Eastern Department of the Colonial Office i.e., with Lucas. In addition to the duties specified in Mitchell's Administrative Scheme, he was to create, by degrees, one civil service for the four states and draw up a scheme of grading and classifying appointments along the lines of the Civil Services of the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong and Ceylon. He was once more reminded that the aim of the new policy was to improve the administration and thus promote economic development and 'native welfare'. That the two objectives could be pursued simultaneously and without any conflict was assumed; similarly with British and 'native' interests.

Mr. Chamberlain trusts that under your experienced guidance

¹ CO273/203 Lucas' memo. for Chamberlain 8 November 1895.

² Ibid. Minute of 30 May 1895 for Ripon. The FMS covered an area of 26,300 square miles whereas Ceylon was about as large with an area of 25,365 square miles.

the new system will promote the welfare of the inhabitants and develop the resources of the respective states. His wish is that the native rulers shall be treated with all consideration and be invited to cooperate in every way in the work of administration, and he is inclined to lay special stress upon the desirability of extending roads and railways on one uniform system with a view to promoting both British and native interests in the Malay Peninsula.¹

On 1 July 1896 the Federation was formally inaugurated with Kuala Lumpur as the seat of the central authorities. To begin with only two new appointments were made, viz., that of T.H. Kershaw as Legal Adviser and L.C. Jackson as Judicial Commissioner. The other Heads of proposed Federal Departments were drawn from officers already in the service. Col. R.S.F. Walker of the Perak Sikhs became the Commandant of the new regiment of Malay States Guides; H.C. Belfield, Chief Magistrate in Selangor, was promoted to the new post of Commissioner of Lands and Mines. Similarly, G.T. Hare of the Straits Civil Service was made Secretary for Chinese Affairs. Later on a Federal Inspector of Schools, a Head of Posts and a Chief Forest Officer, an Accountant-General and Auditor, a Director of Public Works and other Federal Heads of Departments were added to the Secretariat at the apex of which stood the Resident-General.²

Swettenham remained as Resident-General of the FMS from 1896 to 1900. When the new arrangement first came into effect, he and the High Commissioner were frequently at loggerheads.³ Swettenham nearly always wanted his own way; and Mitchell was irritated not only by the Resident-General's unwillingness to consider 'a decision that differs from his own opinion as final'⁴ but at being confronted with *fait accompli*.⁵ Yielding now

¹ Ibid. CO to Swettenham 27 December 1895.

² See Reports on the FMS 1896-1902 in PP C.9108 (1898), C.9524 (1899), etc.

³ The Federal Records (hereafter cited as Fed. Rec.) in the Arkib Negara Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, which contain the internal correspondence between the Resident-General's office and that of the High Commissioner, are useful on the relations between Mitchell and Swettenham.

⁴ Fed. Rec. Mitchell's minute 3 October 1897 on RG to HC 30 September 1897. Although Col. R.S.F. Walker, Commandant of the Malay States Guides, was the object of this remark, there is no doubt that Mitchell considered it equally applicable to Swettenham.

⁵ See e.g., Fed. Rec. 1010/97 Acting RG to HC 24 November 1897 on the

and then to Mitchell in minor matters,¹ Swettenham fought tenaciously for his own viewpoint on large issues like land and railway policy. Supported by the Residents, Swettenham often won the ear of the Colonial Office as well so that on most of the questions where he disagreed with the High Commissioner, the latter found that he had to back down. Two instances of Mitchell's defeat may be given. One concerned his ruling that land within specified areas in Selangor should be disposed of by auction. Dissatisfied with this decision which he felt would discourage private enterprise and hamper Selangor's development, Swettenham submitted to the High Commissioner a request from H. Huttenbach of the Selangor Plantations Syndicate Ltd. for 320 acres of land near Batu Tiga in a district reserved for auction, with the recommendation that the grant should be made on the 'usual terms' in force in Selangor. A vigorous exchange of minutes followed with Mitchell refusing to sanction a departure from his recent ruling. Swettenham took umbrage because he thought that Mitchell was accusing him of interfering with the High Commissioner's prerogatives. Mitchell retorted: 'I never dreamt of imputing to you any interference (save by advice) in the exercise of my prerogative.' Nonetheless he considered it unfortunate that Huttenbach should look to the Resident-General to change the plan that the High Commissioner had sanctioned. To settle the dispute, Mitchell convened a meeting of the Residents at Kuala Lumpur on 21 September 1896 where he found himself in the minority of one. Therefore, it was agreed that henceforth auction areas should be left to the Residents subject to the approval of the Resident-General.² The second major defeat for Mitchell occurred in May 1897³ when the Secretary of State reversed an earlier decision of 21 November 1896 in favour of Mitchell's cautious policy of extending the railway system in the FMS only when surplus balances were available instead of Swettenham's enterprising

appointment of Guthrie and Co. as Commercial Agents in London for the FMS on which Mitchell wrote: 'This correspondence should not have taken place without previous reference to me.'

¹ Ibid. 204/96 Minutes on RG to HC 3 August 1896.

² Ibid. 130/96 RG to HC 18 July 1896, minutes and enclosures.

³ See CO273/228 Mitchell to CO 18 January 1897, minutes on this paper and the Secretary of State's reply 27 May 1897.

scheme of raising a loan of £500,000 for such extensions. That Swettenham succeeded in circumventing the High Commissioner's opposition on this as on other occasions throws light on his persistence as well as the usefulness of his close friendship with Lucas who could advise him of favourable circumstances within the Colonial Office.¹

After 1897 Mitchell seemed to have tired of trying to maintain an effective control over Swettenham. At sixty-two, compared to the latter's forty-eight years of age, Mitchell had neither the Resident-General's energy nor his ambition to be 'chief boss in everything'.² He went on leave at the end of 1898 and not long after his return to Singapore, passed away on 7 September 1899.

During the years 1896 to 1899 therefore Swettenham enjoyed a substantial degree of independence in the conduct of FMS affairs. The High Commissioner's supervision and control tended to be less effective in practice than in theory. The Resident-General claimed that he tried to give Mitchell 'as little to do as possible'³ and proved adept at getting his views adopted. In the FMS too there was neither an executive nor a legislative council to restrict Swettenham's exercise of authority. And the Residents seemed to have toed his line.

The situation remained much the same when J.A. Swettenham administered the government after Mitchell's death. It is true that James Swettenham, reputed to be 'something of a

¹ When Swettenham first submitted his proposal for a loan for railway extensions in order to connect the existing scattered sections in 1896, Chamberlain had 'reluctantly' come to the conclusion that the time had not arrived for such a scheme as a result of objections from Mitchell, Fairfield and Meade. Undeterred, Swettenham asked that his views be transmitted again to the Secretary of State early in 1897 probably because he had heard from Lucas, who favoured the Swettenham plan from the outset, that the official replacing Meade as Permanent Under-Secretary, i.e. Ommanney, saw the force of Swettenham's arguments.

Lucas might also have intimated to Swettenham that Chamberlain could easily be persuaded to change his mind. After all the Secretary of State had a firm belief 'in making railways when there is any prospect of paying traffic...' and was prepared 'to sanction a loan and to push on *all* promising railways as fast as possible'.

Moreover Swettenham often visited the Colonial Office during his leave to put his views on this or that matter to Lucas or Ommanney.

² CO273/229 Wingfield's minute 23 October 1897 on Mitchell to CO 15 September 1897.

³ CO273/284 Swettenham to CO 7 December 1902.

dragon in point of public virtue',¹ made scathing criticisms of defalcations and other defects in the FMS which came to light. He played no positive role however in shaping developments there. For just as Frank Swettenham had countermanded Mitchell's instructions from time to time² so did he set aside those of his brother's recommendations which he found inconvenient. Particularly on the question of land alienation, J.A. Swettenham resembled Mitchell in thinking the Residents and Resident-General over-eager to permit grants of vast areas on terms too favourable to concessionaires. The FMS, in his opinion, could well afford to wait for better offers. When a European planter from Ceylon applied for the lease of an island opposite Jugra on the Selangor coast, J.A. Swettenham, as Acting High Commissioner, objected to the original proposal and stipulated the conditions on which he would be prepared to consider it more favourably. But about nineteen months later J.A. Swettenham was asked by his brother who had then returned from leave, 'to consent to the terms which Mr. Rodger, Mr. Belfield and I strongly recommend'. Annoyed, the Acting High Commissioner protested that he had been 'badly treated' in the matter as his instructions had been ignored. The Resident-General subsequently maintained that he had a 'more intimate and longer knowledge of these States than anyone else', thus practically asserting that his view ought to be accepted. He added that in any case there had been no need for Treacher, the Acting Resident-General, to have referred the application to Singapore; 'I should not have done so. The Resident-General was intended to deal with all matters concerning lands and mines'. J.A. Swettenham retorted: 'If you are correct in your statement . . . you may grant the concession, but *without* my approval'.³ Again, the Resident-General got his own way.⁴

The Resident-General's position became what Sir John Anderson, High Commissioner from 1904 to 1911, has thus described:

¹ CO273/198 minutes on Mitchell to CO 6 November 1894.

² E.g., see Fed. Rec. 1452/1900 Acting RG to HC 14 October 1900 and minutes on it.

³ Fed. Rec. 327/1900 RG to HC 9 March 1900 and minutes on it.

⁴ For other examples, refer Fed. Rec. 1720/1900 Acting RG to Acting HC 20 September 1900; 134/1901 RG to Acting HC 21 January 1901.

It was considered that the Resident-General should relieve the High Commissioner of many matters of routine to an even greater extent than the Colonial Secretary relieves the Governor in an ordinary Colonial Administration. But I am afraid that the position rapidly changed and that the Resident-General instead of being, what I may call, the mouth piece of the High Commissioner, more or less combined the duties of both . . . and at the same time, he had to such a very large extent power to overrule the Residents that he became practically the final authority to all intents and purposes.¹

What contributed to Swettenham's power was the backing he frequently received from the Colonial Office. With Robert Meade's retirement in 1896 and Fairfield's death the following year, the new Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Montague Ommanney, and the rest of the permanent staff showed complete confidence in Swettenham's direction of affairs. The Resident-General's views on the pace of colonial expansion and development also coincided happily with those of Chamberlain's. Chamberlain's acceptance of Swettenham's railway policy in preference to Mitchell's has been mentioned already. Similarly, the Secretary of State favoured the Resident-General's more liberal proposals for the alienation of land to Europeans since Britain's object was 'to promote the agricultural wealth of the Peninsula and to stimulate and multiply its products'.² Indeed the Colonial Office noted with satisfaction the record of achievements contained in the annual reports, appreciated Swettenham's 'energy and go', and valued his services so highly that when his resignation on grounds of health appeared possible at one stage, Chamberlain expressed his personal regret, declaring that he had looked forward to Swettenham's future employment in the Colonial Department 'in high posts'.³

If the Federation with Swettenham at the helm gradually achieved the desired uniformity of administration in the main departments, in some respects it failed to develop along the lines originally envisaged. On the question of finance, Swetten-

¹ CO576/5 Anderson's speech in the Federal Council on 2 November 1910.

² CO273/223 CO to Swettenham 7 February 1896.

³ CO273/245 Chamberlain's minute on Swettenham's letter to the CO 10 February 1898.

ham was just as eager as Lucas to further the union of the four states by introducing a common purse. 'The natural sequence of administrative union' he wrote in his report for 1897, 'would be a common purse, the abolition of interstate loans, interest, accounts, and the appropriation of Federal balances for the construction of works for the general benefit of the Federation, without reference to the amount of revenue raised in any particular State during any given financial year.' Such a scheme would not only simplify accounts, he said, but the most advanced states would, in a few years' time, gain by what for the moment looked like a policy of self-denial. But the High Commissioner considered it too early to introduce such a step which, in his opinion, was bound to give rise to heart-burnings and jealousies not to mention the fact that it would have been a breach of faith with the Rulers who had accepted the treaty of Federation on the understanding that separate state treasuries were to be maintained. In spite of this, Swettenham cherished a 'secret hope' to carry it out soon. When he was in London on leave in 1898 he discussed the matter with the Colonial Office and on his return to Perak sounded Sultan Idris about amalgamating state revenues. Swettenham's powers of persuasion on this occasion failed to move Sultan Idris who raised 'insuperable objections' to a fiscal union. Such action, he stated, would violate the Federal treaty. So the Resident-General could do no more than mention in his report for 1898 that although a common purse was eminently desirable it could not be pressed.¹ However, at a Residents' Conference early in 1902, resolutions were passed which were intended to pave the way for the ultimate adoption of the principle of a common purse.² One resolution waived the payment of interest on loans made by any state in the Federation to another. A second cancelled the accumulated interest on loans to Pahang³

¹ See CO576/1 AR FMS 1896-1901; CO273/229 Mitchell to CO 4 June 1897 and the CO reply 19 August 1897; CO273/245 Swettenham to Johnston, private, 17 January 1898; CO 273/251 James Swettenham, Acting HC to CO 12 July 1899.

² RG's report for 1901, PP Cd. 1297 (1902).

³ In January 1901, Pahang's liabilities exceeded its assets by \$3,566,237. During the year it borrowed a further sum of \$100,000 from Perak and Selangor because while the revenue collected was \$438,558, its expenditure stood at \$696,842.

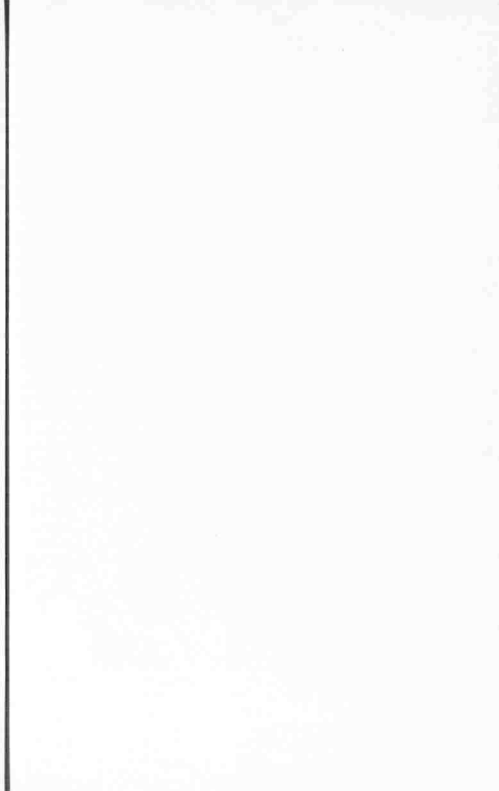




PLATE II *Group at the first F.M.S. Durbar held at Istana Negara in Kuala Kangsar from 14-17th July, 1897.*

Seated (L to R): Hugh Clifford (Resident, Pahang); J.P. Rodger (Resident, Selangor); Sir Frank Swettenham (Resident-General); Sultan Ahmad of Pahang; Sultan Abdul Samad of Selangor; Sir C.B.H. Mitchell (Governor of S.S. and High Commissioner for F.M.S.); Sultan Idris of Perak; Yam Tuan Tuanku Muhammad of Negri Sembilan; and W.H. Treacher (Resident, Perak). Standing immediately behind Sultan Abdul Samad is Raja Muda Suleiman b. Raja Musa, who later became Sultan Suleiman of Selangor.

—the loss being borne by Perak and Selangor in equal shares. Presumably the Sultan of Perak was consulted but did not object. At that time he was looking forward to a trip to Britain to represent the FMS at the Coronation of Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. He left for Europe in April 1902. Nonetheless, as no further steps were taken towards a common purse in the period under consideration we may conclude that this was as far as the Sultans of the rich states were prepared to go. And since it was an underlying principle of British policy laid down when the idea of federation was put forward in 1893 that nothing must be done to wound unduly the susceptibilities of the Malay Rulers, British hopes for a common purse for the FMS could not be realized.

Aside from a common purse, we have noted that the formation of a central legislature for the FMS was another major objective of the Colonial Office. In accordance with Mitchell's scheme and to demonstrate to the Malay Rulers the 'reality of Federation', a conference was held in 1897 at Kuala Kangsar, the seat of the Sultan of Perak. The Malay Rulers and many chiefs attended and participated in discussions on matters concerning the Muslim religion as well as other questions specifically affecting Malay interests. Reporting on its proceedings, Swettenham said:

From every point of view the meeting has been an unqualified success, and it is difficult to estimate now the present and prospective value of this unprecedented gathering of Malay Sultans, Rajas, and chiefs. Never in the history of Malaya has any such assemblage been even imagined. . . . The most important result of this meeting is that it has brought home the reality of Federation to the Malays of the four States, and aroused, as nothing else could have done, an interest in the general weal of a Confederation that binds the Chiefs in a union of mutual interest and personal friendship.¹

Beyond increasing the general stock of goodwill, the Conference of Rulers or Durbar had little administrative importance. It was strictly an advisory body: as Swettenham stated 'Nothing can be decided at the Conference for no Raja has any voice in the affairs of any state but his own.' The subjects considered were also limited and even then, these discussions formed only one item in a programme crowded with fish-drives, water

¹ CO273/229 RG's report on the Durbar of Rulers in July 1897; see also CO *Eastern Pamphlets* 24A.

sports, amateur theatricals, picnics at waterfalls, displays of fireworks and other forms of entertainment. It is significant that after this demonstration to the Malay Rulers of the 'reality of federation' no other conference was held for the next six years.

The Resident-General did not think it advisable to hold such meetings annually and claimed that his opinion was shared by most of those principally concerned. Therefore, it was decided that similar gatherings would be convened at such dates and in such places as might be fixed by the Resident-General with the High Commissioner's approval. For the rest of the period during which Swettenham was executive head of the Federation, no other Durbar was organized. It may be argued that Swettenham was not anxious to create the federal council envisaged by the Colonial Office as he wished to retain his independent position. Apart from his well-known inclination for autocratic rule, he may also have felt that the administrative reorganization and economic development of the FMS could be pushed on more rapidly and efficiently if he were thus able to continue making personal decisions and issuing immediate instructions.¹ Furthermore, a real obstacle to frequent conferences of this nature lay in the difficulty of communications. In addition, on grounds of expense and the work involved in making arrangements for transport, accomodation and entertainment satisfactory to all the royal participants,² such conferences may not have been

¹ M. Elphinstone, when Governor of Bombay, expressed his dislike for the methods of government by Council in words which Swettenham would probably have endorsed. 'It is however a gt. annoyance' he wrote in 1819 'to a person who is used . . . to have his word law and to have nobody to satisfy of the propriety of a measure but himself, to be obliged to explain his motives to a Council . . . 9 times out of ten one can settle a question without exactly stating the reasons even to oneself. And on the Council plan you are not only obliged to state your reasons but sometimes to enter into long arguments about matters not worth the pains of saying two words about.' See K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830*, London, 1957, p. 138.

² At the second Durbar or 'Federal Conference' held in 1903 a few months before Swettenham's departure—for good—from Malaya, four separate villages had to be built for the occasion in the Public Gardens at Kuala Lumpur to accommodate the four Rulers with the majority of their state councillors and numerous followers. Besides, a large hall had to be specially erected for the four day conference. The expense and the organization involved may well be imagined. A committee of ten officials was responsible for the arrangements.

considered worthwhile. Above all, Swettenham and his colleagues found that they were able to proceed with their various tasks without a meeting of all the Rulers and their state councils.

Instead, it became a custom for the Resident-General to meet all the Residents together with such Heads of Federal Departments as he desired, once or twice a year, to consider and reach agreement on matters common to all four states. At these meetings, controversial questions were not merely discussed but decisions actually taken and carried out. The first Residents' Conference held in 1896 adopted a Land Code for all the FMS and subsequently, a Mining Code was agreed upon. 'These periodical Conferences' remarked W. H. Treacher, the Resident-General in 1903, 'are of great utility, allowing for full discussion of important matters and the free exchange of views by the Residents, in the presence of the Resident-General, the attendance of officers with special knowledge of any particular subject set down for discussion being arranged for. They form a sort of Consultative Council to the Resident-General. . . .'¹ From the viewpoint of governing the country and fostering economic development, Durbars, unlike the Residents' Conferences, were not considered essential. Thus Swettenham failed to apply himself to the task of organizing a federal legislature although he knew that the Colonial Office desired the formation of such a body.

The Resident-General concerned himself mainly with carrying out those instructions from the Colonial Office which specially appealed to him. In approving the federation scheme, as we have previously mentioned, Chamberlain had emphasized the desirability of further developing the Malay States and constructing roads and railways to facilitate the opening up of these valuable territories. To this Swettenham gave his enthusiastic attention. What he wrote in his first report sounded the keynote of his administration: 'We cannot afford to sit still. The country is, to a great extent, an unpopulated jungle; money must be spent in developing its resources and men of energy—miners, planters, traders, and Government servants—must be encouraged to drive the work along. . . .'²

¹ RG's report for 1903, Cd. 2243 (1904).

² CO576/1 Resident General's report for 1896; also found in C.8661, (1896).

Chinese and particularly European enterprise received every encouragement from the Resident-General. Hitherto the greater part of the work of development had been done by the Chinese; Swettenham deplored the lack of British interest in the Malay States¹ and therefore did all he could to attract European investment in mining, planting and building. Large areas of land were granted to prospective planters on favourable terms, loans were advanced to agriculturists, roads were constructed, banks established, and a more efficient system of justice introduced. In the closing years of the century, the rubber industry was established under the double stimuli of a falling price of coffee and the rising demand for rubber. British planters turned from the cultivation of coffee to rubber, which was to provide Malaya with its second great industry apart from tin-mining. To meet the increase in economic activity, Chinese and Indian immigrants poured into the Federated Malay States. 'As we rely mainly on the Chinese to contribute to our revenue, carry out our public works, and to work our mines' Swettenham said, 'it is of the extremest importance that the supply should continue in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of the country.'²

To extend facilities for further development soon after the new administrative arrangements had got underway, Swettenham urged the rapid construction of a trunk line of railway from Negri Sembilan to Province Wellesley, to link up the existing isolated sections in Perak, Selangor and Sungai Ujong. A hundred and fifty miles of railways had already been constructed in the three western states out of current revenues over a period of fifteen years, but Swettenham considered this a 'pitifully slow' rate of progress and pressed for a loan of £500,000 for railway construction, an equivalent sum being found out of current revenues.³ The High Commissioner, Sir Charles Mitchell, with his usual caution, discouraged the idea. We have seen, however, that as a result of forcible arguments for 'early

¹ CO273/245 Swettenham to CO, 13 March 1898.

² CO576/1 RG's report for 1896.

³ CO273/223 Swettenham to Chamberlain 17 February 1896 enclosing two memoranda on Railway Construction in the FMS with maps; refer also to his despatch of 22 April 1896. FMS revenues, however, increased so rapidly that the loan was not needed.

action' from Swettenham, endorsed by Lucas and Sir Montague Ommanney, who had replaced Sir Robert Meade as Permanent Under-Secretary, Chamberlain sanctioned a loan to be raised by the FMS. So from 1898 these states embarked on an extensive programme of railway construction which many British officers hoped would one day connect Singapore with Burma and India.¹ By 1903, 350 miles of railways had been completed. There was continuous railway communication from Province Wellesley in the north down through Perak and Selangor to Negri Sembilan with an extension under construction to the Malacca/Johore border and a further line contemplated through Johore to Johore Bahru exactly opposite the terminus of the Singapore railway. Road building was also pushed forward vigorously, and this improvement of communications in the Federated Malay States speeded up the process of centralization.

The centralized administration built up at Kuala Lumpur between 1896 and 1900 hinged so much upon the calibre of the Resident-General that when Swettenham was promoted to the Governorship of the Straits Settlements in February 1901, the centre of direction and control definitely moved to Singapore. Improved communications facilitated this shift but it was mainly a reflection of the tendency for the ascendancy of either the High Commissioner or the Resident-General to be determined by the individuals holding these appointments. W. H. Treacher,² the new Resident-General, was shy and retiring.

¹ Weld was one of the first to indulge in visions of railway communication between Singapore and India. Cecil Smith, Swettenham, Martin Lister and others shared the same dream. There were others like Sir John Dickson and W.E. Maxwell who thought the idea impracticable and that a railway would not be able to compete with communications via the Straits of Malacca.

² W.H. Treacher, graduated from Oxford, went to Labuan in 1871 and there he joined the government service in 1873. In 1881 he became the first Governor of British North Borneo but left the Company's services in 1887 to rejoin the Colonial Service. He was appointed Secretary to the Government of Perak, a position analogous to that of a Colonial Secretary in a Crown Colony. He remained in Perak, sometimes acting as Resident, until 1893 when he took over the post of Resident in Selangor. In 1896 he returned to Perak as Resident. In Malaya, Treacher came to be known as a conscientious, reliable and modest officer. According to Sir Charles Mitchell, his fault was a certain weakness of character that made him prone to yield to bad advice.

He lacked that strength of character and quickness of decision which distinguished his forceful predecessor.¹ As Acting Resident-General during Swettenham's absences on leave prior to 1901, Treacher had referred to Singapore for instructions on matters which Swettenham would have disposed of himself.² Having served for years under Swettenham as Secretary to the Perak Government when Swettenham was Resident and then as Resident of Perak when the latter became Resident-General, Treacher naturally adopted a deferential attitude towards Swettenham the High Commissioner.³ He seemed happy to accept directives and would usually express an opinion or put forward a suggestion in a timid, tentative, way.⁴ As for Swettenham, he wanted to have the last word as High Commissioner, sometimes on questions on which he had previously taken quite a different stand as Resident-General. In 1900 he had maintained that the Resident-General was not obliged to refer to the High Commissioner on matters pertaining to lands and mines. Yet in 1901, replying to the Legal Adviser's comment on a draft land enactment that reference to the High Commissioner ought not to be compulsory since 'the policy of referring everything to somebody else' had already been pushed to its 'utmost limits', Swettenham wrote: 'I don't want to limit the authority of the Resident-General . . . the whole question is whether he will see that land is not given away improperly. I

¹ Chamberlain Papers, Mitchell to Chamberlain, private, 12 November 1895; CO273/274 Swettenham to CO 27 October 1901. The Colonial Office did not think Treacher's appointment an ideal one.

² See above p. 174. For another example refer Fed. Rec. 1287/1900 Acting RG to HC 7 September 1900.

³ This minute is typical: 'I have carefully noted Your Excellency's minute & have amended the circular which will now be issued.' See Fed. Rec. 1352/1901 RG to HC 13 July 1901.

⁴ Ibid. See 504/1901 Treacher's minute of 13 March 1901 addressed to Swettenham. Treacher behaved in the same way towards the Acting High Commissioner, Sir William Taylor, after Swettenham's departure. His practice of referring matters within his competence to Singapore seemed to have irritated the Secretariat officials. He was once told: 'The Acting High Commissioner thinks that reference to him was hardly necessary as the proposal is in accord with the Secretary of State's ruling and the Resident-General can declare such offices to be pensionable without reference to the High Commissioner.' Refer Fed. Rec. 326/1904 Fed. Sec. FMS to Sec. HC 24 February 1904 and the latter's reply 29 February 1904.

am not certain that some mistakes have not already been made in this respect'.¹ He reported to the Colonial Office that 'almost every single question' discussed at the Conference of Residents was referred to him. Furthermore, that he dealt so thoroughly with every paper sent him by the Resident-General that the Malay States gave him twice as much work as the Colony.² By thus keeping a firm hold over the peninsular states from Singapore between 1901 and 1903, Swettenham reversed the earlier trend of the Federation towards autonomy from the Colony.

But what of the future? British officers with long local experience had left or were about to depart. The Resident-General was due to retire in 1904. Towards the end of 1903 J. P. Rodger, Resident of Perak, was promoted on transfer to the Gold Coast; Hugh Clifford, Resident of Pahang, went to Trinidad while W. Egerton, Resident of Negri Sembilan, also left the Straits to become High Commissioner of Southern Nigeria. Of the old Malayan hands, only H. C. Belfield and D. H. Wise remained. Then Wise died, and the Federated States were so short of senior staff that Swettenham recommended the return of E. W. Birch as Resident of Perak on his resignation from the British North Borneo Company. Birch was appointed on the understanding that he would not succeed Treacher as Resident-General.³

From the latter part of 1902, there was some discussion within the Colonial Office and in the Secretary of State's correspondence with Swettenham on questions regarding future policy. The authorities in Whitehall considered that the Federation should not be so separated from the Colony that there would be practically two Governors—one in Singapore and the other in Kuala Lumpur—as these territories were closely linked by geographical, commercial and other ties. Since Swettenham had been successfully reorganizing the administration of the FMS, the Colonial Office anticipated that the next High Commissioner would have far less work to do.

¹ Ibid. 717/1901 RG to HC 11 April 1901; the Legal Adviser's (T.H. Kershaw's) memorandum 14 March 1901 and Swettenham's minute 16 April 1901.

² CO273/283 Swettenham to CO 4 September 1902.

³ CO273/295 Swettenham to CO 28 September 1903; CO to OAG 8 January 1904.

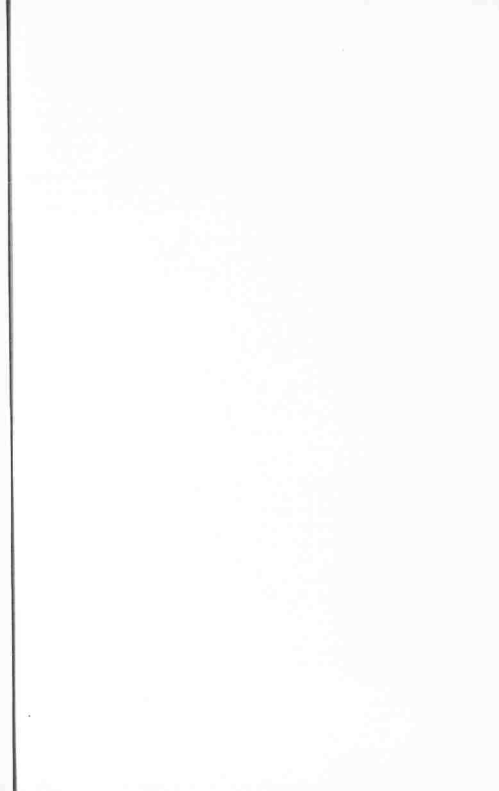
Hence, they asked Swettenham about the advisability of abolishing the post of Resident-General when Treacher retired and whether officers outside the Straits service might be appointed to fill future vacancies. Swettenham urged the retention of the Resident-General's post which, he believed, should be held by someone with local experience. Later on, however, as a result of the depletion of the upper ranks of the service owing to the departure of the senior officers mentioned above, Swettenham as well as the Colonial Office realized that an officer outside the Straits Settlements and FMS services might have to be brought in to replace Treacher. Although at one time Swettenham had wished to make the Resident-General independent of the High Commissioner, he had since changed his mind and now asserted that the executive head of the Federation should remain subordinate to the High Commissioner. Indeed he expected closer relations between the Colony and the Federation.¹ In his opinion, the Resident-General ought to be an officer of the 'highest capacity' but not necessarily with any Malayan experience: an intelligent stranger with fresh ideas would be more valuable to the country than one whose faculties had been blunted by the climate and perception deadened by perpetual contact with the same surroundings. He went on to say that although the logical result of federation was the replacement of the four Residents by Secretaries to Government in the various departments—a step nearer union—the advantages of which he had often contemplated, he feared that the Malay Sultans and chiefs were still not ready for this change.² They regarded the Resident as 'their man'—an advocate of local interests against others—and would therefore oppose the abolition of such appointments.³

This posed a problem for the British Government. How was

¹ At the 1903 Conference of Chiefs prior to his retirement, Swettenham said 'The past has proved that for many obvious reasons, the interests of the Federated Malay States and the neighbouring British Colony are identical on all large issues and will be served by a continued and even closer communion.' See Fed. Rec. 'Minutes of Conference of Chiefs of the FMS held at Kuala Lumpur on 20, 21, 22, 23 July 1903'.

² He was proved right. See Sultan of Perak's speech at the 1903 Conference mentioned below.

³ CO273/283 CO to Swettenham 24 October 1902; CO273/284 Swettenham's reply 7 December 1902.



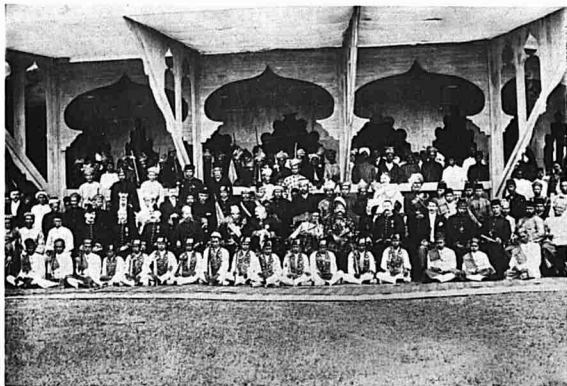


PLATE III *Group at the second F.M.S. Durbar held at the Lake Gardens in Kuala Lumpur from 20-23 July, 1903.*
 Seated (L. to R.): H.C. Belfield (Resident, Selangor); J.P. Rodger (Resident, Perak); W.H. Treacher (Resident-General); The Sultan of Selangor; The Sultan of Perak; Sir Frank Swettenham (High Commissioner, F.M.S.); The Sultan of Pahang; Yam Tuan Muhammad of Negri Sembilan; W. Egerton (Resident, Negri Sembilan); and D.G. Campbell (Acting Resident, Pahang).

it to reconcile the administrative needs of territories adjacent to each other and complementary in many respects, with the political susceptibilities and aspirations of the Sultans and their chiefs? Nearly three decades of British tutelage had had its effects on the more intelligent Malays. Some of them were beginning to express concern at the fact that Malays in the administration were confined largely to the lower appointments such as 'orderlies or Punkah Pullers and Constables' while the few who had become clerks 'could not think of getting more than \$50 a month' because they competed at a disadvantage with other Asians with a better command of the English language.¹ At the second Conference of Chiefs held at Kuala Lumpur in July 1903, Sultan Idris of Perak—'one of the most capable of the Malays of his generation'—urged the appointment of more Malays to the government service and to higher posts. At the same Conference, he protested against the prevailing trend towards amalgamation. The Sultan complained that he could not understand the 'matter of union' (*persekutuan*). He quoted a Malay proverb which said that there could not be two helmsmen in one vessel, neither could there be four Rulers over one country. The Treaty of Pangkor, Sultan Idris reminded the British, had provided for a Resident and not the Resident-General to advise him and he therefore asked that the affairs of each state might be managed by its own officers and their governments remain separate entities.² This was one of the few recorded utterances of the Sultans. And since Sultan Idris usually acted as spokesman for his fellow Rulers, it seems that the Malay Rulers wished to loosen the Federation as opposed to the

¹ CO273/303 Anderson to Lyttelton 17 September 1904 enclosing correspondence on the establishment of a residential school for young Malays of the raja class at Kuala Kangsar.

² CO469/13 Supplement to the Selangor Government Gazette for 1903 containing minutes of the Conference of Chiefs. Also see the full record of the proceedings in Fed. Rec. 1404/1904 RG to HC 30 July 1904. Swettenham's remarks on the subject in his closing address are worth quoting. He said: 'Of course I am aware that irresponsible and ill-informed people have urged that the posts of British Resident should be abolished, but I do not share these views. I think it would be an absolute mistake to adopt such a course . . . Though I speak for myself, my Malay friends will learn, if they do not know already, that it is a characteristic of British methods to maintain continuity of policy.'

British objective of a tighter union to promote administrative efficiency and economic progress.

This then was a problem for the future. It also looked as if the Federation would be guided by new blood rather than by old hands. The Swettenham-Colonial Office discussions just mentioned give the impression that Swettenham was not expected to remain much longer in Malaya. A few of his friends and colleagues, among them W. T. Taylor (the Colonial Secretary) and Sultan Idris of Perak, were told that he would not be returning to the country after his vacation leave—from October to December 1903.¹ Swettenham was a year younger than Treacher. He was not suffering from ill-health or due for retirement, yet he sought and obtained Chamberlain's sanction to his retirement from the public service in December 1903 on the plea that thirty-three years' service in a most enervating climate must shake any constitution and he desired to leave Malaya before he became a burden to the country.² As Sir Cecil Smith had created a precedent by leaving the colonial service before he reached the age of fifty-five, Swettenham now chose to do the same. But in his case it later led to some speculation on the reasons for his resignation.

Both the length of his retirement and the nature of his activities after 1903 threw doubts on the validity of the reason he gave for wishing to resign in his letter to the Secretary of State in 1903. He earned more pension than salary and died in 1946, forty-three years after retirement. It was during these years that he achieved 'more than local prominence'.³ He became the Director of over a dozen rubber and other companies. He was President of the Association of British Malaya, and an active participant in other organizations.

There is a surprising lack of comment on his resignation in the Secretary of State's papers where it is merely recorded that Swettenham visited the Colonial Office when he went on leave to discuss things with Lucas. His letter of resignation was apparently agreed upon between them at that meeting. Apart from other possible reasons, can it be that Swettenham resigned

¹ CO273/295 Swettenham to CO 25 September 1903; Taylor to Swettenham 15 December 1903 in the Swettenham Collection.

² CO273/298 Swettenham to CO 2 December 1903.

³ See his obituary in *British Malaya*, vol. XXI, no. 3, July 1946.

because, as W.T. Taylor stated in a letter, 'there is no real inducement here for you to return, it is all the other way about'?¹ Despite having held the highest-paid post in Malaya, Swettenham was not a wealthy man. Prospects of profitable investment in tin, rubber and other industries as well as remunerative employment in business in the early years of the twentieth century might well have tempted Swettenham to leave the Colonial Service. As a civil servant, and especially in his position of authority, he could not utilize the splendid opportunities for money-making then available in Malaya. And he was definitely not one to underestimate the value of money. Throughout his career, in fact, he always had his eye on better-paid posts and frequently asked for an increase in his emoluments. Moreover, on at least one occasion in his official career, he had engaged in land speculation although with the consent of the Governor at the time, Sir Frederick Weld.² Soon after his retirement too, while assisting the Colonial Office to negotiate a railway agreement with the Sultan of Johore, he took the opportunity to procure from the Sultan a concession of land on the direct route of the proposed railway.³ Swettenham's business activities in retirement lead one to suspect that among other possible reasons, he might have resigned in order to improve his financial position.

Whatever the reasons for his resignation, he looked back with satisfaction to the success of the Federation in terms of its large revenues, increasing population, lines of railways built, roads constructed, telegraph lines laid, hospitals, schools and other public works which were initiated and completed during the years when he was at the helm, whether as Resident-General or as High Commissioner.

To-day the Federated Malay States have a revenue of \$20,000,000,⁴ an ordinary expenditure of a little over half that sum. They have 350 miles of excellent roads; over a thousand miles of Telegraphs; Schools, Hospitals, Prisons, Water Supplies to all large towns, and an administration which comprises many capable and devoted officers. They have also a highly efficient and completely

¹ Swettenham Collection, Taylor to Swettenham 15 February 1903.

² CO273/169 See minutes on Cecil Smith to CO 16 December 1890 with enclosures.

³ See Chapter IX below.

⁴ FMS revenues were only surpassed by a small margin by Ceylon.

equipped regiment of Indian soldiers under British officers. They have a trade worth ten million sterling per annum, a credit balance of ten million dollars, and no debt. . . .¹

On the other hand, Swettenham regretted that the Malays did not take full advantage of the opportunities then available for improving their economic position. In the rapid opening up of the country and the development of its resources, the Malays had little share. As a result of the rush for administrative efficiency and economic progress, the British had taken over almost entirely the Government of the FMS while the demand for labour required for public works, the mining industry and agricultural enterprise, had led to a large immigration of Chinese and Indians. Just as the prosperity of the Federation was chiefly the work of aliens, so it was mainly to their benefit. Even more important from the long-term point of view, these immigrants out-numbered the Malay population of Perak and Selangor. The census of 1901 showed that Chinese exceeded Malays by 18,348. The corresponding figure for Selangor was 74,771. The Malays thus became a minority in the two states. In the FMS as a whole, there were 312,456, Malays and 'other Natives of the Archipelago', 299,739 Chinese and 58,211 Indians in 1901.² That such a development was bound to create problems for the future was not considered by Swettenham.

He claimed, however, that the Malays had gained, on the whole, from the changes brought by British 'advice'; only the rajas had lost the power to oppress whereas in fact they had lost more than that under the Residential system. Federation further reduced their position, power and authority despite the professed desire of the British to safeguard their dignity and prestige. By 1903 the Sultans had practically nothing to do with the ruling of their states. The revenues of the FMS were collected and spent on the authority of British officials. The power of granting state land, making appointments, etc. was similarly vested in the Residents, the Resident-General, the High Commissioner and, in a few cases, the Secretary of State. Sultans received what were described as 'salaries' in the estimates fixed by the High Commissioner subject to the approval of the Colonial Office. In the Perak estimates for 1903, approved by

¹ R.G.'s report for 1902. *PP* Cd.1819 (1903).

² See RG's report for 1901. *PP* Cd.1297 (1902).

Swettenham, the personal emoluments of the Resident came at the top of the expenditure accounts—'in a position of Royalty'—while 'among and parallel to the salaries of all manner of underlings', was listed the salary of the Sultan.¹ To compensate for such losses, the British emphasized the outward trappings of the Malay sovereigns' position by pomp and ceremony, by occasionally increasing their allowances as the revenues of the states expanded (but by no means in the same proportion) and by awarding them honours like the CMG and the KCMG. It may be said that as executive head of the Federation and later as High Commissioner, Swettenham was partially responsible for what happened.

A suspicion of the British authorities in Singapore which emerged in the FMS may also be traced to Swettenham. He gave the Malay Rulers the idea that the Resident-General was to be the champion of their interests *vis-à-vis* the High Commissioner, thus suggesting that the interests of Kuala Lumpur and those of Singapore were not the same. This was one of the arguments he had brought forward when persuading the Sultans to accept the treaty of Federation in 1895. The idea gained ground on the publication of his book, *British Malaya*, in 1906, at a time when Swettenham's successor in Singapore, Sir John Anderson, was dipping into FMS surpluses to finance projects in the Colony, the extension of British control north of the FMS and in Borneo.

The working of the Federation between 1896 and 1903 further showed that the relations between High Commissioner and Resident-General, especially the control of the former over the latter, depended on the individuals in these posts. The balance of power between them shifted according to whether the one was more assertive than the other. What would happen when two equally forceful personalities were in charge in Kuala Lumpur and in Singapore was a situation which did not arise in this period. This problem and others appeared during Sir John Anderson's administration.

¹ CO273/316 see correspondence between Sir Roper Lethbridge and the CO; CO273/303 Anderson to CO 29 December 1904.

VIII

THE FEDERATION OF THE PROTECTED STATES UNDER ANDERSON

IN APRIL 1904, Sir John Anderson took over as Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States. Anderson, as Mitchell had been before him, was a newcomer to Malaya. Except for a brief visit to Singapore in 1901, when he accompanied the Duke and Duchess of York on their world tour, he had no experience of the tropical dependencies, having spent his previous career at the Colonial Office in departments concerned with the self-governing colonies, or else on missions abroad: to Gibraltar in 1891 to enquire into the Registry of the Supreme Court; to Paris in 1893 as secretary to the British representative of the Commission for the Behring Sea Arbitration; to Gibraltar again in 1899 to examine the rates of pay of the civil service there. Anderson was described as Chamberlain's protégé. He served as the latter's secretary at the Conference of Colonial Premiers in 1897 and at the subsequent Conference in 1902. His promotion was rapid. In 1897, Anderson became Principal Clerk at the Colonial Office; he received the CMG in 1898 and the KCMG in 1901. Anderson was a trusted member of the Colonial Office with a reputation for integrity, good judgement, exceptional ability and a wide knowledge of imperial affairs.¹

It is significant that he was the first Governor and High Commissioner to be sent out straight from the Colonial Office. Perhaps it is also significant that he was only forty-six years old at the time of his appointment to Singapore. Though Swettenham had presided over the birth and infancy of the Federa-

¹ A. Wright and H. A. Cartwright, eds., *Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya*, London, 1908, pp. 123-4; *Straits Times* 23 January, 22 February, 16 March 1904.



Map 3. British Malaya in 1905

tion, the experiment was still at a formative stage. The following years were likely to be crucial for these territories from the political and constitutional point of view, and so the Secretary of State must have thought it advantageous to have on the spot a dependable man like Anderson who knew the feeling and thinking in the Colonial Office on imperial affairs and could be expected to approach local problems without the preconceptions or prejudices often acquired by officers long associated with Malaya. That he should not be nearly at the end of his career might have been another consideration in Anderson's favour. He could then remain long enough in Malaya to guide the Federation further along towards the ultimate objective of a union with one system of administration, a central legislature and a common treasury.

The 'enormous advance in every direction' which Anderson saw in the FMS made a great impression on him. Comparing the states outside the sphere of British control to those within the Federation he said; 'To pass from the one to the other is to pass from the Anglo-Saxon period to the twentieth century'. Not only had law and order been firmly established throughout the whole area but the three western states, the new High Commissioner observed, were better provided with roads, railways, public buildings and 'all the usual adjuncts of administration and comforts and amenities of civilization than any of the Crown Colonies in the Empire'.¹ It was not the first time that the extraordinary natural wealth of these territories and the success of British administration in providing facilities for its development had aroused the admiration of a new High Commissioner. Sir Charles Mitchell, reserved and cautious by nature, had been similarly moved to generous praise.² In Anderson's case, it not only convinced him that the rest of the Peninsula should be brought under British control but that the experiment in the Federation was proceeding on the right lines. The former (as we shall see in Volume II) was reflected in his

¹ *PP* Cd.2777 (1906) Anderson to CO 6 September 1905 enclosing *AR* FMS 1904.

² CO273/204 Mitchell to CO 24 June 1895. He attributed the 'extraordinary material progress' of the FMS to British powers of organization, to the rich mineral resources of these states and the Chinese immigrant population.

policy towards the Malay States in the Siamese sphere of influence whilst the latter led him to encourage existing trends towards firstly, greater uniformity of administration and centralization within the FMS and secondly, a closer connexion between these states and the Straits Settlements with particular emphasis on maintaining the High Commissioner's control over the whole. We shall deal with these aspects of his policy in that order.

Those departments in the FMS which had not yet been amalgamated under Swettenham's régime owing to such obstacles as difficulties of communication were steadily combined into Federal establishments under a single head. The printing offices of Perak and Selangor, for example, with the completion of railway communication between Taiping, Kuala Lumpur and Seremban, were integrated to form the federal printing office to serve all the several states of the Federation which subscribed to its running cost in proportion to their annual revenues. The police force of the several states was likewise reorganized into one force under the control of a Federal Commissioner of Police who was subject to the orders of the Resident-General.¹

But a far more important step towards centralization was taken by Anderson when he recommended to the Secretary of State the formation of a federal council together with an administrative council to take the place of the legislative and executive councils in a crown colony.

The administrative convenience of having a central legislature to deal with matters of general application had long been recognized. Under existing arrangements for legislation, draft enactments drawn up by the Legal Adviser in consultation with the Resident-General were submitted to the High Commissioner for approval and afterwards presented to the state councils for discussion and acceptance. In practice there was really no free discussion as otherwise uniformity of legislation throughout the Federation would have been difficult if not impossible to attain. Considering the number of enactments passed by the four state councils—102 enactments in 1904—there could hardly have been time for an adequate discussion of each.

¹ CO273/301 Taylor to CO 12 March, Anderson to CO 17 May 1904; Fed. Rec. 350/1904 RG to HC 1 March 1904.

In fact, the Resident of Perak complained of this 'discourteous method' which gave the council 'no opportunity of discussion'.¹ Thus by and large the state councils merely acted as registering bodies. However, if one council had strong reasons for desiring an amendment (which was not frequent) it required the High Commissioner's approval and was then passed as a subsequent enactment in each of the four states at different times. Such a procedure, though cumbersome, was evidently tolerable. Despite the fact that the Colonial Office desired to facilitate legislation by having a federal legislature, Swettenham had preferred to work without it. Nor did Anderson press for a change when he took office, but accepted the existing arrangements for more than three years. Not until December 1907 did he propose the formation of a federal council giving administrative convenience as one of the reasons for his suggestion.²

From the viewpoint of the British in Malaya, this was neither the most urgent nor the most important reason for calling a central legislative body into existence. The local demand really arose from the newly-felt need of growing European planting and mining interests for a say in the government of the country. The early years of the twentieth century saw a large influx of European capital into the mining and especially the rubber industry, with a consequent increase in the size of the European community. Rubber cultivation expanded at a phenomenal rate from about 1904. The acreage under rubber in the FMS increased from 38,000 acres in 1905 to 100,000 in 1906. Large-scale planting of rubber was mainly undertaken by Europeans. In Selangor where there had been no more than twenty European planters in 1903, there were over seventy of them in the Klang and Kapar districts alone three years later. The rising importance of this section of the population in the FMS was recognized by the appointment of a European member to the Selangor state council in 1900 and the Perak state council in 1905. To use Anderson's words, 'in the circumstances of these Councils it is obvious that a strong body of intelligent Europeans will not continue to be satisfied with an arrangement which affords them no real opportunity of effective discussion of the

¹ Fed. Rec. 929/1907 E.W. Birch to RG 15 June 1907 enclosed in RG to HC 4 July 1907.

² CO273/331 Anderson to CO 26 December 1907.

legislation under which they have to live and work'.¹ The emergence of this new factor which the British Government in Malaya felt obliged to accommodate was explained by Anderson on yet another occasion.

In 1896 when federation was accomplished, the European population, the planting industry in the country, was very small indeed compared with what it is at the present time, and therefore public opinion, so far as Europeans were concerned, was practically a negligible quantity. The one thing that the administration was concerned with was perhaps the opinion of the native rulers and the general work of opening up the country. Now with a very considerable European population, with a very large amount of English capital and even foreign capital invested in these states, there can be no doubt that the conditions which obtained then, the conditions which still obtain, are not satisfactory, and that it is desirable that public opinion, the opinion of the influential community, should have more direct outlet and that the Government should be brought more directly face to face with the criticism of those whose affairs they have to manage.²

Apart from discussion of proposed legislation, Anderson wished to provide for outside criticism of the estimates—state as well as federal. The state councils had no control over public expenditure, which was the sole concern of the Residents, the Resident-General and the High Commissioner. Estimates of revenue for the FMS for 1905, for example, totalled some £2,500,000 and the Colonial Office had noted, on at least one occasion, that such huge sums of money ought not to be left entirely to the discretion of the local officials. Moreover, opinions had been expressed in the local press that those sections of the population which contributed the bulk of the FMS revenues should have a voice in its expenditure. Above any other consideration, the desire to allow the participation of European unofficials of 'high character and ability' in the government of the Federation led to Anderson's despatch of 26 December 1907.

In the same despatch, Anderson put forward another suggestion viz., the formation of an administrative council—to perform the functions of an executive council in the crown colony

¹ Ibid. See also Fed. Rec. 1597/1908 Chairman, Planters' Association of Malaya to HC 21 October 1908.

² *Straits Budget* 20 May 1909 quoting Anderson's speech to the Straits Settlements Association in London.

system. He believed that the existing Conference of Residents and the Resident-General, with the addition of the Sultans and the High Commissioner as President, might constitute an administrative council. Such an inner council, in Anderson's opinion, would secure uniformity of thought and action on measures for presentation to the federal legislature. It was later surmised that Anderson's purpose here was to make the High Commissioner the executive head of the FMS administration.

He informed the Secretary of State that all the Malay Rulers of the FMS approved the formation of a federal council. But we should note that the Sultans of Perak and Pahang had agreed on condition that the proposed central legislature would not deprive the state councils of their 'present power and privileges'. No question within the existing jurisdiction of the state councils such as those connected with Malay religion, mosques, political pensions, penghulus, conversions of agricultural and mining lands etc., should be interfered with, insisted Sultan Idris of Perak. He further stipulated that every draft enactment ought to be submitted, in the first instance, to state councils and only after full discussion there should they be passed by the federal council.¹

The Sultan of Perak's request was due to the fact that Federation had impaired the position of the state councils whose executive and legislative functions had become more and more nominal. In later years it was explained that such developments were an 'unforeseen' result of the Federal Agreement² but the official records on the subject do not warrant such a view. The Sultan of Perak's hope that the federal council, when established, would strengthen the state councils by giving more consideration to their opinions than under the existing arrangements, was similarly contrary to the intention of those who had launched the Federation scheme. We may recall that according to the policy laid down by the Colonial Office in the 'nineties, the federal council was gradually to supersede the several state councils so that the latter would ultimately resemble district councils. Thus, once again, the aspirations of the Sultans ran

¹ CO273/331 Memorandum by E.W. Birch, Resident of Perak; also Brockman to Anderson 4 December 1907 enclosed in Anderson to CO 26 December 1907.

² Sir Anton Bertram, *The Colonial Service*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 230.

counter to the objectives of British policy. Nevertheless, both Anderson and the Colonial Office staff ignored the problem. They merely noted the fact that the Malay Rulers agreed in principle and proceeded with the task of organizing a federal council based on a formal agreement which deliberately left its exact powers vague.¹ Perhaps the British envisaged that even if the working of the federal council were to curtail still further the authority of the state councils, the Sultans would either not notice the gradual and silent encroachment or else acquiesce in the face of a *fait accompli*. The Malay Rulers of that generation had only a slight knowledge of English and were not expected to 'take a very close interest in the proceedings or be assiduous in their attendance'.

Although the Colonial Office welcomed the High Commissioner's suggestion regarding the federal council, it sent no reply to Singapore for many months. Anderson's despatch had been addressed to the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, who had succeeded Chamberlain and Lyttelton at the Colonial Office at the end of 1905 in Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Cabinet. Elgin, however, did not see the despatch since he was replaced by Lord Crewe in a Cabinet reshuffle which occurred when the Prime Minister died in April 1908. In mid-October, Anderson sent a private reminder to G. V. Fiddes of the Colonial Office. He followed this up by a despatch dated 28 October transmitting a request from the Chairman of the Planters' Association of Malaya for the establishment of a federal council on which it would be represented. These communications were circulated so slowly among the permanent staff at the Colonial Office that one suspects that they did not consider the matter at all urgent. The permanent head of the Colonial Office, Sir Francis Hopwood, only minuted on Anderson's despatch of December 1907 about a year and a half after its arrival in the Department. Meanwhile, Anderson wrote again in December 1908 to say that the request from the Planters' Association for representation was being discussed in the press and that he expected pressure from the European unofficial community for early action. Finally, on 8 January 1909, the Secretary of State for the Colonies approved the principle of a federal council and accepted the draft agreement which Anderson had submitted for

¹ CO273/341 CO to Anderson 8 January 1909.

his approval. He did not, however, sanction the proposed administrative council and he refused to change his mind although Anderson supplemented the views expressed in his despatch by personal representations at the Colonial Office when he was home on leave. Members of the Colonial Office considered that the Sultans were unlikely to attend regularly the meetings of the administrative council, and besides, they saw no need for such a body which would duplicate, in some measure, the work of the federal council. The disadvantages of the proposal, in their view, outweighed its anticipated advantages. If, as Anderson maintained, it 'would be of great advantage' for him personally to learn and consider the opinions of the Residents on the proposed measures before they were presented to the federal council, Lord Crewe suggested that the High Commissioner could arrange to preside at and participate in the periodical meetings of the Resident-General with the Residents. The High Commissioner himself had explained that facilities for communication had improved: 'The opening of the Railway, the enormous extension of motorcar traffic, render locomotion here easy if not yet quite as rapid as in the United Kingdom.' Consequently the Secretary of State declined to allow the administrative council to be introduced at the same time as the federal council which, like the Federation in 1895, was regarded as a constitutional experiment.¹

In October 1909 an Agreement for the Constitution of a federal council was concluded between the High Commissioner, acting on behalf of the British Government, and the Sultans of Perak, Selangor and Pahang, and the Yang di-Per-tuan Besar of Negri Sembilan with his five territorial chiefs.² Its members were to be the High Commissioner, the Resident-General, the Malay Rulers with their Residents, four unofficial members nominated by the High Commissioner and such other departmental officers and unofficial members as he thought necessary. The intention of the Agreement, according to the preamble, was to fulfil the Rulers' desire that 'means should be

¹ CO273/349 See minutes on Anderson to CO 8 February and Crewe's reply of 20 May 1909.

² For the text of the agreement see W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 71-73.

provided for the joint arrangement of all matters of common interest . . . and for the proper enactment of all laws intended to have force throughout the Federation or in more than one State'.

The exact powers of the Council, as previously mentioned, were deliberately left vague. Article 9 merely said that laws passed by the state councils would continue to have full force and effect in the states except where they were 'repugnant' to the provisions of any enactment passed by the federal legislature. The same article provided for the exclusive jurisdiction of the state councils on questions concerning the Muslim religion, mosques, native chiefs, penghulus, political pensions and other matters which, in the High Commissioner's opinion, ought to be left to the state councils because they affected the rights and prerogatives of the Malay Rulers. The contemplated division of powers between the central and the state legislatures was recognized at the Colonial Office as 'something new and strange'. Yet the highest officials there thought it unnecessary to refer it to the law officers on the grounds that 'in practice it will probably work out all right'.¹ One is compelled to conclude that they were not concerned with evolving a genuine federal type of government for the FMS.

Neither the above-mentioned article nor any other in the agreement empowered the federal council to pass laws at all. Again, the Colonial Office staff had noticed the anomaly but could find no answer to the question as to what authority could confer on the federal council the power to make laws for all the states. 'Not the Sultans, for each Sultan has only power to make laws for his own state. Not H.M. by Order in Council for the Sultans have never ceded jurisdiction and no Order in Council can be passed under the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890. Not the Imperial Parliament for Parliament has no power to make laws binding on foreigners (the natives of the States) outside British territory, and the Malay States are not British territory.'² Sir John explained that laws passed by the federal council would be binding on each state from the fact that the Malay Rulers had conferred their law-making powers for their states

¹ CO273/349 See minutes by Fiddes, Cox, Hopwood and Crewe on Anderson to CO 8 February 1909.

² Ibid.

on the Council. But this supposed cession of jurisdiction by the Rulers to the central legislature was unique and implicit rather than explicit. An American historian of British rule in Malaya said, 'A Federal Council was established which by an invisible grant, received almost unlimited legislative powers, while the four rulers were left undisturbed in the complete sovereignty which they exercised on the advice of their Residents.'¹

It should be noted that article 10, by providing for the draft estimates of revenue and expenditure of each state to be considered by the federal council and 'immediately on publication be communicated to the State Councils', reversed the procedure proposed by Sultan Idris of Perak. Nevertheless, as if to reassure the Rulers, the next and final article in the document repeated a statement which appeared in the 1895 treaty of Federation, viz., that 'Nothing in the Agreement is intended to curtail any of the powers or authority now held by any of the above-named Rulers in their respective States.' The statement seemed to have had its origin in the principle laid down by the Colonial Office in 1893, that any scheme for the closer union of these states 'must not be uncongenial to or unduly wound the susceptibilities of these Malay communities and their rulers'.² No constitutional significance could have been intended.

The agreement, according to a legal opinion, ignored the juridical position of the Malay Rulers since the High Commissioner, and not the Rulers, was to decide on the meetings of the federal council, to preside at such meetings, to nominate its members and change its composition.³ As members were listed, moreover, the High Commissioner and the Resident-General took precedence over the Malay sovereigns. In effect, the Sultans became ordinary members of the central legislature of the FMS. They had no powers of veto. Nor was the absence of any Ruler to affect the legality of the council's proceedings. Hence, while Sir John publicly declared that this body was to

¹ R. Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule*, New York, 1937, p. 148. The enacting formula adopted was: 'It is hereby enacted by the Rulers of the Federated States in Council.'

² CO273/183 Memorandum on the Protected Native States enclosed in CO to Smith 19 May 1893.

³ Roland Braddell, *The Legal Status of the Malay States*, Singapore, 1931, p. 17.

be the Council of the Malay Rulers to advise them as a whole, the terms of the agreement, as Braddell says, made it in reality the High Commissioner's Council. In practice, too, we may add, Anderson expected it to consist of British officials and unofficials. But such a divergence between the form and substance of British rule in Malaya had become almost traditional.

Although the Colonial Office noticed ambiguities and inconsistencies in the agreement, it decided not to examine the document too closely. The Secretary of State and his staff expected the scheme to 'work out all right in practice' despite the 'novelty of the proposal'.

The Council so established has been described as 'the most singular legislative body ever evolved even by the British Colonial Government'.¹ It met for the first time on 11 December 1909 at Kuala Kangsar, seat of the Sultan of Perak. The four unofficials were: F. D. Osborne, partner in a firm of Mining Engineers; R. W. Harrison, a representative of planting interests; J. H. M. Robson, Managing Director of the *Malay Mail*—a local newspaper; and Leong Fee, a Chinese business magnate. Since Leong was in China when the federal council was convened, Eu Tong Sen was provisionally appointed to replace him.

Anderson, in his presidential address, outlined the reasons for setting up such a body. He now declared in public as he had in private to the Secretary of State, that it was to improve administrative efficiency and to enable the views of the commercial, mining and planting communities in the Federation to influence legislative proposals and administrative measures. Neither in his confidential despatches to the Colonial Office which we have examined, nor in this opening speech, did Anderson profess as a further reason for the formation of the federal council a desire to give the constituent states of the Federation some control over the central authorities. On the contrary, he emphasized that the future greatness and prosperity of the several states depended on the prosperity of the whole; that their interests were so 'intermingled and interdependent' that they had to be viewed and treated from a common standpoint. For this, he implied that a further sacrifice of individuality was necessary. 'It was no small sacrifice of individ-

¹ Bertram, *op. cit.* p. 231.

uality on the part of the Rulers' he said, 'to enter on the compact of Federation and to complete and crown it by the Agreement in virtue of which we are assembled.'¹ Thus the formation of the federal council cannot be described as a step to check centralization. It was hailed by the *Straits Times* as a 'great step' towards the 'unification of Malaya'.² Reporting on the new arrangements, the Acting Resident-General wrote as follows: 'The State Councils still continue to enact measures of a purely local nature, and exercise the same authority as formerly in matters of local Government, while the Federal Council deals with all measures of general application, with the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure, and with such other public business as is usually dealt with by the Legislative Council in a Crown Colony. The rapid opening up of the country and the improvements effected in communications had rendered centralization in such matters both expedient and practicable.'³

Therefore, whatever was said in subsequent years about the establishment of the federal council, in intention and effect it meant further centralization.

It was also an attempt to promote closer relations between the FMS and the Colony. We have noted that one aspect of Anderson's policy was to narrow the distinction between the Straits Settlements and the FMS. The Colonial Office, it may be recalled, desired to prevent the growth of two entirely separate administrations under independent heads: one in Singapore and the other in Kuala Lumpur.⁴ To avoid such an eventuality, Anderson now brought the High Commissioner into the Federal administration as President of the federal council. Some British officials like Sir Frank Swettenham and Sir George Maxwell—son of Sir William E. Maxwell—thoroughly disapproved. Swettenham complained that he could not understand how the Governor of a Colony could also be the President of a council for making laws and otherwise controlling the affairs of a Federation of Protected States each of which had a Malay Ruler.⁵ Maxwell, in his retirement, made a 'diligent' search through the Colonial Office Library 'but was

¹ *PFC* 11 December 1909.

² *Straits Times*, 17 and 29 October 1909.

³ *PP* Cd.5373 (1910) RG's report for 1909.

⁴ CO273/283 CO to Swettenham 24 October 1902.

⁵ F.A. Swettenham, *British Malaya*, rev. ed., London, 1948, pp. 358-9.

unable to find any instance, except in Malaya, where the High Commissioner had a seat in the executive or legislative council of a Protected Territory'.¹ But such criticism would not have deterred Anderson to whom it was probably just another one of the 'numerous anomalies which the British people love to work' so long as it achieved the end in view. In this case, as President of the federal council, his object was to re-establish direct contact with the Rulers and Residents and to assert himself in his role as High Commissioner of the Federation. With this aim in mind he had proposed an administrative council but, as we have seen, it had been turned down by the Colonial Office. For the same purpose, we shall see later that he suggested another change in 1910.

Before that, however, there were other measures which the High Commissioner either suggested or adopted which seemed to have as their purpose even closer relations between the Colony and the Federation. He proposed that the Education Departments and Medical Services of the two territories be combined under Directors responsible to him. 'Having regard to the probable future of the Peninsula' he did not consider it politic to permit existing differences in both these territories to continue or increase as time went on.² Equally significant was his idea that the Resident-General should be made Lieut.-Governor of the Straits Settlements mainly in order to 'mark more clearly the intimate association of the FMS with the Colony'.³ And again when the creation of a federal council was being considered by the Colonial Office, Anderson asked 'if for any or every purpose except finance', the proposed Federal legislature might 'sit with and be part of the Legislative Council of the Colony' since this would be a convenient arrangement for territories which had so much legislation in common.⁴ Though Anderson did not actually recommend the integration of the Colony with the FMS he certainly appeared to have tried to pave the way for it.

The Colonial Office in these years was less clear where

¹ 'The Introduction in the FMS of a Policy of Decentralization', unpublished article by Sir George Maxwell.

² CO273/311 Anderson to CO 20 April 1905; CO273/318 Anderson to CO 22 August 1906.

³ CO273/303 Anderson to CO 14 September 1904.

⁴ CO273/341 Anderson to Fiddes, private, 15 October 1908.

the constitutional experiment in the FMS was likely to lead, or what the relations between the Colony and the Federation were to be in the future. Although Lucas was still at the Colonial Office, he had become the senior Assistant Under-Secretary with responsibilities in divisions outside that which dealt with the eastern colonies. Therefore, he had less time to write copious minutes on the despatches from Singapore or give much thought to Malayan problems. As for the more junior members of the permanent staff, it is doubtful if they were aware of the important policy statements made by Lucas, Ripon and Chamberlain between 1893 and 1895. None of them in their minutes ever referred to the policy laid down when the Federation was launched. Nor did anyone venture to suggest the direction in which the Federation should move. While favouring administrative efficiency and centralization, the Colonial Office pursued, on the whole a 'hand to mouth policy' towards Malayan affairs. During Anderson's governorship, unlike that of his predecessor, it was left to him alone to think and plan for the future of Malaya.

This he did in the light of the policy favoured from the 'nineties and the current problems which arose. One of these concerned finance. From 1906 a serious financial and commercial depression hit the Straits Settlements. Its revenues declined from approximately \$11,700,000 in 1905 to \$9,600,000 in 1906 whereas FMS revenues in the same period rose from about \$24,000,000 to \$28,800,000. Although subsequently the latter also showed a downward trend, the FMS still enjoyed substantial annual surpluses while the Colony had a deficit in 1907 and the following year despite the most stringent economy on the part of the government.¹ Under these circumstances, the Penang and Singapore municipalities borrowed \$600,000 and \$470,000 respectively from the FMS in order to carry out urgent projects.² Arguments which had been put forward in the 'nineties by the advocates of Federation were now applied to the situation in the period 1906-10. Newspapers in the Colony urged union with the Federation chiefly because of the attractions of

¹ See *AR* SS 1904-10.

² Anderson to CO 28 February, 28 August, 15 November 1906 in CO 273/320, 318 and 319 respectively; See also Fed. Rec. 866/1906 for the correspondence between RG and HC on the terms of these loans.

a common purse. On the other hand, the *Malay Mail* which represented European unofficial opinion in the Federation, opposed the suggestion. As a compromise, it mooted the possibility of attaching Penang with Province Wellesley and Malacca to the FMS.¹ Such a Federation, excluding Singapore, did in fact come into existence in 1948. But in the first decade of the twentieth century it had no official support. Nevertheless, Anderson undoubtedly realized the advantages of financial co-operation between the Colony and the FMS. That was probably one of the reasons why he tried in many ways to bring these territories closer together. We have seen that he strove to iron out administrative differences between them; to emphasize the intimate association as opposed to the separation of the Malay States and the Colony; and finally, to keep his authority over the whole unimpaired.

This brings us to a second problem which appeared during his administration. The years 1904-10 saw new areas in the Malay Peninsula and in Borneo brought under more formal British control. Anderson became High Commissioner for Brunei in 1906 when the Sultan accepted a British Resident. In the same year he was appointed Governor of Labuan as the Colony took over responsibility for its administration from the North Borneo Company. With his appointment as British Agent for British North Borneo and Sarawak, his authority extended over these territories as well. And then in 1909, he became High Commissioner for Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu when these states were transferred from Siam to Britain. Expansion meant expense, at least in the early years.

To finance the extension of British control over the above-named areas, Sir John dipped into the 'overflowing exchequer' of the FMS. The Federation Government was asked to advance a loan of \$20,000 to put the administration of Brunei on a satisfactory footing even though prospects of repayment within a reasonable time were known to be remote.² It was the first of several loans.³ Up to 1910 Brunei was still unable to pay any portion of its accumulated interest of \$48,000 at 4 per cent per annum. The Federation also gave Siam a loan of £4,500,000 at

¹ Eg., *Pinang Gazette* 24 November 1910; *Malay Mail* 14 August 1906.

² CO273/311 Anderson to CO 18 May 1905.

³ Fed. Rec. 55/1908 RG to HC 4 November 1908 with enclosures.

the same rate of interest for railway construction in the Siamese part of the Peninsula. This loan was not only to keep the proposed railways out of German hands but also to act as an additional inducement to Siam to transfer the four northern Malay States to Britain. At the same time, the FMS bore the cost of the British Agency in Trengganu, established after its transfer, while it made further loans to Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan to pave the way for the new régime. Besides, the Federation financed the railway extension through Johore. Capital expenditure on this project alone amounted to \$7,871,129 in 1906; the total cost of the line came to much more. In addition, Anderson called upon the Resident-General for loans to the Colony, which we have noted, and even for contributions. One such request for a contribution of \$20,000 towards a new Church of England bishopric in Singapore was hotly contested by Taylor and gave rise to unfavourable comments in the Federation press.¹ The use of FMS surpluses in the manner described, and often at rates of interest dictated by authorities outside the Federation, led to friction between Anderson and Taylor. The latter refused to submit without question to directives from the High Commissioner. He thought it his duty to protect, to the best of his ability, the interests of the Federation and he protested strongly whenever he considered that these interests were being subordinated to those unconnected with the FMS. The differences which arose between the executive head of the FMS and the High Commissioner may be ascribed partly to a clash of personalities. But it was also due to the fact that hitherto the FMS revenues had been spent entirely within the Federation² whereas Anderson departed from the principle established by his predecessors. No doubt Anderson was hard-pressed. As British expansion in the Malay Peninsula had been self-supporting, it was expected to continue to pay its way and not impose fresh burdens on the Imperial Exchequer. From 1906 the finances of the Colony were anything but flourishing, so the High Commissioner looked to the Federation for assistance in carrying out the forward policies approved by the Colonial Office. In his opinion, such loans and contributions would in-

¹ CO273/320 Taylor to CO 9 April 1906 with enclosures; and CO273/321 Anderson to CO 9 October 1906.

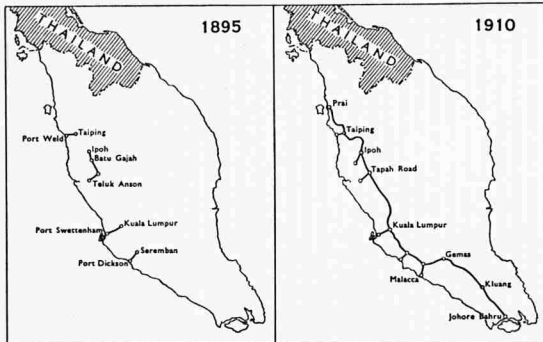
² See *PP* Cd.1297 (1902) Swettenham to CO 16 February 1902.

directly benefit the FMS which should take a broad rather than a 'parochial view'.¹ That the Resident-General should dispute his decisions annoyed Anderson especially as their differences became known to other Federal officers and the public as well.² It encouraged the idea that the interests of the Federation and the Colony were divergent; that the Resident-General was championing the former against a High Commissioner only concerned with colonial and imperial interests. To Anderson this was a problem which required an early solution. He proposed changing the title of the Resident-General to Chief Secretary on Taylor's retirement from the post in order to leave no doubt whatever, that in appearance as in fact, the High Commissioner was the final authority in both the FMS and the Colony and was responsible for the administration of both. In view of the policy favoured by the Colonial Office from the 'nineties, which presumably still remained unchanged, and as a result of his own experience on the spot, Anderson became more determined than ever to promote the growth of one overall government for the whole of British Malaya under the High Commissioner. Earlier on we noted that the federal council Agreement of 1909 conferred new powers on the High Commissioner in this direction; now his suggestions regarding the future of the Resident-General's post was another step towards the same objective.

In July 1910 he addressed a despatch to the Secretary of State explaining the quasi-independent status of the Resident-General, how it was no longer necessary and indeed quite undesirable. He complained that the position of the Resident-General had become much too independent. Residents acted as his mouthpiece and he usually instructed them in his own name. Although nominally subordinate to the High Commissioner whose sanction, according to the Administrative Scheme approved in 1895, was necessary for estimates, drafts of legislation, certain classes of appointments and expenditure over a stipulated sum, in practice the Resident-General could, within these broad conditions, refer to the High Commissioner as

¹ CO273/320 Anderson's minute 19 May on Taylor to CO 9 April 1906; also his speech to the Federal Council 19 January 1911.

² Articles appeared in the Straits newspapers to the effect that the RG's post was going to be abolished.



Map 4. Sketch map showing railways in the Peninsula in 1895 and 1910

little as possible and allow him practically no initiative. Moreover, in corresponding with the High Commissioner by formal letters instead of minutes, the latter did not see the actual papers but the Resident-General's summary of them. With the somewhat rudimentary state of communications in the 1890's there was need for an executive head of the FMS with large discretionary powers. These conditions, Anderson maintained, no longer prevailed. By 1909 the railway and telegraph system ran right through the FMS from Singapore to Penang; a system of good roads traversed the whole of the western states and gave access to the western part of Pahang. 'There are in fact' wrote Anderson, 'few colonies in the Empire in which the Governor has such excellent facilities at his disposal for communicating with his officers in the FMS as the High Commissioner. . . .' He claimed that it was then easier for him to visit and communicate with almost any part of the Federation than with Penang; and so far as the eastern half of Pahang was concerned, the Governor was more accessible than the Resident-General. Consequently the reason for the existence of the Resident-General's post as it was then constituted, he argued, had ceased to exist. Furthermore, instead of easing the High Commissioner's task as it was intended to do, Anderson alleged that that appointment was making it difficult for him to carry out his duties.¹

The problem did not emerge when Mitchell and Swettenham presided over the affairs of the FMS for reasons indicated in the previous chapter. With Anderson in Singapore and Taylor at Kuala Lumpur, the situation was different. Both were assertive and self-willed, with definite ideas on what and how things should be done.² As J. H. M. Robson put it, 'Sir John was autocratic, and would not tolerate the thought that the Resident-General . . . should be able to say "nay" when the Colonial Secretary in the Crown Colony had no such powers.'³ By inclination as well as on grounds of policy, Anderson determined

¹ CO273/362 Anderson to CO 27 July 1910.

² Documents in the Fed. Rec. show that Anderson minuted on practically every paper from the RG and drafted his own replies instead of leaving this to his private secretary, as Swettenham and Mitchell often did. From such evidence one obtains the impression that he was very efficient, meticulous and decisive.

³ J.H.M. Robson, *Records and Recollections 1889-1934*, Kuala Lumpur, 1934, p. 105.

to keep a firm hold over the Federation. The development of communications and the advent of the motor-car encouraged such a trend. So when Anderson found that the powers of the Resident-General, as exercised by Taylor, kept him less in touch with and in control of the personnel and affairs of the Federation than he considered desirable, the High Commissioner decided that the time had come to curtail the Resident-General's authority and, as a sign of his reduced status, to change his title to that of Chief Secretary: '... the time has come when the relative positions of the High Commissioner and the Resident-General should be defined, and that it should be made clear that the latter is an officer of the High Commissioner, his principal adviser and mouthpiece in the Federated Malay States and not a quasi-independent head of a separate administration'. To emphasize the fact that the High Commissioner 'instead of being merely vested with a certain amount of control over the administration of the FMS and over the advice given to the Rulers, was the real responsible head of that administration and that the Residents were his mouthpiece to the Rulers', Anderson also proposed that he should participate in the Residents' Conferences. Further, that he would retain for his own use the house in Kuala Lumpur—*Carcosa*—hitherto occupied by the Resident-General, for whom a smaller house on an immediately adjacent site should be built.

He realized that these proposals conflicted, to some extent, with the Treaty of Federation.¹ By that treaty signed in 1895, the Malay Rulers had undertaken to accept the advice of a Resident-General as 'agent and representative of the British Government under the Governor of the Straits Settlements'. Under the new arrangement proposed, he was to be called Chief Secretary and, in effect, the Rulers were to be advised by the High Commissioner. Nevertheless, Anderson informed the Colonial Office that the Malay Rulers and the Residents entirely agreed with his views expressed in the despatch.

The attitude of the latter may be explained. It was natural

¹ This was a point emphasized by the unofficial members of the Federal Council (and supported by the Chief Secretary) when they petitioned the Secretary of State to restore the earlier title of Resident-General in 1921. See CO717/14.

that the Residents should feel the loss of power and control as a result of the ever-expanding activities of the authorities at Kuala Lumpur. Taylor's appointment aggravated the situation. His promotion from the Colonial Secretariat in Singapore had been unpopular with certain senior officers in the Federation. Unlike them, he had not served before in any of the FMS. In fact he had only arrived in Singapore in 1901. Anderson, however, had warmly recommended him for the Resident-Generalship which Treacher vacated at the end of 1904 because of Taylor's long colonial experience, particularly in Ceylon. Anderson had regarded this as a special qualification since there was 'considerable scope for the better organization of the service' in the FMS at the time.¹ Could it be that Ceylon was still the model which the Federation was expected to follow? At all events, Taylor's qualifications were another cause of his unpopularity with the Residents. In trying to administer the FMS as far as possible along the lines of a crown colony, he whittled down still further the powers of the Residents. Swettenham alleged that 'at least two of the Residents chafed under his control'.² One of them was E.W. Birch, Resident of Perak, who not infrequently showed 'a feeling of irritation at interference in matters of administration' on the part of the Resident-General.³ On one occasion Birch protested vehemently when Taylor took him to task for the 'irregularity of his procedure' in acquiring from a private individual in Ipoh a house and land for the public service in exchange for certain tin-bearing land in Kinta without the knowledge and consent of the Resident-General. Birch argued that this method of obtaining land had been often adopted in the days when he was Secretary to the Resident of Perak, Acting Resident of Selangor and Resident of Negri Sembilan, from May 1892 to April 1900. 'It seems to me', he continued, 'that the position and authority of a Resident is being seriously altered, so much so as to infringe upon the agreement which the Native Rulers signed when they consented to Federation. The Resident of one of these States occupies a totally different position to a Government Agent of a Province

¹ CO273/303 Anderson to CO 3 September 1904.

² CO273/368 Swettenham to Harding, private, 19 September 1910.

³ CO273/320 Taylor to Anderson 12 December 1905 enclosed in Anderson to CO 10 February 1906.

of Ceylon and it is, I submit, a pity to curtail his powers as is now being done every day in many ways that delay administration and cause a feeling of irritation'.¹ Birch disliked Taylor's methods if not Taylor himself, while the Resident-General 'loathed' Birch. In these circumstances, it is understandable that Birch and his fellow Residents should welcome the suggestion to restrict the Resident-General's authority and increase that of the High Commissioner's. Perhaps they expected the latter's control to be less stringent, or that he would be easier to work with than Taylor.

As for the Malay Rulers, for all practical purposes, Sultan Idris of Perak was the only one whose opinion really counted. He took a greater and more intelligent interest in administrative matters than his counterparts in the other states. On this occasion Sultan Idris shared the Residents' preference for more direct contact with the High Commissioner. The Malay Sultans generally liked to deal with the highest possible authority on grounds of prestige. Although they went to Swettenham and not the High Commissioner when the former was Resident-General, that was because they knew Swettenham better than Mitchell. Swettenham had their confidence and spoke their language. In Taylor's case, he neither knew Malay nor was he personally acquainted with the Sultans. The Sultan of Perak might also have been affected by Birch's antagonism towards Taylor. But it is likely that he welcomed the proposal to reduce the Resident-General's status mainly because he thought that it would prevent further encroachment by the Federal Secretariat or even reverse the existing trend towards a tighter control of state affairs by Kuala Lumpur. At the Durbar of 1903, we have seen that Sultan Idris had made a plea for state rights. Events since then had strengthened rather than assuaged his fears for the loss of Perak's identity. Hence in 1910 he backed Anderson's proposals regarding the future of the Resident-General's post but not, so it would seem, for the same reasons. The other Rulers, when consulted, accepted the High Commissioner's proposal as a matter of course. Thus Anderson informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that his policy had the sup-

¹ Ibid. Birch to Taylor 7 December 1905. Also refer Fed. Rec. 898/1906 HC's Secretary to Fed. Sec. 26 July 1906, and 972/1906 RG to HC 27 July 1906.

port not only of the Residents but the Sultans who were 'all delighted and very keen on the change'.¹

The permanent officials at the Colonial Office were impressed by the Governor's arguments. One of them expressed the opinion of his colleagues when he minuted as follows:

... the main fact is that we cannot continue to have a division of authority—whether apparent or real. At the time when the administration was in the making, and in the pre-railway days when communication was difficult, a semi-independent Resident-General was no doubt necessary. But it was a necessary evil and there is no longer need for it. . . . The taking over of the new Malay States and the commencement of British administration in Johore made it still more necessary that the High Commissioner should be the real head of British administration in Malaya. Sir William Taylor tried to keep the Federated States in a ring fence, took no interest in the new States, and gave the High Commissioner all the work to do there without any money to spend. . . .²

We shall explain later the above reference to Johore and the Malay States which Thailand transferred to Britain in 1909. At this juncture it is sufficient to note that in London the only criticism of Anderson's proposals came from Swettenham. Already in 1909 Swettenham had spoken privately to the Secretary of State, Lord Crewe, about a rumour that the post of Resident-General was to be abolished. When the Straits newspapers began discussing this, he begged Crewe not to sanction such a step without first hearing his views. Accordingly, Anderson's despatch was sent to Swettenham for comment. He upheld the advantages of the system which he had established in 1896 and maintained that there was no need at all for a change. Swettenham argued that it would be unwise to confer so large an authority on the High Commissioner with no one to control him except the Secretary of State 8,000 miles away. Finally, Swettenham was dubious if a new Governor, say from Natal, Jamaica or Mauritius, would be able to carry out satisfactorily his duties as Governor of the Straits Settlements; the 'real responsible head of the FMS administration'; Consul-General for Borneo, in addition to being, in effect, the 'director

¹ CO273/362 Anderson to Collins, private, 29 July 1910.

² CO273/368 Collin's minute 27 September 1910 on Swettenham to Crewe 3 June 1910.

of affairs' of Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Johore.¹

While the permanent officials dismissed Swettenham's objections as biased and out-of-date, the Secretary of State decided to support Anderson but 'with much greater hesitation' than his staff. Lord Crewe had misgivings about increasing the duties and responsibilities of the Governor and High Commissioner—an office which Swettenham maintained was overburdened already. Although he had confidence in Anderson's capacity for co-ordinating and supervising the 'whole work', he was sceptical if Anderson's successor could possibly discharge his duties to the full, particularly if he happened to be a man with no Malayan experience. Nevertheless 'there are occasions when it is necessary to take short views', remarked Crewe, 'and this seems to be one of them'. In sanctioning the proposals, he urged Anderson to bear this difficulty in mind; and to organize the system of administration in such a manner as to facilitate the eventual handing over of control to a newcomer. In the same despatch, the Secretary of State approved the Governor's intention to attend the periodic and informal meetings of the Residents, Heads of Departments and the Resident-General.²

The enactment to provide for a change in the Resident-General's title was opposed by all the unofficial members of the federal council. The public whose views they represented was afraid of losing the powerful advocacy of an authority who had no interests to serve outside the Federation. 'We have on the one hand' said Mr. C. M. Cumming, 'an impecunious Colony which, even at the present moment, is seeking for means of raising revenue;³ and we have, on the other hand, a prosperous federation of states with a large surplus.' In these circumstances, they suspected that the proposed change was to enable the High Commissioner to use the Federation's balances in whatever way he thought fit. On this point Anderson assured them that the government would not incur expenditure or make loans outside the Federation without reference to the federal council. As for the general apprehension on the part of the unofficials that FMS interests would be subordinated to other interests if the Resident-General's authority were to be curtailed *vis-à-vis*

¹ CO273/368 Swettenham to Harding 19 September 1910.

² Ibid. CO to Anderson 19 October 1910.

³ Anderson had proposed an income tax.

that of the High Commissioner's, Anderson had this to say:

So far as the relations of the Colony and the FMS are concerned, they are so intimately bound up and associated that it is in most instances not a case of one interest against the other. The real difficulty is to find where the real interest of the whole lies, and in regard to that I think that the High Commissioner, who has as much interest in one administration as the other, feels that he must look to and find the common interest. His aim will be to find the common interest of both...¹

The local press was divided on the subject. While the *Straits Times* welcomed the proposal as a step towards a more harmonious and efficient administration, the *Malay Mail* criticized it and, instead, proposed that the Resident-General should be replaced by a High Commissioner independent of the Governor of the Colony.² In other words, it advocated the separation of the Colony from the Federation—a contingency which both Anderson and the Colonial Office wished to avoid. The *Malay Mail* reflected the opinion of economic interests in the Federation which ignored the political aspect of the situation and the interests of Malaya as a whole.

During the debate on the Chief Secretary Enactment in the federal council, certain statements made by Anderson are worth noting. In the first place, he stated that his policy was the result of representations which he had received, from time to time, from the Sultan of Perak. His own experience only convinced him of the desirability of the course proposed by Sultan Idris. Speaking in favour of the motion, the Sultan of Perak said that it was then easier for a Sultan or Resident to see the High Commissioner than the Resident-General. Therefore, in his opinion, the idea of a Resident-General who would voice the wishes of the Malay Rulers was no longer evident in practice. Elsewhere, it has been explained that the Sultans generally preferred direct contact with the highest British authority. Such a preference was probably strengthened by the character of Taylor's administration and the practice in the northern Malay States just transferred to Britain where the Rulers insisted on corresponding with the High Commissioner and not the Resident-General. Anderson's public explanation of the origins

¹ PFC 2 November 1910.

² *Straits Times* 2 February 1911, *Malay Mail* 6 December 1909.

of the proposed change in the Resident-General's title was probably to counter the criticism of the unofficials, some of whom ascribed personal motives to his policy.

In the second place, in the federal council of 2 November 1910 Anderson, for the first time, represented the formation of the federal legislature as an attempt to give the constituent states of the Federation powers of control over the central authority, since this was a cardinal feature of genuine federations.

When the Federation of these States was established, it differed from all other federations in one most important respect—that is, that the States which were Federated were vested with no control over the central authority. In every other federation of which we know, I think that is the cardinal feature of it. That those who are parties to the federation, either from popular election or otherwise, retain an important measure of control over the central authority. Here that is entirely wanting. . . . The first step that was taken on my recommendation to remedy that state of things, was the establishment of this Council.

He also interpreted the change from Resident-General to Chief Secretary as a 'further step towards admitting the States to greater control in the general administration of the Federation'.

These statements require some explanation because they gave the impression that the changes in the Federal structure introduced in 1909-10 were meant to check centralization. Sir Lawrence Guillemard, for instance, declared in 1925 that Anderson 'hoped that the changes he introduced would restore to the Rulers and Residents the fuller powers and responsibilities which they exercised before Federation'.¹ Similarly, Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, in reporting on his visit to Malaya in 1932 said that Sir John Anderson had tried to modify the system in force because there was a strong feeling on the part of the Malay Rulers against the loss of authority by the state governments. Consequently, to restrict the powers of the Resident-General, Anderson had created a federal council and reduced the status of the Resident-General. The Federal Council Agreement, according to him, marked 'a definite attempt to create a genuine federal system'.² If so, then it is

¹ Federal Council Paper No. 39 of 1925: HC's statement on 'Decentralisation and the Political Development of the Federated Malay States'.

² *Report of Brig.-Gen. Sir Samuel Wilson on his visit to Malaya, 1932*, p. 7.

strange that such an intention was not clearly stated in the official and confidential correspondence between Anderson and the Colonial Office.

It may be argued that political expediency caused Anderson to describe the two innovations mentioned above in the way he did. Owing to unofficial opposition to the Chief Secretary Enactment, Anderson tried to present the motion in a manner least likely to give offence. Looking at the form of the Federal Council and the provision made for the presence and possible participation of the Malay Rulers with their Residents, Anderson probably felt justified in claiming that the 'parties to the federation' now had an 'important measure of control over the central authority'. But passing from form to substance, we should remember that there was an official majority which voted together. Though the four Rulers each had a vote, they had no powers of veto and the High Commissioner made sure of their support before controversial measures were introduced for discussion. Moreover, the Malay Rulers were not expected to take an active part in the debates. They did not consider it dignified or polite to engage in public arguments with the un-officials, the High Commissioner or the Resident-General whose advice, after all, they had agreed by treaty to accept on all matters of administration. In addition, the proceedings were in English. Many of the enactments presented to the Council were also technical in character. Although a few of the Sultans understood some English and summaries of bills and of the discussion were translated for them, in practice they found it difficult to follow the proceedings and rarely expressed an opinion. As for the unofficials, they represented commercial, tin and rubber interests—not those of the several states. In fact, control over the central authority, represented by the Resident-General, was from the High Commissioner above rather than the state authorities below. Again, Anderson's remarks on the significance of the change in the Resident-General's title were also justifiable in theory. A reduction of his powers could well mean that the powers of the state governments would correspondingly increase. Nonetheless in practice, the High Commissioner expected to absorb the control relinquished by the Resident-General in his new role as Chief Secretary. 'The High Commissioner who is responsible for the whole of British interests

here', Anderson maintained on 29 July 1910 in a private letter written two days after the official despatch on the subject, 'should be placed unmistakably in a position to fix the policy of the several administrations and to co-ordinate them'.¹ Perhaps Anderson did not consider it politic to admit this in public because unofficial opinion in the FMS was hostile to the change.

However, it is also possible that his remarks about the federal council being a cardinal feature of federations was an afterthought—the reflection of a change in the objective of his policy towards the FMS. We have noticed that the working of the 'federal system' depended on personalities as well as events. With regard to the latter, the transfer of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu to Britain under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of March 1909 could have influenced Anderson's views on future policy no less than personal considerations. The accession of these new states had strengthened the Governor's conviction that, on financial as well as on political grounds, he must have overall and undivided control over the whole of British Malaya. That this had also occurred to the Colonial Office is clear from a minute to this effect quoted on a preceding page.² The same event may have affected Anderson's policy in yet another and more important way. The northern Malay States were unwilling to enter the Federation. Except for Kelantan, all the rest even refused to accept a British officer with powers equivalent to those exercised by the Residents whose advice had to be asked and accepted in all matters of administration other than those touching Malay religion and custom. Having enjoyed a high degree of independence under the Bangkok Government, the Malay Rulers of Kedah, Perlis and Trengganu were loath to allow the British to assume the administration of their states. The condition of these states and their relations with the British Government will be dealt with in the second volume to this book. Here it is only necessary to point out that Anderson knew that these four states could not be persuaded to accept the status of the FMS. 'It will be a long time before we can bring Kedah into the FMS I fear', he wrote to R.E. Stubbs of the Colonial Office.³ The same applied not

¹ CO273/362 Anderson to Collins, private, 29 July 1910.

² See p.213 above.

³ CO273/350 Anderson to Stubbs, private, 28 July 1910. See also G. Max-

only to the other northern Malay States but also to Johore in the south, to which a British officer was sent in January 1910 as a sort of general adviser without powers of control.¹ The use of methods other than persuasion to get these states into the Federation was ruled out by the Colonial Office. It did not want 'a state of affairs such as has obtained in Acheen for nearly forty years'.² The Permanent Under-Secretary said that 'His Majesty's Government will not be pleased' if any trouble arose from the acquisition of the new territories under the Anglo-Siamese treaty.³ Under these circumstances Anderson might well have done some re-thinking of the situation as a whole. It probably occurred to him that the British objective of turning the FMS into one protectorate with one civil service, a uniform system of administration, a central legislature and a common treasury—which had been conceived in the 1890's and more or less pursued by successive Governors since then—was not a practical framework for the inclusion of the other Malay States. Moreover, although uniformity of administration and a central legislature had been established, a common purse for the FMS appeared incapable of fulfilment due to the Sultan of Perak's opposition. By 1909 there were still separate state treasuries in addition to the federal treasury which collected certain revenues and paid certain departments.⁴ Since a complete union had thus not been achieved and was clearly unacceptable to the other British dependencies in the Malay Peninsula, Anderson may have concluded that British policy had to adjust itself to realities. A looser form of association among the states seemed to stand a better chance of success. Therefore, it is possible that Anderson decided to promote the growth of a genuine federation under the High Commissioner.

The reference to a genuine federation in his federal council speech of 2 November 1910 could have been an indication of his change in objective for nowhere else before this did he profess a desire to encourage the FMS to develop into a federal and

well's reference to Anderson's views on this point in his 'Notes on a Policy in respect of the Unfederated Malay States,' CO 717/10, October 1920.

¹ For details see the following chapter on Johore.

² CO273/353 Stubbs minute 24 May on FO to CO 19 May 1910.

³ CO273/354 Hopwood's minute 6 July on FO to CO 5 July 1910.

⁴ CO273/346 Anderson to CO 18 March 1909.

not a unitary system. Thus, within the limits imposed by existing institutions, Anderson may have made up his mind some time in 1910 to bring the northern Malay States and the FMS more into line with each other: on the one hand, by gradually strengthening British control over the former and, on the other, by loosening the bonds which tied the FMS together and so directing their future development towards a federation rather than a union. He had sufficient imagination and foresight to realize that the ideal of a united Malaya, which he upheld, was more likely to be achieved under a federal structure of government. The official records available for consultation provide no direct evidence that this was in his mind; but the fact that he did not submit his ideas on future policy in a written despatch need not mean that he had not thought about it or even discussed it in his private letters to members of the Colonial Office staff. In this connexion, it is interesting to note that J. H. M. Robson, one of the unofficial members of the federal council, mentioned in his *Records and Recollections* that Anderson had 'visions of a united Malaya and was intent on sowing the seeds which began to show above ground in the time of Sir Lawrence Guillemard'.¹

In the 'twenties and 'thirties when the British finally discarded the idea of a union in favour of a federation as a more practicable form of government for British Malaya, there were those like Guillemard who claimed that Anderson's innovations were designed to check over-centralization in the FMS. Applied to the whole of Anderson's administration, it would seem that they were merely presenting their own version of past events conditioned by the prevailing policy of decentralization. But if we accept the hypothesis that there was a change in Anderson's views on policy in 1910, then their interpretation would be justified, so far as it applies to the subsequent period.

In conclusion, we should note that from 1904 to 1910, Anderson promoted centralization of administration in Kuala Lumpur and tried to strengthen the links between the FMS and the Straits Settlements. Referring to developments during this period, Guillemard said, 'The powers and influence of the State Councils and the Residents gradually diminished, and increasing efficiency and uniformity under the Central Govern-

¹ Robson, *op. cit.* p. 105.

ment have been purchased at the price of the individuality and legitimate independence of the States. . . . The creation of the Federal Council . . . added a further centralizing tendency.¹ Even if Anderson had intended to modify such a trend after 1910, he did not stay in Malaya long enough to carry out whatever plans he had in mind. His term of office was extended in 1909 for a further three years since the Colonial Office considered that he was doing 'great work' and should be allowed to continue, yet during his leave in England in the middle of 1911, he was offered, and accepted, the post of Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. There he remained until 1916 while Arthur Young took over as Governor and High Commissioner in Singapore.

It is difficult to deny the existence of a strong personal element in Anderson's policy as indeed in the policy of his predecessor. It was an important factor in his advocacy of the change in the Resident-General's status which his critics have ascribed almost entirely to a personal motive.² Such an allegation appears to be substantiated by the fact that when Taylor retired and Young became the first Chief Secretary, he reported that the change was in name only for the duties and responsibilities of the post remained the same.³ Further, Anderson's successor in Singapore actually reversed the former's decision by leaving *Carcosa* to the chief administrative officer in the Federation and taking for his own use the new but smaller building which Anderson had intended for the Chief Secretary. Nevertheless, reviewing Anderson's administration as a whole and not merely considering the innovation which he introduced in 1910 regarding the Resident-General's post, one is inclined to conclude that in general, political, administrative and economic considerations carried more weight in determining policy than personal differences.

¹ Federal Council Paper No. 39 of 1925, op. cit.

² See Swettenham, op. cit. p. 356; his article, 'Malay Problems', *Journal of British Malaya*, vol. 1, May 1926; and Sir George Maxwell's article in the *Straits Times*, 5 October 1932.

³ *PP Cd.5902* (1911) *AR FMS* 1910.

IX

JOHORE: FROM ADVICE TO CONTROL

Just as Johore avoided the Residential system in the 'eighties when the Negri Sembilan and Pahang succumbed to British control, so the state, as we shall see, kept out of the federation despite Sultan Abu Bakar's death just before the scheme was implemented. For a decade thereafter the new Sultan, Ibrahim, pursued an independent policy in most matters not affecting external relations, subject to informal advice only from the British Government. But from 1905 the trend was towards a closer surveillance of Johore affairs. Four steps marked the gradual re-establishment of the Governor's ascendancy over the Sultan and the transition from advice to control: the withdrawal of recognition of the Advisory Board in London in 1905; the enforced retirement of Abdul Rahman, private secretary to the Sultan and Secretary to the Johore Government, in 1907; the appointment of a British General Adviser two years later, and the process reached its logical conclusion in 1914 when Johore accepted a British officer with powers similar to those of a Resident in the Federated Malay States. The purpose of this chapter is to explain Anglo-Johore relations in the last years of Abu Bakar's rule and then examine the subsequent evolution of British policy towards Sultan Ibrahim's government up to 1914. This will take us slightly beyond the period covered by the preceding chapters but as far as the theme of this study is concerned, the extension is unavoidable.

During the last years of Abu Bakar's rule, as in the preceding decades, the metropolitan government had no justification for intervention. Britain's strategic interests were safeguarded by the 1885 treaty and the Sultan continued to keep peace and order as well as promote economic enterprise.

The Straits Government, however, was not entirely satisfied

with the situation for two reasons. In the first place, the development of Johore seemed to have slowed down in the early 'nineties compared to the early 'eighties. In 1893 Cecil Smith alleged that there was less progress in Johore than in any of the states under British Residents.¹ The Sultan's increasingly frequent and costly trips abroad deprived the state of his personal attention and much needed funds for public works. His prolonged absence in Europe in 1889-90, for instance, brought a 'Wail from Johore' published in the *Singapore Free Press* indicative of the views of European planting and other interests.² About two years after his return from this tour, Sultan Abu Bakar left Johore again. According to the Governor he stayed 'at great expense' in Cairo. The Khedive's yacht subsequently took him to Athens where he was feted. The Sultan then went to Constantinople and there again was received 'with much magnificence'. In Vienna also the Emperor gave him a grand reception. Flattered by all this attention, Abu Bakar was led to 'cut a great dash' involving heavy expenditure which Johore could not afford since the state had yet to pay off a debt of about \$100,000 incurred by the Sultan on his previous trip. The Governor therefore reported privately to the Secretary of State that the Sultan's personal extravagance 'seriously retarded' the development of Johore proper. He 'begged' Lord Ripon to do everything possible to persuade Abu Bakar to make his visit in England brief. 'And if Your Lordship would further advise him that these visits to Europe and the extravagance and display which is attended upon them should cease' he added, 'and that he should husband his resources for the benefit of his State, it would, I think, have a good effect.' 'In days gone by' the Governor continued, 'the advice of the Governor was sufficient. Since the reception he has had in England—and especially at

¹ Ripon Papers, BM Add. Mss. 43564 vol. LXXIV, Smith to Ripon 29 May 1893.

² *Singapore Free Press*, 20 November 1890. An excerpt from this 'wail' of several stanzas reads as follows:

Sultan, dear Sultan, come back to us soon,
You've been away more than a year . . .
Your roads are all ruts, your officials asleep
And money's exceedingly tight,
Out here in Johore we do nothing but weep
And long for Your Highness' light . . .

Windsor and Marlborough House—the advice of the Governor, if unpalatable, is ignored.¹

This brings us to the second reason for Cecil Smith's misgivings. Towards the end of his reign Sultan Abu Bakar made it quite clear to the Straits Government that he would not accept a subordinate status in matters of local concern. On one occasion he declined to comply with the Governor's request to proscribe Chinese secret societies in Johore in accordance with the policy adopted in the Colony and the Protected States. As 'the old friend, ally and next door neighbour of the Straits Government' he declared that he ought to have been previously consulted. Johore, he pointed out, differed from the Straits and other Malay States in that there was only one secret society—the Ghee Hin—which guaranteed the 'peace and good behaviour' of the Chinese. As for the related question of *Wai Seng* lotteries which the Straits authorities wished to suppress and for which it needed Johore's co-operation, Sultan Abu Bakar stated that the recognition of such lotteries in Johore did not introduce anything new into the private life of the Chinese who would otherwise indulge in this habit surreptitiously. If, as a result of his enquiries, it was proved that the working of such lotteries in Johore was prejudicial to the welfare of the Chinese in the Colony, then he would take remedial measures.² In another instance, when Cecil Smith submitted representations regarding two Hainanese women alleged to have been detained in Johore for purposes of prostitution, Abu Bakar resented the Straits Government's attitude of expecting him to obey directives. He demanded from them the consideration due to an independent Ruler.³ These were examples of how the Sultan resisted encroachment in a sphere where he believed that he was independent.

Technically, the Sultan acted entirely within his rights since he had no treaty obligation to accept the Governor's advice.

¹ Ripon Papers, BM Add. Mss. 43564 vol. LXXIV, Smith to Ripon 29 May 1893.

² CO273/168 J. Dickson, Acting Governor to CO September 1890; CO273/250 Mitchell to CO 20 January 1899 enclosing copy of letter from Sultan to Smith 23 July 1891; also Johore State Secretariat, Official Correspondence, Letter Book A (1885 to 1893) 23 June 1892.

³ See correspondence enclosed in CO273/179 Smith to CO 20 January and 2 March 1892.

There was merely an informal understanding that he would receive such advice when tendered. Herein lay the fundamental weakness of Anglo-Johore relations from the British standpoint. Whereas the Resident's advice on all matters of administration 'must be asked and acted upon' by the Malay Rulers of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, in the case of Johore, the advice of the Governor—whether sought for or otherwise—could be rejected. Informal advice worked well enough so long as the Johore Government willingly adhered to its unwritten obligations. But the Sultan began to question the assumption underlying the policy of informal advice from the late 'eighties at a time when a new influence in the person of Abdul Rahman bin Andak was emerging in the Johore political scene.

Abdul Rahman, a nephew of the Sultan, was 'a very clever' English-educated Malay who became the Sultan's private secretary in 1884. Recognizing his abilities, the Sultan came to rely more and more on his private secretary on whom he bestowed the title of Dato' Sri Amar d'Raja and, in 1893, the post of Secretary to the Johore Government. Abdul Rahman also sat on the Johore Council of State and enjoyed precedence over two older members, namely the Penggawa Timor and Penggawa Barat.¹ Cecil Smith suspected that it was Abdul Rahman who drafted the Sultan of Johore's replies to communications from the Singapore authorities.² In any case, Johore's growing reluctance to accept advice from the colonial government irritated the Governor who wrote: 'In former times, His Highness most readily adopted the advice of the Governor of the Colony, and I am personally on very good terms with him. In official matters however I notice that there is now a marked change, which is, I think, to be attributed to a desire to exhibit an entire independence of control by, or dependence on, the Government of the Colony.'³ This suggests that while the personal element accounted to some extent for Abu Bakar's reluctance to accept advice from Weld, the Sultan's unwillingness to go along with Cecil Smith was the result of political calculation designed to assert his independence of the Straits authorities.

¹ *Singapore and Straits Directory for 1893*, Singapore, 1893, p. 283.

² CO273/154 Smith to CO 29 September 1888.

³ CO273/179 Smith to CO 20 January 1892.

If Abdul Rahman's influence was responsible for this development, it was probably at his suggestion also that Sultan Abu Bakar promulgated a constitution on 14 April 1894 prior to his last journey to Europe.¹ Johore thus became the only nineteenth-century Malay State to have a written constitution which provided for the sovereign, his state allowance and for the descent of the Crown of Johore. Among other things, it stipulated that neither the sovereign, his heirs nor any of his ministers may surrender the state or any part of the country to any European Power. It laid down the constitution and duties of the Council of Ministers and Council of State, the basis of law to be administered in the courts of justice and the state religion. The Council of Ministers had functions similar to those of a cabinet, or the executive council of a crown colony, whereas the state council was to act primarily as a legislative body.²

In a state organized and administered along lines resembling those of the neighbouring British Colony, neither the slow pace of development nor the Sultan's increasingly independent but not unreasonable attitude towards the Governor called for intervention. At this stage moreover the stresses and strains in the policy of informal advice were felt at the local level only. With the metropolitan authorities the Johore Government remained mindful of its unofficial obligations. There was hardly an instance when Sultan Abu Bakar rejected the advice of the Secretary of State.

Anyway, Sultan Abu Bakar died in London on 4 June 1895 at a time when arrangements for the federation of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, were being finalized. In some circles it was thought that this provided a chance for the British Government to seek an immediate revision of its relations with Johore for the purpose of drawing the state into the federation and thus consolidating British power over the entire southern part of the Peninsula. The Colonial Office and the Straits Government, it will be recalled, had agreed in 1888 not to press for the appointment of a consular officer provided

¹ CO273/240 J.A. Swettenham, Acting Governor to CO 7 June 1898 with enclosures. See also R. Braddell, *The Legal Status of the Malay States*, Singapore, 1931, pp. 22-24; and R. Emerson, *Malaysia*, pp. 203-6.

² Ibid.

for in the 1885 treaty during Abu Bakar's lifetime. His death now reopened the question. The *Daily Chronicle* advocated an all-powerful Resident instead of a consular officer for Johore.¹ W. A. Pickering, the first Protector of Chinese in the Straits, and Swettenham shared the same view.² The Colonial Office however believed that to take such a step immediately would be regarded as 'a breach of faith' and look 'ungenerous' in view of the late Sultan's 'unswerving friendship for the Queen'. This decision was made by Lucas and Fairfield. None of the more senior members of the Colonial Office minuted on the subject. Fairfield accordingly assured Abdul Rahman on 8 June 1895 that Britain would abide by the engagements entered into with the late Sultan. In Lucas' mind, however, there lurked the idea that the continuation of the policy of informal advice would depend on 'the character of the new man'.

Sultan Ibrahim, a young man of twenty-two, had little administrative experience when he ascended the throne. After a very brief period of schooling, he joined the Johore Military Forces and on being commissioned as Second Lieutenant, became his father's aide-de-camp. He paid the first of many subsequent visits to Europe before he was seventeen because his aging father wanted to introduce him to European royalty. Proclaimed Crown Prince in May 1891, he was given only routine duties. He worked off his energies on the sports field apparently, rather than in preparation for the throne.³ Sultan Abu Bakar's absolutism presumably extended to relations with his son as well. Ibrahim inherited an empty treasury as well as his father's huge debts in 1895. Whereas the late Sultan was

¹ CO273/210 See minutes by Lucas and Fairfield on Abdul Rahman to CO 5 June 1895, also the *Straits Budget* 14 January 1896 quoting the *Daily Chronicle* 13 December 1895.

² Henry Norman was believed to have been responsible for the items on Johore in the *Daily Chronicle* and Fairfield said that Norman 'reproduces very faithfully' Swettenham's opinions in his writings on Malayan affairs. See also CO273/324 Lucas' minute of 30 March 1906 on Sultan Ibrahim to CO 26 March 1906; W.A. Pickering, 'The Straits Settlements', *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, January-April 1896, and the *Straits Settlements Pamphlets* in the Colonial Office Library, vol. 1, no. 14.

³ See *Souvenir Commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of His Highness the Sultan of Johore, 1895-1955*, Johore Bahru, 1955, *passim*. Ibrahim was an expert rider, an enthusiastic polo-player and keenly interested in horse racing, cricket, tennis and big-game hunting.

generally acknowledged to be 'exceedingly astute' and a man who 'played his cards better than anyone else in these parts',¹ the calibre of the new Ruler remained to be seen.

Nonetheless, in 1896, owing to the disclosure that the Sultan's affairs and the finances of the state were in a 'very bad way and notoriously going from bad to worse under the usurious conditions of the indebtedness'² the Colonial Office, now under Chamberlain, reviewed its earlier decision not to press for a change in the *status quo* in Johore. In August 1896, Sir Robert Herbert, who had taken over the Chairmanship of the Johore Advisory Board in his retirement (when General Fielding's death created the vacancy) sought Chamberlain's approval for some arrangement whereby the Singapore Government would advance £150,000 to £200,000 to pay off Johore's debts and enable the state to 'make a fresh clean start'. His comment that 'Johore must sooner or later come under some form of control' gave Lucas hope that it could be persuaded to join the 'New Malay Federation' if it were required to accept the Resident-General as 'principal European adviser on the spot' instead of a Resident. 'It is a misfortune' Lucas wrote, 'that Johore at the end of the Malay Peninsula is not in the Malay federation'.³ With the approval of Chamberlain's Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Lord Selborne, Lucas broached the subject with Herbert. But he learned that Johore 'would not at present come in on any terms'.⁴ The idea therefore had to be temporarily shelved since pressure was considered inconsistent with the British Government's recent assurance to Abdul Rahman that it would abide by existing engagements. Presumably also, Sir Robert's position on the Johore Advisory Board reassured both the metropolitan and colonial governments that the young Sultan would be well-advised. Thus we find that the Colonial Office took no heed of a complaint from Tunku Khalid, the Sultan's uncle and a member of the state council, against his nephew's administration. He accused Sultan Ibrahim of being

¹ CO273/294 Swettenham to CO 19 October 1903.

² CO273/222 Sir Robert Herbert, Chairman Johore Advisory Board, to Fairfield 24 August 1896.

³ Ibid. See minutes on the above letter.

⁴ Ibid. See also CO273/218 Lucas' minute 10 November 1896 on J.A. Swettenham to CO 12 October 1896.

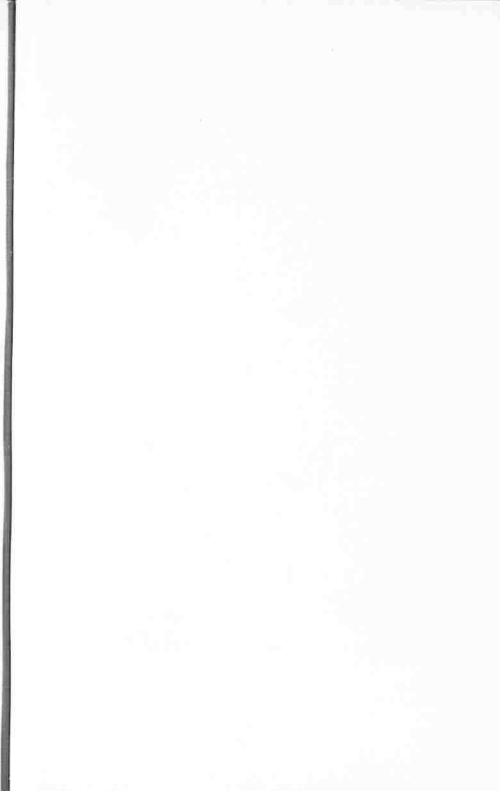




PLATE IV H.H. Sultan Ibrahim of Johore (standing on right) as a young man with members of his Government's Advisory Board during a visit to London. Date unknown.

high-handed, impulsive and of violating the constitution. From the contents of his complaint however the Acting Governor, Sir J.A. Swettenham, inferred that the young Sultan was trying to reduce the financial obligations of the state and might have discovered official corruption.¹

By far the most important question which cropped up in the early years of Ibrahim's reign involving his relations with the British Government, was that of the railway through Johore to bring the trunk line from Gemas in Negri Sembilan to Johore Bahru. Many British officials had long looked forward to the eventual establishment of railway communication down the length of the Peninsula. None more so than Frank Swettenham, Resident-General of the FMS since 1896, under whose energetic direction the trunk line from Butterworth in Province Wellesley to the southern frontier of the Negri Sembilan was nearing completion by November 1899. Swettenham consequently proposed its extension through Johore to its 'natural terminus' at Johore Bahru, opposite the northern end of the railway across Singapore island then being taken in hand. He asked if the Sultan were prepared to let the FMS advance the whole cost and work the line as a section of the FMS system at 2 per cent. until the section gave a return of 5 per cent. on the capital. In the alternative the Resident-General suggested that Johore should finance the line but FMS officers undertake the work on its behalf. The Resident-General wanted construction to commence not later than 1902.² The Governor and the Colonial Office were wholly in favour of Swettenham's suggestion, and Lucas hoped that the Sultan would also agree to 'join the Malay Federation'.³

The matter was referred to Sir Robert Herbert of the Advisory Board who was now assisted by Sir Cecil Smith as vice-chairman. The appointment of the former Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and a former Governor of the Straits Settlements to the Board was a masterly stroke which strengthened Johore's position in its dealings with Singapore

¹ CO273/240 J.A. Swettenham to CO 7 June 1898 with enclosures.

² CO273/252 Mitchell to CO 30 November 1899 enclosing Swettenham to Sultan 7 November 1899.

³ Ibid. Minute by Lucas of 9 December 1899 on Mitchell to CO 9 November 1899 and his marginal note on CO to Advisory Board 3 February 1900.

and the Colonial Office. Again, one suspects that the idea came from Abdul Rahman rather than the Sultan; the former's political experience and understanding of British official thinking at this stage being superior to the latter's. Abdul Rahman had had about a decade and a half of close association with the British as Sultan Abu Bakar's secretary and confidential adviser, and young Sultan Ibrahim was much in his hands. He made Abdul Rahman Minister in Charge of Relations with the British and Vice-President of the Johore Council of State. According to Swettenham, Abdul Rahman practically ran the state during the Sultan's absence, and Herbert once mentioned that the Sultan was 'afraid of Rahman' who laid down the law.¹ With Rahman behind him, Sultan Ibrahim took a 'very suspicious' view of Swettenham's railway proposals. He feared that the acceptance of financial and other assistance from the FMS would jeopardize Johore's independence.² While Herbert favoured the proposal in principle, where the details were concerned he felt obliged to advise the Sultan in the best interests of his state even when this ran counter to the best interests of the FMS. Indeed, Herbert's participation in the railway negotiations strengthened Johore's bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the Colonial Office. As Lucas later put down on record:

... all the difficulties in this case have arisen from the intervention of an Advisory Board between this protected Malay ruler and the High Commissioner at Singapore with whom and through whom alone there ought to be dealings with the British Government. The matter has been complicated by the personality of Sir R. Herbert, to whom I for one, owe the utmost attention and regard, which has made it difficult for me to advise action contrary to what were evidently his very strong wishes.³

These negotiations between Swettenham and the Colonial Office on the one hand, and the Advisory Board and Johore Government on the other, dragged on from the end of 1899 till July 1904 after Swettenham's resignation from the service. While the British pressed for terms to satisfy their own interests, Sultan Ibrahim and Abdul Rahman proved equally determined to do

¹ CO273/301 Herbert to Swettenham 27 May 1904.

² CO273/252 See Herbert's minutes 21 December 1899 on Mitchell to CO 9 November 1899.

³ CO273/306 Minute by Lucas on 15 June 1904 on the CO paper dated 30 June 1904 pertaining to the Johore Railway Convention.

likewise for Johore. Setting aside the recommendations of the Advisory Board which aimed at a fair compromise, the Sultan and Abdul Rahman not only chose to pay more for a loan from private financiers but preferred to entrust the construction of the railway to a London firm of engineers and contractors rather than the FMS. This posed a problem for the British.

Both in Singapore and at the Colonial Office there was agreement that when differences arose between the Colonial and Johore Governments in small matters, the latter might be allowed to have its own way but in 'big questions like the Railway' which was of 'great importance' to the Straits Settlements and the FMS, the Sultan was expected to be guided by British advice.¹ To overcome the Sultan's opposition, the Governor and the permanent officials felt that the Secretary of State should threaten to appoint a British Agent under the terms of the 1885 treaty or even a Resident if necessary. Unless imperial interests were directly or indirectly involved, which hardly appeared to be the case, Chamberlain thought such a threat unjustified. In his opinion, the Sultan might be *advised* to accept whatever seemed most conducive to the interests of Johore, the Colony and the FMS.² There then seemed ways and means short of a threat to make Sultan Ibrahim realize that if he blocked British policy, Whitehall could thwart his aspirations. For instance, Ibrahim was extremely anxious to be received by King Edward VII but the Secretary of State refused to oblige. He told the Sultan to first settle down in Johore and carry out his duties 'to the benefit of his subjects and in cordial cooperation with the High Commissioner, who should be his guide and friend' in order to 'qualify himself for such recognition as was ever gladly accorded to his father'.³ Despite this rebuff the Sultan persisted in looking around for some arrangement which would ensure his personal control over the proposed railway. By the middle of 1902, he had worn down the patience of the local and metropolitan authorities. Ommanney, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, deemed it 'intolerable' that Ibrahim should be allowed to thwart the policy of the power on which he

¹ CO273/277 Minutes on F.R. Harris to Chamberlain 16 November 1901 and in CO273/289 minutes on Herbert to Lucas 8 January 1902.

² CO273/289 Chamberlain to Swettenham 4 February 1902.

³ CO273/277 Chamberlain to Herbert 25 February 1902.

depended.¹ Lucas too felt that 'active intervention' by means of a Consul or Resident would soon become necessary.² In June 1902, the Secretary of State authorized Swettenham to convey to the Sultan his dissatisfaction with the course being pursued by Johore against the 'best advice'.³ But the Sultan continued to stall. And he alienated the sympathies of the Advisory Board by refusing to buckle down to affairs of state. In October 1902 Cecil Smith was 'positively aghast' at the idea of the Sultan of Johore leaving again 'so soon' for England when 'his wretched country' needed every dollar that could be spared.⁴ The Sultan's irresponsible ways and his resistance to advice from the Board and the Colonial Office convinced them both that the *status quo* could not continue for long. To secure 'something more definite to go upon' Swettenham was asked to report on conditions in Johore Bahru with particular reference to the state of the police force, prisons, schools, hospitals etc.⁵ Clearly, with the cognizance of the Board, the British were now preparing for intervention.

Thus within seven years of his accession Sultan Ibrahim came close to losing that position which his father had successfully preserved for over three decades. Essentially, the attitude of the colonial and the metropolitan governments had not changed. It was Ibrahim who either failed to realize or chose to ignore the fact that his independence in internal affairs was at the Secretary of State's discretion. Although Abu Bakar had defied local officials, he always bowed to advice from the Colonial Office, and on the whole, despite his personal extravagance and other weaknesses, Abu Bakar had made a real effort to administer and develop Johore along the lines of the adjacent areas under British rule. But his son, egged on by Abdul Rahman, showed a tendency to claim a *de facto* independence beyond that which his father had enjoyed. Worse still, in the eyes of the British, he seemed lacking in the 'good qualities' of his predecessor. From

¹ CO273/288 Ommanney's minute on Herbert to CO 24 May 1902.

² Ibid. Minute 28 May 1902 on Johore Advisory Board to CO 15 May 1902.

³ Ibid. CO to Governor 10 June 1902.

⁴ Ibid. Smith to Lucas 2 October 1902.

⁵ CO273/294 See minutes on Swettenham to CO 4 July 1903; the Secretary of State's reply of 30 July 1903 and CO273/298 Smith to Lucas, private, 23 July 1903.

October 1902, it looked as if his future position was going to depend on the Governor's first-hand report of conditions in Johore.

Fortunately for the Sultan, he satisfied so competent an observer as Frank Swettenham that there was no maladministration, at least in Johore Bahru. Never an admirer of Sultan Abu Bakar, Swettenham thought even less of Ibrahim and he had proceeded to Johore Bahru with few illusions about the results of indigenous governments acting on informal British advice. Yet after his tour, Swettenham was 'favourably impressed'—more so than he had expected. He reported that 'the Hospital buildings were good enough, though not in best repair'. The roads which he saw were 'all distinctly good'. He had heard nevertheless that a few miles from the town they were in bad order and, a little further away, they were unmetalled. The prison, he considered 'most creditable in every respect' while he noticed plenty of scholars in the school where, despite the absence of good teachers, the results were again better than he had expected. The Central Police Station and the police in it were 'very good indeed'. The men were smart, intelligent and well-dressed. The offices, barracks and lock-ups were 'all good'. After observing the Chief Magistrate conduct a case in court, Swettenham thought that he worked 'quite intelligently'. If he thus commented favourably on some things, Swettenham also recorded his criticism of others. It was his impression that all the Malay officers at the Secretariat were pretending to carry on work the details of which they did not understand. 'There is no doubt,' he wrote, 'that the so called Administration of Johore is a farce, but the personnel is just clever enough to make it look like reality to the general spectator.' He pointed out too that Sultan Ibrahim did exactly as he pleased. He was capricious, reckless, headstrong and insufficiently circumspect in his public behaviour. Swettenham nevertheless felt bound to say that if Johore were regarded simply as a Malay State with an independent Ruler and administered by Malay officials, he could see 'very little cause to interfere with the present regime'. He concluded with the words: 'The country, of course suffers, the people suffer and Singapore suffers from the want of a developing and well governed neighbour but beyond that it would be difficult to frame a strong indictment. As matters stand Johore,

as we know it, is the Sultan and he is capable of a good deal of improvement; but that might be said with equal truth of some other Rulers.¹

Credit for the state of affairs in Johore Bahru seems to belong more to Abu Bakar who had laid the foundations of a modern administration; to officials such as the Dato Mentri (the Chief Minister who had the respect of Malays as well as Europeans); and probably Johore's European advisers, for example, C. B. Buckley of Messrs. Rodyk and Davidson (a member of the Johore State Council since 1899) than to the personal efforts of Sultan Ibrahim himself. At all events Swettenham's report in 1903 meant that Britain could not use maladministration as a reason for insisting on control over Johore's internal affairs.

Subsequently, the Colonial Office considered intervention on other grounds. The Sultan showed that he was above the bidding of Herbert who 'for friendship of his father, did what he could to safeguard the son'.² When Herbert tried to expedite the conclusion of the railway convention by sending a member of the Board to Paris where Ibrahim was holidaying, to obtain the Sultan's signature, he received a peremptory note to desist from such action. Nor would the Sultan condescend to indicate the probable date of his intended visit to London. Similarly, he refused to reply to a letter signed by Lucas for the Secretary of State urging him to accept the convention, the terms of which he had already agreed to, without further delay. Instead Sultan Ibrahim instructed Herbert to 'make a suitable reply . . . on my behalf'.³ This held up work on the line and kept Swettenham's successor, Sir John Anderson, waiting impatiently in London to conclude arrangements. Should the Sultan also disobey a personal communication from the Secretary of State, both Ommanney and Lucas thought that a British Agent ought to be appointed who should be converted into a Resident at the earliest opportunity. Even though there was no 'serious misgovernment', they argued that the Sultan's refusal to keep his word and to 'guide himself by the wishes of His Majesty's Government'

¹ CO273/294 Swettenham to CO 19 October 1903, enclosing memo. by G.A. Bosanquet, his private secretary, on the 'Administration of the State of Johore'.

² CO273/324 Lucas' minute on Ibrahim to Elgin 26 May 1906.

³ CO273/307 Ibrahim to Herbert 4 February 1904; Lucas to Ibrahim 18 February 1904.

justified a 'strong step'.¹ But again the Sultan avoided such a contingency by finally recognizing the conditional nature of his independence. A firm note from A. Lyttelton, then Secretary of State, brought him to London where he reluctantly signed the Johore Railway Convention on 11 July 1904.²

By 1904, the railway episode and, to a lesser extent, the Sultan's personal conduct had cost him the good opinion of the Colonial Office. The Secretary of State turned down yet another request from him to be presented to King Edward notwithstanding Herbert's good word on his behalf. Replying to Herbert, the Permanent Under-Secretary said:

I have reminded Mr. Lyttelton of the strong desire of the Sultan of Johore to be received in audience by the King and I have ventured to say that you think there is good ground for assuming that the Sultan has materially amended his ways. . . . Mr. Lyttelton feels however that the escapades which rendered the sowing of his wild oats by the Sultan a matter of such undesirable notoriety, are of much too recent occurrence to justify him in standing sponsor for Johore before the King, and that his presentation must still be deferred. If he visits this country next year and, in the meantime, avoids giving ground for open scandal and adopts towards the High Commissioner the same loyal attitude which his father assumed, the Secretary of State would approach the question of his presentation to the King in a different spirit to that in which he regrets to be at present compelled to consider it.³

Instead of setting out to regain the confidence of the Colonial Office, Sultan Ibrahim proceeded to assume a posture of greater independence. Over the issue of an *exequatur* to the German Consul-General at Johore, for instance, he insisted that the application should be made to him and not the High Commissioner.⁴ Likewise, without consulting either the Governor or the Secretary of State, Sultan Ibrahim gave a concession involving monopoly rights for twenty years over 'everything on which the progress of the State' depended, to the Johore State

¹ CO273/306 See minutes on Ibrahim to Herbert 20 February 1904.

² CO273/301 Smith to Lucas 14 May 1904 enclosing Herbert to Swettenham 27 May 1904; CO273/802 CO to Anderson 11 July 1904. The Johore Railway Convention may also be found in W.G. Maxwell and W.S. Gibson, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London, 1924, pp. 252-67.

³ CO273/306 Ommanney to Herbert 27 July 1904.

⁴ See correspondence on the subject in CO273/309.

Corporation Ltd. which was backed by Amsterdam financiers.¹ On top of this, he adopted such a cavalier attitude towards Herbert that the latter contemplated resignation on grounds of 'age and infirmity'. Cecil Smith too was 'not in the least anxious' to remain. The other members at the time were D. Hervey, formerly of the Straits Civil Service, Charles H. Ommanney and two new members² appointed by the Sultan without consulting the chairman or the vice-chairman.³ What speeded up the Board's resignation was Abdul Rahman's note to Cecil Smith (who had become Chairman at Herbert's death), taking him to task for communicating to the Colonial Office the papers on the Johore Corporation.

The course taken in approaching the Secretary of State will necessarily prejudice any future negotiations of a similar nature, and it may well be interpreted by the British Government as an admission on the part of Johore that it has not, under the treaty of 1885, the full powers of an independent state in the matter of concessions even to British subjects, but it is bound before granting *any* concession to submit it for approval to the British Government.

This position has been brought about by the course taken by the Advisory Board, and it is for the purpose of avoiding and rectifying such mistakes that the Board has been established. The Sultan, therefore, considers it incumbent upon the Advisory Board, if possible, to get the matter put right. How this is to be done it is for the Advisory Board to consider, the Board being . . . to some extent in touch with the Colonial Office will know best how they can set about it and induce the Secretary of State for the Colonies to withdraw the adverse opinion and position he has expressed and taken up.⁴

Having practically forced the Board's resignation, the Sultan reconstituted the Board with Abdul Rahman as ex-officio member. The new body was intended to further Abdul Rahman's view that Johore should now exercise 'the full powers of an independent state' in its internal affairs as it was entitled to, rather than abide by an informal obligation to receive advice at the British Government's discretion.

¹ CO273/313 See minutes on Johore Advisory Board to CO 10 April 1905; CO273/316 E. Erlanger to A. Lyttelton 9 May 1905.

² Sir Charles Evans Smith and Colonel A. Durand.

³ CO273/316 Smith to Lucas 29 March 1905.

⁴ CO273/313 Abdul Rahman to Smith 13 July 1905 and 10 October 1905 enclosed in Smith to CO 21 October 1905.

The Colonial Office did not doubt that the inspiration behind these moves came from Abdul Rahman just as he had been the cause of Sultan Abu Bakar's increasingly independent attitude towards the end of his reign. During the negotiations for the 1885 treaty and the Railway Convention of 1904, Abdul Rahman had given 'an infinity of trouble'.¹ With the Sultan in the hands of one as sharply intelligent as Abdul Rahman 'who had been so much in England . . . speaks English and has had to do with Europeans all his life',² the British thought a 'dangerous' situation likely to develop.

The Secretary of State therefore decided to have no more dealings with the Board in London and instead insisted that henceforth the 'High Commissioner of the FMS' should be the sole means of communication between Johore and Whitehall. This reversion to the *status quo* before 1886 was intended to make clear that Johore's pretensions to independence would not be tolerated further, and that Johore ought to accept advice from the High Commissioner like the other Protected States. Addressing Abdul Rahman, who was holidaying with the Sultan in Europe, Lucas said:

Mr. Lyttelton considers that the continued existence of the Board can serve no useful purpose and accordingly strongly advises His Highness to take the opportunity of abolishing it with a view to being guided in future solely by the advice of the High Commissioner for the FMS, when he is in Johore, or by that of the Secretary of State when he is in this country. Mr. Lyttelton trusts that His Highness will recognize the desirability of complying with this suggestion since in any case if the Board is retained the Secretary of State will not feel justified in taking any further cognizance of its existence and must decline to communicate with any one on His Highness' behalf except the High Commissioner of the FMS. I am to add that the High Commissioner will now be given a free authority to place a British Agent in Johore, should he think fit to do so. . . .³

The reply to this communication showed that the Johore Government, having successfully asserted its right to reject informal advice from the Singapore authorities, was now intent on assuming a similar position *vis-à-vis* the Colonial Office. Abdul Rahman maintained that the correspondence between the

¹ CO273/301 Herbert to Swettenham 27 May 1904.

² CO273/294 Swettenham to CO 19 October 1903.

³ CO273/316 Lucas to Abdul Rahman 9 November 1905.

Johore Government and its Advisory Board should not have been communicated to the Colonial Office without the Sultan's approval. Further, that there was need for a Board to give Johore 'independent advice' on occasions when its interests were not 'wholly identical' with those of the FMS or the Straits Settlements. 'In case of conflicting interests' Abdul Rahman argued, 'Johore like any other independent state may reasonably expect to have the advantage of independent advice.'¹ This confirmed the Colonial Office view that it was high time for Johore to fall into line with the other Protected States.

In addition to the non-recognition of the Advisory Board, the Colonial Office suggested the appointment of a British Agent as another step towards the desired result. Anderson disagreed. Knowing full well that Sultan Ibrahim had 'a vein of combativeness in his disposition', Anderson felt sure that a British Agent would encounter a 'conspiracy of silence' and have nothing to do since he had neither the right nor the power, under the 1885 treaty, to look into things for himself in the absence of complaint from a British or a foreign subject. 'To be of any real use' Anderson said, 'the Agent should be a member of the State Council with a right to examine or inspect any of the public institutions, and it is highly improbable that the Sultan would agree to that except under compulsion, which under existing circumstances it would be difficult to justify.' He deprecated the appointment of an Agent on the grounds that this was unlikely to facilitate decisive action 'when the opportunity for claiming control' arrived. Such an opportunity, he believed, would soon be provided by the influx of more Europeans into Johore to take up rubber planting. Besides, he thought that Johore would not be able to meet its financial obligations to the FMS when the railway was completed. On this, as on a previous occasion, he expressed the view that there was no need for haste: with a financial hold over the Johore railway,² financial control by the FMS would become 'an absolute necessity' and 'political and administrative control must inevitably follow'. Meanwhile, Anderson preferred to confine himself to advice when asked

¹ Ibid. Abdul Rahman to Lucas 14 November 1905.

² According to the 1904 Railway Convention between Johore and the FMS, the latter was to advance the initial capital of approx. £1,200,000 at 3 per cent. See article xvii, Maxwell and Gibson, op. cit. p. 256.

unless he heard of anything which appeared to call for intervention.¹

Although the appointment of a British Agent was thus once again postponed, Sultan Ibrahim's position by the end of 1905 was actually much weaker than it had been at the beginning of his reign. No longer did he have the backing of an Advisory Board presided over by a man of political influence in British circles. He was also out of favour at the Colonial Office. Whereas his father had been able to claim the friendship of Queen Victoria, Ibrahim was not even received by King Edward. To make matters worse, the Chief Minister of Johore and the State Secretary, among other Johore officials, disapproved of Sultan Ibrahim's conduct. The Mentri Besar told Anderson that during the Sultan's brief periods of residence in Johore he was so impulsive and erratic that 'he only upset things and created difficulties' for others to face. Then when the Sultan was in Europe, he made exorbitant demands on the state treasury. He insisted on a special overseas allowance of \$40,000 a month when the estimates provided him with \$18,000 to \$20,000 only. Concerned that the state revenues could not be stretched to accommodate the Sultan's requirements, the Chief Minister and State Secretary asked Anderson to see the Sultan during his leave in England to induce him to listen to reason. They also indicated that if the Sultan returned to Johore, the presence of a British officer on the spot would be helpful.²

Early in 1906 Anderson reported on the imminence of a crisis in Johore affairs. He had heard that the Sultan was giving away large concessions of land to people in Britain which were likely to clash with others made locally. Less than a fortnight later, the Governor cabled the Secretary of State to see the Sultan at once to warn him against granting further 'improvident, reckless concessions' on terms which were 'certain to hamper administration in the future'. He suggested that Lord Elgin should demand the appointment of D. G. Campbell (then Resident of Negri Sembilan) as Resident in Johore with a seat on the state council.³

¹ CO273/316 CO to Anderson 23 November 1905; Anderson to CO 26 December 1905. See also CO273/312 Anderson to CO 27 June 1905.

² CO273/320 Anderson to CO 20 February 1906.

³ Ibid. Anderson to CO 2 March 1906.

But the Secretary of State could hardly thrust a Resident on Johore because, to quote one official, he did not want 'the bloom rubbed off the plant' before it fell 'into the British lap'.¹ It transpired that Sultan Ibrahim had recently granted only two concessions for rubber planting to British subjects. One of these, comprising some 25,000 acres of land adjacent to the railway then under construction, was to Sir Frank Swettenham who, with Col. A. G. Durand of the Advisory Board, was among the directors of the Rubber Estates of Johore Ltd.² Though the Colonial Office expressed regret that a former High Commissioner should have thus become involved in Johore, what gave them more concern were the Sultan's negotiations with Guthrie and Company of Singapore and London for the formation of a company whose privileges included the construction of light railways and the occupation of a portion of the foreshore of Johore Bahru for the purpose of erecting landing stages, docks, quays, etc. at the terminus of the Johore section of the trunk line. The Sultan was determined that his capital should develop into a 'port of consequence' rather than remain a 'wayside station' serving Singapore. Aggrieved that he had not been 'treated with consideration' in the question of the Johore Railway Convention, Sultan Ibrahim now appealed to Elgin to prevent 'undue encroachment' upon his rights and prerogatives. He further pointed out that the company in question was not monopolistic in character and emphasized his desire to attract British capital into his 'backward state'.³

To understand why this provoked Anderson to contemplate intervention and control, we should note the Sultan's expressed intention to be guided exclusively by Johore's needs and in competition with the 'selfish interests' of Singapore if necessary. Obviously Sultan Ibrahim wished to make Johore less dependent economically on Singapore and the FMS. His plans threatened to impair the financial control which Anderson had anticipated in 1905 and, in turn, the political control that was regarded as inevitable. Should they materialize, the Governor

¹ Ibid. Minute by Fiddes 2 March 1906.

² CO273/324 Minute by Fiddes on the Swettenham concession 28 February 1906. Swettenham had obtained the concession from the Sultan on 14 November 1905 and the Company's prospectus was dated 1 February 1906.

³ Ibid. Sultan to Elgin 26 March 1906.

feared that the beneficiaries were likely to be the Sultan and the concessionaires rather than the state or the people. By about March 1906 therefore both Singapore and Whitehall were eager to 'put a British Resident into the State and have it administered in line with the FMS';¹ what hampered them was their inability to frame an indictment against the Sultan.

None of the factors hitherto used to justify the establishment of political control over the other Malay States operated in Johore in 1906. There was neither turbulence nor 'serious misgovernment'. Admittedly the Sultan was guilty of neglecting official affairs from time to time, of spending too much on himself and not enough on Johore² yet, within these limits, he encouraged economic enterprise. That he refused to toe the British line in matters of local rather than imperial concern did not provide sufficient grounds for Britain to deprive him of that degree of independence which he still enjoyed.

Under the circumstances, Elgin decided to give Ibrahim a personal warning in the hope that the latter might be persuaded to devote his full attention to Johore and, more important still, accept advice from the High Commissioner. At an interview held in the Colonial Office on 3 April 1906, in the presence of Abdul Rahman and Anderson, Elgin made three points clear. First, that Britain was 'deeply interested' in Johore as its neighbour and protecting power, hence it was necessary that 'the administration of Johore should be carried on in general conformity with the views of His Majesty's Government'. When they felt obliged to tender advice, they confidently expected such advice to be followed. Second, regarding proposals from concession hunters, the Sultan was expected to consult the High Commissioner and be guided by his advice. Incidentally, this was an obligation accepted by Ibrahim's predecessor since 1878. Third, that the Sultan should return 'as soon as possible' to Johore. If in future he desired to be temporarily absent from the state, permission should be obtained from the High Commissioner as well as the Secretary of State. Otherwise, the latter

¹ Ibid. Minute by Lucas 30 March 1906.

² In 1902 the Sultan of Johore enjoyed an allowance of at least \$240,000 out of a revenue of approximately \$1.35 million while the Sultan of Perak, in contrast, drew \$48,000 only when Perak's revenues stood at about \$8 million.

'would have to consider if any change would be required in the constitution of Johore to enable the administration to be carried on'. In the written record of the interview, Elgin underlined his warning to the Sultan. 'From what passed at the interview, I am glad to believe that Your Highness fully recognizes the position and I trust that it will not at any time be necessary for His Majesty's Government to consider the steps which they would be called on to take if unfortunately their wishes or their advice should be disregarded.'¹ Such an unequivocal statement by the Secretary of State left Ibrahim in a 'very chastened mood'. He was particularly sorrowful that his holiday in Europe had to be terminated. He kept on postponing his departure but Anderson advised the Colonial Office to take a lenient view of this as he preferred not to have the Sultan back in Johore in 'too sulky' a mood.²

In January 1907, within a few months of the Sultan's return to Johore, Anderson advised him to dispense with the services of Abdul Rahman, his companion and Minister in charge of Relations with the British. Like Swettenham before him, Anderson conceived a strong distrust of Abdul Rahman whom he thought responsible for the Sultan's attempt to disregard an arrangement concerning the letting of the Johore opium and spirit farms which the Sultan, the Dato' Mentri and Dato' Mohamed (State Secretary) had previously agreed to. Owing to this and other incidents, Anderson concluded that Abdul Rahman's 'continuance as the chief spokesman of Johore was a distinct menace' to the good relations between the two governments. Without Abdul Rahman, Anderson was confident that the Sultan would 'do what I want'. He had had no trouble with the Dato' Mentri and Dato' Mohamed who were 'straightforward men'. The other Johore officials, he added, were on the whole 'very timid and dilatory' and thus unlikely to oppose the Governor. Anderson counted on the acquiescence of the 'real Malays' in Johore in Abdul Rahman's removal for he believed that they disliked Abdul Rahman. Although C. B. Buckley thought well of him, both he and T. Shelford, legal advisers to the Sultan, were eventually convinced by Anderson that Abdul

¹ CO273/324 Elgin to Ibrahim 9 April 1906. See also a typewritten account of the interview in the same volume.

² Ibid. Anderson to Lucas, private, 11 April 1906.

Rahman must go. The Sultan capitulated to British pressure. Accordingly, his so-called 'evil genius' was pensioned off to Europe with his German wife on a salary of £1,000 a year.¹

Without an Advisory Board in London and now deprived of support from the 'very clever' Dato' Sri Amar d'Raja Abdul Rahman, Sultan Ibrahim became more amenable to the Governor's influence. Anderson privately expressed his relief that this obstacle to the smooth operation of informal advice had been disposed of and outlined his Johore policy thus:

I feel much more comfortable about Johore. . . . If we are to take it as we must in the long run it is important that we should get it with the full consent and goodwill of the Malays themselves, and if we had a quarrel and then took it, we could not have that, and it is much better for us to wait till the plum is ripe from natural causes than hasten it artificially. If Rahman had remained I am quite sure we should have had a row before long and had to take decisive action. It would have been all right of course only the Johore Malays would have had a grievance, and I want them to come in without any, but because they feel they cannot help it. The planters who are now at work there will soon bring about what we want without any action of ours. . . . I have now I think got the Sultan fairly well in hand and do not think I shall have any trouble with him. I like him personally and I believe he trusts me and is anxious to do what I want him, and as I only want him to do the best for Johore and himself, we ought to get along.²

From January 1907 Anderson's advice was not ignored although he refrained from interfering with the details of Johore's administration. Informal advice was nonetheless hardening into control. Symptomatic of the change was the conclusion of a new agreement between Johore and the FMS on 5 February 1908 involving important modifications in the Railway Convention of 1904 which gave the FMS full powers of control over the operation of the Johore State Railway.³ The completion of this line on 30 June 1909 meant that Johore and the Federated States had an integrated system of communications. Naturally the British wanted Johore's administration to be assimilated 'as closely as possible' to that of the Federation and at Anderson's suggestion, the Sultan formally applied for an Adviser in

¹ CO273/326 Anderson to CO 18 January 1907.

² Ibid. Anderson to Lucas, private, 18 January 1907.

³ CO273/339 Anderson to CO 12 March 1908.

October 1909. Both the Governor and the Colonial Office deemed it unnecessary and undesirable to spell out the powers of the proposed appointment.¹ To the Secretary of State, Anderson confided that the Adviser would be expected to 'keep a close supervision over the different departments of the State with a view to bringing the administration up to something approaching the standard of the FMS'.²

In January 1910 D. G. Campbell, hitherto Resident of Negri Sembilan, assumed duties as General Adviser to the Johore Government. His appointment as the first British official to reside in Johore marks an important milestone in the assimilation of Johore into the British framework of administration and control. Hitherto the Sultan's European employees were entirely subject to his pleasure, and had little, if any, colonial experience. Campbell, on the other hand, was considered 'one of the best officers of the SS and FMS service'. Despite his nominal status as a Johore government officer, in practice he was responsible to the Governor. That he should have been called General Adviser 'a term borrowed by Johore from independent Siam'³ shows however that the Sultan regarded as his model Chulalongkorn's employment of foreign personnel to assist in the modernization of Thailand rather than the Residential system operating in the neighbouring states. For this reason, perhaps, Sultan Ibrahim was easily persuaded to appoint other officers from the Colony and the Federation. In April 1910, the Sultan asked the Governor for a competent surveyor.⁴ Then in July, again acting on the 'advice of Mr. Campbell and with the concurrence of' his state council, the Sultan applied to the Governor for the loan of four more colonial officials to teach his own people 'up to date methods of administration' so that Johore would be governed 'on the lines of the British Colony'. Such officials were to act as Legal Adviser, Assistant to the General Adviser, Commissioner of Customs and Collector of Land Revenue. Campbell's own appointment as Commissioner of Lands, Mines and Surveys was

¹ CO273/351 Anderson to CO 16 October 1909 and minutes on this telegram.

² CO273/360 Anderson to CO 19 March 1910.

³ Emerson, *op. cit.* p. 207.

⁴ Johore State Secretariat Letter Book (1910-11) Sultan to Governor 4 April 1910.

gazetted a few months later and among other new posts created for British officials in 1911 and 1912 were those of Chief Engineer, Judge of the Supreme Court and Commissioner of Police.¹ The Johore Government Gazette dates from 1910. Similarly, in accordance with established practice in the other states, annual reports began to appear for Johore.²

Initially impressed by the 'progress and development' evident in Johore Bahru and Banda Maharanee, with their well-laid out towns, roads and water supplies, the General Adviser ascribed this to the Europeans employed by the Johore Government, particularly C. B. Buckley,³ and mentioned that in the rest of the state, communications were very undeveloped. Nonetheless, he believed that Johore could look forward to a prosperous future in view of its agricultural resources and the completion of the Johore State Railway. The revenue for 1910 amounted to \$3,323,185 while normal expenditure, not considering the public debt of \$11,676,310, stood at \$2,718,105. The British anticipated a considerable increase in the revenue since this was the period of the rubber boom. In order to make the state more attractive to capital and enterprise, the Johore Government enacted new land laws for the issue of grants in perpetuity on terms like those in force in the FMS, besides which the codification and publication of laws was undertaken. The taking up of about 250,000 acres of land for rubber planting in the first half of 1910 indicated the quickening pace of development in Johore.⁴

¹ See Johore Government Gazettes, 17 September 1910, 8 January and 1 June 1911, 30 May and 30 December 1912.

² See CO715/1 AR Johore 1910-20.

³ C. B. Buckley had come out to Singapore in 1864 when he joined W.H. Read's firm—A.L. Johnstone & Co. Subsequently, he read law and became a partner of Rodyk and Davidson, Advocates and Solicitors, who were the legal advisers to the Johore Government. In 1899 Sultan Ibrahim appointed Buckley an honorary member of the Johore state council and from January 1904 Buckley was a full-time Financial and General Adviser to the Johore Government. (See *Singapore and Straits Directory*, 1899, p. 288 and *Singapore and Straits Directory*, 1906, p. 32.) He seems to have retired from this role in 1909, see K. Sinclair, 'The British Advance in Johore, 1885-1914', *JMBRAS*, vol. xl, part i, July 1967, p. 105. In 1912 Buckley died in England where he had gone to arrange for Sultan Ibrahim's son's education.

⁴ CO715/1 AR Johore 1910. The rush for land continued in 1911 and 1912 but trailed off in 1913 with the fall in the value of rubber.

Considering that the General Adviser had 'to do everything by asking and not by order', the Colonial Office read his early reports with satisfaction.¹ The State Secretary, Dato Mohamed bin Mahbob² supported Campbell's efforts at reorganization with more enthusiasm than the Sultan who found it hard to yield to the encroaching tide of British advice. He turned down Sir Arthur Young's proposal that from January 1912 official correspondence from Johore should be addressed to the High Commissioner of the Malay States as in the case of the FMS, instead of the Governor of the Straits Settlements because he saw this as a move to propel him gradually into the Federation.³ In matters which had long been exclusively his personal concern also, the Sultan resisted British interference. Both Campbell and J. B. Elcum, acting General Adviser during the greater part of the former's absence on leave (from January 1912 to May 1913), made little headway in their efforts to investigate and improve conditions in the Johore Bahru jail where prisoners were allegedly maltreated by the warders and compelled to work on the Sultan's private estates.⁴

The question of prison administration was one of many in which the Sultan and General Adviser did not see eye to eye as time went on.⁵ In 1912 Campbell complained about the Sultan's autocratic methods, asserted that he did 'absolutely nothing' for the country and, on the contrary, tended to 'block and hinder its development'. In Johore, more than in any of the other Malay States with the exception, perhaps, of Pahang,

¹ CO273/372 Minutes on Anderson to CO 25 January 1911.

² In March 1912, Anderson's successor, Sir Arthur Young, recommended the Dato for a CMG in the 1913 Honours list. He mentioned that the Dato had done good work in the Muar district and served as State Secretary for seven years; that he was 'an enlightened and able officer . . . always . . . most friendly with the English' whose 'tact and sound commonsense' had been very valuable to the Straits Government in matters affecting Johore.

³ CO273/375 R.J. Wilkinson, OAG to CO 28 November 1911.

⁴ CO273/396 Young to CO with enclosures of correspondence with Campbell and the Sultan, 7 August 1913. Elcum acted for Campbell from January 1912 to February 1913 when he was succeeded by J. C. Sugars, Judge of the Johore Supreme Court. See 'Johore in 1913' Supplement to the Johore Government Gazettes for 1914 kept in the Secretariat at Johore Bahru.

⁵ See e.g., *Straits Echo* 18 February, 14 March 1913. Also CO273/397 Campbell to Young enclosed in Young to CO 14 October 1913.

circumstances favoured the exercise of arbitrary power. There were no hereditary territorial chiefs. Officials in Johore including members of the state council, depended completely on the Sultan for their position and emoluments. Compared with other Malay Rulers too, Sultan Ibrahim was by far the most wealthy, for in addition to a substantial allowance from the state treasury, he had private sources of income derived from rubber estates, sawmills, brick-works and other forms of enterprise in which he had a share. His subjects, so Campbell said, were 'absolutely dominated' and 'terrified' by him, for Ibrahim 'probably owing to the admixture of European blood in his veins' was not only much bigger physically but also a 'much stronger personality'. The Sultan moreover was autocratic like his forbears and jealous of his own power so that he denied his officers authority to deal with anything outside ordinary routine matters and got his own way in the state council. In such a situation, the General Adviser discovered that his influence was restricted.

In practice, he tenders advice but has to use some discretion in his choice of subject, for relying solely on his personal influence and having no power or authority in the country, it is necessary that he should not weaken that influence by advocating measures which he is not reasonably sure he can carry through to a successful issue. In addition to his duties as General Adviser, he carries on the work of Commissioner of Lands, Mines and Surveys. As such he is in the position of a head of Department.¹

The Sultan further circumvented Campbell's influence at meetings of the state council by absenting himself (ostensibly on grounds of ill-health) so that he could refuse to see the minutes 'for a week or more' or else alter or rescind any resolution 'without the necessity for giving any reason for his action'. Apart from such methods of direct obstruction in matters of personal concern, the Sultan would also 'block works in a more intangible but not less effective way' by making it known that he disliked an officer or objected to some proposed measure. 'At once his officials reflect his mood', added Campbell. 'Necessary instructions from the Secretariat are forgotten, or become mislaid by their recipients. Subordinates misunderstand what they have been told—clerks mislay papers and that officer's work or pro-

¹ Ibid.

posal comes to an absolute standstill.¹ While admitting that the Sultan had 'no settled policy of opposition to the development of his country', the General Adviser stated that Sultan Ibrahim grudged expenditure on items not involving his private financial interest or the gratification of his whims and fancies. To substantiate his criticism that Ibrahim was guided more by personal rather than public considerations, Campbell reported how the former had got the state council to double his allowance, from \$120,000 a year to \$240,000 on his fortieth birthday in September 1913 despite the General Adviser's disapproval.¹

By about mid-1913 the British officials in Johore and the Governor seemed agreed that the time had arrived for the General Adviser to have a *locus standi* in Johore which would enable him to get on with the task of developing the state and organizing its administration unimpeded by the Sultan. So far the British Government had been prevented from obtaining full control because, as Lucas and others explained, they could not 'show any serious misgovernment in Johore as a justification for taking a strong step'.² Though preferring Johore's 'absorption' to occur 'quietly as a result of a movement from inside the

¹ Until 1910 the Sultan had drawn \$240,000 a year for his personal use but on a hint from Anderson that 'in the then state of the country, his allowance was excessive' he halved it in May 1910 (see CO273/397 Anderson's minute on Young to CO 14 October 1913). By 1913 however his finances were in a bad way whereas the state revenue had risen from about £2,000,000 in 1910 to roughly over £3,000,000 in 1913. He probably felt entitled to share in the growing prosperity of Johore though the following figures show that he was already much better-off than the rulers of the FMS.

	<i>Estimated Revenue 1914</i>	<i>Civil List</i>
	(\$)	(\$)
Perak	21,299,230	52,000
Selangor	14,417,594	37,500
Negri Sembilan	2,661,731	16,800
Pahang	1,458,406	36,000
Kedah	2,294,246	72,000
Kelantan	795,633	24,000
Johore	4,238,752	240,000

In addition to the above allowance, the Johore Government paid for the Sultan's entertainment expenses, the upkeep of the Istana in Johore and the Tyersall residence in Singapore, the cost of his eldest son's education in England, etc. See CO273/406 Young to CO 18 March 1914.

² CO273/306 Lucas' minute 2 March 1904 on Johore Advisory Board to CO 1 March 1904. Note also CO 273/312 Anderson to CO 26 December 1905.

country' the local officials decided to wait no longer and now set out to bring it about 'from outside'.¹ Confident of evidence of maladministration in the Johore Bahru prison, the Governor pressured the Sultan into accepting a Commission of Enquiry in October 1913.² The Report³ disclosed abuses which the Commissioners urged 'must be remedied forthwith'. And to deal with such a situation in any department, they recommended an enlargement of the General Adviser's powers.

To convince the Colonial Office further that the scope of British control in Johore should be extended and the Sultan's powers correspondingly curtailed, the Governor submitted a memorandum from M. H. Whitley, Johore's Legal Adviser, on the Administration of Justice in the state and another on the Report of the Commission written by Campbell. Both enlarged on the Sultan's shortcomings and put the case for a change in the *status quo*. Campbell explained the difficulties which had prevented the Commissioners from getting a true picture of prison conditions—really worse than painted in the Report—and the Sultan's personal responsibility for them. He repeated the oft-heard complaint of British officials that 'the Sultan regards the whole State, its Courts, its Gaols and all branches of the administration as his private property to be administered for his personal benefit'. Moreover Campbell maintained that since 1912 the Sultan had shown himself 'less and less inclined to accept the Governor's advice and altogether more antagonistic to the British Government'.⁴

The instances listed to exemplify this charge reflected problems inherent in a policy of advice as opposed to control. The first British Resident in Perak, J. W. W. Birch, experienced the same frustrations and irritations as Campbell did in Johore

¹ CO273/326 Anderson to CO 18 January 1907.

² CO273/396 and 397 Young to CO 7 August 1913 and 13 October 1913 respectively.

³ Enclosed in CO273/406 Young to CO 26 February 1914. The Commission consisted of the Chief Justice of the Colony, Sir W. Hyndman Jones as President; Lt.-Col. W. E. White who spoke Hindustani and could converse with the Sikh warders; E. Burnside, formerly acting superintendent of a convict establishment in Taiping and M. H. Whitley, Legal Adviser to the Johore Government.

⁴ CO273/406 Young to CO 19 March 1914 enclosing Whitley's memorandum and Campbell's dated 10 February 1914.

when Abdulla of Perak in 1874-5, like Ibrahim in 1912-13, declined to accept advice. Enjoying a far stronger position than Abdulla, and heir to a tradition of vigorous autocratic rule, not to mention the special circumstances—mentioned already—which facilitated the exercise of arbitrary power in Johore, Sultan Ibrahim naturally refused to behave as if he were treaty-bound to ask and accept advice from the British in all matters of administration. In 1910 and 1911, he may have been more amenable to such advice probably because he was then a little uncertain of British intentions. But by 1912, with Campbell away on leave, Sir John Anderson replaced by Sir Arthur Young¹ and having gained in self confidence, Sultan Ibrahim proceeded to disregard British advice more frequently. Perhaps too the effect of the Secretary of State's warning in 1906 that Johore's administration 'should be carried on in general conformity with the views of His Majesty's Government' had worn off.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the European officials employed by the Sultan also expected to do more than they had considered expedient in the early days of their arrival in Johore. The Legal Adviser's memorandum on the administration of justice may be regarded as typical of the man-on-the-spot's attitude. He mentioned that up to 1911 justice was entirely in Malay hands. Subsequently, Europeans were appointed as magistrates and the Legal Adviser gazetted as a judge of the Supreme Court but they handled a 'very trifling portion of the judicial business' involving European interests only. While not denying 'some improvements' in the 'past three years' in this aspect of government generally, Whitley urged increased participation of European officers in the various courts. Indeed, he wished them to be entrusted with 'a dominating influence' in the courts. Having acquired a partial control, the British sought to dominate this and other aspects of the administration.

The obstacle to their objective was the Sultan himself. Whitley, Campbell and Young therefore harped on the theme that Sultan Ibrahim should 'not be permitted longer to re-

¹ Young had served as Colonial Secretary in Singapore from June 1906 till February 1911 when he went to Kuala Lumpur as the first Chief Secretary to the Federal Government. He took over from Anderson as Governor and High Commissioner in September 1911.

tard the progress and hinder the development of this portion of the Peninsula'. 'Had he the desire' Campbell continued to say, 'he does not possess the knowledge or ability to rule on civilized lines and his conceit is such that he declines to learn or be guided by others. He fails not only from indolence but because he has not at heart the permanent welfare of his country or his people and is content to devote his energies and activities to matters which tend to his own aggrandizement and pecuniary profit.'¹ In his public pronouncements,² Campbell considered it expedient to continue expressing a high opinion of his employer. In confidential reports he, like other local British officials, was emphatic on the Sultan's failings and silent about his good qualities since they sought to convince the Secretary of State of the need for one of two possible courses: first, that the Sultan should withdraw completely from the administration and 'reside elsewhere permanently'; second, that his influence should be eliminated by imposing the 'Residential system of the FMS'. Having regard to the Sultan's personality, Campbell anticipated that this 'would work somewhat differently and involve a considerable amount of friction before settling down to smooth working'. The Governor, Young, recommended the second alternative in his despatch of 19 March 1914, at the same time proposing a reorganization of the Johore state council 'the members of which should be appointed with the full concurrence of His Majesty's Government, and not be subject to be deprived of office without the same consent'. To overcome the Sultan's opposition, the Governor asked for authority to warn him that the alternative was deposition.

On 28 April 1914, the Secretary of State telegraphed his consent to the proposed course of action. He was satisfied that the Sultan had 'wilfully ignored' British advice and convinced that 'Johore's administration requires immediate reform'. In fact, even before the Commission of Enquiry made their report, Sir John Anderson, then Permanent Under-Secretary, recorded his view that 'the Sultan will have to go' since he was 'incurable'. In authorizing Young to obtain an agreement to provide for an adviser 'with the same powers' as FMS Residents, the

¹ CO273/406 Campbell's memorandum dated 10 February 1914 enclosed in Young to CO 19 March 1914.

² CO715/1 See 'Johore in 1911' dated August 1913.

Secretary of State suggested, as a face-saving device, that the Sultan should express his desire for such an arrangement.¹

Sultan Ibrahim bowed to the inevitable. To 'safeguard his dignity and future reputation' he addressed two letters to the Governor on 11 May 1914. In one, pleading ill-health and the possibility of his leaving Johore for a period, he requested an amendment of article 3 of the 1885 agreement in order to provide for a General Adviser with 'wider functions and powers'. In the other, he asked for various assurances e.g. that in case of differences with the General Adviser, the views of the state council would be communicated to the Governor; that European officers appointed to the Johore service with the Governor's full concurrence, should be regarded as Johore officers for the time being and expected to wear the Johore white uniform; that Malay and English should be accepted as official languages in Johore and preference be given to qualified Johore Malays available for employment in the government.² The new version of article 3 replaced the British Agent with consular powers by a General Adviser 'whose advice must be asked and acted upon on all matters affecting the general administration of the country and on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom'. 'The collection and control of all revenues of the country' it went on to say 'shall be regulated under the advice of the General Adviser.' This Agreement concluded on 12 May 1914, on the one hand, gave the British official stationed in Johore a clear *de jure* status although he had been called General Adviser since his advent in the state in 1909; on the other hand, his powers were now spelled out in terms practically identical with those of the Residents in the FMS. The curtain thus fell on the last act of the policy of advice or informal control.

We have just described the circumstances in which the

¹ CO273/406 Telegram CO to Young 28 April 1914, CO273/396 Anderson's minute 16 September 1913 on Young's despatch 7 August 1913.

² CO273/407 Young to CO 14 May 1914 with enclosures. See also Maxwell and Gibson, *op. cit.* pp. 134-6. With regard to the Sultan's stipulation that Malay should be an official language, it is interesting to note that in September 1902 when the Commandant of the Johore forces, Col. A. C. Tompkins, asked that Sultan Ibrahim address him in English, the former curtly replied that Malay was the official language of Johore. See State Sec. Official Letter Book, August 1900-November 1902, pp. 4 ff.

British weakened Ibrahim's position, firstly, by refusing to communicate with the Johore Advisory Board in London; secondly, by removing the Dato' Sri Amar d'Raja Abdul Rahman from Johore; thirdly, by securing the appointment of a British official with undefined powers as General Adviser to the Johore Government in 1909; and eventually converting that post into one of overall control by the High Commissioner in 1914. In retrospect it is clear that Anglo-Johore relations depended much on personalities. Ibrahim was considered to lack his father's stature both as an individual and as head of state. Also, the tendencies towards extravagance and dictatorial methods evident in the father seemed, to the British, to have become more marked in the son, and similarly the yearning for independence. That Sultan Ibrahim's injudicious behaviour hastened the imposition of British control cannot be denied: but the takeover was inevitable. Lying between Singapore—the seat of British power in the Peninsula—and the FMS, Johore suffered from political and geographical handicaps in its efforts to remain independent. For one thing, British paramountcy ruled out the possibility of an independent foreign policy for Johore. For another, its administration and development, as we have seen, was expected to conform and harmonize with that of the surrounding British possessions and Protected States. Johore never had a chance of remaining independent like Thailand, irrespective of the calibre of its Rulers. The question was not whether it would be able to resist the spread of British control, but when and on what grounds Britain would intervene and install a Resident, albeit called Adviser.

The despatches from Singapore and comments of Colonial Office officials show that by 1913 the Sultan had reached the end of his tether as far as the British were concerned. According to the General Adviser, complaints against the Sultan increased in 1913. Likewise, the Governor maintained that he had recently changed his mind about the Sultan:

Until comparatively recently, I held the view that His Highness had a genuine interest in his country's prosperity, that he worked hard and that though conceited and quick-tempered, he was shrewd and clever, ready to recognize when he was wrong and grateful for sound advice and willing to follow it. Mr. Campbell also shared these views. But recent events have shown that they are untenable and

that the Sultan's *bonhomie* conceals a policy of the most pronounced selfishness.¹

Notwithstanding such statements, it appears that the administration, excluding the gaol, had not deteriorated. Nor was Ibrahim at this time more impervious to British influence than in 1906. Writing in March 1914, the Governor himself said '... the condition of affairs in Johore *is reverting* to that which called for decided action in 1906'.² Much more was at stake, however, in 1913-14 as a result of the Sultan's 'personal government'. In the intervening period, Johore, the Colony and the FMS had been inextricably knit together by a growing network of communications; by commercial, investment and other ties. Johore's total population too had grown, and with the extension of rubber planting, so had the number of Europeans and European interests in the state. It was thus urgent for the administration to be more rationalized not only to further the progress of Johore itself but that of the neighbouring states as well. Whitley's words expressed the thinking of the local officials at this juncture:

During the period under review the material prosperity of the State has increased rapidly, a result largely due to the influx of foreign capital and foreign labour. If these improved conditions are to continue Johore must offer advantages to the investors and to the immigrant not inferior to those offered by the neighbouring states. Unfortunately the Johore Courts are a byword for dilatoriness and incompetence. . . . But apart from the obvious interests of the State itself, it will hardly be denied that for geographical reasons alone it is imperative that the administration of Johore should approximate to the standard in the adjacent territories.³

Within the Malayan context also, important events had occurred between 1906 and 1914 which had a bearing on the British attitude towards Johore. Four northern Malay States had come into the British sphere of action in 1909 on their transfer from Thailand. A full-blown Resident had been placed in Kelantan in 1910 and Governor Young was anxious for a similar arrangement in Trengganu.⁴ Looking at British

¹ CO273/406 Young to CO 19 March 1914.

² Ibid. The italics are mine.

³ Ibid. See Whitley's memorandum on the 'Administration of Justice' in Johore.

⁴ CO273/412 Young to CO 8 October 1914.

Malaya as a whole in 1913-14, the policy-makers must have deemed it imperative to eliminate an anomalous situation at the southern end of the Peninsula. The Report of the Prison Commission conveniently provided the 'handle' needed for intervention. Thus, of the two main threads underlying British policy epitomized in the words 'peace and progress' which we noted towards the beginning of this book, concern for the second brought the rejection of a compromise between advice and control practised in Johore in favour of the Residential system.

From May 1914, Campbell had substantially the same powers as his colleagues in the FMS although he was still called General Adviser in deference to the Sultan's susceptibilities. As another concession to the Sultan's pride, the British allowed him to continue with the existing practice of addressing the Governor instead of the High Commissioner like the other Rulers. Emerson points out that of similar importance was the absence of a Union Jack flying over the General Adviser's house.¹ The same historian of British Malaya concludes that 'in Johore as in the other Malay States the actual substance of political power and the control of the administrative machine' were in the hands of 'the British authorities in the State'.²

The British eased the transition to control by minimizing 'the outward signs of change'. And to humour the Sultan further, they awarded him the GCMG in 1916 followed by the KBE two years later. The former was for his 'work in civil administration' while the latter was in recognition of his assistance to the British war effort.³ After 1914, Sultan Ibrahim seems to have made a serious effort to cope with political realities so that when he died in 1959 at the age of eighty-six, Winstedt, among other retired officials personally acquainted with the Sultan, paid him glowing tribute.⁴

¹ Emerson, *op. cit.* p. 207.

² *Ibid.* p. 211.

³ CO715/1 AR Johore, 1917, 1918.

⁴ Winstedt referred to Ibrahim as 'the most forceful and greatest Malay ruler of his time'. See *Singapore Standard*, 9 May 1959, also the *Straits Times*, 11 May 1959 for Sir George Maxwell's praise for the late Sultan's 'devotion to his country'. Both Winstedt and Maxwell had served as General Adviser to the Johore Government.

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